

TRADITION AND INFLUENCE IN THE DACIAN POTTERY DISCOVERED AT SARMIZEGETUSA REGIA*

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Abstract: This paper aims to identify the Mediterranean and Celtic influences in the Dacian pottery from Sarmizegetusa Regia. The imitated or influenced vessels correspond mainly to tableware and storage jars, while cooking ware tends to belong to a local cultural layer, in regards to morphology and technology. Late Hellenistic and Roman technical influences used by the Dacian craftsmen are: slip, painting and stamped decoration. Laboratory analyses showed that both in the cases of tableware and kitchen pottery, the “recipes” used by the potters working in the ceramic workshops on the Grădiște Hill were practically identical.

Rezumat: Această lucrare își propune identificarea influențelor mediteraneene și celtice regăsite în ceramica dacică de la Sarmizegetusa Regia. Vasele imitate sau inspirate se înscriu în principal în rândurile veselei de masă sau ale vaselor de provizii, în timp ce vesela de gătit pare să urmeze tiparele unui filon cultural autohton, atât în ceea ce privește morfologia vaselor, cât și procesul tehnologic. Influențe elenistice târzii și romane se pot observa și în unele tehnici folosite de olarii daci: aplicarea angobei, pictarea sau ștampilarea. De remarcat însă este faptul că analizele de laborator au arătat că atât în cazul veselei de masă, cât și a celei de gătit, „rețetele” utilizate de meșterii din atelierele ceramice de pe Dealul Grădiștii sunt practic identice.

The Dacian pottery discovered at Grădiștea de Munte – Sarmizegetusa Regia (Fig. 1/a) is a less known and studied category of archaeological material. Nevertheless, its distinctive note was underlined many times in the context of the ceramic production in pre-Roman Dacia, due to the fine wheel-made wares and, most of all, to the figurative style of painted vessels, which are not present in other Dacian settlements or fortifications. It was well noted that, at least from the technological point of view, the Dacian products resemble some of the Mediterranean wares, but Celtic influences may be identified as well. The handmade cooking pots received less or almost no attention at all.

Therefore, I intend to list briefly the potential technological, stylistic, morphological and functional imports or/and influences, making note, as much as possible, of the ways in which those were adapted in the ceramic repertoire of Sarmizegetusa Regia, and of the (existing) local contribution. The result of this succinct analysis¹ should help to reconsider the originality of the ceramic industry in the Dacian Kingdom’s capital.²

Some historiographical landmarks

As previously mentioned, the quality of the Dacian tableware unearthed at Grădiștea de Munte was noted by the archaeologists since the discovery of such numerous ceramic fragments, in different contexts (especially in civil edifices and their annexes).³ Not only the good quality of firing or the finesse execution of those vessels have impressed the specialists, but also the “classical” aspect of the ceramic shapes, comparable to the late Hellenistic or Roman products.⁴ In addition, the presence of the painted pottery, featuring a particular thematic and ornamental register, apart from other similar findings from outside the area of the Orăștie Mountains, has supported the opinion according to which the Dacian potters from Sarmizegetusa Regia were inspired by the imperial luxury wares in terms of technology (the slip, the painting, the stamped decoration) and form (such “imported” shapes are the *situla*, the storage jar, the krater or the spouted bowl).⁵

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¹ The study of the Dacian pottery discovered on the terraces of Sarmizegetusa Regia, as well as in the others fortresses and settlements in the Șureanu Mountains has recently restarted.

² Florea 2011, p. 138.

³ Daicoviciu *et alii* 1953, pp. 182-187.

⁴ Crișan 1969, pp. 152, 215-216; Florea 1993, p. 108; Florea 1998, p. 145; Florea 2000, p. 272; Florea 2001, p. 180; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 142; Cristescu 2013.

⁵ Crișan 1969, p. 214; Glodariu 1974, p. 141 ; Florea 1998, pp. 181-183; Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 139-146.

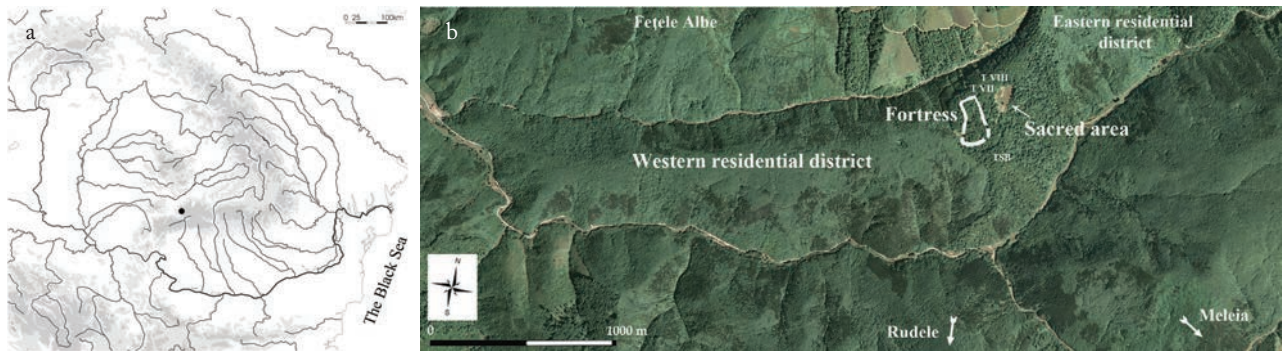


Fig. 1 – a. Location of Grădiștea de Munte-Sarmizegetusa Regia; b. Ortophotomap of the ancient site, with the position of Fetele Albe, Meleia, Rudele, T VII, T VIII and TSB (*apud* Florea 2011, photo 8).

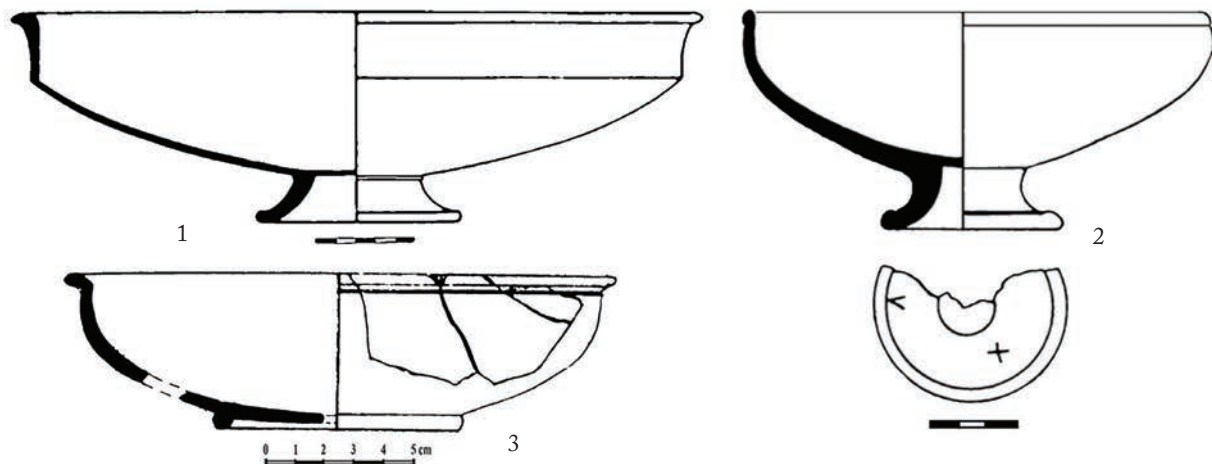


Fig. 2 – 1. Pedestaled carinated bowl (*apud* Florea 2001, pl. 2/2); 2. Pedestaled incurved rim bowl (*apud* Florea 2000, fig. 2); 3. Flaring rim bowl (*apud* Cristescu 2013, fig. 6/9).

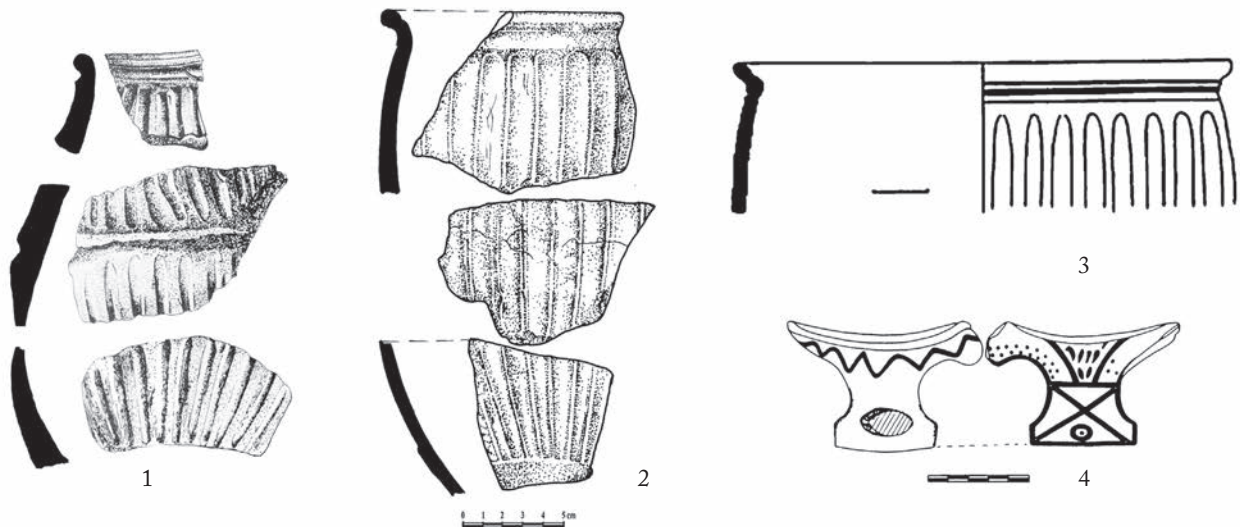


Fig. 3 – 1. Pontic flaring rim bowl or imitation (*apud* Glodariu 1976, pl. 32/IC 27-1); 2. Pontic flaring rim bowl (*apud* Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 138/2); 3. Pontic flaring rim bowl from *Histria* (*apud* Suceveanu 2000, pl. 32/7); 4. Painted *kantharos* (*apud* Glodariu 1976, pl. 28/IC 27-12).

Strongly related to the aspects above, the presence of Greek-Roman potters, working or owning the workshops on the Grădiște Hill in which these “court pottery” vessels were manufactured, was hypothetically taken into discussion.⁶ Unfortunately, with only few exceptions, the handmade cooking pottery was not sufficiently studied, weighting almost nothing in the general considerations on the ceramic phenomenon specific to the analyzed Dacian site.⁷

Import, influence, adaptation

Comparing the Dacian vessels discovered at Grădiște de Munte (I have included here some other near sites: Fețele Albe, Rudele, Meleia;⁸ Fig. 1/b), one may easily observe the resemblance with the Greek-Roman pottery of the time, in the ceramic shapes, in the surface treatment, and in a form of behavior towards these recipients (or their content): the presence of *graffiti*.

In regards to the ceramic shapes “borrowed” by the Dacian craftsmen from the foreign repertoire, they were vessels for serving/eating food and for pouring/drinking liquids, and storage vessels, of Hellenistic, Roman or Celtic inspiration.⁹ Much of the tableware unearthed at Sarmizegetusa Regia bears the trademarks of the ceramic taste of the time in the Greek-Roman world:¹⁰ the dishes (Fig. 2/1), with a small pedestal¹¹ or a ring foot,¹² are imitating the carinated Flavian luxury wares;¹³ the pedestaled bowls with incurved rim (Fig. 2/2)¹⁴ seem to copy the shape of a popular vessel in the Danubian provinces;¹⁵ bowls with flaring rim (Fig. 2/2)¹⁶ have derived from similar Pontic brown slipped recipients, decorated with vertical grooves (Fig. 3/3),¹⁷ of which at least one was found at Grădiște de Munte (Fig. 3/1-2);¹⁸ painted *kantharoi* (Fig. 3/4)¹⁹ follow the Pontic and lead glazed drinking cups with plated handles from Asia Minor features;²⁰ pitchers (Fig. 4)²¹ copy the Roman bronze recipients or their ceramic imitations;²² kraters (Fig. 5), although their functionality remains debatable,²³ are visibly derived from earlier Hellenistic vessels,²⁴ but, as in the case of other Dacian sites, the

⁶ Glodariu 1974, p. 146; Florea 1993, p. 108; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 140.

⁷ Florea 1994, p. 51; Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 139, 145. Some authors considered that this type of ceramic is almost inexistent: Crișan 1969, pp. 215-216.

⁸ I have placed together here the discoveries from the mentioned sites because of their proximity, but especially due to the presence of ceramic forms and figurative painted pottery, specific to the area of the Dacian capital.

⁹ Of course, the imitated types could be larger in number and more varied, but this aspect may be concluded only after the publication of the entire ceramic material unearthed at Sarmizegetusa Regia.

¹⁰ Cristescu 2013.

¹¹ Florea 1993, p. 99, fig. 1/1-6, fig. 2/1-4, fig. 6/2-5; Florea 1998, pp. 173-174, pl. 44/1-5; Florea 2001, p. 181, pl. 2/2; Florea, Suciș 2004, fig. IV/4; Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 142-143, fig. 122/1-2, fig. 123/2-4, fig. 130/5-7. I do not adhere to the hypothesis that the small pedestaled dish is the result of the evolution of the high pedestaled dish (the so-called “fruit-bowl”): Florea 1998, p. 174; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 143.

¹² Crișan 1969, pl. LXXXII/4; Florea 1994, pp. 52-53, fig. III/1-6; Florea 1998, pp. 172-173, pl. 45/1-6. An additional third variant could be taken into account, but only few fragments from the “Sub baie” terrace (TSB) were discovered so far: Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 123/1-2.

¹³ Atlante II, p. 54, tav. XI/17-19; Warner Slane 1990, pp. 51-52, n. 48, fig. 7/101; Lund 2003, p. 164, pl. LXXXI/8; Rivet 2002, p. 264, fig. 8/1-3; Popescu 2008, pp. 92-93, 96, fig. 2/9-10.

¹⁴ Florea 1993, pp. 101, 104, fig. 5/1-5; Florea 2000, p. 273, fig. 2; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 143, fig. 124/1, 3, 5-8.

¹⁵ Atlante II, p. 394, tav. CXXIX/5 (Pucci XXXI, variant 4); Conspectus, p. 114, Taf. 32/36.4.1-3.

¹⁶ Florea 1993, pp. 99, 101, 104, fig. 2/5-6, fig. 3/1-5, fig. 4/2-4, 6, fig. 6/1; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 143, fig. 124/1-2.

¹⁷ Suceveanu 2000, pl. 32/7 (nr. 5, with vertical grooves, dated at the end of the 1st century-beginning of the 2nd century AD).

¹⁸ Glodariu 1976, pl. 27/IC 27 8, pl. 32/IC 27 13-14 (hypothetically dated in the 1st century BC and considered imitations); Gheorghiu 2005, p. 140, fig. 138/2 (the vessel is considered a Pontic import, but a local imitated recipient is mentioned as well).

¹⁹ Glodariu 1974, p. 143; Florea 1998, p. 170, pl. 49.

²⁰ Atlante II, p. 94, tav. XXIII/10-11; Hayes 2008, pp. 206-207, fig. 27/854-862; Popescu 2012, p. 8, pl. I/1.

²¹ Crișan 1969, p. 310, pl. LVIII/3; Daicoviciu *et alii* 1973, p. 76, fig. 25 A, fig. 24; Florea 1993, p. 107; Florea 1998, pp. 113, 116, 165, pl. 47; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 144, fig. 134/10.

²² Verzár-Bass 1991, tav. 13/CO 1; Anderson-Stojanović 1992, p. 115, pl. 105/889; Suceveanu 2000, pl. 72/14; Morán Álvarez, Paya i Mercè 2007, p. 203, lám. 15/3.

²³ Crișan 1969, pp. 323-324, pl. XCVII/1-3, pl. XCVIII/1-4, pl. C/1-2, l. CI/4; Iaroslavschi 1995, p. 58; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 145.

²⁴ Anderson-Stojanović 1992, p. 108, pl. 94/801; Rotroff 2006, pp. 105-107, fig. 36-38.



Fig. 4 – Pitchers (1. Fețele Albe, *apud* Florea 1998, pl. 47; 2. *apud* Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 134/10; 3. *apud* Florea 1993, fig. 7/6; 4. Rudele, *apud* Crișan 1969, pl. LVIII/3).

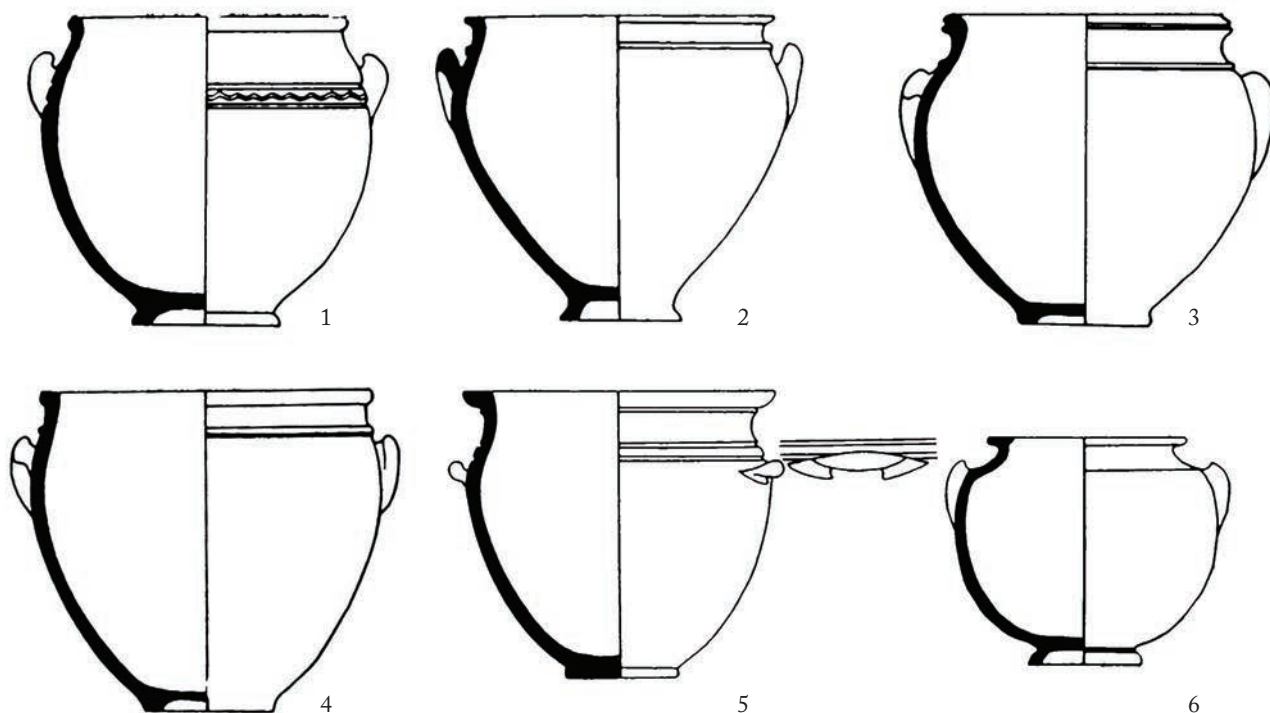


Fig. 5 – Kraters (1-4, 6. Meleia, *apud* Crișan 1969, pl. XCVII/3, pl. XCVIII/1-4).

exact prototype can not be identified;²⁵ finally, spouted bowls (Fig. 6)²⁶ resemble earlier Mediterranean forms as well.²⁷

Also of Greek-Roman origin, the *pithos* (or *dolium*) was a frequent ceramic form at Sarmizegetusa Regia,²⁸ but it was also largely used in other Dacian settlements and fortifications for storing food and liquids.²⁹ One variant, with rilled or profiled rim (Fig. 7),³⁰ sometimes with *graffiti*³¹ was either considered of local background³² or of Hellenistic origin.³³ Rilled rim *pithoi* were discovered in the Archaic level of *Histria*³⁴ and in Early Hellenistic contexts at Koprivlen (Bulgaria).³⁵ Chronologically closer to the finds from Grădiştea de Munte are the vessels from *Gallia*³⁶ and *Stobi*.³⁷ As we can see, there is no doubt for the Hellenistic origin of this *pithos* type.

The list of ceramic vessels of Hellenistic and Roman influence comes to an end with the lid.³⁸ Well represented at Grădiştea de Munte (Fig. 8),³⁹ this form was inspired by the Roman lids, with or without handles or low neck.⁴⁰

From the Celtic ceramic repertoire, the *situla* (Fig. 9) has a surprising presence at Grădiştea de Munte and its surroundings, with 21 fragments discovered so far, just a few of them containing the notorious graphite.⁴¹ They were rightfully considered of Celtic influence, bearing the vertical grooved decoration, and being considered storage recipients (mainly for salt) or cooking pots.⁴² Although their functionality might depend on their sizes or the archaeological contexts in which they were found, it is clear that the *situla* is a ceramic form imported from the Celtic area. Further researches and new materials may point to one specific zone; in my opinion, the prototypes might not be found as far as in *Pannonia*⁴³ or the Scordiscan region,⁴⁴ but much closer, on the Mureş Valley.

As a hypothesis, I wish to bring into discussion the origin of the piriform vessel (Fig. 10). This wheel-made slipped storage recipient, sometimes with *graffiti*, used mainly in relation to liquids, was often painted in the unique figurative style of Sarmizegetusa Regia, and has no other analogies outside the area of the Orăştie

²⁵ Crişan 1969, p. 193, fig. 104; Ursachi 1995, p. 188.

²⁶ Daicovicu *et alii* 1973, p. 76, fig. 25B; Florea 1994, pp. 116-117, 165-166; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 145.

²⁷ Morel 1981, pp. 198, 398, n. 530, 514-515, pl. 198/6521a 1; Rotroff 1997, pp. 134-135, 302-303, fig. 40/570-578; Rotroff 2006, pp. 81, 253-254, fig. 14-15.

²⁸ On the 7th terrace (T VII), storage vessels are second in number, after tableware.

²⁹ Crişan 1969, pp. 184-186; Macrea, Glodariu 1976, p. 62; Florea 1993, p. 107; Ursachi 1995, p. 171; Sirbu 1996, p. 18; Andriţoiu, Rustoiu 1997, p. 84; Florea 1998, pp. 156-160; Crişan 2000, p. 128; Pop, Matei 2001, pp. 264-265; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, p. 79; Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 140-141; Glodariu, Moga 2006, pp. 77-79.

³⁰ Crişan 1969, pl. LXXXIV/3; Florea 1998, pp. 156-158, pl. 38; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 140, fig. 101/2-3, fig. 102.

³¹ Daicovicu 1972, p. 187, fig. XXIV/1; Florea 1998, pp. 157, 159-160; Florea 2000, pp. 275-77.

³² Dărăbanţ 1979, p. 519; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 140.

³³ Glodariu 1995, p. 45, fig. 1/2-3, 5-6; Iaroslavschi 1995, pp. 57-58.

³⁴ Alexandrescu 1978, p. 94, fig. 17/616-617.

³⁵ Hadjingelov 2005, pp. 92, 94, 96, fig. 1/3, fig. 2/1-3, 7, 9-12, fig. 4/4.

³⁶ Dicocer 1993, p. 406.

³⁷ Anderson-Stojanović 1992, p. 116, pl. 107/103.

³⁸ Crişan 1969, pp. 182-183; Macrea, Glodariu 1976, p. 68; Ursachi 1995, pp. 164-165, 182-183; Andriţoiu, Rustoiu 1997, p. 90; Florea 1998, pp. 118-120; Crişan 2000, p. 129; Pop, Matei 2001, p. 265; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 142; Glodariu, Moga 2006, p. 79.

³⁹ In terms of quantity, the third category on T VII. Crişan 1969, pl. XLVII/4, 7, pl. XCIII/1; Florea 1998, pp. 166-170, pl. 50-52; Florea 2000, p. 273, fig. 6/2; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 142, fig. 117/6, 8-12, fig. 118/1-5, 7-8, 11, fig. 119/2, 5-6.

⁴⁰ Vegas 1973, p. 52, fig. 17/3; Conspectus, p. 144, Taf. 47/54.1.1., 54.3.1, 54.2; Anderson-Stojanović 1992, pl. 16/89; Rotroff 1997, fig. 84/1329, 92/1358, fig. 94/1559; Rotroff 2006, fig. 91; Hayes 2008, fig. 30/957.

⁴¹ Crişan 1969, p. 203, fig. 111 (Costeşti), pl. LXXXVII/2 (Rudele); Gheorghiu 2000, pp. 215-217, fig. 3-5, pl. 1 (other examples at Costeşti, with graphite, one vessel repaired with iron rods, and Piatra Roşie, two *situlae*, one with graphite); Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 141-142, fig. 114-116.

⁴² Vegas 1973, pp. 17, 19, fig. 4/5; Rustoiu 1993, p. 135; Iaroslavschi 1995, p. 58; Gheorghiu 2000, p. 214; Cattelain 2002, pp. 29, 31, fig. 2/27; Daire 2002, p. 183; Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 141-142; Ferencz 2007, pp. 95-96.

⁴³ Szabó 1971, fig. 9/22, 26; Szabó, Tankó 2007, p. 170, fig. 5/II.2.

⁴⁴ Sladić 1986, p. 63; Popović 2000, p. 85.

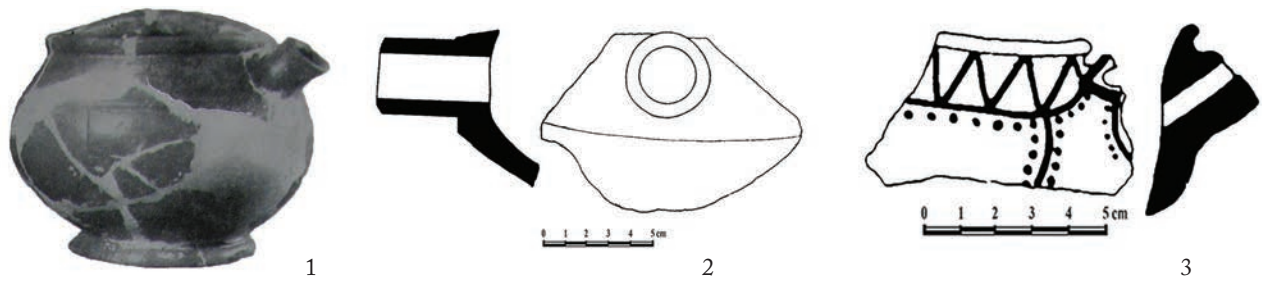


Fig. 6 – Spouted bowls (1. Fețele Albe, *apud* Daicoviciu *et alii* 1973, fig. 25 B; 2. *apud* Florea 1994, fig. I/3; 3. *apud* Florea 1998, pl. 48/3-4)

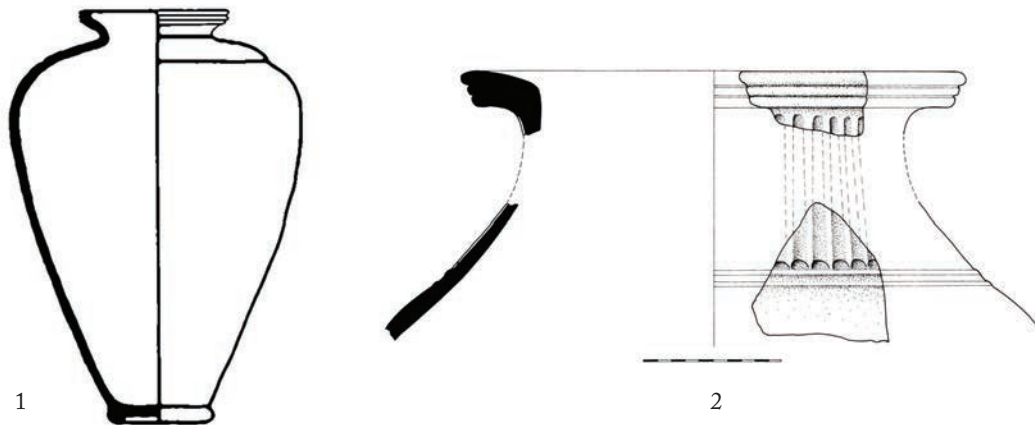


Fig. 7 – Rilled rim *pitboi* (1. *apud* Crișan 1969, pl. LXXXIV/3; 2. *apud* Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 102)

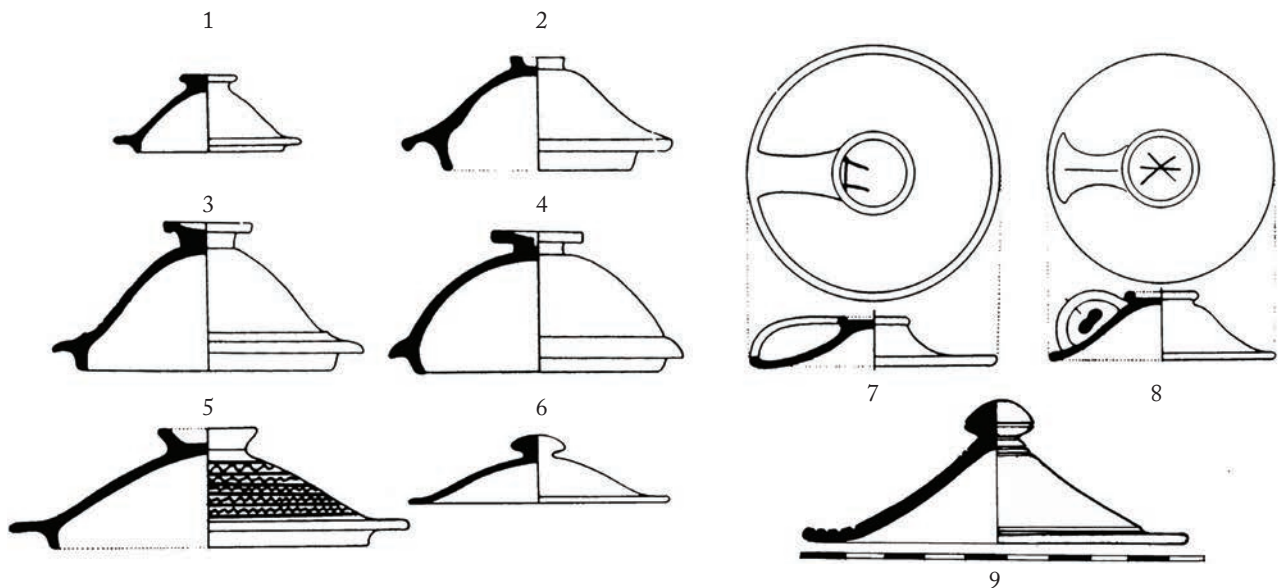


Fig. 8 – Lids (1-4. Rudele; 5-8. Meleia, *apud* Crișan 1969, pl. XLVII/4, 7, pl. LXXXIII/2, 9-12, 14; 9. *apud* Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 118/1)

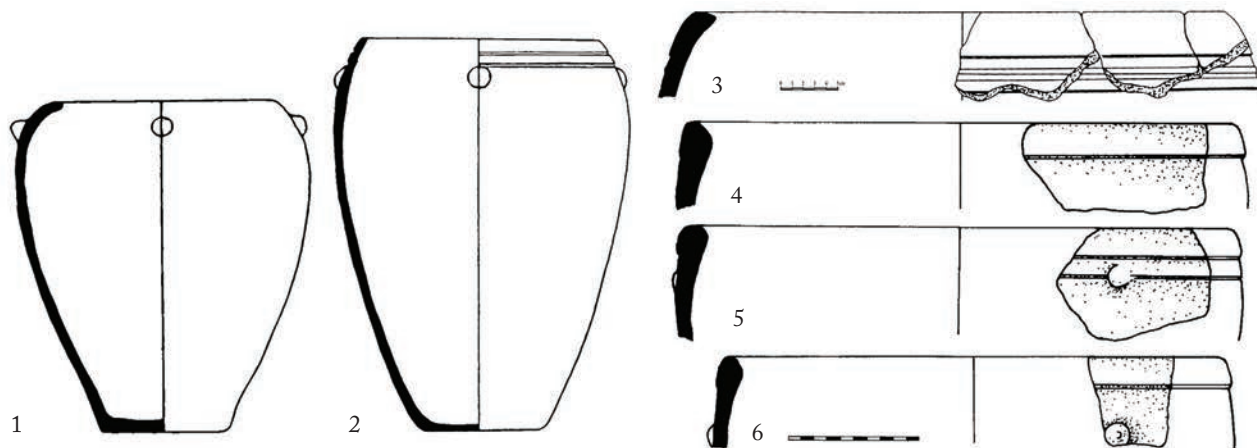


Fig. 9 – *Situlae* (1-2. Rudele, *apud* Crișan 1969, pl. LXXXVII/2, pl. LXXXVIII/5; 4-6: Fețele Albe, *apud* Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 114/5-6, 8).

Mountains.⁴⁵ Similarly shaped kraters were discovered in 1st century BC contexts at *Stobi*.⁴⁶ In my opinion, the piriform vessel's silhouette reminds of some Celtic storage jars, with similar morphological and ornamental elements: the flaring bold rim, the thick nervure on the neck, the pronounced shoulder (with the weight centre lowered down) and bulging body.⁴⁷

The potters working in the area of the Dacian capital were using surface treatment methods largely spread at that time: the slip, the painted and the stamped decoration. The first two techniques are close related, since in the case of the majority of the painted vessels from Sarmizegetusa Regia the paint was applied on a consistent layer of clay.⁴⁸ Slip was used both for decorative and functional reasons⁴⁹ and its use in the Dacian pottery production was linked to the Hellenistic influence,⁵⁰ as in the case of the painted decoration, with the observation that Celtic painted pottery has to be introduced in the discussion as well.⁵¹

Distinctive for the painted pottery produced in the area of Sarmizegetusa Regia is the figurative style, composed of different motifs painted on a yellowish slip (Fig. 10/1).⁵² Only few fragments could be interpreted as being painted directly on the paste;⁵³ this painting technique, considered to be of Roman origin,⁵⁴ was in practice since the Hellenistic period: the “Clay Ground” subcategory of the *Hadra* wares.⁵⁵ It is this painted Hellenistic ceramics (initially produced in Crete),⁵⁶ among the Hellenistic painting tradition in general,⁵⁷

⁴⁵ Crișan 1969, pp. 163-164 (the author makes a confusion and mixes at least two types of vessels: piriform and ovoidal); Florea 1998, pp. 160-163, pl. 40-42; Florea 2000, p. 273, fig. 7/1; Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 139-140; *Ceramica* 2011, pp. 36 (Costești), 40.

⁴⁶ Anderson-Stojanović 1992, p. 108, pl. 94/800-802.

⁴⁷ Szabó 1971, fig. 9/19; Schwappach 1979, fig. 4/5-6, fig. 34/1, fig. 35/28; Sladić 1986, T. III/5, T. VIII/5, T. IX/7, T. XXVIII/1-3; Szabó, Tankó 2007, fig. 5/II.3.1

⁴⁸ Florea 1998, pp. 152-153; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 146.

⁴⁹ Trohani 2000, p. 165.

⁵⁰ Glodariu 1974, p. 148.

⁵¹ Glodariu 1974, p. 141; Florea 1998, p. 54, 62 (the author dismisses the idea that Celtic influences could have contributed to the style of the painted pottery from Sarmizegetusa Regia). For general observations regarding the Celtic painted pottery in Eastern Europe: Jovanović 1991; Szabó 1991. For example, motifs encountered in the western Celtic area, like the “network” pattern, are present at Sarmizegetusa Regia and in some other Dacian sites: Barral 1994, pl. 91-32; Florea 1998, pp. 172, 189-191, pl. 44/3, pl. 45/6, pl. 46/1, pl. 55/13, pl. 65/3; Crișan 2000, pl. 55/1, 4; Trohani 2006, pl. 178/54.

⁵² Florea 1998, pp. 180-205.

⁵³ Florea 1998, p. 158.

⁵⁴ Glodariu 1974, p. 142.

⁵⁵ Lungu, Trohani 2000, p. 138.

⁵⁶ Coldstream *et alii* 2001, p. 117.

⁵⁷ Daicovicu 1972, p. 271; Glodariu 1974, p. 142; Florea 1998, p. 152.

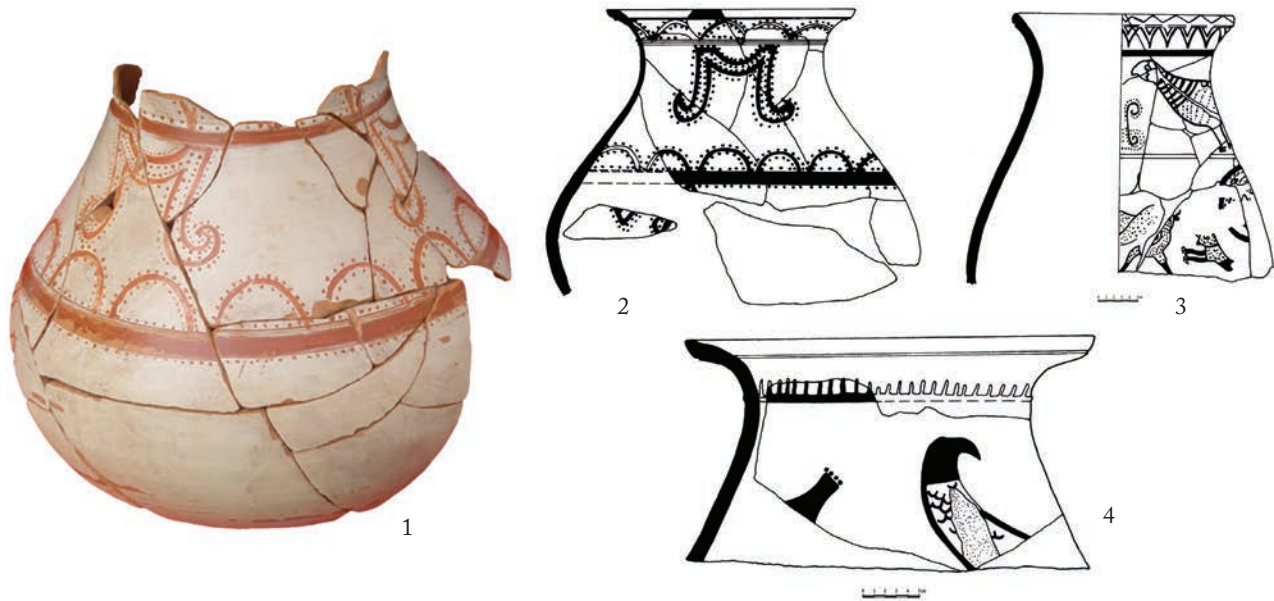


Fig. 10 – Piriform storage vessel (1. *apud* Ceramica 2011, p. 40; 2-4. *apud* Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 141/1-3).

that influenced heavily the Dacian painted vessels production, both in technology and ornamentation.⁵⁸ One might observe that the influence of the *Hadra* style is more visible in the geometrical, vegetal and zoomorphic ornaments depicted on the vessels from Grădiștea de Munte (Fig. 10/3)⁵⁹ than in other Dacian sites, but in which an important amount of *Hadra* style painted recipients, mainly produced in the Pontic region, were discovered.⁶⁰

Stamped decoration⁶¹ is not frequent in the ornamental register of Grădiștea de Munte and it is specific to storage vessels of Greek-Roman origin (*pythoi* or *dolia*). The rosette is the predominant motif, represented by five, six or seven radial triangles, sometimes enclosed in a circle. Vessels decorated with stamped rosettes were found on T VII and on the 8th terrace (T VIII) and at Rudele (Fig. 11/2).⁶² In a particular case, one rosette was stamped on the interior of a lid, thus it was presumed that it did not have an ornamental function and could have been a potter's mark.⁶³ This is also the case of another stamp (probably an X), placed on the interior of the rim of a profiled rim *pythos* found at Meleia.⁶⁴ An interesting slipped grey *pythos* with a profiled rim was discovered on T VII: its decoration consists of seven rows of stamped “scales” (resembling the egg-and-tongue design),⁶⁵ framed on each side by a row of stamped rosettes and horizontal incisions (Fig. 11/1 a-b). It was surprising to notice a similar stamped pattern on a *kantharos* discovered at Kosd (Hungary), dated in the 3rd century BC.⁶⁶

⁵⁸ Cook 1997, pp. 197-199; Rotroff 1997, pp. 223-224; Lungu, Trohani 2000, pp. 137-138.

⁵⁹ Florea 1998, pp. 180-205.

⁶⁰ Lungu, Trohani 2000, pp. 148-149.

⁶¹ Rotroff 1997, p. 37.

⁶² Crișan 1969, pl. LXXXVII/1; Florea 1994, p. 51, fig. II/1; Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 111/2.

⁶³ Daicoviciu 1987, p. 187. A similar situation, but with storage vessel, at Poiana: Vulpe, Teodor 2003, p. 311, fig. 215/6.

⁶⁴ Daicoviciu 1987, p. 187, fig. XXIV/1.

⁶⁵ Some carinated bowls from Sarmizegetusa Regia were painted with similar, but reversed, “scales” (we can additionally notice that the stamped ones are double, while the painted ones are simple): Florea 1998, p. 172, pl. 45/1-5. The “scales” motif appears also on a silver bowl discovered in a cremation grave from *Noviodunum*: Simion 1984, pp. 78, 83, pl. 11/1.

⁶⁶ Szabó 1971, pl. 33, 35; Celtes de Hongrie 2001, pp. 74, 103 (cat. 215). A simpler motif was stamped on a pot with an alveolar girdle from Poiana: Vulpe, Teodor 2003, fig. 156/3.

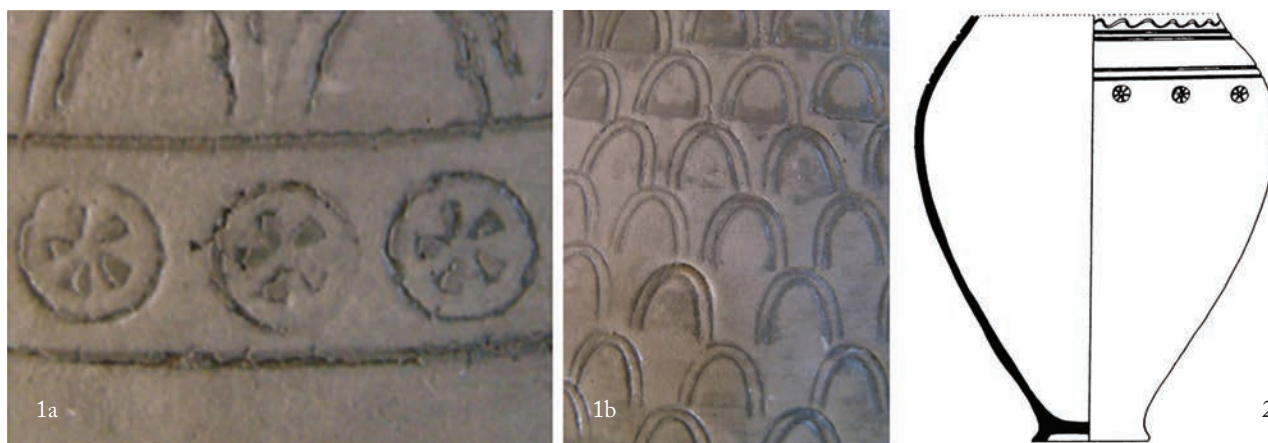


Fig. 11 – 1 a-b. Details with the stamped motifs on the rilled rim *pithos* found on T VII (1 a: photo Bodó Cristina); 2. *Pithos* with stamped rosettes from Rudele (*apud* Crișan 1969, pl. LXXXVII/1)

Analogies for the stamped rosette decoration, probably of Hellenistic origin, may be found in several Dacian sites, on storage vessels, drinking wares or *amphorae*, all of them wheel-made.⁶⁷ When looking at the chronology of the discoveries (with the maximum use period in the second half of the 4th - middle of the 1st centuries BC) and the distribution of the sites, we can see that the stamped rosette motif spreads, in time, from the southern to the northern areas inhabited by the Dacians.⁶⁸ One should also take into discussion the possibility of tracing the way of this stamped decoration to the Celtic ceramic products, knowing that stamped ornaments (such as circles, rosettes, zoomorphic, even anthropomorphic motifs)⁶⁹ were widely applied on many categories of fine and semi-fine wares produced in Europe,⁷⁰ including Transylvania.⁷¹ At Sarmizegetusa Regia, as for most of the ceramic forms and decoration types, the stamped vessels have been discovered in contexts before the Roman conquest;⁷² in Athens, they are also present during the 1st century AD.⁷³

I shall mention just briefly the conic vessel discovered in the center of a large one-storey building because of its unique character and the use of stamps in order to write down a message/statement (Fig. 12/8 a-b).⁷⁴

Professor Gelu Florea has studied more than 50 fragments of vessels with *graffiti* discovered at Sarmizegetusa Regia (Fig. 12/1-7).⁷⁵ Two such recipients had been already published,⁷⁶ the *graffiti* being interpreted as potter or owner marks.⁷⁷ Incised markings have appeared on dishes, storage vessels, lids, and

⁶⁷ Crișan 1969, p. 210; Daicovicu 1972, p. 270; Glodariu 1974, pp. 148-149; Crișan 1978, p. 112, pl. 45/3; Iosifaru 1982, pp. 28, 30, pl. I/1; Preda 1986, p. 60, pl. XLVIII/2; Glodariu, Moga 1989, p. 80, fig. 35/12; Florea 1994, p. 52; Ursachi 1995, p. 194, pl. 290/3; Sirbu *et alii* 1996, p. 63, fig. 103/1; Dupoi, Sirbu 2001, p. 23, fig. 116/2; Trohani 2009, p. 237; Măndescu 2010, vol. II, p. 70, pl. 122/13, 16, pl. 334/1, 3.

⁶⁸ Trohani 2009, p. 238.

⁶⁹ Harding 2007, p. 34, fig. 2.7/4-5, 8 (HaD); Rustoiu, Egri 2010, pl. 30/2-3.

⁷⁰ Sladič 1986, T. VI/1, T. IX/7; Barral 1994, p. 182, pl. 45/156-158, pl. 118/11-12; Szabó, Tankó 2007, p. 174, fig. 6/15, 17; Szabó *et alii* 2008, pp. 217-218, fig. 14, fig. 20/2, fig. 28/5; Tankó, Egry 2009, pp. 396-397, 402, fig. 2/2-3, fig. 4/7, fig. 5/3, 12; Horváth 2010, pp. 62-63, fig. 5/2 a-b, fig. 7/1-2; Megaw, Megaw 2010, fig. 3; Rustoiu, Egri 2010, pp. 218-219, pl. 4/11, pl. 12/6, pl. 23/4, pl. 26, pl. 30/2-3; Tankó 2010, p. 255; Megaw, Megaw 2011, fig. 14.

⁷¹ Ferencz 2007, pl. XXXI/1, pl. LXXXV/13; Pupeză 2008, p. 42, pl. XIV/6, pl. XXII/3, pl. XXVI/4; Rustoiu 2008, fig. 44/7-8; Pupeză 2013, p. 45, pl. 24/6.

⁷² Dated mainly in the second half of the 1st century AD: Florea 1994, p. 59; Florea 1998, pp. 148, 176-177; Cristescu 2013.

⁷³ Robinson 1959, pp. 28, 40, pl. 36/K5-K9, pl. 57/G 19, G62-G63, G 168.

⁷⁴ Daicovicu *et alii* 1955, pp. 201-203; Crișan 1969, p. 189, pl. LXXXVI/1; Suci 2000, p. 41; Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 85, 146; Florea 2010, p. 285, fig. 1-2. For the discussion regarding the text of the stamped inscription: Grec 2009, pp. 138-158.

⁷⁵ Florea 2000; Florea 2001.

⁷⁶ Crișan 1969, pp. 307, 312, pl. XLVII/4, 7. Ioan Glodariu has mentioned other such incised symbols (H, Δ, S, Ψ, X, Λ, ♀): Glodariu 1974, p. 166.

⁷⁷ Crișan 1969, p. 212; Glodariu 1974, p. 166; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 142.

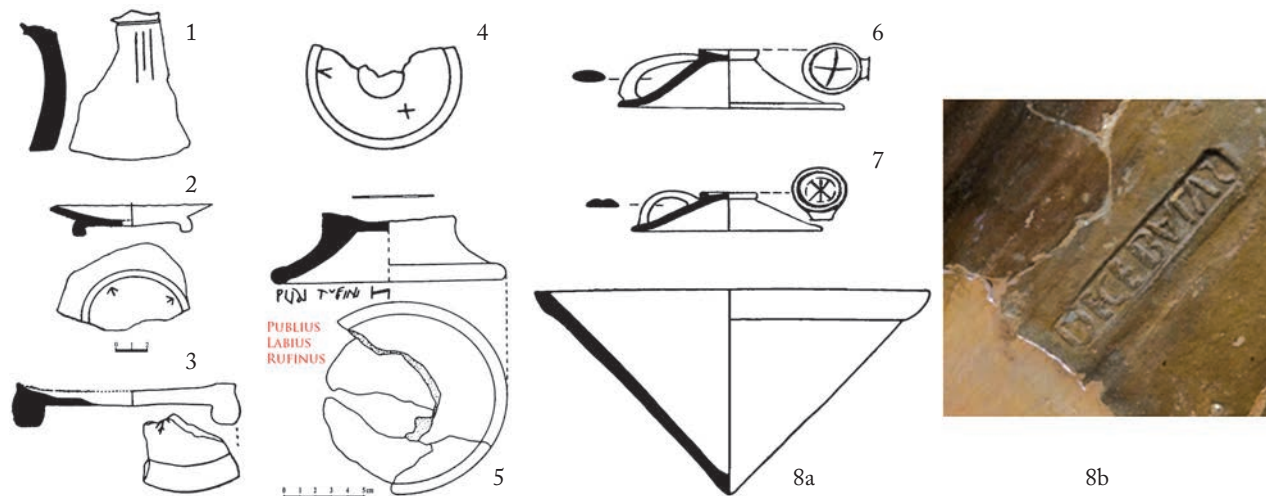


Fig. 12 – 1-7. *Graffiti* on different types of vessels (*apud* Florea 2011, fig. 34 b); 8 a-b. Conic vessel with stamped inscriptions (a: *apud* Crișan 1969, pl. LXXXVI/1; b: *apud* Florea 2010, fig. 2).

bowls, mostly wheel-made.⁷⁸ In general, the letters or signs have been scratched in less visible places (the base or the interior of the vessel), but they appear also on the buttons of the lids or on the rim.⁷⁹ It was interpreted that, perhaps, the graffiti present on tableware are signs of property, while the ones on storage vessels and lids could have been markings of content or of quantity, but it was not totally excluded the possibility that some of them were potter/workshop marks.⁸⁰ These are the interpretations for the Greek-Roman finds, as well.⁸¹ I have to mention a very interesting piece, a pedestaled carinated dish, on which a Roman citizen (probably a soldier, Publius Labius Rufinus) scratched down his name, so that everybody would know he is the owner of that vessel (Fig. 12/5).⁸² After all, the *graffiti* found on the Dacian ceramics from Sarmizegetusa Regia express the necessity and the will of communication, in an effervescent and fast changing cultural environment.⁸³

The way in which the potters from the Dacian capital had adapted the influences and trends mentioned above is still a poorly explored research field. The main difficulty lies in the fact that is hard to identify the way through which the model reached Sarmizegetusa Regia in the absence of the originals.⁸⁴ Even so, as it was noted, the impression is that some vessels do not reproduce entirely the model, being inspired forms, rather than imitations.⁸⁵ It is true that the preference for various morphological or decorative elements, and their unique combination, is highly visible in the vessels from Grădiștea de Munte (the pedestaled dish and incurved rim bowl, the spouted bowl, the piriform vessel), but there are also forms which present major similarities with the foreign prototype (the rilled rim *pithos*, the lid, the pitcher, probably the *kantharos*, the bell shaped krater). In the case of the *situla*, even if for a small number of samples, the “original” recipe with added graphite was kept. But, when it came to decoration (or perhaps for functional purposes: better grip and good maneuverability), the local potters used traditional elements, such as the circular button. Furthermore, it is interesting that we have at Sarmizegetusa Regia handmade, but also wheel-made imitations of Roman

⁷⁸ Florea 2000, pp. 272-274; Florea 2001, pp. 180-181.

⁷⁹ Florea 2000, p. 274.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 276.

⁸¹ Lang 1976, pp. 23-30, 55-58, 64-65, 69-70, 72-73; Stolba 2002, pp. 230-231, 234-236;

⁸² Florea 2001, pp. 183-185, pl. 2/3.

⁸³ Florea 2010, p. 285.

⁸⁴ In general, the ceramic imports from Grădiștea de Munte are almost unknown: Glodariu 1974, p. 146; Florea, Suci 2004, p. 67, fig. V/10. It might be a situation related to the current research stage.

⁸⁵ Florea 1993, p. 108. Such an imitation (if it is not a real import) was discovered on the Mureș Valley at Câmpuri-Surduc and it has been repaired in Antiquity: Gheorghiu 2005, p. 142, fig. 122/5.

lids. Why was it necessary to have both fine and course replicas of the originals? Where they used differently, alongside different categories of vessels? I believe this aspect requires a more detailed analysis in the future.

The local contribution

It has been highlighted on several occasions that, in general, the changes in the ceramic repertoire (especially in the cooking ware) translate significant modifications in the society/community that produces and uses those vessels.⁸⁶ In the case of Sarmizegetusa Regia, it seems that important changes operated in tableware and storage vessels, but one may notice that the handmade cooking pots preserve the traditional shapes and techniques, just like a few other local forms. In addition, the surface treatment is specific to Late Iron Age course pottery. The local potters even produced handmade replicas of some imported wheel-made forms, without any changes in the functionality of the respective vessels.⁸⁷

Named “pots” or, especially, “jars”,⁸⁸ the cooking recipients represent the majority of the handmade ceramic production at Sarmizegetusa Regia. Largely outnumbered by tableware or *pythoi*,⁸⁹ these vessels are well represented in most of the Dacian settlements and fortifications from the time of the Dacian Kingdom, being difficult to establish variants of chronological relevance. However, it was observed that, starting from the first half of the 1st century AD, the jar starts to be also produced on the potter’s wheel,⁹⁰ furthermore, the archaeologists consider that the jar tends to become more slender towards the beginning of the 2nd century AD.⁹¹

At Grădișteea de Munte, the jars were modeled from a course or semi-course paste, with mica particles and sand, to which grog and pebbles were added. In some cases, a thin layer of clay (polished, similar to a course slip) can be observed, alongside a more careful treatment on the inside of the pot (Fig. 13/5). The decoration, when present, consists of applied (alveolar or notched girdles: Fig. 13/3, 6, 8; alveolar circular, ovoid or horizontal buttons: Fig. 13/1, 5, 7) or incised ornaments; some times, these elements are combined (Fig. 13/2, 4).⁹² I have to mention that at Sarmizegetusa Regia the decoration is obviously modest and scarce compared to other Dacian sites.

The functionality of the jar is documented by the traces of secondary firing (soot on the outside, in the base area; rarely, carbonization marks on the inside) visible on many of the discovered fragments.⁹³ Of course, these pots could have been used for the temporary conservation of food or for other kitchen necessities,⁹⁴ the larger ones for example.⁹⁵

Even if at Grădișteea de Munte Roman lamps and their imitations are present,⁹⁶ we have to make note of the continuous use of the traditional handmade tronconic lamp (the so-called “Dacian cup”), widely spread

⁸⁶ Bats 1988, p. 255; Skibo 1992, p. 31; Bats 1994, p. 408; Abbink 1999, p. 45; Ralph 2006, p. 106; Joyner 2007, pp. 189-190. It was recently proposed that the persistence of handmade pottery alongside wheel-made products could be interpreted by its presumed ideological function, leading also to conservatory behavior towards special categories of ceramic vessels: Papadopoulos 2001, p. 191.

⁸⁷ As I have previously mentioned (Cristescu 2012, p. 110), I appreciate that the Dacian pottery can be classified in functional categories, leaving in secondary the old technological differentiation in wheel-made and handmade pottery. Yet I wish to thank Andrei Opaîț for the kind observations and suggestions made during the workshop “Dacii între Orientul Elenistic și Occidentalul Roman în secolele II a. Chr. - I p. Chr”, the 14th ARA Symposium, Bucharest, 19th of April 2013.

⁸⁸ Crișan 1969, pp. 161-164; Macrea, Glodariu 1976, p. 41; Glodariu 1981a, p. 39; Ursachi 1995, pp. 159-161; Sirbu 1996, p. 19; Andrițoiu, Rustoiu 1997, p. 85; Crișan 2000, pp. 119-121, 124; Pop, Matei 2001, pp. 263-264; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, p. 73; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 139; Glodariu, Moga 2006, pp. 67-68.

⁸⁹ Proportionally, cooking ware represents about 7 % of the material discovered on T VII. A similar, yet relative, estimation is mentioned for the ceramic material discovered on T VIII: Florea 1993, p. 108.

⁹⁰ Glodariu 1981b, p. 153.

⁹¹ Macrea, Glodariu 1976, p. 53; Ursachi 1995, p. 158; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 139.

⁹² Florea 1994, p. 51, fig. I/4, 6-7; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 139, fig. 83/5, fig. 86/1, fig. 87/7, 11, fig. 88/1, fig. 89/1, 7, fig. 90/1, fig. 92/2, 18; Ceramica 2011, p. 32.

⁹³ Unfortunately, this kind of observations was not made on complete vessels. Fragments with such traces of secondary firing were found on T VII and the TSB.

⁹⁴ Some authors consider that this was the primary function of the jar, not cooking: Teodor 1995, p. 17.

⁹⁵ Iaroslavschi 1995, p. 51.

⁹⁶ Glodariu 1974, p. 146; Glodariu 1976, p. 168, pl. 26/C 25 b, pl. 48/C 25 c.

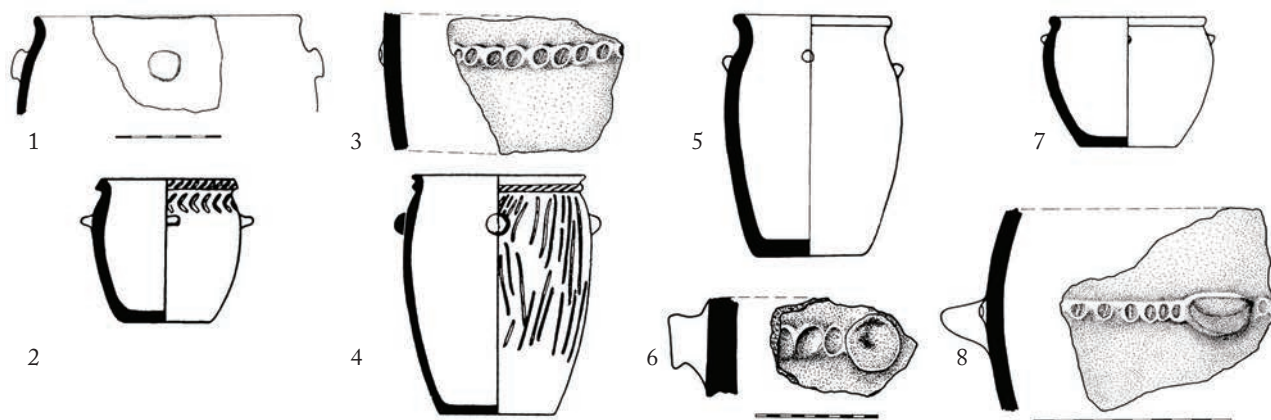
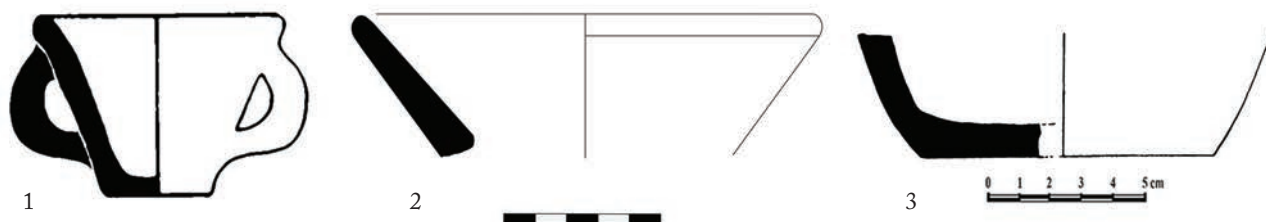


Fig. 13 – Cooking pots (1, 3, 5-6, 8: *apud* Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 83/5, fig. 88/7, fig. 89/7, fig. 90/1, fig. 92/9; 2, 4, 7: Rudele, *apud* Crișan 1969, pl. LXXII/4, pl. LXXIX/12, pl. LXXX/18).



Pl. 14 – Handmade tronconic lamps (1. *apud* Crișan 1969, pl. XLVII/5)

in pre-Roman Dacia.⁹⁷ There aren't many pieces found at Sarmizegetusa Regia⁹⁸ and none of them is decorated (Fig. 14/2-3); one such vessel had two handles (Fig. 14/1).⁹⁹

I have recently tried to demonstrate that there is a certain ceramic pattern which starts to take shape here, in the proximity of the sanctuary,¹⁰⁰ respectively the assemblage tableware-storage vessels-cooking ware, encountered in some large edifices in the mentioned area. If this should prove to be a reality, we still have to analyze and validate the presence of cooking ware in the settlement spread on the Grădiște Hill, in the household ceramic assemblages. Until then, it must be recorded in theory that, even if the convivial practices have changed (or started to emerge), the culinary ones kept their substance and remained practically the same.¹⁰¹

Some conclusions

I shall start with a fact on the pottery from Sarmizegetusa Regia: petrographic and chemical analyses proved that fine wares and course wares received the same technological treatment, in terms of paste and temper, only surface treatment and firing conditions being different.¹⁰² There is more to be done in this matter, but one conclusion has to be drawn at this point: the recipe by which the vessels were produced is the same, meaning the raw materials and the following activities were similar for each of the vessels produced. Furthermore, it

⁹⁷ Crișan 1969, pp. 155-156; Macrea, Glodariu 1976, p. 62; Glodariu 1981a, p. 39; Ursachi 1995, pp. 162-164; Sirbu 1996, p. 20; Andrițoiu, Rustoiu 1997, p. 90; Crișan 2000, pp. 122-123; Pop, Matei 2001, p. 264; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, p. 75; Gheorghiu 2005, p. 145; Glodariu, Moga 2006, pp. 71-72.

⁹⁸ Ceramic 2011, p. 43.

⁹⁹ Crișan 1969, pl. XLVII/5.

¹⁰⁰ For the new terminology regarding the religious structures from Sarmizegetusa Regia: Mateescu 2012.

¹⁰¹ Yet we know nothing of the culinary/convivial practices for the early phase(s) of Sarmizegetusa Regia.

¹⁰² Optical microscopy and X-ray power diffraction on a sample of 11 shards, performed by my colleague Rodica Filipescu, Department of Geology, "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca: Filipescu *et alii* 2012.

would mean that the pots were produced in the same area, in the same workshop, by the same craftsmen, as it was presumed a few years ago.¹⁰³

One can easily notice that the number of ceramic forms used at Grădișteea de Munte is limited. In addition, it is not always clear what was the exact functionality of a certain shape. This way, we might assume that at least some of the mentioned types are multifunctional vessels. And this is very interesting because almost all the tableware forms were imported or influenced by Greek-Roman models. As in the case of other Dacian sites (like Popești or the three *davae* on the Siret Valley), we have to underline the taste for “vintage” forms (the spouted bowl or the krater). By the high number of storage jars found, we must presume that some kind of mass-production took place in the area of the Dacian capital. And it is this well organized system which carefully selected the recipients fitted for receiving specific types of decoration, but conservative enough to preserve the ceramic traditions related to cooking and lighting.

These observations point to a cultural model specific for the studied historical period, denoting a type of originality more contextual rather than substantial: it is Sarmizegetusa Regia, a cosmopolite and pulsating city at the turn of the centuries, a “melting pot” of trends and ideas, which influenced heavily the local ceramic production, probably more than the Mediterranean models ever did.

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- | | |
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¹⁰³ Popescu 2004, p. 292.

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