

DATA ON THE LEAD-GLAZED POTTERY DISCOVERED ON THE DACIAN SITES BRAD (BACĂU CO.) AND POIANA (GALAȚI CO.)*

Mariana-Cristina Popescu**

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Abstract: The article presents the lead-glazed pottery discovered on the Dacian sites Brad (Bacău Co.) and Poiana (Galați Co.). The identified items were either mould-made or wheel-made, and their relief decoration was moulded or applied in barbotine. The identified decorative motifs form three categories that are typical for this ceramic group: figurative decoration, vegetal decoration, and ornamental decoration. The identified shapes and auxiliary elements – Ringhenkelskyphos Ia, cups, Daumenplatte 1 – and also the decorative motifs – Ionian kyma, stylized hearts, myrtle wreaths with berries, stylized vegetal decoration – have good analogies in Asia Minor; two of the items under discussion (no. 4-5) might have been produced in the center of Mytilene. In the absence of clear details on the contexts in which these items were discovered in the Dacian settlements, they can be dated to a wide interval between the end of the 1st century B.C. and early 2nd century A.D.

Rezumat: Articolul prezintă ceramica glazurată descoperită în siturile dacice de la Brad (jud. Bacău) și Poiana (jud. Galați). Piesele identificate sunt modelate în tipar și la roată, iar decorul în relief este realizat în tipar și în tehnica barbotinei. Motivele ornamentale identificate se regăsesc în cele trei grupe decorative caracteristice pentru această clasă ceramică: decor figurat, decor vegetal și decor ornamental. Formele identificate și elementele auxiliare – Ringhenkelskyphos Ia, cupe, plăcuța Daumenplatte 1 – și, de asemenea, motivele decorative – ionian kyma, inimi stilizate, ramuri de mirt cu boboci, decor vegetal stilizat – au bune analogii în zona micro-asiatică. Două dintre piese (no. 4-5) ar putea proveni din centrul de la Mytilene. În lipsa unor detalii certe despre contextul în care piesele au fost descoperite în mediul dacic, ele pot fi datate în intervalul cronologic cuprins între sfârșitul secolului I a Chr. și începutul secolului II p. Chr.

I. Introduction

Lead-glazed pottery appeared during the first half of the 1st century B.C. in Asia Minor. Since the end of that century it was produced in Italy and the Western provinces of the Roman Empire as well.¹ Vessels were covered, on both inside and outside, or just on the outside, with glaze containing a variable proportion of lead oxide;² the technique allowed the production of new colors on pottery – various shades of green, yellow, brown, and rarer blue – and made vessels completely water-proof and rendering them a shine that brought them much closer to their metal prototypes. The repertory of shapes in Asia Minor was restricted to drinking vessels – skyphoi, kantharoi, chalices, cups, etc – and for pouring liquids – jugs, oenochoe – and only occasionally did it extend to other shapes such as askoi, atramentaria, etc.³ In the Western provinces the typological repertory is heterogeneous, including items produced in Asia Minor, imitations differing in quality and style from the imported items, and local shapes and decorative motifs.⁴ The decoration of these items was made according to different techniques: molding, appliqué, and barbotine, while the repertory of decorative motifs is typical for contemporary vessels made of clay, glass, or metal: figurative decoration, vegetal decoration, and stylized ornamental decoration. Despite the fact that the quantity of recorded items, indifferent of their origin, is rather small as compared to other contemporary pottery groups, lead-glazed pottery has been recorded throughout the Mediterranean, the Pontus, and the European provinces of the Empire.⁵

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¹ Hochuli-Gysel 1977; Hochuli-Gysel 2002, pp. 303-305; Maccabruni 1987, pp. 169, 170-173; Desbat 1986, p. 37; Casas i Genover et al. 1993, pp. 142-143; Desbat 1995, pp. 39-48; Martin 1995, pp. 63-64.

² Hatcher et al. 1994, pp. 431-456; Lopez-Molinero et al. 2000, pp. 586-589; Benedetto et al. 2004, pp. 615-624; Walton, Tite 2010, pp. 733-759.

³ Hochuli-Gysel 2002, pp. 307-308.

⁴ Maccabruni 1987, pp. 170-173; Jigan 1988, pp. 189-203; Casas i Genover et al. 1993, pp. 137-140; Maccabruni 1995, pp. 49-55.

⁵ Hochuli-Gysel 1977, p. 121, Abb. 31, p. 129, Abb. 33, p. 137, Abb. 35, p. 142, Abb. 37; Maccabruni 1987, p. 168-169; Desbat 1986, p. 33-37; Desbat 1986a, p. 105, 108; Symonds 1989, p. 85; Bolindel, 1995, p. 147-149; Istenić 1995, p. 23; Martin 1995, p. 63-64; Hayes 2008, p. 57.

II. Lead-glazed pottery discovered in pre-Roman Dacia

1. *State of research.* In Romania, works on Dacian sites that have been research up to this date do not mention, to the best of my knowledge, any lead-glazed vessels. Items covered with slip or yellow-green or green glaze have generally been considered as being terra sigillata.⁶ Lead-glazed pottery has certainly been discovered in the Dacian sites Brad and Poiana. One might mention the uncertain items found in the site of Piatra-Neamț – Bâta Doamnei. Among the import items discovered there, Silviu Sanie mentions: “one fragment belonging to a Boscoreale-type cup, consisting of part of its handle, measuring 2.7 cm in length. The cup is unevenly covered with yellowish slip”⁷ and “one grey fragment, made of dense fabric, lacking impurities and well fired, decorated on the outside with a mask that was applied on the shoulders of a pot belonging to difficult-to-establish type. The fragment is covered, on half of its surface, with white paint and also preserves traces of yellowish slip”.⁸ According to the published drawing and photographs, the first mentioned fragment could be a skyphos with handle-plate, with good analogies in Asia Minor,⁹ while in the second case one might be facing a mask that might have decorate the body of a skyphos or the handle of an oenochoe; this decorative motif has good stylistic analogies among the products of the center in Mytilene.¹⁰

2. *Discovery context of the items, their state of preservation, and previous publication.* The five items in the present catalogue were discovered in two of the largest Dacian settlements researched so far – Brad and Poiana – well known for the large quantities of Hellenistic and Roman imports they contained.¹¹ The items have been preserved in fragments and were collected during systematic excavations performed on these sites over the years. They are presently in the collections of the History Museum in Roman and the City Museum of Tecuci.¹² All items have been classified as imports and published as such in archaeological monographs dedicated to the sites where they were discovered.¹³ The items in Poiana can be found in the work dealing with imported pottery discovered in this settlement.¹⁴ The number of lead-glazed pottery discovered in Poiana could be easily increased if one adds the “handle of a Boscoreale-type cup, with glazed relief decoration”¹⁵ and a “handle of a Boscoreale-type cup, decorated with alveoli, entirely covered with greenish slip”¹⁶ published in the monographic work dedicated to the settlement and the study of imported pottery discovered there. These two fragments might also belong to lead-glazed pottery. I was unable to see them, but according to the published drawings and descriptions they might be Daumenplatte 3-type handle-plates.¹⁷

3. *Technical details.* The items under discussion are mould made or wheel made, and their relief decoration was created in molds (no. 1-3) or applied in barbotine (no. 4-5). Their fabric is fine, hard, and compact, grey 5Y 7/1, 7/2 (no. 1, 3-5) or of an impure white color 5Y 8/1 (no. 2), while their glaze is yellow with green nuances – 5Y 6/8, 5/6 – applied in a thin layer (no. 1-2, 4-5) or dark green, applied in a thick layer (no. 3). In certain cases, the decorative motifs were covered with glaze of a different color. In the case of fragment no. 3 one of the berries preserves a yellow-honey glaze, in contrast to the green background of the body, while in the case of fragment no. 5 all decorative motifs were covered in yellow glaze 5Y 7/6, different from the glaze covering the body.

⁶ Ursachi 1995, p. 211; Teodor 1994, p. 92-93; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, p. 328-329.

⁷ Sanie 1973, p. 416, pl. 7/7; Glodariu 1974, p. 214, pl. XXIV C 31/g.

⁸ Sanie 1973, p. 417, pl. 3/1.

⁹ Hochuli-Gysel 1977, Daumenplatte 1, p. 29, Abb. 9 S25.

¹⁰ Archontidou-Argyri 1997, p. 252/16370, p. 254/16379, p. 254/16380.

¹¹ Teodor 1994, p. 73-122; Ursachi 1995, p. 208-225, pl. 188-201, 319-324/1-8; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, p. 70-95, cat. 1-881, fig. 233, 235-241.

¹² I hereby express by gratitude to Mrs. Silvia Teodor and Mr. Vasile Ursachi, leaders of the archaeological excavation sites in Poiana and Brad, for allowing me to study the import pottery material discovered on the two sites and to the members of the executive board and employees of the above mentioned museums for their support while I was working with this material.

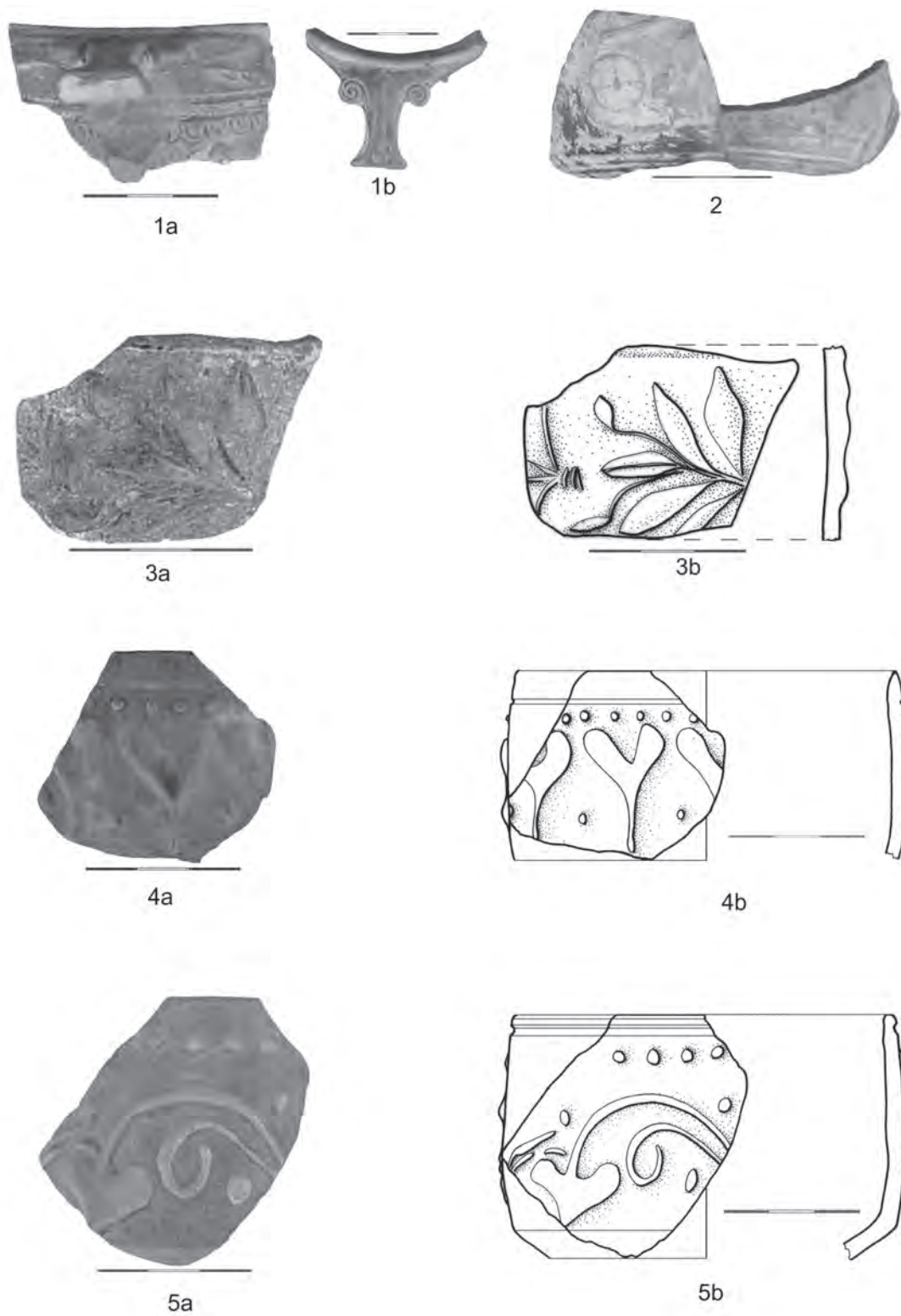
¹³ Ursachi 1995, p. 211, 214, pl. 188/8, 189/3, 8, 319/6; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, cat. 853, 856, p. 328-329, fig. 240/3, 6.

¹⁴ Teodor 1994, cat. 60, 63, p. 92-93, fig. 6/3, 6.

¹⁵ Teodor 1994, cat. 61, p. 92, fig. 6/4; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, cat. 854, p. 328, fig. 240/4.

¹⁶ Teodor 1994, cat. 65, p. 93, fig. 6/8; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, cat. 858, p. 329, fig. 240/8.

¹⁷ Hochuli-Gysel 1977, p. 30-31, Abb. 11 T11, T45.



Pl. I

4. *Shapes.* The analyzed items are fragments of skyphoi and cups. The only identifiable skyphoi shape is a Ringhenkelskyphos Ia,¹⁸ a type of skyphoi with short wide body, rounded base diameter, slightly smaller than its rim diameter, and two grooves on the outside at the junction area between wall and base (no. 2). Also, the handle-plate of skyphos no. 1 can be identified with Daumenplatte 1.¹⁹ Fragment no. 3 most likely also belongs to a skyphos.

Fragments no. 4 and no. 5 are parts of short cups with bitronconic body, rounded or angular in their area of maximum diameter, with base concave on the inside, narrow faceted ring, and simple handle, more or less elevated.²⁰

5. *Decorative motifs.* The main decoration identified on the studied items is figurative, vegetal, and there are also several stylized decorative motifs. Thus, item no. 2 preserves parts of a figurative composition – depicting the wheels of a chariot and the hind legs of its horses; fragment no. 3 is decorated with myrtle branches with berries that one also finds on hellenistic moldmade bowls;²¹ fragment no. 5 is decorated with branches and stylized leaves interwoven with dots, and fragment no. 4 is decorated with a row of stylized hearts also alternating with dots. Some of the motifs composed decorative bands. I was able to identify rows of dots (no. 4-5) and Ionian kyma (no. 1). One must note the stylistic unity of fragments no. 4 and no. 5, with their main decoration framed by a row of dots on the upper part and with the decorative motifs alternated with dots. We should also mention that on fragments no. 5 and 3 the entire decoration or part of it is highlighted by glaze different in color than that covering the rest of the pot.

6. *Origin and chronology.* The identified items have good analogies in Asia Minor.²² One can advance the hypothesis that items no. 4 and no. 5 were produced in the center of Mytilene.²³ In the absence of clear data on the discovery context of these items in the Dacian environment, they can only be dated to a larger time period between the end of the 1st century B.C. and early 2nd century A.D.²⁴

The small quantity of lead-glazed pottery identified in the two settlements compared to the other types of contemporary import pottery groups recorded on the same sites is not exceptional. What is rather surprising is the fact they got there in the first place. The situation noted on the two Dacian sites illustrates, on a small scale, lead-glaze pottery production and trade at the level of the entire Empire: leads-glazed pottery was produced in small quantities in comparison to the other contemporary pottery groups and was, implicitly, less widely traded.²⁵

III. Catalogue

Abbreviations: MT. – City Museum, Tecuci, MR. – History Museum, Roman, s – section; c – quare; inv. no. – inventory number; Ref. – reference; fs. – fragment size; hp – height preserved; rd. – rim diameter.

1. *Brad*: 1981, S XXVB, c. 4, -0.70-0.90 m; MR. inv. no.1667; rd. 10 cm; pl.I/1a-b.

Fragment of body and handle. Straight rim, rounded at the top, slightly high than handle plate; curved wall, two grooves at the junction between rim and body, outside; fine handle with circular section; handle-plate decorated with volutes and an arrow. Relief ornament: below rim Ionian Kyma. Hard compact fabric, light grey 5Y 7/1; lead-glaze olive yellow 5Y6/8.

Cf. Hochuli-Gysel 1977, Daumenplatte 1, p. 29, Abb.9; Hochuli-Gysel 2002, tip 1, fig.11/1. *Ref.* Ursachi 1995, p. 211, pl. 189/3, 319/6. *Date*: end of 1st century B.C. – 1st century B.C.

¹⁸ Hochuli-Gysel 1977, Ringhenkelskyphos Ia, p. 25-26, Abb.3.

¹⁹ Hochuli-Gysel 1977, p. 29, Abb.9.

²⁰ Shape Archontidou-Argyri 1997, p. 254, 15766, 15765.

²¹ Conze 1913, pl. 43/no.6, 12,15; Laumonier 1977, pl. 13/2380, pl. 46/1731.

²² Hochuli-Gysel 1977, p. 25, 29.

²³ Archontidou-Argyri 1997, p.247-188, 15766, 15765.

²⁴ Hochuli-Gysel 1977, p. 26; Archontidou-Argyri 1997, p. 250.

²⁵ See note 6 above.

2. *Brad*: 1981, SXXVB, c 6, -0.50-0.80 m, MR inv. no. 21747; fs. 7x3 cm; pl. I/2.

Fragment of globular body: two grooves at the junction between wall and base, outside. Relief ornament: fragment of chariot and horses legs. Fine hard compact fabric, white 5Y 8/1; olive yellow lead-glaze 5Y6/8.

Cf. Hochuli-Gysel 1977, Ringhenkelskyphos Ia, p. 25-26, Abb.3. *Ref.* Ursachi 1995, p. 214, pl. 188/8. *Date*: end of 1st century B.C. – 1st century B.C.

3. *Brad*: 1989, SXXIV, c 1, -0.75 m, MR inv. no. 21751; fs. 5.2x3.1 cm; pl. I/3a-b.

Fragment of wall. Relief decoration: four myrtle wreath left with double berries. Fine hard compact fabric, pale grey 5Y 7/2; dark green glaze; dark yellow glaze on one berry.

Cf. for shape Hochuli-Gysel 2002, fig. 3/1(?). *Ref.* Ursachi 1995, pl. 189/8.

4. *Poiana*: 1950, s. L, -0.50 m, M.T. inv. no. 2300; rd. 8 cm; hp. 3.8 cm; pl. I/4a-b.

Fragment. Slightly inner straight rim, beveled at the top which came at the junction with the body into a grooves inside and outside; globular body, slightly concave inside wall. Relief ornament applied in barbotine: below the rim horizontal band of raised dots; band of stylized hearts separated by raised dots on the body. Fine hard compact fabric, light grey 5Y 7/1; glaze: olive yellow 5Y 6/1 outside, 5Y8/8 yellow inside.

Cf. Archontidou-Argyri 1997, gr. III (15765), p. 254. *Ref.* Teodor 1994, cat. 60, p. 92, fig. 6/3; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, cat. 853, p. 328, fig. 240/3. *Date*: end of 1st century B.C. – early 2nd century A.D.

5. *Poiana*: 1949, s. H, IX, S, -1.20 m, 825; MT, without inv. no.; rd. 8 cm, hp. 5.3 cm; pl. I/5a-b.

Fragment. Rounded rim, beveled on the outside, separated from the body by an outside groove; bitronconic body, angular at the junction between wall and base; slightly inner wall, concave base inside. Relief ornament applied in barbotine: below the rim horizontal band of raised dots; branch of stylized leaves left, separated by raised dots on the body. Hard compact fabric, pale grey 5Y 7/2; olive glaze on the body 5Y 5/6, yellow on the decorative motives. 5Y7/6

Cf. for shape Archontidou-Argyri 1997, gr. III (15766), p. 254. *Ref.* Teodor 1994, cat. 63, p. 93, fig. 6/6; Vulpe, Teodor 2003, cat. 856, p. 329, fig. 240/6. *Date*: end of 1st century B.C. – early 2nd century A.D.

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