

Eduard Krekovič

## REGIONAL PATTERNING OF FUNERARY POTTERY IN PANNONIA

*The author examines differences in the deposition of pottery into graves in various regions of Pannonia in the first three centuries AD. – Pannonia Superior: Carnuntum – although the location of the legionary fortress, the examined material originates from the cemetery to the south of the civilian town; Gerulata – an auxiliary fort (Cemetery II); Poetovio – a civilian town (the northern cemetery). – Pannonia Inferior: Aquincum – the cemetery located west of the canabae; Matrica – an auxiliary fort. Based on their functionality the author devised seven categories (jugs, beakers, plates, pots, bowls, cups, and censers) and an additional two categories representing terra sigillata and lamps. Within these indexes differences existed at both cemeteries and in the regions. Some of these can be explained, but some remain unexplained. It is possible that some differences could be dependent on the ethnicity of the deceased. For the most part the differences concern the numbers and combinations of particular shapes of the vessels. On the other hand, the overall trends in deposition of the vessels at all cemeteries can be observed. The preference for vessels for the purpose of drinking is one of these. This mostly concerns their total numbers, and also the combination of a jug and beaker. It seems that for the Romans it was more important to supply their deceased with drinks rather than with food.*

In this article, I will examine possible differences in the deposition of pottery into graves in various regions of Pannonia. The sources were partly limited, as in Pannonia there are not as many well-researched and published cemeteries from the first three centuries AD. My interest was not in the cemeteries of the 4<sup>th</sup> century as the pottery inventory is different and therefore incomparable with cemeteries from older periods. I have turned my focus to five sites: Pannonia Superior: Carnuntum<sup>1</sup> – although the location of the legionary fortress, the examined material originates from the cemetery south of the civilian town; Gerulata<sup>2</sup> – an auxiliary fort (cemetery II); Poetovio<sup>3</sup> – a civilian town (the northern cemetery). – Pannonia Inferior: Aquincum<sup>4</sup> – the cemetery located to the west of the canabae; Matrica<sup>5</sup> – an auxiliary fort. None of the sites mentioned have been fully examined, as only parts of these cemeteries were unearthed.

The examined material originated mainly from cremation graves where many were disturbed either by ploughing or other earthworks. In my research I have included disturbed graves in which at least three pieces of pottery were found, and for the purposes of statistical analysis undisturbed graves

without pottery have also been included. As the examined material was considerably fragmentary, I have taken into the consideration only typologically determinable potsherds lying in the grave pits, but not in the fill. I have not dealt with the issue of whether the fragments came from the whole pots of which the other fragments had not got into a grave, or whether these were fragments representing the so called *pars pro toto*. Some fragments from the region of Poetovio were unable to be classified as they were published as ‘typical funerary pottery’. In Carnuntum and Gerulata inhumation graves were also located. In Gerulata they accounted for approximately one third of all graves. To generalise, we can state that in the inhumation graves there were fewer finds than in the cremation graves. Pottery in these graves represented, with high probability, funerary gifts for the dead; albeit in the cremation graves this cannot be proven clearly. Partly, due to the probability of these objects being funerary feast leftovers. In the analysis I have not attempted to distinguish between the cremation and the inhumation graves. However, I have considered the vessel types which occurred in rather adequate quantities. I have excluded some unique shapes such as bottles or amphoras. My special interest was in the function of the vessels but not the regional differences concerning the particular shapes of vessels.

Based on their functionality I have devised 7 categories (jugs, beakers, plates, pots, bowls, cups, and censers) and an additional two categories representing terra sigillata and lamps. Small-size pots or jars, ranging from 10 cm to 15 cm in size, were classified into the beaker category. It was plausible for larger pots to be distributed between the category of urns and other vessels, however, in most cases this was

<sup>1</sup> C. ERTTEL/V. GASSNER/S. JILEK/H. STIGLITZ, Untersuchungen zu den Gräberfeldern in Carnuntum. B 1: Der archäologische Befund. RLÖ 40 (Wien 1999).

<sup>2</sup> M. PICHLEROVÁ, Gerulata – Rusovce. Rímske pohrebisko 2 (Bratislava 1981).

<sup>3</sup> Z. KUJUNDŽIĆ, Poetovijske nekropole/ Die Nekropolen von Poetovio. Kat. Monogr. 20 (Ljubljana 1982).

<sup>4</sup> J. TOPÁL, Roman cemeteries of Aquincum. The western cemetery, Bécsúti road 2 (Budapest 2003).

<sup>5</sup> J. TOPÁL, The southern cemetery of Matrica (Százhalombatta – Dunafüred). Fontes Arch. Hungariae (Budapest 1981).

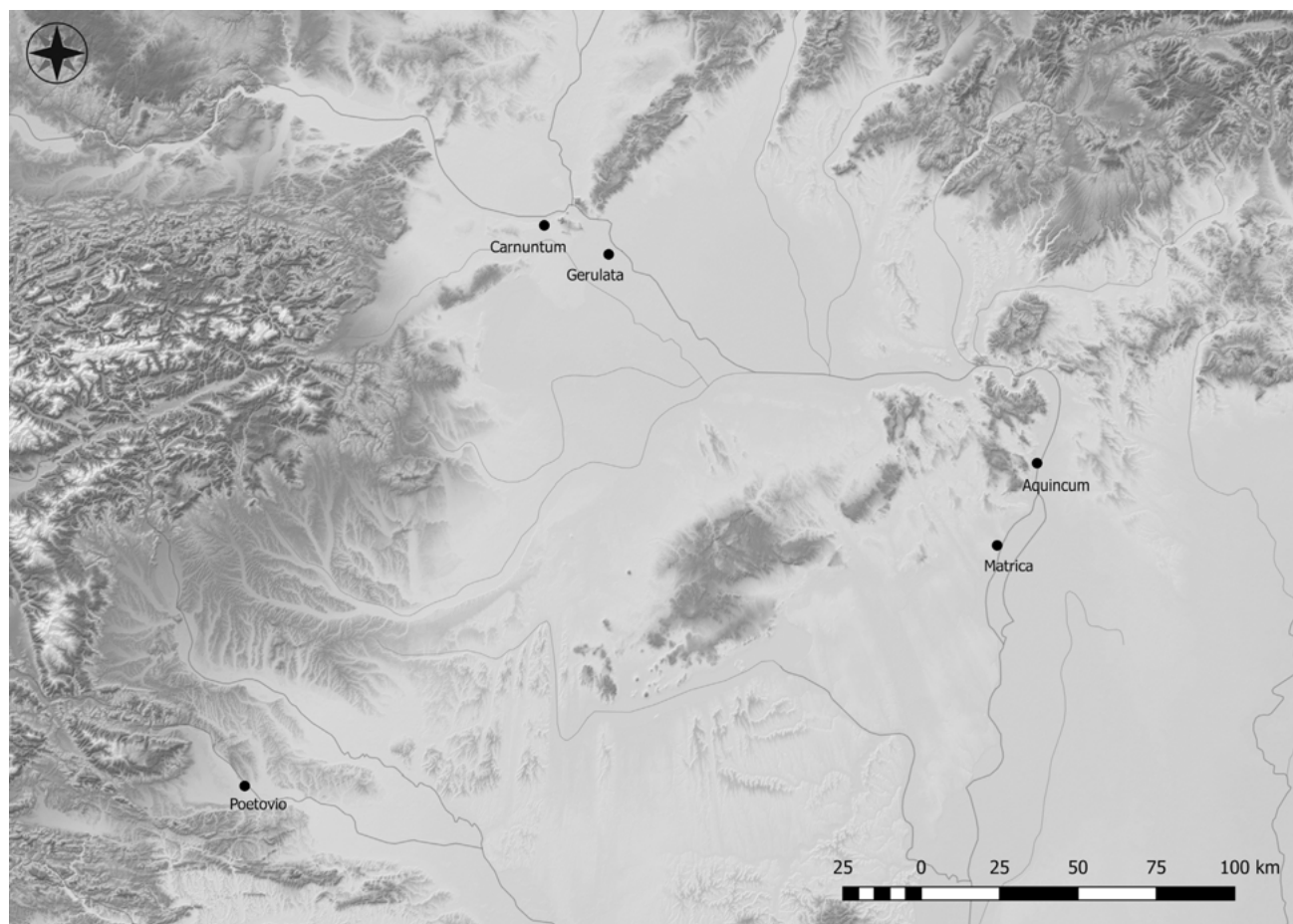


Fig. 1. Map.

not possible as the ashes had been scattered throughout the graves and as such, the ashes, not confined to the pots were also found in other neighbouring vessels. In exceptional cases other shapes of pots were used as urns, however, as a general rule, urn graves were in significant minority. I have focused on the numbers of individual types of vessels in cemeteries and their combinations in graves.

As far as particular shapes are concerned, jugs were dominant at three cemeteries (*Gerulata*, *Aquincum*, *Poetovio*) and beakers dominated in *Carnuntum* and *Matrica*. These two shapes occurred in nearly a half of all graves – jugs in 47.6 % of graves; beakers in 47.6 % of graves. Of course, there are significant differences in absolute numbers to which I will refer to later. The thought-provoking fact is the high rate of occurrence of censers in *Carnuntum* (26.2 % of graves). At this cemetery the greatest number (27.8 %) of terra sigillata also occurs, while in *Poetovio* it is merely 2.7 %. This phenomenon is probably connected with better opportunities to supply this ware along the Danube River and finds of terra sigillata in the other three cemeteries on the *limes* is surely evidence of this; though, in *Carnuntum*, relatively few lamps (20.6 %) occurred. These were found in a greater quantity in *Matrica* cemetery – on average, in every other grave (51.9 %). Exactly 100 lamps were found here and in some graves as many as 5 pieces occurred, which, as far as we know, is a unique phenomenon to *Pannonia*. What is also a rather interesting phenomenon is the fact that in *Carnuntum*

no pottery shape occurs in more than 30 % of graves, while in *Matrica* and *Aquincum* some shapes were represented very frequently. Of this 79.7 % of beakers in the cemetery of *Matrica* exemplify the highest figure.

In the following analysis I have focused only on the graves with pottery (in this case I have not taken into consideration lamps and terra sigillata). At first sight it is obvious that at two cemeteries pottery occurred in almost every grave – in *Aquincum* and *Matrica* in more than 90 % of all graves, while in *Carnuntum* it was only in 59.5 % graves. This was also reflected in the total figures – a great deal of pottery was found in above mentioned cemeteries, as evidenced by an average number of vessels in one grave (*Aquincum* 5 and *Matrica* 4 vessels/ fragments). This could have resulted from the existence of a large pottery centre in *Aquincum*. From there, ceramics could have got along the Danube to the nearby *Matrica*. It seems that pottery products were more accessible in this region than the region of *Carnuntum*. However, if we follow the occurrence of unbroken vessels, the picture changes: the greatest numbers occur in *Poetovio* (52.6 %) and then in *Gerulata* (35.4 %). This fact can be explained rather simply – in *Poetovio* a comparatively large number of brick graves occurred in which the vessels had been protected from earthworks. In *Gerulata*, whole vessels occurred especially in the inhumation graves which were understandably placed deeper and therefore remained mostly undisturbed. This cemetery also represents an exceptional phenomenon in the

	<i>Carnuntum</i> 126 graves	<i>Gerulata</i> 213 graves	<i>Aquincum</i> 168 graves	<i>Matrica</i> 133 graves	<i>Poetovio</i> 184 graves
	n. graves / %				
jug	34 / 27	87 / 40.8	120 / 71.4	76 / 57.1	77 / 41.8
beaker, jar	37 / 29.4	67 / 31.5	102 / 60.7	106 / 79.7	68 / 37
plate, dish	28 / 22.2	31 / 14.6	70 / 41.7	58 / 43.6	58 / 31.5
pot	28 / 22.2	28 / 13.1	41 / 24.4	15 / 11.3	52 / 28.2
bowl	15 / 11.9	16 / 7.5	33 / 19.6	22 / 16.5	18 / 9.8
small bowl, cup ( <i>acetabulum</i> )	16 / 12.7	12 / 5.6	25 / 14.9	2 / 1.5	9 / 4.9
censer ( <i>turibulum</i> )	33 / 26.2	–	5 / 3	4 / 3	17 / 9.2
terra sigillata	35 / 27.8	24 / 11.3	20 / 11.9	22 / 16.5	5 / 2.7
lamp	26 / 20.6	54 / 25.4	67 / 39.9	69 / 51.9	50 / 27.2

average (all cemeteries): jug - 47.6 % beaker - 47.6 % plate - 30.7 %

**Table 1.** Number of pottery types in researched cemeteries.

	n. of graves with pottery / %	n. of vessels	average n. of vessels in 1 grave	n. of whole vessels / %
<i>Carnuntum</i>	75 / 59.5	208	2.8	60 / 28.9
<i>Gerulata</i>	146 / 68.5	294	2	104 / 35.4
<i>Aquincum</i>	158 / 94	792	5	208 / 26.3
<i>Matrica</i>	121 / 91	487	4	101 / 20.7
<i>Poetovio</i>	142 / 77.2	397	2.8	209 / 52.6

**Table 2.** Numbers of whole vessels.

	jug + beaker	jug + plate	beaker + plate	jug + pot	jug + bowl
<i>Carnuntum</i> 75 graves	14.7 %	20 %	8 %	17.3 %	16 %
<i>Gerulata</i> 146 graves	24	11.6	11.6	7.5	4.1
<i>Aquincum</i> 158 graves	49.4	36	33.5	20	18.4
<i>Matrica</i> 121 graves	48.8	27.2	38.8	2.4	14
<i>Poetovio</i> 142 graves	24.6	22.6	18.3	12.7	4.2
total	32.3	23.5	22	12.7	11.3

**Table 3.** Combinations of pottery types.

whole of *Pannonia* due to the fact that as many as 36.3 % inhumations were found here.

The combinations of vessels in the graves were the final subject matter of my analysis. At all cemeteries – except for *Carnuntum* – the combination of a jug and beaker was the most frequent, on average 32.3%. This corresponds with the overall situation concerning the total numbers of jugs and beakers. The second place is taken by a jug – plate combination (23.5 %) followed by a beaker – plate combination (22%). *Carnuntum* is slightly behind the average. Here the most frequent combination was that of a jug and a plate (20 %) followed by a jug – pot combination (17.3 %). This is interesting as single beakers and jugs occurred in *Carnuntum* in almost one third of graves (29.4 % or 27 %), however, their combination takes only fourth place (14.7 %) and thus

spoils the average that prefers the combination of these liquid vessels. The low percentage of the jug – pot combination in *Matrica* (only 2.4 %) is also an exception to an otherwise prevailing trend. This is the result of a low occurrence of pots at this cemetery – only in 15 graves (11.3 %). Equally low is the combination of a pot and bowl at *Poetovio* (4.2 %), which, again, is the result of a low number of graves with bowls. The highest percentage of combinations appears in *Aquincum* and *Matrica* which corresponds with the total amount of pottery at these cemeteries.

To sum up we can state that in the considered indexes differences existed at both cemeteries and in the regions. Some of them can be explained, some, not just yet. Perhaps some differences could be dependent on the ethnicity of the deceased. Mostly they concern the numbers and combinations

of particular shapes of the vessels. On the other hand the overall trends in the deposition of vessels at all cemeteries can be observed. The preference for vessels for the purpose of drinking is one of these. This concerns mostly their total numbers and also the combination of a jug and beaker. It

seems that for the Romans it was more important to supply their deceased with drinks rather than food. Of course, these results are only partial and once we have sufficient amount of comparable data, e.g. data from other provinces, possibilities for further interpretations will appear.

*eduard.krekovic@uniba.sk*