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TERRA SIGILLATA WORKSHOP AT MARGUM, UPPER MOESIA

In the National Museum collection there are fragments of four moulds of Drag. 37 vessels, from *Margum*, purchased in 1973 from Radiša Vujičić.¹ Motives are well known in the repertoire of *Viminacium-Margum* workshop (running deer, dog; six-bordered ovoli, row of rosettes beneath with running dog, five-bordered ovoli scattered in the decorative field), but not particular organization of elements and arrangement (fig. 1–4). These unpublished moulds, as well as new excavations of *Margum* launched in 2011, were reason for this re-consideration of the *Viminacium-Margum* terra sigillata workshop.

Margum represents important terra sigillata workshop recognized in *Moesia Superior*, as complex, multipart *Viminacium-Margum* manufacturing centre active in the 2nd century AD. Unfortunately, research carried out by L. Bjelajac² was not completed, and precise data about the beginning of *Viminacium-Margum* production, range and quantity of products, time span of its activity, as well as relation between *Margum* and *Viminacium* potteries were not established.

B. Rutkowski was the first one to recognize products of the *Margum* workshop on the basis of a mould from this site,³ until then ascribed to *Siscia* production.⁴ D. Gabler revisited all published finds and identified *Margum* manufacture.⁵ Studies of Bjelajac confirmed production at both *Viminacium* and *Margum* sites, identifying it as a single *Viminacium-Margum* centre.⁶

The evidence on *Margum* production is not numerous but it is quite reliable, and The existence of a workshop is certain. During the excavations carried out from 1947 to 1949 a pottery kiln was discovered in the Morava river profile,⁷ belonging to the oldest Roman strata in *Margum* (fig. 5), the end of the 1st century.⁸ In the Collection of Roman Imperial

Period of the National Museum in Belgrade and of the National Museum Požarevac there are moulds from *Margum* site,⁹ indicating developed terra sigillata production.

Extensive archaeological investigation at *Viminacium* (from the 1970s onward) revealed no traces of production of terra sigillata, just of a pottery for necropolises, i. e. for ritual use during burial and for sacrifices.¹⁰ Moulds from *Viminacium*,¹¹ together with some unfinished vessels, were discovered in 1987, while cleaning and widening the Mlava river canal, regrettably without archaeological supervision. Assumption was made that a pottery workshop existed here, at the outskirts of the town, near water supply, but further investigations were not carried out, so there is no data available about its structure and real production scope.

The workshops at *Margum* and *Viminacium* are closely related and connected – moulds from *Margum* and *Viminacium* are similar (motives and field organization are alike), as examples presented in this paper corroborate. They have similar decorative organization as moulds registered in *Viminacium* (fig. 6)¹² and one found at *Margum* (fig. 7).¹³

Bjelajac recognized it as one centre, assuming that the *Viminacium-Margum* workshop represents a vast and well-organized complex.¹⁴ The forms produced were for the most part Drag. 37 vessels, with exception of rare specimens of Drag. 30 beakers and one unique form of a clepsydra. The repertoire includes a total of 290 different motives in a great number of combinations.¹⁵ The decorative field is whole or divided in two horizontal zones and the motives are arranged in a free style (animal figurines and series of small decorative motives in free or divided field; one motif in a row or a number of motives evenly distributed in a certain pattern). It is difficult, at this stage, to determine the range of production – the potters were very productive and *Viminacium-Margum* products had a wide area of distribution concentrated along middle and lower Danube region – 23 sites in *Pannonia*,

¹ Moulds are catalogued in the Collection of Roman Imperial Period, under No 4139-4142/III. Drawings were made by A. Đorđević.

² BJELAJAC 1990, 143-172.

³ B. RUTKOWSKI, A fragment of a Mould Decorated Sigillata from Margum. RCRF Acta 10, 1968, 18-23 Fig. 1.

⁴ BJELAJAC 1990, 143.

⁵ D. GABLER, Moulded Imitations of Samian Ware in Pannonia. Arch. Ért. 103, 1976, 36-37 Abb. 24; 31.

⁶ L.J. BJELAJAC, Imitacija reljefne terra sigillatae sa Beogradske tvrđave. God. Grada Beograda 27, 1980, T. IV/1-3; EAD., Imitation of Terra Sigillata with Relief Decoration from Singidunum. RCRF Acta 25/26, 1987, 467; EAD. 1990, 143-172.

⁷ MARIĆ 1951, 113; 121-122 sl. 24-27.

⁸ Ibid. 119.

⁹ BJELAJAC 1990, T. 78/17; 79/34; 37. In the National Museum Požarevac several examples of moulds are still unpublished.

¹⁰ Č. JORDOVIĆ, Grnčarski i ciglarski centar u Viminacijumu. Saopštenja 26, 1995, 95-106; A. RAIČKOVIĆ, Keramičke posude Zanatskog centra iz Viminacijuma (Beograd 2009).

¹¹ BJELAJAC 1990, T. 78; 79.

¹² Parallel for mould 4140/III: BJELAJAC 1990, T. 78/11 (without *cymae*).

¹³ Parallel for moulds 4141 and 4142/III (possible parts of the same mould): BJELAJAC 1990, T. 79/37; related to T. 78/3; 78/8.

¹⁴ Solely at *Viminacium* more than 1000 vessels were found.

¹⁵ BJELAJAC 1990, T. 65-77.

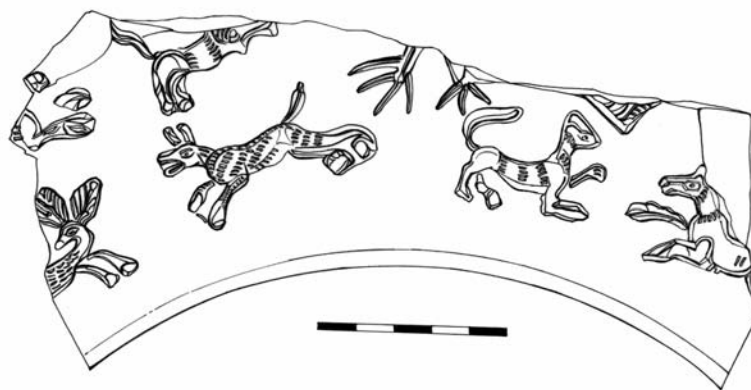


Fig. 1. Fragment of a mould, 4139/III.

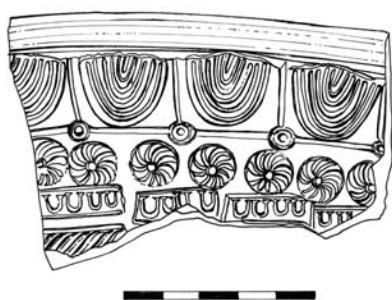


Fig. 2. Fragment of a positive of a mould, 4140/III.



Fig. 3. Fragment of a mould, 4141/III.



Fig. 4. Fragment of a mould, 4142/III.

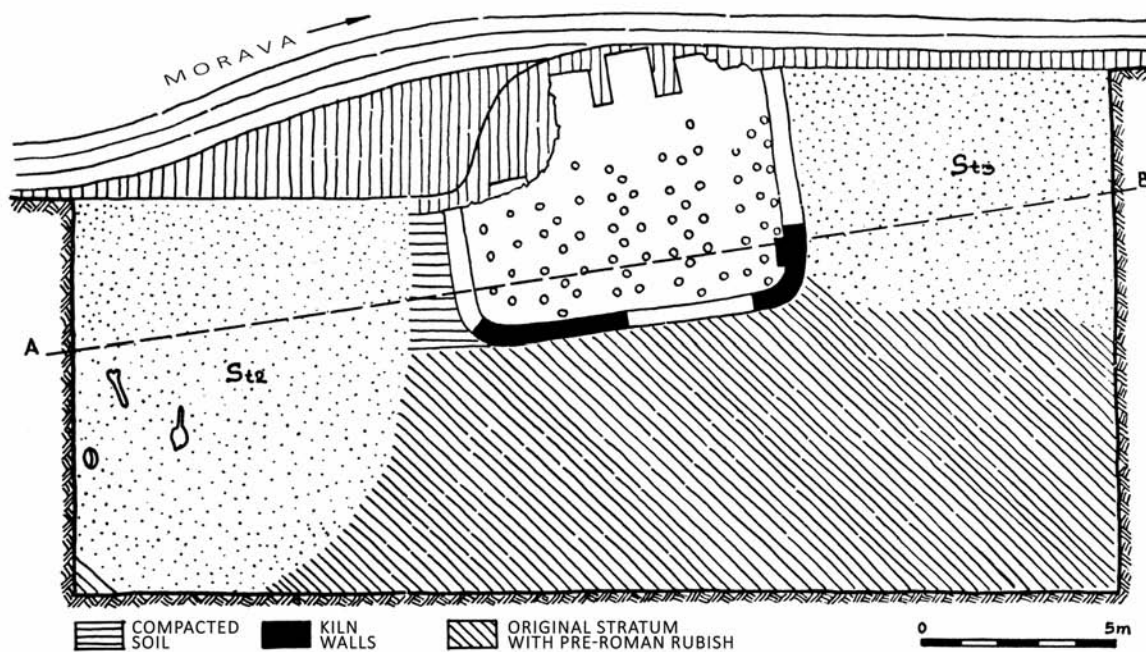


Fig. 5. Excavations at Margum: kiln discovered in 1948 (ground plan).

Dacia and *Moesia Inferior* along with sites in *Moesia Superior* (fig. 8). In *Moesia Superior* finds along the Danube are numerous, in roman forts and fortresses, especially during the 2nd and first half of the 3rd century, while in the Moesian hinterland there are hardly any vessels found.

The *Viminacium-Margum* workshop certainly operated in the second quarter of the 2nd century. Similarities in choice of motives and decoration with big centres operating during the 1st century and the first half of the 2nd century speak in favour of the beginning of the *Viminacium-Margum* production in the first decades of the 2nd century, most probably during the reign of Hadrian. The end of production is assumed to be the last quarter of the 2nd century, i.e. the end of the 2nd century. Anonymous potters from *Viminacium* and *Margum* were influenced by South Gaulish production, according to parallels within decorative motives – and not to decorative composition as such – and some motives that have parallels in Central Gaulish production. But, wares resemble late Italian decorated vessels as well, and an assumption was made that maybe the first potters were Italian ones, of Italian origin.¹⁶

Bjelajac supposed that a mould workshop was probably at *Viminacium* and that *Viminacium* is the older production centre, while *Margum* may have been an *officina* established at a later date. This theory was made considering that *Viminacium* was a huge pottery production centre, and for lamps as well, one of the most important centres in *Moesia* and had a highly developed pottery production.¹⁷ This relation is one of the most important questions in our research, as well as the time span of the *Viminacium-Margum* workshop.

Margum (Orašje, near Dubravica) is a Roman town developed on the right bank of river Morava, nearby its confluence with the Danube, on a pre-Roman settlement. It was a strategically important spot on the Danubian limes, especially for the hinterland of *Moesia Superior*. A legionary camp of the legion IV Flavia is assumed to be here at the end of 1st century, until the Trajan reign at latest. The status of a *municipium* *Margum* was gained probably in the time of Marcus Aurelius. Archaeological investigations, conducted on the very limited surface, revealed remains of 1st to 5th century structures.¹⁸

The character and type of the archaeological sites and finds were in the first place determined by *Moesia Superior* being a frontier province. The presence of the Roman army – a huge manpower – had additional numerous and strong effects. The role of the military in the redistribution of goods and in the transfer of new technologies was extremely important. Certainly, amount, range and type of ceramic evidence are also affected by the position and role of Upper Moesia in the Roman Empire.



Fig. 6. Mould 4140/III.



Fig. 7. Mould 4141/III.

Significant changes in the Roman frontier policy denote the Flavian phase of *Moesia*, from 86 AD Upper Moesian (*Moesia Superior*) limes. It was in those times, and especially during the reign of Domitian, that the Danubian frontier became the focal point of Roman military activities, determining the further military history of the Empire generally¹⁹ and in particular, the military and economic history of *Moesia Superior*. New earthen permanent camps were built and previous temporary bases were strengthened, creating along the river line between *Singidunum* (Belgrade) and *Ratiaria* (Archar) a linear chain of fortifications.²⁰ Two legions were stationed in *Moesia Superior* from the reign of Domitian: legion VII Claudia, already in *Moesia* from 57/58 AD, at an unknown camp, and from Domitian or at the latest from Trajan, with a permanent camp at *Viminacium*. From AD

¹⁶ Ibid. 201.

¹⁷ Ibid. 198.

¹⁸ Đ. MANO-ZIŠT/R. MARIĆ/M. GARAŠANIN, Iskopavanje na Orašju. Prethodni izveštaj o radovima u 1947. godini. *Starinar* 1, 1950, 143–167; MARIĆ 1951, 113–132; M. MIRKOVIĆ, Römische Städte an der Donau in Obermoesien. *Soc.Arch. Yugoslavie Diss.* 6 (Beograd 1968) 50–55; SPASIĆ-ĐURIĆ 2003, 11–24; MIRKOVIĆ 2007, 57.

¹⁹ K. STROBEL, Die Donaukriege Domitianis. *Antiquitas* 1,38 (Bonn 1989) 113.

²⁰ M. VASIĆ/V. KONDIĆ, Le limes romain et paléobyzantin des Portes de fer. In: *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms III.* 13 Internationaler Limeskongress Aalen 1983. *Forsch. u. Ber. Vor- u. Frühgesch. Baden-Württemberg* 20 (Stuttgart 1986) 524–544; P. PETROVIĆ (ed.), *Roman Limes on the Middle and Lower Danube* (Belgrade 1996); MIRKOVIĆ 2007, 31–34.



Fig. 8. Distributional map of *Viminacium-Margum* products, after Bjelajac 1990, T. 89.

86 the legion IV Flavia was transferred to Upper Moesia as well. Its first camp in *Moesia*, until the reign of Hadrian, is also unknown, and the assumption is that *Margum* was its base,²¹ or *Viminacium*, until Trajan's Dacian wars. Until the reign of Hadrian the legion was stationed in Dacia, and from AD 117 its permanent site was at *Singidunum*.²²

The relation between *Viminacium* and *Margum* is one of the most important questions in our research. We propose that the legion IV Flavia had an important role in founding and development of terra sigillata workshops both at *Margum* and *Viminacium*. Pottery production at *Margum* is established at the end of the 1st century, and it is possible that the military presence of the legion IV Flavia, at the end of the 1st century, was the main reason, even main actor, for founding potteries. We would like to suggest that production started at *Margum*, and was transferred to *Viminacium*, following the relocation of the legion IV Flavia, based in *Viminacium* until Trajan's Dacian wars.

We believe that future excavations in *Viminacium* will reveal traces of earlier pottery production, one influenced by legion IV Flavia, considered to be the legion that built a permanent camp there in Flavian times,²³ and that the local

pottery production started at least at the end of the 1st and the beginning of 2nd century. Circumstantial data are speaking in our favour. To begin with, the territory of *Viminacium* is not completely investigated and researches were limited in the last decades to the area of necropolises, and one should expect new information with excavations of a fortress and its surroundings. Secondary, the *Viminacium* workshop has already very elaborated Roman forms and techniques in its repertoire from Hadrian times,²⁴ indicating excellent adjustment of the local potteries to new ceramic traditions and highly skilful artisans. Additionally, pottery ascribed to the *Singidunum* workshop from the 2nd century,²⁵ is demonstrating among other things impact of the newly stationed legion, and that was the legion IV Flavia. Of course, influence of legion VII Claudia, after its transfer to *Viminacium* around AD 100 should not be excluded. Precise record of vessels, motives and possible chronological determination of production phases for the *Viminacium-Margum* manufacture still have to be determined (fig. 9). New comprehensive studies certainly will be facilitated with latest results of the *Margum* excavations, and we expect new data on pottery production

²¹ SPASIĆ-ĐURIĆ 2003, 13.

²² MIRKOVIĆ 2007, 31–32.

²³ Cf. M. MIRKOVIĆ, The Iron Gates (Djerdap) and the Roman Policy on the Moesian Limes AD 33–117. Roman Limes on the Middle and Lower Danube (Belgrade 1996) 36.

²⁴ BJELAJAC 1990, 147; T. CVJETIČANIN, Some Observations about Upper Moesian Production of Terra Sigillata Vessels Drag. 39. Zbornik Narod. Muz. Arh. (Beograd) 16/1, 1996, 175–181; V. IVANIŠEVIĆ/S. NIKOLIĆ-ĐORDEVIĆ, Novi tragovi antičkih fortifikacija u Singidunumu – lokalitet Knez Mihailova 30. Singidunum 1, 1997, 104–106; T. CVJETIČANIN, Roman Pottery in Upper Moesia (Belgrade 2010) 12–15.

²⁵ T. CVJETIČANIN, Grnčarska radionica u Singidunumu – lokalitet Narodno pozorište. Singidunum 2, 2000, 245–254 sl. 9,10.



Fig. 9. Mould 4139/III.

at this site and particulars that will facilitate assumptions about triggers of production not only of utilitarian pottery but of luxurious wares as well at the end of the 1st century. Even if the appearance of local pottery centres, and terra sigillata workshop among them, is not a result of the legionary production in a strict sense – and the activities of the legion IV Flavia – this pottery from Upper Moesia represents an

interesting contribution to this problem and should always be taken into a consideration when this ceramic phenomenon of a military production is studied.

It is time for rediscovering the *Viminacium-Margum* production centre, lounching new research, one that will comprise the early military history of *Moesia* as well.

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