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NOT JUST WHITE: COLOGNE FABRICS

In Cologne forty four excavated sites have revealed evidence for more than thirty pottery production workshops with about a hundred kilns¹. The workshops were established in Cologne as a result of the expanding market in and around the city, as well as the transportation of the finished products to other markets via long distance roads or along the Rhine. Most of the workshops are dated to the first and second centuries, another two to the third and fourth centuries AD². Production was comprised of colour coated, Gallo-Belgic, plain and coarse wares along with *dolia* and *mortaria*. In some workshops a small amount of Terra sigillata, Terra sigillata imitations, “Weißbrotware”, mica dusted and glazed wares were made.

Most of the fabrics have an off white colour, but orange pottery was also found amongst the wasters of some workshops³: There must have been both iron rich and iron poor clay deposits nearby. Unfortunately it is unknown, where the iron rich clay was extracted from. The deposits may have lain along streams and small rivers around Cologne.

The white raw material was brought in from Frechen, 10 km to the west of the city⁴. These large clay deposits were formed in tertiary times in a wide basin⁵, which was formerly flooded by the sea. Acids from the overlying peat, that was transformed to coal by pressure and temperature, as well as the general chemical weathering in tertiary times destroyed most of the iron based components within the clay (which amount to less than 4 per cent): The clay was of very high quality. In an oxidized firing process the pottery usually turned white⁶. Due to the possibility of different reactions and different percentages of iron during the firing process it could also turn beige and light orange to raspberry reddish⁷.

This clay usually had no natural tempering. To produce coarse wares rounded quartz sand (ca. 0,5 mm in size) was added⁸. At one site, sand from the Rhine with slate inclusions was used⁹.

The production of Terra sigillata in the early first century can be assumed by chemical analysis. The fabric is buff to orange or off-white. The dishes and cups bear a stamp of P.FLOS¹⁰. The corresponding workshop has not yet been identified.

A concentration of roughly made Terra sigillata-imitations with thick bases and a matt slip, which date to the second century AD, has been found in Cologne¹¹. This pottery of low quality cannot have been distributed over any great distance so a regional production is likely. The fabric is orange to orange brown; the texture of the clay is not very fine. The origin of this ware has yet to be determined. Chemical analysis has shown that the clay could very well come from deposits near to the Rhine¹².

Glazed ware was made in at least nine workshops in the second century AD¹³. There is no evidence as of yet for production in the first century AD. The fabric is white, the glaze

at times intense green or sometimes yellow. Because of the lack of sherds from the production sites the range of forms remains unclear.

Mica-dusted ware, produced in five workshops from the late first century AD¹⁴, has a high quality mica slip, that adheres well to the surface. The fabric is white to light brown. This ware seems to correspond to the shapes of metal vessels in the form of drinking vessels and jugs.

A special type of pottery is “Weißbrotware” that was produced for only a short period of time in the early first century AD¹⁵. It has an orange reddish fabric with a white slip. The decoration comprised of rouletting and combing removed parts of the white slip, resulting in a red and white pattern. The potter probably came from Gaul; the closest parallels are found in Trier¹⁶.

¹ HÖPKEN 2005. — Title of the poster presented in Namur: 44 Fundstellen: Römische Keramikproduktion in Köln. — I am grateful to J. D. Williams and D. De Rosa for the translation. Any mistakes are my own.

² Recently some wasters found in the south of Cologne and dated to the 3rd c. AD were recovered, (Luxemburger Straße/Hochstadenstraße). Pers. communication B. Liesen.

³ A fabric reference of 32 samples is shown on four coloured plates in HÖPKEN 2005, Farbtafel 1–4.

⁴ K. GOEBELS, Rheinisches Töpferhandwerk gezeigt am Beispiel der Frechener Kannen-, Düppen- und Pfeifenbäcker (Frechen 1971) 29.

⁵ H. HAGER/J. PRÜFERT, Tertiär. In: H. D. HILDEN (ed.), Geologie am Niederrhein. Geolog. Landesamt Nordrhein-Westfalen⁴ (Krefeld 1988) 32–40. — R. G. V. HANCOCK, On the source of clay used for Cologne Roman pottery. Archaeometry 26,2, 1984, 210–217. — A. BOCQUET/D. LADURON/F. VILVORDER, Carte d'identité physico-chimique des céramiques fines engobées produites dans les ateliers de Cologne et Trèves. S.F.E.C.A.G. Actes du Congrès de Tournai 1992 (Marseille 1992) 223–238.

⁶ Clay from the same deposit was also extracted in Bonn and Neuss in Roman times and was used to produce the famous medieval and Rhenish wares in Badorf, Pingsdorf, Siegburg and Frechen.

⁷ L. JACOBS, Oorzaken van kleurverbleking bij ijzerhoudend aardewerk. In: A. VAN AS/R. M. A. BEDEAUX/G. BRONTISKY/H. J. FRANKEN/L. JACOBS/G. A. LONDON (eds.), Bijdragen tot de technologische studie van het aardewerk. Publ. Provinciaal Gallo-Romeins Mus. Tongeren 34 (Tongeren 1987) 50.

⁸ HÖPKEN 2005, Warenproben 24–26.

⁹ G. SCHAUERTE, Der römische Töpfereibezirk am Rudolfplatz in Köln. Kölner Jahrb. 20, 1987, 23–82. — HÖPKEN 2005, 115 (Warenprobe 23); 279–308 (Fst. 14).

¹⁰ S. BIEGERT/S. V. SCHNURBEIN, Neue Untersuchungen zum Sigillatempel P.FLOS. In: B. LIESEN/U. BRANDL (eds.), Römische Keramik – Herstellung und Handel, Kolloquium Xanten 2000. Xantener Ber. 13 (Mainz 2003) 1–5. — HÖPKEN 2005, 61–62.

¹¹ HÖPKEN 2005, 62.

¹² G. SCHNEIDER/M. DASZKIEWICZ/C. HÖPKEN, Chemische Zusammensetzung der Keramik aus Kölner Töpfereien. Kölner Jahrbuch 37, 2004 (in press).

¹³ C. HÖPKEN, Die Produktion glasierter Keramik im römischen Köln. RCRF Acta 38, 2003, 375–376. — HÖPKEN 2005, 62–63 (Warenprobe 3).

¹⁴ HÖPKEN 2005, 63–64 (Warenprobe 4).

¹⁵ HÖPKEN 2005, 65–66 (Warenprobe 5).

¹⁶ Augustusstadt der Treverer. Stadt und Land in vor- und frühromischer Zeit. Ausstellungskatalog Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier (Mainz 1984) 191.

Colour coated wares – including the famous hunting cups (*Kölner Jagdbecher*) – were produced from the late first to the fourth century AD¹⁷. The earliest wares have an orange to reddish brown slip and the surface is often covered with rounded quartz sand, scales or a Barbotine decoration. In the second century the slip is mostly dark brown to black, very dark green or purple. The decoration consists of clay pellets, rouletting or Barbotine, especially the hunt scenes.

The Gallo-Belgic ware or *terra nigra*¹⁸, produced in the first and third centuries AD¹⁹, has a very smooth polished surface comparable to products from the Champagne region. The fabric is white or grey, the surface is usually dark grey to black. None of the Cologne products bear a stamp.

Plain and coarse vessels were the most common products of Cologne²⁰. In almost every workshop plain jars and jugs were made. The fabric is fine, white to beige in colour with a fine texture. In the early first century some of the surfaces were polished. Unfortunately it is sometimes impossible to distinguish between plain ware and (accidentally) oxidized fired Gallo-Belgic sherds.

The manufacture of coarse wares has been established in almost every workshop in Cologne. Usually the fabric is white to buff and tempered with rounded quartz sand²¹. In some workshops a reddish clay was used²². In the first century AD most of the coarse vessels were fired reduced, from the second century onwards the coarse ware was fired oxidized. They have a white, yellowish to orange red and brownish colour. Coarse ware can be divided into regular coarse ware and thin walled coarse ware²³. Thin-walled wares were produced in an early first century workshop. The fabric is white to grey, the surface silver-grey to dark grey, sometimes brown (slip?). The walls are only a few millimetres thick and the vessels have been fired at high temperatures. Because of shrinking in the firing process the coarse tempering stands out on the surface. The high standard is comparable to Italian products. The forms – hemispherical cups and jugs – also display a Mediterranean influence.

The small number of preserved fragments of *dolia*, *mortaria* and *amphorae* may indicate some sort of minor production in most of the workshops. The fabric is beige; the temper may consist of rounded quartz sand or clay pellets. *Mortaria* of the third and fourth centuries are also common in an orange fabric with quartz sand tempering. Only one workshop from the first century specialized in *dolia* and *mortaria*²⁴. The beige fabric is tempered by clay pellets: *mortaria* show only white, *dolia* white and orange tempering.

Exported ceramic goods from Cologne are usually recognized by their type, decoration and white fabric²⁵. The definition and description of the different fabrics may be seen as a further step in recognizing more of these goods at other sites.

¹⁷ HÖPKEN 2005, 66–85 (Warenproben 6–10).

¹⁸ HÖPKEN 2005, 86–96 (Warenproben 11–14).

¹⁹ This does not follow Deru: He connects the Gallo-Belgic shapes with this ware and so it is restricted to the first c. AD: X. DERU, *La céramique Belge dans le Nord de la Gaule. Caractérisation, chronologie, phénomènes culturels et économiques*. Publications d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie de l'université catholique de Louvain 89 (Louvain-la-neuve 1996). In Cologne the wares of the first and third c. AD are absolutely identical, so both are summarized in one chapter. HÖPKEN 2005, 86–96.

²⁰ HÖPKEN 2005, 96–114 (Warenproben 15–20).

²¹ HÖPKEN 2005, 114 (Warenproben 23–29).

²² HÖPKEN 2005, 350 f. (Warenproben 27–30).

²³ HÖPKEN 2005, 115 (Warenproben 21–22).

²⁴ M. CARROLL, *Frührömische Töpferöfen in Köln*. In: H. G. HORN/H. HELLENKEMPER/G. ISENBERG/H. KOSCHIK (eds.), *Fundort Nordrhein-Westfalen. Millionen Jahre Geschichte. Schriften zur Bodendenkmalpflege in NRW 5* (Mainz 2000) 328–331. — HÖPKEN 2005, 194–229 (Fst. 07).

²⁵ W. OENBRINK, *Die Kölner Jagdbecher im Römischen Rheinland. Form und Dekor, Funktion und Handelsgeschichte einer Kölner Geschirrproduktion im 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr.* *Kölner Jahrb.* 31, 1998, 71–252. — H. ROSE, *sum figuli lusus ... Die römischen Terrakottamasken in den Nordwestprovinzen* (in press).

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