

Milica Tapavički-Ilić

## THE ROMANIZATION OF SCORDISCIAN POTTERY (as shown by the example of bowl finds from *Viminacium*)

Within the realm of *Viminacium* (fig. 1), the famous and much spoken about Roman city in Upper Moesia, more than 13,000 graves have been discovered. The greatest part of them represent typical Roman burials, both inhumations (numbered G-nnn) and cremations (numbered G1-nnn).

In the ceramic material from the *Viminacium* cemeteries certain phenomena can be observed concerning the appearance of pottery types deriving from Late Iron Age forms.

These mostly concern ceramic forms in the tradition of Celtic S-profiled bowls, which appear within typical Roman burials. Although remaining approximately of the same size as the Late Iron Age examples, such bowls are often of different colours from typical grey Celtic examples.

**Type 1** includes only one bowl, C-33 (fig. 2), which was unfortunately not discovered within a grave and which shows a complex multiple concave-convex profile in its upper part, just under the rim. It resembles the previous “S” profile, but makes the bowl much higher, i.e. deeper, probably because of a slight change of its use in comparison to the Late Iron Age. Its other characteristics can be easily connected to its Iron Age prototype. While the colour is light orange, this bowl manifests rather crude potting. Apart from the rim and neck segment, it is plain conical in its lower part and it has a flat base. It has only rather remote parallels in bowls found at Gomolava and belonging to type 9.<sup>1</sup> Chronologically, this type stretches throughout the whole Late Iron Age period into the Roman provincial period.

It can be presumed that the rim shape of the bowl belonging to type 1 was inspired by the Drag. 29 bowls, produced in south Gaul and dating from the middle of 1<sup>st</sup> century AD onwards.<sup>2</sup>

**Type 2** includes a bowl numbered C-5774 (fig. 3), which was found in inhumation grave no. G-931. Apart from this bowl, another red-fired and red slipped bowl, an oil-lamp, a balsamarium and a coin were deposited in the grave. The coin was minted during the reign of Trajan.<sup>3</sup>

Like the previously mentioned example, it resembles the former Iron Age “S” profile, but it is generally much deeper than its prototype. Its grey surface, rough potting and flat base clearly connect it to prehistoric bowls used in this region before the Roman occupation. It has parallels in inherited local La Tène forms found in Lower Pannonia, for example in *Sirmium*, dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Brukner type 39).<sup>4</sup> Similar vessels are found in bowl type 4 from the most thoroughly investigated Scordiscian site in Lower Pannonia, Gomo-



Fig. 1. The location of *Viminacium*.

lava.<sup>5</sup> The most striking difference between the bowl from *Viminacium* and bowls found at this Late Iron Age settlement is that the former is much deeper and possesses a groove at the widest point on the body. Bowls of this shape were produced throughout the whole Late Iron Age period at the Gomolava settlement<sup>6</sup> and continued to be produced even in Roman times,<sup>7</sup> at least until the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

<sup>1</sup> JOVANOVIĆ/JOVANOVIĆ 1988, 7.

<sup>2</sup> BJELAJAC 1990, 14 Pl. 1. – BRUKNER 1981, 150 Pl. 20,1.

<sup>3</sup> I owe my gratitude to my friend and colleague Ms. Mirjana Arsenijević for dating this and all the other coins mentioned in this paper.

<sup>4</sup> BRUKNER 1981, type 39, 91, 155 Pl. 77,5.

<sup>5</sup> JOVANOVIĆ/JOVANOVIĆ 1988, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>7</sup> BRUKNER/DAUTOVA-RUŠEVLJAN 1992, 44 Pl. 10,64.



Fig. 2. Type 1, bowl Nr. C-33.

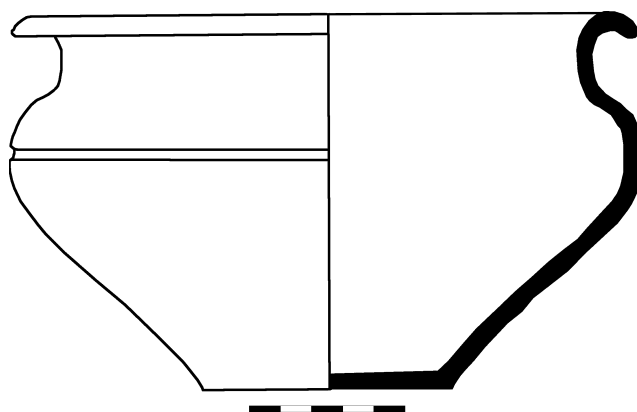


Fig. 3. Type 2, bowl Nr. C-5774.

Further Late Iron Age parallels include examples from the Karaburma necropolis (grave 222),<sup>8</sup> as well as from the site of Turski Šanac in Bačka,<sup>9</sup> both dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.

In Roman times, parallels from *Moesia Superior* include examples found in *Singidunum*, which are dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (Nikolić-Đorđević type I/104).<sup>10</sup>

**Type 3** includes five examples found in five different graves. They are numbered C-9258 (grave G1-1362), C-10070 (grave G-1790, **fig. 4**), C-10933 (grave G1-1572, **fig. 5**), C-11176 (grave G1-1624) and C-12130 (grave G-2176).

The first bowl, C-9258, fired ochre, was found in association with a grey-fired beaker, an Aucissa fibula, a knee-shaped fibula and a bronze application with a ring. The bowl numbered C-10070 was found with four other handled pots, a plate and an oil-lamp. Finds accompanying C-10933, included two bowls, a pot, two oil-lamps and a coin struck by a local mint and dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Number C-11176 was discovered with three plates, two other bowls and an oil-lamp, while in the grave with C-12130 only an oil-lamp was found.

Although not all are of the same colour (C-9258 and C-11176 being ochre, C-10070 and C-12130 grey and C-10933 red), they all belong to the same type of S-profiled, deep biconical bowls. The thick rim is typically bent and has an interior groove. Two examples (C-10933 and C-11176) also bear horizontal combed decoration. Their bases are flat. They can all be compared to traditional local La Tène forms found in Lower Pannonia, for example in *Sirmium* and in *Mursa* (Brukner, type 58),<sup>11</sup> which are dated from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. At *Singidunum*, a somewhat broader chronological span can be observed, where these bowls are dated from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>12</sup>

The Late Iron Age assemblage manifests a great number of parallels for bowls of type 3. Examples were found in Pećine<sup>13</sup>, Karaburma<sup>14</sup>, Židovar<sup>15</sup> and Surčin<sup>16</sup>. At Gomolava, only a small number of similar La Tène bowls was found. There, these are classified as bowl type 12.<sup>17</sup> The production of bowls of type 3 continued in Roman times, when they grew deeper and were decorated with incised wavy horizontal bands.<sup>18</sup>

Bowls belonging to type 3 were found both in settlements (Gomolava, Židovar, Surčin) and in necropoles (Pećine, Karaburma). Although their similarity cannot be overlooked, without exception all the Iron Age parallels are distinct in being grey and devoid of horizontal combed ornamentation.

**Type 4** includes two bowls: C-6467 and C-10521 (**fig. 6**). The first one was a single find in grave G-1065, while the second was accompanied by three oinochoai, an oil-lamp and a coin (grave G-1879). The coin was minted during the reign of Hadrian.

Both examples are grey, have a spherical shape, with an upturned rim and a ring-like swelling on the interior (Brukner type 64)<sup>19</sup>.

Parallels from the Late Iron Age include finds from Surčin<sup>20</sup>, as well as from Gomolava, where these bowls show parallels with bowl type 11.<sup>21</sup> Like all the other bowl types from Gomolava mentioned above, this type also experienced its peak of production in phase VI-b of the settlement, dated to the middle and the end of 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.<sup>22</sup>

Parallels from the Roman period were found in *Taurunum*, *Sirmium* and *Mursa*. In these settlements, such bowls date from the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> and throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>8</sup> TODORVIĆ 1972, 39 Pl. XXXIX,6.

<sup>9</sup> SLADIĆ 1986 Pl. XXXV,9.

<sup>10</sup> NIKOLIĆ-ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000, 56 type I/104.

<sup>11</sup> BRUKNER 1981, type 58, 93, 94 Pl. 82,57,58.

<sup>12</sup> NIKOLIĆ-ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000, 30 type I/28.

<sup>13</sup> SLADIĆ 1986 Pl. IX,2.

<sup>14</sup> TODORVIĆ 1972, 39 Pl. XL,10.

<sup>15</sup> SLADIĆ 1986, Pl. XVII,1.4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Pl. XLVI,4.7.

<sup>17</sup> JOVANOVIĆ/JOVANOVIĆ 1988, 7; 119 Pl. 1,5.

<sup>18</sup> BRUKNER/DAUTOVA-RUŠEVLJAN 1992, 44 Pl. 10,65.

<sup>19</sup> BRUKNER 1981, type 64, 94 Pl. 85,79.

<sup>20</sup> SLADIĆ 1986 Pl. XLVII,2.

<sup>21</sup> JOVANOVIĆ/JOVANOVIĆ 1988, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 88.

<sup>23</sup> BRUKNER 1981, 94.

As shown, there is quite a number of Roman provincial ceramic forms derived from the S-profiled Late Iron Age bowls and similar items produced by the Scordisci during the last centuries BC. Such bowls were widespread and in use throughout the La Tène period. They are found both in settlements and as grave offerings in several necropoles.

In Roman times, the S-profiled bowls changed in several ways. First of all, they became deeper in comparison to the Late Iron Age examples. Such a change in form might have been caused by a slight change in their usage as table ware.

Secondly, all the Late Iron Age examples were made of grey clay resulting from a reducing atmosphere in the final stage of firing (cooling). In contrast, many examples made in Roman times were fired in a process which maintained an oxidising atmosphere in the final stage. This typically resulted in red or other vessels, although some examples still retained the original grey colour.

Other changes can be observed on the inner surfaces of the vessels, because, contrary to the earlier Late Iron Age examples, they show clearly visible turning-marks from the potter's wheel.

In some examples, changes also appear in the upper part of the vessels, i.e. by the rim. Especially in vessel types 3 and 4, the rim was bent in such a manner that it allows the placing of a lid. This morphology is not known from the Late Iron Age. Such technological developments might attest to changes in the use of these bowls.

As mentioned, bowls showing Late Iron Age stylistic influences appear in Roman burials side by side with typical Roman offerings. Such graves date from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, which is confirmed by coin finds from graves at *Viminacium*. The archaeological distribution of S-profiled bowls corresponds to the former territory occupied by the Celtic tribe of the Scordisci. It includes the southern part of Lower Pannonia and the northern part of Upper Moesia, with most of the sites situated along the banks of the Sava and the Danube.

Continued production of bowls deriving from the Late Iron Age S-profiled tradition shows the strength of the Late Iron Age tradition in pottery making. Not only did local potters continue to produce such vessels, but they also managed to place them side by side with Roman products of the same kind, thus showing quality and style which was still popular among the people who inhabited the Roman city of *Viminacium*.

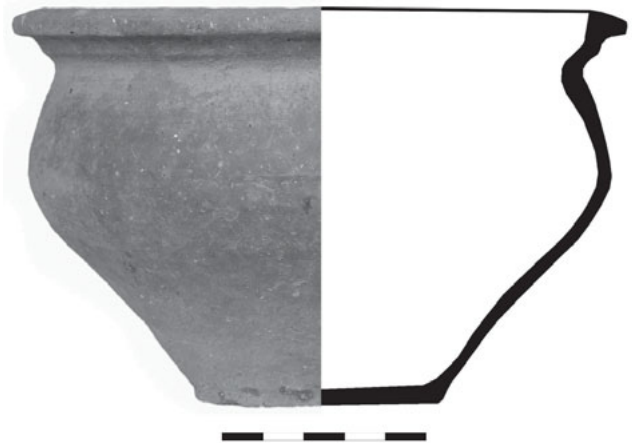


Fig. 4. Type 3, bowl Nr. C-10070.

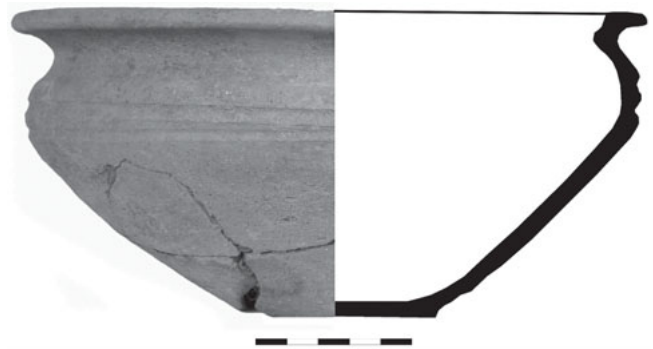


Fig. 5. Type 3, bowl Nr. C-10933.



Fig. 6. Type 4, bowl Nr. C-10521.

## Bibliography

- |                                 |                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BJELAJAC 1990                   | LJ. BJELAJAC, <i>Terra Sigillata u Gornjoj Meziji</i> (Beograd 1990).                               |
| BRUKNER 1981                    | O. BRUKNER, <i>Rimska keramika u jugoslovenskom delu provincije Donje Panonije</i> (Beograd 1981).  |
| BRUKNER/DAUTOVA-RUŠEVLIJAN 1992 | O. BRUKNER/V. DAUTOVA-RUŠEVLIJAN, <i>Gomolava - rimski period</i> (Novi Sad 1992).                  |
| JOVANOVIĆ/JOVANOVIĆ 1988        | B. JOVANOVIĆ/M. JOVANOVIĆ, <i>Gomolava, naselje mlađeg gvozdenog doba</i> (Novi Sad, Beograd 1988). |
| NIKOLIĆ-ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000           | S. NIKOLIĆ-ĐORĐEVIĆ, <i>Antička keramika Singidunuma</i> . <i>Singidunum</i> 2, 2000, 11–244.       |
| SLADIĆ 1986                     | M. SLADIĆ, <i>Keramika Skordiska</i> (Beograd 1986).                                                |
| TODOROVIĆ 1972                  | J. TODOROVIĆ, <i>Praistorijska Karaburma</i> (Beograd 1972).                                        |

