

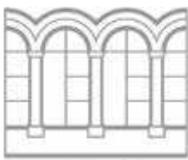


**BECAP 22**

Pots as media: Decoration, technology, and message  
transmission

Belgrade, May 12-13<sup>th</sup> 2022

**Book of abstracts**



1838



**BECAP – Belgrade Conference on Archaeological Pottery**

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Pots as media: Decoration, technology, and message  
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**Book of abstracts**

*Edited by*

Jasna Vuković and Vesna Bikić

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Belgrade Conference on Archaeological Pottery (**BECAP**) is an international biennial conference aiming at gathering specialists from the field of pottery studies, organized by the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade and the Institute of Archaeology. Pottery is usually the most abundant material found on archaeological sites, and in many cases, it is the only evidence of different phenomena: lifestyle, every-day activities, communal gatherings, food habits, exchange and trade, religious and ritual practices, symbolic behavior, individual and group identities, and many other aspects of social relations, as well as relations between communities and their environment. BECAP meetings are conceived to explore variety of topics through themed conferences, aimed at addressing specifically formulated problems, from different theoretical and methodological perspectives. Published collections of double-blind peer-reviewed papers presented at the conference will be of significant interest to different fields of archaeology and anthropology: material culture studies, studies of technology, social archaeology, archaeometry, archaeological method and theory, and computer applications in archaeology.

## **BECAP 22 – Pots as media: Decoration, technology and message transmission**

Since the beginning of the discipline, decoration on ceramic vessels was considered one of the most important features of pottery; motifs and designs were important in defining archaeological cultures and understanding chronological sequences. With time, the research topics related to decoration broadened and today many potential lines of investigation are possible, making pottery designs still challenging and inspiring. Instead of focusing on typology, BECAP 22 is aimed to address the topics related to pottery decoration through three main themes:

- **Technology:** the procedures and techniques of applying specific designs; artisans' skill and knowledge transfer; organization of production related to decoration; characterization and origin of raw materials needed for applying of the designs; identification and usage of tools used for decoration execution; the relations between pots' function/usage and decoration.
- **Style:** meaning of the motifs; the relations between the decoration and users of the pots, i.e. elite and people of high status vs. others; (dis)continuity of specific motifs and their meaning through time; creativity and (or)

conservatism in decoration techniques and the choices of motifs.

- **Methodology:** methods of processing and quantification of pottery decoration.

The contributors are invited to address some of the following issues:

- case studies of wide chronological and geographical span dealing with pottery decoration: technological aspects, including archaeometry, and style;
- theoretical-methodological contributions related to the research of decoration including quantitative methods;
- ethnoarchaeological case studies and experiments designed and conducted to resolve the issues related to the application of specific decoration techniques.

# PROGRAMME

**Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>**

**10.00 Official opening of the Conference:**

**11.00 Keynote lecture**

Michela Spataro, Department of Scientific Research, British Museum,  
**Ceramic technology and style as media of socio-cultural identity  
and influence: Case-studies from the ancient world**

**11.45 Coffee break**

**I Technology and Production**

12.00 Clare Burke, Stylish Choices: The Technology and Raw Materials of Starčevo type from Svinjarička Čuka, Serbia and its Place Within Neolithic Potting Traditions

12.20 Marija Svilar, Dragan Milanović, and Miroslav Kočić, Get into the groove: Decorative techniques and motifs on the Late Eneolithic pottery from the site of Adžine Njive (Western Serbia)

12.40 Andreja Kudelić, Ina Miloglav, and Dalibor Branković, White paste inlay – on the trail of the manufacturing sequence

13.00 Sergio Taranto and Vanessa Forte, Investigating the score patterns of the 'husking trays' through a technological traces analyses

## **13.20 Lunch break**

### **II Technology and Production**

14.00 Carlo De Mitri, The Apulo-Lucanian Hellenistic Ware. An entangled node between Aegean and Italic pottery productions: the Moldmade Ware

14.20 Flora Miele, *Ars ornamentum*: Analysis of the decorative repertoire present on tin-glazed wares of southern production from Cencelle (VT)

14.40 Ilaria Incordino, The decorative repertoire of the ceramics from the monastery of Manqabad (Egypt)

15. 00 Beatrice Brancazi, The usefulness of the superfluous. Majolica's decorations as indicators of the socio-economic dynamics of a late medieval context

## **15.20-15.40 Coffee break**

### **III Chronology, Continuity/diachronic phenomena, quantitative analyses**

15.40 Canay Alpagut, White-on-Red Painted Pottery: Interregional Interactions between Western Anatolia, the Aegean coast and the Balkans in the Early Neolithic

16.00 Simon Radchenko and Nadia Kotova, Double zigzag decoration in the Prehistory of Eastern Europe

16.20 Elena Starkova, The main approaches of the study of Tripolye-Cucuteni ornaments

### **16.40-17.00 Coffee break**

17.00 Marija Ljuština and Katarina Dmitrović, Rocky Road to Sokolica: Middle Bronze Age Pottery in Central Serbia from Vatin to Bubanj-Hum IV-Ljuljaci Culture

17.20 Miklós Takács Thoughts on the level of importance of incised decoration on the pottery of 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> c. Hungary

17.40 Anastasiia Korokhina Decorational shift as a marker of cultural change? A case study from the Late Bronze Age settlement of Hlyboke Ozero-2 in Eastern Ukraine

## **Friday, May 13<sup>th</sup>**

### **10.00 Keynote lecture**

Joanna Sofaer, University of Southampton, **Thinking through creativity in prehistoric pottery**

### **10.45-11.00 Coffee break**

## **IV Identities, networks, boundaries**

11.00 Márton Szilágyi, Pottery styles and identities in the second half of the 5th millennium BC in the Carpathian Basin

11.20 Jasna Vuković and Boban Tripković, Culture melting pot?: Mixed pottery traditions in the 5th millennium western Serbia

11.40 Esmeralda Agolli, Transmission through style: an attempt to understand the decoration of handmade pottery in Albania

12.00 Ivan Ninčić, Bassarabi Decorative Style as a Material Culture Trait of the Initial Stages of the Early Iron Age in the Western Parts of the Serbian Danube Region

12.20 Thomas Eriksson, Styles and tribes in decorated pottery c. 180-600 AD in Sweden

12.40 Vesna Bikić, Message on the pot: Sgraffito pottery decoration and group identities in the medieval Balkans

### **13.00-14.00 Lunch Break**

## **V Meaning and symbolism**

14.20 Ilya Palaguta, Ornament: Power, expression, technology. And where is meaning?

14.40 András Füzesi, Communicate through the feasting: long-term changes in the decoration of pedestal vessels in the Neolithic and Copper Age of the Great Hungarian Plain

15.00 Miloš Spasić Animals on pots: Ornaments curating social interactions among Late Neolithic Vinča culture communities

## **15.20-16.00 Coffee break**

16.00 Cesare Vita, Shapes and meanings. A preliminary study of the matt-painted pottery decorations and their role in the communication system of ancient communities in Southern Italy (half of the 7th - half of the 5th century BC)

16.20 Miroslav Vujović, Roman Chimney pot from Golubac (Cuppae)

16.40 Ivan Bugarski, Stick figures on early medieval pottery vessels

## **17.00 General discussion**

# ABSTRACTS

# **Transmission through style: an attempt to understand the decoration of handmade pottery in Albania**

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Discussion on style, decoration, or any aesthetic feature in the archaeological data has tailored intriguing aspects regarding the meaning and any potential message they convey. Since the notable contribution of Martin Wobst on information exchange and behavior embodied on style, the theoretical attention evoked growing interest towards a thorough understanding of the aesthetic expressions. More recently, discussion on style has enriched the research towards a wide variety of issues including, technology, symbolism, identities, boundaries, networks, and so on. By considering this potential, in this presentation I seek to analyze style and decoration in late prehistoric pottery in Albania from a two folded perspective: firstly, I see to what extent decoration and any other aesthetic feature Albania contributes to understanding expressions of behaviors, networks, and boundaries if any. Three types of decoration techniques are included here, matt-painted, plastic, and incised decoration. Secondly, I shift the focus to ethnographic research and attempt to evaluate how style and aesthetics are defined in an active context. To what extent are the potter's perceptions on function and decoration defined during the process of production and how could this compare to the stylistic pattern of late prehistoric pottery? I argue that style and decoration in late prehistoric pottery (Albania) does not transcend the pattern of a simple aesthetic

expression which however comprises an indispensable feature to understand socio-cultural networks and distribution of production. The regional patterns and of the decorative techniques at most simply speak for expressions that are transmitted by contacts that potentially develop through marriage or other types of informal exchange.

# **White-on-Red Painted Pottery: Interregional Interactions between Western Anatolia, the Aegean coast and the Balkans in the Early Neolithic**

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Over the past decades, the interaction between Southeastern Europe and surrounding areas has been discussed intensively. It is widely agreed that Neolithic populations spread to Southeastern Europe from Anatolia and the Aegean coastal regions at the turn from the 7th to the 6th millennium calBCE. Among other features, these early farming communities are strongly connected with the first appearance of pottery. Within these emerging networks, painted pottery shows great variety from one region to another. The present study focuses on the detection of networks of decoration styles and their connections to specific vessel shapes. Within this context, white-on-red painted pottery (WRPP) plays a central role as one of the distinctive characteristics of the Early Neolithic in the Balkans.

The first part of the paper will focus on WRPP in the Aegean. Vessel forms and decoration styles of WRPP from sites like Nea Nikomedeia and Mavropigi-Filotsairi in Western Macedonia, as well as Argissa and Achilleion in Thessaly will be classified. Using multivariate statistics the results will be compared to sites like Hacilar and Bademağacı in Southwest Anatolia, and Çukuriçi in Central-West Anatolia. In the end, the hypothesis of Anatolian influences in the Balkans through WRPP will be re-evaluated.

The second part will concentrate on the area of modern-day Bulgaria. Pottery from Early Neolithic sites like Kovachevo in the Struma River Valley, Karanovo in the Thracian Plain, and Dzhulyunitsa-Smardesh in the Lower Danube Basin will be reassessed in order to identify the distribution of the WRPP in different geographic locations. The presented analyses offer insights into regional peculiarities and interactive relations of Early Neolithic pottery in the influential regions of Anatolia, the Balkans, and the Aegean.

## **Message on the pot: Sgraffito pottery decoration and group identities in the medieval Balkans**

**Vesna Bikić**

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In the class of medieval tableware, Byzantine sgraffito pottery holds a prominent place, due to its attractive, complex technique, and various elements which create endless series of decorative patterns. The intertwining of similar technical solutions and motifs of pottery from local workshops of the medieval Balkan states of Bulgaria and Serbia, both inheriting Byzantine culture, is evident in the period from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the decorative styles of locally produced glazed vessels somewhat differ, both from the Byzantine pottery of the previous (Middle Byzantine) and contemporary (Late Byzantine) periods.

The presentation aims to explore the differences in decoration between Byzantine sgraffito and these designs and techniques on the pottery originating from regional pottery workshops. The selection of motifs, their combinations, and colors, as well as the application of specific decorations on particular types of vessels, varies according to the chronology, but also depends on the artisans' skill and the closeness and availability to the source model(s). All of the above leads us to a more precise identification of pottery designs and even more, to a deeper understanding of its significance in the social and cultural milieu of the Balkans. In this regard, local sgraffito pottery can be regarded as an indicator of the unique Byzantine - Orthodox cultural identity of the entire Balkan area, but at the same time as a medium revealing peculiarities of regional noblemen and cultural spaces.

**The usefulness of the superfluous. Majolica's decorations as indicators of the socio-economic dynamics of a late medieval context**

**Beatrice Brancazi**

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The contribution aims to analyse the decorative motifs of the Archaic Majolica from Cencelle as indicators of the socio-economic dynamics in the site. Cencelle has been a small medieval town located in the north of the Lazio region (Italy) and abandoned in the modern age. During the Late Medieval Period in the urban center, there was a big production of pottery and, mainly, of archaic majolica. The large number of fragments related to this class of pottery makes it possible to study its decorations from a quantitative point of view and carry out a percentage survey of the main categories of motifs found (geometric, floral, anthropomorphic, fantastic, etc.), of the single decoration and of its variants. This approach will allow us to deepen the evolution of the patterns from the mid-thirteenth century and the early fifteenth century, together with the identification of the possible meanings that these decorations must have had also in relation to the social classes that bought and used the vases.

## **Stick figures on early medieval pottery vessels**

**Ivan Bugarski**

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The presentation will focus on simple (although attractive) incisions on early medieval pottery, namely, the stick figures which decorated some vessels - mostly but not exclusively from the Avar milieu. Building on a small corpus assembled as early as 1972 by Jovan Kovačević, this overview will mention several more finds, including those made from antler and bone. However, the main task will be to discuss the meaning of those signs. While one cannot entirely dismiss the possibility that these were runes or tamgas, I see no reason to go beyond the obvious – they could well have been somehow connected with children, who indeed often draw stick figures of family members. These figures were easy to incise on wet clay, and it is important to note that the drawings were made on handmade pots and not on those wheel-thrown, which were apparently the products of specialised workshops and presumably of greater value. We do not know whether these pots had been originally made for funerary purposes or put in graves after their lifetime use. Most of them came from the burials of the adults, but the Sarkel vessel warns us not to define these incised pots as exclusively funeral. In my opinion, the most plausible explanation for their occurrence in the graves could lie in the family status of the deceased. The placement of these specific grave-gifts can be seen as a touching gesture from the loved ones, by which the buried were sent to the afterlife with a sentimental token of their or their offsprings' childhood.

**Stylish Choices: The Technology and Raw Materials of Starčevo  
type from Svinjarička Čuka, Serbia and its Place Within  
Neolithic Potting Traditions**

**Clare Burke**

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Ceramic production techniques are learnt within specific socio-technical contexts, as potters are taught what is the 'right' way to make a vessel within their cultural group. The aesthetic and typological similarities between Neolithic pottery from across broad areas have suggested important networks of connectivity. This paper will discuss the early results of an integrated typological, raw material and technological study of Starčevo type pottery from the site of Svinjarička Čuka focused on the execution of different vessel types and the repertoire of vessel types made by local potters.

It will situate the trends identified within the context of other Starčevo pottery production strategies, such as those most recently published in the seminal work by Spataro (2019), in order to understand the range of methods and spheres of shared technological knowledge held by potters making Starčevo type pottery.

**The Apulo-Lucanian Hellenistic Ware. An entangled node  
between Aegean and Italic pottery productions: the Moldmade  
Ware**

**Carlo De Mitri**

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In the late Hellenistic period, Rome's expansion into the Mediterranean triggered a series of transformations involving various activities, especially economic and commercial ones. Goods circulated together with knowledge and techniques that inexorably evolved into manufacturing skills that were also 'exported'. The study of some relief potteries and the application of methodologies drawn from Social Network Analysis make it possible to put forward interesting hypotheses on the diffusion of such objects and the creation of new production centres that used and reworked craft skills from non-local areas.

In particular, the study dwells on the possible role played by the sites of the Apulian-Lucanian Ionian arc in the transmission of technical skills between the Ionian-Greek and Italic worlds for the production of Moldmade ware (and its links with Italo-Megarese and Italian Mouldmade ware) and Medallion cups and their links with Tyrrhenian and Sicilian productions.

## **Styles and tribes in decorated pottery c. 180-600 AD in Sweden**

**Thomas Eriksson**

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The decorated pottery from the Late Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period has a large but underutilized potential for studying ethnicity and contacts in modern Sweden. Vessel shapes and decors clearly show both similarities and differences in material culture in different regions. This is probably also due to differences in ethnicity and the emergence of different networks in terms of trade, political and marital alliances. The differences in frequencies of different vessel shapes and especially decors show clear differences in culture, within Scandinavia. The study will show and study how these factors can be interpreted and discuss the background in external influences versus autochthonous processes. The study relies on a large material from excavated graves at the Swedish Mainland during the period c. 180-600 AD. The material has undergone statistical analyses and is GIS-based.

**Communicate through the feasting: long-term changes in the decoration of pedestal vessels in the Neolithic and Copper Age of the Great Hungarian Plain**

**András Füzesi**

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Feasting had a strong formative character in the life of prehistoric communities, creating and maintaining relationships, reducing social stress, promoting cooperation. Despite this fact, its archaeological research is challenged by methodological and taphonomic difficulties of the science which studying objects, material imprints, and remains. In prehistoric archaeology, the subject is primarily intelligible through the functional analysis of the huge ceramic materials. At present, the identification of cooking pots is well-founded, while indirect data and assumptions determine our thinking about other uses. Our ideas about serving are typically influenced by topos. One fixed idea is that pedestal vessels were used as serving tools, as the high and often decorated pedestals made them stand out from their surroundings. Taking this as a working hypothesis, I will concentrate on the decoration of this object type in order to check this assumption. Today, stylistic analysis is an important subfield of social archaeology, particularly in theorising the roles of style. Traditional ceramic analysis exploited the typo-chronological possibilities of decorated ceramics and emphasised temporal discontinuity, as opposed to the observation of long-term sociocultural changes. Postprocessualism - after Ian Hodder - tends to look for the meanings of things that can be understood in larger time intervals, e.g. in adaptive cycles. This

presentation is based on the stylistic analysis of Neolithic and Chalcolithic pedestal vessels from the Great Hungarian Plain. While the vessel types underwent a continuous formal transformation process, all the details of decorated pottery changed several times over the two millennia (6000-3600 BC). Inside of the complex transformation of pottery, the decorations on the pedestal vessels followed their specific trends. By evaluating these, I will try to shed light on the role of feasting as a social event.

# **The decorative repertoire of the ceramics from the monastery of Manqabad (Egypt)**

**Ilaria Incordino**

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The pottery documentation project at the Late Antique monastery of Manqabad (Asyut) started in 2012 and has been focused on the study of the assemblage from the site, which is formed by 245 complete items collected during the past excavations (today stored at the warehouses of el-Ashmunein and Shutby), plus some hundreds of fragments deriving from the most recent excavation (2018-2020). The research includes a stylistic and iconographic study of the themes decorating the different typologies identified, ranging from human figures, animals, geometric and vegetal elements and texts. This ongoing study follows the architectural and paintings documentation currently in progress at Manqabad, highlighting the occurrence of a similar decorative repertoire on different supports (ceramics, architectural elements, paintings), quite common element to be found during the Late Antique period in Egypt. Since the Byzantine Egyptian ceramics still lack a comprehensive treatment, this research seeks to contribute to closing the existing gap in our knowledge by focusing also on their symbolic and cultural value, to lead the basis for a new general classification system, never been attempted to date. The recent (2020) find of a large kiln-like structure with wastes of production supported the presence of a workshop for a massive and standardised ceramic production at Manqabad. The proposed hypothesis of a pilgrimage centre at the site could be supported also by pottery evidence (small cups with stamped

motifs/ trademarks, inscriptions/prayers, terracotta female figurines). The current investigation will therefore offer more information also about the social groups involved in the serial production process, their relationship with the activities of the adjacent monastic community and village, and their involvement in the possible pilgrimage productions.

**Decorational shift as a marker of cultural change? A case study  
from the Late Bronze Age settlement of Hlyboke Ozero-2 in  
Eastern Ukraine**

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The paper examines the evidence of how the change of archaeological and prehistoric milestones can be traced through a quantitative analysis of ceramic decoration. The study was conducted on the materials of the multilayer settlement of Hlyboke Ozero-2 in the Siverskyi Donets river basin, Eastern Ukraine (excavations by Dr. Ya. Gershkovich). Six stratigraphic horizons of the site demonstrate a smooth transition from the Late Timber-Grave to Post Timber-Grave cultures. This has traditionally been linked to the change of the cultural-historical environment – influence of foreign traditions and a new population inflow. However, the manifestations of this phenomenon were not scrutinized, which creates ambiguity during its historical interpretation.

The author investigated the evolution of the incised decoration on the ceramics in the context of the stratigraphic subdivision of the site. Data on the correlation of the decoration and morpho-functional groups of pottery was also used for this purpose. The methods used were measures of sampling diversity, chi-square tests, and multiple correspondence analysis.

The analysis of morphology and decoration revealed statistically significant and inter-correlated changes in ceramic features in the transition to layer III (horizon 3a). Another argument for the peculiar "leap" that took place at this time is the maximum variety of decoration, though the growth of this trend is traced in the previous layer. At horizon 3b pottery morphology and decoration return to average standards on the site.

Thus, we, probably, managed to trace a "critical" moment in the development of material culture at the settlement, which, as one can speculate, is connected with the beginning of a new, transitional stage to the Early Iron Age in the region.

## **White paste inlay – on the trail of the manufacturing sequence**

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White paste or incrustation represents a very characteristic technique of decorating prehistoric ceramic vessels, especially within the framework of pottery traditions in the area of the Carpathian Valley and the Balkans. Due to its very attractive decorative style, the first researches were focused on stylistic analysis, but in the last 10 years, following the development and application of analytical methods in archaeology, the technology of making the white paste began to interest scientists.

To this date, several scientific papers have been written about the mineral and chemical composition of the white paste material and its origin. The results showed that the basic component of various recipes consists of calcite or hydroxyapatite – the bone material, and aragonite – carbonate polymorph, found in bivalves and mollusc shells. However, the

process of making a paste, especially regarding the binding agents, is still unknown. Yet, there is no focused research on the manufacturing sequence which could enable discussion on characteristics of social practice related to raw material or the process itself.

This paper presents preliminary results of experiments that are aimed at the manufacturing process and procedure of applying white paste inlay. The initial archaeological experiment was designed following published scientific research results and the results of compositional analysis of encrustation of the Copper and Bronze Age pottery in Croatia. Accordingly, animal bone material and river mollusc shells were used in experiments. The result showed that the organic binder is not effective and that the homogenisation and strength of the material is a result of applying one of the oldest chemical processes known to man – slaking of quicklime. In addition to establishing a production sequence, the research goal is to create experimental reference samples of white paste and to conduct mineralogical and chemical analyses of paste comparing the analysis results with the archaeological material, in order to create the foundation for scientifically based technological analysis.

## **Rocky Road to Sokolica: Middle Bronze Age Pottery in Central Serbia from Vatin to Bubanj-Hum IV-Ljuljaci Culture**

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In contrast to the flourishing settlements of tell type, which characterize the first half of the 2nd millennium BC and the Middle Bronze Age of the Carpathian Basin, contemporary settlement sites of central and western Serbia remained almost invisible or poorly explored. Pottery makes the majority of portable material from these sites. Its stylistic-typological analyses provided a base for cultural attribution of the settlements and traditional connection with the Vatin culture from the Danube Basin.

One of these instructive sites is the hillfort at Sokolica. It is situated in the village of Ostra, near the town of Čačak, on the border between western and central Serbia. It is placed on a dominant rocky summit at the eastern periphery of the West Morava valley. Stratigraphy of the Bronze Age settlement was not preserved and the pottery was analysed using stylistic and typological methods. The first results indicated that Sokolica had been inhabited by a population whose material traces were recognized as the Vatin culture. This traditional interpretation and terminology aggravated comprehension of independent development and relations with neighbouring areas.

Changes in perspectives of cultural relations and interactions during the Middle Bronze Age led to the recent recognition of the Bubanj-Hum IV-Ljuljaci cultural group of the Central Balkans, and the attitude that the pottery from Sokolica was of local production, among which local imitations of original forms and ornaments from the north were recognised. This attitude is acceptable since it implicitly takes into consideration innovation, modification of technology of pottery manufacture. Factors that contributed to the acceptance and spread of the innovations in decoration techniques and choices of motifs, apart from aesthetics, remained unknown.

***Ars ornamentum: Analysis of the decorative repertoire present on tin-glazed wares of southern production from Cencelle (VT)***

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Giving beauty, elegance, and particular meanings to objects of practical use requires precise skills and knowledge even more if you choose to resort to the decorative arts. In particular, the figurative universe of low medieval pottery is populated by original images resulting from the confluence of heterogeneous traditions that is rendered through different procedures and application techniques. By virtue of this, it was decided to focus attention on the decorative repertoire visible on some tin-glazed wares, found in Cencelle (VT), most likely produced in Southern Italy, between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This contribution aims to shed light on the choice, organization, and various stages of implementation of the decorative program using an approach that analyzes material culture using traditional and scientific techniques. The integration of the data obtained will be fundamental not only to understand the technological processes related to decoration but also to try to identify a series of representations that are more or less directly linked to reality and to the recipients of the ceramic containers.

# **Bassarabi Decorative Style as a Material Culture Trait of the Initial Stages of the Early Iron Age in the Western Parts of the Serbian Danube Region**

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The initial stages of the Early Iron Age in the western parts of the Serbian Danube region are marked by several material culture traits separating them from the preceding Late Bronze Age. More frequent iron object finds from the 8th century BC were accompanied by elements of Pontic-Caucasian properties and pottery decorated in a distinctive Bassarabi manner. Said territory was characterized by the development of the Bosut archaeological group since the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC, with its middle phase distinguished by the predominant Bassarabi style of decorating pottery vessels.

The Bosut group was differentiated from the rest of the Bassarabi complex due to local particularities in pottery production, and the fact that uninterrupted continuity with the previous Kalakača horizon was stratigraphically confirmed. Bassarabi horizon also owes most of its pottery forms to the local traditions, while adopting a new style of adorning.

Being primarily defined by pottery design, its categorization as a culture is debatable. While indicating the possible origin of some pottery ideas in the preceding cultures (e. g. Insula Banului and Babadag), the Bassarabi phenomenon spread through most of modern-day Romania and neighboring regions in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. In contrast to the more

heterogenous image of archaeological groups and their material culture (specifically pottery) of the previous period, the Bassarabi phenomenon symbolized an epoch of a widespread pottery trend.

Since the majority of the sites with Bassarabi pottery were discovered in the large river basins (Danube, Mureş, Siret, and Dniester), this could be owed to the intensified communication down the river valleys, catalyzing the transfer of styles and techniques. This paper will investigate the appearance of Bassarabi decoration in western parts of the Serbian Danube region as a possible effect of style and technique trends transfer, as well as its participation with traditional pottery forms in the creation of a unique identity in material culture.

# **Ornament: Power, expression, technology. And where is the meaning?**

**Ilia Palaguta**

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Approaches to the study of ornament include its formal description, study of its technology, historical and cultural context, semantics, as well as exploring of its artistic forms. The problem that remains is the definition of the ornament, which can be built on its essential characteristics or functions. Apparently, it is necessary to distinguish ornament from décor, because of its rhythmic structure. This terminological difference is reflected in the etymology of the terms 'ornament' and 'décor'.

According to A. Picon (2013), ornament reflects "pleasure, social distinctions, and knowledge", with the same success we can say that it is power, expression, and technology. So, the ornament is a marker of objects, representing their place in the classification system of artifacts, and ranking them by their importance, respectively, emphasizing the importance (social category) of their owners. The main means of expression in the ornament are rhythm, harmony, and symmetry. The connection with technology is manifested both through the emphasis on the shape tectonics and construction of the object and through the 'technical ornament'.

The meaning in the sense, which we put it into the text, is not so important for the ornament: in its rhythmic structure, semantics takes

secondary place. An analysis of ethnographic examples shows that the names of similar ornamental elements can vary within relatively wide limits. Interpretations of ornaments, even within a single ethnic environment, are usually built on the principle of free association. Therefore, the possibilities for disclosing the content without the artist's comments are very limited. However, ornament can be viewed as a means of non-verbal communication, in which symmetry plays a special role (Washburn 2018).

## **Double zigzag decoration in the Prehistory of Eastern Europe**

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Though the same ornamental pattern might belong to a different cultural or chronological context, others appear to introduce the particular processes and ancient circumstances. For instance, a zigzag made of two parallel lines (double zigzag) seems to be quite rare compared to the widespread singular one that is known to have a broad spatial expansion and dating range. Unlike the latter, double zigzag is noticed for the East European Late Mesolithic and Early Neolithic cultures. Such ornament is found both on parietal and portable art specimens from Ukraine and Russia that used to habituate the rapid-rich parts of river valleys. During the Neolithic and Early Eneolithic, double zigzag was used in the Neolithic pottery ornaments in the very same regions where it was used to decorate the Mesolithic bone and stone finds — Lower Don and forests near river Volga. From the Late Neolithic till the Late Eneolithic double horizontal zigzags decorated the pottery within Dnieper and Southern Bug regions. Double zigzag in this case is considered to present the ideogram of water and probably was developed and imaged by the Late Mesolithic complex river-oriented cultural groups.

# **Animals on pots: Ornaments curating social interactions among Late Neolithic Vinča culture communities**

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The potters of the Late Neolithic Vinča culture were skilled artisans developing and applying innovative technological procedures in the production of clay vessels. A myriad of recent studies demonstrates a high level of their craftsmanship that led to the standardization of manufacture, both in terms of recipes and applied techniques, as well as with regard to formal and stylistic characteristics of their products. Although pottery is still a central analytical objective in Serbian Neolithic archaeology, its decoration techniques, ornamental systems, and symbolic use remain vaguely studied and continue to fall under scholar radar. Technological and stylistic attributes of Vinča pottery decoration thus continue to be used as one of the strongest diagnostic elements – a typo-chronological marker offering confident conclusions to the hoary *when and where it's made* questions. Appropriation of novel analytical and quantitative techniques in pottery ornament studies are starting to provide final answers for such inquiries- freeing space for the revival of equally worn-out but still unanswered *what does it mean* questions.

Zoomorphic ornaments on Vinča pottery are among rare examples of figural decoration in a standardized repertoire of geometric decorative techniques and motifs which constituted an almost rigid system of applying certain designs onto particular vessel types or even vessel parts. Animal bodies and body elements were mainly rendered as applications on the rim,

handle, or body of bowls, amphorae, lids, and so-called altars. Incised or burnished representations are very rare. Highly stylized, almost generic animal images dominate the corpus, with certain species being frequently portrayed, such as bovines or birds. The presentation aims to discuss the social role and symbolic aspects of zoomorphic representations on vessels through contextual analysis and appropriation of quantified data generated from 13 major Late Neolithic Vinča culture settlements in Central Balkans. Animal imagery on pottery was a vital part of the symbolic repertoire that curated and governed social interactions and played a crucial role in the creation and maintenance of local histories and grand narratives of Vinča communities.

## **The main approaches of the study of Tripolye-Cucuteni ornaments**

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The decor is one of the most important markers for Tripolye-Cucuteni ceramics. It reflects local traditions in pottery decorating techniques, as well as contacts between local groups and population movements within the cultural area. The study of pottery ornamentation includes several aspects: from preparing the vessels' surface for painting to analyzing the structure of ornamental compositions.

As studies have shown, within the common technologies of pottery decorating that used throughout the entire areal during definite chronological horizons of Tripolye-Cucuteni, there are some differences between the ceramic decoration of different local settlement groups. Particularly, an additional coating of vessels before painting (engobe) is not found in all ceramic assemblages.

It was also revealed that painting could sometimes be applied in several stages with possible intermediate relatively low-temperature firing, as evidenced by the presence of organic binders in mineral paints. The composition of the paints also differed on different sites, when not only ferromanganese ore was used as a dark brown dye, but also burnt bone was added to it.

One of the newest trends in the study of the Tripolye decoration is the analysis of the symmetries of ornamental compositions. Linear and circular patterns were considered, and significant differences were established in the percentage ratio of symmetry types for settlement groups of different chronological horizons, which may indicate changes in the ethnic composition of the Tripolye population at the final stage of the culture.

**Get into the groove: decorative techniques and motifs on the  
Late Eneolithic pottery from the site of Adžine Njive (Western  
Serbia)**

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In 2021-2022, on the new highway route that is currently under construction in Western Serbia (section Ruma-Šabac), a part of a large multi-layered site of Adžine Njive (occupation spanning from the Early Neolithic until the Late Medieval Period) was excavated. During the course of the rescue excavation, the remains of Late Eneolithic (Baden culture) settlement were discovered. Pottery, decorated in a number of ways, from incision, which was most commonly used, to impression, was unearthed among settlement features in a seemingly overwhelming quantity.

It is widely acknowledged that decorative techniques and motifs on pottery have a huge importance in prehistoric studies due to their chronological implications. In particular, decoration made a significant contribution to the typological approach, inasmuch as it was regarded as a

critical tool for establishing relative chronological sequences. In this paper, our intention is to present a comprehensive view of the various grooves and impressions occurring on the Late Eneolithic pottery, to identify what type of tools was used in their making, to examine whether some elements and compositions should be regarded as a surface finishing methods, applied in order to make the vessel less slippery and easier to handle, and furthermore, to explore if specific decorative techniques and motifs were limited to a certain group of vessels.

# **Pottery styles and identities in the second half of the 5th millennium BC in the Carpathian Basin**

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The second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC is one of the most underrepresented fields of prehistoric research in Central Europe, although several changes of great importance took place during these centuries. The appearance of metal objects, metallurgy, new pottery styles, formal cemeteries, new social constructions, and other developments can be dated to this time.

Recently, a large number of new AMS dates suggested that the widely accepted previous chronological system cannot be maintained anymore. In this system, the Early Copper Age Tiszapolgár culture of the Great Hungarian Plain was dated to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium (4500-4000 cal BC) and was followed by the Middle Copper Age Bodrogkeresztúr culture in the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium (4000-3700/3600 cal BC). In Transdanubia, the third period of the Lengyel culture was dated to the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium and was succeeded by the Balaton-Lásinja culture at the same period as the Bodrogkeresztúr culture.

As a result of the new developments, a new chronological model had been set up, in which a significant overlap between the Early and Middle Copper Age cultures was outlined. This indicates that the significant differences in the material culture cannot be due to chronological

differences, but to something else. This triggered a new discourse about our understanding of Copper Age social groups in the Carpathian Basin with special attention to the use of the widely criticised concept of the archaeological culture, and the relation of past social identities and material culture.

This paper will focus on how pottery styles were used to express identity and how pottery occurred in different social contexts as a tool of distinction in the Carpathian Basin and adjacent regions along the Danube.

# **Thoughts on the level of importance of incised decoration on the pottery of 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> c. Hungary**

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An interesting viewpoint is to be formulated during the process of analysis of complexes of findings from settlement features, consisting mainly of ceramic shards. The situation is well known to every archaeologist: the disclosed and in principle fragmented remains of vessels, as single pieces, can usually give only a limited number of information. As a consequence of this, every single property to be observed on them gains big importance. The incised decoration occupies an upscale place in this process. It was and is often treated as having big importance, and is many times analyzed not only among the other characteristics but before all of the others. Concerning the early middle ages, the various types of incised decorations have gained crucial importance not only in the outlining of the chronology but these patterns were also used as markers for the determining of ethnicity, especially in the older literature.

It is therefore worthy of time and effort to make a recapitulation of the formal characteristics of the processed ceramics, with a focus on the question of their possible importance in the times, when the given vessels were produced or used. The author of the present study will give examples from 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century Hungary to be used in this way of analysis with an aim to underline the importance of a bit more critical approach towards an overall interpretation of incised decoration. According to him, these

decorative patterns are only in regional frames suitable as markers for the outlining of a precise timeframe. Further on, one has to pay also attention to the way, how the analyzed vessels were produced. As the incised decoration could had have different significance in the case of the handmade vessels, the pottery thrown on a slow wheel, and the more sophisticated ceramic items, produced on fast turning potter's wheel.

# **Investigating the score patterns of the 'husking trays' through technological traces analyses**

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The term husking tray is used in archaeological literature to refer to large oval basins from the Late Neolithic Near East.

The peculiarity of these vessels is the presence of a wide variety of score patterns (impressions/incisions) on their internal surface. Due to the fact that the scores appeared to have been made with little care, scholars have always considered them as a functional expedient rather than a proper decoration. Moreover, recent studies, based on experimental and use-alteration analysis, suggest that the husking trays could have been baking pans; in this case, their internal scores would have worked as anti-adhesive arrangements to facilitate the detachment of the bread from the vessel.

In this communication, the results of a traces analysis undertaken to better understand the techno-functional choices made by potters to

carry out these scores will be preliminarily presented. Finally, speculations about the possible value and meaning of the score patterns of the husking trays on the basis of ethnographic analogies with baking pans from the Balkans will be proposed.

**Shapes and meanings. A preliminary study of the matt-painted pottery decorations and their role in the communication system of ancient communities in Southern Italy (half of the 7th - half of the 5th century BC)**

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The archaic communication systems of societies without conventional forms of writing remain under-studied. Previous studies were mainly concentrated on Greek objects and have neglected the decorations and symbols present on indigenous vases. The study of these objects can reveal their role in disseminating messages related to the identity and culture of these communities.

What kind of communication system was applied by ancient societies free of conventional forms of writing? Is it possible to use the decorations and symbols painted on the vases to reconstruct the language of the archaic communities? Objects convey ideas, memories, and messages. Decorations on ceramics are certainly one of these vectors of conservation, but also of dissemination of cultural identity messages among the indigenous communities. Unfortunately, most of its meanings still elude us.

This paper will present the SandMan project that studies the material culture of ancient societies without conventional forms of writing,

between the end of the Iron Age and the Archaic period (half of the 7<sup>th</sup> - half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC) in southern Italy. The project has a semiotic, typological, and archaeometric approach, and its aim is to understand the symbolic 'lexicon' of the pottery decorations and its role in the communication between these communities.

## **Roman Chimney pot from Golubac (Cuppae)**

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The paper is dedicated to a fragment of a tubular ceramic object with a relief-decorated outer surface discovered beneath the remains of the Roman fortification of the ancient Cuppae in modern Golubac. Although a chance find without a clear context, this is a unique find in the territory of Serbia and corresponds to the forms known as the Roman chimney pots or votive lanterns. The decoration is consisting of four relief winged figures (Victoria, Cupid, Psyche ?) with different attributes. The object is made of orange-baked clay coated with red engobe. In the preserved part of the object, two zones can be recognized, the lower with figural relief decoration and the upper, only partially preserved, in which the remains of horizontal sides of four laterally cut openings can be seen. The inner diameter of the lower zone (9 cm) is slightly larger than the diameter in the upper part (8 cm), which indicates that the object narrowed from the bottom to the top in which openings of rectangular, triangular, or trapezoidal shape were open. Horizontal grooves visible from the inside, similar to those found in ceramic water pipes of the Roman period indicate that the tubular base was first made on a potter's wheel. The relief decorations were firstly made in molds and then subsequently applied to the outer surface. The precise details were made by incision and retouching. This particular decorative technique is also known from vessels with snake-like and medallion applications that were also discovered in this part of the Danube region and associated with various cults. Based on Roman coin finds and fragments of ceramic vessels discovered on the same occasion, the find from Golubac could be dated to the period of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries.

## **Culture melting pot?: Mixed pottery traditions in the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium western Serbia**

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The end of the Late Neolithic and the beginning of the Early Copper Age in the area of modern-day western Serbia is characterized by so-called mixed ceramic assemblages. Pottery traditions originating from different geographic areas (Vinča and Bubanj of the Central Balkans, and Tiszapolgár, Lengyel, and Lasinja of the Pannonian Plain) are observable on pottery from several sites. These traditions differ in technological procedures, but also the execution techniques and the appearance of decorative patterns. Their presence in the same archaeological contexts opens up questions concerning the origin and distribution of pottery, as well as the issues related to the identities of both the potters and pottery users.

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