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The migration period pottery made after Germanic traditions from the Someșul Mic Valley and the Arieș  
Basin

**SUMMARY**

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**KEY WORDS:** pottery, Migration Period, Gepids, utilitarian pottery, funeral pottery

Ceramics are the most frequently encountered artifact at archaeological excavations. Ceramic vessels were already important since the Neolithic in everyday life, fulfilling various functions from storing and transporting foodstuff and drinks, to thermal treatment and serving them. Over time, ceramic containers also acquired ritual functions, being placed next to the deceased as personal objects that accompanied the dead in the passage to the afterlife, containers that held the remains of the funerary banquet, offerings for the deceased or for the divinities.

The study entitled "The migration period pottery made after Germanic traditions from the Someșul Mic Valley and the Arieș Basin" aims to investigate, with the help of ceramic discoveries, through case studies from settlements of Turda – Castrum, Cluj – Napoca – Florești – Polus center, and the cemetery of Șardu. The analysis of the pottery is based on the construction of a usable typology in the case of Transylvania, and on the classification of the ceramic material from the cemetery of Șardu and the settlements of Turda – Castrum Legionis V Macedonica and Cluj – Napoca – Florești – Polus Center within it. The lack of a detailed study on the ceramics of this period and the tendencies present in the pottery of this era were the foundations of this analysis. The fact that there is no unified typology, nor well – defined methods for the study of pottery from this period, has discouraged many researchers from studying ceramic fragments or vessels.

The main purpose of this work was the detailed analyses of the ceramic material from the cemetery of Șardu, and the settlements of Turda – Castrum Legionis V Macedonica and Cluj – Napoca – Florești – Polus Center, as well as the matching and adaptation of methods in processing the material. Another aim of the work was the realization of a classification, based on the shape and functionality of the vessels, which should also be useful for other researchers. The analysis approaches not only the ceramic material, but also the phenomena related to cemeteries and settlements of this period, placing them within the archaeological, historical and cultural landscape of Europe in the 4th – 6th centuries.

From a methodological point of view, the work is based not only on the study of ceramics and its framing in the archaeological landscape of the age, but also on the analysis of written sources in order to understand in detail the historical and archaeological phenomena. The

concept of „barbarian” is often used by ancient writers, Greek or Roman, to denote the populations living at the borders of the Empire (foederati).

The origin myth of the Gepids takes place under the mythical king Berig, who with three ships and the three tribes on these ships, left their ancestral homeland, Gothiscandza. The lack of written sources about the Gepids can be due to their geographical position, far from the areas controlled by the Romans.

The next mention of the people is found in *Historia Augusta*: during the reign of Probus, a tribe called „Gepidis” is recorded. After this, they appear in the sources in the battle fought against the Goths near the „oppidum Galtis” and the „fluvius Auha”, though the localization of this battle is still debated in research. Scholarly opinions are also divided regarding the early Gepids and their material culture.

Over the course of the 4th century, the Hunnic threat transformed the political map of Europe. The Gepids were subdued by the Huns and are often mentioned in the descriptions of their military campaigns. In the year 453, Attila, the leader of the Huns, died, and his empire collapsed as a consequence of the battle of Nedao. The Gepids then occupied new territories and established their own kingdom. Archaeological research in recent decades has demonstrated that the most plausible route of entry for the Gepids was through the Meseş Gate, followed by the occupation of former Roman cities, including the former city of Sirmium. Battles with the Langobards and later with the Avars led to the disintegration of the Gepidic kingdom. Gepid communities continued to exist under Avar domination as attested by written and archaeological sources.

From a methodological point of view, the work is based on the study of ceramics, using both classical and innovative methods, taking into account every step of the production process, from the choice of fabric, to the manufacture of ceramic vessels, their decoration, and firing. In order to process the ceramic assemblages, classical methods were applied, such as defining the fabric types and vessel forms.

The first step in developing a classification of vessels was the study of the ceramic material of this period. Vessels can be classified into two main groups: wheel – made vessels and hand – made vessels. The elaboration of the classification also involved the study of fabrics and the attribution of functionality, on the basis of the „Form and function” principle. To obtain data from the fragment descriptions, the catalogue was structured in table format, based on objective

criteria such as: the shape of the vessel/fragment, the type of vessel or fragment, the internal and external color of the fragments, the type of fabric used to produce vessels, the modeling technique with which the vessels were made, their firing, taking into account the firing sequences where present, and the illustrative reference.

The classification is based on the study of existing typologies and previous publications of ceramic material. Thus, in the case of vessels manufactured on the potter's wheel, there is the group of vessels made of fine fabrics (carafes, Murga – type jugs, jugs with narrow mouth and handle, jugs with wide mouth and handle, spouted jugs, as cups: biconical cups, bag – shaped cups, ovoid cups, globular – cups, the „Morești” – type cups, and round or biconical bowls). In the case of semi – fine (utilitarian) pottery, a greater variety of forms and functionalities can be observed. For example, within this group we can find jugs and carafes similar to those from the fine ceramics group, but also lids of different types (usually associated with cooking pots), pots of various shapes (round pots, elongated pots, pear – shaped or sack – shaped pots), plates (plates with almost straight sides, plates with semi – curved sides, plates with flaring rim and semi – rounded body imitating Late Antique forms). In addition, there are also bowls of various types (biconical bowls, straight – sided bowls, truncated – conical bowls, or round deep bowls). Another important group is that of storage vessels or, *Krausengefäße*, which were used since Classical Antiquity to store food supplies.

Handmade pottery appears in smaller numbers than the vessels produced on the wheel. This type of manufacturing technique is present both in the ceramic material from settlements and in that from cemeteries. In the classic Gepidic period, three main forms of these vessels can be distinguished: small handmade cups, elongated handmade pots (similar to Praga – Korchak type pots), and prominent – shoulder pots, whose greatest diameter is located in the upper part of the vessel, just below the neck.

To define the vessel type, I considered the typological aspects in the present work, comparing them with the existing typologies of Margit Nagy, Zsófia Masek, and Vlad – Andrei Lăzărescu. The exterior and interior colors of the fragments were defined using the Munsell Soil Color Chart. The fabric type was defined based on the descriptive method of Matthew, Woods and Oliver, later also recommended by Orton. In the „Observations” section, my own remarks were included following the examination of the material, such as: traces from the potter's wheel on the inner or outer wall, traces of incomplete firing or overfiring, cutting marks from the

potter`s wheel, surface smoothing, or traces of secondary burning. The decorative types used are: straight incisions, wavy incisions, grooves, and *Keilstichverzierung*. For describing the type of firing, I developed my own method, which records the firing phases represented by the letters „O” – oxidative and „R” – reductive, and their representation in the case of consecutive firing sequences, indicating firing stages.

To contextualize the ceramic material from the cemetery of Șardu, and from the settlements at Turda – Castrum Legionis V Macedonica and Cluj – Napoca – Florești – Polus Center, it was also necessary to study the cemeteries and settlements. Row – grave cemeteries can be characterized by the W – E orientation of the graves, the inhumation rite, the presence of grave goods in gender – specific kits, and the organization of the graves in relatively parallel rows. In Transylvania, two phases of these cemeteries can be distinguished, and early and a later one. Regarding the ceramic inventory of the early phase, most vessels were produced on the potter`s wheel, although handmade vessels also occur. The repertoire of forms is relatively limited compared to the late phase. Most frequently appear vessels used for the consumption or serving of liquids (cups of various types and jugs) and different types of pots. Most of the vessels from this phase were fired in reducing atmosphere. The most frequent decorative technique is surface burnishing or application of burnished motifs, but straight incised lines, and wavy lines are also present.

The ceramic material from Șardu cemetery belongs to the first phase of these cemeteries. The Murga – type jug – tall variant and the Murga – type jugs – short variant are present only in the first phase of these cemeteries and are replaced by new types of jugs in the following phase. The biconical cups from this cemetery have burnished surface and are most frequently encountered in this phase of the row – grave cemeteries.

In the late phase of these cemeteries a greater variety of forms can be observed (this may also be due to the current state of research, since cemeteries of the late phase have been excavated in a larger number compared to funerary complexes and cemeteries of the early phase). A greater variety can be seen in the forms of cups and jugs. Stamped decoration also appears in this phase, which so far has not been found on vessels from the early phase.

The settlements of the Gepids are, in most cases, located near river courses, close to the main communication routes, in the areas of former Roman towns, and in zones rich in natural resources. The houses were built from natural materials such as wattle – and – daub, straw, reeds

and wood, using various construction techniques. Sunken – floored buildings (Gruberhäuser) could be of several types (sunken, semi – sunken or above ground) and occurred in various shapes.

The ceramic material from the settlements is usually much more fragmentary than that of the cemeteries. The forms present in the ceramic assemblages from settlements are more varied than those from cemeteries, fulfilling multiple functions: from food transport and storage, to thermal processing and serving.

The ceramic material from *Castrum Legionis V Macedonica* is relatively varied. In this settlement, seven types of fabric were identified (fine fabrics: PF1 – PF3, coarse fabrics: PZ1 – PZ3, and one coarse fabric used only for vessels made by hand: GRS), from which the studied vessels were made. The most frequently represented fabric is PF3, a relatively fine paste with more inclusions. This was most often used for the production of various types of pots. The predominant manufacturing technique is wheel – throwing, although hand – made ceramic fragments were also present. Most vessels were fired in a reducing atmosphere, but oxidatively fired fragments and shreds that underwent multiple firing sequences also represented.

Regarding the range of forms, we can observe that significant amount of fragments come from rims and bases of different types of pots. In addition, the presence of cups (e.g. elongated cups – P.E., and rounded cups – P.R.) various types of lids, handles, plates and bowls can also be noted. The most frequently used decorative technique is incision, but fragments decorated with grooves and even a stamped variant on the surface of some shreds are also present.

In the case of the ceramic material from the settlement at Cluj – Napoca – Florești – Polus Center, four types of fine fabrics (PF1 – PF4), five types of coarse fabrics (PZ1 – PZ5), and three types of very coarse fabrics used only for hand – made vessels (GRS1 – GRS3) were identified. The predominant manufacturing technique here as well is wheel throwing, though a smaller number of fragments come from hand – made vessels. As in the previous case, most fragments were fired in reducing atmosphere, but a smaller number were fired oxidatively, or went through several firing stages. As for vessel forms, a greater variety can be noted compared to the ceramic material from Turda – *Castrum Legionis V Macedonica* (a phenomenon which may also be explained by the larger number of fragments). Most fragments come from pots of various types, but cups, bowls, lids, handles, dolium – type vessels, and even one fragment of a strainer are also present. The most common decorative technique is incision and its variants



(vertical incisions, grooves), but some fragments with burnished surfaces or with various burnished motifs also occur.