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PhD THESIS

Late Antique/Early Medieval pottery in the Balkan Peninsula: A comparative study of Kosovo pottery

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Declaration

I, the undersigned Shipoli Elza (Neptun code: G2AIO2), by signing the present declaration, hereby declare that I wrote the thesis entitled "Late Antique/Early Medieval pottery in the Balkan Peninsula: A comparative study of Kosovo pottery", myself.

I declare that the thesis is my own, independent work, that I followed the rules of Act LXXVI of 1999 on Copyright during its preparation, and the rules on authoring the thesis as set out by the University, with special regard to references and quotes.

In addition to the above, I hereby declare that I have not misled my supervisor as regards independence during the preparation of my thesis.

Budapest, 2026

Shipoli Elza .....

Name

Acknowledgment

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This thesis is dedicated to all those who contribute to the study and preservation of the archaeological record, ensuring that the material traces of the past continue to inform and inspire future generations.

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PART I

1. Significance of the Study

The significance of conducting research on pottery from the Late Antiquity/Early Middle Ages in the Balkan Peninsula, particularly concerning Kosovo, is grounded in the comprehensive exploration of this subject. To date, no such studies have been conducted in this region, thus making a comparative analysis of the two periods in pottery a valuable contribution to the field. This research will enhance the understanding and importance of this topic, especially within the boundaries of Kosovo.

Pottery as one of the best forms that can explain a lot about the social, economic, commercial, and political status of a settlement also shows the development of that settlement. As one of the best forms of material culture, serve as a crucial indicator of the social, economic, trade, and political status of a settlement and reflect the overall development of that community.

In terms of academic contribution, this research, specifically presented in this thesis, will bring new insights and gather information that has not been previously documented regarding pottery in the Balkan countries for the indicated period.

Regarding the gap in the literature, our research focuses on a period that lacks extensive documentation, with few written accounts available. Furthermore, the existing texts primarily emphasize political events, leaving a significant void in other aspects of that period. Yet, recently, several topic publications for Late Antique/Early Medieval pottery in the Balkan Peninsula have made a significant contribution to this topic.

If we mention just Kosovo as a part of this topic, unfortunately, there are not enough publications, few of them or just mentioned as Late Antique pottery, not deep research or to make an analogy of it.

Mentioning the reasons above, I found it very attractive and interesting to give this topic an intensive and detailed study, so that researchers can find abundant information regarding Late Antiquity/Early Medieval period pottery on the Balkan Peninsula.

2. Structure of the Dissertation

The structure of the dissertation is separated into four parts, each with separated chapters.

Part I

The first part will include research, aims, methods, and background of the research with three chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Historical, Geographical, and Archaeological Background: Background and Context: Introduce the broad historical and archaeological context of the research.
1.2 Research Problems, Questions, and Aims:
1.3 Significance of the Study:
1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research approach and design

Part II

The second part will include three chapters as well.

Chapter 1. Composition of pottery in general and the firing process, compared with Late Antique/Early Medieval pottery.

Chapter 2. Types of pottery in the Late/Antiquity/Early Medieval period.

Chapter 3. Main differences of Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery.

Part III

The third part will be focused on the research dissertation, where chapters about Late Antique/Early Medieval pottery in the Balkan Peninsula will be presented.

Chapter 1. General overview of Late Antique/Early Medieval Period of Balkan Peninsula countries.

Chapter 2. Late Antique/Early Medieval pottery in Balkan Peninsula: a comparative study of Kosovo pottery. This chapter will be a detailed research of the dissertation topic, as the main part of the thesis, where will be precise data and study contributions about the topic.

Part IV

The fourth part will conclude the thesis. With the term conclusion, I want to explain the last part of the dissertation: the conclusion, bibliography, and the list of figures.

The mentioned parts and chapters will be the main structure of my thesis, where is a complete work of five years intensive studies, research and collection of bibliography, that will contribute in my thesis and also for young researchers on the future, where they could find enough material to understand the main characteristics of Late Antique/Early Medieval Period pottery.

3. Research Problems, Questions and Aims

The study of pottery can encompass various dimensions, including form, material, chemical composition, minerals, color, decoration, period, classification, typology, and analogy, depending on the perspective of the research[1].

The study of Late Antique pottery in the Balkan Peninsula represents a significant area of research, given that this region has been continuously inhabited for millennia. Exploring this topic provides valuable insights into the cultural and historical developments that have shaped the area.

This research aims to establish a comparative analysis between Late Antiquity/Early Medieval pottery of the Balkan Peninsula and pottery discovered in Kosovo. It is important to note that Kosovo pottery has not received the same level of scholarly attention or publication as other artifacts. This study intends to facilitate the examination and comparison of pottery within both the archaeological context and the specified period. Developing this analogy will enhance our understanding of the characteristics and cultural significance of pottery from Kosovo during Late Antiquity.

Objectives:

Objectives of my thesis topic will be focus in the main points of study of pottery. The study of Late Antique pottery (circa 3rd-7th centuries) serves several key objectives including different kinds of perspectives such as:

1. Chronology & Typology – Establishing typologies and dating frameworks for pottery styles, forms, and production techniques to aid in archaeological dating.
2. Trade & Economy – understanding trade networks, production centers, and economic structures by analyzing distribution patterns in pottery.
3. Cultural & Regional Identity—Identifying regional variations and influences in pottery styles to examine cultural interactions and identity formation.
4. Technological Developments – Studying changes in ceramic production techniques, including firing methods, clay composition, and decoration styles.

[1] RICE 1987, 3; ER 2011, 12; GIBSON – WOODS 1990, 5.

5. Daily Life & Consumption – Examining the role of pottery in food storage, cooking, and tableware to understand diet, domestic practices, and social customs.
6. Religious & Symbolic Uses – investigating pottery with religious motifs or inscriptions to explore beliefs, rituals, and sacred practices.
7. Site Function & Urbanism – Using pottery assemblages to interpret the function of archaeological sites, including urban centers, rural settlements, and military sites.
8. Cooking & Dinning – Various wares served for cooking, eating, and dining.
9. Storage & Transport – Amphorae carried goods like oil, grain, and wine.

Hypotheses:

As for the hypotheses of Late Antique pottery in the Balkans firstly this period is a board and complex field, with various hypotheses concerning its production, distribution, and socio-economic significance. There are several points about Late Antique pottery in the Balkans hypotheses such as the following:

1. There is an ongoing debate among scholars regarding whether ceramic production experienced disruption or continuity from the Roman period into Late Antiquity. Some argue that there were gradual technological and stylistic changes, while others suggest that there was a more abrupt shift resulting from economic decline, political instability, or changes in consumer preferences[2].
2. Researcher García Vargas, E., 2011[3], indicates urban centers continued relying on imported fine wares and amphorae, whereas according to Hárshegyi, P., & Ottományi, K. 2013[4] rural areas increasingly utilized local coarse wares.
3. There are some cases where there are visible changes in pottery in religious aspects, such as crosses in ceramic vessels or oil lamps, this affects also Late Antique pottery as well.
4. As for the quantity of the Late Antique pottery, considering the time and the crises of this period, we can say that comparing with previous period such as

[2] BONIFAY – REYNOLDS 2023, 2.
[3] GARCÍA VARGAS 2011, 77-78.
[4] HÁRSHEGYI – OTTOMÁNYI 2013, 471-473.

Roman Period, it can be lower, interpreting this from economic, social and trade aspects.

5. If we dig deeper and make a detailed review we can emphasize into the hypotheses that during this period the transportation was quite rare due to a very complex period, therefore it could be more common to have local workshops to each of areas, where also one of the best examples could be the so-called *pythos* ceramic, where people used to buried underground to save the cereals, wine, olive oil during Late Roman period[5].

The mentioned hypotheses could give a different overview of Late Antique pottery in the Balkans, always comparing the places and political, economic, social, and geographic aspects that will be mentioned in my thesis.

[5] GIANNOPOULOU 2010, 44.

Chapter 1

1.1. Historical, geographical, political, and social background of Balkan Peninsula

1.1.2 .*Prehistory and earliest evidence*

As an area with cultural differences from prehistory to the Middle Ages, the Balkan Peninsula has many traces of cultural, social, historical, and archaeological aspects in all the countries that are part of it. The territories of the countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia over the centuries have formed and exchanged cultures that today make up the people who live in these territories. Throughout history, the peninsula has consistently been referred to by the name of the mountain range that prominently features in its northern plains. Historical and archaeological evidence of this region starts from the upper Paleolithic until the Ottoman period, where each period left its traces in different ways, there is evidence of caves, lakes, mountains, hills, archaeological settlements that are in flat geographical positions, and so on. As has been increasingly remarked on feature of Late Antique and Early Byzantine period history in the Balkans, is its marginal position in much of the studies both ancient and modern. Since its initial introduction in the late 19th century, the concept of 'southeast Europe" has served as an alternative geographical identity for the Balkan region. The German geographer Zeune was the first person to refer to the region as the Balkan Peninsula, who substituted the previous designation of the peninsula as "European Turkey" with the term "Balkanhalbinsel".The etymology of the Balkan name according to the latter interpretation served as the foundation for the new derivative: "balyk+an" as 'Balkan' which is commonly translated as 'wooded mountain(s), however, a more accurate collective interpretation might be 'mountains with swampy forests', and this derivative continues to be relevant today in the internationally recognized geographical term: the Balkans[6].

The biggest lake, Ohrid, is remarkable because it is a steep-sided graben created through rifting, whereas the majority of lakes, like Prespa is a result of karst processes and, therefore, represent a specific type of lake that is especially prevalent in the Balkans compared to many other regions of Europe; both are dissolution basins that have

[6] STACHOWSKI 2013, 618.

experienced ongoing subsidence since their inception[7]. Several lakes in the Balkan Peninsula offer not just history but also archaeological traces such as Ohrid lake, where they have been found palafites settlements at Lin, Pogradec, and other artifacts such as pottery that suggest a life during prehistory, as one of the oldest in Europe[8].

A lot of Bronze Age period settlements are also in the Balkan Peninsula, and sometimes it has the same continuing life also in the medieval period, this is shown in several cases, one of them is Ulpiana, which means life has been continuing in that place for centuries[9].

Historically, the Balkan region has been marked by instability, characterized by small states that date back to the classical Greek city-states, largely due to its mountainous terrain, which tends to isolate human settlements in distinct river valleys and elevated plateaus[10]. In the Balkan Peninsula, a significant difference existed between Illyricum and Thrace to the north, and Macedonia and Greece to the south; prior to the Roman conquest, the northern regions were populated by extensive tribal groups who resided in dispersed villages[11].

Throughout history, various groups, including the Romans, Goths, Avars, Slavs, Byzantines, Tatars, Turks, Venetians, Austrians, Russians, and Germans, have conducted military campaigns in these hills, resulting in widespread destruction and death[12].

1.1.3. *Roman Period*

During the Roman period, most settlements took place in a flat geographical position that was better suited to developing a way of life that met the necessary needs. By 9 A.D., the Empire had extended its control to the Danube, as Rome advanced into the imperial age, an unprecedented era of civilization and security began for the Balkans, where great cities were built, and great roads were constructed[13].

[7] REED-KRYSTUFEK-EASTWOOD 2004, 17.
[8] REPORT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE OHRID REGION (ALBANIA/REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA) 2024, 31.
[9] BERISHA 2016, 17.
[10] HUPCHICK – COX 2001, 1.
[11] JONES 1964, 716.
[12] STILLMAN 1964, 11.
[13] STILLMAN 1964, 25.

The Roman period was very fruitful in the Balkan Peninsula a lot of settlements established were they contributed to the creation of a stable and civilized lifestyle, with different kinds of cities Roman ranks started from the veteran *colonia* of Scupi, going further to the territory of Kosovo with the second highest rank of the Roman cities known as Municipium that were in Ulpiana and Municipium D.D[14].

1.1.4. *Late Roman / Early Byzantine (3rd – 6th century)*

During the late 3rd century, the Shkodra basin, along with the western part of Kosovo, was formally separated from the province of Dalmatia, leading to the creation of the province known as Praevalitana (or Praevalis), further to the south, the geographic region of Illyris, which lies west of the natural watershed and stretches along the picturesque coastline between the rivers Drin and Aous, was extracted from Macedonia to establish the new province of New Epirus, consequently, the ancient territory situated to the south was designated as Old Epirus, reflecting its historical significance and continuity[15].

The Danube, since ancient times, has been a very important river that helped to make connections to and from the Balkan Peninsula, to exchange culture, and traditions and to make a difference between people's lifestyles. Through their military expertise, the Romans established the Danube as a natural defense line against tribal raiders, however, while it functioned as a strategic obstacle, the Danube also served as the natural pathway for any potential invaders coming from the frozen northern territories[16]. Constantine the Great was the first to acknowledge the strategic significance of the peninsula when he moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium[17]. Consequently, the Balkan Peninsula emerged as a defensive structure that safeguarded the capital of the Empire from the northern and western fronts, it also served as a significant battleground where numerous conflicts occurred, fought in the name of preserving the civilized world[18]. Until his final day, Constantine battled against the Barbarians, and while he

[14] TEICHNER 2015, 287.
[15] WILKES 2010, 741.
[16] SCHEVILL 1922, 7.
[17] MYLONAS 1947, 3; MÓCSY 1974, 312-313.
[18] MYLONAS 1947, 9.

may not have been able to obliterate their kingdom, he certainly reinstated the honor of Byzantine military forces in the Balkan Peninsula[19].

The political landscape of the later Roman state was primarily influenced by three land regions: the Balkans, Asia Minor, and the Middle East extending to the Euphrates and south to Egypt; by the two seas that both divided and connected them, namely the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean, along with the Black Sea; and by the geographically peripheral, yet politically significant, territories of Italy and the North African holdings of the empire[20].

The era known as Late Antiquity is characterized by locations or sites that can be identified at different times from the predominantly undefended rural settlements based on their status, structure, size, location, or related functions, for example in the north of Danube was relinquished earlier, with limes moving back in the 3rd century, where the end of Roman period generally associated in the 5th century, while in central and southern Balkan, was later due Christianization, urban life transformation, fortifications, that went up to 6th -7th centuries[21].

1.1.5. *Migration Period*

In 250, approximately 70.000 Goths laid siege to Durostorum but were driven back, while in 267, a significant raid occurred when a forced of 320.000 Goths, Herulae, Bastarnae, Gepids, Greutungae and Tervungae ravaed the area[22].

In 376, a tribe of Germanic people called the Goths sought permission to cross the Danube River and enter the Roman Empire as they were escaping from nomadic invaders from Central Asia known as the Huns[23].

The latter part of the 4th century marked the onset of a tumultuous and violent period characterized by invasions, during which numerous barbarians inundated the Balkan Peninsula[24]. With the destabilization of the Roman crises until the 4th century, this region got an invasion of different populations such as Goths, Huns and Avars, who

[19] BURY 1923, 13.
[20] HALDON 1990, 10.
[21] DUNN 1994, 60.
[22] ANGELOVA – BUCHVAROV 2007, 62.
[23] DAILEADER 2004, 27.
[24] CHEKREZI 1919, 20; SARANTIS 2018, 219.

crossed into the Balkans and robbed, destroyed, and demolished Roman cities. This made a new way for the indigenous population to look for a new place to build their living place, and the best way to have control over the new invasions was to move up to the hills, where they created their fortifications, which are quite high in number in this area. The Goths were a significant issue in the Balkans, leaving a lasting impact on the region, after centuries of destruction and turmoil caused by the Goths, the peoples of the Balkans became weaker and less able to resist subsequent invaders[25].

The Huns led by Attila, were known for their ruthless tactics; it's evident that Attila, leveraging his vast army of subjects, was willing to expend lives in direct assaults, as detailed in historical evidences, whereas in the northern Balkans, nearly all significant cities fell, with Naissus being joined by Viminacium, Ratiaria, Philippopolis, Arcadipolis, and Constantia; the damage was so vast that it could be said that only Adrianople and Heracleia by the Sea of Marmara remained[26]. Attila, exhausted from devastating the Balkans, finally set his sights on the prosperous land of the West[27].

In the 5th century, a comprehensive historical account is lacking; however, the writings of Priscus and Malchus which focus mainly in diplomatic matters, provide significant insights into interactions with Huns and Goths, along with some pertinent observations regarding the circumstances in the Balkan[28]. In the 6th century, according to a new version of the *Miracula*, the prefect responsible for the *Miracles of Saint Demetrius* traveled Greece, to gather taxes; a century later, the write of the second collection of the book, makes it even clearer that the Avars and Sklavens devastated nearly all of Illyricum, which includes the provinces of the two Pannonias, the two Dacias, Dardania, Moesia, Prevalitane, Rhodope, as well, as Thrace and the areas of the long walls of Byzantium[29].

After the Huns' devastating attacks in the mid-5th century, in the second half of the same century written information concerning construction in the Balkan provinces is very rare, as these areas were continuously under the threat of Ostrogothic and Bulgarian attacks[30].

[25] FINE 1991, 22.
[26] WHITBY 2008, 709.
[27] JONES 1964, 1031.
[28] WHITBY 2008, 703.
[29] CHARANIS 1970, 229-230.
[30] BĂJENARU 2010, 37.

The 6th century brought a lot of damages in the empire that causes a lot of changes especially from the invasions by the Persians, and then the Arabs in the East, Slavic incursions into the Balkans, Lombard movements into Italy, and Franks fought among themselves[31].

The researcher Kaplan asserts that the Balkan region, encompassing present day North Macedonia, was undergoing a significant demographic decline by the year 530, marked by a diminishing population number and shifting societal structures[32].

A significant Slav raid that reached the coastal city of Dyrrachium in the year 548 likely followed a strategic corridor from Naissus to Scodra, traversing through the mountainous region of Kosovo, where two years later, the Slavs who migrated southwestward from the Serdica area sought refuge for the winter months in the province of Dalmatia, probably adhering to the same established route that facilitated their earlier movement[33].

In the year 549 Gemanus, through the generous distribution of the substantial funds received from the emperor, as well as additional contributions from his personal finances, he successfully assembled a remarkably large contingent of capable soldiers, primarily sourced from the regions of Thrace and Illyricum, additionally this endeavor was part of a broader strategy to enhance the expeditionary forces, which typically involved conducting recruitment campaigns in select areas, notably within the Balkan and eastern Asia Minor, by offering attractive incentives[34].

Procopius mentioned that in 551 the Slavs gathered in immense numbers, that made a new invasion of Illyria, and, despite the presence of Roman army covered the roads with corpses, and returned home with an immerse prey, paying a stater of gold for each captive's head to the Gepades[35].

In a challenge to mainstream analyses of the period, A. Sarantis[36] resists a teleological reading and argues that by carefully examining the immediate context of events rather

[31] LIEBESCHUETZ 1992, 35-36.
[32] DUNN 2005, 269.
[33] WILKES 2010, 749.
[34] JONES 1964, 668.
[35] PROCOPE TRANS. ISAMBERT 1856, 733.
[36] SARANTIS 2009, 38.

than the eventual outcome, it was the Gepids rather than the Sclavenes who posed the major threat to the Balkan until the 560s[37].

The stream of Slavic colonization which had begun in some places at the end of the 6th century, had poured in an irresistible flood over the whole Balkan Peninsula early in the 7th century after the failure of the Danubian campaigns of Maurice and the complete collapse of the old system in the time of Phocas[38].

The Byzantine defenses definitely collapsed at the beginning of the 7th century, and the Slavs then spread throughout the Balkan Peninsula, whose history they would profoundly mark the present day[39].

By the end of the reign of Phocas, the Slav occupation of much of the Balkans, and the existence of the Avar dominion, had severed any regular and direct land link between the Greek-speaking southern Balkans and the Latin-speaking provinces around the Danube[40]. For the Lombards, settled to the north-west of the Gepids, had asked the Avars for their assistance in their war with the latter[41].

Avars, Slavs, and Bulgars overran the old Danube frontier and much of the Balkans, though the imperial government still clung to coastal strongholds like Thessalonica or Monemvasia[42]. As for the Avars, they also left a mark on history, particularly in their interaction with the Romans, where the territory under Diocletia's control extended to the banks of the Danube River, Romans managed to defeat these unprepared nations, seizing treasures and captives before returning, and from that moment on, the Romans established two rotating garrisons that served from Easter to Easter, often timing their shifts so that those returning from duty would meet those departing for service on Great and Holy Saturday[43].

At 623 fits in perfectly with events like the Slavs revolt and the Avar attack, lack of Byzantine army in the Balkan area, while according to Theophanes the Byzantines were in that region in 619[44].

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[37] WOOD 2017, 168.
[38] OSTROGORSKY 1959B, 4.
[39] FERJANČIĆ 1984, 85; CURTA 2001, 59.
[40] HALDON 1990, 404.
[41] HALDON 1990, 32.
[42] MCCORMICK 1995, 351
[43] BECK *ET AL.,* 1967, 123.
[44] STRATOS 1968, 147.

The Slavs provided some of the manpower not only for the Avars, but also for the thematic armies, both in the Balkans and in Anatolia[45].

The fact is that the Avars evacuated the Balkan Peninsula in 626, pursued by the Byzantine army, after which they disappeared all at once both from the Byzantine political horizon and from its history[46].

An immerse of multitude of the so called Barbarian tribes, crossed the Danube, as they had done before, but in the smaller numbers and ravaged Europe, from the Ionian Gulf, to the suburbs of Byzantium, they took thirty-two forts in Illyria and returned to them with 120.000 captives[47].

After the Avars had been thrown out and Singidunum recaptured in 626-627, the part of the Balkan Peninsula remaining to Byzantium, that is, Macedonia, a section of Dalmatia and Moesia, Dacia, Thrace, the mainland of Greece, the Peleponnese, went on being governed by the Praefectus Praetorio Illyrici with its center at Thessaloniki[48]. During 630s it was only after they have been assured of an increase in the annual subsidy that the Avars consented to make a new peace treaty with the Byzantines, where it is possible that tribes subject of the Avars entered the Northern regions of the Balkan Peninsula during the first half of the 7th century, as Byzantine control was either non-existent or sketchy[49].

This spatial structure implies deurbanization in parts of the East, in the 6th century Balkans and 7th century Anatolia[50]. In the 7th century, the Balkans, particularly the central and northern regions, seem to have seen a population collapse, resulting in extensive portions of land becoming uninhabited[51].

Bulgars referes to a group from the steppe regions from Central Asia, with Turkic language[52]. During the 7th century was the Bulgaria of the Danube and that of Volga, where some of them migrated from the pressure of Khazars to the Volga bend and others to the lower course of the Danube[53]. Eventually, Khan Asparukh escaped over

[45] FINE 1991, 70.
[46] STRATOS 1968, 315.
[47] PROCOPE TRANS. ISAMBERT 1856, 734.
[48] STRATOS 1968, 321.
[49] STRATOS 1968, 145.
[50] WICKHAM 2005, 638.
[51] CURTA 2013, 145.
[52] ZIEMANN 2026, 165.
[53] JORMA 2019, 55.

the Dnieper and the Dniester Rivers, setting up himself and his supporters just north of the Danube Delta, in an area referred to as Oglos, which is quite probable that he was already there by year 670[54]. Led by Khan Asparuh, a group of Bulgars moved westward and ultimately settled in the northeastern Balkans, founding the First Bulgarian Empire in 681[55]. The three earthworks between the Prut and the Dniester known as the Bessarabian dikes may be connected to his stay in the area north of the Danube; it was from this area that the Bulgars started attacking the parts of the eastern Balkans that were still under Byzantine rule[56].

Armenia played a pivotal role during the insurrection in 703 and sought Arab aid; nevertheless, in 704, it revolted once again against the Arabs, appealing for Roman participation in the conflict, while Tiberius may have initiated actions in the southern Balkans against numerous Slavic groups[57].

The Slavs show up within the Royal Frankish Annals firstly during 780, and thereafter the Veleti, Sorbs, Smeldingi, Linones, and notably the Obodrites[58].

According to the indications of Nicephorus, Kuvrat revolted against the authority of the Avar Khagan and drove the Avars out of his country; he apparently succeeded because of the collapse of Avar power after the Khagan's defeat near Constantinople just as, at about the same time, the Croats succeeded in ousting the Avars from the western part of the Balkan peninsula, at the other end of the Empire[59]. On the other hand Kuver, having been appointed by the Khagan to be leader of the Byzantine community which, drawn from all parts of the Balkans, had been settled in the region of Sirmium, in Pannonia, Kuver withdrew his allegiance from the Avar chief and, at the head of the Byzantine populations subject to him, moved into Macedonia, and even sought, through a stratagem, to take possession of Salonica[60].

[54] CURTA 2001, 79.
[55] SARNO *ET AL*., 2025, 2.
[56] CURTA 2001, 80.
[57] HALDON 1990, 76.
[58] CAROLINGIAN CHRONICLES 1970, 14.
[59] OSTROGORSKY 1959B, 16.
[60] OSTROGORSKY 1959B, 17.

Only South of Italy, which, together with the Balkan region of Illyricum, was annexed to the Patriarchate of Constantinople by the Iconoclasts in the middle of the 8th century, period within the orbit of Byzantine influence thereafter[61].

For more than two centuries, from 585-805 South of the Balkan Peninsula was occupied by the Slavs[62].

1.1.6. *Late Roman Administration and economy*

During the late 4th century, the Empire was organized into four major regions (prefectures) for civil administration: (1) Gaul, which included Britain, Gaul, Spain, and the northwestern part of Africa; (2) Italy, covering Africa, Italy itself, the territories between the Alps and the Danube, and the northwestern segment of the Balkan peninsula; (3) Illyricum, the smallest prefecture, encompassing the provinces of Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece; and (4) the East, which consisted of the Asiatic territories, along with Thrace in the northern part of Europe and Egypt in the southern region[63].

In recent decades, there has been notable progress in Late Roman archaeology, making it a platform for evaluating various theoretical frameworks related to the arrangement of diverse activities and the characteristics of socio-economic changes[64]. Research into the creation, distribution, and practical analysis of pottery has demonstrated significant value of the mentioned models[65].

The presence of balances and weights – a distinctive Balkan feature of late 6th century hoarding behavior, strongly suggests that donative were paid in gold[66].

It is thought that coins from the 4th and 5th centuries were used alongside coinage made by 6th century emperors in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, that were unearthed within forts in the central Balkan area[67]. The specific method of exchanging goods and services in the northern Balkans during the 6th century was a response to the total disintegration of the

[61] OSTROGORSKY 1959B, 8.
[62] JENKINS 1966, 12-13.
[63] VASILIEV 1952, 64.
[64] BIKIĆ 2023, 57.
[65] BIKIĆ 2023, 57.
[66] CURTA 2017, 441
[67] CURTA 2017, 443.

villa economy and the lack of substantial local food production, which could have established the foundation for marketplace organization[68].

The increase in research regarding the medieval Byzantine economy has been significant, particularly in areas like new comprehensive economic histories, studies on the contributions of Western, Muslim and Jewish merchants in Constantinople and its surrounding regions, as well as the continuous editing of archives from provincial estates; along with Venetian and early Ottoman records that discuss Late Medieval production, trade, and taxation in former Byzantine territories, despite, the challenges posed by the less-than-ideal preservation of various sources, it is feasible to investigate certain broad historical inquiries[69].

Sea transport usually costs less but takes a longer arrival time, especially if there are weather challenges, meanwhile, land transport is also quite slow, in comparison to good weather on sea transport[70].

1.1.7. *Roman Emperors from the Balkans and Late Roman leadership*

There are three Roman Emperors that had a very big influence at that time and their origin is from Balkan. Three of them were Diocletian, Constantine the Great, and Justinian.

Diocletian was a Roman Emperor who was born in Balkan, in Dalmatia, probably in 243, in Salona, where he grew up with the name of Diocles[71]. Diocletian is known for his tetrarchy. The ongoing negotiations between claims for piecemeal and wholesale implementation of new provinces and dioceses underscore the broader issue of the motivations that led to the formation of the Tetrarchy in 293 and, consequently, Diocletian's political agenda[72] Under Diocletian's reign, significant reforms made to provincial administration were implemented, resulting in the elimination of the distinction between senatorial and imperial provinces, with all provinces now directly under the authority of the emperor[73].

[68] CURTA 2017, 450.
[69] DUNN 2004, 21.
[70] JONES 1964, 842.
[71] WILLIAMS 2000, 22.
[72] REES 2004, 26.
[73] VASILIEV 1952, 63.

Constantine the Great was born in Naissus, about 274[74], he is remembered as someone who made Christianity the main religion of Rome known as Edict of Milan[75], and created Constantinople. Constantine had been contemplating the relocation of the capital for an extended period he considered several locations, including Naissus, which is regarded as his birthplace, as well as Serdica[76].

Another Roman Emperor who was born in the Balkan, and who made an impact during the Late Roman Period was Justinian. Such roots were quite common among Roman Emperors, particularly among the Eastern Roman leaders from the era's right before and after[77]. Justinian earned lasting recognition for his achievements as a legislator and codifier, directing the systematic compilation and reform of Roman law into a unified legal code known as the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, which preserved Roman legal traditions and profoundly influenced the development of modern legal systems.In the year 482, in Tauresium, a village located in the Roman province of Scupi (now known as Skopje) in Illyria, Flavius Petrus Sabbatius was born, after his uncle took a full paternal interest in him, he renamed him Justinian at the age of twelve[78].

1.1.8. *Justinian era and Byzantine context*

During the reign of Justinian, the administrative organization of the Balkan provinces remained largely the same, even if some of the territories were reconfigured[79]. In the time of the Justinian period, the state was clear that: Goths in Europe, Vandals in North Africa, and Persia in the East, western, eastern Illyricum, and Thrace were in Gothic hands[80]. The Visigoths, another tribe, had seized nearly the entire Iberian Peninsula by 475 where they faced defeat at the hands of the Franks in the Battle of Vouillé in 507, which resulted in the loss of their territories in Gaul, consequently, the Visigoth kingdom was confined entirely to Spain, where it persisted until the early 8th century[81].

[74] COLEMAN 1914, 112.
[75] SMITH 1971, 178.
[76] HOLSAPPLE 1942, 306.
[77] BARKER 1966, 64.
[78] SALTI - VENTURINI 1999, 5.
[79] BĂJENARU 2010, 14.
[80] WOOD 2017, 166.
[81] DAILEADER 2004, 30.

After the break-up of Justinian's restored Roman Empire in the West, the mass incursion of the Slavs into the Balkan peninsula, and the very rapid conquests of the Arabs in the East, Byzantine power was confined within territorial limits which were, by comparison, quite modest[82].

1.1.9. *Byzantine crisis and transformation*

From the territories that had fallen under Arab domination only three Oriental patriarchs themselves were represented, since, according to tradition, an ecumenical council was hardly possible without participation, whereas from the Balkan lands there was only a handful of metropolitans and bishops, largely from cities which, like Thessalonica and a few coastal town of Thrace and Greece, had been able to survive the Slave invasion[83].

F. Dvornik emphases that in Illyricum was a destruction of Christianity, because to this territory came under control the jurisdiction of the Roman See, that had established the metropolitan of Thessalonica as a special apostolic vicar for Illyricum, the main factor that the Christian civilization was destroyed in Illyricum was the Avars and Slavs, this brought a quite difficult communication between East and West, including here also the Arab control extension over the Mediterranean Sea[84].

The trauma from the Arab assaults and triumphs, the loss of the East, the devastation of much of Anatolia, and the significant siege from 674 to 678, alongside the erosion of effective imperial authority in most of the Balkans, compounded by the gradual decline of urban centers as vital social, economic, and political entities within both state and society, profoundly impacted the situation, while this upheaval once again called into question the legitimating theories of imperial political ideology, creating a chasm between the reality of actual events and the conventional narrative depiction of the world[85].

[82] OSTROGORSKY 1959B, 3.
[83] OSTROGORSKY 1959A, 55.
[84] DVORNIK 1956, 44.
[85] HALDON 1990, 440.

Thus, while the great majority of Balkan bishoprics known from early Byzantine sources are absent from the episcopal lists of the 680s and 692s, the bishoprics of Asia Minor continue for the most part to be represented[86].

Two fundamental reactions to the seventh military crisis shaped the Byzantine Empires army; the first step was the stationing of army groups known as *themata* in military districts as themes, where four of them were mentioned in 687[87].

The *themes*, as administrative areas, were inaugurated later on, when danger began to threaten the Balkan Peninsula, where the first *thema* in the Balkan was found in Thrace in 7th century in order to control Bulgarian expansion[88].

According to Ibn-Khordâdhbeh, taking his reference at the time of his visit to the Empire, in around the 840s, there were ten fortified towns in the theme of Thrace, as against three in the theme of Macedonia[89].

At the end of the 7th century, there were two themes in the Balkan Peninsula, that of Thrace, which probably embraced those regions of the former Thracian diocese which had remained intact after the Slavic colonization and the setting up of the Bulgarian state, and the theme of Hellas, which seems to have comprised Central Greece[90].

Monastic centers thrived in the Aegean region, western Asia Minor, Cappadocia, the Pontus, and some portions of the Balkans, namely those territories remaining under the empire post-7th century[91].

The dioceses of Dacia and Thrace provide a general image of the Late Roman and Early Byzantine defensive constructions in the Balkan area[92] where the frontier between the prefecture of the Orient and Illyricum ran through the Balkan Peninsula[93].

[86] OSTROGORSKY 1959A, 57-58.
[87] OXFORD DICTIONARY OF BYZANTIUM 1991, 184.
[88] STRATOS 1968, 321-322.
[89] OSTROGORSKY 1959A, 62.
[90] OSTROGORSKY 1959B, 7.
[91] HALDON 1990, 294.
[92] BĂJENARU 2010, 11.
[93] BĂJENARU 2010, 13.

1.1.10. *Early Medieval developments in the Balkan Peninsula*

Bulgarians started to rise and become stronger in any aspect that they created their kingdom, where they began to rule over a few places including some places Balkan Peninsula. Bulgarian kingdom ruled in Balkans during 815-1018 where they also left Slavic traces in language[94]. Between the years 830 and 880, the Bulgarians exhibited significant aggression, instilling fear within the territories they conquered, which were previously under the control of the Byzantine Empire. In the year 851, they advanced into the territories of modern central North Macedonia and southern Albania, successfully capturing the cities of Ohrid and Devolli[95]. While in 850s the Bulgars pushed westwards until they had taken over Kosovo[96]. During the reign of Simeon from 894 to 927, Bulgaria attained its most significant territorial expansion, encompassing nearly all of territory of modern Central and Lower Albania, while in the year 913, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII acknowledged Simeon with the title of 'Emperor of Bulgaria'[97].

The Early Medieval period witnessed a remarkable array of political, social, economic, and cultural transformations that fundamentally reshaped the landscape of present-day Europe. During this era, the decline of the Western Roman Empire gave rise to new kingdoms, Christianity spread across the continent, feudal structures began to emerge, and evolving legal, religious, and cultural institutions laid the foundations for the development of medieval European civilization. The migration and settlement of the Slavs introduced new cultural dynamics, while the emergence of new administrative systems laid the groundwork for governance that was more complex and structured[98]. Additionally, the establishment of an innovative military framework redefined defense strategies and territorial control where this era also saw the rise of powerful kingdoms that adopted fresh perspectives on political organization, ultimately giving birth to a novel conception of statehood and empire. These developments not only marked the beginning of a new chapter in history but also set the stage for the evolution of society, culture, and governance in the region.

[94] DEMIRAJ 2004, 191.
[95] IBRAHIMI 2003, 21.
[96] MALCOLM 1998, 27.
[97] ISLAMI 2002, 186.
[98] GRETZINGER *ET AL.*, 2025, 399.

Following a decade of conflict with the Byzantines, the situation deteriorated significantly, despite these challenges, Bulgaria successfully strengthened its independence in the last third of the 9th century by accepting Christianity and expanding its territory beyond the Balkan Mountains[99].

The connections with Bulgaria during the era of the Macedonian emperors held great importance for the Empire. However, during King Simeon's reign, Bulgaria emerged as a serious adversary of the Byzantine Empire, posing a threat even to the capital and the authority of the Emperor. The rulers of the Macedonian dynasty ultimately subdued this kingdom and converted it into a province of the Byzantine Empire[100].

Following the latter half of the 11th century, Diocleia emerged as a significant power in the Balkans confronting Byzantium, where its leader, Michael, ultimately allied with Western Rome, which led to him receiving a crown from the pope in 1077[101].

1.1.11. *Geography and Natural setting*

In Europe, the tribal system remained fully intact into the 12th century only on the Balkan Peninsula, tracing back to its earliest written references where Strabo provides a detailed description of the Illyrian and Epirotic tribes that inhabited the eastern coast of the Adriatic during his era and had recently been conquered by Rome[102]. The Thracians and Illyrians are recognized as the earliest historically noted inhabitants, and it is believed that the Albanians are their descendants; they hold a similar significance in the Balkan as the Basques do in Western Europe[103].

This region of Europe is characterized by a diverse landscape that includes numerous mountains, rivers, lakes, and hills, making it an ideal environment for agricultural activities. The area supports the cultivation of a wide array of fruits, vegetables, and seeds, benefiting from a stable climate that is favorable for livestock production.

These animals provide food sources such as meat, fat, and dairy products, while their skins have traditionally served as protection against the harsh conditions on cold days

[99] FINE 1987, 27.
[100] VASILIEV 1952, 315; TAKÁCS 2014, 138-139.
[101] FINE 1991, 281.
[102] DURHAM 1928, 13.
[103] NEWMAN 1945, 8.

during the winter months. Key features include high environmental stability, geographical and climatic variety, and the existence of land bridges[104].

A historical overview of the Balkan Peninsula has to do with its geographical position. The Balkan Peninsula is characterized as an irregular, inverted triangle of land that extends from Central Europe in the north to the Eastern Mediterranean in the south. It is largely surrounded by the Adriatic, Ionian, Aegean, and Black Seas on most sides[105]. The rivers that are present in the region are the Danube and its tributaries: Drava, Sava, Morava, Vardar, Drin, and Shkumbin which also played an important part in the development of this area[106]. Rivers such as the Drin, Shkumbin, Vjosa and Vardar flow from the mountainous regions to the Aegean Sea[107].

Kosovo has been an independent nation since 2008, from geographical area is areas is characterized by various mountain ranges and hills, with the highest peak being Sharr; on the western side of Kosovo, the Bjeshkët e Nemura extend northwards from the Albanian massif into Montenegro, while the boundaries of Kosovo follow another mountain range until they reach Kopaonik range[108] and has the highest concentration of mineral wealth in all of southeastern Europe[109].

In terms of topography, Southeastern Europe features three prominent mountain ranges: The Balkan Ranges, which are a continuation of the Carpathians, lie south of the Danube in northeastern Serbia and northern Bulgaria; next are the Dinaric Ranges, which extend southeast from the Julian Alps, running parallel to the Adriatic coastline up to the mouth of the Drin River and then continue inland to the Morava-Vardar depression; finally, the Rhodope Mountains traverse the Morava-Vardar depression and extend southeast, partially surrounding Bulgaria's Maritsa Valley, which is located within the Rumelian, or Thracian Basin[110].

The Balkan Mountains constitute the straight extension of the northward-oriented Alpine-Carpathian band traversing Bulgaria from west to east[111]. As for the highest point it is a mountainous, densely forested area that includes Musalla Peak which, at

[104] KRYŠTUFEK – REED 2004, 4-5.
[105] REED-KRYSTUFEK-EASTWOOD 2004, 10.
[106] JELAVICH 1983, 1-2.
[107] HUPCHICK – COX 2001, 5.
[108] MALCOLM 1998, 1-2.
[109] MALCOLM 1998, 4.
[110] HOFFMAN 1963, 12.
[111] AGER 1980, 413.

2925 meters, is the tallest mountain in the Balkan Peninsula, being slightly higher-although less holy-than Mount Olympos[112].

Every mountain range has its own unique tectonic and sedimentary background; they all exhibit intricate folding and faulting due to Alpine orogenesis, but to varying extents[113].

Periods of crises and transformation, such as the instability of the 3rd century and the Gothic invasions, or even earlier during the time of the Antonine plague, likely brought about changes in economic systems, settlement patterns, production methods, and consumer behavior, where archaeological discoveries have shown that during these times, the economy was strong and rural areas experienced significant prosperity, however, these changes were not straightforward or sudden, and in many regions, life continued much as it had before, maintaining a similar level of vitality through at least the 6th century[114].

The economy during the Late Antique period in Northern Illyricum including Adriatic Sea, mountains, Dacia and Macedonia up to Peloponnese, primarily focused on providing resources for both military stationed along the *limes*, which included resident garrisons, and the local inhabitants whereas, according to the mid-4th century text from *Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium*, the output in the provinces of Moesia and Dacia was adequate, even in light of the harsh of winter conditions[115].

The economic impact of handing over thousands of pounds of gold to the Huns was significant, and while Priscus felt sorrow for the senators who had to sell their furniture and their wives' jewelry, it may not be warranted for these usual beneficiaries of privilege, nonetheless, all taxpayers had to bear the burden during a time when revenues from the Balkan Peninsula provinces were diminished due to extensive destruction[116].

From archaeological evidence, it is widely acknowledged that the cities of the Balkan experienced devastation and economic deterioration during the Gothic invasions of the

[112] AGER 1980, 435.
[113] REED-KRYSTUFEK-EASTWOOD 2004, 14.
[114] EVANGELIDIS 2022, 8-9.
[115] IVANIŠEVIĆ 2016, 89.
[116] WHITBY 2008, 711.

3rd century, still, it is considered as evident that the Diocletian reforms of the military and administration rejuvenated cities across the Balkan provinces[117].

G. Ostrogrsky, along with various scholars, contended that the persistent presence of gold coins at numerous Anatolian and Balkan sites during the 7th century, despite being less abundant than in the 6th or 9th centuries, nonetheless indicated the ongoing existence of a relatively robust 'monetary' economy and a commendable level of commercial activity[118].

1.1.12. Continuity and change: The Eastern Roman Influence in the Balkan and Southern Europe, 6th – 9th Century

The praetorian prefecture of Illyricum was theoretically composed of thirteen provinces, including Pannonia of Sirmium, and was divided into two dioceses: Dacia and Macedonia, additionally this administrative structure was more than just theoretical; evidence shows that the role of praetorian prefect of Illyricum continues to be utilized at least until the end of the 6th century, where by 604, the prefecture established in Thessalonica still maintained both a Dacian and Macedonian dioceses[119].

The last indication is that the conciliar lists and episcopal announcements, which were once seen as progressive before shifting to a more traditional stance, had ceased to acknowledge Illyricum as possessing a unified jurisdiction and established hierarchy by the time the Fifth Ecumenical Council convened in 552[120].

No doubt individuals did preach Christianity in neighboring lands or along the border regions, when the opportunity presented itself, but these seem to have had little, as far as the sources reflect the actual situation in the Slav-occupied Balkan and the Peloponnese, in the early 9th century, as the population was still predominantly pagan[121].

[117] POULTER 1992, 57.
[118] HALDON 1990, 117-118.
[119] DAGRON 1984, 2.
[120] DARGON 1984, 3.
[121] HALDON 1990, 353.

By the middle to late 7th century, numerous remaining military groups had become isolated from Constantinople and integrated into local communities and economies, particularly in the northern Balkans[122].

The Early Medieval period, spanning from the 7th to the 9th century, presents significant challenges for historians due to the limited evidence available regarding the physical attributes and organizational structures of villages during this timeframe, yet this deficiency in information is particularly acute in many regions; however, it is somewhat mitigated in Southern Italy, while conversely, in Macedonia, peasant populations migrated toward mountainous areas in response to various pressures, including invasions and resource shortages, such adaptations to hilly or mountainous terrain have also been proposed for other communities across the Balkan that faced similar challenges[123].

At the outset of the 8th century, the authority of the Eastern Roman emperors was primarily limited to a well-fortified yet susceptible capital city where their domain included several enclaves in the far western regions, such as Sicily, southern Italy, and the Exarchate of Ravenna, as well as areas in the northeast, specifically portions of Crimea and the western Caucasus, additionally, the emperors maintained influence over territories in the western, southern, and southeastern Balkans, although these regions were frequently governed under only nominal Roman control, where the communication between the centers was mainly provided by the sea[124].

Romanian, Serbian, and Ukrainian historiography has posited the existence of small "ethnic" principalities in the 9th century, purportedly dismantled by the conquering Hungarians; consequently, the medieval archaeologies of these nations have aimed not only to delineate the range of 9th century subjects but also, at times, to expand this scope[125].

[122] SARANTIS 2019, 365.
[123] LAIOU, 2005, 38-39.
[124] DELATTRE *ET AL*., 2018, 128.
[125] TAKÁCS 2014, 149.

1.1.13. Roads, Forts and Villas: Tracing Late Roman and Early Byzantine Balkans

In the Roman Empire, almost every major political figure was urban-based. This bald statement needs immediate qualification, for military leaders did not necessarily have the same identification with a city as did senatorial and curial aristocrats, and indeed frequently came from frontier regions, above all the northern Balkans, where cities were relatively weak; but the higher they rose the more they gravitated to the urban centers of political power, as with Aetius and Aspar, contemporaries of Balkan and Alan origin respectively, whose points of reference were Ravenna and Constantinople, or Belisarios, who was also from the Balkans, but who retired to Constantinople[126].

Recent studies conducted in various locations throughout the south-west Balkans have revealed a similar pattern of change occurring in two distinct phases: the first being more centralized during the late 3rd and early 4th centuries, and the second, less coordinated, occurring in the late 5th and 6th centuries, however, this particular region was situated at the core of the unified Roman Empire until the division of the east and west at the end of the 4th century, at which point it transformed into a borderland straddling the fault line between the two halves[127].

By the 380s, urban areas in the Balkans had evolved into well-established and resilient bastions for limitanean units, characterized by well-fortified structures, which enabled them to manage military operations and maintain regional stability effectively[128].

In the Late Antiquity period, there are instances where fortified sites transitioned into urban centers during the early Byzantine era. A significant example is the fortified settlement of Kamenica in North Macedonia, which represented a new type of large settlement typical of this late stage of antiquity that encompasses an approximate area of 5 hectares[129].

Signs of specifically economic or demographic weakening were more heterogeneous and varied considerably across different regions of the empire, making it difficult to identify a single, uniform pattern of decline.

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[126] WICKHAM 2005, 602.
[127] WILKES 2010, 735.
[128] POULTER 1992, 61.
[129] MIKULČIĆ 1974, 206.

Some cities were perhaps in trouble already in 500 or before, but for locally specific reasons, like Sagalassos on the Anatolian plateau, a ceramic-production center probably hit by the success of the Phocaean potteries, or an array of north Greek cities on the edge of the Balkan military zone, such as Amphipolis[130]. One examples in Balkan Peninsula if from Thessaloniki where agora was used for pottery production from the beginning of the 5th century[131].

The conventional perspective has held that there was no significant transformation in urbanism in the southern Balkan region; instead, there was a gradual deterioration in the economic and social significance of cities, which only experienced a brief resurgence during Justinian's reign, before ultimately declining in the final years of the 6th century, for example Muncipium Ulpiana[132].

The erection of new fortification, like Harilaq, walls of some cities and internal construction were primarily related to the military interests of the Byzantine Empire, to which should be added church constructions[133].

If imperial interest and the continuous arrival of new residents encouraged the swift growth of Balkan cities, the newly established villa estates within these regions likely benefited from the close proximately to a military market for agricultural and industrial products, Ratiara in Bulgaria and Narona in Croatia are two of the examples from these villas, while landowners with the wealth that funded the Antonine and Severan construction projects in the cities were more along Danubian provinces[134].

In many parts of Britain, Gaul and the Balkans (Apollonia in Albania and Viminacium in Serbia), it would hardly be an overstatement to claim that the monumental and aesthetic aspirations of the classical city were largely abandoned[135].

During Late Antiquity, the lowlands may have been inhabited by a diverse range of rural settlements like Rab in Croatia, similar to those that thrived in the preceding era across the southern Balkans, however, this period likely witnessed a significant

[130] WICKHAM 2005, 627.
[131] BOWDEN 2010, 73.
[132] POULTER 2000, 347.
[133] ANAMALI 1979, 7.
[134] POULTER 1992, 57.
[135] LIEBESCHUETZ 1992, 9.

reduction in the number of small "farms" and "hamlets", which could have profound implications for the region[136].

There are researchers like Poulter that indicates that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were effectively barred from the entering fortress towns in the Eastern Balkans, particularly at the site of of Nicopolis ad Istrum[137].

There are several urban areas that maintained their Late Roman roles as hubs of civil and religious governance, shelters for rural inhabitants, and starting points for military defenses during conflicts, like forts with military character, including Balkan also[138].

Camps that included pseudocomitatensian forces of eastern Illyricum that are listed in the Notitia Dignitatum, were based on the Via Egnatia, the main road in the Balkans that connects west Illyricum with eastern provinces, Scupenses, was based in today Skopje and the other the so-called Ulpianenses was based in the city of Ulpiana[139].

Based on the data of archaeological discoveries, simple civic constructions, the uniformity of ceramics and tools, and the limited monetary circulation of late antiquity, it appears that cities like Sirmium, Salon, Justiniana Prima, had become small, insignificant settlements, with a reduced population, where consequently the city polarimetry also changed[140].

The continuous invasions and the subsequent decline in financial stability have undeniably impacted the villa economy in the Balkans[141].

In various regions, particularly in the historically rich landscapes of Byzantine Judaea, and the arid expanses of the Negev, isolated farmsteads emerged as common agricultural settlements, that during the Late Roman period, more elaborate villas could be discovered in thriving locales such as Palestine, the picturesque Peloponnese, the culturally significant region of Boeotia, and the diverse landscape of the Balkans, however, it should be emphasized that these villas were relatively uncommon,

[136] DUNN 2005, 272.
[137] LIEBESCHUETZ 1992, 16.
[138] LIEBESCHUETZ 1992, 17-18.
[139] POULTER 1992, 63.
[140] ANAMALI 1979, 7.
[141] POULTER 1992, 66.

particularly in areas of the Balkan Peninsula, expectations are in Bulgaria such as Kasnakovo Villa and Pavlikeni Villa[142].

Roads in the south-western Balkans utilized four primary roads, with two of these routes connected by two documented paths across the watershed: one route ran from Lissus (Lezhë) on the Adriatic to Ulpiana (Lipjan) in Kosovo through the Drin and White Drin valleys; the other encompassed the western segment of the ancient Via Egnatia linking Dyrrachium (Durrës) and Thessalonica, passing through the Genusus (Shkumbin) valley, the lakes of Ohrid and Prespa, and Heraclea Lyncestis (Monastir/Bitola) situated in the Pelagonia basin[143]. From Municipium DD, an extension of one of the most significant vertical main roads in the Balkan Peninsula stretched along the river Ibër, connecting the south of the Balkan Peninsula, which originates from the northwest, with the Adriatic coast and central Bosnia, that continues cut through the Kosovo plain and reached the colony of Scupi in the Vardar valley via Slatina, Mitrovica, Vushtrri and Kaçanik[144].

The road network developed over time in the Balkan provinces following the ancient natural roads used by the local populations, as well as the roads used by the Greeks colonies along the coasts of the Aegean, Adriatic and Black Sea[145]. One of the the road important during roman period was the Danube road and Trans-Balkan strategic roads (viae militares)[146] that includes the roads Via Egnatia started from Adriatic coast[147], it was another important road started near Viminacium and ended in Constantinople, that passed through the most important towns in the Balkan, Coastline roads in Balkan included roads during the Dalmatian coast and Adriatic. Also interprovincial roads that included Lissus-Naissus-Ratiara road that includes more Dardania[148].

[142] LAIOU, 2005, 37.
[143] WILKES 2010, 737.
[144] BULIĆ 2013, 272.
[145] BĂJENARU 2010, 25.
[146] BĂJENARU 2010, 25.
[147] FASOLO 2005, 6.
[148] TABULA PEUTINGERIANA.

Chapter 2

2.1. Literature Review

Research on Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery in the Balkan Peninsula has undergone significant development over the past several decades, reflecting broader shifts in archaeological methodology and interpretative frameworks. Early studies, such as those by Anamali (1971), Komata (1974), Ceka (1972), Topoleanu (1996), Opaiţ (1991), Rădulescu (1973), Popović (1987), and Bikić (1994), focused primarily on typological classifications and the delineation of cultural boundaries through ceramic forms. These foundational works provided essential chronological frameworks.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, regional syntheses began to emphasize production technology, trade networks, and patterns of cultural interaction[149]. Studies revealed the diversity of ceramic assemblages and underscored the complexity of regional exchange systems during the Late Antique and Early Medieval transitions. These findings have been crucial in challenging earlier narratives of abrupt cultural discontinuity following the collapse of Roman authority.

Despite this progress, Kosovo's ceramic record remains comparatively under-researched. Excavations at sites such as Ulpiana, Vendenis, and Harilaq have yielded substantial ceramic material, yet analyses have largely been descriptive or limited to preliminary typologies. Systematic comparative studies that situate Kosovo's pottery within broader Balkan ceramic traditions are still lacking. This gap is particularly evident in the study of technological attributes—such as fabric composition, firing techniques, and surface treatment—that could illuminate local production dynamics and interregional exchange.

This thesis, therefore, aims to situate Kosovo's Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery within a comparative Balkan perspective, based on typological data. By synthesizing existing regional research and applying a systematic comparative methodology, it seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of ceramic production, exchange, and cultural transformation in the post-Roman Balkans.

[149] ORSER 2009, 113-114; OYEN 2017, 53.

Chapter 3

3.1. Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methods used in the study, highlighting important aspects that were included. It describes the geographical area of the study, the research design, and the sample selection. Additionally, it details the data collection techniques employed, along with measures taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.1.2. Research approach and design

In the research a qualitative approach was followed, defining the objective, and systematic process during four years of PhD studies. Hundreds of books and articles are part of the thesis, all of them were either obtained from different libraries or authors.

Libraries that were used in Hungary to approach the best study research are: the National Széchenyi Library and Budapest University Library, Leiden University Library in Netherland, while libraries in Kosovo were the National Library of Kosovo and the Institute of Albanology Library in Pristina.

I found several online sources and books that I bought that were very helpful and significantly aided me in understanding the topic.

The research methodology primarily focused on written sources related to the Balkan Peninsula. Additionally, a survey on Late Antique localities in Kosovo was conducted, which included various images. The methodology employed historical documents, artifacts, analyses, and comparative studies.

Primary sources include publications that contain historical, geographical, and archaeological evidence, such as pottery originating from the Balkan Peninsula.

PART II

Chapter 1

1.1 The composition of pottery – clay

Pottery is a significant information source regarding archaeological settlements, historical periods, societal structures, and economic conditions. Its durable components provide valuable information that lasts for thousands of years. At an archaeological site, one of the fastest ways that help to date approximately a site is pottery. Throughout history, pottery has served various essential functions in everyday life, including cooking, drinking, storage, aesthetic expression, and transportation. Represents the earliest synthetic material developed by humans – an artificial form of stone – and it integrated the four fundamental elements recognized by the Greeks: earth, water, fire and air; as a component of the vast field of technology referred to as ceramics, pottery has influenced a wide array of human activity; from ancient cooking to innovations in the aerospace's industry of the twentieth century[150].

In addition, pottery is a robust material that requires specific learned skills and knowledge to produce, and a class of material that appears to have been used in the daily lives of past communities, so the physical examination of the technological, raw material, and use alteration aspects of ceramic containers allows to consider not only the performance characteristics and function of the vessels but also elements of social and technical knowledge, skills, and communication, as well as the differences in vessel function. Pottery is transported across various locations for several purposes, as it can be produced at a manufacturing site and sold over long and short distances, utilized as containers for items like wine, food, or other goods, and exchanged as presents or collected as souvenirs from journeys[151].

Pottery constitutes the most prevalent form of portable material culture that has survived from the Roman era, consequently, it is neither unexpected nor inappropriate that the examination of pottery occupies a significant position within the field of Roman archaeology[152].

[150] RICE 1987, 3.
[151] ORTON – HUGHES 2013, 27; BURKE 2022, 74.
[152] PEÑA 2007, 1.

Pottery can be categorized into two types: soft and hard. The soft category encompasses unglazed options like common bricks and earthenware; lustrous varieties such as Greek pottery; and glazed types seen in Late Antique, medieval, and most contemporary pottery, while the hard category includes stoneware and firebrick[153].

The diets of ancient societies were of equal importance to those of modern times where populations depended on adequate consumption of food and beverages, as well as effective methods for long-term food storage. Such factors had a profound impact on their daily lives, the ethnic identities of different groups, and the social and economic statuses of individuals. Additionally, the evolution of dietary methods like thermal treatment and fermentation has been vital to human eating habits, with the historical period in which they existed significantly influenced their nutritional practices[154].

Every day pottery typically exhibits a consistent style and is usually devoid of the variety of shapes, decorations, and glazes typically seen in imported fine wares; nevertheless, with the proper analytical methods, coarse-ware pottery can provide important information regarding the daily lives of communities, from the Late Antique to Early Medieval era[155].

When it comes to the analysis of pottery, a variety of sophisticated techniques can be employed to gain deeper insights into ceramic materials. These methods not only unveil the composition and structure of the ceramics but also enhance our understanding of their historical, cultural, and artistic significance. By utilizing advanced technologies, researchers can uncover valuable information about the origins, manufacturing processes, and usage of these ancient artifacts[156]. Each technique offers a unique perspective, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate world of ceramics.

Ceramic analysis techniques include:

1. Typological Analysis
2. Morphological Analysis
3. Fabric Analysis

[153] YOUNG 1879, 54.
[154] BRAGAZZI, *ET AL*. 2024, 4.
[155] FAZIOLI 2012, 200.
[156] PILAAR BIRCH – SZPAK 2022, 1-2.

4. Chemical Composition Analysis
5. Residue Analysis
6. Thermoluminescence Dating
7. Contextual and Spatial Analysis

Each of the techniques mentioned is crucial for the analysis and study of ceramics, varying based on the research methodology and the objectives of the researcher.

Pottery serves as a crucial source of information for archaeologists due to its durability, once clay is fired at appropriate temperatures and for sufficient durations, it becomes nearly impervious to degradation, making it an invaluable artifact for study[157]. Roman and medieval archaeological sites yield thousands of ceramic sherds, a phenomenon attributable to the increased utilization of ceramics as well as the advancements in firing techniques and material compositions throughout these historical periods[158].

The term "ceramic" is derived from the Greek word "keramos," which is translated as "burned material" or "earthenware." This term specifically refers to a product that has undergone firing, distinguishing it from clay, which serves as a raw material[159].

The raw material used in ceramic, which consists of sandy and/or silty clays, fall under the broader classification of 'geomaterials', whereas this group encompasses all materials derived from geological sources, including rock, sediment, and soil, which can be beneficially utilized for creating artifacts either in their natural form or through human processing[160].

Originally, clay was used to create animistic figures, which were tiny objects thought to represent various gods[161].

The use of clay in architecture dates back to as early as 7500 BC throughout the Near East, highlighting the relationship between clay utilization and settled agricultural communities, where it was employed alone or combined with chaff or straw from crops

[157] GIBSON – WOODS 1990, 5.
[158] GIBSON – WOODS 1990, 5.
[159] RICE 1987, 3.
[160] MONTANA 2017, 87.
[161] BLANDINO 1997, 15.

to create poured or 'puddled' adobe for building the walls of permanent homes, as well as for plaster or mortar on rock of pole walls, and for constructing floors and roofs[162].

Clay substances play a crucial role in various areas of human activity; in agriculture, as they are a vital component of soils; in construction engineering, since buildings are constructed on and with these materials; and in numerous industries like ceramics, rubber, paper, petroleum, and metal founding, where they serve as a key role material[163].

Aside from the clay's structure and composition, various other elements play a crucial role in defining the characteristics and used of clay; these include the composition of non-clay minerals, the presence of organic matter, the types and quantities of exchangeable ions and soluble salts, as well as the texture[164].

Seventy-five percent of the Earth's surface consists of the main components, clay-alumina, and silica, mixed with various minerals and metals, especially iron[165].

Terra-cottas are a type of rough, porous pottery that is baked at low temperatures, typically 900 degrees or lower; this kind of fired ceramic is the oldest pottery found in various regions around the globe [166].

Earthenware encompasses clay bodies that are porous and not thoroughly tested, and these materials are fired at various temperatures, generally ranging from around 800 to 900 degrees up to approximately 1100 to 1200 degrees[167].

Earthenware clays usually have a red color due to the presence of iron oxide, which enables them to set at relatively low temperatures ranging from 950 to 1100 degrees Celsius, while red clay pots are typically not fired to the stage of vitrification, they stay somewhat soft and porous, allowing them to endure the minor expansion and contraction that happens during cooking[168].

[162] RICE 1987, 10.
[163] GRIM 1942, 225.
[164] MURRAY 2007, 1.
[165] SWEEZY 1984, 34.
[166] RICE 1987, 5.
[167] RICE 1987, 5.
[168] SWEEZY 1984, 34.

Stoneware is fired at temperatures between 1200 and 1350 degrees, which is sufficient to attain at least partial fusion or vitrification of the clay body, depending on its specific composition[169].

Stoneware containers are fired at a temperature that enables the clay to bond, resulting in impermeable vessels that are also appropriate for holding liquids[170].

The textual factor pertains to the distribution of particle sizes among the constituent particles, whereas a rapid assessment of the particle-size distribution of larger grains can be achieved through microscopic analysis, while more thorough evaluations can be conducted using sieving and/or wet sedimentation techniques[171].

Distinctive tools, like a potter's wheel and related instruments, are readily identifiable, while natural tools, including shells, sticks, and smooth stones, might be disregarded even when they are found at a location[172].

For centuries, the study of pottery was a very complex topic, as it has transformed archaeology by incorporating various aspects, that can serve as valuable sources of information regarding the lives of the individuals who created them, as well as they can provide insights into religious practices, social norms, and the extent of the technological advancement within a particular area[173]. So, we are not dealing with just one element but with multiple components, starting from their chemical composition to their decorative features, which can also connect to the realm of art.

George L. Miller utilized documentary sources to determine price index values for different types of ceramics, aiming to support the comparative examination of archaeological collections to assess spending patterns[174]. Though this analysis was based on the data of the 19th century its results can be transponde of the circumstances of the late Roman times.

[169] RICE 1987, 5.
[170] SWEEZY 1984, 34.
[171] GRIM 1953, 7.
[172] RYE 1981, 7.
[173] ROSIAK *ET AL.,* 2025, 444.
[174] MILLER 1991, 1.

In 1987, Majewski and O'Brien suggested classifying ceramics according to their body type and level of vitrification[175]. Their approach, relevant to all ceramics created throughout the historical era—ranging from colon ware to tin-glazed earthenware and porcelain—enables researchers to gain deeper insights into the links between worldwide technological progress and artistic trends[176].

Ceramic analysis in archaeological methods involves the typological classification and analogy of artifacts, dating, technology, décor, and stylistic evaluation.

The archaeometric methods focus on: (a) the identification and sourcing of the ceramic raw materials, (b) the techniques used in manufacturing, (c) the vessel contents (including capacity and potential residues), and (d) the absolute dating of the items[177].

Another alternative method for categorizing ceramics is by examining the raw materials, including visually identifiable substances like minerals and rocks. This classification also considers color, which can arise from either the clay or the firing process, as well as the hardness of the ceramic after it has been fired, in other words use of chemical and physical techniques analyses[178].

Various analyses conducted on raw materials from the Roman period, extending to the 5th century, included both unfired and fired samples, revealing the presence of various minerals and rocks.

The clay needs to be prepared to a pliable state before any vessels can be created; with adequate moisture, it can take on the desired shape, but if the clay is too dry, it becomes harder to process the shape.

Historically, when compared to pottery, the Roman Empire reached its peak in the 2nd century and maintained relative stability until its complete fall in the West during the 5th century, whereas the East experienced a slow decline and change, evolving into the medieval Byzantine Empire, despite of this evolution, the term 'Roman' can still be

[175] BARKER – MAJEWSKI 2006, 208.
[176] BARKER – MAJEWSKI 2006, 208.
[177] XANTHOPOULOU *ET AL.*, 2020, 74.
[178] SCIAU – GOUDEAU 2015, 2.

used to describe ceramics found throughout the Mediterranean up until the 7th century[179].

The word "clay" can refer to three distinct meaning: 1. a fine-grained geological substance that becomes malleable when combined with water; 2. a classification for the smallest grain size encountered in geological sediments; 3. the category of hydrous aluminosilicate minerals known as "clay minerals", which are formed from existing minerals and are primarily distinguished by their flat crystalline structure[180].

Clay was once believed to have a mostly colloidal structure, but subsequent research suggests that the very tiny size of clay particles is responsible for many of its physical characteristic[181].

Evidence such as quartz, phyllosilicates, plagioclase, K-feldspars, calcite, and dolomite can be found in unfired raw clays[182]. The fired ceramics primarily include quartz, feldspars, hematite, clinopyroxenitic, spinel, and frequently carbonates, along with occasional sanding[183].

Various kinds of minerals are present in pottery, contributing to its makeup, which results from various factors, primarily the base material, clay. It is important to highlight that the color of pottery can change based on the material used[184], the initial firing process, and occasionally even the re-firing process, especially the kitchen wares, that were used as everyday utensils.

Coarse sand is incorporated into cooking pots; the potter clarified that this addition makes the vessel less likely to break when exposed to the cooking fire, meaning that the coarse sand enhances their resistance to thermal shock[185].

There are three main categories of clay minerals: the kaolinite group; the montmorillonite group and the illites. Kaolinite is the primary member of the kaolin group and also the main component of most high-quality clays; montmorillonite, a key

[179] GREENE 1992, 7.
[180] MONTANA 2017, 90.
[181] RHODES 1973, 9.
[182] CECCARELLI *ET AL*., 2018, 418.
[183] CECCARELLI *ET AL*., 2018, 423.
[184] VALANCIENE 2010, 1610.
[185] RYE – EVANS 1976, 28

mineral of its namesake group, constitutes bentonite, which is a hydrous aluminum silicate where some of the aluminum is substituted by different ions; the illites, which are micaceous clay minerals, share a structural similarity with muscovite[186]. Micas are a component of clay composition, and while they technically aren't classified as clay minerals, it is important to mention them since they frequently appear in clay[187].

There is a process of how to use clay for pottery production. Clay is typically sourced from a location close by; the process of preparing is very straightforward; clay is first-sun-dried, crushed using a stone, sifted, combined with water, and allowed to cure for a minimum of twenty-four hours, following the addition of sand, sherds or small rocs, it is then ready to use[188].

1.2. Pottery forming techniques and decorations.

The techniques used in pottery formation are significant, as various methods have been employed throughout the centuries, beginning with the simplest ones in the early period and evolving through to the medieval era from an archaeological perspective.

The shape of pottery is determined by its elasticity, which is directly related to the clay's plasticity. The plasticity of clay is related to its components, including both its mineral and chemical composition as well as the moisture introduced by the water mixture[189].

The surface treatments applied to pottery vessels are significant, as they function not only as decorative elements but also help decrease the vessels ability to absorb liquids, whereas these treatments include burnishing, applying mineral pigments, such as slip or glaze[190].

There are six techniques, primarily fundamental in construction that are typically recognized: pinching, and/or drawing, slab modeling, molding, casting, coiling, and throwing[191].

[186] SHEPARD 1956, 8, 10.
[187] WORRALL 1982, 22.
[188] PEACOCK 1982, 13.
[189] AUGUSTO DE ANDRADE 2010, 395-396.
[190] TITE 2008, 218.
[191] RICE 1987, 124.

1. Pinching and drawing are comparable methods that are used to shape a lump of clay through the upward motion of the hands and fingers; additionally, tools can be utilized to perfect the form by removing any surplus clay[192].
2. Molding technique suggests both the regulation of form and indicates a level of uniformity and specialized manufacturing, yet it is vague regarding how the form is regulated[193]. Molds can be either convex, with the clay applied to the outside, or concave, with the clay fitted to the inside; they can create complete pieces (full molds) or just portions of the vessels body (most commonly the base); and these molds may consists of a single unit or be constructed in two parts[194].
3. Another method known as coiling involves primarily attaching rolls or ropes of clay together, whereas this technique encompasses various styles, including ring coiling, segmental coiling, and spiral coiling, which are distinguished by how they are joined and the length of the coil used[195]. Any portion of the pottery can be subjected to the coiling technique. The handle, rim, body, and base are all possible places. If the base is made by coiling: a sausage of clay into a spiral shape, beginning in the middle and working the way out to the desired diameter[196].
4. Among the most sophisticated techniques from the earliest periods is the use of the so-called potter's wheel. This technique includes various types of wheels that can be turned using hands, legs or electric power. The technique of throwing was a significant advancement of industrial practices; it involves positioning clay precisely at the center of the wheel to avoid inconsistent thickness, followed by raising the walls by drawing and lifting with both hands from the interior and exterior of the clay mass, supported by the centrifugal force[197]. The clay intended for throwing is typically more pliable and moist than what is used for hand building, this is partly because the lifting or drawing technique requires to elevate the walls cannot be performed with stiff, dry clay, and also because

[192] ER 2011, 12.
[193] REINA – HILL, 1978, 22.
[194] RICE 1987, 125.
[195] ER 2011, 12.
[196] BLANDINO 1997, 29.
[197] ER 2011, 12.

the air flow created during rotation causes the water in the clay to evaporate quickly, leading to a drying effect on the material[198].

The substances utilized for white paints might have differed slightly between the tribes, but they must have consistently been minerals that did not contain iron oxides[199].

Pottery that has been shaped can undergo additional processing through surface treatments such as smoothing, scraping, burnishing, and other comparable techniques, which primarily serve as secondary forming techniques that impact the pottery's surface, although they may also alter the dimensions of the vessel[200].

Glaze is a shiny layer on the surface of a vessel, created by the fusion of silica[201]. The phrase is utilized in the context to refer to lead glazing (a glaze produced through the use of powdered lead oxide)[202].

Pottery can be adorned through two primary methods: altering surfaces and applying various types of embellishments[203]. The use of dies and sharp tools for cutting, stamping, punctuation, and impressing to adorn the vessel's surface results in surface displacement and penetration into the body[204].

When clay is mixed with the right amount of water, it can maintain any shape that is formed, a property referred to as a plasticity, which is one of the main advantages of this material[205].

1.3. Firing process

There are two basic types of firing technology: open firing and kiln firing. 1. Open firing refers to a non-kiln method that takes place in a small, focused area, often in a pit or partially dug depression in the ground, without any permanent kiln setup, this method is distinguished by a brief firing cycle, quick heating rate, and temperatures reaching

[198] RICE 1987, 128.
[199] HAWLEY 1929, 735.
[200] ER 2011, 13.
[201] VROOM 2005, 13.
[202] VROOM 2005, 13.
[203] ER 2011, 13.
[204] ER 2011, 13.
[205] RHODES 1973, 10.

maximum of 900 degrees, in contrast, kiln firing involves pyro-technological installations that features a combustion chamber for burning fuel and a firing chamber, whereas this method does not necessarily involve high firing temperatures, which can range from 1000 to 1300 degrees; kilns can be classified based on the design of the firebox and/or the type of structure separating the firebox from the firing chamber[206].

The firing atmosphere influences various characteristics of the final product, particularly its color and hardness, as well as its porosity and shrinkage, where in places where kilns were absent or simple, the atmosphere during firing was probably quite inconsistent, not fully oxidizing nor entirely reducing at any point, and could be most accurately described as partially oxidizing[207].

Firing process is another way that is a very important in pottery where the extended duration of the firing process leads to an increase in heat transfer to the ware. Typically, the pots will appear gray from the ash; a brief rub with a soft cloth is all that's needed to clean them and restore their shine[208].

Thermal shock is a significant consideration during the firing process. The main factors influencing resistance to thermal shock include: (1) porosity, which involves the quantity and dimensions of the pores; (2) mineral inclusions, considering their type, amount, and size distribution; (3) thermal expansion, referring to how much the clay matrix and inclusions expand when heated; and (4) the form of the vessel[209].

Regarding pottery color, in addition to the various factors mentioned above, we can simply determine a pottery color classification using the Munsell Soil Color Charts from the 1970 edition. This chart presents a variety of soil colors that can be compared to the color of the clay featured in pottery[210].

To explore color more thoroughly, there are both primary and secondary causes: the primary factors include the clay composition, along with the atmosphere, firing temperature and duration, while the secondary changes arise from condition after firing,

[206] DASZKIEWICZ – MARITAN 2017, 487.
[207] RICE 1987, 81.
[208] BERENSOHN 1972, 124.
[209] RYE 1981, 27.
[210] MUNSELL COLOR COMPANY, *MUNSELL SOIL COLOR CHARTS: 1970 EDITION* (BALTIMORE, MD.: MUNSELL COLOR COMPANY, 1970).

such as stain absorption during use, carbon deposits from cooking over fire, wear, and deposits formed through reheating, as seen in the burning of a building[211].

Decorative elements on pottery can differ based on the historical, archaeological period and the individual potter. These decorations can be applied either before or following the firing process. Pre-firing decorations typically involve handcrafting techniques with various tools, such as stone or wood, which are set before firing to create the design. In contrast, post-firing decorations utilize different colors, including painting, which requires an additional firing process to ensure they are dry and long-lasting[212]. The color of the painting may be different from the material that the potter used, it all depends on the preference of each individual.

From a broader perspective, kitchenware from Late Antiquity typically features a clay matrix rich in iron, accompanied by metamorphic inclusions that are generally uniform in size and occurrence, in contrast, coarse wares present a calcareous matrix along with metamorphic inclusions[213].

In certain regions, Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery may represent an evolution of Roman pottery with minimal modifications. In contrast, in others, significant variations can be found, including differences in fabric and decoration. Since the thesis will primarily concentrate on the characterization of Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery within the Balkan Peninsula, it will encompass the main categories from these eras.

Regarding pottery trade, particularly with the inclusion of amphora's, it is important to note that the era of Vandal dominance saw the highest variety and volume of imports, in contrast, the Byzantine reconquers in 533 resulted in a decline, suggesting that the cessation of direct Roman control provided financial advantages, this change, due to the elimination of requirements imposed by the central government for taxes and by foreign landowners for rents, did not hinder trade[214].

[211] SHEPARD 1956, 103.
[212] ORTON – HUGHES 2013, 89.
[213] DASZKIEWICS 2010, 762.
[214] GREENE 1992, 43-44.

Every piece of pottery serves a specific purpose; the words functional and utilization are commonly contrasted with elite, ceremonial, non-utilitarian, display, storage, serving, cooking and special purposes pottery[215].

The distribution of pottery with African origins can be attributed to the Vandals' invasions of North Africa around 450, during which they maintained control until the beginning of the 6th century when local potters in the towns to which this red burnished ware, featuring stamped designs, was exported sometimes imitated this pottery style[216].

The firing atmosphere plays a crucial role, with the kiln capable of having oxidizing, neutral, or reducing states. In an oxidizing atmosphere, there is unburnt oxygen present within the kiln chamber; conversely, in a reducing atmosphere, unburnt or partially brunt carbon is found, and due to the absence of available oxygen, the oxygen-seeking carbon extracts oxygen from the oxides present in the clay or glaze that can release oxygen, where this interaction is key to the coloration of pottery[217].

A different common production of reduction-fired (grey) fine wares started in the early 5th century, including those of Thessalonikini (Macedonina T.S. grise), these are the types known as Gaulish Dérivées-des-Sigillées Paléochrétiennes, which display influences from both the Gaulish range of form and various African characteristics[218].

From this viewpoint, we can deduce that new invasions in the later period of the Roman Empire introduced new styles and creations in pottery, although remnants of earlier forms persist, with only minor modifications.

In terms of the substance of Late Antique pottery, the most prevalent type is the green glazed pottery, which began to see its peak utilization. Glaze is a mixture of finely ground insoluble substances suspended in water, which is applied to clay surfaces as a thin layer, that when fired at the right temperature, these components melt together to create a liquid solution that, upon cooling, solidifies into a glossy layer on the clay body[219].

[215] RICE 1987, 210.
[216] CHARLESTON 1955, 21-22.
[217] COLBECK 1988, 48.
[218] BONIFAY-REYNOLDS 2023, 3.
[219] COLBECK 1988, 53.

Certain ceramic items can be repurposed for different uses beyond their original intended function, demonstrating the adaptability and resourcefulness of past societies. Broken items that cannot be fixed, or outdated objects that are no longer appreciated, may be altered, whereas during the Roman period, pottery vessels were utilized to round off the jagged edges of a bowl so it could serve as a shallow dish or another type of container, or to transform a damaged vessel into a lamp[220].

The physical characteristics of pottery can be examined from multiple perspectives, a pottery might consider them to influence both durability and visual appeal; properties such as hardness, porosity, and strength suggest how well a piece can withstand use, while color and luster may attract the visual part[221]. Techniques like pinching, coiling, slab construction, hammer and anvil, molding and wheel throwing, whether used separately or together, can influence the micromorphology of ceramic materials[222].

Clay being a primary element of ceramics, along with other previously mentioned components, including secondary materials and the firing process, significantly influences the period in which it was created. By examining the decoration, shape, and various other features, we can arrive to a conclusion regarding its period of usage and its origin. The first category of clay preparation is purifying, which involves eliminating unwanted material like organic matter of large stones; the second category of clay preparation is to modify the material's properties[223].

Pits or containers utilized for clay preparation, hardened sports created through foot kneading, and various other features linked to pottery production might be challenging to recognize or distinguish unless supported by more specific types of evidence[224].

1.4. Typology, classification, analysis and characterization.

Analysis of pottery can effectively reveal the cultural influence of conquering forces or dominant elements of an era, particularly in relation to politics, economics and power,

[220] SWIFT 2015, 98.
[221] SHEPARD 1956, 101.
[222] WHITBREAD 2017, 201.
[223] ORTON – HUGHES 2013, 125.
[224] RYE 1981, 7.

as well as how these factors affect the lifestyle of society. Furthermore, the degree of successful domination can be partially assessed through the analysis of these artifacts. Pottery is a highly intricate framework that holds significant value in terms of archaeology and history as well, along with its evolution across various periods.

The characterization of archaeological artifacts discoveries is connected to typology, which distinguishes between type and period. Typology is a major subject, as it requires the classification of artifacts, particularly in the context of pottery, sorting the types from shape, color, decoration, and so on[225]. Still, typology, classification, and analysis are topics in discussion in archaeology.

Typology is a method created by archaeologists for organizing artifacts based on the perceived or measurable similarities found in specific analytical units; classification involves various techniques for the deductive categorization of observable phenomena; and analysis refers to separating something into manageable and interpretable parts to conclude about dynamic relationships between them[226].

The patterns identified by archaeologists in the types of artifacts are a direct consequence of 'mental templates' or 'type concepts' within the historic or prehistoric groups that created them[227].

In terms of classification, typology, and analysis, pottery serves as the most suitable form of these terms can be examining all three categories.

When we consider typology, it begins with classifying pottery according to its similarities with areas and historical periods. About classification, we can showcase its categorization across various periods; including aspects such as shape, size, material, and decoration. Furthermore, analysis is one of the most valuable elements we can employ in the examination of pottery, considering its study, interpretation, and conclusions.

Characterization is another form of comparing pottery in different aspects, which involves both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the composition and structure of a ceramic to assess its properties and applications and to enable the reproduction of the

[225] ORTON – HUGHES 2013, 11-12.
[226] BORTOLINI 2017, 652.
[227] CLARKE 1978, 203.

material, whereas various aspects of ceramic can be the focus of characterization investigations, such as mineralogical composition, chemical compositions, microstructure, and surface characteristics[228].

1.5. Parts of Pottery

In the following part, I intend to give a short overview of the way of hand making the shards of pottery in the archaeological literature.

Various components of pottery are identified by specific terminology, each term bearing significance that offers insights into the vessel's design, historical context, and functional attributes. For instance, the body refers to the main structure of the piece, often reflecting the style and shape predominant in a particular era. The rim, or lip, serves not only as a decorative element but can indicate the intended use of the vessel—whether for pouring, drinking, or serving. The base is a portion from the lower part of the body, while the foot is an appendage attached along the circumference of the base that raises the body of the pottery, and that can reveal details about its stability and standing, while also hinting at the craftsmanship techniques of the time[229].

Additionally, aspects such as material composition—whether stoneware, earthenware, or porcelain—along with the glaze's color and finish can provide further clues about the pottery's origins and the technology available during its creation. Understanding these elements enhances our appreciation of pottery as both functional objects and art forms, offering a glimpse into the cultural practices and artistic expressions of different time periods.End Points (EPs), Points of Vertical Tangency (VTs), Inflection Points (IPs), and Corner Points (CPs) on a vessel's vertical profile curve are the four types of feature points used in archaeology to determine a vessel's dimensions and proportions[230].

Pottery encompasses a diverse array of components that extend beyond mere material and decorative elements. The primary structural features of pottery include the rim, neck, shoulder, body, and base, each serving distinct functions and contributing to the

[228] RICE 1987, 309.
[229] BANNING 2020, 187.
[230] LIU *ET AL.*, 2005, 448.

overall profile of the piece[231]. In more elaborate forms of pottery, additional features may enhance both aesthetic appeal and functionality.

Each category of pottery is characterized by specific shapes and proportions. Rims, for instance, can manifest in various designs—ranging from sharply defined square edges to elegantly rounded or gracefully curved forms. These variations not only serve a decorative purpose but may also indicate the usability of the piece, as seen in ceremonial vessels versus everyday dining ware.

Necks of pottery vessels can vary significantly in length and width, affecting how the pot is held or poured. A longer neck may be conducive to pouring liquids, while a shorter neck can provide a more stable grip for handling. The body of the pottery, perhaps the most variable component, often reflects its intended use—be it for storage, transport, or display. An amphora designed for transporting goods will typically have a robust, elongated body and a securely designed base to facilitate stability while in motion. Conversely, a vessel intended purely for food storage may feature a broader, more rounded body with a flatter base.

Handles are another integral aspect of pottery, with styles and shapes that can signify specific cultural contexts or historical periods. For instance, looped handles may be common in certain ancient civilizations, while more contemporary designs could favor strap-like configurations.

Moreover, intricate pottery may present specialized elements such as fillets — decorative bands adorning the upper section of the base —for both aesthetic enhancement and structural support. Neck rings are employed to reinforce the junction between the neck and the body, promoting durability while contributing to the overall design aesthetic. Additional features like lids, unique base angles, and decorative knobs can also enhance the functionality of the vessel and reflect the artisanship of a particular era.

[231] RICE 1987, 212-214.

Chapter 2

2.1. Types of pottery in Late Antique / Early Medieval Period

The diversity of pottery is remarkable and can be attributed to a myriad of factors, including variations in the raw materials used, the shapes and forms crafted, the production techniques employed, the methods of decoration applied, the firing processes chosen, and the resulting colors and finishes. Each of these elements contributes to the unique characteristics of ceramic pieces, with materials such as earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain all offering distinct properties. The shape can range from functional utilitarian wares to intricate artistic sculptures, reflecting both practicality and creativity. Production methods vary from traditional hand-building techniques to modern mechanical processes, each influencing the final product's texture and quality. Moreover, decorative techniques can include glazing, painting, and carving, which enhance the aesthetic appeal and individuality of each piece[232]. Lastly, the firing process, whether it involves high-temperature porcelain firing or low-temperature earthenware firing, significantly affects the durability and coloration of the pottery, leading to a rich spectrum of visual effects and finishes[233].

The pottery of Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period showcase a fascinating array of pottery that, while distinct in their characteristics, also share notable similarities. During Late Antiquity, artisans produced a variety of functional and decorative pottery, often influenced by Roman techniques and designs. This period is marked by a transition from the classical forms of pottery to more localized styles that reflect regional tastes and materials.

As we move into the Early Medieval Period, the introduction of new cultural influences led to further diversification in pottery styles. This era saw the emergence of distinct pottery that combined practical utility with artistic expression, incorporating intricate glaze work and innovative shaping techniques.

Despite the differences in political, economic, and cultural circumstances that characterize the two periods, they share a number of common threads that highlight the continuity of historical processes. Both demonstrate a rich interplay of tradition and innovation, as artisans adapted their practices in response to changing social and

[232] LIU 2017, 543.
[233] TAM – GEORGE 2024, 134.

economic conditions. The vessels from these times not only served everyday needs but also reflected the evolving cultural identity of their respective societies. Overall, the pottery from Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval Period tell a compelling story of historical continuity and transformation in the art of pottery, one of the best examples of this is African Red Slip ware.

During Late Antiquity, pottery played a pivotal role in daily life, and their classification often reflects their specific functions. Among the most significant types are the storage vessels known as *pithoi*. These large, robust pots were typically constructed from clay and could be quite large, often reaching heights of several feet. Frequently, they were buried below ground level to help maintain a stable temperature, which was essential for the preservation of perishable goods. The primary contents of these *pithoi* were grains, such as wheat and barley, which were vital for sustenance and trade. This method of storage not only facilitated the long-term preservation of food but also allowed communities to support themselves during lean seasons or difficult periods, showcasing the importance of pottery in the agricultural practices of the time[234].

Fine wares, which were often intricately decorated and used for serving and dining, showcasing the craftsmanship of their makers. Coarse wares, on the other hand, catered to everyday needs and comprised various items such as cooking pots, *mortaria* (used for grinding and mixing ingredients), and unglazed, buff-colored 'plain' wares intended for domestic activities. These functional pieces were essential in kitchens and dining settings, offering practicality alongside durability. Additionally, pottery from this period included lamps, which served both utilitarian and decorative roles, and amphorae, large storage vessels designed for transporting liquids such as oil and wine. Each of these ceramic types played a crucial role in the daily lives of people in Late Antiquity, reflecting the social practices and cultural exchanges of the era[235].

[234] GIANNOPOULOU 2010, 33.
[235] CAU *ET AL*., 2011, 1-9

Chapter 3

3.1. General differences of Late Antique and Early Medieval period pottery

Although Late Antique pottery shares certain features with Early Medieval pottery, several distinct differences set them apart. These variations can be observed in various aspects, including the shapes of the vessels, the composition of the clay and materials used, the styles and techniques of decoration, and the methods employed during the firing process.

For instance, Late Antique pottery often showcases more elaborate forms and intricate designs, reflecting the aesthetic preferences of the time. In contrast, Early Medieval pottery tends to exhibit simpler shapes and less ornate decoration, as it was influenced by different cultural and functional priorities. Additionally, advancements in firing techniques during the transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Medieval period had a significant impact on the durability and final appearance of the pottery, further emphasizing the differences between these two periods.

The pottery produced during the Early Medieval period using a wheel was consistently classified into two technological subcategories, with distinct types of potter's wheels assumed to exist: the "slow wheel" (operated by hand) and the "fast wheel" (operated by foot)[236].

The Late Antique and Early Medieval period, spanning from the 4th to the 7th century, was significantly shaped by a variety of migrating tribes. During this era, many of these tribes including the Goths, Visigoths, Avars, and Slavs, were characterized by their "nomadic", i.e. migrating lifestyle in their early interactions with settled regions. As a result, they often moved swiftly from one territory to another, prioritizing mobility over the establishment of permanent settlements. Consequently, the ceramic produced during this time tended to be of simpler forms and lower quality, focusing on functionality rather than artistry.

The observed differences can be attributed to the influence of earlier Visigoth traditions, which were likely transmitted by the local population that had been conquered, despite the presence of numerous common elements in both morphology and production, available evidence suggests a greater disruption in continuity rather than a fluid

[236] STANCIU 2022, 78.

transition between the pottery styles of the Visigoth period and those of subsequent eras[237].

In addition to the incised designs created with a comb on the outer surfaces of the vessels, this feature of the interiors of clay containers, pots, or open forms can be observed in some pottery from the eastern region of the former Roman province of Noricum and the southwestern area of Pannonia, dating back to the Early Roman Imperial period[238]. In the Friuli region, located in the northeastern part of Italy, particularly within the Invillino-Ibligo area, vessels featuring distinctive interior stripes were frequently utilized whereas these specific designs were primarily associated with certain types of pottery that predominated during the latter half of the 5th century and into the subsequent century, indicating a significant cultural and artistic trend within that historical period[239].

The ceramic pieces from the early Byzantine-Balkan Avar period are noted more for their variety than their volume, based on their origin, the vessels can be categorized into two distinct groups: one group indicates that the craftsmanship, shape, and techniques suggest they were made in one of the Balkan-Byzantine workshops; for the other group, it can be inferred that these vessels were likely created locally within the Carpathian Basin[240]. The artifacts produced in Byzantine workshops (such as amphoras, clay jugs, and canteens) were mainly found in the graves of more affluent individuals within the political hub of the Avar settlement region (Dány, Gátér, Kunbábony, Tiszavasvári), in contrast the locally made pottery from the Byzantine-Late Antique period, characterized by (bowls and pots with handles, bowls with grooved shoulders, bulbous pots featuring a lid fold, and spouted jugs), was exclusively uncovered in burial sites in Eastern Pannonia (Budakalász, Bijelo Brdo, Mezőfalva, Környe, Várpalota, Zamárdi)[241].

The amphora shipments to Britain predominantly consist of Eastern Mediterranean (LR1 and LR2) varieties, suggesting that there are likely no definitive signs of African oil, fish, and wine during post-Roman Britain, however, another possibility is that

[237] LOPEZ 2011, 9.
[238] STANCIU 2022, 85.
[239] STANCIU 2022, 85.
[240] VIDA 1999, 177.
[241] VIDA 1999, 177-178.

African food items may have been stored or moved in barrels to make their transport easier[242].

Certainly, African imports played a minor role in the post-Roman Mediterranean trade directed towards the British Isles during the period of approximately 475-550, even so, given the extensive presence of African ceramics spread across the Mediterranean during this time[243].

Certain researchers have categorized specific pottery types as 'Visigothic wares' (for example, DSP – Dérivées des Sigillées Paléochrétiennes), and have consequently dismissed them as analogous to Red Slip wares from Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean[244].

It seems that the primary types found on British sites have been connecting with west Mediterranean markets since at least the early 5th century, while the peak ratios are observed at Carthage in layers dating from the mid to late 5th century through to the mid-6th century; after this period, there is a decrease in representation[245].

In addition to the manufacturing and shipping of amphorae, there was also the creation of tableware, primarily led by ARSW in the west, while PRSW is also found commonly, though in limited amounts[246].

As a far away, but thus very interesting example we are referring on the pottery of a city in Spain. In the city of Braga and its surrounding area, numerous copies of ARSW ceramics have been discovered, with their chronology spanning from the late 4th century to the end of the 6th century[247].

Late Roman C ceramic productions are not as common, yet some fragments of Hayes 3 and Hayes 8 types have been discovered, which were produced during the 5th and 6th centuries[248].

From the Early Medieval pottery, certain types are prevalent, including jars with high, narrow collars, beveled lips, and round bodies intended to accommodate one or two

[242] BONIFAY 2020, 2.
[243] BONIFAY 2020, 4.
[244] DUGGAN 2020,13
[245] FULFORD 1989, 3.
[246] FULFORD 1989 3.
[247] PEÑÍN – MARTINS 2016, 58.
[248] PEÑÍN – MARTINS 2016, 58.

tabs that extend from the very edge. Additionally, medium-sized pots exhibit edges that closely resemble those found in typical late gray productions[249].

Another interesting example is from Italy: Palazzo Mazzola, located in the charming town of Asti, showcases a remarkable collection of pottery that dates back to the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods, where African Red Slips wares dating from the 3rd to the 6th centuries, along with local late terra sigillata referred to as low-quality 'fine' pottery from the 5th and 6th centuries, were found, and glazed pottery was also identified[250].

Coarse ware fragments from the early Middle Ages have been identified, characterized by a spectrum of colors ranging from reddish to brownish-grey and black, however, these fabrics exhibit a complex material composition that includes lithics, micas, and quartz, whereas among these artefacts are lids, known *Clibani/testi*, which have been dated specifically to the 4th to 7th centuries, additionally, a variety of pots and jars have been uncovered, with dates spanning from the 4th to the 8th centuries, reflecting the craftsmanship and functions of this period[251].

Another site featuring Late Antique and Early Medieval ceramic vessels is the religious complex of San Pietro in Canusium, Italy. This site has yielded a remarkable array of pottery, including both intricately designed local pieces and exquisite imports, reflecting the rich cultural exchanges of the period[252].

During the Late Antique period, Canusium served as the main town of the province and was also a key diocesan hub; it was located on the Via Traiana and close to the port of Bardulos, which is present-day Barletta[253]. Here are also present coarse wares and fine table wares dating from the 4th to 7th centuries[254], fragment types that are very common for this period in almost every place where life was continuing at that time.

From the Early Medieval period, vessels that are typologically comparable to the 'Classe-type' jars have been discovered at various sites in Emilia Romagna, Veneto, Marche, and Abruzzo, additionally, similar finds have been made along the eastern

[249] PEÑÍN – MARTINS 2016, 63.
[250] UGAGLIA 2024, 785-786.
[251] UGAGLIA 2024, 786.
[252] GLIOZZO *ET AL.*, 2024, 527.
[253] ERAMO *ET AL.*, 2014,377.
[254] GLIOZZO *ET AL.*, 2024, 509.

coast of the Adriatic Sea, specifically in Istria at Parenzo, in Dalmatia at Zara, and in Albania at Butrint[255].

Oil lamps dating from the 4th to 6th century AD have also been discovered on the eastern perimeter of Roman Canusium, in a burial site that dates back to the 2nd century AD[256]. The lamps originating from the necropolis are characterized by a light-colored ceramic body, which is frequently enhanced with a red glaze. These lamps exhibit a textured surface and incorporate simplified decorative motifs, including geometric symbols located on the shoulders, a cross and *chrismon* on the discus, and, on rare occasions, figurative decorations[257].

Further examples from Italy: In Salapia, Italy, fragments of painted and common ceramics dating from the 4th to 7th century AD have been found, showcasing a variety of shapes and purposes such as jars, table amphorae, basins, small jars, jugs, and bowls.[258]. Each piece offers valuable insights into the material culture and daily life of the time, reflecting the artistry and utility of that era.

Numerous archaeological fragments were discovered in Invillino, Villa Santina, and Erto, Pordenone where findings in these two places include an iron knob, iron arrowheads, fragments of combs, glass paste beads, reddish terracotta vase, a knife, two earrings of the 'polyhedral globule' type, a zoomorphic fibula, as well as various ceramic types dating from the sixth to the seventh centuries[259].

E ware is a type of coarse pottery that is unglazed, undecorated, and unpainted; its texture is had and gritty, often containing large fragments of white quarts, while the outer surface appears as though it was wiped or sponged while still moist; it is crafted on a wheel, and its colors range from grey, black, red, white-cream to brown, though it is typically light brown to grey were found in Ireland[260].

At various locations, both Mediterranean and Gaulish pottery have been discovered within the same layers: this includes Caherlehillan in County Kerry, Colp West in County Meath, and Dalkey Island in County Dublin. Similarly, at Whithorn in

[255] GLIOZZO *ET AL*., 2024, 512.
[256] ERAMO *ET AL.,* 2014, 375.
[257] ERAMO *ET AL.,* 2014, 376.
[258] GLIOZZO *ET AL*., 2018, 2661.
[259]BROZZI 1986, 294-295.
[260] DOYLE 2014, 82-83.

Galloway, Scotland, Mediterranean ceramics and E ware were uncovered within a series of excavated layers dated around 550, additionally, at Bantham in South Devon and Tintagel in Cornwall, recent radiocarbon dating has identified Mediterranean LRA sherds in contexts from the early seventh century[261].

[261] DOYLE 2014, 87.

Part III

The pottery from the Late Antique and Early Medieval period in the Balkan Peninsula represents a captivating assortment of fragments, each offering a glimpse into the diverse styles and utilitarian functions of the time. These shards, ranging from intricately painted tableware to robust storage vessels, demonstrate the varied cultural influences that permeated the region, including Roman, Byzantine, and local traditions. As they have been carefully separated and categorized into distinct types, each fragment narrates a unique story of its origin and use, unveiling the intricate craftsmanship and societal practices that flourished in this historical landscape.

The texture analysis[262], colors, and decorative motifs found on pieces not only highlight the aesthetic sensibilities of their makers but also reveal the everyday lives of the people, trade, economy and traditions in a vibrant historical landscape[263].

The study of the Late Antique and Early Medieval period in the Balkan Peninsula encompasses a diverse array of countries, each with its unique historical trajectory and cultural influences.

This part will include nine modern countries from Balkan Peninsula, starting from Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, and Montenegro. Each of these countries have their own identity on pottery either in Late Antique or in Early Medieval Period.

By examining ceramic assemblages, production techniques, distribution patterns, and material characteristics, the research seeks to uncover the complex social, economic, cultural, and political transformations that shaped these regions. Pottery, as one of the most enduring forms of archaeological evidence, provides valuable insights into patterns of trade, technological innovation, daily life, cultural interaction, and regional identities.

[262] SANTACREU 2014, 12.
[263] SANTACREU 2014, 199.

Chapter 1

The pottery of the Late Antique/Early Medieval pottery of the Balkan Peninsula

1.1 Albania

The territory of modern Albania during the Late Antique and Early Medieval period was a time of significant transformation and cultural exchange, like a case of Dalmaca that used to have post-Roman culture and was forced to abandon traditional lowland settlements that fell to the Slavs[264]. This era, roughly spanning from the 3rd to the 12th centuries, saw the region evolve through the influences of various empires and migrations. In the Late Antique period, Albania was part of the Roman Empire, which left a lasting impact on its cities, infrastructure, and governance. Important urban centers like Apollonia and Dyrrachium thrived, acting as vital hubs for trade and communication across the Adriatic Sea. Christianity survived throughtout this period, yet it was the revival of the Byzantine Empire and its missionary efforts that reconnected the Balkans with the Christian faith[265]. As the Western Roman Empire declined, the Byzantine Empire rose to prominence, further shaping Albania's political landscape. The territory became a battleground for various tribes and powers, including Slaves and Bulgars, who sought to control the region. This was a period marked by frequent invasions and shifting allegiances, which influenced the local communities and their cultural practices. The emergence of regional principalities, such as those led by the Thopia and Kastrioti families, demonstrated a growing sense of autonomy and governance[266]. This era also saw a resurgence of the arts, with the blending of Byzantine and local influences creating unique architectural and artistic expressions. Overall, the Late Antique and Early Medieval period in Albania was characterized by a complex interplay of cultural influences, political changes, and the gradual emergence of a distinct national identity, laying the foundations for the country's future developments.

Albania, a country on the Balkan Peninsula, has a continuity of civilization dating back to ancient times, which it maintained through the Middle Ages, encompassing the periods of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages in this territory.

[264] FISCHER – SCHMITT 2022, 23-24.
[265] FISCHER – SCHMITT 2022, 59.
[266] FISCHER – SCHMITT 2022, 42.

Late Antique pottery plays an essential gateway to understanding Albania's rich historical narrative and intricate cultural evolution. By meticulously examining these artifacts, we can unveil profound insights into the everyday life, trade interactions, and diverse artistic expressions of the era. These pieces reflect a captivating blend of indigenous traditions and external influences, showcasing the dynamic exchanges that shaped society during this transformative period in history.

This historical period in Albania is closely intertwined with the larger narrative of the Balkans, characterized by a seamless continuity that extends from the Roman epoch. During this time, Albania not only persevered its Roman heritage but also absorbed a myriad of cultural influences from various tribes who traversed the Balkan Peninsula. These interactions enriched the region's mosaic culture expressions, shaping a unique cultural identity that reflects a blend of indigenous traditions and external influences, which also affected the pottery of this period.

Archaeological excavations at sites of Late Antiquity and Early Medieval times in Albania have been carried out since the last century, where excavations have been carried out in the cities of Berat, Lezhë, Shkodër, in ruins of the ancient cities of Butrint, Bylis and so on[267].

Archaeological excavations as well as reconnaissance expeditions to settlements in Albania have shown the presence in Late Antiquity of a single material culture, where the unity of the material culture is observed in handicraft and ceramic products, including construction ceramics, in the art of construction, in decorative architectural plastic and mosaics, and even in monetary circulation[268].

The examination of a cohesive material culture, characterized by the integration of ancient artifacts and traditions, reveals that within the southern Illyrian provinces, namely Prevalitane, Dardania, and both Old and New Epirus, there were no distinct regions that demonstrated divergent reactions to the significant influences of Roman and later, Byzantine culture, this suggests a remarkable cultural continuity and a collective adaptability, as these civilizations interacted and merged, leaving an indelible mark on the social and cultural fabric of the local communities[269].

[267] ANAMALI 1979, 5; BONIFAY-REYNOLDS 2023, 2.
[268] ANAMALI 1979, 6.
[269] ANAMALI 1979, 6.

The castle of Kanina prominently located in the historical district of the city of Vlora in southern Albania, has revealed an impressive array of stratified periods that encapsulate the region's long-standing cultural and historical continuity. Each layer of this stratigraphy provides valuable insights into the evaluation of human settlement and social structures in this area, showcasing the resilience and adaptability of its inhabitants throughout the ages.

In this locality, a rich assortment of pottery artifacts from the Late Antiquity and Early Medieval period has been discovered, featuring a wide range of shapes and intricate decorative style details that reflect valuable insights into societal and cultural influences.

At the outset of the excavations, a diverse and intriguing collection of ceramics was discovered at this locality, covering a broad chronological span from the Illyrian period, which dates back several centuries before our era, to the early Middle Ages. Therefore, my research focus will be primarily on analyzing the specific subset of ceramics from the period pertinent to my study, exploring their intricate designs, into the daily life and artistic expression of the societies that produced them.

Separated by archaeologists as group II of ceramics belonging to the period of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the ceramics in this group are largely and fragmented, where their types are the decorated tableware[270].

The vessels that characterized the period of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages encompass a rich diversity of forms and functions, among these are deep bowls with pointed feet, which serve a both functional pieces and artistic statements, this collection also includes shallow and deep plates, cups that come in a variety of styles, some featuring handles while some others no, bowls, and kettles contributes to this vibrant repertoire of vessels, as a decorative motifs, are predominantly applied thought a refined painting technique that exhibits the skill of the artisans, motifs themselves are diverse, however, it is important to highlight that only a limited number of these vessels incorporate motifs of human or animal techniques (fig. 1)[271].

Other motifs are mainly represented by free geometric drawings such as parallel lines, wavy lines, lines woven in the form of braids, vertical lines that are interrupted between

[270] KOMATA 1974, 478.
[271] KOMATA 1974, 478.

them and included within a circle, slanted lines that imitate fir branches, figures in the form of emblems, lines with dots in the form of spots, the color spectrum is rich, the ornaments are polychrome composed of three or more colors, and are mostly created on a base of a white dough, while the color palette vary from blue, dark brown and red, the drawing technique in creating these designs include painting, engraving and the so-called 'sgrafitto' method, the dough itself is made of pure compounds, ranging in color from white to beige and is known for its good firing quality ensuring that the final product not only exhibit stunning aesthetics but also maintain durability and resilience[272].



Figure 1. *Vessel fragments from Kanina with human, geometric and animal motifs* (D.Komata, 1974).

The 5th and 6th centuries saw the emergence of various kitchen utensils, including numerous bowls with one or two handles, lids, candles, and large vases, where one particual large vase features a rim and shoulder adorned with bands of wavy or zig-zag lines, while its belly its decorated with a cross, this decorative technique is achieved by scratching and embedding patterns before the firing process, and the clay composition is blended with a coarse sand[273].

Within the extensive collection of ceramic exists a diverse selection of building material, including both brick and tiles of various styles and function; a considerable portion of these materials has been uncovered in a fragmented state, reflecting the historical usage and construction techniques of the period, in contrast, several pieces remain intact, showcasing their original craftsmanship and design, while these fragments exhibit a remarkable range of dimensions, with some reaching almost a half

[272] KOMATA 1974, 479.
[273] KOMATA 1974, 479.

meter in size, illustrating the varied applications and aesthetic consideration of period[274].

Pottery pieces from the Late Antique era, namely from the 4th to 5th century, were also discovered in Dyrrachium. A fragment of African Red Slip Ware dating from the 4th 5th century (fig. 2), while two other fragments the so called Phocaean dates at the middle of the 5th century (fig.3, 4)[275].



Figure 2. *Red Slip Ware, Dyrrachium* (A.Hoti et al., 2008).



Figure 3, 4. *Phocaean Wares* (A.Hoti et al., 2008).

As of later period of late 5th and early 6th centuries is an African Lamp, Phocaean red slip dish and an African amphorae (fig. 6), while a casserole fragment dating at the 5th century was part of the findings at Dyrrachium as well (fig. 5)[276].



Figure 5. *Casserole fragment* (A.Hoti et al., 2008).

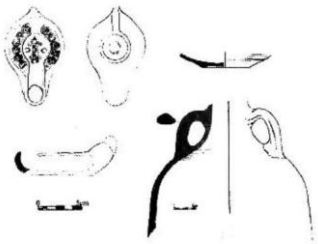

Figure 6. *African Lamp, Phocaean red slip dish and an African amphorae* (A.Hoti et al., 2008).

[274] KOMATA 1974, 479.
[275] HOTI *ET AL*. 2008, 387.
[276] HOTI *ET AL*. 2008, 393.

A pottery workshop has been uncovered at Dyrrachium, adjacent to the Byzantine Forum, indicating that a state-run pottery production facility was operational during the early decades of the medieval period, in the initial half of the 7th century, there is a marked decline in the importation of pottery, save for the Gaza amphorae discovered in Dyrrachium, which maintained a steady presence until the mid-7th century (fig.7)[277]. Extensive archaeological excavations conducted at Zharra Castle in Albania, a fortress that dates back to the Late Antiquity period, reflects the architectural and defensive ingenuity of its time, and at the same time have uncovered a wealth of artifacts, including finely crafted ceramics that offer insights into the everyday practices of the era, a diverse range of metal items indicative of the technological advancements and trade networks, and delicate glass artifacts that reveal the sophistication of glass-making techniques, each of these discoveries not only enhances our understanding of the region's cultural and historical context but also underscores the significance of Zharra Castle in the narrative of Albania's heritage.



Figure 7. Gaza amphorae, Dyrrachium (A.Hoti, 1999).

The pottery artifacts discovered from the era of Late Antiquity are systematically organized into four distinct categories.

These classifications have been established by archaeologists based on the specific types of pottery and their corresponding uses, reflecting the diverse cultural practices and lifestyle of the era.

The first group includes tableware such as vases and amphorae, the dough of which is made of pure clay, with smooth surface and a predominance of yellow and reddish clay; the edges of these are slightly thick, while among the flat bottoms some have a concave

[277] HOTI 1999, 285.

shape with a small bulge in the middle, typical of finds from the Late Antiquity period, often with thin layers of tar preserved on the inner surface of some vessel, while on the outer surface they have no decorations, with the exception of the walls of a fragmented vessel whose surface is covered with frequent parallel grooves (fig. 8)[278].

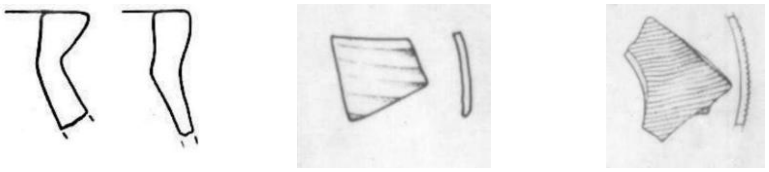

Figure 8. *Pot and amphorae fragments, Zhara Caslte* (D.Komata 1976).

The pottery associated with the first group reveals fascinating similarities to the artifacts unearthed at prominent archaeological sites across Albania, including the historically rich locations of Gradishtë in Belsh, Bradeshesh, Lezhë, and Pogradec, these findings encompass variety of ceramic forms, often characterized by intricate designs, furthermore, comparable fragments have been discovered in other Balkan countries, shedding light on a broader regional connection and cultural exchange during the 4th and the 5th centuries, which highlights our interconnectedness of the people and cultures of the region during Late Antiquity and Early Medieval period[279].

The second group primarily consists of fragments of vessels, including rims, jugs, and bases; the clay used for these pieces is not completely clean, as it contains coarse sand particles, resulting in a slightly rough surface, whereas in terms of colors, these items range from dark brown to brownish and feature no decorative elements; this category includes kitchen vessels, encompassing small to medium-size jugs that may or may not have handles, while the handles of the jugs that may or may not have handles are characterized by rectangular cuts, while the jugs typically have short necks and outwardly flared rims, while the bottoms are flat, and overall these kitchen vessels are wheel-thrown and well-fired (fig. 9)[280].

[278] KOMATA 1976, 317.
[279] KOMATA 1976, 317.
[280] KOMATA 1976, 317-318.

The large vessels pithos represents the third group, characterized by the predominance of larger fragments, the clay used in their construction is generally clean, although there are instances where it contains grains of sand, the color ranges from brown to red, and often, traces of a tar layer are preserved on the interior of the vessel, the upper parts of the rims and shoulders are adorned with bands of horizontal and wavy lines, which are frequently combined and arranged alternately, these decorative elements are typically applied before firing (fig. 10.)[281].

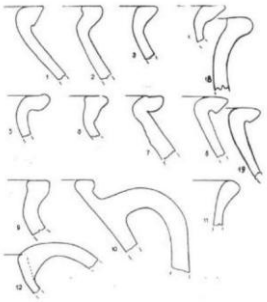

Figure 9. *Fragments of the second group, Zhara Castle* (D.Komata, 1976).

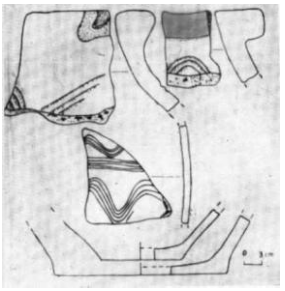

Figure 10. *Pithoi fragments, Zhara Castle* (D.Komata, 1976).

The fourth group encompasses ceramic tiles, characterized by their slightly curved edges and a two-tone color scheme of red and yellow, featuring a clean paste, that some of these tiles display two or more parallel or arched cannelures arranged in four parallel lines, notably, one tile features three letters that can be interpreted as A, C and N (fig. 11)[282].

In the settlement of Prishtë, also through the discovery of pottery fragments, archaeologists have concluded that they date also from the 4th to the 6th centuries, which is directly related to the period of Late Antiquity[283].

[281] KOMATA 1976, 318.
[282] KOMATA 1976, 318.
[283] G.A. 1976, 348.

The ancient settlement of Petra also brought light, among other things, ceramic material from Late Antiquity, through an amphora where the decorative motifs are formed by parallel, wavy lines, made with the incising technique[284].

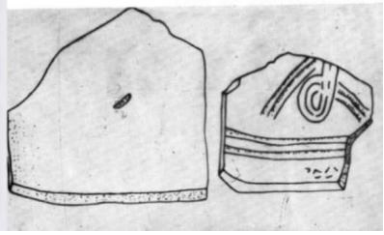

Figure 11. *Ceramic Tiles, Zhara* Castle (D.Komata, 1976).

The ceramic from the Late Antiquity period (4th – 6th centuries) hold significant importance among the artefacts uncovered in Symizë, these include various types of pottery such as pots, bowls, amphorae, and thick-walled vessels like pithos; the pots typically feature a wide mouth and a swollen belly, characterized by two handles that extend from the rims and meet at the belly, many of these pots have a channel running along the rim for placing a lid, and their surfaces are often adorned with decorative cannelures, additionally, neckless pots with wide mouths and short rims, lightly finished on the outside, have been discovered, some of these have swollen bodies that begin directly under the lip or possess a slightly thickened rim, leading to a conical shape; pithos found at the settlements are particularly noteworthy, as they are coated with a layer of tar both inside and out, and showcase decoration through techniques such as embossing or the use of plastic ornaments (fig. 12)[285].

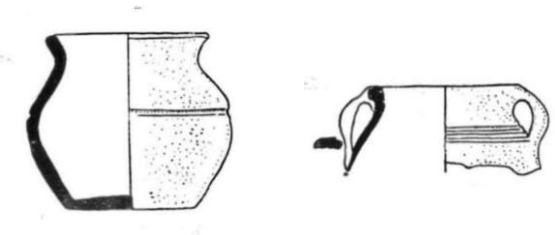

Figure 12. *Pots, Symizë* (Gj.Karaiskajt, 1976).

[284] G.A. 1976, 350.
[285] KARAISKAJT 1976, 351.

The pottery from Symizë during Late Antiquity (4th -6th centuries) features a wide range of fragments, with one of the primary types being pots.

Pots typically feature a wide mouth and a rounded body, equipped with two handles that extend from the rims and connect at the belly, the area between the rims and the handles is often adorned with horizontal incisions; the clay used in these pots is relatively clean, containing only a few small silica particles that remain beneath the surface; the firing quality is generally good, with many pots exhibiting a brick-brown hue, some, subjected to intense firing, appear black and usually have a rough texture; similar types of pots have been found in Lin and Tren, while other Balkan countries have examples discovered at the site of Caričin Grad (in present day Serbia)[286].

Another type of pot feautres a wide mouth and short rims that are lightly covered on the exterior with a swollen belly that begins directly beneath the rims, this variety lacks a smooth finish, exhibiting a rough surface and a dark brown color with similar characteristic can also be observed in the Gradishta of Zecov and the Castle of Mogorjelo (in present day Bosnia-Hercegovina)[287].

Various vessels discovered at this location from the Late Antiquity era include bowls, amphorae, and pithos, each possessing unique features.

The bowls are designed with a body resembling a spherical segment, featuring straight-cut edges, their outer surfaces are adorned with shallow horizontal cannelures, which is a style that was discovered at Zharra Castle, another variation includes decorations with engravings along the edge; the amphorae are crafted from the pure dough with a red ocher color, and some even exhibit brown tones, occasionally adorned with cannelures; pithoi as part of substantial pottery, consist of dough mixture with fine silica grains, they are well-fired, resulting in a red-brown coloration and are characterized by wide cannelures and onion-shaped ends, some examples display a plastic decoration in the form of wavy strip situated below the edge of the pithoi; painted pottery appears only minimally during the Late Antiquity period, dating back to around 4th century, its notable feature include red coloring and irregular semicircles, while the vessels often display a red cross, whereas similar pieces have been found in Gradishtë of Zecovi[288].

[286] KARAISKAJ 1979, 175-176; BIKIĆ 2023, 59.
[287] KARAISKAJ 1979, 176.
[288] KARAISKAJ 1979, 177-178.

The remnants of medieval walls serve as a physical boundary for the Gradina (Gradishtë) location, which comprises a plateau atop the hill of the same name[289].

In the 4th century, Gradishta e Symizës was fortified by a defensive wall, its habitants, along with those from the surrounding area, felt compelled to reconstruct the walls that had collapsed nearly six centuries earlier due to the new historical and political circumstances arising from the crises of the Roman Empire and various invasions, while this restoration allowed the towns to reclaim their former strategic and military significance, a role they would maintain until the onset of the Turkish invasion[290].

In the multilayer settlement of Berat, the fourth layer dates back to the Late Antiquity period, where ceramics serve as a kitchen utensils, including pots, bowls and cups, the fifth layer represents a continuation of life in this settlement, featuring Early Medieval ceramic material from the 7th century, additionally the ceramics from this period are notable for their diverse colors and intricate motifs[291].

Like many archaeological settlements that have different toponyms, the Illyrian city of Lower Selca has the toponym Gradishtë, precisely its hilly area.

In Lower Selca, which also bears the name Gradishte[292], there is also the presence of ceramics from late antiquity, from the 4th-6th centuries, where there is no major change in the fractures and shapes of the ceramics, while the vessels are made of brown to red clay with limestone particles, meanwhile the large vessels like pithoi with rounded edges on the outside and a spherical or pear-shaped body, where the vessels of daily use are pots (fig. 13)[293].

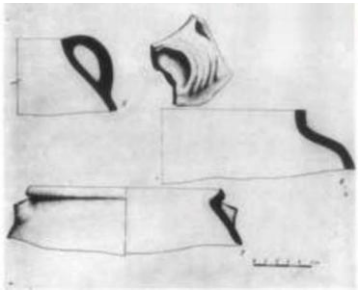

Figure 13. *Pithoi and pot* (N.Ceka 1972).

[289] POPOVIC 1999, 34.
[290] LÉRA 1992, 197.
[291] G.A.1976, 357.
[292] CEKA 1972, 152.
[293] CEKA 1972, 157.

The excavations on the eastern side of the acropolis dates back to Late Antiquity, specifically the 4th and the 6th centuries, as indicated by the ceramics fragments discovered, these vessels are crafted from brown to red clay containing limestone particles, with the most substantial examples being pithos that feature rounds rims and spherical or pear-shaped bodies [294].

During the 5th and the 6th centuries in the southern Illyrian area, a fresh wave of creativity emerged in monumental church architecture, evident in both the structural design and the decorative architectural elements[295].

At the beginning of the Middle Ages, in the area influenced by the Arbër culture, there existed a population that had successfully resisted the assimilation efforts of the Roman Empire, which during the transition from slavery to feudalism, this group emerged as a significant force[296].

Kanina is a locality that has maintained a continuous existence from the Illyrian period through to the Early Medieval era. According to local archaeologists who classify the site's historical phases, while Phase III pertains to the Early Medieval period. The dating of the wall from Phase II is largely determined by pottery, most of which is attributed to the Late Antiquity period. In contrast, the Early Medieval period, designated as Phase III, is dated not only by pottery but also by the presence of coins.

In context of Late Antiquity pottery, there are single-handled vessels designed for liquid use, additionally, some pots feature wide outer rims and have a significant diameter, adorned with zig-zag lines along the neck; a fragment of another vessel has survived, though only its upper portion remains; this piece has outer rims, a small diameter, and is double-handled, with short neck handles that extend from the neck to the belly of the vessel, as can be observed from the discovered fragment (fig. 14.)[297].

The early Middle Ages in this area reveals remnants of pottery from the 10th and 11th centuries, including a glazed pot and three ceramic pieces featuring paintings, often referred to as 'sgraffito', with varying designs; in fragment number 9, which is a plate type, lines can be seen decorating the edge of the plate, whereas fragment number 10,

[294] CEKA 1972, 157.
[295] ANAMALI 1979, 7.
[296] ANAMALI 1979, 10.
[297] KOMATA 1979, 278.

being just the central part of a pieces, showcases several circles with a dot in the center of each circle (fig. 15.)[298].



Figure 14. *Vessels, Kanina* (D.Komata, 1979).



Figure 15. *"Sgraffito" fragments, Kanina* (D.Komata 1979).

In the captivating region of Mallakastra, fascinating traces of Late Antiquity have been unearthed, showcasing intricate fragments of pottery that hint at a rich historical tapestry. Noteworthy localities where these exquisite ceramics from this period have been discovered include the ancient sites of Margëlliçit and the imposing Cfiti Castles, each holding stories of a bygone era.

At Margëlliçit castle, three pithos were discovered, partially buried in the ground and coated with tar on the interior, the remaining ceramic findings include amphorae featuring ring-shaped rims and horizontal flutes, as well as jars characterized by spherical bodies and short rims that tilt slightly outward; jars also have raised handles on the rims and are adorned with zig-zag pattern decorations (fig. 16.)[299].

At the Cfiri fortress, ceramic fragments of pithos types featuring wavy engravings have been discovered. As illustrated in fig. 17 these decorative lines are found on the interior of the vessel additionally, two-handled amphoras have been identified, characterized by handles that connect from the neck to the upper portion of the body[300].

In the region of Mallakastra, one can find pottery that closely resembles the styles and designs prevalent in other localities from the same time period, reflecting a shared cultural heritage.

[298] KOMATA 1979, 278.
[299] MUÇAJ 1979, 288.
[300] MUÇAJ 1979, 292, 299.

An intriguing discovery has been made in Ballsh, where a basilica has been unearthed, revealing a rich array of archaeological artifacts. Among these artifacts are pottery fragments that provide valuable insights into the craftsmanship and daily life of the Middle Ages.

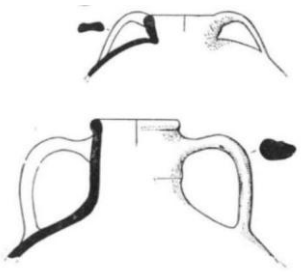

Figure 16. *Pithos, Margëlliç* (S.Muçaj, 1979).

The period of Late Antiquity and the initial two centuries of the early Middle Ages have limited evidence on this side, consisting of fragments from jars and amphorae, as well as pieces of vessels, additionally, the Middle Ages showcases a greater quantity of pottery fragments that date up to the 14th century[301].

Even in proximity to Dalmaca Castle, the archaeological findings indicate a singular period and ethnicity, specifically during the 6th and 7th centuries when this culture thrived, its bearers were none other than the early Albanians, the medieval Arbërs, who are the direct descendants of the Illyrians from Late Antiquity[302].



Figure 17. *Inside decoration of Pithoi, Cfiri* (S.Muçaj, 1979).

Onchesmos Castle, a significant historical stronghold, has revealed a fascinating collection of pottery artifacts from Late Antiquity. These artifacts exhibit an impressive variety in their forms and functions, showcasing an array of colors that range from

[301] LÉRA *ET AL*. 1983, 258.
[302] LÉRA *ET AL*. 1983, 263.

earthy tones to vivid hues. The diversity in their craftsmanship and clay textures offers insight into the intricate cultural and utilitarian practices of the era, highlighting the artistry and daily life of those who once inhabited this remarkable site.

Found pottery types include transport vessels, pithos, amphorae categorized into several varieties, jugs, pans, kettles, plates, and lamps.

Storage and transport containers include pithos and amphorae; the dough for pithos is mixed with a considerable amount of sand and has a brown color; amphorae are categorized into seven different types: the first type features a cherry color, characterized by shoulders that taper towards a short mouth in relation to the larger body, with thick, rounded rims on the exterior; the second type consists of sturdy amphorae with a rounded body that approaches a nearly spherical form, complemented by medium-sized handles; the third type is represented by amphorae that have handles with more oval indentations, detailed with 2-3 long, deep grooves made by finger pressure on a dough that ranges from ocher to yellow and includes fine sand particles; the fourth type contains amphorae with a pure ocher dough, displaying large funnel-shaped mouths with thick rims that protrude like a shelter, discovered in Butrint and Saranda, dating back to the 4th century; the fifth type bears similarities to the third type, but features three shallower grooves instead; the sixth type presents a biconic body that extends more toward the bottom, with handles that start just below the rim and oval cuts that terminate at the mouth; the seventh type has an elongated body that tapers toward a funnel-like mouth, in addition to the amphorae, their lids, made from pure ocher clay, have been discovered in both Butrint and the Agora of Athens (fig. 18.)[303].

The handmade ceramics, which date back to the 6th and 7th centuries, where several researchers, relying on historical sources, who indicate that Slavic populations traversed into the Balkan region, including Illyria, which suggests that producers and distributors of this pottery may have been Slavs[304], along with other tribes that were not meant to settle, but they used that area just for the short period. The so-called 'Slavic pottery', from the second phase of the settlement Onchesmos, found at the Monastery of 40 Saints[305] and dating at the later 6th and 7th centuries presented by Lako[306], but

[303] LAKO 1984, 176-180; REYNOLDS 2010, 95.
[304] LAKO 2001, 305.
[305] LAKO *ET AL*., 2014, 616.
[306] LAKO 2001, 293-294.

according to Hodges[307] and Vroom[308] it dates later than 7th century (fig. 19.). Based on the available archaeological evidence, the later dating suggested by Hodges and Vroom appears to be more convincing in my assessment.

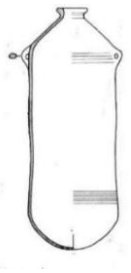

Figure 18. *Amphorae Onchesmos Castle* (K.Lako, 1984).

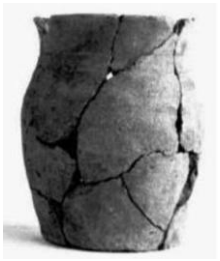

Figure 19. *'Slavic pot', Onchesmos* (R.Hodges, 2007).

The remaining vessels consist of pots that represent the majority of the collection, with pieces of rims and handles having been found, while these pots have a rounded body and exhibit a range of colors from light brown, pink, and gray to black, all of which contain fine particles of sand, features a broad and shallow opening, along with bottoms that are recessed in the center; a similar example was also discovered in Dinogetia, Romania (fig. 20, 21.)[309].

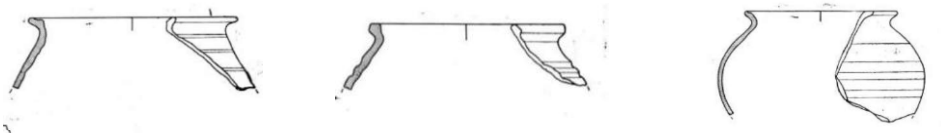

Figure 20. *Pots without handles, Onchesmos Castle* (K.Lako, 1984).

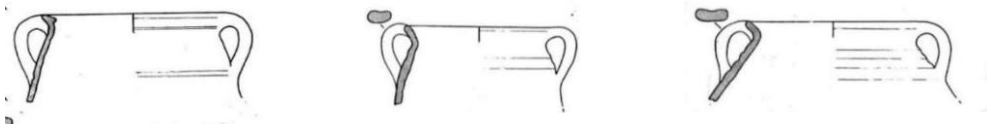

Figure 21. *Pots fragments with handles, Onchesmos Castle* (K.Lako, 1984).

[307] HODGES 2007, 38.
[308] VROOM 2017, 343.
[309] LAKO 1984, 181-182; BARNEA 1966, 257.

The candles are crafted from a dough that is ochre and brown in color, featuring decorative relief figures like circles, rhombuses, or triangles that decrease in size within one another, typically, the disc is plain, although there are instances where intricate multi-petaled flowers or animal motifs are embossed in relief, also they are equipped with vertical handles, and the spine is characterized by two or three deep longitudinal grooves that extend from one end to the other (fig. 22.)[310].

Onchesmos Castle features a wide range of pottery types, including those used for food storage, transportation, tableware, lighting, lids, and more, with nearly all dating back to the Late Antiquity period.

The Ad Quintum thermal complex, located near Elbasan, exhibits a remarkable continuity from the Roman era through Late Antiquity. This historical site has yielded a wealth of ceramic fragments dating back to the 4th century, providing valuable insights into the daily life and cultural practices of the people who frequented the bath during that time. The remnants highlight the importance of these thermal baths as social and communal spaces during the late Roman period or the beginning of Late Antiquity.

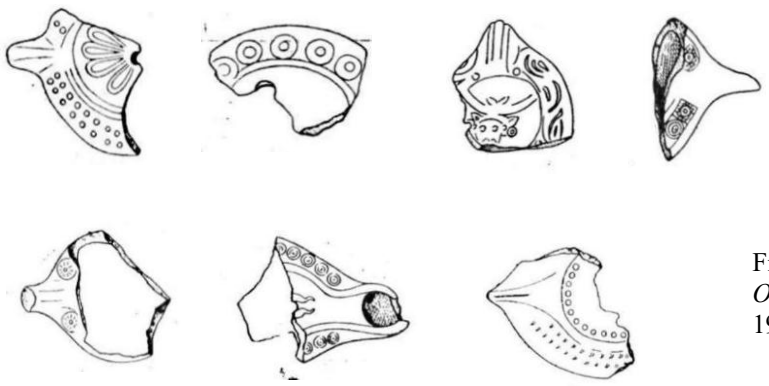

Figure 22. *Lamp fragements, Onchesmos Castle* (K.Lako, 1984).

In the *apodyterium* environment and the residential area, in western part of the thermal complex, cultural layer containing domestic ceramics were encountered, also to the west of the thermal complex on the hillside was a small dwelling, in which a bowl with an ellipsoidal edge in cut was found, painted with bright red or matte brown, typically of the 4th century, also dated this century is a bowl with rounded rims painted with

[310] LAKO 1984, 186-187.

bright red color; a table plate with a profiled spout was also found in Belsh in the 4th century layer, also a jar with slightly pronounced neck, from the same century, was found in the Elbasan Castle (fig. 23.)[311].

As for the pots, characteristic shapes for the 4th century include those with short rims with triangular cuts, and with short horizontal rims; a pot with a monogram of Christ dating back to the 4th century has also been found[312].

Near the thermal complex, the pottery fragments that have been uncovered, contributed valuable historical and archaeological insights regarding the settlement.

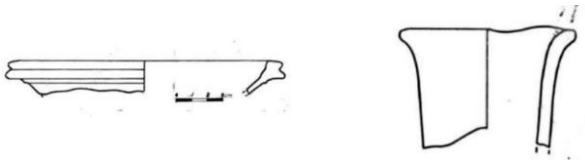

Figure 23. *Bowl and Jar with slightly neck, Elbasan Castle* (N.Ceka, 1976).

Butrint is an esteemed archaeological site in Albania, known for its remarkable collection of artifacts, well-preserved ruins, and profound historical significance.

This site, which spans various epochs, offers a captivating glimpse into the ancient world. Today, it is one of the foremost National Archaeological Parks in the region, where visitors can immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of Illyrian life. The park not only showcases the architectural ingenuity of its inhabitants but also highlights their interactions with the surrounding environment, set against the stunning backdrop of the adjacent sea. The combination of natural beauty and historical depth makes Butrint a truly unique destination for scholars and tourists alike.

Within the majestic Trinorch palace, archaeologists have uncovered an array of pottery fragments dating back to the Late Antiquity period. These exquisite artifacts illuminate the daily lives of the inhabitants from that time, revealing the diverse types of dishes employed in their culinary practices. Furthermore, the intricate designs and materials used in these pieces provide significant insights into the cultural and functional purposes they served, shedding light on the societal norms and traditions of the era.

[311] CEKA 1976, 296-297.
[312] CEKA 1976, 297-298.

The exquisite ceramics of the 6th century encompass a diverse array of shallow plates and bowls, each showcasing remarkable craftsmanship. These pieces feature a variety of rim designs, including straight, curved, and flowing stream-like contours; the bottoms can be either flat or elevated, adding to their aesthetic appeal, while each item possesses its unique form, with shapes and dimensions categorized as small, medium, or large (fig. 24.)[313].

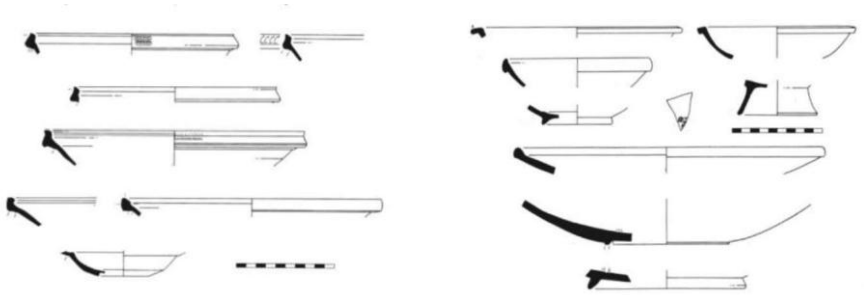

Figure 24. *Plates and bowls from the 6th century, Trinorch palace* (P.Reynolds, 2004).

Amphorae from the 6th century have been discovered rims, neck, bodies and handles. Certain amphoras are characterized by straight or outwardly rims, accompanied by necks of varying in length, both short and long, while many examples lack sufficient body components to ascertain their complete shape, a select number provide clear evidence of a spherical or elongated body shape, additionally, the handles of these amphoras also exhibit a range of designs where some are rounded, whereas other are flat (fig. 25.)[314].

Butrint, similar to Corinth and Athens, also brought in a notable amount of tableware from Tunisia, nevertheless, it seems that the volume of Apulian amphorae decreased from the mid to late 5th century, which a fascinating occurrence is given that their import had become prevalent from the 6th century and onwards (fig. 26.)[315].

[313] REYNOLDS 2004, 253-254.
[314] REYNOLDS 2004, 255-258.
[315] REYNOLDS 2010, 95.

In Particular pieces the handle may originate from the rim and extend down to the shoulder of the body, while in others, it may commerce at the shoulder and conclude on the body itself, additionally, there exists an example where the handle begins at the neck and culminates at the body, these variety illustrates placement of the handles and their workmanship; in examining the bottoms of the amphora there is identified a fragment that vividly reveals the presence of a small gap at the base, that suggests that the bottom did not maintain a consistent or entirely level surface, thereby indicating a degree of irregularity in its construction[316].

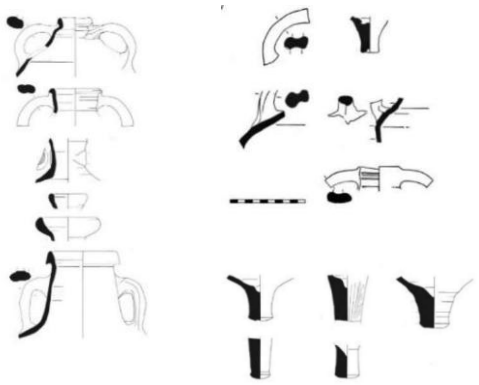

Figure 25. *Amphorae fragments from the 6th century, Trinorch palace* (P.Reynolds, 2004).

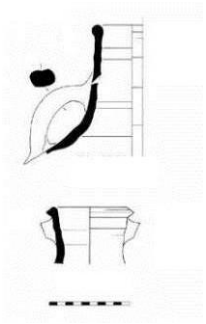

Figure 26. *Apulian amphorae, Butrint* (P.Reynolds, 2010).

Courseware embodies a highly functional category of ceramic that has been widely utilized in daily life.

This type of ware is characterized by its unrefined clay and a distinctly rough texture, often incorporating various natural materials such as sand, grit, or small stones, to enhance its structural integrity. This kind of ceramic is typically constructed with thick, robust walls that provide exceptional durability, making them suitable for daily use. Additionally, these wares are usually made by minimal decoration, which allows them to reflect the practical aspects of domestic life.

[316] REYNOLDS 2004, 255-258.

The abundance of courseware compared to fine ware renders it an invaluable resource for understanding historical domestic practices. Within this category, one can find diverse array of types including *mortaria,* cooking pots that vary in origin between local and imported styles, storage jars, jugs designed for liquid containment, lids, and various forms of plain wares that serve different utilitarian purposes (fig. 27.)[317].

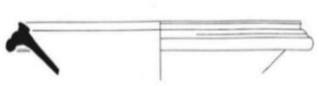

Figure 27. *Mortaria, Butirnt* (P.Reynolds, 2004).

Each type contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the material culture surrounding everyday activities.

In Butrint, the ceramic artifacts from the Late Antique period display a notable level of quality and variety.

Among these ceramics can be characterized by straight outer and inner rims, some of which are designed with the absence of necks, showcasing both short and elongated silhouettes. Additionally, certain pieces are adorned with handles, while others take the form of jugs with closed structures, including several distinguished imports that feature high necks; bases of these artefacts vary in design, with some presenting flat surfaces, while others display wavy contours or are elevated on high legs, reflecting the artistic sophistication, and usage of the period (fig. 28, 29, 30, 31.)[318].

Butrint from the 6th century is well-documented, mainly supported by the eastern Mediterranean sources originating from the Aegean and Asia Minor, along with a few Levantine imports that indicate their focus on western ports during this time[319].

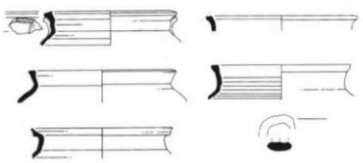

Figure 28. *Coarse ware, imported, Butrint* (P.Reynolds, 2004).

[317] REYNOLDS 2004, 259.
[318] REYNOLDS 2004, 259-263.
[319] REYNOLDS 2010, 98.

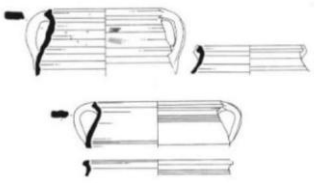

Figure 29. *Coarse ware, local and regional, Butrint* (P.Reynolds, 2004).

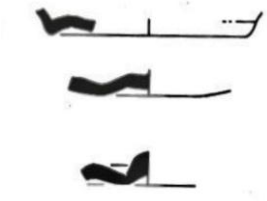

Figure 30. *Coarse ware, bottoms, Butrint* (P.Reynolds, 2004).

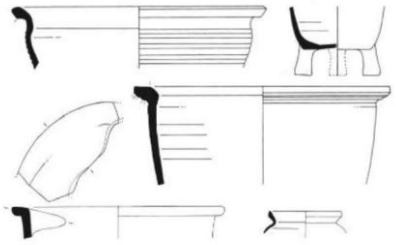

Figure 31. *Plain wares, Butrint* (P.Reynolds, 2004).

The ancient city of Phoinike represents an important archaeological site situated in southern Albania, in proximity to Saranda.

The site encompasses a range of significant features, including an Acropolis, a theater, city walls, an agora, and various public buildings. Additionally, it contains villas, baths, and mosaic floors that date back to the Roman and late Roman periods.

The findings at this location also include numerous small artefacts, such as pottery, which contribute to the understanding of its historical context.

Beginning of the 4th century the pottery artefacts due to invasions and crises was replaced by a local imitation products and new forms of vessels, additionally, new styles emerged, this transformation was a gradual process that affected Balkan Peninsula and the region places.

Along with *amphoras* from the Early Medieval era that dates back from 5th to 8th centruies; cooking pots from the Late Antique period typically exhibit similarities with

those from nearby regions; they often feature thicker walls, with or without handles, and usually have outer rims[320].

A miniature spatheion-type pottery dating back to the 7th century, characterized without handles, was discovered also in Phoinike, where this artefact is believed to have been produced in northern Tunisia (fig. 32.)[321].



Figure 32. *Miniature, spatheion amphorae, Phoinike* (E.Cirelli, 2015).

It is important to emphasize that a remarkable pithos dating from the 6th to 7th century was also discovered in Phoinike, it is characterized by a stamped decoration along its rim, and this intricate design features wavy patterns, furthermore, small triangle motifs are artfully arranged to create an illusion of circularity within the overall composition[322]. Such wavy decorations were prevalent during this historical period.

The trade was significantly influenced by the sea, particularly the Adriatic Sea, which provided Albania with opportunities for commerce and an array of pottery types during the Late Antique and Early Medieval period.

In the region of Bukel in Mirdita, archaeological excavations have uncovered several cemeteries that are believed to date back to the Early Medieval period.

The comprehensive inventory of these findings reveals not only the existence of burial sites but also a variety of artifacts, notably ceramics.

[320] CIRELLI 2022, 3-6.
[321] CIRELLI, 2015, 106.
[322] CIRELLI 2022, 6.

Many similarities have been found in these cemeteries compared to the medieval cemeteries of Northern and Central Albania, where, among other things, a clay vessel found in the Bukël cemetery closely resembles those unearthed in the Kruja and Lezha cemeteries, suggesting a shared funerary tradition that intertwines these historical and archaeological locations within the region's rich heritage in Albania[323].

The vessels that were found in the Early Medieval cemetery in Bukël, some of them are fragments and some of them are oichnohe type, the clay of which is yellow brown in color, pure in material composition, and good of quality firing[324].

In the upper Vjosa valley within the Përmet district, archaeological excavations of tumulus cemeteries dating back to the Late Antique period have revealed a captivating collection of materials, particularly ceramic fragments, jugs are among the pottery fragments, distinguished by their thin walls and well-fired surfaces that exhibit a warm yellow color, the motifs are of irregular lines painted in rich reddish tones, also pots fragments were discovered, characterized with rough material, not well fired, resulting in deep dark brown color, with wavy and linear incised lines as ornamental motifs[325].

Jugs were commonly used during the Late Antique and Early Medieval period in Albania, which were made from clean clay that blended with fine sand, and in some instances, coarse sand, were well fired and featured a surface that could be brown, red, gray or black sometimes, with spherical body, with or without hands, with short necks, with straight or flattered rims, decorative elements such as wavy line motifs were present on the neck, shoulder and handles (fig. 33.)[326].



Figure 33. *Jugs* (D.Komata, 1986).

[323] ANAMALI 1971, 223.
[324] ANAMALI 1971, 220.
[325] BODINAKU 1983, 243.
[326] KOMATA 1986, 255-256.

Tableware from this period is characterized by thin walls and is compose of pure clay with a sandy texture, it is produced using a potter's wheel and exhibits a spherical form along with thin handles, while the decorations consists of strip painting motifs, which are applied before the firing process typically in brown color and engraved decorations are infrequently found on these pieces[327].

In the medieval cemetery of Rehova, substantial number of tombs have been uncovered, revealing a wealth of archaeological artifacts that contribute to the understanding of the corresponding area, including fragments of pottery.

The ceramic from the Late Antique period includes jugs, formed by a wheel, they are made of generally clean clay and have an ochre to reddish color, with spherical body and narrow mouth, where the handle begin at the rim, and extends to the upper part of the body, additionally, the body adorned with dense circular grooves (fig. 34, 35.)[328].

While the ceramics of the Early Medieval period in Rehove, also do not differ much from other parts of Albania and other Balkan Peninsula countries, where some of the fragments also have Slavic decoration influence.

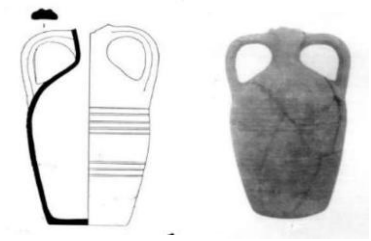

Figure 34. *Two-handled vessel, Rehovë* (S.Aliu, 1986).

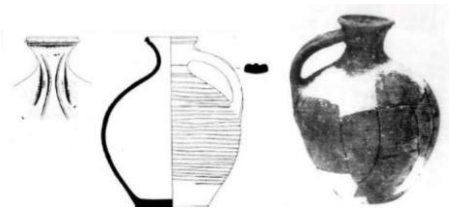

Figure 35. *One handle Rehovë vessel* (S.Aliu 1986).

Early Medieval pottery from 7th to 9th centuries typically features jars that are mostly without handles, are characterized by their biconical shape, swollen shoulders, and wide necks, decorated with motifs that include wavy lines, bunch of wavy lines, and

[327] KOMATA 1986, 256-257.
[328] ALIU 1986, 228.

combination of wavy and straight lines; one particular jar have a square seal at its bottom and eight ribs that extend outwards from its center, each with raised edges, while these types of jars with this decorative motifs have also been found in Romania as well (fig. 36.)[329].

The Pecë Castle, dating back to Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, revealed pottery fragments from this period.

Late Antique ceramics are distinguished from transport vessels such as pithos and pots, with a rough dough, mixed with medium-fine particles of sand and silica of dark and brown color, without decoration, in contrast, pots, have decorations with wavy and irregular lines on parts of the body, but also on the rim, there are pots with crosses stamped on the shoulder of the vessel (fig. 37.)[330].

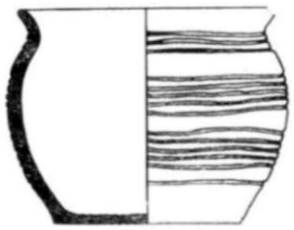

Figure 36. *Pots with wavy lines* (S.Aliu, 1986).

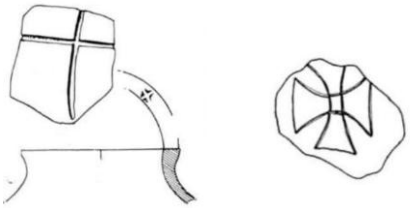

Figure 37. *Cross stamps on pottery, Pecë Castle* (L.Përzhita, 1990).

[329] ALIU 1986, 230.
[330] PËRZHITA 1990, 211-212.

1.2. Serbia

During the Roman era, the land that is now Serbia was split up into three provinces: Moesia Superior owned the majority of the region, western Serbia was part of Dalmatia, and Srem was part of Pannonia[331]. Sirmium (Sremska Mitrovica) and Bassianae (Donji Petrovci) were significant cities in the Lower Pannonia region, while Singidunum (Belgrade), Margum (Dubravica), Viminacium (Kostolac), Horreum Margi (Cuprija), and Naissus (Nis) were well-known towns in Upper Moesia[332].

The Drina functioned as a border between Bosnia and Serbia[333]. Silver, iron and lead from the rich Balkan mines were exported in the late Roman era and again in the 13th and 14th centuries with the establishment of autonomous Serbian and Bosnian kingdoms[334].

The Late Antique period, spanning approximately from the 4th to the 6th centuries, was a transformative epoch marked by significant upheavals. The decline of the formidable Roman Empire ushered in an era of profound change, as the remnants of Roman civilization began to intertwine with the burgeoning influences of Christianity and the movements of various migratory tribes. Each of the Balkan countries played a distinctive role in this dynamic landscape, reflecting a rich tapestry of cultural and architectural legacies that evolved over the centuries.

As we progress into the Early Medieval period, which extends from the 7th to the 9th centuries, a further evaluation of identity and power unfolded across the region. This era witnessed the establishment of influential political entities, the spread of Slavic peoples, and the formation of new cultural identities. The intricate interplay of trade, religion, and conquest during this time contributed to the unique social and linguistic fabric that characterizes the Balkans today.

By examining these countries through the prism of their historical trajectories, we aim to uncover the profound interconnectedness of their pasts, illuminating the shared experiences and distinct developments that have shaped the rich cultural heritage of the Balkan Peninsula.

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[331] FERJANCIC 2013, 16.
[332] VASIC 2013, 76.
[333] FINE 1991, 3.
[334] FINE 1991, 4.

Roman observer towers were transformed into fortifications defended by four corner towers (tetraprigia), as was the case with the forts of Ljubičevac, Rtkovo-Glamija and Donje Butorke, on the Danube fortifications, numerous amphorae fragments were found, while in some settlements, like Hajdučka Vodenica and Bosman, there were almost 90% of the archaeological findings, ceramic ones[335].

In Boljetin, glazed dishes like tableware, mostly bowls, are found, along with a ceramic kiln from the 4th century, and the majority of the vessels are from the 4th to 5th centuries (fig. 38)[336].



Figure 38. *Glazed tableware, Boljetin* (T.Cvjetićanin, 2006).

In today's Belgrade, which during the Roman period was called Singidunum, there were found late Roman pottery dating from the 4th to the 5th century.

Pot with beveled rim, with accentuated shoulders, round belly and flat bottom; made of purified clay dark and grey firing colors, polished black-painted surface decorated with ornament of geometric motifs, they are so called 'federal ceramic', that is pottery production of the Germanic tribes, dated to the 4th and 5th century (fig. 39.)[337].

Pot with a flared rim with a slightly thickened edge, an accentuated neck and spherical belly; clear clay of light brown color, surface decorated with polished geometric ornament motives, the transition of the rim into the belly is accentuated by thinner rib motif, dated to 4th and 5th century (fig. 40.)[338].

Cup with slightly raised rim, flat bottom; made of refined clay of a gray color with decorated polished ornament surface, belongs at the end of the 4th century and the first half of the 5th century, with same characteristics of Germanic tribes' cups (fig. 41.)[339].

[335] IVANIŠEVIĆ 2016, 91.
[336] CVJETIĆANIN 2006, 109.
[337] NIKOLIĆ-ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000, 80.
[338] NIKOLIĆ-ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000, 81.
[339] NIKOLIĆ-ĐORĐEVIĆ 2000, 163.

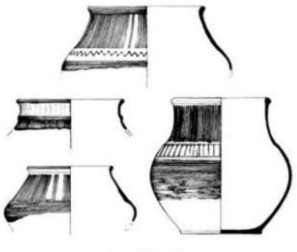

Figure 39. *Pots, Blegrade* (S.Nikolić-Đorđević 2000).

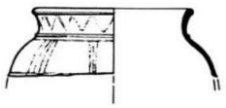

Figure 40. *Pot with flared rim, decorated with polished geometric ornaments motives* (S.Nikolić-Đorđević 2000).

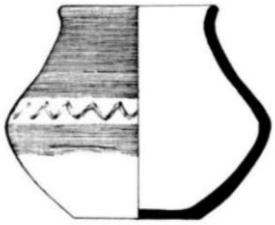

Figure 41. *Cup with same characteristics of Germanic tribes' cup* (S.Nikolić-Đorđević 2000).

The Gepids in eastern Hungary and Transylvania are known for their high-necked carinated vases (fig. 42), which are often adorned with geometric or wavy lusterware, as well this kind of pottery was also documented at the Singidunum and the castle of Viminacium – Svetinja[340]. According to the typology put out by the Hungarian researchers it constitutes as group IIIA-B)[341].

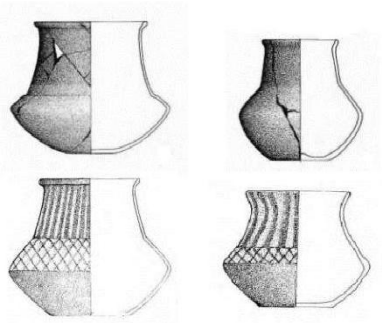

Figure 42. *Gepid vases found at Viminacium – Svetinja* (V. Ivanišević et al., 2006).

[340] IVANIŠEVIĆ *ET AL.,* 2006, 48.
[341] BÓNA-NAGY 2002, 130-131.

A Germanic presence was also identified in Sirmium, evidenced by artifacts and pottery with distinct characteristics, where pottery is typically crafted from well-fired gray, brown or black clay, featuring highly polished surfaces – both internally and externally, and adorned with geometric patterns and stamps[342].

A pot known to be used by the Lombards in northern Italy was discovered in Sirmium, as a large vessel featuring a spout that rises above the rim, crafted from fine, well-fired dark gray clay, while the exterior is decorated with polished alternating burnished and rough triangles, beneath which lies a stamped design of small lozenges followed by a series of larger, net- pattern (fig. 43)); A small pot of the Bočar type was also present (fig. 44))[343].

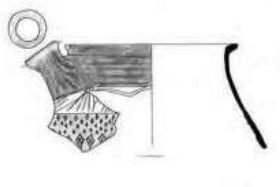

Figure 43. *Pot used by Lombards, Simium* (J. Davidović 2017).

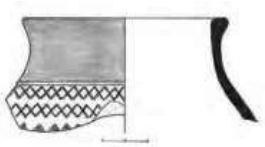

Figure 44. *Bočar type pot* (J. Davidović 2017).

In Viminacium - Svetinja, a *federati* settlement, dated to the end of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th century, where a lot of amphorae fragments were found, which is a good example as the *federati* served as the defense of the border and in the distribution of the goods (fig. 45.)[344]. Find of amphorae of this type are frequent in the Danube region and especially along the western and northern Black Sea coast, while are represented at a large numbers in a whole serios of Romanian sites that dates at the same period, in contrast, Bulgarian sites the same amphorae are dates to the 4th – 6th centuries, but in most other places they are dated at the 6th century generally[345]. This type of amphorae that were found from the 6th to 7th century, consist of the biconical body shape amphorae with grooved lines on the upper body part, transport amphoras,

[342] DAVIDOVIĆ 2017, 125.
[343] DAVIDOVIĆ 2017, 134.
[344] IVANIŠEVIĆ 2016, 92.
[345] POPOVIĆ 1987, 13.

all of them with two handles, some of them starts at the rim and ends on the upper part of the body, while some others starts at the neck and ends at the same place, while the decoration is with lines, in body or in the neck part.

The largest Late Roman ceramic unit, with nearly 13.000 fragments, was found in Thermae area with fragments from a variety of dishes, including, pots, bowls, lids, plates, jugs, beakers, pithoi, amphorae as well, whereas other locations in Viminacium where late Roman pottery has been found includes Selište, the northern camp, and the area of the amphitheater[346].

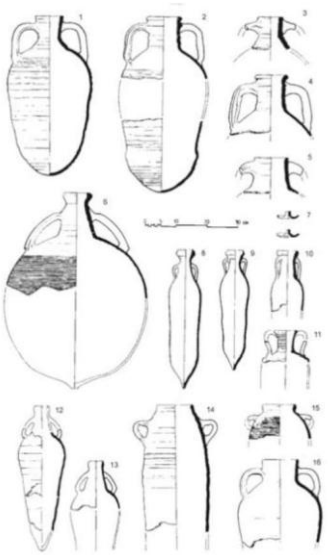

Figure 45. *Amphorae fragments, Svetinja* (V. Ivanišević, 2016).

In Viminacium a uniquely styled ovoid pot (fig. 46.) with stamped decoration has no close similarities)[347].



Figure 46. *Uniquely ovoid pot, Viminacium* (V. Ivanišević et al., 2006).

[346] RAIČKOVIĆ 2012, 147
[347] IVANIŠEVIĆ *ET AL*., 2006, 49.

The quality of plates in Viminacium is higher; one of them has a triangularly profiled indented rim and sloping belly walls that descent to an understated flat bottom, made of sandy-white clay with a yellowish-white firing color and an untreated surface, another plate has slightly indented belly walls that break sharply towards a flat bottom made of medium purified clay of a red baking color, both dating from the late Roman period (fig. 47)[348].



Figure 47. *Plates, Viminacium* (A.Raičković 2012).

Caričin Grad, founded during the Late Antique period, gave evidence of local fragments of pottery during this period. There were found several cooking wares, storage ware, tableware, a baking cover, and *pithoi* (fig. 48.) fragments of pottery, while cooking pots were made on the potter's wheel, having all the same dimensions or volume, and in most cases, they have relatively thin walls, as well as in Caričin Grad was produced several baking covers, also known as 'bells' or *clibani,* for baking bread or buns (fig. 49.)[349].



Figure 48. *Pithoi fragments, Caričin Grad* (V.Bikić, 2023).

Tableware's are from the jugs and ewer typology, in open forms, yet there are few types of bowls also, most of them are in glazed decoration with olive green color, yellow, or brown (fig.50.)[350].

[348] RAIČKOVIĆ 2007, 30-31.
[349] BIKIĆ 2023, 59.
[350] BIKIĆ 2023, 60

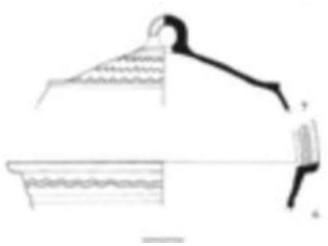

Figure 49. *Baking covers 'bells' or clibani, Caričin Grad* (V.Bikić, 2023).



Figure 50. *Tableware fragments* (V.Bikić, 2023).

Using non-calcareous clay and lead oxide alone, the lead-glazed pottery from the Caričin Grad in Serbia and the Byzantine Glazed White Wares from the Saraçhane in Istanbul, both of which date to the early 7th century, were comparable[351]. Glaze analyses reveal that the pottery samples of glazed white wares excavated in Caričin Grad display strikingly unique characteristics, marked by their notably high levels of manganese, strontium, and barium[352]. These elements contribute to the distinct aesthetic and physical properties of the pottery, underscoring the exceptional craftsmanship and material selection utilized in this ancient production.

Gamzigrad/Romuliana is another archaeological complex in Serbia that has a continuity from prehistory until the medieval period; therefore, Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery fragments were discovered as well. In Gamzigrad as well, a large number of glazed vessels and lamps were registered from the 4th century, where rich repertoire of shapes were are present, there are vessels with traces of glaze (fig. 51.) and one pot which could be used during the process of glazing (fig. 52.)[353].

Considering the lamps, we have to refer on the sites previously mentioned: at Singidunum, lamps dating from 3rd to 5th centuries, were discovered featuring a ring

[351] WALTON – TITE 2010, 752.
[352] WAKSMAN 2007, 130.
[353] CVJETIĆANIN 2006, 112.

encircling the filling hole, devoid of a handle(variant 2), lamps devoid of a ring and featuring either a flat or ring-shaped handle (variant 3), lamps devoid of a ring and featuring a strap or ring-like handle (variant 4), lamps with a substantial filling aperture in the center, bordered by a ring-like flat edge (variant 1), and an oil lamp with a contoured shoulder region, elevated discus, unglazed exterior, and a prominently positioned strap handle (variant 5) (fig. 53, 54.)[354].

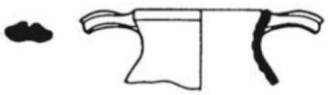

Figure 51. *Vessel with traces of glaze, Gamzigrad* (T.Cvjetićanin, 2006).



Figure 52. *Pot* (T.Cvjetićanin, 2006).



Figure 53. *Lamps, Singidunum* (S.Krunić, 2012).

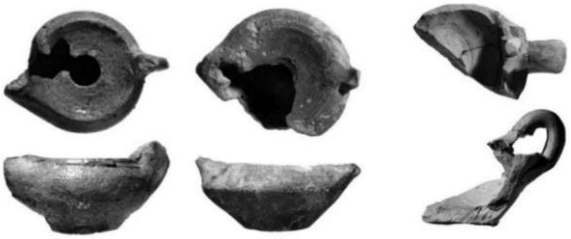

Figure 54. *Lamps, Singidunum* (S.Krunić, 2012).

[354] KRUNIĆ 2012, 97-98.

Lead oxide by itself was applied to non-calcareous clay bodies for the vast majority of lead-glazed pottery made in central Gaul between the first and the third centuries, as well as in the Balkan countries of Serbia and Romania between the first and fourth centuries[355]. The fragments provide indications of the existence and creation of glazed ceramics in northern Italy and the Balkans during the 5th to 7th centuries, specifically in the time leading up to the emergence of Byzantine Glazed White Wares[356]. The use of non-calcareous clay combined with lead oxide in the production of early 7th century Byzantine lead-glazed pottery aligns with the idea that this technology originated from Italy and the Balkans into the Byzantine realm[357].

From the 4th to the 6th centuries, 66 vessels in various shapes, colors, and decorations, including bowls, plates, amphorae, pithoi, flagons, lids, and pots, have been found in Gradac-Saldum, Serbia[358].

Bowls come is a small variety of shapes, including conical, biconical, or calotte, with rims that everted horizontally or slanting, which are made of clay, usually sandy, and are fired in brown, less often red, grey, or ochre, while some of the pieces had glaze on the inside in shades of olive, brown, or yellowish-green (fig. 55)[359].

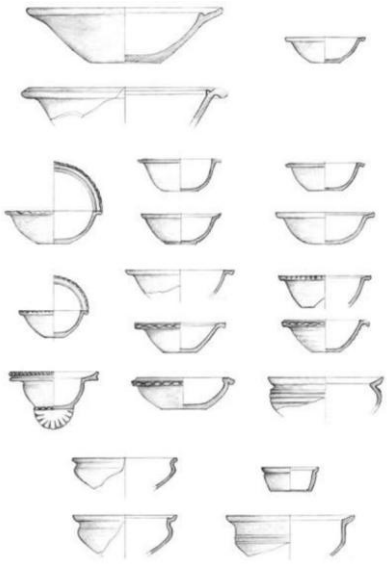

Figure 55. *Bowls, Gradac- Saldum* (G.Jeremić 2012).

[355] WALTON – TITE 2010, 754.
[356] WAKSMAN 2007, 129.
[357] WALTON – TITE 2010, 754
[358] JEREMIĆ 2012, 81.
[359] JEREMIĆ 2012, 83.

Pots are the most common vessel type found in other types of vessels, where they are primarily composed of sandy clay, and their fabric is grey or greyish brown, which is similar to the characteristics of pots, as well are identified with lids, which were most likely used to cover the pots based on their diameter and the rim sizes (fig. 56.) and (fig. 57.)[360].

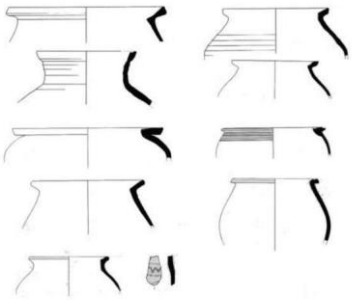

Figure 56. *Pots* (A.Raičković 2012).

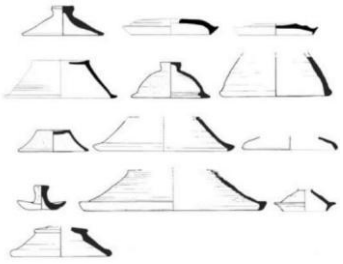

Figure 57. *Lids* (A.Raičković 2012).

Jugs are typically made of sandy clay with grey fabric and have glazed surfaces that are olive in color and most of them have one handle, but some have two handles (fig.58.)[361].

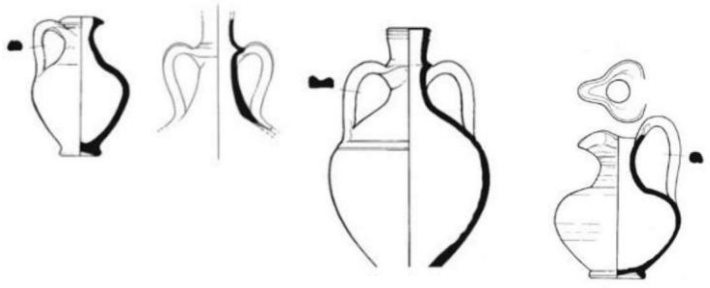

Figure 58. *Jugs* (A.Raičković 2012).

The upper portion of the vessels in the Banat region and Bačka in the northern part of Serbia, lying northwards of the Danube-Sava line, pottery fragments discovered were decorated with wavy lines; other vessels also have a combination of wavy and paralleled lines and the most common method of decorating these vessels was to use a

[360] RAIČKOVIĆ 2012, 147
[361] RAIČKOVIĆ 2012, 149.

tool, such as a comb, with motifs and combinations of motifs that were frequently found on Early Medieval vessels and Late Antique pottery production (fig. 59.)[362].

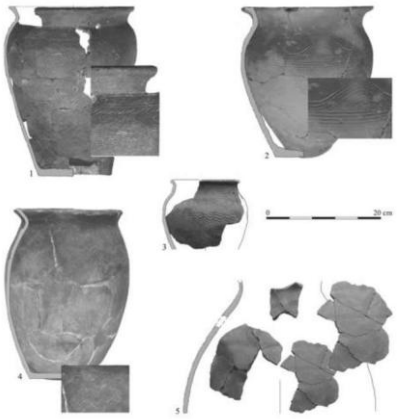

Figure 59. *Pots, Banat region and Bačka* (I.Stanciu, 2022).

Two vessels from the Gornjak site, a pot featuring two handles intersection of the upper belly and the short neck beneath the rim, with a rounded belly that gradually tapers down to a smaller base made of sandy clay with a yellowish or white firing color and this type of pot has a continuity until the 5th century (fig.60.); the amphorae discovered at the same location originates from the 4th to 6th centuries likely a regional amphorae, featuring a spherical or oval body and a straight or concave base (fig. 61.)[363].

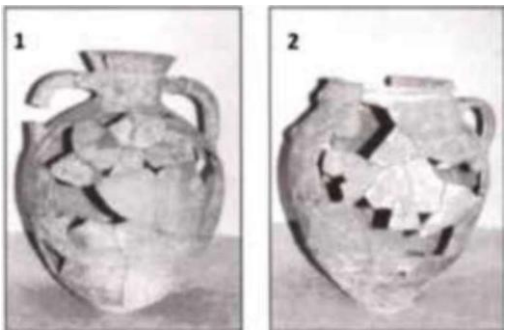

Figure 60-61. *One handle pot and amphorae, Gornjak* (M.Milovanović, 2020).

[362] STANCIU 2022, 94-95.
[363] MILOVANOVIĆ 2020, 62-63

Summarizing the territory of modern Serbia: in comparison to the total volume of imported pottery in Central Illyricum during the period spanning the 4th to the early 7th centuries, the quantity of imported pottery is quite limited, and primarily includes luxury items, predominantly red slip ware (fig. 62.) and amphorae of types LR1 and globular LR2, along with North African *spatheion* and Syrian-Palestinian amphorae (fig. 63.)[364].

The routes for bringing in pottery to this area consisted of waterways and roads, such as the one stemming from the Danube or the southern path that went from Salonika through the Vardar river valley to Ulpiana and Naissus[365].

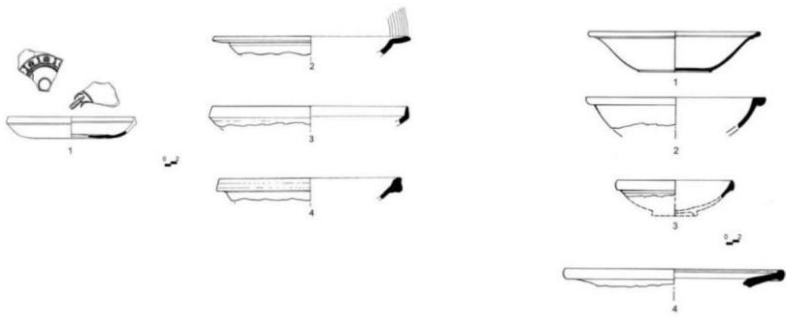

Figure 62. *Red Slip Wares* (V. Bikić – V. Ivanišević, 2012).



Figure 63. *Amphorae types: LR1, globular LR2, with North African spatheion and Syrian-Palestinian amphorae* (V. Bikić – V. Ivanišević, 2012).

[364] BIKIĆ - IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 42.
[365] BIKIĆ - IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 48

The pottery is made from sandy clay, often mixed with quartz, mica, or limestone, resulting in typically gray or brown hues; some pieces feature a slip of yellowish or reddish clay; the decorations often adorn the entire exterior of the vessel, extending from the shoulder nearly to the bottom, same decorations consist of a blend of various incised linear designs, combined with patterns created using a comb or serrated wheel, and occasionally enhanced with plastic bands and each vessel from this period represents a cohesive entity of artistic expression[366].

Early Medieval pottery 7th – 9th centuries crafted on the wheel is typically divided into two technological subcategories, with assumptions made about differing constructions of the potter's wheel: the "slow wheel," which is hand-operated, and the "fast wheel," which is foot-operated. In discussions of the Early Medieval period, the distinction between these two types of wheels is often understood in terms of technical complexity, where the slow wheel represents a simpler design and the fast wheel embodies a more advanced construction of the device[367].

Early Medieval pottery made with the slow wheel often features deep lines that correspond to the design elements on the inner surface, which are covered by fairly deep and consistent, parallel horizontal lines arranged sequentially, additionally, the thickness of these deep lines typically aligns with the decorative patterns on the outer surface, indicating that they were probably made with the same tool, like a comb, while the vessel support was rotating (fig.64.)[368].



Figure 64. *Early medieval pottery* (I.Stanciu, 2022).

[366] BIKIĆ 1994, 129-130.
[367] STANCIU 2022, 78-79.
[368] STANCIU 2022, 83.

Among the discovered pottery pieces were pots, bowls, pithoi, and the so-called "vrsnik" rough earthen lids, along with fragments of jugs.

At the house 7, large amount of ceramics was found, among the determined shapes were as conical bowls, pots where also two of the fragments had plastic bands, jugs fragments were also present, dating at the 6th century (fig. 65.)[369].

At the house 13 was found layer of the 4th century dating according an Arcadius were unearthed around 1187 fragments of ceramics, where the numerous were bowls, six of them belonged to the type of shallow conical receptacles with a flat bottom and a flared rim, conical bowls, a bowls with a slightly profiled belly, there is on bowl with painted ornament (type 1/11), other kinds of ceramics were lids, and a jug (fig. 66.)[370].

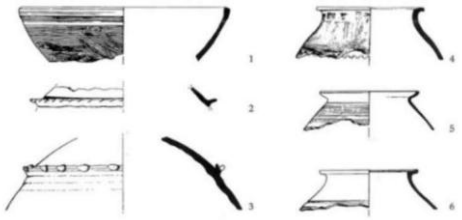

Figure 65. *Bowls and pots, Ras* (M.Popović, 1999).

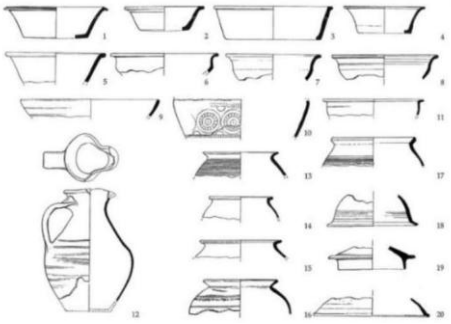

Figure 66. *Bowls, and jug, Ras* (M.Popović, 1999).

From the bowl fragments were found 12 forms, the most common are cup-shaped bowls, as well as conical shallow bowl in the form of a lid, there were present also profiled belly types, there are made of sandy brown clay partially polished surface with traces of enamel, most of the bowls were found on the center place dating at the 4th century, while one type I/7 dates at the end of the 6th century, whereas the bowls type I/1 are distinguished by their unusual shape and texture, which are difficult to date since

[369] POPOVIĆ 1999, 90.
[370] POPOVIĆ 1999, 95.

their fragments were found in disturbed layer, it could be the so-called technical ceramics, which arrived as an important from one of the neighboring areas, for example it could come from Ulpiana, where fragments of such bowls were found in somewhat larger numbers (fig. 67.)[371].

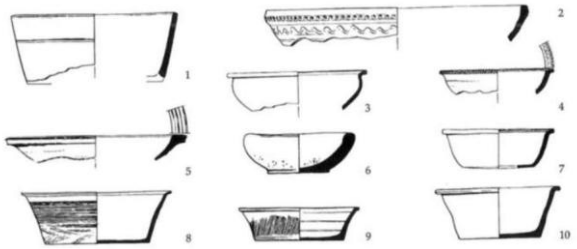

Figure 67. *Bowl fragments* (M.Popović, 1999).

Imported ceramic was presented by two plates, one plate made of well-purified clay, red firing color and red-painted surface, the flat inner surface of the bottom is decorated with a stamp ornament, dates at the 5th century; the second plate was made of medium refined clay, gray firing color and black surface, the flat inner surface of the bottom of the vessel is decorated with a stamp ornament as well, the second one dates at the 6th century, and its origin it could be from Gaul (fig. 68.)[372].

The pottery of Late Antique and Early Medieval Serbia showcases an intriguing and diverse array of forms, intricate decorations, varied materials, and practical applications. This rich assortment not only highlights the artistic craftsmanship of the time but also offers profound insights into the daily lives of the region's ancient inhabitants. It reveals the complexities of their diets, the economic practices that sustained them, and the societal structures that defined their communities over the centuries, painting a vivid picture of life during this historical period.

A jug with rouletted decoration on the rim and the middle part of the jug where the handle ends, was manufactured on a slow potter's wheel, dating to the beginning 7th century (fig.69.)[373].

[371] POPOVIĆ 1999, 104.
[372] POPOVIĆ 1999, 313-314.
[373] PETKOVIĆ 2011, 275.

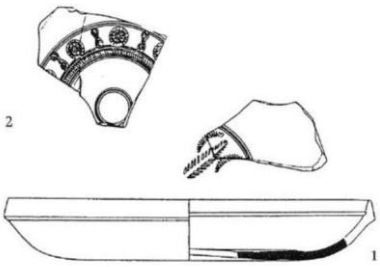

Figure 68. *Imported plate, could be from the Gaul origin* (M.Popović, 1999).



Figure 69.*Jug with rouletted decoration* (S.Petković 2011).

Situated high above the mouth of the gorge, near the origins of the Raška River, it served as both a natural barrier and a vital fortress guarding the principal western route into the valley, conversely, on the eastern side, a comparable function was fulfilled by the hill featuring Gradina in Postenje[374]. In the historic fortress of Ras, which boasts a lineage stretching from the enigmatic depths of prehistory to the vibrant ages of the Medieval Period, remnants of both the late Roman and Early Medieval eras can be found. From the construction at the start of the 4th century until its ultimate abandonment at the end of the 6th century, the fort was continually utilized according to the stratigraphic condition[375]. These remarkable epochs have contributed to the fascinating uncovering of pottery fragments that offer a glimpse into the craftsmanship and daily life of those times. The town of Ras was likely located at Gradina – Postenje, aligning with the found artifacts, though placing it at Gradina near Trgovište[376]. Procopius of Caesarea, in his depiction of Emperor Justinian's building endeavors, noted Arsa among the defenses in Dardania, while Constantine Porphyregenitos was the first to refere to the medieval Slavic version of this name: the term "Rasa", which evolved from the pre-Slavic name "Arsa", a transformation likely resulting from the metathesis of liquid consonants[377].

Like many high-altitude fortifications in the central Balkans, the site at Ras-Postenje was abandoned in the early 7th century, where it was reoccupied during the 9th century, when

[374] POPOVIC 1999, 291.
[375] POPOVIC 1999, 294.
[376] BULIĆ 2013, 222.
[377] BULIĆ 2013, 216.

researchers believe that Late Antique ramparts, houses, and a larger church were restored, meanwhile all this renovation was dated on the 9th and 10th century according pottery that was found in Bulgaria as well[378].

In Gradina on Jelica, several pottery from fragemnts from Late Antique and Early Medieval period were discovered.

A small jug (fig. 70) from the 6th – 7th century features a narrow neck with a single handle and a flat base, crafted from clay with sand additives, displaying a gray firing color, and an olive-colored glaze on the outer surface)[379].

The so-called "crepulja" (fig. 71), from the 8th – 9th century, features a flat base, coarse clay texture with inclusions of sand, tiny stones, and ground straw, and has a brown color due to firing)[380].



Figure 70.*Small jug, 6th – 7th century, Gradina on Jelica* (M. Milinković 2017).



Figure 71."*Crepulja" 8th - 9th century, Gradina on Jelica* (M. Milinković 2017).

A 9th century pot (fig. 72) featuring a distinctly shaped, ring-like rim that is flat on top, a short neck, an ovoid form, and a flat base, constructed from clay mixed with sand, red in color, adorned with incised designs from the neck to just above the bottom)[381].

[378] ŠPEHAR 2019, 118.
[379] MILINKOVIĆ 2017, 215.
[380] MILINKOVIĆ 2017, 232.
[381] MILINKOVIĆ 2017, 232.

Pieces of 9th century jug (fig. 73) featuring an extended, oval body with a flat base, crafted from refined red clay, embellished with horizontal stripes and alternating ribs with rouletting decoration)[382].

Medieval pottery from the 9th to 11th centuries was also found in Serbia, coinciding with the era of the first Slavic settlement at the Belgrade fortress where vessels were discovered such as pots made of using a slow-moving potter's wheel, characterized by coarse material and thick walls, wider opening and ovoid body, a broad base, as well as similar shapes with elongated forms, additionally, bowls exhibit a conical shape with rounded bodies[383].



Figure 72.*Pot, 9th century, Gradina on Jelica* (M. Milinković 2017).



Figure 73. *Fragments of jug, 9th century, Gradina on Jelica* (M. Milinković 2017).

[382] MILINKOVIĆ 2017, 233.
[383] BIKIĆ 1994, 129.

1.3. North Macedonia

North Macedonia, rich in archaeological treasures, invites a deep dive into the legacy of ancient kingdoms and civilization, including the kingdom of Paeonia, and the influence of the great conqueror Alexander the Great. The region is a mosaic of linguistic and cultural influences, reflecting centuries of migration and interaction.

Following the Roman – Macedonian conflicts, Macedonia was split into four regions, with Stobi likely located in the 4th region, which was also appointed as hub through which the 3rd region sent salt to Dardania[384].

North Macedonia during the Late Antique and Early Medieval period was a region marked by a significant transformation influenced by various cultural, political, and military changes. As the Western Roman Empire fell in the late 5th century, North Macedonia transitioned into a contested territory between the Byzantine Empire and the emerging Slavic tribes[385].

In the early 4th century, Stobi experienced significant urban development, featuring numerous residential and public structures, while the 5th and early 6th centuries provide a clear example of the wealth and influence of the Christian community in the city and by the latter half of the 6th century, Stobi had a transformed urban layout[386].

The construction of early Christian basilicas and alterations in the urban plan, which are typical of all Late Antique cities, were displayed by Stobi and Scupi in the 5th and 6th centuries, where ceramic findings are mostly connected to the construction of these structures[387].

In the partition of Macedonia carried by Paul Aemilius, the town of Stobi was unequivocally encompassed in the claims made by the Dardanians to the Romans for dominion over Paeonia, whereas, Paeonia was bifurcated by a line that traced the course of the Axios River, with the western segment, including Stobi, situated within the Third Macedonia, whose capital was Pella[388]. As well, Stobi was in the part of the Empire with Greek, as the language of administration.

[384] JOSIFOVSKI 2001, 25.
[385] BARFORD 2001, 70.
[386] BHF 2016, 24-25.
[387] ONCHEVSKA-TODOROVSKA 2018, 343.
[388] HEUZEY 1876, 334.

Due to an administrative reform in the Roman Empire during the late 3rd and early 4th century, the province of Macedonia was split into two smaller provinces: Macedonia Prima and Salutaris, subsequently, in the 5th century, Macedonia Salutaris was renamed Macedonia Secunda, with Stobi serving as its capital[389].

In Late Antiquity, North Macedonia was known for its distinctive Macedonian Gray Ware, which originates from that era. This type of pottery was not limited to the region of North Macedonia; it was also discovered in neighboring countries, including Bulgaria[390].

Macedonian Gray Ware is categorically classified as domestic pottery, particularly as tableware. It is characterized by high-quality clay that often exhibits shades of gray, brown, or dark colors, featuring a frequently polished and shiny surface. This type of pottery typically displays stamped or incised decorations along the rims and walls, showcasing designs such as circles, lozenges, diamonds, and a variety of grooves[391].

The manufacturing of Macedonian Gray Ware at Stobi ceased by the middle of the 6th century, as no instances of this ware have been found in the deposits from the third quarter of the 6th century on the Acropolis[392].

A dish featuring a shallow wall and rim, along with a flat base, showcases a smooth center adorned with a circular band of rouletting and decorative stamped circles; paste color ranges from brownish gray to dark gray, and the clay includes mica and organic matter, additionally, there is a bowl characterized by a wide horizontal rim and a ring base, which also displays a circular band of rouletting in its center, two grooves on the interior rim, and features stamped circle decorations; paste color for this bowl is gray to black, composed of clay with mica, small pebbles, and organic materia (fig. 74.)[393].

The collection includes four jugs; the first jug features a biconical shape with a small ring foot and has a grayish-brown paste, containing mica and organic materials; the second jug is larger, with a thicker body and neck, a ring foot, a series of grooves adorning both the neck and body, and a twisted handle; paste is gray and contains mica, small pebbles, and organic materials; the third jug has a short neck and a plump body,

[389] BHF 2016, 24.
[390] TSONEVA 2016, 43.
[391] TSONEVA 2016, 43.
[392] ANDERSON – STOJANOVIĆ 1992, 65.
[393] TSONEVA 2016, 43-44.

also with a ring foot, a trefoil rim, and grooves positioned below the rim, neck, and body, as well as one handle, where this jug's fabric includes mica, small pebbles, and organic materials; the fourth jug is similarly trefoil, with a short neck, a rounded body, a ring foot, one handle, and grooves around the neck and body; has a lustrous surface with gray paste, made from clay containing mica and organic materials (fig.75, 76.)[394].

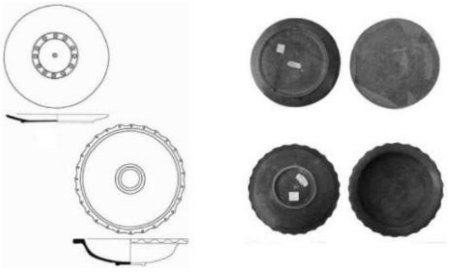

Figure 74.*Dish with shallow rim, Stobi* (A.Tsoneva, 2016).



Figure 75. *Biconical body jugs* (A.Tsoneva, 2016).

Bowls and pans featuring scalloped edges emerged in the pottery of present-day North Macedonia around the late 4th century and became widely spread during the 5th century[395].

Stobi is a historical archaeological site located in North Macedonia, where Late Roman pottery has been found. During this era, local craftsmen created a limited selection of basic shapes and employed various stamped designs, often attempting to replicate some forms of African Red Slip Ware[396].

In the later period of antiquity, Stobi received imported red gloss pottery from Africa and Asia Minor, along with green, yellow, and brown glazed pottery from Pannonia, where local artisans appeared to have ceased imitating foreign imports as the traditional gray ware gained popularity again in North Macedonia[397].

Bowls featuring wide, flat rims were the most sought-after, although jars and pitchers were also produced, many of which were adorned with stamped patterns reminiscent of those found on the "three-ridged bowl" type, on the other hand, incised decorations

[394] TSONEVA 2016, 44-45.
[395] TRAIKOVA 2023, 196.
[396] ANDERSON – STOJANOVIĆ 2014, 52.
[397] ANDERSON – STOJANOVIĆ 2014, 52.

such as scallops, diamonds, and circles are much more prevalent on the wide rims of bowls (fig.77.) and during the 4th and 5th centuries, the overall style of the coarse wares at Stobi underwent a transformation, with utility wares made from lighter materials seemingly being supplanted by coarse, thinner-walled vessels composed of micaceous, gritty brown or gray fabric[398].

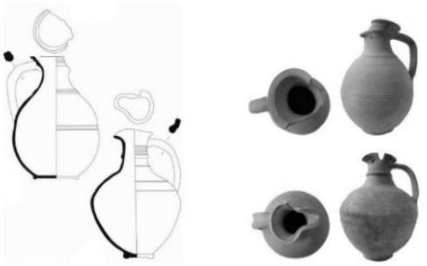

Figure 76.*Biconical body jugs* (A.Tsoneva, 2016).

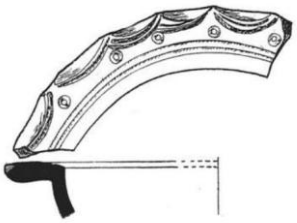

Figure 77. *Bowl with scallop decoration, Stobi* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 2014).

Gray ceramics were also discovered in the regions of Gaul, referred to as "visigoths," or marked with geometric designs, dating from the late 4th century and extending into the 5th century and later[399].

A bulbous Unguentarium discovered in Stobi features a rolled and outturned rim, a narrow yet short neck, a pear-shaped body, and a flat base; the rim and part of the neck are coated in a brownish slip, while the clay is quite coarse and contains mica particles, indicating it was produced locally, dates back to the late 6th century (fig. 78.)[400].



Figure 78.*Bulbous Unguentarium, Stobi* (Balkan Heritage Foundation, 2016).

[398] ANDERSON – STOJANOVIĆ 2014, 52-53.
[399] RIGOIR 1968, 177.
[400] BHF 2016, 77.

At Stobi, a different category of pottery, which holds significant importance in the history of ceramics, is notably represented by a fragment that forms part of a bowl's rim, coated in a metallic glaze (likely lead) typical of many fragments from both open and closed vessels discovered in the late 4th and early 5th century deposits at Stobi (fig.79)[401].

A bowl rim discovered in Stobi is made of dark gray micaceous clay, with a black shiny paint covering the body; shallow, featuring a horizontal rim and a scalloped edge marked by two curved, concentric grooves (fig. 80.)[402].



Figure 79. *Bowl coated in metallic glaze, Stobi* (J.Wisenan – D.Mano-Zissi, 1971).

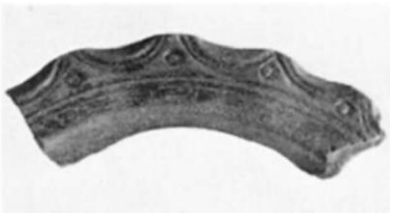

Figure 80. *Bowl rim, with scalloped edge, Stobi* (J.Wisenan – D.Mano-Zissi, 1971).

Wide-rimmed open bowls discovered at Stobi, featuring a similar glaze, are comparable to those from Germany dating back to the 4th century. Meanwhile, the closed vessels from Stobi resemble a collection of Pannonian graves, which are dated to the 4th century based on associated coins found with them[403].

In 2021, a publication released by the National Institution of Stobi and Balkan Heritage Foundation offered details about Stobi during the Late Antique period, comprising a total of 185 ceramic vessels and 41 oil lamps[404].

Cypriot Red Slip Ware originates from Cyprus, and its fabric ranges in color from red to brown, frequently featuring visible lime particles, where one example from Stobi is

[401] WISEMAN – MANO-ZISSI 1972, 418
[402] WISEMAN – MANO-ZISSI 1972, 418.
[403] WISEMAN – MANO-ZISSI 1972, 419.
[404] TUTKOVSKI 2021, 144.

dated to the 5th to 6th century; it is a dish crafted from a hard-fired red material, coated with a dull red slip on both sides (fig. 81.)[405].

A dish known as African Red Slip Ware was discovered at Stobi, a sizable bowl with a two-part angular rim, polished and smoothed on the interior while having a dull exterior, is dated from the late 4th century to the late 5th century (fig. 82.), and a large plate exhibits wide areas of feather rouletting on the exterior wall below the rim, dating to the 5th century (fig. 83.)[406].



Figure 81. *Cypriot Red Slip Ware, Stobi* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 1992).



Figure 82.*African Red Slip Ware, Stobi* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 1992).

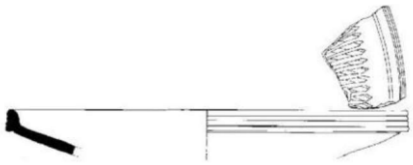

Figure 83. *A large plate exhibits wide areas of feather rouletting on the exterior wall, Stobi* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 1992).

A dish of Phocaen Red Slip Ware discovered at Stobi, dated to the late 4th to mid-5th century; a bowl is dated to the 5th to the first half of the 6th century (fig. 84.); a bowl featuring rouletting on the outer surface (fig. 85.); a dish is dated to the first half of the 6th century (fig. 86.); and a stamped fragment from the base of a plate displaying part of a stamped rabbit dates to the 5th century (fig. 87)[407].

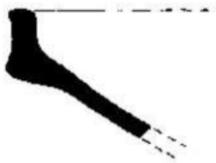

Figure 84. *Phocaen Red Slip Ware, Stobi* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 1992).

[405] ANDERSON – STOJANOVIĆ 1992, 55.
[406] ANDERSON – STOJANOVIĆ 1992, 56-58.
[407] ANDERSON – STOJANOVIĆ 1992, 60-61.



Figure 85. *Bowl featuring rouletting on the outer surface* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 1992).



Figure 86. *Dish from the 6th century* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 1992).



Figure 87. *Fragment of pottery with stamped rabbit* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 1992).

A jug fragment exhibiting reddish yellow fabric, very micaceous with white grits, and a metallic surface, preserving the lower part with diagonal gouged decoration (fig. 88.); a handle made of reddish yellow fabric with a very micaceous surface, featuring two stamped wheels on the upper side, was also excavated at Stobi (fig.89.)[408].



Figure 88. *Jug fragment with diagonal gouged decoration* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 1992).



Figure 89. *Handle featuring two stamped wheels on the upper side, Stobi* (V.R. Anderson – Stojanović 1992).

[408] ANDERSON – STOJANOVIĆ 1992, 88-89.

During Late Antiquity, Scupi reshaped its administrative matters, similar to many other Balkan nations of the time, leading to alterations in everyday life.

Following Diocletian's administrative and military reforms in the late 3rd century and the establishment of the province of Dardania in the early 4th century, Scupi underwent significant economic and urban growth, emerging as a center for religion, culture, economy, and administration for the entire region, although the invasions led to considerable destruction, there remained a resilient spirit for reconstruction, where it is evident in the Synecdemus by Hierocles, written in the 6th century, that refers to the period at the close of the 5th century and the start of the 6th century, noting Scupi as a metropolis of the province of Dardania[409].

Pottery from the Late Antique period discovered in Scupi (ancient Skopje) is of the same category as that found in various locations throughout North Macedonia, although there are some variations in design, clay composition, and shapes.

As for the chronological classification of urban development phases, the older urban stage spans from the late 1st century to the late 4th or early 5th century, while the earlier urban stage extends from the early or middle 5th century to the middle or late 6th century[410].

The time frame from the 4th to the 6th centuries will be the era of pottery discoveries that I will discuss.

In Scupi, pottery products were discovered in two locations: the Southern defensive wall and the Thermae – Atrium Basilica Complex, where pottery fragments are nearly indestructible and resistant to the effects of weathering time, and natural conditions, also they are the most common finds on all archaeological sites[411].

In Scupi, both shallow and deep bowls are found, with the most prevalent featuring wavy engravings along their edges, their surface are adorned with intricate decorations, common to nearly all vessels of this pottery style, showcasing a wealth of motifs (fig. 90)[412].

[409] JOVANOVA 2015, 13.
[410] JOVANOVA 2015, 220.
[411] JOVANOVA – ONCHEVSKA TODOROVSKA 2018, 298.
[412] ONCHEVSKA – TODOROVSKA 2006, 277.

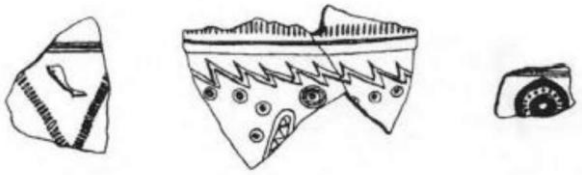

Figure 90.*Macedonian Grey Ware, Scupi* (M. Onchevska – Todorovska 2006).

In addition to local pottery, the so-called Late Antique period "Macedonian Gray Pottery" and "African Red Slip Wares" were found in ancient Skopje and other locations in North Macedonia.

Scupi Macedonian gray pottery emerges in the latter half of the 4th century remains prominent during the 5th century, and concludes at the century's end and the early decades of the 6th century)[413].

There are two vessels from Macedonian Gray Wares in Scupi: first one is a bowl with a semi-calotte body, a rim that extends horizontally, a vertical profile, and an engraved cannelure on the topside of the rim, a slightly extended bottom, burnt gray clay, and an olive-colored slip, dated between the 4th and 5th centuries (fig. 91);the second is a cup with one handle, a biconical body, the upper section is massive, while the bottom section stands on a small ringed base, has an attached ringed handle, slightly overhanging in the cup's rim, with fired dark-brown clay and slip from dark-brown to dark gray color, dated between the 4th and 6th centuries (fig. 92)[414].



Figure 91. *Macedonian Gray Ware, bowl, Scupi* (L.Jovanova-M.O.Todorovska, 2018).



Figure 92. *Cup with one handle, Scupi* (L.Jovanova-M.O.Todorovska, 2018).

[413] ONCHEVSKA – TODOROVSKA 2006, 278
[414] JOVANOVA – ONCHEVSKA TODOROVSKA 2018, 306-307.

The production of Macedonian Gray pottery, apart from being shaped by contemporary luxury ceramics from the major pottery centers in the Empire, was significantly affected by the Goths' presence in the Balkan, as they managed to establish their interpretation of opulent tableware; the features of their pottery – shapes, color, clay quality, and decoration are the same as those of Macedonian Gray pottery[415].

The vessels of the Macedonian gray pottery in Scupi were discovered in the strata that also contained artifacts of African red-glazed pottery and Late Roman C pottery[416].

African Red Slip pottery is the foremost fine pottery in the Mediterranean, and it is found in Macedonian locations with numerous plates from 4th and 5th centuries, with some dated to the 6th century[417].

African Red Slip Ware was also present at Scupi, two of them are: first is a plate featuring a slanted rim resembling a wide strap with a triangular profile that overhangs the body, has a shallow, conical form, a folded rim, and a flat, wide base, while on the interior of the base, there is an embossed small seal shaped like a palm leaf, encircled by two engraved concentric circles, exterior of the body, just beneath the base, displays engraved lines, it is composed of light-orange clay and retains traces of an orange slip, dating from the late 4th to mid-5th century(fig. 93); second fragment is a bowl featuring an almost vertical upper body section, delineated by a bulging cannelure from the lower section, which tapers toward the base, forming a cone; rim is enhanced by a vertically oriented belt with a ribbed profile; the upper section displays a relief ornament comprising figural representations, bordered by zigzagging lines, while a broad serrated band is applied with a tool directly beneath it and crafted from high-quality clay, it is fired to an orange hue and finished with a glossy dark-orange slip, dated to the 4th century (fig. 94)[418].

At Scupi, there were also many types of vessels made of glazed pottery that during the Late Antique period, were extremely prevalent.

One of the illustrations at Scupi is one handle cup, with biconical body, the upper segment is nearly vertical, with bigger base and funnel shaped, nearly semi-globular

[415] ONCHEVSKA – TODOROVSKA 2016, 388.
[416] ONCHEVSKA – TODOROVSKA 2006, 278.
[417] ONCHEVSKA – TODOROVSKA 2016, 387.
[418] JOVANOVA – ONCHEVSKA TODOROVSKA 2018, 309-312.

shape, thick edge, inclined profile, proceeding into a ring-handle, clay has expansive amount of mica and was let go brown, outside and upper portion of the insides are coated with a thick layer of an olive-colored coated, dated at the 4th and 5th centuries (fig. 95)[419].



Figure 93. *African Red Slip Ware, Scupi* (L.Jovanova-M.O.Todorovska, 2018).



Figure 94. *Bowl with relief ornament comprising figural representations* (L.Jovanova- M.O.Todorovska, 2018).



Figure 95. *One handle cup* (L.Jovanova-M.O.Todorovska, 2018).

At the theater section of Scupi, active from the 2nd to the late 4th and early 5th centuries, a settlement emerged over the theater's ruins, originating in the Early Byzantine period from the late 5th to early 7th centuries, succeeded by a medieval settlement from the 9th to 10th century[420].

In the theater area, pottery shreds from the Early Medieval period were found during excavations, created on a slowly rotating wheel, using refined clay or a blend of clay that included both small and large stones, crushed quartz, sand, and organic material; the artifacts consists of various pots, bowls, cups, and jars (fig. 96), featuring typical

[419] JOVANOVA – ONCHEVSKA TODOROVSKA 2018, 313.
[420] JAKIMOVSKI – TOLEVSKI 2016, 182.

Slavic decorative elements such as carved wavy lines and comb-like vertical patterns)[421].



Figure 96. *Early Medieval pottery fragments, Scupi* (A. Jakimovski – I. Tolevski 2016).

There were more finds from the Local Slip Pottery at Scupi, which mostly consists of bowls and pots made of partially refined clay with a slip that is similar in color to the "Local Pottery without a Slip" type, which is distinguished by coarser clay and irregul ar shapes made for food preparation and storage[422].

Throughout the Balkan Peninsula, oil lamps were common during the Late Roman era, and the majority of them had Christian-related motifs like crosses.

Lamps from the Late Antique period that have been discovered on Scupi include cup-shaped lamps, Asia Minor lamps, Ephesus types, trapezoid nozzle lamps, and other unsorted forms[423].

Made of ochre to orange fired clay with a slightly darker matt-slip, the first lamp is a trapezoid nozzle with a circular recipient and two trapezoidal lines separating the nozzle from the should, has a wide shoulder adorned with engraved motifs of vine saplings with alternating leaves and grapes, a curved strap, and a flat base framed by a raised ring with an engraved workshop signature shaped like the Greek letter delta "Δ"(fig. 97.)[424].



Figure 97. *Lamp with signature shaped like the Greek letter delta "Δ"* (L.Jovanova- M.O.Todoraovska, 2018).

[421] JAKIMOVSKI – TOLEVSKI 2016, 186.
[422] JOVANOVA – ONCHEVSKA TODOROVSKA 2018, 313.
[423] JOVANOVA – ONCHEVSKA TODOROVSKA 2018, 328 - 340.
[424] JOVANOVA – ONCHEVSKA TODOROVSKA 2018, 330.

Another settlement in North Macedonia that has Late Antique pottery is called Gradishte Taor, in the village of Taor, which according to written sources, is believed to be the same as the ancient settlement of Tauresium, which Procopius mentioned as the birthplace of the famous emperor Justinian I[425].

The majority of the pottery fragments found in the settlement of Gradishta Taor dates from the Late Antiquity period, and the small quantity of luxury imported ceramics are local productions for daily use. The clay from the local pottery frequently consists of stained quartz and mica, which have a gray to dark-gray color due to baking, and dates to the second half of the 5th and 6th centuries[426].

Pots are the most common form of local ceramic, followed by deep and shallow bowls, pots, lids for covering the pots, and storage pots and pithoi for storing grains, meanwhile, fragments of imported pottery include amphorae, a shallow serving plate, a bowl, cups, and several pieces of oil lamps that are fully preserved and several pieces that are fragmented, as well, there are glazed pottery fragments with green enamel and a few fragments with printed ornaments that are typically associated with the 4th to 6th century[427].

The primary pottery type that was frequently found during the Roman era was African Red Slip Ware, was first found in northern Africa and spread throughout the Empire in the 4th and 5th centuries, from Britain to the Black Sea and along the rocky Pyrenees coast, whereas from the 6th to the middle 7th centuries, it was found on numerous sites in the eastern part of the Empire, the southern Balkans, the coast of Asia Minor, the east end of the Mediterranean, the coast of North Africa, and occasionally in the Apennine Peninsula[428].

Although they existed in the latter part of the 4th century, the Late Roman C ceramics, and Phocaean, a prominent ceramic forms, are distinctive of the 5th to 7th centuries in Scupi and Stobi (fig.98)[429].

[425] NEIBUHR 1828, 266.
[426] RISTOV 2015, 378.
[427] RISTOV 2015, 378.
[428] ONCHEVSKA-TODOROVSKA 2018, 345.
[429] ONCHEVSKA-TODOROVSKA 2018, 347.

Organized rural living throughout the late 6th and early 7th century is implied by a few transportable artifacts that were found inside the structures, primarily the pottery, coinage, metal, and bone objects[430].

The luxury goods imported from the eastern regions of the Empire came primarly through Thessalonica and the ports along the western Black Sea coast, and were subsequently distributed overland to Macedonian locations chiefly, Scupi, Stobi, Heraclea, Lyncestits, Lychnidos, and the city at Isar near Marvinci[431].

In summary, the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods were pivotal in shaping North Macedonia's historical landscape, as the region underwent significant transformations under the influence of empires, migrations, and the gradual emergence of a distinct Slavic identity[432]. Local ceramic production in North Macedonia is characterized with Macedonian Gray wares, glazed wares while the imported ceramic was African Phocaean, Cypriot Red Slip Ware and Mediterranean Amphorae.

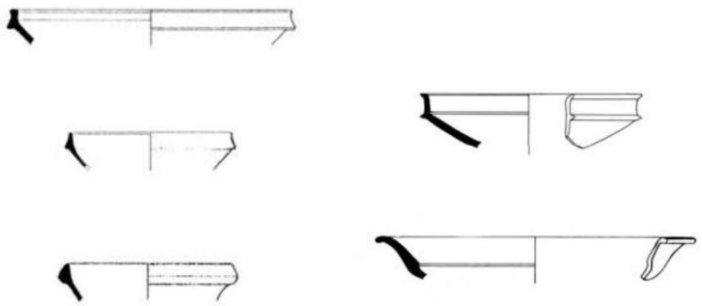

Figure 98. *Late Roman C and Phocaean Wares* (M.Ončevska-Todorovska, 2018).

[430] JOVANOVA 2015, 249.
[431] ONCHEVSKA – TODOROVSKA 2016, 389.
[432] PLOKHY 2006, 44.

1.4. Bulgaria

During Late Antiquity, the territory of present-day Bulgaria underwent profound transformations that affected various aspects of life, including administration, politics, society, and culture. These developments not only shaped local communities but also left a lasting impact on the region's historical narrative[433].

The changes guided in a new administrative structure, evolving political dynamics, and shifting social norms, all of which contributed to the Bulgarian identity after this period.

Furthermore, these influences resonated through the centuries, as evidenced by the archaeological artifacts that emerged from this era, reflecting the complexity and vibrancy of life in Bulgaria during this period.

The crises that occurred within the Roman Empire resulted in substantial administrative changes, which included the establishment of new provinces. The Gothic migration across the Danube in 376 marked a departure from the typical Roman approach to managing tribal entities; preoccupied with the conflict against Persia, Emperor Valens could not manage the surge of people[434].

In the first half of the 5th century the fortified settlement suffered a major disaster combining a natural cataclysm and an enemy attack[435].

An overview of the Early Medieval period that included also Bulgaria shows that coin circulation completely vanished in several provincial centers and settlements for roughly two centuries, which followed by a new activation of coin circulation in the first half of the ninth century, which also included Constantinople, with coin circulation declining in this period[436].

The provinces of Dacia Ripensis, Dacia Mediterranea, Moesia Secunda, Scythia, Thracia, Rhopdopa, and Haemimontus, which were part of the diocese of Dacia and Thracia, were mostly or completely in Bulgaria after the 3rd century and onwards[437].

The main form of organized settlement life in Bulgaria during the Late Antique and early Byzantine periods was fortified settlements, which were situated in hilly regions

[433] CURTA 2021, 202.
[434] HEATHER 1994, 309.
[435] ALEXANDROVA 2016, 35.
[436] KIRILOV 2020, 16.
[437] DINTCHEV 2021, 18-19.

where the defense system benefited from the geographical position and gave the occupants a greater sense of security.

In the area located to the south of the Danube, within the Slavic context of present-day Bulgaria, it is widely believed that wheel-thrown pottery emerged in the 8th century, while hand-formed pottery was predominantly utilized, conversely, in northern Bulgaria, pottery shaped on the slow wheel has been found dating back to the early 7th century[438].

At the end of the 4th beginning of 5th century new types of earthen vessels appear where their best parallels are discovered in the Sântana de Mureş – Chernyakhov culture, whereas this pottery complex is brought by a new population, while in Bulgaria this kind of pottery was found in Serdica as well[439].

In Durostorum, there were kilns for architectural ceramics and pottery appeared in the sixth century in areas containing 3rd century artefacts, where they have been discovered 5th – 7th century lamps, on the *canabae* territory[440].

The lamps were made of yellowish clay without any engobe, with elongated shape, concave disc, with bottoms slightly concave (fig. 99.)[441].

Also there are fragments of cooking pots, tableware, jugs and pitchers with two handles, bowls and dishes with ochre-red and brown-red slip ware, found in Durostorum (fig. 100.)[442].

In the Kovachevsko Kale Fortress, a lot of Late Antique fragments, as pithoi jugs, whose outer surface is decorated with polished vertical strips, while vessels were made of fine quality purified clay, while the gray color was produced by the firing technology, and it consists of household vessels, such as dishes, bowls, kitchen vessels,, jugs and lids, also were present amphorae, and dolia[443].

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[438] STANCIU 2022, 89.
[439] ALEXANDROVA 2016, 26.
[440] ANGELOVA-BUCHVAROV 2007, 76-78.
[441] ANGELOVA-BUCHVAROV 2007, 81.
[442] ANGELOVA-BUCHVAROV 2007, 81.
[443] DIKOV, I. (2016). *POTTERY ANALYSIS REVEALS VISIGOTHS SETTLED EN MASSE IN NORTHEAST BULGARIA SHORTLY BEFORE ROMAN EMPIRE'S DIVISION - ARCHAEOLOGY IN BULGARIA. AND BEYOND.* [ONLINE] ARCHAEOLOGY IN BULGARIA. AND BEYOND - ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY & NATURE: THE HUMAN - EARTH CONNECTION. AVAILABLE AT: HTTPS://ARCHAEOLOGYINBULGARIA.COM/2016/01/22/POTTERY-ANALYSIS-REVEALS-VISIGOTHS-SETTLED-EN-MASSE-IN-NORTHEAST-BULGARIA-SHORTLY-BEFORE-ROMAN-EMPIRES-DIVISION/ [ACCESSED 14 JUL. 2025].

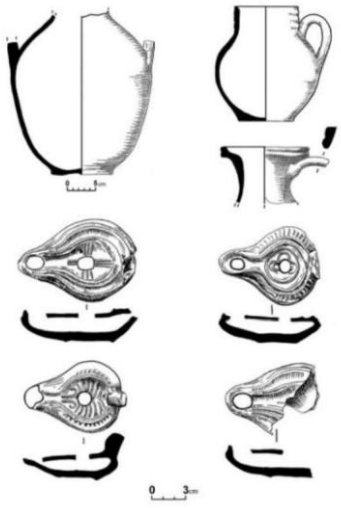

Figure 99. *Elongated shape lamps, Durostorum (*S.Angelova-Buchvarov, 2007).



Figure 100. *Fragments of cooking pots, tableware, jugs and pitchers with two handles, bowls and dishes, Durostorum (S.Angelova-Buchvarov, 2007).*

On Marcianopolis, fragments that are up to the 4th century are plates with short neck, widening towards a body, rounded mouth that are turned outwards or concave inwards, with brown or grey-black clay with quartz particles (fig.101.)[444].

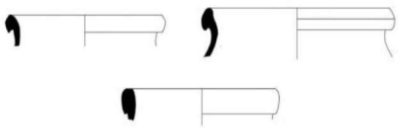

Figure 101. *Plates with short necks, widening towards a body, rounded mouth that are turned outwards or concave inwards, Marcianopolis* (G.Ilieva, et al. 2023).

Late Roman Amphorae was present in Balkan Peninsula also, where several fragments have been uncovered.

There is enough historical and contemporary evidence to justify a review of the archaeological evidence for a specific late Roman amphora, which appears to have been

[444] G.ILIEVA, *ET AL*. 2023, 112-113

extremely popular in the Balkan and Aegean regions despite being found throughout the Mediterranean[445].

Archaeological evidence exavations have revealed this distinctive type of amphorae at several historically signidicant sites, each contributing to the understading of trade and daily life in the region.

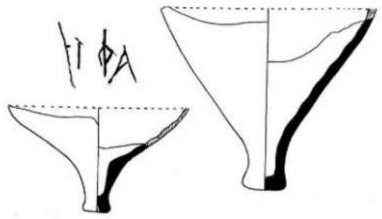

Figure 102. *Amphorae fragment with inscription in Greek language, Nesebăr (*J. Bouzek– F. Kordač, 1963).

The following locations where LR2 were discovered are: Iatrus (Yantra), Nikopolis (Nikopol), Golemanovo Kale, Novae, Pernik, and Nesebăr[446].

The Nesebăr amphorae fragments that have been observed in Bulgaria, generally have a knobbed, pointed bottom and are grey and reddish in color, they were discovered on the shipwreck, where one of them have an inscription in Greek language, and the upper part of the body to one of them there are also two handles (fig. 102.) [447].

To Dopoparon, Yambol region in the south-east of Bulgaria, have been found several, Late Antique pottery fragments, that includes small pots size with rounded body, small size pots with broad body, strainer, vessel with a spout, lids, cooking pots, pots with triangular rim, mug, small table amphorae,, transport amphorae, jugs, dolia, were found, some with decorations such as wavy lines on the upper part of the body, with lines on the neck and on the upper part of the body, or with a combination of wavy lines, lines and oval small motifs (fig. 103)[448].

[445] KARAGIORGOU 2001, 132.
[446] KARAGIORGOU 2001, 133.
[447] BOUZEK – KORDAČ, 1963, 256.
[448] TUŠLOVÁ 2019, 101-102.

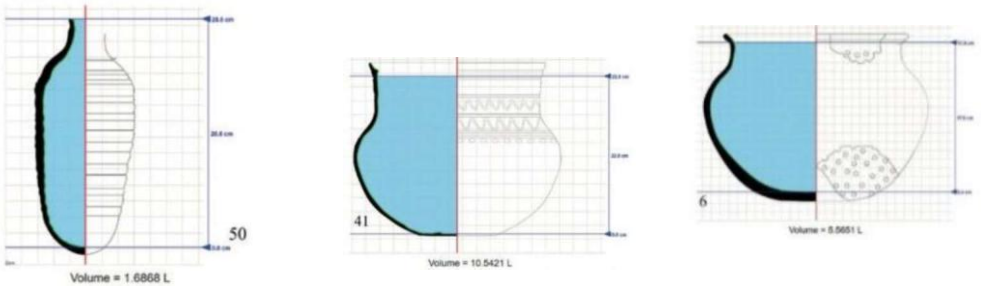

Figure 103. *Vessels, Dopoparon, Yambol region, south-east of Bulgaria (*P.Tušlová, 2019).

As long as in Bulgaria ruins of several kilns have been discovered in places like Pokrovnik, Moshtanets, Breznik, Golemo Buchino, Dragovishtitsa, Serdica, also at Cape Sveti Atanas, fragments of different pottery, have been unearthed as well.

At Cape Sveti Atanas, there are fragments of pottery, including jugs, amphorae, two-handled cooking pots, lids, spherical and hemispherical bowls, pithoi, fragmented deep plates, various molds, and ceramic fishing net weights.

The deep plate dish has a ring-shaped base, a semi-conical, rather deep body, and prominently carinated, nearly non-elevated, vertically raised rim[449].

It's important to highlight the thirty-eight ceramic fishnet weights, which are oval or irregular in shape, have rounded ends, two holes near each end, and measure between 8 and 10 cm in length and 2-2.4 cm in width(fig. 104.)[450].

While fragments of Late Antique pottery found in kilns of Golemo Buchino are more of lid types, coarse table and kitchen wares like cooking pots, bowls and lids, with smaller quantities of pitcher or table amphorae and jugs(fig. 105.)[451].

The assemblage of tube ceramics discovered at Moshtanets was found to be in an almost pristine condition, where this collection includes a variety of shapes, ranging from broader to narrower forms, with predominant coloration of reddish tones (fig. 106.)[452].

[449] MINCHEV – YOTOV 2018, 303.
[450] MINCHEV – YOTOV 2018, 304.
[451] HARIZANOV 2022, 165.
[452] HARIZANOV 2022, 164.



Figure 104. *Ceramic fishnet weights* (A.Minchev – V.Yotov, 2018).

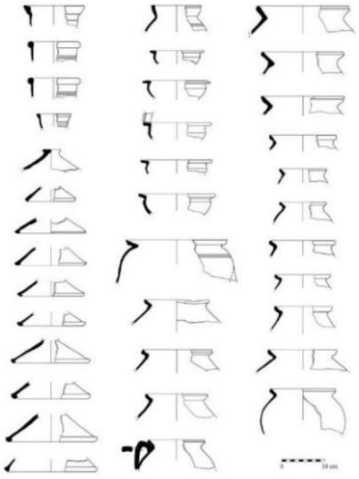

Figure 105. *Vessels, Golemo Buchino (*A.Harizanov 2022)



Figure 106. *Tube ceramics, Moshtanets* (A. Harizanov 2022).

During Late Antique Early Medieval period, thousands of fragments that have been discovered so far, they needed to prepare the clay, fired, and decorated somewhere, in this case the local producers should be highlighted, where several kilns were discovered so far, not only in Bulgaria, but also in Serbia, where the people who were living there, due to need to eat, whether for short-term or long-term use, or even to storage the food, created kilns to prepare of various ceramics for daily use.

Abritus, Razgrad, a cup was discovered dating 4th to 5th century, where similar ones can be drawn between it and Samatian and Germanic vessels, that are hypotheses that in necropolits of Abrtius, barbarian settlers were buried as well(fig. 107.)[453].

[453] ALEXANDROVA 2013, 43.

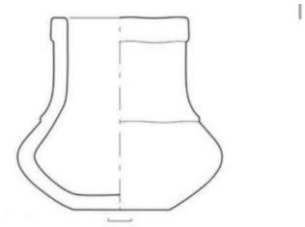

Figure 107. *Cup, Abritus* (S.S.Alexandorva, 2013).

In Stara Zagora Roman *villa rustica*, a supposed flower pot from the 4th century was unearthed, handmade, with reddish-brown to dark grey color, clay has sand and pebbleds, well fired[454]. It has a very thick walls and very irregular surface, yet it has decorations on it, circular dots in different sizes as well as zig-zag decoration (fig.108.).

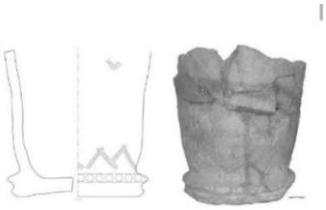

Figure 108. *Flower pot, Stara Zagora, Roman villa rustica* (S.S.Alexandrova, 2013).

Novae, during the period of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, had a great deal of stability in terms of religion, where it was a religious complex from the Early Medieval period, among other things, fragments of pottery were also found that served in the aforementioned period.

Amphoras are short and narrow with a rough, pointed stem, separated into two types, the first one includes fragments of two amphorisks dating from 4th to 5th century, vessels with a grooved spindle-shaped body tapering downwards, flat bottom, with red-brown clay color, small amount of lime and sand (fig. 109.)[455]. The second type is represented by the so-called "Palestinian" type, the shape is spindle, with cylindrical neck, dense clay with amount of lime, red-brown, brown, gray and black colors, the dating of this kind it is supposed to be from 5th to 7th century (fig. 110.)[456].

[454] ALEXANDROVA 2013, 237
[455] KLENINA 2009, 20.
[456] KLENINA 2009, 20 -21.

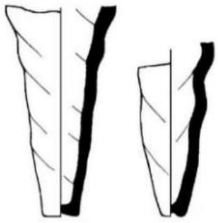

Figure 109. *Amphorae with grooved spindle-shaped body* (E.Y.Klenina, 2009).

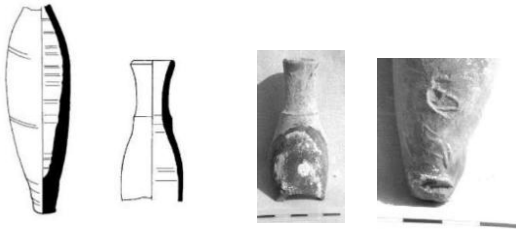

Figure 110. *The "Palestinian" type amphorae (*E.Y.Klenina, 2009).

The third type of amphorae includes fragments of a small two – handled vessels, cylindrical body, with rounded bottom, grooved cylindrical neck, and a small roller-shaped rim beveled inwards, with unevenly fired clay, light red and beige in color, the clay contains a significant amount of small particles of mica as well as lime, dating on the first half of the 6th century, this kind of amphorae according to the author they are attributed to the group of cult ampoules and they were used for storing and transporting oil (fig. 111.)[457].

Lead-Glazed pottery is another kind of pottery type that is very common during roman and Late Antiquity period, usually in green color, glaze is kind of coat that is put to the pottery which in material contains lead oxide, that after the firing it give the vessel glossy, bright and often translucent finish look.

In Bulgaria a large number of fragments of mortaria, flagons, lid and lamps with glaze were registered[458].

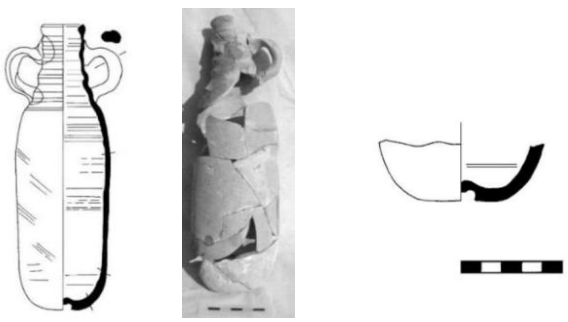

Figure 111. *Cylindrical body amphorae* (E.Y.Klenina, 2009).

[457] KLENINA 2009, 24.
[458] CVJETIĆANIN 2006, 128.

The clay is very well purified, with a brick red or grey colour, while the glaze color were from orange-yellow, brown-red or dark green, this kind of pottery usually are from the military fort, where the repertoire of these type of pottery varies from dishes, bowls, cups, small and larger mortaria, jugs, pitcher, votive plates and clay lamps (fig. 112.)[459].

Another type of glazed pottery in Bulgaria that has been found is a fired cup, red or yellowish-white color, manufacturing from late 4th to beginning of the 5th century (fig. 113.)[460].



Figure 112. *Pottery fragments (*G.Kabakchieva, 2018).

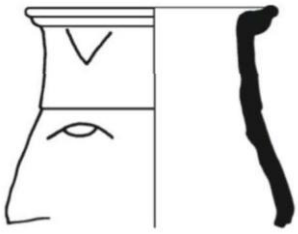

Figure 113. *Fired glazed cup* (T. Cvjetićanin, 2006).

In the framework of Late Antiquity, Bononia is particularly distinguished by a variety of kitchenware samples that are divided into six specific categories; among these, five categories of pots have a clear dating to the 4th century, demonstrating the skill and culinary customs of that time, meanwhile, one category represents the transitional phase

[459] KABAKCHIEVA 2018, 585.
[460] CVJETIĆANIN 2006, 86.

between the 4th and 5th centuries, underscoring the progression of cooking tools and the cultural changes that accompanied this period[461].

As long as Slavs were part of history and settled in many places in Balkna Peninsula, as well, they also left their mark in Bulgaria with various archaeological artefacts, including the so-called Slavic pottery.

In the village of Ivancha in Bulgaria several fragments were discovered where the pottery was handmade, from coarse, unrefined clay, with large-size inorganic impurities of limestone, quarts and pebbles paste was visible, fired at the low temperature with porous and very crumbly surface[462].

The vessels are with thick-walled, in shapes as pots and baking plates, with slightly curved outwards, rounded rims, some with long necks, few of them with decorations that vary with incised and finger impressions (alveoli), the earliest decorations consists of incision of short lines on the lip of a pot's rim[463], while the date comparing the other Slavic pottery fragments from the region goes to the end of 6th and the beginning of the 7th century (fig. 114.)[464].

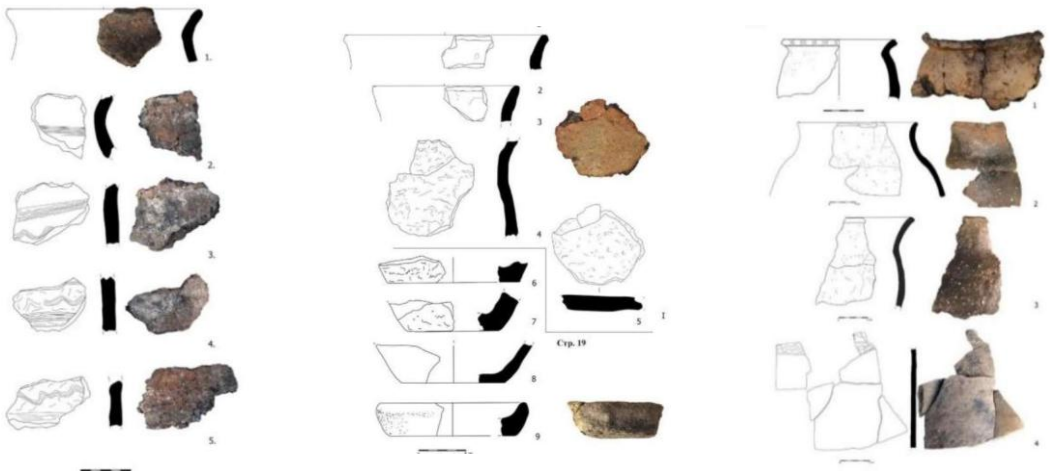

Figure 114. *Slavic pottery* (G.Grozdanova – D.Rabovyanov, 2024).

[461] BLAGOEVA 2025, 95.
[462] GRAZDANOVA - RABOVYANOV 2024, 38.
[463] BEKIC 2016, 109.
[464] GRAZDANOVA - RABOVYANOV 2024, 38-39.

The period of the middle ages in today's Vidin, discovered finds from clay vessels, pots, different from their size, there are two fragments from 6th 7th centuries, the first one is hand made from single piece of clay, clay contains sand, coarse impurities, fired in low temperature, the shape is asymmetrical, with double conical with rounded sides; while the second one is has grayish-brown color, traces of secondary burning, body shapes is like an inverted truncated cone with a downwardly sloping line of a maximum diameter, constricted neck, outwardly curved mouth (fig. 115.)[465].

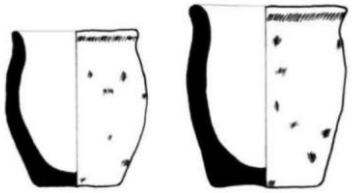

Figure 115. *6th – 7th century's pottery, Vidin (M.Daskalov, 2009).*

It should be highlighted that Slavs began decorating pottery, using some ornamental elements of Late Antiquity pottery, executed in their style, like the use of the wavy lines[466].

Pottery in these centuries were handmade and wheel made, as well as it has Slavic and Byzantine influences in both their shapes and decorations, while the common vessel types were storage jars with thick walled, large; cooking pots with rounded bottoms; bowls and cups in different size, sometimes with smoother surface; jugs, lids and strainers.

Studies in Thrace indicate that in Sandanski (Bulgaria) an early Christian basilica from the 6th century, within its late Roman stratum, which unearthed artefacts made of Macedonian gray pottery; these vessels match those found in Skopje, and their similarity to the Stobi vessels is corroborated by V. Anderson Stojanović[467]

There is jug discovered at Kroum Palace, from early 9th century, with yellow in color, shprecial body, narrow neck, profiled mouth rim, pentagonal hande in cross-section, the extended lower end of which is decorated with two leaf engraving half palmets in each side, smooth body with remnants of glaze-like coating (fig.116.)[468]. At the same

[465] DASKALOV 2009, 65
[466] BEKIC 2016, 139.
[467] ONCHEVSKA – TODOROVSKA 2006, 275.
[468] DONČEVA-PETKOVA, *ET AL* 2007, 666.

place pottery fragments of tea pots have been also discovered, made of well-refined clay on a foot-driven potter's wheel (fig.117.)[469]. This type is from the early 9th century, with a spheroidal body, narrow neck, cloverleaf-shaped mouth, rounded base, handle rounded in cross-section, attached to the neck and shoulder, it has a polished surface covered with fluting and bud shapes attachments are in the upper part of the handle and on the neck (fig. 118.)[470].



Figure 116. *Jug, Kroum Palace* (L.Dončeva-Petkova, et al. 2007).



Figure 117.*Fragments of tea pots, Kroum Palace* (V.Grigorov – J.Dimitrov, 2013).

Another vessel from 9th to 10th century found in Vidin, is made from clay that is better purified, with sand and some larger impurities, the firing was in high temperature, brownish black in color, the surface is smoothed, the body shape is like inverted truncated cone, the neck is well defined, with curved rim[471].

Pliska is an important site of Bulgarian history with archaeological evidence, that from Pliska it could be controlled the north-south routes through the eastern passes of the Balkan mountains and along the narrow lowland coastal strip, as well Omurtag reconstructed the city after had been burned at 811[472]. As of archaeological context Pliska complex has palace, citadel, large basilica, churches, pagan temple, monastery, and baths[473]. A pouring jug is another one that should be mentioned from a 9th century vessel found in Pliska, that has yellow-gray color, spherical body, narrow cylindrical

[469] GRIGOROV – DIMITROV 2013, 121 – 123.
[470] DONČEVA-PETKOVA, *ET AL.* 2007, 672.
[471] DONČEVA-PETKOVA, *ET AL*. 2007, DASKALOV 2009, 65.
[472] CRAMPTON 2005, 9-11.
[473] RASHEV – DIMITROV 1999, N.P.

neck, ring-shaped mouth, flat bottom, round handle, cylindrical spot, with smooth surface (fig. 119.)[474].



Figure 118. *Vessel from 9th century* (L.Dončeva-Petkova, et al. 2007).



Figure 119. *Pouring jug, 9th century* (L.Dončeva-Petkova, et al. 2007).

As for the pots there are two different types from the 9th century each with different shape and decoration.

The first one is has a spherical body, stepped neck, protruding mouth with a rounded rim, flat base, polished surface with horizontal incised grooves (fig. 120.)[475]; the second found in Pliska, has an ovoid body, short neck, thick rim, with horizontal incised grooves in the lower half of the body and reticulated smoothing stripes in the upper half, made of pure clay and decorated also by polishing (fig. 121.)[476].



Figure 120. *Pot polished with horizontal incised grooves* (L.Dončeva-Petkova, et al. 2007).



Figure 121. *Pot with smoothing stripes in the upper half body, Pliska* (L.Dončeva-Petkova, et al. 2007).

[474] DONČEVA-PETKOVA. *ET AL.* 2007, 673
[475] DONČEVA-PETKOVA, *ET AL.* 2007, 672.
[476] DONČEVA – PETKOVA 2007, 301-302; DONČEVA-PETKOVA, *ET AL*. 2007, 672.

In Bulgaria, pottery of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages are quite diverse in clay composition, shape, decoration, design, color and firing.

Starting from the periods of Late Antiquity 4th 5th, and 6th centuries, then 7th and 9th centuries, the variety of ceramics shows the culture, society, politics, and above all the economy in Bulgaria over the centuries.

Whether the pottery imported or not, whether used for a longer period by the local people or used for a shorter period by Slavic tribes, where the durable or less durable clay, by analogy and chronology Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery in Bulgaria is quite large in quantity and variety, at the same time there are a lot studies of pottery.

Starting from the 4th century, various bowls, pots, jugs, and amphorae have been discovered from Bononia. One notable bowl features a conical shape, a rim with a strong inward curve, a flat base, and is decorated with incised lines; it is crafted from beige clay containing impurities of quartz, mica, and small pebbles, a similar item from the same century has also been found in Nove (fig. 122.)[477].

Another spherical or biconical bowl was discovered in Bononia, featuring a rim that is thickened and curves outward, with a circumferential edge that is rounded; it has handles that are curved with an elliptical cross-section; the clay used is gray-brown and contains sand and mica particles, a similar type has also been recorded in Ratsiaria during the Late Antiquity, dating back to the 4th century (fig. 123.)[478].

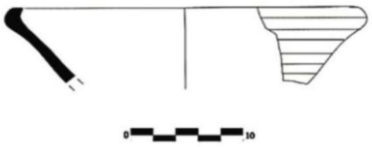

Figure 122. *Bowl, Bononia* (N.Blageova, 2025).



Figure 123. *Biconical bowl, Bononia* (N.Blageova, 2025).

[477] BLAGOEVA 2025, 62
[478] BLAGOEVA 2025, 63

Two bowl from the mid-4th century were discovered, the first one is a bowl with hard firing, light gray color, well purified clay with an admixtures of sand in the dough, with horizontal rim; the second bowl has a uniform firing, gray-brown color of the clay with an admixture of sand in the dough, with almost the same horizontal rim (fig. 124.)[479].

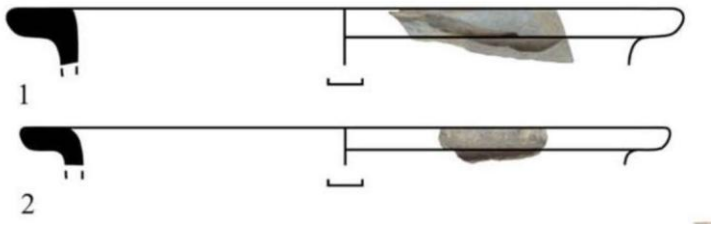

Figure 124. *Two bowls from 4th century (*L.Traikova, 2023).

[479] TRAIKOVA 2023, 202-203.

1.5. Romania

The regions that make up modern-day Romania had very varied histories throughout the late Roman and Early Medieval eras. The province of Dacia, which was purposefully abandoned and cleaned away in 271 or 275, included the eastern portion of Oltenia and the central portions of Transylvania. Karps migration started around 271, and a big urn, typical of the Hungarian Great Plain Region, was discovered there, that had a medal depicting Empress Serveria (271-275), where these immigrants had a civilization that was both "Barbarians from the Imperial era" and typical of the Great Plains[480], where there were Barbarians in Dacia after 271 and no evidence of Latin speakers or the Roman way of life[481].

While several older confederations resisted in the areas of the Middle and Lower Danube, such as the Iranian Sarmathians and the Carpi of Dacian origin, they also posed a serious threat to the Roman Empire, where in Europe, the movement of Germainc populations from the north to the south were accompanied by unification processes that led to the formation of great tribe union near the Roman border: the Vandals, Juthungi, Alamanni, Burgundians, Franks and Goths north of the Black Sea and westwards up to the North Sea[482].

Normally belonging to Gratian's western empire, the Illyrian dioceses of Dacia Mediterannea southern of Danube and Macedonia were likely given to Theodosius, who was also left in charge of the Goths' war[483].

The Goths had an impact in Romania in the former province of Dacia, where they established permanent settlement as sedentary people involved in farming and animal husbandry, where they were culturally homogenous group that coexisted with the older ethnic elements in the steppe and Dacian territory, either assimilating or, more likely, economically and military dominating them[484].

In addition to Goths, Slavs were also present day Romania in the Early Medieval era, where Avars may have maintained strict control over Slavs who had settled in the Banat

[480] VÉKONY 2000, 155.
[481] VÉKONY 2000, 159.
[482] PETCULESCU 2017, 259.
[483] HEATHER 1994, 149.
[484] LENSKI 2002, 117 – 118.

area of western Romania, or along the upper course of Tisza River, but Slavs along the lower Danube would have been less submissive[485] .

These various cultural influences profoundly shaped archaeological artifacts, particularly in the realm of pottery, where the distinctive attributes of each tribe are intricately reflected in the diverse shapes and elaborate decorative patterns of their ceramic works. Each piece tells a story, showcasing the craftsmanship, aesthetic sensibilities, and cultural traditions of the artisans who created them.

In the following overview of the find material we are going to refer on several sites of Dobrudja on the Eastern edge of Romania. These sites belonging at least to the first half of the Byzantine Empire, as parts of Scythia Minor, and their settlement history differes from the central parts of today's Romania, which as a Barbaricum shared the history of Eastern Central, or Eastern Europe. In Capidava a site of Dobrudja, on the bank of Lower Danube, there were several Early Byzantine amphorae discovered dating from the 6th century according of coins dating from the same period. One of them of this period is a transport amphorae that has a cross with red paint as B Y † N E[486], this amphorae has grooved lines on the body parts, two handles that starts from the neck to the shoulder of the vessel (fig. 125.)[487].



Figure 125. *Early Byzantine amphorae with cross and red paint as B Y † N E, Capidava (*I.C.Opriş – A.Raţiu 2016).

[485] WHITBY 1988, 174.
[486] OPRIŞ 2003, 233.
[487] OPRIŞ – RAŢIU 2016, 29.

Another amphorae type LR 1, two handles that start from the neck to the shoulder of vessel, half a meter on the height[488]. The Gaza type amphorae was also discovered as transport amphorae, with fine fabric, with sand and quartzite particles, brick orange in color, two small handles, in upper part are grooved lines around the vessel (fig. 126.)[489]. A felting mill also have been discovered in Room III, with other amphorae shreds some in fragments while some others half preserved (fig. 127)[490].



Figure 126. *Gaza type amphorae (*I.C.Opriş – A.Raţiu 2016).



Figure 127. *Felting Mill (*I.C.Opriş – A.Raţiu 2016).

[488] OPRIŞ – RAŢIU 2016,198.
[489] OPRIŞ – RAŢIU 2016, 30.
[490] OPRIŞ – RAŢIU 2016, 37.

In Dinogetia - Dobrudja, amphoras of wine products have been found, from the Late Antique to the Early Medieval period, as well as imported olive oil. This is the best information about the economy of that time, one of the amphoras dating to the 4th-5th century, imported from the Aegean known as LRA2 type, was found as well, with wavy lines under the end of the handle that continues until the middle part of the body (fig. 128.)[491]. In the Late Antique period, pottery was found, which I would also like to talk about, two of it. An amphora dated to the 6th century, with yellowish paste with impurities, it has a cylindrical body shape (fig.129.)[492].

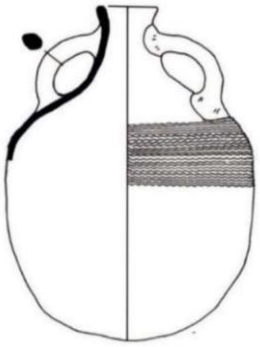

Figure 128. *Amphorae of wine, Dinogetia (*A. Opaiț et al. 2020).

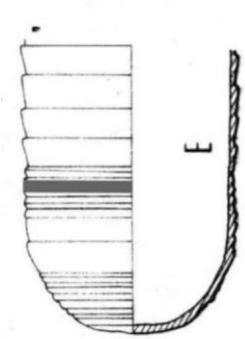

Figure 129. *Amphorae with cylindrical body shape (*AL. Suceveanu, 1982).

Late Antique period starting from 4th century AD was evident in Histria, a site of Dobrudja, where fragments of plates, bowls, pots, lids, as well as mugs.

[491] OPAIȚ *ET AL*. 2020, 385.
[492] SUCEVEANU 1982, 87.

A plate with red fabric, featuring small and rare porosities containing small calcite and mica particles, and decorated with tear-drop motifs under the rim, was found fragmented in Histira (fig. 130.)[493].

Another plate with detailed rouletted decorations all over the rim, with red fabric, with tiny calcite particles, and few mica, dating from the 5th century (fig. 131.)[494].

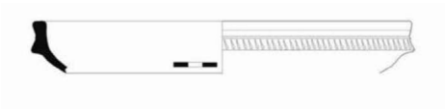

Figure 130.*Plate* (A. Bădescu – L. Cliante 2015).



Figure 131. *Plate from 5th century* (A. Bădescu – L. Cliante 2015).

Mugs also have been unearthed from Histria, I would like to highlight only two of them, that one of them has reddish red fabric on the exterior while reddish-grey color in the interior dates back from 4th to the 6th century, with small calcite and iron oxide particles, the other mug that dates back to on the first quarters of the 4th century, has semi-rough sandy fabric, brittle but resistant, with tiny calcite and iron oxide particles as well as mica also (fig. 132.)[495].

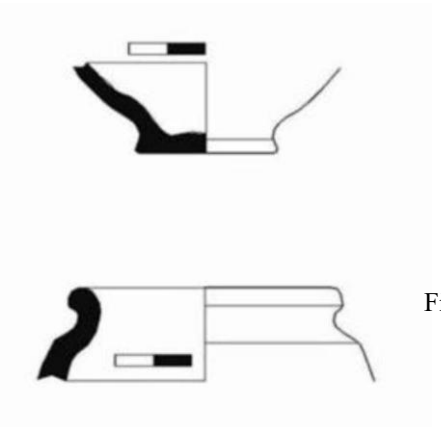

Figure 132. *Mugs, Histria (*A. Bădescu – L. Cliante 2015).

[493] BĂDESCU – CLIANTE 2015, 212
[494] BĂDESCU – CLIANTE 2015, 213.
[495] BĂDESCU – CLIANTE 2015, 216-217.

Lid from the 6th century has been found in Histria also, with primary oxidant unifiorm firing, red semi fine fabric, with tiny calcite and mica particles as well (fig. 133.)[496].

In Histria where type LRA1 were discovered, dated from 5th to 7th century, Early Medieval period, with rounded rim, thickened outside, fine and compact fabric, porous with reddish yellow color, with limestone particles, one of them with bottom fragment has red angoba (fig. 134.)[497].

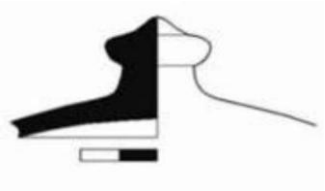

Figure 133. *Lid, Histria (*A. Bădescu – L. Cliante 2015).

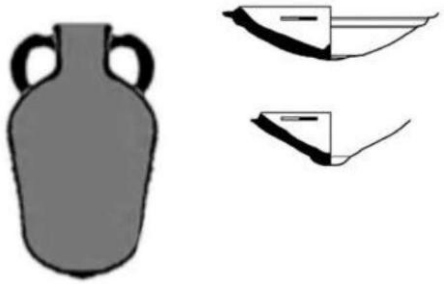

Figure 134. *Amphorae bottoms, LRA 1, Histria* (A. Bădescu, 2012).

While the LRA 2 Amphorae were produced starting from 5th and up to the 7th century A.D, they are large amphorae having approximately twice the capacity of small globular amphorae in capacity approximately from 30 liters to 40 liters of containing liquids[498].

There are four fragments of LRA 2 types of Amphorae found in Histria, wshere usually the have edge rounded and thickened, slightly flaring outwards, fine and compact fabric, porous, some in red some in pale red or pale yellow color, with particles of limestone (fig. 135.)[499].

[496] BĂDESCU – CLIANTE 2015, 221.
[497] BĂDESCU 2012, 316.
[498] BASS – DOORNICK JR. 1982, 161 -163.
[499] BĂDESCU 2012, 322.

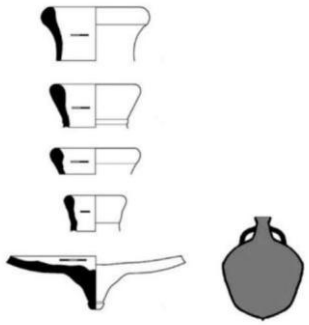

Figure 135. *LRA 2 Amphorae type, Histria* (A. Bădescu, 2012).

Also in the area of Napoca, ceramics datable to the 4th to 6th century were discover4ed, however the pottery assemblage in Napoca appears to date to the 6th century[500].

Halmyris unearthed several plates with decorative motifs, including geometrical, vegetal, zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, and Christian designs, all dated to the Late Antique/Early Medieval period, 4th to 7th centuries.

First plate fragment with fine paste with white mica in clay composition, beige color, beige brick paint, thin, with palm branch motif, dating from 5th to 7th century; second plate has a concentric circle, with white mica in composition, brick color, dating to the 5th century; another fragment of pottery with limestone paste, brick-pink color, matte, with four volutes motifs, from the 5th century, is another base fragments found with unique decoration (fig. 136.)[501].

Zoomorphic fragments of pottery are from rabbit, there is a base fragment of pottery with limestone clay paste, light red, its dating from the second half of the 5th century; another base fragments with deer deoration is part of this selection with compact paste, brick-red color, dating from the 6th century (fig. 137.)[502].

Christian motifs in pottery are very common in this period in Dobrudja. There are found in all places in Balkan Peninsula, where in fragments of pottery are crosses in different types.

[500] WANNER – SENA 2010, 13.
[501] TOPOLEANU 1996, 144 – 146.
[502] TOPOLEANU 1996, 147-148.

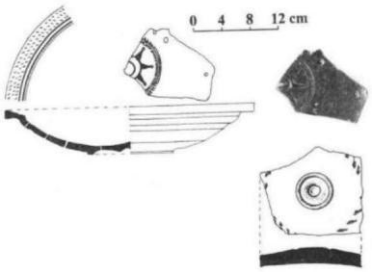

Figure 136. *Plate with decoration on the rim and in the middle, Halmyris (*F.Topoleanu, 1996).

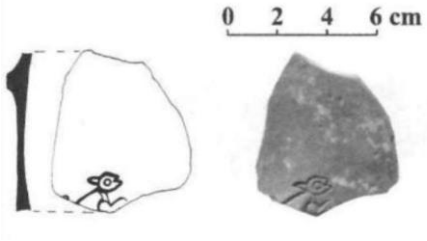

Figure 137. *Fragment of pottery with zoomorphic motif* (F.Topoleanu, 1996).

Several fragments with cross motifs have been found as well in Romania, in different sizes and shapes, one of them was found in a plate, base fragment, it has paste clay with limestone granules and white mica, brick-reddish in color, it is dated in the 6th century(fig. 138.) [503].



Figure 138. *Fragment of pottery with cross motif, Dobrudja* (F.Topoleanu 1996).

Another amphora with straight rim, handles starting from the end of the neck, and a decoration with red paint color, dating the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century (fig. 139.)[504].

[503] TOPOLEANU 1996, 150.
[504] OPAIȚ 1991, 140.

A pitcher from the 5th century with pink-red paste clay color, hard with white mica, it contains iron oxide, traces of brown paint on outside (fig. 140.)[505].

Pots from the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th century, concave on the inside and straight on the outside, with globular body shape, twisted handles, decorated with grooves, with base of the "umbo" type, brick-red paste clay, rare limestone granules and silver mica, with secondary firing (fig. 141.)[506].

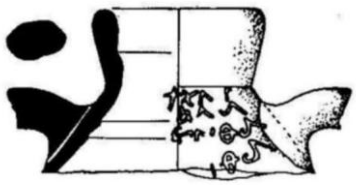

Figure 139. *Amphorae from 5th – 6th century (*A.Opaiţ, 1991).

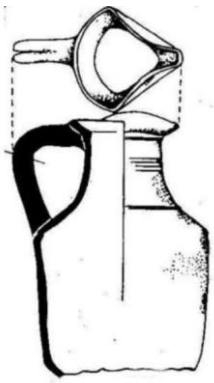

Figure 140. *Pitcher from 5th century* (A.Opaiţ, 1991).

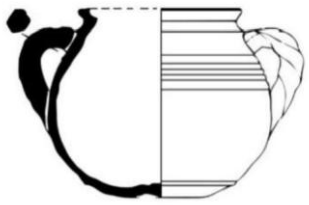

Figure 141. *Pot with twisted handles* (F.Topoleanu, 2000).

[505] OPAIŢ 1991, 160.
[506] TOPOLEANU 2000, 116-117.

An amphora with light red paste with gray core, iron oxide, limestone, pebbles, handles raised more than the rim, attached under the rim and lower on the shoulder, and this one found in Murighiol in Delta of Danube, dates to the 4th century (fig. 142.)[507].

Another lamp from 6th and early 7th century that is a clear indication with Christian identity is with fine clay, pink brick, rare particles of limestone and silver mica, with Byzantine shape cross, double-countered and circular incision at the bottom (fig. 143.)[508].

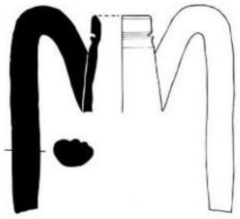

Figure 142. *Amphorae with raised handles more than the rim* (F.Topoleanu, 2000).



Figure 143. *Lamp with cross handle* (F.Topoleanu, 2000).

In Topraichioi, Dobrudja, a conical amphora was found, containing a significant amount of iron oxide and brick-red fabric, suggesting a small capacity for liquids, as the dating of this amphora varies from the 4th to the 5th century (fig. 144)[509].

Pitchers in Romanian are quite common. There is one of them that was probably brought by a Germanic population who migrated into the province, which is one of

[507] TOPOLEANU 2000, 140-141.
[508] TOPOLEANU 2000, 186.
[509] OPAIȚ 2004, 23.

pitchers, dull grey, and fine, burnished outside, dating from the 4th century and discovered at Dinogetia (fig. 145.)[510].

Feeding bottles known as Titina or Ubuppa were found in Topraichioi dating from the 4th century, with a globular body, spout, brown color, fine, silver, and gold mica in clay (fig. 146.)[511].



Figure 144. *Conical amphorae, Topraichioi (*A. Opaiț, 2004).

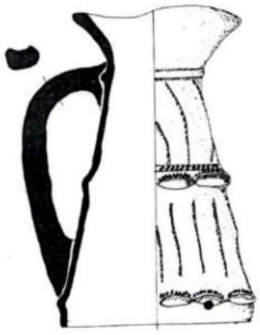

Figure 145. *Pitcher from Germanic population origin, Dinogetia* (A. Opaiț, 2004).

Dishes with a cross shape decoration during the Early Medieval period are very common and one of them was found on Capadavia. The décor is in the middle of the dish, precisely it's large plate, the paste is with brick-red color, with an almond-shape

[510] OPAIȚ 2004, 61.
[511] OPAIȚ 2004, 82

rim, it is a stamped decoration with presentation of two identical lateral male figure, rendered from the front, clothing elements presents tunics, two of these figures flank a latin cross plattee and gemmed, with a double outline, according to literary sources it is from the 6th century[512].



Figure 146. *Feeding bottle, Topraichioi (*A. Opaiț, 2004).

Ampoules were also found with cross symbols, two in Capidava and one in Callatis, Romania, each with different designs of crosses and decorations.

Ampoules found in Capadavia are decorated in relief, with Greek cross with flared, biscuspid ends, while the diagonals of the field are adorned with petals (fig. 147.)[513].

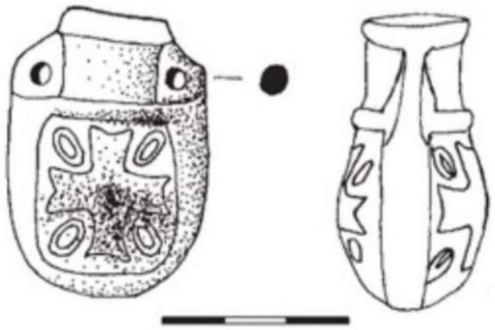

Figure 147. *Ampoule, Capadavia (*I.C.Opriș, 2003).

Another ampoule found at Capidava as well, is decorated with the image of Saint Menas, it has a utriform body, flattened bilaterally, the Saint appears praying, arms

[512] OPRIȘ 1997, 210.
[513] OPRIȘ 2003, 449.

wide open, dressed in tunic and paludament, also there are two crosses, this kind of ampoules known as Egyptian variant dates at the 6th – 7th century (fig. 148.)[514].



Figure 148. *Ampoule with Saint, Capidava* (I.C.Opriș, 2003).

Many fragments of amphorae from the 4th to the 6th century were discovered in the vicinity of the Roman mosaic in Tomi, where the destruction of the roof that supported the mosaic floor above the rooms caused the rubble to crush, revealing amphoras still having traces of with s variety of organic and inorganic chemicals, including Colophonium, Balsamum terebenthuque, Mastix, Balsamum styracis[515].

[514] OPRIȘ 2003, 447-448.
[515] RĂDULESCU 1973, 197.

1.6. Croatia

The territory of Croatia throughout the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods saw substantial cultural, political, and social developments. Subsequent to the deterioration of the Roman Empire, the region saw the emergence of many tribes and the formation of new social hierarchies. The arrival of Slavic peoples in the 6th and 7th centuries contributed to the gradual development of Early Medieval identities and communities. Cities like Zadar and Split evolved became significant centers of trade and culture, embodying a fusion of Roman legacy with nascent Slavic traditions. Settlements around the Adriatic Sea served as hubs for long-distance commerce, enduring the Great Migration, first under Ostrogothic governance from the mid-6th century as Byzantine settlements, and then included into the *thema* of Dalmacia from the mid-9th century[516].

One of the most important sites in the Sava-valley is Crkvišče Bukovlje has a diverse array of ceramic types, including kitchenware from African regions. It recognized in mortars, amphorae, oil lamps, and one-handled jugs adorned with burnished design (fig. 149), while the most prevalent types are LRA 3 and LRA 4[517].



Figure 149. *One handled jug with burnished design, Crkvišče Bukovlje (*I.H.Marić 2020).

In Fažana, lying in the Southern part of the peninsula of Istra, archaeological investigations have revealed pottery workshops dating back to the Late Antique period. Among the findings are coarse kitchenware from the 4th to 5th centuries, as well as flat-based pots characterized by a robust fabric and a vertically brushed surface that spans

[516] FERLUGA 1976, 11.
[517] MARIĆ 2020 (POSTER).

the entirety of the vessel, dating from the 4th to 7th centuries. Additionally, a fragment of North African terra sigillata from the 5th century was also uncovered[518].

Two pots, one larger and one smaller, were discovered at the Boškina site near the village of Krvavići during 2006 (in the hinterland of Pula); pot from Boškina is hand-crafted, incorporating a significant amount of calcite temper, with irregular formations and varying rim shapes depending on the observed section (fig. 150.)[519].



Figure 150. *Hand-crafted pot, Boškina (*L.Bekić, 2016).

Burnished pottery from the Late Antiquity and Early Medieval period were discovered in Lobor, Croatia, that included closed shapes like jars, and jugs as well as unidentified forms[520]. While the composition of the clay is mostly composed of fine clay, sometimes with tiny limestone and quartz inclusions, sand grains, and mica flakes, while the motifs are often simple and devoid of intricate combinations[521].

There are fragments that were found with burnished triangles (fig.151), burshnied decoration (fig.152); bowl fragment with lattiece pattern made with combitation of surface grooved burnishing (fig.153), as well as were found fragments of inner and outer side of a glazed bowl with burnished horizontal lines (fig. 154)[522].

A biconical bowl with burnished design from Grave 2 was discovrerd in Hermanov, Vinograd, in eastern part of Croatia, its shape indicates that it was made between the middle of the 5th and beginning of the 6th century (fig. 155)[523].

[518] BULIĆ – IDA 2010, 134.
[519] BEKIĆ 2016, 151-152.
[520] NIKŠIĆ 2025, 14.
[521] NIKŠIĆ 2025, 16-17.
[522] NIKŠIĆ 2025, 17-20.
[523] ROKSANDIĆ VUKADIN 2025, 46.



Figure 151. *Jug or pot sherd with burnished triangles on an untreated surface (*P. Nikšić, 2025).



Figure 152. *Jug or pot sherd with smoothened surface and burnished decoration* (P. Nikšić, 2025).



Figure 153. *Bowl with lattice pattern made with the combination of surface and grooved burnishing* (P. Nikšić. 2025).



Figure 154. *Inner and outer side of a glazed bowl with burnished horizontal lines (*P. Nikšić, 2025).

At Ilok, situated in the eastern third of the Drava-Sava valley, a limited number of pot fragments exhibit a flared and gently sloping rim, a low neck, and a pronounced belly, characterized by gray or black color and rough textures, dating back to the 4th century; a fragment of a lid, characterized by its uniquw profiling, is dated to the 4th century AD (fig. 156.)[524].

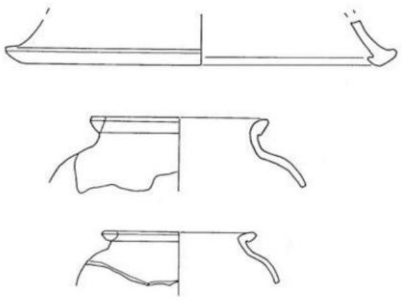

Figure 156. *Flared, sloping rim pots, Ilok* (K.Jelinčić, 2003).

Burnished pottery (Fig.157, 158), glazed pottery (fig. 159), hand-formed coarse pottery (fig. 160), and wheel turned coarse (Grey) pottery (fig.161) are all examples of the 5th and 6th century Germanic migration, settlement in Novi Čeminac-Jauhov Salaš, Croatia[525].

During the examination of two early Christian basilicas at Podvršje, a site in Middle Dalmacia, several potsherds, likely linked to early Slavic pottery, were discovered, that based on the results of the investigation, revealed a substantial layer of soot within the basilica, which, through standard radiocarbon analysis, can be dated to the years between 530 and 660, notably, sherds of early Slavic pottery were located in a layer that succeeded the burn layer, leading to the conclusion that these artifacts are indicative of the presence of an early Croatian population (fig. 162.)[526].

The vessels of the indigenous Romans, in contrast to the thin and understated neck curves of Slavic pots, had a pronounced S or V neck shape[527].

[524] JELINČIĆ 2003, 81-82.
[525] DUGONJIĆ 2025, 63-64.
[526] BEKIĆ 2016, 163.
[527] BEKIĆ 2016, 120.



Figure 155. *A biconical bowl with burnished decoration from Grave 2, Hermanov Vinograd 2* (R.Vukadin, 2025).

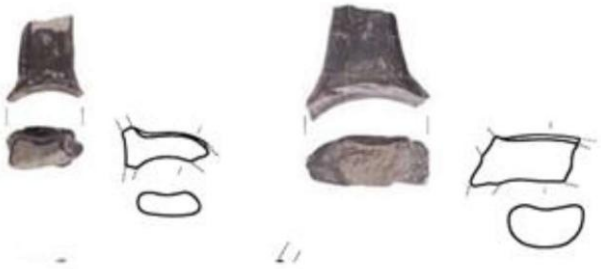

Figure 157. *Wheel-turned, fine pottery group, Novi Čeminac-Jauhov Salaš (A.* Dugonjić, 2025).

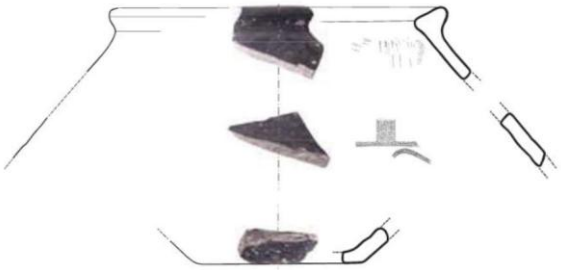

Figure 158. *Wheel-turned, fine pottery group: – burnished pottery, Novi Čeminac-Jauhov Salaš (*A. Dugonjić, 2025).



Figure 159. *Glazed pottery,Novi Čeminac-Jauhov Salaš (*A. Dugonjić, 2025).

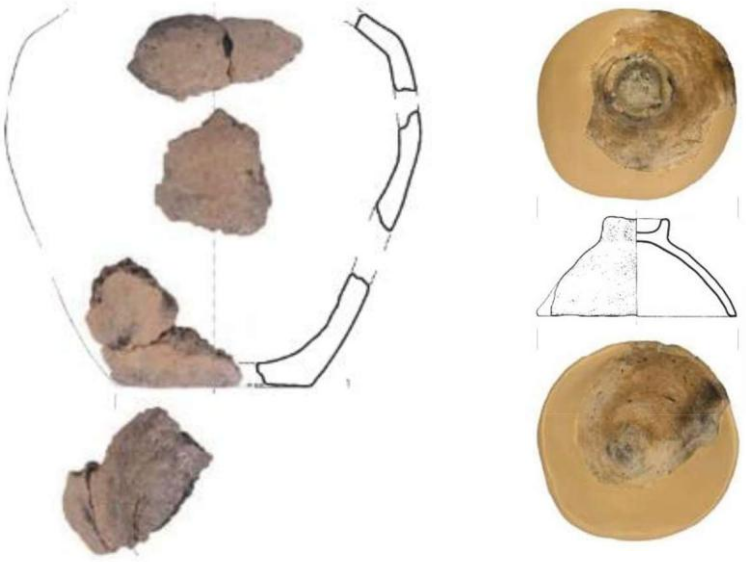

Figure 160. *Hand-formed coarse pottery group, Novi Čeminac-Jauhov Salaš* (A. Dugonjić, 2025).

One of the most interesting issues is the widespread perforated or porous ceramics that appear in the earliest group of Slavic ceramics in this area. Porous ceramic represents a significant category within the earliest assemblages of Slavic ceramics, however, it is the perforated ceramics from Late Antiquity that exhibit a connection with those from the early Middle Ages, that during the 5th and 6th centuries, discoveries of perforated ceramic vessels, predominantly black-fired pots crafted on a fast-turning wheel, were documented in regions such as Noricum and parts of Pannonia, whereas, findings from Slovenia and northwestern Croatia have thus far been limited to the Blizna site, while the remnants of porous Late Antique pottery (fig. 163.) can be readily differentiated from Slavic pottery through a range of distinctive characteristics (fig. 164.)[528].

In the locality of Ždrijac, in the town of Nin situated in northern Dalmatia, fragments of Slavic pottery from the 8th to 9th century have been unearthed (fig. 165), additionally, at Podvršje, early Slavic potsherds have been discovered, including two reconstructed vessels from the first half of the 7th century, crafted by hand, alongside another pottery

[528] BEKIĆ 2016, 101.

fragment from the 8th century, characterized by three parallel lines adorned with a scalloped ornate motif in between (fig. 166.)[529].

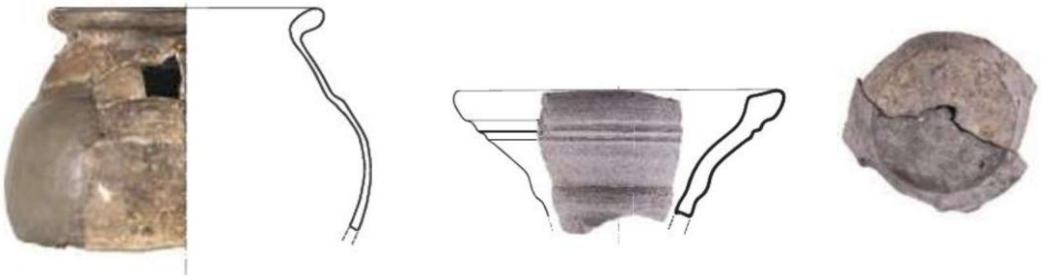

Figure 161. *Wheel-turned coarse (grey) pottery group, Novi Čeminac-Jauhov Salaš* (A. Dugonjić, 2025).



Figure 162. *Slavic pottery* (L.Bekić, 2016).



Figure 163. *Late Antique pottery fragments, Blizna site* (L.Bekić, 2016).

[529] FABIJANIĆ 2014, 345-346.



Figure 164. *Slavic pottery (*L.Bekić, 2016).

Pottery shreds were found in a 8th -9th century cemetery in Vaćani–Laluše, Coratia, during excavations in 2024[530]. In Early Medieval graves, pots are the most prevalent type of ceramic vessels. They have an S-profile, a more or less pronounced biconical shape, or the so-called "bellied" and "oval" shapes. The first group of "bellied" pots consists of vessels from grave 1, which have a biconical shape and three oblique parallel lines visible at the bottom of the rim on the neck (fig. 167)[531].

The development of black carbonized deposits within the vesels, as seen in burial number 17 (fig. 168), is another sign that the vesels were exposed to fire during the thermal preparation of food[532].



Figure 165. *Fragments of Slavic pottery, Ždrijac* (T.Fabijanić 2014).

[530] FABIJANIĆ, *ET AL.*, 2025, 210.
[531] FABIJANIĆ, *ET AL.,* 2025, 215-217.
[532] FABIJANIĆ, *ET AL.,* 2025, 220.

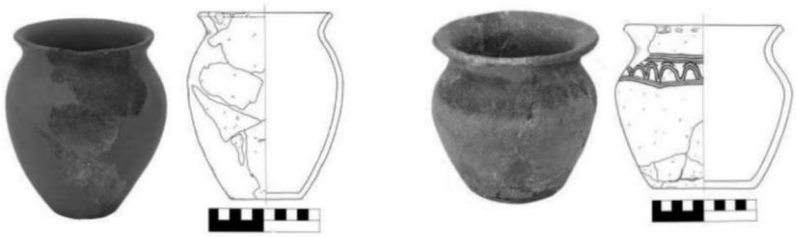

Figure 166. *Early Slavic potsherds, Podvršje* (T.Fabijanić 2014).



Figure 167. *Pottery of biconical shape and three oblique parallel lines visible at the bottom of the rim on the neck* (T.Fabijanić, A.Karađole, Ž. Krnčević, 2025).



Figure 168. *Carbonized deposits within the vessels (*T.Fabijanić, A.Karađole, Ž. Krnčević, 2025).

1.7. Montenegro

At the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th century, Montenegro became a part of Prevalis, which separated from the province of Dalmatia[533].

Montenegro represents yet another nation within the Balkan Peninsula that boasts settlements dating back to the Late Roman period. As a border part of province Prevalitana it is a neighbouring region to Kosovo amd Albania.

Montenegro features rural settlements that have persisted since Late Antiquity, alongside newly discovered communities in the countryside.

Two rural settlements demonstrating continuity during Late Antiquity include a substantial Roman villa at Mirište in Petrovac, which is thought to have functioned as a fully residential site from the 2nd century until the early 7th century, and the second settlement is a villa located at Podvrh-Crkvine in Martinicka Gradina, which featured an Early Christian church[534].

A recently discovered settlement in the rural landscape of Late Antiquity is located at the bay of Kruče near Ulcinj, archaeological artifacts, including a mosaic floor, coins, and various small items, suggest that the villa dates back to the 6th century, coinciding with the Justinian era[535].

Doclea, a settlement of central role that maintained its presence into the Late Antique period, is noted for having been ravaged by the East Goths in 489, followed by its destruction in 609 at the hands of the Avars and Slavs[536].

Fragments of Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery have been discovered at Petrovac, dating from the late 3rd century to the 6th century, with additional fragments extending into the 8th century. The fragment of African sigillata, known as African red slip ware, is part of a sizable plate characterized by a flat base and angled walls, featuring a small pseudo-foot beneath the rim of the base, this particular form is typically associated with the late 3rd and early 4th century(fig. 169.)[537].

[533] BULIĆ 2013, 173.
[534] CIGLENEČKI 2023, 185.
[535] CIGLENEČKI 2023, 197.
[536] KOPRIVICA 2011, 25.
[537] JELENČIĆ - VUČKOVIĆ 2013, 159-160.

A piece of an amphora handle and a section of the neck indicate that it is a Late Roman 7 amphora, made from the late 4th to the 8th century (fig. 170.)[538].



Figure 169. *Fragemnt of Africana sigilliata, Petrovac* (K.Jelenčić - Vučković 2013).

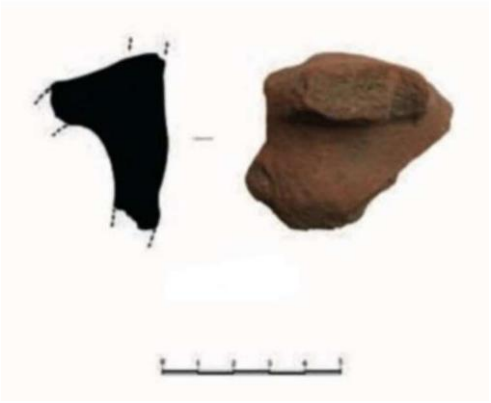

Figure 170. *LRA 7 (*K.Jelenčić - Vučković 2013).

[538] JELENČIĆ - VUČKOVIĆ 2013, 162.

Chapter 2

2.1. Late Antique/Early Medieval pottery in the Balkan Peninsula: a comparative study of Kosovo pottery

Dardania

In the interior region, the watershed that separates the Black Drin Valley, located between Ohrid and Kukës, from the White Drin in Kosovo delineated the inland boundary of Praevalitana and New Epirus, beyond this boundary lay Dardania and Macedonia, where the areas of eastern Kosovo and the Skopje basin were separated from Upper Moesia to create a distinct province historically known as Dardania[539].

The key gold mining regions in the western Balkans were overseen by the *comes metallorum per Illyricum*, beneath it, there were *procuratores metallorum* in the provinces of Macedonia, Inland Dacia, as well as in Moesia and Dardania, who were responsible for collecting dues from the mines, these positions were filled by decurions appointed by the city councils[540]. From the economic perspective, such a territoria metallorum was situated within a broader fiscal realm that included imperial fields, pastures, woodlands, villages, and other objects of provincial soil exploitation[541]. The metal industry was fundamental to Upper Moesian economy, significantly impacting its administrative structure and influencing its subsequent growth through Antiquity[542].

In Anatolia, the Caucasus region and to a degree also the Taurus, along with the eastern Pontus, were sources of gold, silver, lead and iron, as well as copper including Balkan especially the inner mountain region[543].

Woolen products have not been effectively preserved; however, one noteworthy example if a single cloak made of wool from Dardania, which had a value of approximately 7.000 denarii, while a double cloak was valued at around 12.500 denarii[544].

[539] WILKES 2010, 742.
[540] JONES 1964, 838.
[541] POPOVIC 1999, 291.
[542] POPOVIĆ 1999, 395.
[543] HALDON 1990, 13.
[544] JONES 1964, 849.

These products not only highlight the craftsmanship and value associated with woolen goods in Dardania but also serve as compelling evidence of the region's reputation for producing high-quality textiles.

According to the picture presented by the Notitia Dignitatum, the civilian government of the provinces was entrusted either to *consulares* with the rank of *vir clarissimus* (Thrace, Dacia Mediterranea), or to praesides with the rank of *vir perfectissimus* (Haemimontis, Rhodope, Moesia Secunda, Scythia, Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Prima, Praevalitana, Dardania)[545].

According to the list drawn up by Hierocles for the province of Dardania run by a *praeses*, Dradania had three cities: Scupi (the capital), Merion and Ulpiana[546].

In period of the bishop authority not only over the city, but also over the fortifications of its territory, the inscription discovered in Izbičanj (provice of Dardania, today in the Southwestern edge of Serbia) is revealing, as it mentions the contruction of walls, basilicas, houses, fountains, bath, under the patronage of a bishop[547].

Also Dardania had a reputation as an unruly and dangerous region, where Mócsy mentioned *latrones Dardaniae*, and he concluded that the *latrones* were highwaymen and inhabitants of the uplands, who focused their attacks on travelers along roads in several mountainous regions in Upper Moesia[548]. The Dardanians practiced pastoralism in the high mountains of Dardania, and since robbery and herding are often intertwined, one can consider the Dardanian pastoralism, already well known to the Greeks as the origin of the *Latrones*[549].

However, pastoralism in the mountains was by no means the only occupation of the Dardanians, because they had thousands of subjects (idoalegats) who farmed in peacetime while being used as soldiers in wars[550].

Within the expansive interior of this region, notable urban centers such as Naissus and Ulpiana were established at vital crossroads in the Balkans, additionally, Municipium Dardanorum, located on the River Ibër near the Dardanian mines, and Municipium S(),

[545] BĂJENARU 2010, 15.
[546] BĂJENARU 2010, 17.
[547] BĂJENARU 2010, 39.
[548] RIZOS 2017, 214.
[549] MÓCSY 1968, 24.
[550] MÓCSY 1968, 24.

positioned in the Lim River valley, further exemplify the significance of these urban settlements in the area[551].

Permanent garrisons were established at beneficiarium stations, with several positioned along the highways in the Dardanian region of Moesia, where military troops were also responsible for the collection of natural taxes – anonae, which, among other uses, supported the legions along the Danube[552].

In addition to numerous strongholds, archaeological evidence of urban settlements has not been documented in the region between Soçanica (Municipium Dardanorum) on the Ibër River and Kolovrat on the Lim near Prijepolje, where an unnamed ancient municipium was situated; the sole known episcopal seat in Dardania during the 4th century was Ulpiana[553].

The significance of the Stobi market is underscored by its designation as the hub for the salt trade between Third Macedonia, a coastal area, and the interior regions of Dardania: " *Dardanis…post non impetratam Pæoniam, salis commercium dedit; tertiæ regioni imperavit ut Stobos Pæoniæ deveherent, pretiumque statuit*", thus, Roman regulation likely served to regulate the traditional practices of local commerce, which had been disturbed under the Macedonian rulers, by a system of prohibitions and trade blockades, motivated by both political and financial factors [554].

The area that is now Kosovo was called Dardania during the Roman Empire. It features several archaeological sites from the late Roman Empire and Late Antiquity, with the influence continuing into the early middle Ages.

Late Antiquity settlements in Kosovo are plentiful, as the local populace, similar to other Balkan nations, retreated to elevated areas due to invasions by hostile groups and the destruction of Roman cities, which provided superior natural defenses.

The ethnic connections of the Dardanians, from whose name the contemporary Albanian term for "pear" (dardhë) is purportedly derived, have been analyzed through the examination of names from their region by Papazogu[555]. Historical texts document

[551] BIKIĆ - IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 41.
[552] POPOVIĆ 1999, 395.
[553] POPOVIĆ 1999, 395.
[554] HEUZEY 1876, 334.
[555] WILKES 1996, 85.

Dardanian nomenclature for three medicinal plants: The Materia Medica of Pedanius Dioscurides, a Roman military doctor from Anazarbus in Cilicia during the time of Nero, reveals that *gentiana* was referred to as *aloitis*, while *aristolocheia makra*, also known as *klematitis*, was designated as *sopitis*[556].

The Dardanians were part of an ancient group of Balkan peoples ethnically connected to those from north-west Asia Minor, a connection noted by the Greeks: "There are many similar names among the Trojans and Thracians," states Strabo[557]. The Trojan Dardanians, referenced in the Iliad, inspired Late Antique writers to depict emperors from Moesia Superior, notably Constantine the Great and Justinian, as descendants of a Trojan, or ancient Roman, lineage[558]. Synchronizing the data of ancient authors with diachronic archaeological evidence is exceedingly challenging[559].

Among the most organized tribes, which extended to the central part of the Balkan Peninsula, were the Dardanians, where in terms of social and political structure, the Dardanians, by the notion of which is meant the alliance of many tribes such as: the Thunates, the Galabres and many other unidentified ones, and the name Dardanian, is the common name of many Illyrian tribes that extended to the central area of the Balkan Peninsula, they appear to us as very stratified, militarily organized, in intertribal relations with a wide autonomy, while in international relations or in relations with neighbors they were represented by kings or even chieftains, or captains[560].

In the year 44 A.D., Moesia attained provincial status, subsequently, in 86 A.D., under the reign of Emperor Domitian, it was partitioned into two distinct region, Moesia Superior and Moesia Inferior, facilitating more efficient administration and enhanced protection[561].

Dardania found itself in a similar predicament, being under the dominion of the Roman Empire, which during the initial decades of the first century these groups had already formed communities within the framework of Roman governance; notably, they resided in regions that were among the earliest subjected to military oversight, with the

[556] WILKES 1996, 85.
[557] MÓCSY 1978, 27.
[558] MÓCSY 1978, 27.
[559] MIRDITA, 1991, 32.
[560] MIRDITA 1979, 118.
[561] FERRI 1997, 26

stronghold of Legio IV Scythica likely situated in Dardania[562]. Despite the extensive deployment of legions and auxiliary units of the Roman army within Dardanian territory, there remained an unwavering opposition to the Roman occupation, characterized by persistent resistance and intermittent uprisings[563].

In the historical context of the administrative divisions, Dalmati and the provinces of Pannonia were organized within the Diocese of Pannonians, which subsequently evolved into Illyricum, meanwhile, Praevalitana was allocated to the Diocese of Moesia to the east, where the ancient designation of Dardania emerged as a distinct province derived from Moesia, where this reorganization also encompassed Moesia Prima, Dacia, Epirus Nova, Epirus, Vetus, Macedonia, Thessalia and Achaea[564]. Plotemy designates Dardania as a distinct region within Moesia Superior[565].

The Roman invasions, extending beyond Dardania to encompass the entirety of the Balkan territory, instigated numerous transformations, commencing with administrative alterations and culminating in the widespread Romanization of the region.

The Roman Empire rendered the area now known as the Balkan Peninsula significant due to its role in commerce, the process of romanization, cultural exchange, the dissemination of religion, and subsequent population movements. Throughout the period of Roman rule in the Dardanian region, a multitude of settlements emerged, each with varying statuses, accompanied by the construction of extensive road networks. These thoroughfares included road stations, designed not merely to facilitate access for the territories under Roman influence to cultural and administrative hubs, but also to enable a more efficient exploitation of the abundant economic potential inherent in the reclaimed lands. The construction of these roads, along with the administrative organization, facilitated the Romans in establishing cities that subsequently evolved into central and organizational hubs within the region.

[562] MÓCSY, 1978, 69
[563] FERRI 2018, 16.
[564] WILKES 1996, 210.
[565] MÓCSY, 1978, 69.

The province of Moesia Superior, encompassing the region of Dardania as previously noted, had a brief existence from 86 to 272, characterized by a distinct historical narrative and a particular military and administrative framework[566].

Upon the incorporation of Dardania into the Empire, there ensued a rapid advancement of diverse economic endeavors, particularly marked by the vigorous extraction of mineral resources[567].

The factors contributing to the early Romanization of the Dardanian regions primarily stem from the Roman Empire's growing demand for ores rich in silver, gold, zinc, copper, and lead, which were essential for sustaining the monetary stability of the empire[568]. Consequently, the regions abundant in ores, including the slopes of Stara Planina, Svrljig, and Kopaonik, were systematically structured into mining territories and imperial domains[569]. Consequently, the more traditional sectors of the Dardanian economy, including agriculture and livestock, progressively diminished in significance, yielding prominence to handicrafts, trade, and particularly mining, which underwent substantial advancement following the Roman conquest[570].

Commercial networks were pivotal to the functioning of the Roman Empire. According to the *Tabula Peuntegiriana*, the principal road stations included Lissus, Ad Piccaria, Creveni, Gabuleo, Theranda, Viciano, Vindenis, Ad Fines, Hammeo, and Ad Herculem, extending to Nissus. This route, originating from Lissus (present-day Lezha) and culminating at Naissus (modern Nish), spans a total of 211 miles, which is roughly equivalent to 312 kilometers. In Tabula Peuntegirana, Municipium Ulpiana featured an additional connection to Skopje Road, linking Colonia Scupi with Municipium Ulpiana[571].

Late Antiquity represented a period marked by significant social and political transformations, most notably profound religious shifts. During this era, the Illyrian emperor Constantine the Great, in collaboration with Licinius, enacted the Edict of

[566] PETROVIC 2007, 11.
[567] PETROVIC 2007, 18.
[568] PETROVIC 2007, 17.
[569] PETROVIC 2007, 17,
[570] HAJDARI-BERISHA 2021, 41.
[571] TABULA PEUNTEGIRIANA.

Milan in 313, which proclaimed a policy of tolerance towards all religions, with a particular emphasis on Christianity[572].

In Kosovo, this era is distinguished not only by its castles but also by the emergence of numerous edifices reflecting Paleo-Christian architectural principles[573].

Dardania exhibited a notable population density during the Late Antiquity period, as evidenced by the numerous fortifications erected across its landscape, frequently situated in challenging terrains and atop mountain ridges. Hierokles, in the 6th century, references three towns within the province of Dardania: Scupi, Merion, and Ulpiana[574].

In the Roman period, various cities of differing ranks were established, including Colonia Scupi, Municipium Ulpiana, and Municipium DD.

Colonia Flavia Scupinorum

The Scupi colony, known as Colonia Flavia Scupinorum, was founded through the settlement of veterans from various legions, including the Seventh Claudius (VII Claudia), Fifth Macedonian (V Macedonica), Fifth Alauda (V Alaudae), and Fourth Macedonian (IV Macedonica), where retired soldiers were granted land as a form of reward, which encompassed a broader urban area that aligned with the territory of the Skopje Valley[575].

In 269/69, it was devastated by the formidable forces of the Goths and Heruls/Eruli. By the late 3rd century, it emerged as the principal city of the newly formed province of Dardania, and in the 4th century, it witnessed a resurgence of significant economic and urban development[576].

Following the administrative and military reforms instituted by Diocletian in the late 3rd century, along with the establishment of the province of Dardania in the early 4th

[572] SCHRAMM 1994, 55.
[573] BERISHA – SHALA 2013, 230.
[574] IVANIŠEVIĆ – ŠPEHAR 2005, 152.
[575] JOVANOVA 2015, 10.
[576] HAEMUS, COLONIA FLAVIA SCUPINORUM (SCUPI) | HAEMUS | CENTER FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND PROMOTION OF CULTURE.

century, Scupi underwent significant economic and urban development, emerging as a prominent religious, cultural, economic, and administrative hub for the entire region[577].

The significance of Scupi in the realms of politics, military affairs, and strategy during the late 4th century was underscored by the two visits of Theodosius I in 379 and 388, during which he promulgated two royal decrees[578].

It is also noteworthy that Scupi is referenced by Hierocles in the Synecdemus as a significant metropolis within Dardania[579].

In 518, Scupi met its demise due to an earthquake, a calamity chronicled by Marcellinus Comes, notes that 24 cities in the vicinity were affected by this seismic event, including the prominent city of Scupi, however, its inhabitants had previously evacuated and sought refuge from the barbarian incursions in a nearby location[580].

Muncipium Ulpiana

In Dardania, Trajan made a significant impact by elevating the settlements of Ulpiana and Municipum DD to the status of Roman municipium, where he undertook the construction of various public works, including forums, temples, bridges, aqueducts, and roads, while also promoting the productivity of the earlier Dardanian mines (Metalli Dardanici)[581]. The earliest Dardanian road network was also modified, evolving to meet contemporary demands and integrating seamlessly into the broader system of primary and suburban roads of the Empire[582].

In *Tabula Peuntegirana,* the thoroughfare linking Theranda with various locations in Moesia Superior, including Ulpiana, was also associated with a branch that directed towards Scupi.

Municipium Ulpiana has been referenced in ancient texts, notably by Procopius of Caesarea in the fourth book of *De Aedificiis*, where he notes that Ulpiana was a city in Dardania that was reconstructed by Emperor Justinian[583]. The area was renowned for

[577] JOVANOVA 2015, 13.
[578] JOVANOVA 2015, 13.
[579] WESSELING *ET AL*. 1735, 655
[580] JOVANOVA 2015, 13.
[581] FERRI, 2017, 24-25.
[582] FERRI, 2017, 25.
[583] PROCOPIUS: CAESARIENSIS 1537, 78.

its silver and gold mining throughout the Roman Empire[584]. The toponym of the administrative center Ulpiana indicates that its foundation coincided with the creation of the mining area in the early 2nd century[585]. Drawing from the substantial corpus of epigraphic evidence, the early historical inquiry into the subsequent emergence of the res publica Ulpiana is noteworthy[586], on the municipium *splendissimum Ulpianorum* is to be understood[587]. Ulpiana is thought to have been founded as a Roman municipium in 169, known as Municipium Ulpianum[588]. The remarkable Municipium of Ulpiana is distinguished by its intricate road networks, systematic orthogonal layout, efficient water supply and drainage systems, as well as an array of residential structures, edifices, and diverse public, sacred, secular, and functional buildings[589].

Historical records and archaeological evidence indicate that Ulpiana sustained destruction during the incursions of the barbarian tribes, namely the Huns and the Goths, around the mid-5th century[590]. In the northern cemetery of Ulpiana artifacts associated with Germanic culture were found adjacent to the burial site, known as memorial[591].

Today, Ulpiana is recognized as the premier Archaeological Park in Kosovo, owing to its significant historical relevance from the Bronze Age to the Late Antique era.

The Late Antique remains exhibit three distinct periods. The first restoration occurred around the conclusion of the 3rd century or the beginning of the 4th century, subsequent to a significant fire and the city's devastation. The subsequent refurbishment is thought to have taken place toward the close of the 4th century or the beginning of the 5th century. The final phase is attributed to the 6th century, revealing a partial desertion of the city alongside the destruction of the entrance due to the earthquake in 518, where during this period, an array of artisanal establishments emerged within the vacated structures, and a modest cluster of graves was also uncovered[592].

[584] GASSMANN-KÖRLIN 2011, 128.
[585] TEICHNER 2015, 28.
[586] PETKOVIĆ 1976, 69-71.
[587] TEICHNER 2015, 288.
[588] BERISHA 2012, 70.
[589] BERISHA 2012, 70.
[590] HOXHA 2021, 208.
[591] MILINKOVIĆ 2003, 144.
[592] CIGLENEČKI 2023, 64.

After periodic excavations nowadays it is separated into three main sectors: I Sector: Northern Gate, Taverna, Cardio Maximus, Roman bath, Temple with portico and early Christian basilica.

Municipium DD

Municipium DD represented a significant site within Dardania, distinguished by its archaeological findings that underscore its historical relevance. Excavations in Municipium DD have ceased due to political circumstances, resulting in the preservation of only previous findings.

The archaeological site of Muncipium DD (Dardanorum) is positioned in the northern region of Kosovo, roughly 27 kilometers north of Mitrovica, within the Municipality of Leposaviq[593].

Within the extant municipia of Moesia Superior, two may be attributed to the era of the Severi, perhaps during the reign of Caracalla, with the only justification for this dating being the presence of the name M. Aurelius among their decurions[594]. The two cities associated with decurions are the municipium Dardanorum, also known as Dardanicum, located in the Ibër valley, and the municipium Celegerorum, situated in the valley of the western Morava[595] .

This region, particularly Mount Kopaonik and Rogozna, was rich in precious metals, while the southern sector of Soçanica was known as the "mining town," associated with the local metallurgy of Dardanica[596].

Archaeological excavations were conducted in the eastern section of the village, revealing a Roman forum, horrea, and urban basilica, elements of a Roman bath, ancillary artifacts, and the northern cemetery[597].

[593] BERISHA, 2012, 61
[594] MÓCSY 1974, 223
[595] MÓCSY 1974, 223.
[596] WILKES 1996, 258.
[597] BERISHA 2012, 61.

Economy in Dardania during 4th – 6th centuries

During the Roman era, from the 1st to the 3rd century, the economy experienced significant prosperity. This pertained to the dominion of the Roman Empire. Pottery and coins were the primary exports and imports of artifacts, reflecting the main economic drivers. During Late Antiquity, this transformation occurred for several causes.

During this period, the epigraphic monuments in Kosovo were more numerous compared to the 4th century and beyond. The prolific era of epigraphic monuments occurred from the 1st to the 3rd centuries, whereas subsequent eras have yielded no more epigraphic artifacts. This suggests that after the 3rd century, a new invasion likely occurred, initiating the disintegration of the region.

Comprehending the intricacies of the late Roman economy poses a distinct challenge[598]. Certain subjects, including slavery, taxation, and the concept of the 'colonate,' which once held a prominent position in secondary literature, have experienced significant re-assessment, while the extensive influx of new archaeological and other forms of evidence has fundamentally altered the entire discourse surrounding these topics[599]. We have to make also a short remark on the evolution of urban existence along the middle Danube. These were the Sava and the Drava, which were significantly influenced by the prominent Roman military hubs, which progressively transitioned from the Save to the Drave, ultimately reaching the Danube[600]. Siscia and Sirmium on the Save, Poetovio and Mursa on the Drave, Vindobona, Carnuntum, Brigetio, Aquincum, Singidunum, Viminacium, and Ratiaria on the Danube, along with Scupi in the territory of the Dardanians, served as significant fortifications for the legions, with several enduring throughout the entirety of Roman rule[601]. Scupi served as a stronghold for the Dardanians, whereas Ratiaria was associated with the Moesians (Thracians)[602].

The dimensions and characteristics of the late Roman economy remain contentious; prevailing inquiries encompass the effects of state taxation and the procurement of grain from Egypt and North Africa, the influence of the affluent elite with extensive estates,

[598] CAMERON 2012, 84.
[599] CAMERON 2012, 84.
[600] ROSTOVTZEFF 1926, 226.
[601] ROSTOVTZEFF 1926, 226
[602] ROSTOVTZEFF 1926, 226.

the extent of economic integration, and the prevalence of a market economy[603]. In the regions of these colonies and *municipia*, extensive areas of land were progressively consolidated in the possession of a limited number of proprietors, including both residents and veterans, as well as foreigners[604]. In the region of Ulpiana, substantial estates were possessed in the 3rd century by an individual from the senatorial class, namely C. Furius Octavianus[605].

In Late Antiquity, coin circulation is less prolific than in previous eras; yet, the surviving pieces are mostly made of gold[606].

The Golden Solidus of Emperor Justinian the Great is among the rarest discoveries, composed of gold and unearthed in Kosovo. This find is accompanied by other coins from the 4th century, including two from Theodosius I (discovered in Janjevë), one from Theodosius II (found in Gjilan), and one from Leon I (5th century, location unknown), all crafted from gold[607].

Given the abundance of mines in this territory, which contained gold and silver, and the fact that coins were minted from these metals, it is noteworthy that gold coins persisted into the medieval period, as some mines, such as that of Novobërda (Artanë), remained operational until the 16th century[608].

This conclusion highlights that although the Late Antique period was marked by unrest, coin circulation and the quality of the coins remained significant. This phenomenon may be attributed to the availability of raw materials such as gold and silver, as well as a relatively stable economy in contrast to the prevailing instability of the era.

Late Antique period in Kosovo expect the coins also the jewelry it is made with gold, there are finds from Municipium Ulpiana earring with gold material and glass used as stone decoration of the earrings, also a very good golden ring with inscription as "Probila" found in Vërmicë, Prizren it is from Late Antique period, while another find from Vindenis, Gllamnik-Podujeve, it is a golden bracelet material with e very beautiful

[603] CAMERON 2012, 84.
[604] ROSTOVTZEFF 1926, 229.
[605] ROSTOVTZEFF 1926, 229.
[606] GRIERSON – MAYS 1992, 10
[607] BERISHA – SHALA 2013, 228-252.
[608] AMEDOSKI – PETROVIĆ 2018, 1127; BOŽOVIĆ 2017, 5.

forming structure, as four-leaf clover and other small beads made all in gold, it is typically a type of 4th – 6th century bracelets[609].

Alongside this highly valued metal, iron artifacts were also recovered from this period, providing important evidence of technological development, economic production, and daily life.

Other bone items include sword handles adorned with embellishments and combs, and iron objects include of medical instruments, kitchen knives for dough preparation (dough scrapers), and Modus, an ancient unit of measurement for liquids and grains comparable to 8.73 liters[610].

Late Antique/Early Medieval pottery of Kosovo

My objective is to maintain and enhance my concentration on Late Antique ceramics. Late Antique pottery is regarded as inferior to ceramics from earlier and medieval times; nonetheless, it has distinctive qualities such as dough compounds, decorative elements, and specific shapes used throughout this age.

In the area of Kosovo, several types of pottery from the late ancient period were used in everyday life, including cooking vessels, serving dishes, kitchenware, ornamental items, and storage ceramics. All types of pottery had a significant everyday function, but their creation and use were challenging owing to the need for specialized care and treatment, particularly at a time characterized by unrest.

Luxury tableware was documented solely in major cities and military-administrative hubs, along with Dardania[611].

The presence of imported amphorae during this period has also been documented in Dardania, which corresponds to the contemporary territory of Kosovo, specifically in sites such as Zveçan and Ulpiana, as well as in Skopje, North Macedonia[612].

The Late Roman Glazed type 5 is a calotte-shaped *mortaria* featuring a rounded rim and a triangular-profiled collar, which is either horizontally or slightly obliquely set,

[609] BERISHA – SHALA 2013, 237.
[610] BERISHA – SHALA 2013, 231- 232.
[611] BIKIĆ - IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 44.
[612] BIKIĆ - IVANIŠEVIĆ 2012, 47.

resting on a flat base. It is constructed from coarse clay, fired in shades of red, often revealing a visible grey core in section, and exhibits an internal surface glazed in olive-green, brownish-green, or dark-green, applied in a thick layer, Dardania unearthed two fragments of this type were discovered, one of which was found in Ulpiana and dated to the first half to middle of the 4th century[613].

At the Institute of Kosovo for the Protection of Monuments, a pot has been discovered in Ulpiana, measuring 21 cm in diameter and 19 cm in height, artifact features three groove lines on the upper section of its belly, the outer rim, and the spherical body, and it is dated to the Late Antique period (fig. 171)[614].



Figure 171. *Pot with spherical body, Ulpiana* (I.Hajrullahu, 2019).

At *statio* Vendenis (Gllamnikë-Podujevë), a three-handled cup was discovered in cemetery number 50, measuring 11 cm, this clay artifact features circular decorations and dates back to the 4th century (fig. 172)[615].

A pithos, measuring 92 cm in height, 75 cm in diameter, and 11 cm at the base, was discovered in Mushtishtë, located 10 kilometers from Suhareka, dated to the Late Antique era, was unearthed serendipitously and has a light yellow color with a spherical body, used for food storage (fig. 173.)[616].

[613] CVJETIĆANIN 2006, 26-27.
[614] HAJRULLAHU 2019, 26.
[615] SHUKRIU 2004, 117.
[616] BARALIU *ET AL*., 2023, 138.



Figure 172. *Three handled cup, statio Vendenis* (E.Shukriu, 2004).



Figure 173. *Pithos, Mushtishtë* (S.Baraliu, et al. 2023).

During excavations at Marec Castle, numerous fragments from Late Antiquity were uncovered, including ceramic pieces characterized by biconical, spherical, and half-spherical forms, as well as lids, bottoms, neck fragments, and handles, majority of these artifacts are composed of fired clay, exhibiting traces of sand and presenting a palette of brown, gray, green, and black colors, while the decorative elements range from plastic ornamentation to circular groove lines and green glaze finishes[617].

There is a fragment of pottery that Rama mentioned as decorated with two deep straight horizontal lines and below them with two other wavy lines (fig. 174.)[618].

[617] RAMA 2022, 163-164.
[618] RAMA 2022, 164.

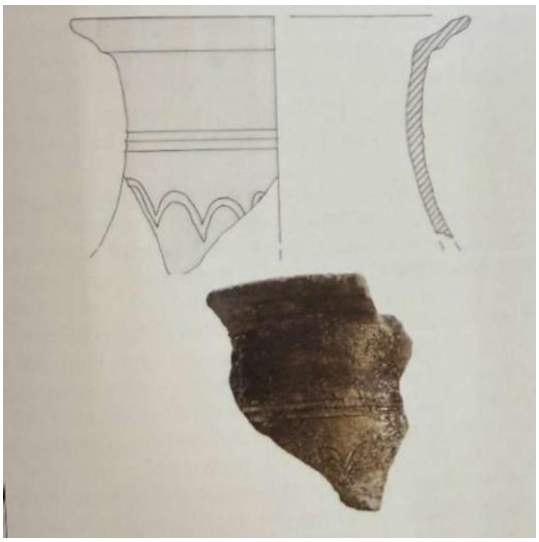

Figure 174. *Fragment of pottery with with two deep straight horizontal lines and below them with two other wavy lines, Marec Castle* (Z.Rama, 2022).

The Castle of Harilaq stands as a fortification from the Late Antique period, featuring unearthed pottery fragments representative of that era, showcasing a variety of types, decorative styles, and clay compositions. I had the luck to personally participate on the excavations on this important Late Antique archaeological site during summer 2018.

An entire pithos, dating from the 4th to the 6th century, was discovered at the Castle of Harilaq, utilized for the storage of food[619].

Fragments of Late Antique pottery from the same settlement include rims, body sections, and bases, each adorned with distinct decorative elements; rims are positioned externally, exhibiting a spectrum of colors ranging from black and gray to green glaze and pale red, decorative elements include wavy lines, groove lines, and mixed lines, alongside a fragment that functioned as a drainer[620].

At Municipium D.D near Soçanica, a fragment of an oil lamp dating back to the 4th century was discovered, composed of brownish-chestnut-colored clay, exhibits impurities, uneven baking, fractures, and a rough texture, notably, the end of the fragment retains the impression of the spinner's wheel center, characterized by a round, deepened disk featuring a hole, although the tail is absent (fig. 175.)[621].

[619] PEJA *ET AL*., 2016, 56.
[620] PEJA *ET AL*., 2016, 65-66.
[621] ÇERSHKOV 1973, 116.

A Lucernae was discovered in Ulpiana, characterized by its oval body, absence of a handle, and elongated foot, dating from the 4th to the 6th centuries (fig. 176.)[622].

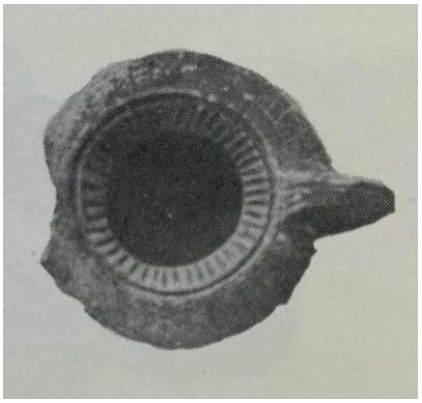

Figure 175. *Lamp, round, deepened disk featuring a hole, Municipium D.D. (*E.Çershkov 1973).



Figure 176. *Lucernae, Ulpiana* (M.Berisha – E.Shala, 2013).

A shallow plate adorned with engraved lines and featuring a rim shaped like saw teeth was discovered in Ulpiana, dating from the 4th to the 6th centuries, characterized by an olive green color (fig. 177)[623].

A pot exhibiting a reddish color, discovered in Vendenis (Gllamnik-Podujevë), with a dating range spanning the 4th to 6th centuries (fig.178.)[624].

[622] BERISHA – SHALA 2013, 237.
[623] BERISHA – SHALA 2013, 238.
[624] BERISHA – SHALA 2013, 242.



Figure 177. *Shallow plate with engraved lines and featuring a rim shaped like saw teeth, Ulpiana* (M.Berisha – E.Shala, 2013).



Figure 178. *Pot, Vendenis (*M.Berisha – E.Shala, 2013).

Three jugs were found as well in Vendenis (Gllamnik- Podujevë), three of them dating at the 4th to 6th centuries, the first one has a reddish color, one handle (fig. 179.); second one has a grayish color, with wide rim, one handle as well (fig.180.); the third one, has a pale orange-yellow color, with two handles, spherical body, tall narrow neck, the handles start at the middle of the neck and end at the upper part of the body (fig. 181.)[625].

A lid of a grayish color, discovered at the Castle of Kamenica, dating from the 4th to the 6th centuries (fig. 182.)[626].

[625] BERISHA – SHALA 2013, 242-248.
[626] BERISHA – SHALA 2013, 332.



Figure 179. *One handle jug, Vendenis* (M.Berisha – E.Shala, 2013).



Figure 180. *One handle jug, greyish color, Vendenis* (M.Berisha – E.Shala, 2013).



Figure 181. *Two-handle jug, Vendenis (*M.Berisha – E.Shala, 2013).

In Sopotnicë, Kaçanik, the so-called "latine graves" were discovered, revealing pottery artifacts, predominantly pots adorned with comb technique decoration, dating from the 4th to the 6th centuries[627].

[627] VALLA 2015, 165.

Fragments from the Hisar fortification, Kusar, Gjakovë, dating to Late Antiquity, include one piece featuring a rim and handle adorned with wavy decoration at the neck, alongside another fragment representing the body of a ceramic vessel, also embellished with wavy motifs, characteristic of the 4th to 6th centuries (fig. 183, 184.)[628].



Figure 182. *Lid, Kamenica Castle (*M.Berisha – E.Shala, 2013).



Figure 183. *Rim and handle, with wavy decoration at the neck, Hisar, Kusar, Gjakovë* (M.Valla, 2015).



Figure 184. *Body pottery fragment with wavy decoration, Hisar, Kusar, Gjakovë (*M.Valla, 2015).

[628] VALLA 2015, 170-171.

Pithos, with measurements of 69 cm height, 55 cm large, rim 15 cm wide, bottom 14 cm, was found at Hisar of Suhareka, compound of material clay with mica, with elipsoide-biconice shape, dating at Late Antique period (fig. 185)[629].

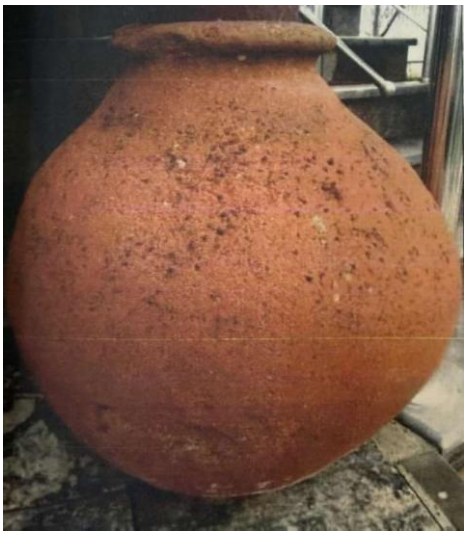

Figure 185. *Pithos, Hisar, Kasterc – Suharekë* (F.Bytyçi, 2025).

Upon examining the aforementioned artefacts from the Archaeological catalog of Kosovo, which represent a mere selection from various locations within Kosovo, dating from Late Antiquity in the 4th to 6th centuries, one can deduce that this period is characterized by a notable presence of quality material artefacts, particularly in precious metals such as gold and silver. During this period, the quantity of epigraphic inscriptions is notably fewer compared to the preceding era. When we concentrate on pottery, we encounter a variety of vessels; however, their materials and functions are predominantly oriented towards everyday applications, such as serving dishes, tableware, cooking implements, and pitchers.

In Kosovo, various forms of pottery from Late Antiquity have been discovered, many of which bear similarities to other regional pottery types. However, subtle distinctions can be observed in terms of decoration and materials used.

[629] BYTYÇI 2025, 90.

2.2. An analytical study of pottery traditions in Kosovo in comparison with other Balkan countries

An analytical comparison of the Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery traditions demonstrates that Kosovo (ancient Dardania) shared the principal technological, morphological, and decorative characteristics that defined pottery production throughout the Balkans, while simultaneously exhibiting several regional particularities related to its inland position and administrative role within the Late Roman Empire.

Across Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Romania, Croatia, and Montenegro, pottery production was characterized by a combination of locally manufactured utilitarian wares and imported Mediterranean fine ceramics. Similar technological principles are evident throughout the region, with purified clay employed for tableware and fine vessels, while coarse fabrics tempered with sand, quartz, limestone, mica, and silica were preferred for cooking pots, *pithoi*, and storage containers because of their improved resistance to thermal stress. Kosovo follows the same technological tradition. Pottery discovered in Ulpiana, Harilaq, Marec, Hisar, Vendenis, and other sites consists predominantly of coarse domestic wares identical functional adaptations observed elsewhere in the Balkans. Pithoi discovered at Mushtishtë, Harilaq, and Hisar further confirm the importance of large storage vessels within the local economy, paralleling assemblages documented in Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania.

In terms of vessel morphology, Kosovo exhibits a ceramic repertoire fully consistent with neighboring regions. Cooking pots, jugs, bowls, lids, plates, *mortaria*, lamps, storage vessels, and *pithoi* dominate the archaeological assemblages, reflecting a domestic ceramic economy comparable to those documented across the Balkan Peninsula. Similar vessel categories occur consistently in Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, and North Macedonia, indicating a shared Late Roman ceramic tradition maintained throughout the region. Nevertheless, unlike coastal Albania, Montengero, Croatia, and the Danubian settlements of Romania and Bulgaria, Kosovo has yielded comparatively limited quantities of imported amphorae and luxury tableware. Imported ceramics appear primarily within major urban centers such as Ulpiana and administrative or military settlements, suggesting that imported fine ware

reached Dardania through inland distribution networks rather than direct maritime commerce.

Decoration provides one of the clearest indicators of regional continuity. Throughout the Balkans, Late Antique pottery commonly displays engraved, incised, stamped, combed, rouletted, ribbed, and plastic decorative techniques dominated by geometric motifs, including parallel grooves, horizontal bands, zigzags, circles, dotted compositions, and especially wavy-line decoration. Kosovo conforms closely to this regional decorative tradition. Pottery from Harilaq, Marec, Hisar, and other settlements displays groove lines, plastic ornaments, circular decoration, comb decoration, and characteristic wavy motifs identical to those documented in Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania. The comb-decorated vessel from Sopotnicë corresponds particularly well with Serbian and Bulgarian Early Medieval assemblages, while the repeated use of wavy-line ornamentation reflects one of the most widespread decorative conventions throughout the Late Antique Balkans.

Glazed ceramics represent another important technological similarity. Serbia and Bulgaria produced sophisticated lead-glazed pottery employing olive-green, yellow, and brown glazes, while North Macedonia also imported and manufactured glazed wares. Kosovo likewise preserves evidence of glazing technology, although on a more limited scale. The Late Roman glazed *mortarium* from Ulpiana together with green-glazed pottery fragments discovered in Marec and Harilaq and the olive-green plate from Ulpiana demonstrates familiarity with glazing techniques already well established throughout the Byzantine Balkans. Compared with Serbia and Bulgaria, however, glazed ceramics appear considerably less numerous, indicating that such vessels probably represented higher-status imports or specialized products rather than widespread local manufacture.

One of the principal distinctions between Kosovo and several neighboring countries concerns the scale of Mediterranean imports. Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, North Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria all produced abundant evidence for African Red Slip Ware, Phocaean Red Slip Ware, Cypriot Red Slip Ware, Late Roman Amphorae, Gaza amphorae, and other imported Mediterranean ceramics, illustrating their direct integration into maritime or Danubian commercial systems. Kosovo, by contrast, contains relatively little imported fine pottery. Luxury ceramics are largely confined to

Ulpiana and other major administrative centers, while most excavated assemblages consist of locally produced domestic wares. This contrast suggests that Dardania occupied a more peripheral position within Mediterranean exchange networks while remaining economically connected though inland Roman road systems.

Regional interaction nevertheless remained significant. Albania demonstrated particularly close ceramics parallels with Serbia, North Macedonia, and Romania, while Bulgaria shares important technological traditions with North Macedonia and the Danubian provinces. Serbian assemblages incorporate Germanic influences, Croatian pottery reflects interactions among Roman, Germanic, and Slavic traditions, and Romanian ceramics combine Mediterranean and Gothic elements. Kosovo similarly occupied an intermediate cultural position. The ceramic assemblages reveal strong Late Roman provincial traditions while exhibiting decorative elements common throughout the central Balkans. Wavy-line decorations, comb ornamentation, groove lines, and biconical vessel forms closely resemble ceramics from Serbia, North Macedonia, Bulgaria, and parts of Croatia, suggesting continuous interaction across neighboring provinces despite changing political circumstances.

Chronological development also follows broader Balkan patterns. Throughout Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Croatia, and other regions, the 4th – 6th centuries witnessed the coexistence of imported fine wares with local production, whereas from the 7th century onward imported ceramics declined and coarse handmade pottery became increasingly dominant. The available evidence from Kosovo largely reflects the earlier phase of this development. Most published pottery dates to the 4th – 6th centuries and represents Late Roman provincial production characterized by wheel-made utilitarian vessels. Evidence for the Early Medieval ceramic transition remains considerably more limited than in Serbia, Bulgaria, or Croatia, where Slavic pottery traditions have been documented extensively. Consequently, Kosovo currently provides a stronger archaeological record for Late Antiquity than for the subsequent Early Medieval transformation.

Overall, Kosovo should not be viewed as an isolated ceramic province but rather as an integral component of the Late Antique Balkan ceramic koine. Its pottery shares common manufacturing technologies, vessel forms, decorative practices, and functional assemblages with neighboring Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Bulgaria,

Romania, Croatia, and Montenegro. The principal differences lie not in ceramic technology itself but in the quantity of imported Mediterranean wares, the predominance of locally produced utilitarian pottery, and the comparatively limited evidence for the Early Medieval transition. These characteristics reflect Kosovo's inland geographical position and its role as a provincial administrative and military region within the Late Roman Empire, where local production successfully met every day domestic needs while selectively incorporating technological innovations and imported luxury ceramics circulating through wide Byzantine and Balkan exchange networks.

Regional Comparative Analysis

1. Coastal vs Inland Dynamics (Albania, Croatia, Montenegro vs. Kosovo)

The most significant difference between the pottery of the coastal regions and Kosovo is the degree of Mediterranean integration.

Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro, regions that were part of the maritime trade network of the Byzantine Empire. Consequently, their pottery assemblages are rich in imported wares such as African Red Slip Ware, Phocaean Red Slip, and Gaza amphorae. In cities like Dyrrachium (Albania) and Zadar (Croatia), imports remained common until the mid - 7th century.

Being an inland territory (Dardania), Kosovo relied more on local production and imitation. While high-status items existed, the ceramic record is dominated by functional, domestic vessels. Trade reached Kosovo via the *Lissus* - *Ulpiana*, but the volume of bulky maritime imports (like large amphorae) was lower than on the coastal regions.

2. Specialized Productions (Bulgaria and Romania vs. Kosovo)

Bulgaria and Romania: These regions show evidence of industrial-scale specialized production. Kilns in Durostorum (Romania) and Pokrovnik (Bulgaria) produced not just pottery, but also architectural ceramics (tiles and bricks). They also feature unique items like ceramic fishing net weights and specialized lamps.

In Kosovo production was more decentralized and utilitarian. The pottery focus was on the "*pithos*" (large storage jars) and "casseroles". Kosovo's strength lay in its mineral wealth, like gold and silver, which perhaps lessened the economic necessity for large-scale ceramic export industries compared to the Danubian frontier provinces.

3. Stylistic and Decorative Traditions (North Macedonia and Serbia vs. Kosovo

North Macedonia: Famous for "Macedonian Gray Ware," which is characterized by high quality, polished surfaced and stamped decorations. Centers like Scupi (today Skopje) show a very high prevalence of glazed pottery.

Serbia: Sites like Caričin Grad show high technical sophistication in lead-glazed pottery, utilizing specific mineral compounds (manganese/barium) to achieve high-quality finishes.

Kosovo pottery is identified by its "comb technique" decoration and "saw tooth" rims (notably found in Ulpiana). While Serbian and Macedonian pottery often focused on refined tableware, Kosovo's artifacts emphasize longevity and resilience in dough composition, bridging the gap between Roman and Medieval styles.

In conclusions analyses indicate that Kosovo was not a "marginal periphery" but rather a stable inland place. While neighboring regions like Romania and Bulgaria served as military frontiers with industrial kilns and Albania/Croatia served as maritime trade ports, Kosovo maintained a hybridized ceramic tradition. This tradition combined Roman functionalism with local Dardania resilience, eventually merging the "Slavic" and "Germanic" styles (characterized by bucolical shapes and wavy lines) that defined the Early Medieval period across the entire peninsula.

PART IV

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery traditions of the Balkan Peninsula, with particular focus on a comparative analysis of Kosovo pottery within the broader regional framework. Through the integration of typological, technological, and contextual analyses, this study has aimed to elucidate the cultural, economic, and social transformations that shaped ceramic production and use during a period of transition between the late Roman world and the emergence of new medieval identities. By synthesizing archaeological data, historical sources, and comparative regional studies, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how pottery reflects the complex dynamics of continuity and change in the Balkans between the 3rd and 9th centuries.

The main objectives of this research were to define the characteristic features of Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery in the Balkan Peninsula with a special accent on its central parts and within it the territory of Kosovo, to compare these with findings from Kosovo, and to assess the degree of technological and stylistic continuity between the two chronological phases. The methodological framework combined qualitative and comparative approaches, integrating typological, morphological, and compositional analyses. In addition to bibliographic research carried out in multiple European and Balkan institutions, field surveys and photographic documentation in Kosovo provided new empirical data to support the comparative analysis.

Analytical emphasis was placed on clay composition, firing processes, and surface treatments, evaluated through both macroscopic and referenced petrographic criteria from published sources. Furthermore, the study utilized contextual evaluation linking ceramic assemblages to settlement patterns, trade routes, and socio-economic contexts to interpret the broader implications of pottery production and consumption. This multi-scalar approach, combining site-level data with interregional synthesis, allowed the research to move beyond descriptive typology and to reconstruct cultural and economic networks at the heart of the Balkan Peninsula.

The results of this research reveal several interrelated dimensions of pottery development in the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods. Across the Balkans,

pottery reflects both long-term continuities rooted in Roman technological traditions and gradual adaptations resulting from political instability, shifting trade networks, and local cultural transformations.

In technological terms, there is clear evidence that pottery production maintained many of the Roman firing and forming techniques well into the Early Medieval period. Wheel-thrown production, standardized vessel forms, and the use of kilns persisted longer in the Balkans than in many other parts of Europe. However, local workshops began to show increasing regionalization, especially in inland areas such as Dardania (modern Kosovo), where local clays and tempering materials were used. This pattern suggests a gradual decentralization of production away from major urban centers and toward rural, community-based manufacturing.

The firing process demonstrates that both oxidizing and reducing atmospheres were utilized, with temperatures varying from 800°C to 1100°C, depending on the vessel's intended function. Kitchen and storage wares were often fired at lower temperatures to retain porosity, while fine wares, especially table ceramics, were subject to more controlled kiln environments. These technological choices reflect both environmental adaptation availability of fuel and clay quality and the persistence of Roman technical traditions in post-imperial contexts.

In typological and stylistic terms, Late Antique pottery in the Balkans was characterized by forms such as amphorae, jugs, cooking pots, lamps, and table vessels with simple geometric or stamped decorations. During the Early Medieval period, however, there was a shift toward more functional and less ornate forms, often hand-made or finished on a slow wheel, with limited decorative motifs. Kosovo pottery displays many of these features, providing an important case study of regional adaptation. The comparative analysis indicates that while imported fine wares diminished over time, locally produced coarse and utilitarian ceramics increased, mirroring a broader economic reorientation toward self-sufficiency.

From a distributional and economic perspective, the study confirms that the decline of long-distance trade following the collapse of imperial administration did not eliminate all interregional exchange. The persistence of amphorae in coastal and riverine contexts shows continued circulation of goods especially oil and wine between the Adriatic,

Aegean, and inland Balkans. However, Kosovo's inland position and limited access to navigable waterways contributed to its more localized ceramic economy. The presence of imported forms in some Late Antique layers nonetheless indicates Kosovo's indirect participation in these broader exchange networks, possibly through intermediary routes connected to Ulpiana and Naissus.

The comparative framework of this dissertation highlights Kosovo as an integral but distinct part of the Late Antique and Early Medieval ceramic landscape. The region's pottery assemblages reveal a combination of inherited Roman manufacturing traditions and emerging local identities that developed during the transitional centuries.

The Late Antique phase in Kosovo (3rd – 6th centuries) corresponds to the final phase of Roman provincial production. Sites such as Ulpiana, Municipium D.D., and their surrounding rural settlements yielded ceramic assemblages consistent with regional Roman forms red-slipped tableware, amphorae, and fine utilitarian wares. These were often locally produced but stylistically influenced by imports from the Adriatic and Eastern Mediterranean. The abundance of coarse domestic pottery indicates an economy still closely tied to urban markets and military supply systems.

The Early Medieval phase (7th – 9th centuries AD) demonstrates a distinct transformation. The disruption of long-distance trade and the shift of populations toward fortified hilltop settlements (gradina-type sites) corresponded with a simplification of ceramic production. Handmade or slow-wheel pottery, rough surfaces, and limited typological variation became typical. Nonetheless, the persistence of some Late Roman forms, particularly storage jars and cooking pots, suggests that technological continuity remained even amid cultural change. The comparative study across neighboring regions, including northern Albania, western Serbia, and Macedonia, confirms similar patterns of adaptation: reduced specialization, increased local autonomy, and gradual integration of new cultural influences, particularly Slavic and Byzantine.

Thus, Kosovo pottery embodies a microcosm of Balkan transformation - a region at the crossroads of empires, invasions, and trade routes, where ceramic traditions evolved through the interplay of resilience and adaptation. The results suggest that rather than

an abrupt rupture, the transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Medieval period was characterized by gradual, regionally varied processes of cultural hybridization.

The comparative analysis presented in this dissertation underscores that pottery is not merely an artifact category but a dynamic cultural text. In the Balkans, where diverse populations interacted over millennia, ceramics encapsulate the story of adaptation, resilience, and continuity amid transformation. The persistence of traditional techniques, even during episodes of invasion and instability, reflects the deep-rooted nature of technological and cultural knowledge within local communities.

By contextualizing Kosovo pottery within the wider Late Antique and Early Medieval Balkans, this study contributes to reinterpreting the region's archaeological narrative not as a marginal periphery of empires, but as an active participant in shaping the cultural and technological continuum of southeastern Europe. The findings emphasize that even in periods of apparent decline, creativity and adaptation persisted, producing material cultures that bridged the ancient and medieval worlds.

Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that the study of pottery through its materiality, technology, and distribution offers one of the most effective means of understanding the historical processes that defined the Balkan Peninsula in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. It is hoped that this research will provide a foundation for future interdisciplinary studies and foster greater collaboration in the exploration of the region's complex archaeological heritage.

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Aspect	Albania	Serbia	North Macedonia	Bulgaria	Romania	Croatia	Montenegro	Kosovo
General Characteristics	Local traditions combined with Mediterranean and Balkan influences; remarkable regional uniformity	Crossroads of Roman, Byzantine, Central European, Germanic, and Balkan traditions	Highly developed regional ceramic industry with strong Mediterranean connections	Local production integrated with extensive Roman and Byzantine trade	Frontier province combining Mediterranean and barbarian traditions	Transitional zone between Adriatic Mediterranean and continental Balkans	Coastal province strongly connected to Byzantine maritime trade	Inland provincial tradition dominated by practical domestic production
Main types	Cooking pots, bowls, jugs, amphorae, pithoi, tableware	Cooking pots, bowls, jugs, amphorae, pithoi, plates, lamps, *clibani*, glazed wares	Bowls, dishes, jugs, cups, lamps, amphorae	Bowls, cooking pots, dishes, jugs, amphorae, pithoi, dolia, lamps, mortaria	Amphorae, bowls, jugs, storage vessels, tableware	Kitchen wares, amphorae, oil lamps, mortaria, coarse wares	African Red Slip Ware, LR7 amphorae, domestic wares	Cooking pots, jugs, bowls, plates, mortaria, pithoi, lids, lamps, storage vessels
Clay technology	Fine purified clay for tableware; coarse fabrics with sand, limestone, silica	Purified clay for fine wares; coarse fabrics with sand, quartz, limestone, mica	High-quality gray-fired fabrics with polished surfaces	Refined clay for glazed wares; coarse fabrics for domestic pottery	Fine Byzantine fabrics vs coarse local fabrics with limestone, quartz, mica, calcite	Variable local fabrics depending on regional resources	Roman fine wares and local production	Mostly coarse fired clay with sand and mineral inclusions; limited fine wares
Regional Ceramic Tradition	Strong Balkan provincial tradition	Roman provincial tradition with Germanic influences	Macedonian Gray Ware (distinct regional industry)	Strong local production with regional workshops	Mixed Roman, Byzantine, Gothic traditions	Roman, Germanic and Slavic traditions	Roman-Byzantine coastal tradition	Late Roman provincial tradition without a distinctive regional ceramic industry
Decorative techniques	Incision, engraving, stamping, plastic decoration	Incision, rouletting, comb decoration, stamping, polished bands	Stamping, incision, polishing, rouletting	Incised lines, finger impressions, wavy lines	Stamped, vegetal, geometric, zoomorphic, Christian motifs	Burnishing, polished bands, geometric motifs, incisions	Limited published decorative repertoire	Groove lines, wavy lines, comb decoration, plastic ornamentation, circular grooves
Common decorative motifs	Parallel lines, zigzags, braids, circles, dotted motifs, crosses	Parallel lines, wavy bands, ribs, rouletting	Circles, diamonds, lozenges, grooves, scalloped motifs	Wavy lines, incised bands, finger impressions	Crosses, palm branches, circles, volutes, animals	Triangles, lattices, grooves, scalloped motifs	Limited evidence	Wavy lines, horizontal grooves, circular decoration, comb decoration
Glazed pottery	Present but limited	Highly developed olive-green, yellow and brown lead glazes	Imported and locally used glazed wares	Extensive lead-glazed production	Byzantine glazed imports	Limited	Rare	Limited evidence (olive-green mortarium, glazed fragments from Ulpiana, Marec and Harilaq
Imported Fine Wares	African Red Slip Ware, Phocaean Red Slip Ware	Limited compared with local production	African, Phocaean, Cypriot Red Slip Ware	African imports and glazed wares	African and Byzantine fine wares	African Terra Sigillata and African kitchen wares	African Red Slip Ware	Rare; mainly in Ulpiana and administrative centres

Aspect	Albania	Serbia	North Macedonia	Bulgaria	Romania	Croatia	Montenegro	Kosovo
Imported Amphorae	Gaza amphorae, Tunisian spatheia	Amphorae present but decline after 7th century	Mediterranean amphorae	LRA2 dominant	LRA1, LRA2, Gaza amphorae	LRA3 and LRA4	LR7 amphorae	Very limited archaeological evidence
Mediterranean Trade	Very strong maritime connections	Strong until 6th century	Strong eastern Mediterranean connections	Strong Danubian and Mediterranean trade	Strong Byzantine frontier trade	Strong Adriatic trade	Strong coastal maritime trade	Moderate inland connections through Roman road network
Germanic influence	Minimal	Strong (Gepid pottery, Tisza Basin parallels	Limited	Sarmatian and Germanic influences	Gothic influences inland	Strong Migration Period influence	Minimal	Very limited
Slavic Influence	Mainly after 7th century	Well developed in 7th–10th centuries	Less pronounced	Handmade Slavic pottery from 7th century	Regional Early Medieval traditions	Strong Early Croatian Slavic tradition	Limited evidence	Poorly documented archaeologically
Christian Symbolism	Crosses and Christograms common	Present	Strongly represented on lamps	Present	Crosses and Christian motifs	Present	Indirect evidence	Limited; lamps and Late Roman material culture
Production Organization	Numerous fortified settlements with local workshops	Provincial and urban workshops	Major production centres at Stobi and Scupi	Numerous kilns and specialized workshops	Regional workshops	Decentralized regional production	Mainly coastal production	Primarily local production serving settlements and fortifications
Economic Character	Local production supplemented by imports	Balanced local and imported production	Prosperous urban economy	Local industry integrated with imperial trade	Frontier supply economy	Mixed local production and imports	Maritime exchange economy	Predominantly local utilitarian economy with limited luxury imports
Chronological Development	Imports dominate (4th–6th c.); local wares increase after 7th c.	Imports decline after 7th c.; Early Medieval pottery develops	Gray Ware dominates until early 7th c.	Handmade wares dominate after 7th c.; improved wheel-thrown pottery by 9th c.	Continued Byzantine imports despite instability	Roman → Germanic → Slavic transition	Continuity of Byzantine trade into 8th c.	Evidence concentrated in the 4th–6th centuries; Early Medieval sequence less well documented
Distinctive Feature	Strongest combination of Balkan and Mediterranean traditions	Germanic influences and advanced glazing technology	Macedonian Gray Ware	Extensive kiln network and lead-glazed pottery	Byzantine frontier with rich amphora assemblages	Interaction of Roman, Germanic and Slavic traditions	African Red Slip Ware and LR7 amphorae demonstrate maritime trade	Dominance of utilitarian pottery, limited imports, and strong continuity of Late Roman provincial traditions

Category	Balkan Countries Most Characteristic	Kosovo Compared
Mediterranean imports	Albania, North Macedonia, Romania, Montenegro, Croatia.	Significantly fewer imports; mainly confined to Ulpiana and major centers.
Local utilitarian	Kosovo, Serbia, Bulgaria.	Comparable, but Kosovo is the most strongly dominated by everyday domestic wares.
Glazing technology	Serbia and Bulgaria.	Present but much less common.
Distinct regional ceramic tradition	North Macedonia (Gray Ware).	No unique ceramic tradition identified; follows broader Late Roman provincial traditions.
Germanic influence	Serbia and Croatia.	Minimal evidence.
Slavic ceramic development	Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria.	Poorly represented due to limited Early Medieval assemblages.
Storage vessels (pithoi)	Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Kosovo.	Kosovo has several complete examples (Harilaq, Mushtishtë, Hisar), indicating strong emphasis on agricultural storage.
Decoration	Entire Balkans share wavy lines, grooves, incisions, and geometric motifs.	Fully consistent with regional decorative traditions.
Economic orientation	Coastal states emphasize Mediterranean trade.	Kosovo functioned primarily as an inland provincial production and distribution centre linked by Roman roads rather than maritime commerce.