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PhD THESIS BOOKLET

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

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Part I

Summary of the research objective

The objectives of my thesis topic will focus on the main points of the study of pottery. The study of Late Antique and Early Medieval pottery serves several key objectives, including different kinds of perspectives such as:

- Chronology & Typology – Establishing typologies and dating frameworks for pottery styles, forms, and production techniques to aid in archaeological dating.
- Trade & Economy – Understanding trade networks, production centers, and economic structures by analyzing distribution patterns in pottery.
- Cultural & Regional Identity—Identifying regional variations and influences in pottery styles to examine cultural interactions and identity formation.
- Technological Developments – Studying changes in ceramic production techniques, including firing methods, clay composition, and decoration styles.
- Daily Life & Consumption – Examining the role of pottery in food storage, cooking, and tableware to

understand diet, domestic practices, and social customs.

- Religious & Symbolic Uses – Investigating pottery with religious motifs or inscriptions to explore beliefs, rituals, and sacred practices.
- Site Function & Urbanism – Using pottery assemblages to interpret the function of archaeological sites, including urban centers, rural settlements, and military sites.
- Cooking & Dining – Various wares served for cooking, eating, and dining.
- Storage & Transport – Amphorae carried goods like oil, grain, and wine.

Part II

Research methodology

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.

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.

The research followed a qualitative approach, with a clear objective and a systematic process developed over four years of PhD studies. Hundreds of books and articles are part of the thesis; all of them were obtained from different libraries or authors.

Libraries that were used in Hungary to approach the best research are: the National Széchenyi Library and Budapest University Library; Leiden University Library in the Netherlands, 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.

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. Overall, one of the best contributors to the pottery used in the thesis is as well Hayes (1972).

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.

Part III

Summary of the research results

Summary of the research results are shown on the tables below:

	ALBANIA
General Characteristics	Local traditions combined with Mediterranean and Balkan influences; remarkable regional uniformity
Main types	Cooking pots, bowls, jugs, amphorae, pithoi, tableware
Clay technology	Fine purified clay for tableware; coarse fabrics with sand, limestone, silica
Regional Ceramic Tradition	Strong Balkan provincial tradition
Decorative techniques	Incision, engraving, stamping, plastic decoration
Common decorative motifs	Parallel lines, zigzags, braids, circles, dotted motifs, crosses
Glazed pottery	Present but limited
Imported Fine Wares	African Red Slip Ware, Phocaean Red Slip Ware
Imported Amphorae	Gaza amphorae, Tunisian spatheia
Mediterranean Trade	Very strong maritime connections
Germanic influence	Minimal
Slavic Influence	Mainly after 7th century
Christian Symbolism	Crosses and Christograms common
Production Organization	Numerous fortified settlements with local workshops
Economic Character	Local production supplemented by imports
Chronological Development	Imports dominate (4th –6th c.); local wares increase after 7th c.
Distinctive Feature	Strongest combination of Balkan and Mediterranean traditions

	SERBIA
General Characteristics	Crossroads of Roman, Byzantine, Central European, Germanic, and Balkan traditions
Main types	Cooking pots, bowls, jugs, amphorae, pithoi, plates, lamps, *clibani*, glazed wares
Clay technology	Purified clay for fine wares; coarse fabrics with sand, quartz, limestone, mica
Regional Ceramic Tradition	Roman provincial tradition with Germanic influences
Decorative techniques	Incision, rouletting, comb decoration, stamping, polished bands
Common decorative motifs	Parallel lines, wavy bands, ribs, rouletting
Glazed pottery	Highly developed olive-green, yellow and brown lead glazes
Imported Fine Wares	Limited compared with local production
Imported Amphorae	Amphorae present but decline after 7th century
Mediterranean Trade	Strong until 6th century
Germanic influence	Strong (Gepid pottery, Tisza Basin parallels
Slavic Influence	Well developed in 7th – 10th centuries
Christian Symbolism	Present
Production Organization	Provincial and urban workshops
Economic Character	Balanced local and imported production
Chronological Development	Imports decline after 7th c.; Early Medieval pottery develops
Distinctive Feature	Germanic influences and advanced glazing technology

	NORTH MACEDONIA
General Characteristics	Highly developed regional ceramic industry with strong Mediterranean connections
Main types	Bowls, dishes, jugs, cups, lamps, amphorae
Clay technology	High-quality gray-fired fabrics with polished surfaces
Regional Ceramic Tradition	Macedonian Gray Ware (distinct regional industry)
Decorative techniques	Stamping, incision, polishing, rouletting
Common decorative motifs	Circles, diamonds, lozenges, grooves, scalloped motifs
Glazed pottery	Imported and locally used glazed wares
Imported Fine Wares	African, Phocaean, Cypriot Red Slip Ware
Imported Amphorae	Mediterranean amphorae
Mediterranean Trade	Strong eastern Mediterranean connections
Germanic influence	Limited
Slavic Influence	Less pronounced
Christian Symbolism	Strongly represented on lamps
Production Organization	Major production centers at Stobi and Scupi
Economic Character	Prosperous urban economy
Chronological Development	Gray Ware dominates until early 7th c.
Distinctive Feature	Macedonian Gray Ware

	BULGARIA
General Characteristics	Local production integrated with extensive Roman and Byzantine trade
Main types	Bowls, cooking pots, dishes, jugs, amphorae, pithoi, dolia, lamps, mortaria
Clay technology	Refined clay for glazed wares; coarse fabrics for domestic pottery
Regional Ceramic Tradition	Strong local production with regional workshops
Decorative techniques	Incised lines, finger impressions, wavy lines
Common decorative motifs	Wavy lines, incised bands, finger impressions
Glazed pottery	Extensive lead-glazed production
Imported Fine Wares	African imports and glazed wares
Imported Amphorae	LRA2 dominant
Mediterranean Trade	Strong Danubian and Mediterranean trade
Germanic influence	Sarmatian and Germanic influences
Slavic Influence	Handmade Slavic pottery from 7th century
Christian Symbolism	Present
Production Organization	Numerous kilns and specialized workshops
Economic Character	Local industry integrated with imperial trade
Chronological Development	Handmade wares dominate after 7th c.; improved wheel-thrown pottery by 9th c.
Distinctive Feature	Extensive kiln network and lead-glazed pottery

	ROMANIA
General Characteristics	Frontier province combining Mediterranean and barbarian traditions
Main types	Amphorae, bowls, jugs, storage vessels, tableware
Clay technology	Fine Byzantine fabrics vs coarse local fabrics with limestone, quartz, mica, calcite
Regional Ceramic Tradition	Mixed Roman, Byzantine, Gothic traditions
Decorative techniques	Stamped, vegetal, geometric, zoomorphic, Christian motifs
Common decorative motifs	Crosses, palm branches, circles, volutes, animals
Glazed pottery	Byzantine glazed imports
Imported Fine Wares	African and Byzantine fine wares
Imported Amphorae	LRA1, LRA2, Gaza amphorae
Mediterranean Trade	Strong Byzantine frontier trade
Germanic influence	Gothic influences inland
Slavic Influence	Regional Early Medieval traditions
Christian Symbolism	Crosses and Christian motifs
Production Organization	Regional workshops
Economic Character	Frontier supply economy
Chronological Development	Continued Byzantine imports despite instability
Distinctive Feature	Byzantine frontier with rich amphora assemblages

	CROATIA
General Characteristics	Transitional zone between Adriatic Mediterranean and continental Balkans
Main types	Kitchen wares, amphorae, oil lamps, mortaria, coarse wares
Clay technology	Variable local fabrics depending on regional resources
Regional Ceramic Tradition	Roman, Germanic and Slavic traditions
Decorative techniques	Burnishing, polished bands, geometric motifs, incisions
Common decorative motifs	Triangles, lattices, grooves, scalloped motifs
Glazed pottery	Limited
Imported Fine Wares	African Terra Sigillata and African kitchen wares
Imported Amphorae	LRA3 and LRA4
Mediterranean Trade	Strong Adriatic trade
Germanic influence	Strong Migration Period influence
Slavic Influence	Strong Early Croatian Slavic tradition
Christian Symbolism	Present
Production Organization	Decentralized regional production
Economic Character	Mixed local production and imports
Chronological Development	Roman → Germanic → Slavic transition
Distinctive Feature	Interaction of Roman, Germanic and Slavic traditions

	MONTENEGRO
General Characteristics	Coastal province strongly connected to Byzantine maritime trade
Main types	African Red Slip Ware, LR7 amphorae, domestic wares
Clay technology	Roman fine wares and local production
Regional Ceramic Tradition	Roman-Byzantine coastal tradition
Decorative techniques	Limited published decorative repertoire
Common decorative motifs	Limited evidence
Glazed pottery	Rare
Imported Fine Wares	African Red Slip Ware
Imported Amphorae	LR7 amphorae
Mediterranean Trade	Strong coastal maritime trade
Germanic influence	Minimal
Slavic Influence	Limited evidence
Christian Symbolism	Indirect evidence
Production Organization	Mainly coastal production
Economic Character	Maritime exchange economy
Chronological Development	Continuity of Byzantine trade into 8th c.
Distinctive Feature	African Red Slip Ware and LR7 amphorae demonstrate maritime trade

	KOSOVO
General Characteristics	Inland provincial tradition dominated by practical domestic production
Main types	Cooking pots, jugs, bowls, plates, mortaria, pithoi, lids, lamps, storage vessels
Clay technology	Mostly coarse fired clay with sand and mineral inclusions; limited fine wares
Regional Ceramic Tradition	Late Roman provincial tradition without a distinctive regional ceramic industry
Decorative techniques	Groove lines, wavy lines, comb decoration, plastic ornamentation, circular grooves
Common decorative motifs	Wavy lines, horizontal grooves, circular decoration, comb decoration
Glazed pottery	Limited evidence (olive-green mortarium, glazed fragments from Ulpiana, Marec and Harilaq
Imported Fine Wares	Rare; mainly in Ulpiana and administrative centers
Imported Amphorae	Very limited archaeological evidence
Mediterranean Trade	Moderate inland connections through Roman road network
Germanic influence	Very limited
Slavic Influence	Poorly documented archaeologically
Christian Symbolism	Limited; lamps and Late Roman material culture
Production Organization	Primarily local production serving settlements and fortifications
Economic Character	Predominantly local utilitarian economy with limited luxury imports
Chronological Development	Evidence concentrated in the $4^{th} – 6^{th}$ centuries; Early Medieval sequence less well documented
Distinctive Feature	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 center linked by Roman roads rather than maritime commerce.

Part IV

Publications

- Shipoli, E., Zear, A., " *Mehmet Pasha Dukagjini and al-'Adiliyyah Mosque in Aleppo, Syria*", In: *Gjurmime Albanologjike – Seria e Shkencave Historike*, Vol. 51, pp. 113-129, Institute of Albanology, Pristina, 2021.
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- Shipoli, E., "*The mosque of Hasan Pasha Gjakovalis in Pécs of Hungary*", In: *Gjurmime Albanologjike - Seria e Shkencave Historike*, Vol.

54, pp.109-123, Institute of Albanology, Pristina, 2024.

- Shipoli, E., "*Ancient mining activities in the area of Mitrovica*", In: *Java e Albanologjisë*, Vol.II, Nr. 15, pp. 101-108, Institute of Albanology, Pristina, 2025.
- Shipoli, E., "*Characteristics of Late Antique pottery in Kosovo*", In: *Gjurmime Albanologjike - Seria e Shkencave Historike*, (In process of publication).