

NEW INFORMATION ON THE EAST AND SOUTH-EAST CARPATHIAN STORAGE VESSELS (1ST- 4TH C. AD)

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Abstract: Food production, storage and consumption are the most important steps towards the economic stability of a region and society. Storage vessels were used in all Getic, Carpic and Roman settlements for storing provisions in good conditions and keeping the food protected from pests, fungi and insects.

Their production was not random and ethnographic sources demonstrate the correlation between certain types of fabrics, manufacturing techniques and vessel shapes. Generally, the shape of a vessel can determine its function. Storage vessels can be used for keeping cereals but also liquids like wine or water. Attention paid to the design of this type of vessel reveals not only the significant role of these containers in the everyday life of society, saving families from starvation, but also provides us information on the economic, cultural, and social life.

A large variety of storage vessels has been found in the territory between the Carpathian Mountains, the Black Sea and the Prut River. These vary from large *dolia* to small vessels used for storing different quantities. This paper discusses only the medium and small storage vessels. There is an important correlation between these containers.

Rezumat: Producția alimentelor, păstrarea și consumul sunt cei mai importanți pași spre stabilitatea economică a unei societăți și regiuni. Vasele de stocare au fost utilizate în așezările getice, carpice și romane pentru a depozita proviziile în condiții optime. În acest fel au fost protejate de ciuperci și insecte.

Producția acestui tip de vas nu a fost întâmplătoare, iar studiile etnografice dovedesc existența unei legături între anumite tipuri de pastă, tehnici de realizare și forma vasului. Astăzi atât arheologii cât și etnografii sunt de acord că forma vasului determină și funcția. Vasele au fost utilizate atât pentru a păstra cerealele dar și alimente, de exemplu vin și apă.

Atenția acordată realizării vaselor de provizii arată rolul important pe care acestea îl joacă în societate, iar utilizarea lor contribuia, în multe cazuri, la salvarea familiei de la foamete. Studiul lor ne oferă totodată, informații despre economie, viața socială și culturală.

Storage vessels represent an important ceramic category discovered in the large area that encompasses the Carpathian Mountains, the River Prut and the Black Sea. In spite of the huge volume of information provided by these vessels regarding production, storage, and consumption of food, a systematic study of these vessels has not been done yet. Their ubiquity in all settlements, and even cemeteries when they were reused as urns, makes us consider them among those artefacts that attest to the existence of a local grain production i.e. of the presence and prosperity of the local population. However, the existence of a food production, regardless of how abundant the harvest was, was not sufficient. There was a long *chaîne opératoire* involved in this process from harvesting to storage, distribution, processing, and consumption. Storage played a central role in this *chaîne opératoire* as it influenced different behavioural levels of society.¹ One needs to distinguish between storage at the lower level of household, in house annexes, and at the higher level when it involved the action of the central authority, which disposed of warehouses and *horrea* for longer or shorter periods. In the former case, storage, which could include not only food but also money, cloth and clothing, water in cisterns, or prestige goods (social storage) was part of a large social strategy.²

Food in antiquity was, until the last 30-40 years, a relatively unknown topic in the archaeological literature. However, more progress has been made in this area, with scholars paying more attention to food residues, bone analysis, looking from a different angle at ancient literary, ethnographic and archaeological sources. The aim of this paper is to discuss food storage practiced at the lower level of the household, using medium and small storage vessels. These should be considered an important source for understanding the existence of different food storage strategies used by the ancients for survival.

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¹ Forbes, Foxhall 1995, pp. 69-70.

² Forbes, Foxhall 1995, p. 70; Ionas 2000, p. 19.