

## THE RESTORATION OF A CERAMIC POT FROM THE ROMAN PERIOD

**Abstract:** This paper succinctly presents the ways in which a series of potsherds found during archaeological excavations at Micăsasa were processed and how, through restoration works, an artefact dating back to the Roman period was reconstituted, enriching the patrimony of the National Museum of Transylvanian History in Cluj- Napoca.

**Keywords:** restoration, ceramic, artefact, Roman period.

The large-scale archaeological campaigns conducted at Micăsasa, Sibiu County in 1998 led to the discovery, among others, of a rich ceramic hoard of Roman provenance, for the processing of which archaeologist Dr. Cristian Aurel Roman addressed himself to the Zonal Restoration Laboratory of the National Museum of Transylvanian History in Cluj-Napoca. Sorting the ceramic material led to the identification of 19 shards pertaining to the same restorable vessel (Fig. 1), a cup/bowl with two handles made of good quality clay paste, ochre in colour, with incised reddish stripes.

The restoration work started through a preliminary cleaning operation, consisting in the repeated immersion of the potsherds in water so that debris and impurities could be washed of. The careful rinsing of the shards was followed by their wet mechanical cleaning with a soft brush. The fragments were left to dry for a few days, on filter paper, at room temperature. The consolidation of the potsherds was absolutely necessary and, for this purpose, the fragments were impregnated with a 1/5 diluted nitro-lacquer solution.

We separated the potsherds based on the decoration and on the thickness and the texture of the clay paste and we started reconstituting the pot by gluing together the ceramic fragments with a transparent, plasticizer-free adhesive, of the white glue type. The pot decoration considerably eased the restoration operations, which lasted several days. To reinforce the glued joints, we resorted to using a small box filled with fine sand as excellent support for placing the assembled potsherds. Because of the missing ceramic shards, the resulting pot represented about 50% of the total (Fig. 2a, 2b, 2c).

The restoration of the pot required that the incomplete profile of the vessel be made based on analogies presented by specialists. The next stage of the restoration resided in reconstituting the pot with the help of a negative model, namely a clay mould of the missing parts, secured by light pressure inside the vessel, over which a mass of coloured plaster was poured from the outside to remake the pot. After the plaster set, the clay mould was easily removed thanks to the application, prior to the casting, of silicone

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oil, with soft brush movements on the stamped ceramic areas. The finishing of the pot occurred in several stages: the removal of excess casting with the help of a surgical scalpel, modelling the plaster with an “S”-type scraper, sanding the pot with sandpaper of different grits and with fine-wire mesh. The rhythmic nature of the decoration enabled its easy reproduction by simple chisel incisions. The colour palette was carefully reproduced by using water-based acrylics, combined to achieve the desired shade and applied to the surface of the pot with fine brush movements. For the final conservation, the pot was impregnated with a 1/5 diluted nitro-lacquer solution.

The result of the restoration work is a globular ceramic pot, slightly bulging in the area of maximum diameter, a cup/bowl with a low, flat base and two side handles made on a wide circular band, attached to the rim and the body; the barely flaring lip rises above the narrow edge, slightly pulled inward. The junction area between the rim and the body of the pot is marked by a groove flanked by two incised borders. The restored pot has entered the patrimony of the museum in Cluj; the dimensions of the pot after restoration are: rim D = 12.2 cm, H = 9.8 cm (Fig. 3).



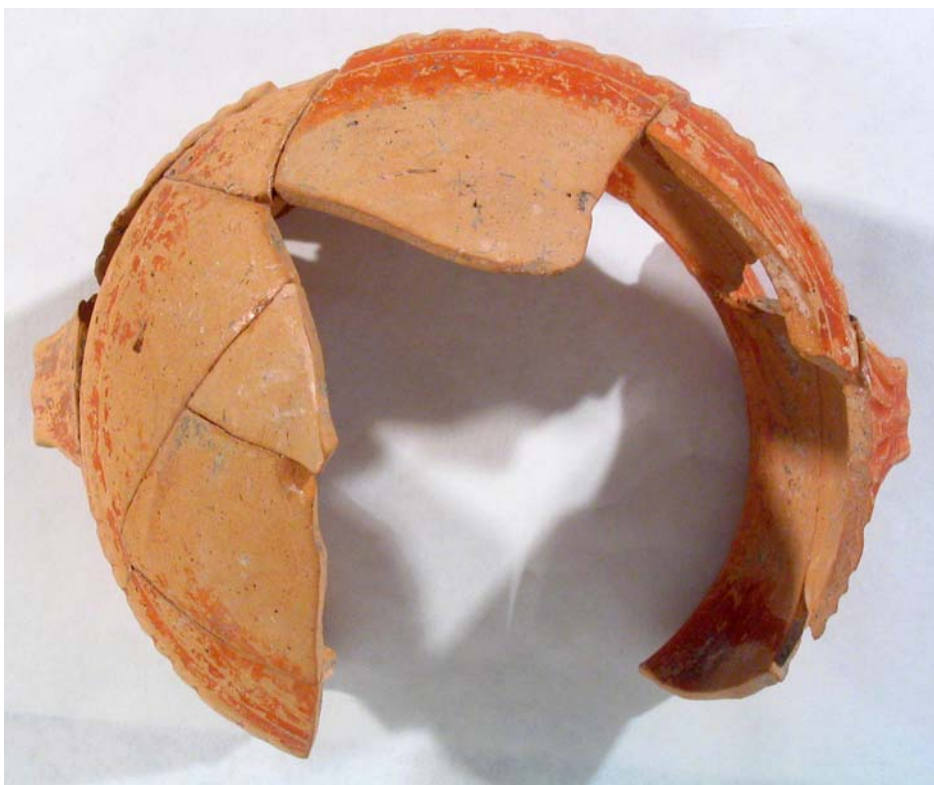
**Fig.1**



**Fig.2.a**



**Fig.2.b**



**Fig.2.c**



**Fig.3**