

# A CERAMIC MOULD FROM BELGRADE CITY MUSEUM ANTIQUITY COLLECTION USED FOR PRACTICE AND SPOILED

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The antiquity collection of the Belgrade City Museum includes a ceramic mould found some time ago Kalemegdan, at the location Zapadno podgrađe – Donji grad, registered under inventory number 3286.<sup>1</sup> The mould is oval in shape, with poorly or, rather, barely profiled bottom, and the upper part features a round opening. The mould was made of purified earth, ochre firing colour, dimensions: 17 cm in breadth, 4.6 cm in height, and diameter of the opening on the upper part is 6.7 cm. The mould was published<sup>2</sup>, but it was not studied in detail. It was described as a ceramic mould with a representation of Victoria at the bottom (Fig. 1).

Various decorative elements are visible both at the edge of the wall and at the bottom, obtained mostly by embossing and also to a lesser degree by inscribing (Fig. 2). Slightly below the rim and along the entire length of the mould wall, between the two parallel lines obtained by inscribing, a continuous vegetative ornament was made, unevenly embossed (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3

<sup>1</sup> Марјановић – Вујовић 1980, p. 146. Поповић / Иванишевић 1982, p. 132–136. Поповић 1997, p. 1–20.

<sup>2</sup> Војовић 1977, p. 74, n. 153, T. XIV, n. 153.

At the bottom of the mould, in the lowest part, an ornament of two leaves was precisely embossed, and above each leaf there is a small bird poorly imprinted and now hardly visible (Figures 2 and 4). In the centre of the mould bottom, to the left, there is a poor impression of a wing, and to the right there is an almost imperceptible impression of an hand along whose left edge an inscribed line was drawn. Above, at the middle of the mould, there is a hardly visible imprint of a face (mask), on top of which three parallel lines were inscribed, meeting at an irregular angle (Fig. 5). Above the inscription a crescent moon ornament was impressed, filled with slanted, small notches. In the middle and on the sides two deep lines were inscribed. Along the bottom edge, in an irregular sequence following all the impressed ornaments, there is an ornament of embossed dots. Within it, between the wing and the arm on the left and on the right, and between the mask and leaves on the upper and lower parts, it looks as if the clay had been wiped while still moist. It is obvious that all three inscribed lines at the bottom of the mould were not used for practice, i.e. for inverse inscribing of a certain image, but for striking off the mould itself as unfit for further use.

By its shape, the mould was intended for making vessels, namely bowls of type Drag. 40.<sup>3</sup> This type of vessel originated in mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century in Eastern Gaulish workshops and lasted until mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century. This was also a type of vessel that was frequent in Roman provincial pottery making. In Moesia, judging by archaeological finds, this type was rare as import, but frequent in local production.<sup>4</sup> It is obvious that the form Drag. 40 in time became a favourite one in local provincial production also because of its simple form, corresponding to similar forms of simply profiled native ceramics.<sup>5</sup> The opening on the upper side of the mould served as the so-called grip, i.e. for removing the mould from the formed vessel after the ornaments were embossed and the shape of the vessel formed (Figures 6, 7 and 8).



Fig. 6

<sup>3</sup> Bjelajac 1990, p. 126, T. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Bjelajac 1990, p. 126.

<sup>5</sup> Brukner 1981, T. IV, 4–6, domestic ceramic I c., Sirmium.



Some of the ornaments appearing on the mould are typical for images on terra sigillata. Among them are primarily the ornaments of leaf and “crescent moons”. In this sense the leaf ornament is especially frequent, both alone and in combination with other motifs, particularly the rosette. As an ornament it appears in a broad chronological span from La Tène to late Middle Ages,<sup>6</sup> while in the Roman period it very frequently appeared on relief terra sigillata and especially so in provincial forms and imitations.<sup>7</sup>

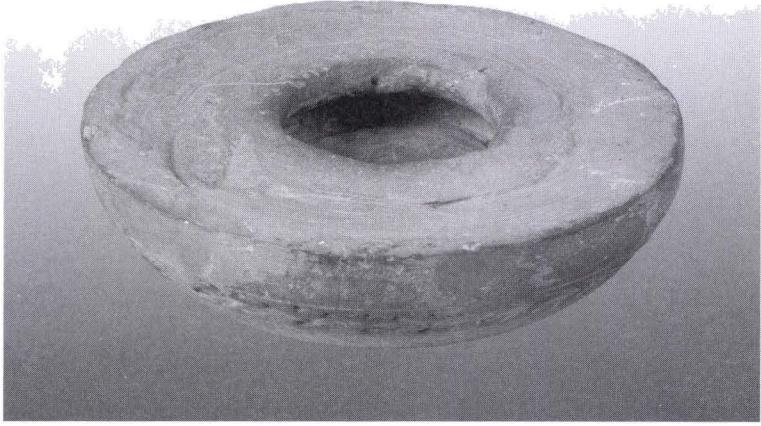


Fig. 7

In our territory it frequently appeared as a motif in workshops of Viminacium – Margum,<sup>8</sup> which confirms that this motif was favoured in local production.



Fig. 8

<sup>6</sup> Dautova Ruševljan 1996, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> Dautova Ruševljan 1996, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Bjelajac 1990, T. 72, 73, 74, different forms of the leafes.

The mould from the Belgrade City Museum features it in two different forms. Two leaves of identical shape at the bottom of the mould are clearly embossed by a skilful hand, while the leaf ornament appearing continuously on the side of the mould was unevenly embossed (Fig. 9), which indicates lack of skill of the person working on it. The form of leaves appearing on the side of the mould is the form most similar to the form of leaves of type E40, smaller trefoil leaves, from the workshop Viminacium – Margum.<sup>9</sup> The leaf ornament rendered at the bottom of the mould is similar to the forms E63 or E46 of the workshop Viminacium – Margum.<sup>10</sup> The crescent moon ornament is present in ceramics of various sizes, most often filled with slanted incisions, or, less frequently, by ornament of small rectangles or squares.<sup>11</sup> The most similar form of this crescent ornament is found in stamp ornaments from Srem,<sup>12</sup> where the ornament of “crescent moon” is found in combination with leaves.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 12

The dotted ornament is not considered as frequent in terra sigillata or terra sigillata imitation ceramic vessels.<sup>14</sup> The dotted ornament in the form of concentric circles is present in the ceramics found in Srem, at Gomolava.<sup>15</sup> Rather, this ornament is more characteristic of ceramic medallions – moulds for preparing festive cakes, as for instance the one found in Sirmium.<sup>16</sup> The appearance of small birds or a mask is not so frequent, but they are present in terra sigillata from local, provincial workshops,<sup>17</sup> while in the Sirmium area the remnants of moulds with embossed masks – faces were also found.<sup>18</sup>

Different ceramic moulds were made in the Roman period. There were not only ceramic moulds for ceramic vessels,<sup>19</sup> but also ceramic moulds for preparing votive cakes on occasion

<sup>9</sup> Bjelajac 1990, T. 73, E40.

<sup>10</sup> Bjelajac 1990, T. 73, E46, T. 74, E63.

<sup>11</sup> Bjelajac 1990, T. 76.

<sup>12</sup> Dautova Ruševljan, *Prilog proučavanju*, T. XIII, 24–26, 30–31.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., T. XI – 1.

<sup>14</sup> Bjelajac 1990, T. 76.

<sup>15</sup> Даутова Рушевлан 1996, T. II /4.

<sup>16</sup> Брукнер 1997, p. 100, T. I, 1, 3, T. II, 3, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Bjelajac 1990, T. B67 – mask, T. 71 – D81 – 86 different forms of birds.

<sup>18</sup> Брукнер 1981, T. 46, br. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Фидановски 1996.



of religious holidays (co-called crustelum – i),<sup>20</sup> and ceramic moulds smaller in size that were used for directly embossing the ornaments into ceramics or into a ceramic mould in order to render a number of specific ornaments on it. Such ceramic moulds of smaller dimensions very frequently featured a different ornament on the upper and on the lower sides.<sup>21</sup> The moulds for cakes were often made by borrowing motifs from ceramic terra sigillata vessels,<sup>22</sup> or taking over such motifs as their inverse images. They often had representations of divinities or different motifs embossed. The most frequent representations of divinities are the representations of Isis and Serapis, Isis – Fortune, Hermes, Hecate, Nemesis and Victoria.<sup>23</sup>



Fig. 12

Ceramic medallions had a resemblance to ceramic vessels, which points to an indirect connection through a common mould.<sup>24</sup> This “connection” was obviously such that the imprints from ceramic moulds for vessels were also used for imprints for producing ceramic medallions, or stamps, for festive cakes. This connection of the ceramic mould from the Belgrade City Museum collection with the ceramic stamps for cakes is indicated by the remnant of embossed representation of Victoria, and the dotted ornament, which were, as was already mentioned, characteristic of ceramic stamps for festive cakes.

At several locations in the area of ancient Singidunum the remnants of brick making workshops were identified, based on the findings of ceramic kilns. Thus, in the location of the National Theatre a pottery workshop, dated to the period from mid-2<sup>nd</sup> to mid-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, was identified, and its production volumes met the needs of both the military and civil population of Roman Singidunum.<sup>25</sup> The remnants of ceramic workshops were identified also in the locations between the streets Jovanova and Tadeuša Koščuškog, in Golsvordijeva, in Obilićev Venac, as well as near the Patrijaršija (Patriarchate Palace).<sup>26</sup> All this points to the conclusion that local

<sup>20</sup> Ивановски 2001. Глумац 2009, p. 221–232. Брукнер 1997, p. 97–102. Јовановић 2007, p. 15–23.

<sup>21</sup> Бјелајац 1992, Т. II, 9; Брукнер 1981, Т. 46, 3, 4; Djordjević – Nikolić 2000, p. 201.

<sup>22</sup> Брукнер 1997, p. 97.

<sup>23</sup> Глумац 2009, p. 225.

<sup>24</sup> Ивановски 2001, p. 202.

<sup>25</sup> Popović 1997, p. 15, sl. 3.

Cvjetičanin 2000, p. 253–254.

<sup>26</sup> Cvjetičanin 2000, p. 245. Nikolić / Pop – Lazić 2005, p. 11.

ceramic production was developed and that it met the needs of the local market.<sup>27</sup> According to the location of finds, it may be logically assumed that the mould originated from a nearby pottery workshop, i.e. for the time being the finds indicate as the nearest location the workshop situated between the streets Jovanova and Tadeuša Koščuškog. As indicated by the most active period of work of local workshops in Singidunum, as well as by the preference for the Drag. 40 in local production, the mould may be dated to the broader chronological period from mid-2<sup>nd</sup> to mid-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries.

Decorations on the ceramic mould from the Belgrade City Museum collection were formed by using smaller or larger ceramic moulds. The representation of Victoria was embossed first by a larger ceramic mould – imprint, and most probably, since the embossing was poorly done, it was immediately, and for the most part, wiped out. Other ornaments, leaves, small birds, crescent ornament and mask ornament were embossed by applying smaller size moulds, as well as the dotted ornament flanking the entire “representation”. Hands lacking skill are indicated primarily by unevenly embossed ornaments of trefoil leaves on the wall of the mould, for whose application or rather continuous embossing it was obviously necessary to have experience, skill and “quick” hands in order for the imprinting on moist clay to be completed clearly and evenly. Lack of skill is also indicated by the poorly imprinted representation of Victoria that obviously failed due to uneven embossing in the moist clay, and was therefore also wiped out. The two leaves at the bottom of the mould that were embossed extraordinarily well were, perhaps, an attempt turned successful, but, we believe that rather it was a result of a skilful hand showing the student how it should be done. Indistinctly embossed little birds above the leaves indicate lack of feeling how much pressure was to be applied to clay when using smaller moulds, and, similarly, hardly visible imprints of mask and crescent ornaments at the upper part of the mould bottom indicate lack of experience. The dotted ornament flanking the “representation” was obviously not complicated to emboss, and it was therefore embossed rather evenly. Finally the mould was deemed unfit for use and it was crossed off by slanted incisions.

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<sup>27</sup> Cvjetičanin 2000, p. 245.

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## O MATRIȚĂ CERAMICĂ DIN COLECȚIA DE ANTICHITĂȚI A MUZEULUI ORAȘULUI BELGRAD FOLOSITĂ CA PRACTICĂ PENTRU RĂSFĂȚ (Abstracts)

The antiquity collection of the Belgrade City Museum includes a ceramic mould found some time ago Kalemegdan, at the location Zapadno podgrađe – Donji grad, registered under inventory number 3286 . The mould is oval in shape, with poorly or, rather, barely profiled bottom, and the upper part features a round opening. The mould was made of purified earth, ochre firing colour, dimensions: 17 cm in breadth, 4.6 cm in height, and diameter of the opening on the upper part is 6.7 cm. The mould was published, but it was not studied in detail. It was described as a ceramic mould with a representation of Victoria at the bottom.