

COARSE POTTERY FROM DEPOSITS in the Roman Villa of San Potito (AQ)

Aim of our project was to publish the Roman pottery of the Roman villa excavated between 1983 and 2009. In order to draw and take photos on the huge bulk of the pottery as well to take samples for petrographic and NAA analysis we spent one week three times (in 2012, 2013 and 2014) in the site of San Potito di Ovindoli, where the finds were reserved.

In course of our work we have studied ceramics from three deposits: in a well, a cisterna and a burnt layer. We have taken also the vessels that were intact or could be refit, found atop the terrazzo floor in the central part of the villa, which might have been still in use when the villa was destroyed. We have studied all the lamps found during the series of excavations, that could suggest dating for mosaic floors in some rooms of the villa.

During the last years of the excavations (2008-2009) mostly focused on the SE part of the building complex, we could more precisely determine the chronology and periodisation of the entire site, which included the publication and evaluation of the complete coin material of the villa and also the medieval ones. The SE area of the site was inhabited or even densely built in all through the existence of the villa. The majority of the coins were minted in the 2nd half of the AD 1st century. The money circulation lasted continuously from the Tiberian-Claudian time until the end of the 3rd century. There were just a few coins minted in the 4th century; the villa in that time had not fulfilled its economic and luxurious function. We examined a building-complex of the villa that has been known for decades without being able to determine its function and role. We have already published its details and 3D reconstruction but it has not provoked substantial reactions. Its shape, structure and position within the villa-complex and its wider geographical environment suggest that it could be a cold storage, an ice house.. This type of building is barely known until the Modern Period. The shape and ground plan of this building is not typical since was constructed with a different purpose and was only later modified to fit this function. The subterranean part of its structure afforded the observation of minute details.

The great bulk of the pottery has been found in a well (excavated in 4,5 m deep). The well found in the eastern part of the villa, yielded pottery dated by coins from the second half of AD 1st and beginning of the 2nd century. Only 0,5 % of this deposit contained imported pottery (Rhodian, Cnidian or Lusitanian amphoras); the other 390 vessels were Italian products. 6,2 % of the pottery was fine ware (Italian terra sigillata, thin walled pottery or red slip ware. We have published all the thin walled pottery found in the villa (not just from the deposits), being this ware in focus of the international research. The thin walled pottery contained a lot of forms. We found plain types as well decorated a la barbotine or rouletted ones. All of them are Central Italian products, only 3 items were probably North Italian (Ravenna or Marche) ware. The red slip pottery mainly imitated the forms of the Italian terra sigillata. 91 % of the pottery finds was coarse pottery; two thirds of them was kitchen ware and 14 % of them table ware (plate, ink pot). We found two ampolla and turribula which served also cultic purpose. The coarse pottery is without any exception- local, Central Italian ware, although in Ostia in the contemporaneous Flavian- Trajanic ensembles more than half of the kitchen ware is North African imported ceramic.

In the cistern located in the middle of the Northern court we found 160 vessels. In this deposit just one piece was imported ware: a North African A 1 bowl. The number of fine ware (thin walled pottery) was very low; some amphora, lamp and dolium fragments came to light. The low number of dolia is a characteristic on the whole area of the villa. It means that the local agriculture in this estate did not use these storage vessels, there was no need to use them. The amphoras were containers of Italian products. The number of kitchen ware (cooking pots, lids) is twice so high than the table ware (flagons and a few thin walled pottery). The large

bowls can be dated to Late Republican Age or AD first century. The cistern (erected in beginning of 2nd century) was several times rebuilt and also its function altered. The fill of the cisterna established in the later phase of the villa, dated from the second half of the 3rd century. However the pottery found in its filling is composed of types characteristic for the AD first and second century-if its chronology can be reconstructed at all.

In the southern part of the earliest villa we found a burnt layer, which contained as imported ware some Hispanian amphora fragments and a Drag.29 samian from La Graufesenque. 9 % of the pottery was fine ware (Italian terra sigillata, thin walled pottery, red slip ware) and 80 % coarse pottery. Two third of the household ware dating from the Flavian period was kitchen ware. The number of the dolia was also here very low. Vessels (including North African kitchen ware, bowls and platters) that were intact or could be refit were found atop the terrazzo floor on the central part of the villa .They might have been still in use when the villa was destroyed. The imported vessels probably accompanied other African shipment e.g cereals.

Twenty two Roman sherds were studied in the Institute for Petrographie and Geochemistry of the Eötvös Loránd University by petrographic microscopic analysis. The ceramics were divided into five petrographic groups on the basis of their composition and structural textural features. Two groups of the pottery were tempered with clasts of alkaline volcanic origin, which seem to originate from Central Italian volcanic territory components. The ceramics belonging to the other three groups contained large amounts of limestone and carbonatic fossils, the origin of the raw material was a marine clayish sediment, perhaps flysch.

Based on the results of the examination of 55 samples, analysed in the Institut for Nuclear-Technology of Technical University in Budapest- the vast majority of the analysed pottery originated from the same area, they were probably local (Central Italian) products. Some slightly different items were identified as well, which was perhaps due to a difference in their dating or in the production technology. Six potsherds proved to be significantly different concerning their chemical composition. These were supposedly imported ceramics from other parts of Italy (e.g. thin walled pottery).

Partly carbonated seeds testify that barley, millet, lentil, legumes, walnut and strawberry were planted in the property belonging to the villa. Grape and cereals the remains of which were found in a small amount, were probably transported from elsewhere to the inhabitants of the villa located 1000 m high. This is suggested by the presence of amphorae from Campania or Hispania as well. Remains of wetland plants and fish scales were recovered by flotation, their presence was due to the vicinity of the Fucine Lake.

We have published five papers on our explorations in 2015 and hold three lectures in the last years: in 2012 in a session of the Hungarian Archaeological Society (in the National Museum in Budapest), in 2014 in Xanten (Germany) on the international congress of researchers of Roman pottery (Rei Cretariae Romana Fautores) and in 2015 in Avezzano (Italy) on the 4th Congress of the Archaeology of the Fucine Lake and its environs in the ancient times.

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