

AS CERÂMICAS NO SEU CONTEXTO / *POTTERY WITHIN ITS CONTEXT*

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Morava and Braničevo in the 11th-12th century: Context, Character and Typology of Pottery from Danubian Fortresses

The systematic archaeological research on two neighboring towns at the confluences of the Morava, Mlava and Danube Rivers – Morava and Braničevo – was recently renewed. As the significant frontier fortresses and episcopal centers they shared the similar (common) faith in the period of the Byzantine re-conquest of the Balkans. Moreover, they fully illustrate very active frontier policy of the Byzantine Empire on Danube, starting from the late 10th century to the early 13th century.

Besides excavated elements of fortifications, parts of settlements were defined, offering us an insight into the character of an everyday life in this part of Byzantine commonwealth. There are three main medieval settlement horizons (we know so far), defined by houses, ovens and waste pits. Their chronology is determined by the findings of coins and seals, from Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (913-959) and John I Tzimiskes (925-976) to Bulgarian and Latin imitative coinage, dated between 1195 and 1204/61.

In this regard, there are several very illustrative pottery contexts of different chronology. Thus, we can establish the precise chronology of the pottery types, both locally manufactured coarse pottery and fine table ware, made in the main Byzantine workshops. In all three horizons coarse (earthen) vessels have similar characteristics, regarding clay mixtures and firing temperatures. However, certain differences are observed in the shapes of vessels and, particularly, in decoration that becomes simpler and takes less surface eventually. Basically, there is the Balkan-Danubian pottery tradition that has changed and improved due to new social and economic conditions. On the other hand, the establishment of commercial traffic was initiated by the Byzantine troops supply. In relation to this, beside amphorae as containers for oil, wine, garum etc., the fine table pottery appeared, such as sgraffito, glazed and red painted vessels.

The similar phenomena, as well as pottery itself, are registered the most, but not only, in the Danubian areas in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, confirming that the Byzantine authority has led to important cultural and economic changes throughout the Balkans.