
SCRIPTA MANENT... A JAR WITH LATIN INSCRIPTION

FROM THE NORTH-EASTERN LOWER MOESIA

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ABSTRACT:

This paper presents two pieces of large jars, one of them bearing a Latin inscription of four letters, spelling SATV, the other decorated with geometrical figurines imprinted in the row fabric before firing. The archaeological artefacts were retrieved from the filling layers of a pit-house dated in the late 2nd and first half of the 3rd century. The unusual rim shape of the inscribed jar alongside the archaeological context together with all the other finds, the Latin inscription and the decoration represent motifs for discussion regarding the origins, dating and functionality of these two jars.

REZUMAT: *SCRIPTA MANENT...* UN VAS CU INSCRIPȚIE LATINĂ DIN NORD-ESTUL MOESIEI ÎNFERIOARE

În cuprinsul acestui articol sunt prezentate două fragmente ceramice care au aparținut unor vase de mari dimensiuni. Primul fragment ceramic poartă o inscripție în latină care se poate citi SATV, al doilea este decorat cu figuri geometrice imprimate în pasta crudă înainte de ardere. Cele două fragmente ceramice au fost descoperite în umplutura unei locuințe – bordei datată la finalul secolului al II-lea și în prima jumătate a celui de-al III-lea. Forma aparte a buzei vasului cu inscripție coroborată cu contextul arheologic în care a fost descoperit, inscripția cu caractere latine și decorul geometric ștampilat duc la o discuție referitoare la originile, datarea și funcționalitatea celor două vase.

KEYWORDS: Danube Limes; Lower Moesia; Rural Settlement; Latin Inscription; Stamped decoration.

CUVINTE CHEIE: Limesul dunărean; Moesia Inferior; așezare rurală; inscripție latină; decor ștampilat.

In the year of 2020 the Eco-Museal Research Institute in Tulcea undertook a comprehensive pre-emptive archaeological project in northern Dobruja. The project was carried out due to the intention of a major communication company to realise a new fibre-optic network. On this occasion several rural settlements from the 2nd – 4th century had been researched. This paper will focus on one interesting discovery from the site named Jijila – *La Izvor*. An exhaustive report on the archaeological investigation carried out on this site was published recently.¹

The Roman site Jijila – *La Izvor* is situated in the north-western corner of Dobruja, or the north-eastern part of Lower Moesia Province. Not far from the Danube Limes, the settlement sits nearby the military fortresses from *Arrubium* and Luncavița – *Milan*. It was discovered in 2005 by a team lead by V. Sârbu. At that time, the archaeological investigation focused on the First Iron age fortification situated on a top hill, towards west. A very limited area of the Roman site was researched (two by four meters), being unearthed some artifacts dating back between the 1st century BC and 1st century AD according to those who carried out the archaeological excavation.² Furthermore, a Middle Age settlement was identified north from the Roman site, after a field survey.

During the archaeological pre-emptive excavation from 2020, a tranche 2.6 metres wide and 175 metres long, cut through the site Jijila – *La Izvor* on a south-west to north-east axis. Thus, were individuated nine archaeological contexts, the most relevant being context number 4, representing a pit-house. The remaining eight contexts were considered domestic pits, some predating the pit-house and others postdating it.³

The jars presented in this paper were retrieved from the filling layers of context number 4. The pit-house in question had a rather rectangular shape and considerable proportion, with ten metres in length and five in width.

¹ Stănescu et al. 2021. I want to express my gratitude to Sorin Ailincăi for granting permission to publish these pottery fragments.

² Sârbu et al. 2008, 36-37, fig. 19/4 and 69/1-4.

³ Each archaeological context was described and illustrated previously. Stănescu et al. 2021, 140-143, fig. 3-5.



Fig. 1. The geographical location of the site Jijila-La Izvor.

The depth of this pit-house was 1.25 metres. Also, the archaeological excavation highlighted the presence of an access ramp on the southern side. Most archaeological finds, consisting of ceramic building materials, animal bones and pottery, were discovered in this context along with the domestic pits number 6 and 9, which are located inside the pit-house.⁴

As I mentioned earlier, two fragmentary jars were discovered in the filling layers of context number four. The first one consists of the rim, neck and upper body. The fabric has a fine texture, free of large impurities, uniform firing, and pale reddish-orange colour. A bright reddish-brown slip covers the outer side, while a yellow-orange slip with silvery mica was applied to the inner side. The height of this fragment measures 15.9 centimetres, the rim diameter of 26.6 centimetres and wall thickness of 1.2 centimetres. It has a prominent, circular rim in cross-section and is hollow inside. One spherical bump with a hole in the centre, towards the interior is also intact. The entire jar originally had either three or four such spherical bumps with holes. The purpose of this rim shape is unclear, and no analogies are known. It may be some non-Roman influences owed to the Nordic tribes who dwelt north of the Danube at that time. Besides its odd shape, the jar was decorated with vegetal motifs rendering vine tendrils made by incision before firing and placed immediately under the neck. On the neck, in the same manner, was incised an inscription with Latin characters. The letter's height is about 3.9 centimetres and the width 2.2 centimetres. Only four letters which spell [...]SATV[...] were preserved.

The second fragment consists of the neck and part of the wall. The rim and the foot are not preserved. The fabric has a yellow-orange hue, good quality firing and no major impurities. An orange bright slip with a few silvery mica particles covers the exterior. Instead, the interior is covered by bright yellowish-brown slip, also with silvery mica. On this side, the traces of wheel-throwing are visible as horizontal grooves. This vessel's preserved height is 21.6 centimetres, its maximum diameter is 23.7 centimetres, and its wall thickness is 1.2 centimetres. Judging by its dimensions, the vessel is similar in size to the previous one. The fragment preserves traces of secondary firing on both sides of its lower part, meaning it was sitting over a source of fire at some point. The decoration is placed on the exterior side, both on the neck and the upper wall (above the maximum diameter point). It was done before firing by incision and stamping. The double-shaped diamonds displayed on the neck and upper wall were realised by stamping. The double arch between the diamonds was done also by stamping. This double arch is flanked on both sides by a vertical line with a rounded upper end resembling the letter P. Because of the fragmentary state of this pot, one can just assume that the upper missing part of the other line was oriented towards the left, rendering an inverted P. It seems that the decoration pattern consists of at least two double-shaped diamonds, followed by the double arch with its attributes and again double-shaped diamonds. Adding to these, small dots made by incisions were placed between the diamonds' lower parts. Five identical diamonds are stamped on the upper wall. Those on the neck are displayed vertically, instead those on the upper wall are made horizontally.

⁴ Stănescu et al. 2021, 141-142, fig. 5.

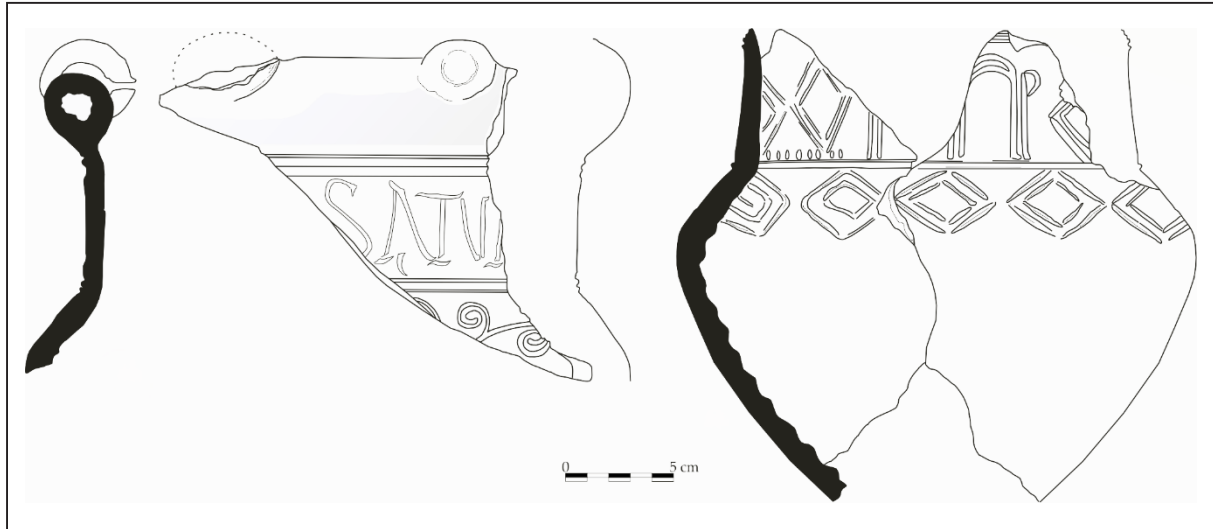


Fig. 2. The jars from Jijila-La Izvor (drawing by S. Ailincăi / Stănescu et al. 2021, fig. 15).

The above-mentioned jars were discovered together with seventy ceramic vessels of different types were retrieved from the fillings of context number four. The majority of these pottery vessels were used in day-to-day life. Coarse ware for preparing food and several types of cups and pots alongside bowls and plates of various dimensions are among the most common forms unearthed from the pit-house. Most were crafted in local workshops (from Moesia Inferior), and the few imports came from Asia Minor. All these forms date to the 2nd and 3rd century.⁵ Also, several types of amphorae originating from the Eastern Mediterranean and Pontic regions were discovered. These containers have been used for transporting wine and olive oil. In total, 15 typical fragments belonging to amphorae were recorded. The individuated types can be chronologically framed during the 2nd and 3rd century.⁶ A special type of pottery vessel discovered alongside the jars analyzed in this paper is represented by three censer fragments. Considering that censers appear in both domestic and funeral contexts, they could have been used in some sort of religious ritual. Also, the type of censer discovered at Jijila – *La Izvor* was widely spread in all Roman settlements along the Danube limes between the 2nd and 3rd century.⁷ Another important type of pottery vessel discovered with the jar fragments is the hand-crafted container. Its main function was to prepare or store food. Thirteen fragments belonging to vessels of different dimensions were retrieved from the filing layers of the pit-house.⁸ These vessels are a clear marker of Indigenous traditions and probably indicate the ethnicity of those who dwelt in the pit-house. Beside a clay lamp, several iron objects, such as nails, a key, a rod, an iron sickle and a stripe/bracelet were found together with the pottery vessels. Adding to these there are also fragments of ceramic building materials and a fragment of rotary quern, indicating that the main occupation for those who lived in the settlement of Jijila – *La Izvor*, was the cultivation of land.⁹

As it was stated before, there are no perfect analogies for the jars presented in this article, especially for the rim' shape and hollowness of the first exemplar. Nevertheless, in the northeastern corner of Lower Moesia, there are several pottery vessels with more or less similar forms and dimensions whose function is debatable. In general, they are topologically framed as krater vessels. One such pottery vessel presenting similarities with those from Jijila – *La Izvor* in terms of shape and dimensions, comes from Tomis and is dated in the late 2nd and early 3rd century. The exemplar from *Tomis* is undecorated.¹⁰ From an inhumation tomb in the south-western cemetery of *Tomis*, comes another smaller krater with two handles, which has a similar profile to those from Jijila. In that tomb, beside other ceramic vessels, a bronze coin issued by Antoninus Pius was discovered.¹¹ Also at Tomis (in Cathedral's Park), during older research conducted in the mid-20th century, a large krater vessel (height of 36 and rim diameter of 24 centimetres) was unearthed. This one is dated by its editor in the second half of the 4th century, but its

⁵ Stănescu et al. 2021, 155-165, fig. 9-12; 170-174, fig. 16.

⁶ Stănescu et al. 2021, 152.

⁷ Radu 2014, 100.

⁸ Stănescu et al. 166-168, fig. 14.

⁹ Stănescu et al. 175-186, fig. 18-21.

¹⁰ Băjenaru 2013, 53-54, pl. 5/32.

¹¹ Bucovaia and Pașca 1991, 215-216, pl. 9/M10 and pl. 17/M10.

earlier origins in the Hellenistic and early Roman pottery are recognised.¹² Another small krater (height of 13 centimetres) dated by its editor very early, into the 1st century AD, was discovered together with a clay lamp and a seal, in an inhumation tomb from one of Tomis' cemeteries.¹³

Further north, on the western Black Sea coastline, at *Histria*, several krater ceramic vessels were discovered in the last century, in different archaeological contexts. One of them, even having medium dimensions (rim diameter of 18 and preserved height of 7.4 centimetres) is similar in profile to the jars from Jijila. It was dated in the 2nd and 3rd century and considered of Pontic origine.¹⁴ Besides this, other larger exemplars were discovered during the research of the Roman baths. Second to A. Suceveanu, these are produced in local workshops at *Histria* and were dated to the last quarter of the 2nd and the first half of the 3rd century.¹⁵

Not far from *Histria*, from the rural settlement of Fântânele, comes the upper part of a jar with a rim diameter of 18 centimetres and a similar profile to those from Jijila. It was discovered in the second habitation layer, thus being chronologically framed to the 3rd century.¹⁶

Krater vessels also appear in Roman settlements situated on the Danube Limes. One such example comes from the *Noviodunum* cemetery. Its editor dated it very early, towards the end of the 1st century AD. This vessel is not decorated, but its general profile is similar to that of the jars from Jijila.¹⁷ From the headquarters of *Legio V Macedonica*, several krater vessels of various dimensions are known. At least two exemplars are similar to those presented in the current paper. A small pot shard draws attention because, on its neck, a graffito spelling **FLAVI** is present.¹⁸ Due to the small dimensions, is hard to tell if the shape of the pot from *Troesmis* has commonalities with those from Jijila. Instead, the inscription's position and the letter's shape are very similar to the one discovered at Jijila-*La Izvor*. All these exemplars belonging to the civilian settlement of *Troesmis* are generally dated to the 2nd century.¹⁹ The other legionary headquarters from Dobruja provides a good number of kraters, most of them being produced in local workshops. One jar without handles was discovered in a large waist-pit located on the Danube bank. The pot is medium-sized and decorated with horizontal grooves on the outer side. It is dated during the 2nd and the next century.²⁰ From other waste pits in the area of ceramic workshops, two more exemplars were retrieved. The first one is a medium-sized jar with two handles and the second one seems to be a larger storage pot, without



Fig. 3. The jar with Latin inscription (photo G. Dincu).

¹² Scorpan 1976, 173, pl. 27/3.

¹³ Rădulescu 1975, 222, pl. 2/1.

¹⁴ Suceveanu 2000, 138, pl. 65/8.

¹⁵ Suceveanu 2000, 139, pl. 66/22.

¹⁶ Angelescu 1998, 244, pl.10/59.

¹⁷ Simion 1984, 85, pl. 15/1.

¹⁸ Opaît 1980, pl. 6/5.

¹⁹ Opaît 1980, 333, pl. 6/2, 4 and 5.

²⁰ Mușețeanu and Elefterescu 1992, 224, fig. 2/23.

handles, instead is decorated with rouletting under the rim and incised wavy lines above the maximum diameter.²¹ An interesting discovery was made in 1999 when the remains of a pottery kiln were researched. Among a large number of ceramic shreds, a krater with two handles stands out. The general shape is similar to the jars from Jijila, but the container from *Durostorum* is smaller and decorated with two parallel grooves on its lower side. Their chronological frame is between the 1st and the 3rd century.²²

Leaving the military fortresses on the limes and advancing inland, towards the rural settlements, one can record these types of jars at Telița – *Amza*, where Roman pottery was found together with hand-made Indigenous vessels dated between the 2nd and the 4th century.²³ Similar kraters were also discovered in other rural sites, such as Revărsarea – *Cotul Tichilești*²⁴ and Telița – *Valea Morilor*, the last one being a production centre for both Roman and indigenous pottery.²⁵

Advancing westward in Lower Moesia Province, in today Bulgaria, one can find krater vessels in different archaeological contexts. Second to S. Ivanov, some of them were produced in Verbovski Livadi, Pavlikeni and Hontnisa workshops starting in the mid-2nd century. Also, Ivanov states that krater vessels were used in religious ceremonies, thus most of them were decorated with relief figures depicting mythological characters.²⁶ At the Verbovski Livadi site, B. Sultov discovered a medium-sized krater which bears on its neck a graffito placed in the same manner as that found on the pot from *Troesmis* and the jar from Jijila. The difference is made by the Greek letters present on the krater from Bulgaria, spelling *ΠΑΥΛ*. It was dated at the end of 2nd and the first half of 3rd century.²⁷ A type of krater without handles, having a similar profile to these presented in the current paper, is attested at *Nicopolis ad Istrum*, being dated very broad from the 2nd to the 6th century.²⁸

In the West-Pontic and Lower Danube regions, there are no precise analogies for the vessels from Jijila-*La Izor*, at least so far. The shape itself is easily recognisable among the jars and krater vessels with roots in the Late Hellenistic ceramic widely spread through settlements of the local population. Instead, in the Middle Danube region, throughout Dacia, Upper Moesia and Pannonia provinces, one can find closer analogies, both in terms of shape and the inscription on the krater's neck. A first example, even far from being similar to the jars from Jijila, is a small krater having two handles and bearing on its outer neck a Latin inscription *VAL*. It was discovered in southern Dacia, in the settlement of Stolniceni and dated to the 2nd century.²⁹

A much closer analogy comes from inner Carpathian Dacia. In the pottery workshop from *Ampelum*, a large jar was discovered. It was decorated with vegetal motifs displayed on the upper part, similar to the one from Jijila. On the neck, immediately under the rim, one can read the following inscription, made by incision before burning: *C•IVLIVS•PRO*[...]. The inscription was reconstituted as *C(aius) Iulius Pro[culus]*, a character considered to be at the same time the owner and a craftsman in *Ampelum* workshop, which functioned in the mid-2nd century.³⁰ The same name, spelled differently (*G•I•P*), appears on several lamps moulded in the same workshop.³¹ A more or less resembling vessel in terms of profile to those from Jijila is known in *Napoca*. It is a large pot having two lamellar handles and is decorated in barbotine style in the area of its maximum diameter. According to its editor is dated in the early to mid-2nd century.³²

In the province of Upper Moesia, one can find more examples of krater vessels similar in shape, decoration and even bearing an inscription, generally situated under the rim. In *Viminacium* such vessels are considered to be used in ceremonial rituals. There are several examples of large kraters having two or three handles, or without handles, richly decorated either by stamping, by relief applique or in barbotine style. Most of them are locally produced in the nearby pottery workshops otherwise originating from the nearby provinces. This type of vessel is chronologically framed into the 2nd and 3rd century.³³ A pots group of medium or large size, framed at *Viminacium* as type II/48, have similar traits, especially in shape, to the vessels from Jijila. They were used for cooking food and had two lamellar handles. One of these pots has under its rim four Latin letters incised before firing. The entire

²¹ Mușețeanu and Elefterescu 1988-1989, fig. 2/22 and fig. 5/3.

²² Mușețeanu and Elefterescu 2004, 67-98, pl. 4/1.

²³ Baumann 1995, 164, pl. 63.

²⁴ Baumann 1995, 256, pl. 17/3.

²⁵ Baumann 1995, 402, pl. 1/13-14.

²⁶ Ivanov 2022, 74, fig. 26/341; fig. 27/344-348.

²⁷ Ivanov 2022, 194/348.

²⁸ Falkner 1999, 207-207, fig. 9.35/686 and 694.

²⁹ Popilian 1976, 91-92; 184/397, pl. 39/397.

³⁰ Rusu-Bolondet 2021, 318, fig. 11/1a-1b; Moga 1996, 11, fig. 3.

³¹ Lipovan 1984-1985, 142, pl. 1.

³² Rusu-Bolondet 2007, 335/400, pl. 76/400.

³³ Nolić, Raičković Savić and Mitić 2023, 73-84, fig. 13-19.

group has broadly dated between the end of the 1st and middle of the 4th century.³⁴ Another interesting example is the type II/96. It has a rim diameter of 26.5 centimetres and a very similar profile to the jars from this paper. The decoration located at the maximum diameter can indicate some non-roman influence. Unfortunately, no data concerning its chronological framing is provided.³⁵ Moving to *Singidunum*, another legionary headquarters on the Danube limes, one can see the same vessels from *Viminacium*. Two-handled jars used to prepare food; some even have a graffito beneath the rim are dated the same.³⁶ Given the small distance between these two sites is more than plausible that these jars were crafted by the same potters.



Fig. 4. The jar with stamped decoration (photo G. Dincu).

³⁴ Nicolić, Raičković Savić and Mitić 2023, 211-212.

³⁵ Nicolić, Raičković Savić and Mitić 2023, 224.

³⁶ Nicolić-Dordević 2005, 85, Type II/52.

Some other examples throughout Lower and Upper Pannonia can be found in older literature. In her work, O. Bruckner presents several examples of pottery vessels wearing graffiti in the same fashion as those from Jijila. The container's form varies from hemispherical bowls to storage pots, but in every case, the inscriptions with Latin characters lie immediately under the rim.³⁷ The workshop established by Resatus at *Aquincum* is another place where jars resembling those from Jijila could have been produced. One can see krater vessels having similar profiles in the repertoire of this workshop.³⁸ What is more interesting is the almost identical aspect of the double-shaped diamonds decorating pottery vessels crafted in Resatus' workshop and those stamped on the second vessel from Jijila.³⁹ The workshop led by Resatus in *Aquincum* produced different types of pottery vessels during the early 2nd century,⁴⁰ especially hemispherical bowls imitation of Form Drg. 37 decorated by stamping with various vegetal or geometric figurines.

Another aspect to be considered is that the jars analysed in this paper may have some origins in hand-made pottery, which is generally attributed to the local cultural background preceding the Roman expansion in this area. Large pots with everted rims, cylindrical necks and spherical bodies, sometimes decorated by incisions, were used before and after Romans arrived in the area.⁴¹ Also, the local cultural influences over newly created workshops in all Danube provinces are evident, either one speaks of Getic or Celtic populations.

To have a more accurate dating for the jars from Jijila-*La Izvor*, one must return to the other archaeological artefacts unearthed together with these ceramic fragments. Unfortunately, during the archaeological research, not a single coin was found. The only viable chronological marker in this case remains the pottery retrieved from the filling layers of the pit-house and the more accurately dated form of pottery is tableware. There are some fragments belonging to the Aegean workshops producing Eastern Sigillata C which can be narrowed chronologically in the late 2nd and during the 3rd century. Also, the forms of Pontic Sigillata (plates with vertical rims) are dated in the 2nd and the first half of the 3rd century. Instead, the local red slip tableware and the lamp are framed between the beginning of the 2nd and the beginning of the 4th century. The hand-made pottery associated with local population is generally dated in western Black Sea from the 1st to the end of 3rd century. Another two types of ceramics generally dated in the 2nd and 3rd centuries are coarse ware and amphorae.⁴² Narrowing down all these chronological intervals to find a common frame one can observe with a good amount of probability that the entire archaeological structure investigated at Jijila, and by consequence the jar fragments discussed in the current paper, can be dated between the last quarter of the 2nd and the first half of 3rd century. This chronological interval fits the analogies presented above and the functioning period of pottery production centres, either from Lower or Upper Moesia, Dacia or Pannonia.

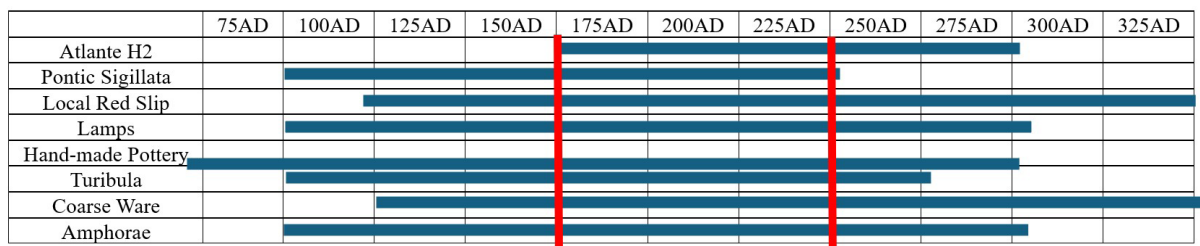


Fig.5. The chronological framing of the pottery from Jijila-*La Izvor*.

A legitimate question regarding the jars discovered at Jijila-*La Izvor* is what their purpose was? At first glance, the easier answer is that they were used as ceremonial vessels. A raw interpretation of the inscription is a dedication to the Saturn God and its agrarian attributes, especially if one takes into consideration the broader picture with all archaeological artefacts discovered inside the pit-house. Also, the odd rim shape can be explained by such a function. The protector gods of farmers, crops, and households are often attested to in rural communities such as

³⁷ Bruckner 1981, T70/13, T128/1.

³⁸ Nagy 2017, 179, T95/4.

³⁹ Nagy 2017, 157, T73/U11-U12.

⁴⁰ Nagy 2017, 13.

⁴¹ For some aspects concerning the local pottery production in the Lower Danube during Early Roman times see: Baumann 2009.

⁴² Stănescu et al. 2021.

those from Jijila. In north-eastern Lower Moesia, several colleges of worshippers for Silvanus are known. Silvanus is another god associated with household and agrarian activities, very popular in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.⁴³

In the Danube's Limes area pottery vessels similar in shape and size, decorated with relief applique rendering a snake are often found. They were crafted in both Lower⁴⁴ and Upper Moesia⁴⁵ workshops during the 2nd and 3rd centuries and are considered cultic vessels, the snake being an attribute of the Thracian Horseman God, Mithras, Dionysus or other deities.⁴⁶ Similar krater vessels can be found north of the Danube in southern Carpathian⁴⁷ and inner Carpathian Dacia, in Pannonia and other western Roman Provinces.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the similarities between the jars from Jijila and the snake-decorated kraters are circumstantial and there is no direct analogy. Furthermore, upon closer inspection, the letters inscribed on the jar's neck are part of a broader word. The letter **S** is preceded by at least one other letter, even though this is almost unnoticeable. Also, letter **V** is followed by at least one other letter. As consequence, the four letters spelling **SATV** cannot be interpreted as a dedication to Saturn God which casts doubts regarding the cultic functionality of these vessels.

A more plausible interpretation may be that these four letters appertain to a potter's mark. To sustain this assumption, we could return in Dacia to *Ampelum*'s pottery production center and the vessel bearing the name of *Caius Iulius Proculus*. The similarities between the letters in size and in the way that were inscribed in the raw fabric before firing are obvious. It is hard to tell which potter the syntagma **SATV** can be related to. Even very unlikely, due to the shape of the letter which follows the **V**, a fitting guess for a craftsman from the Middle Danube area is **[RE] SATV[S]**. The problem is more complicated if one takes into account the possibility of a *tria nomina*, as in the case of *Caius Iulius Proculus* in *Ampelum*. Nevertheless, the similarities between the Latin inscription on the Jar from Jijila-La Izvor and those from *Ampelum*'s pottery production center spelling *Caius Iulius Proculus* are striking. Also, one can point out similarities between the Latin characters of potter's stamps from the Middle Danube (i.e. Dacia, Pannonia or Upper Moesia) and those presented in the current paper.

Returning to the vessel's functionality, another very unlikely usage for the jar bearing the inscription from Jijila judging by the perforations on its inner rim is as a water clock. This is improbable, first, due to the jar's size and second, due to the archaeological context from which it was retrieved. In the Danube Limes area, one can find two examples of water clocks at *Viminacium*, one of them coming from a cremation grave dating to the 2nd century.⁴⁹

The most probable function of these two jars, judging by their size, was as storage vessels. In a recent pottery monograph from *Viminacium*, one can see another possible use, at least for the jar bearing the inscription. This could also explain the unusual rim shape and its perforations. In *Viminacium*, in the filling layers of wells, several shards of large-sized pots having perforations were discovered during archaeological excavations. Thus, the vessels were used to draw water from wells. Probably, the pots were tied with ropes through dose perforations to fulfil this purpose.⁵⁰ This is a very appealing explanation for the way in which the jar from Jijila was used. A rope could have been inserted inside the hollow rim and brought out through the perforations which makes the vessel suitable for drawing water from a well. Also, in this manner, the jar could be hung to store different goods, keeping them away from pests, like mice. The rim and wall thickness were done in such a way as to sustain a heavier weight.

Considering what was written above, the answer to the question of where the two vessels presented in this paper come from is easy to guess. Most probably were crafted in one of the pottery production centres found in the Middle Danube area during the 2nd and 3rd centuries. This assumption is proven by the fabric and coating colours and textures, the decorative figurines imprinted in the row fabric before firing and not in the end bay the Latin inscription itself. This last piece of evidence makes it unlikely the making of the jars from Jijila-La Izvor was in one of Lower Moesia's pottery workshops.

The presence of such vessels with Latin inscription and stamping decoration in a rural settlement, inside a pit-house, in north-eastern Lower Moesia, represents definitely an unusual archaeological discovery. Besides their functionality, these two pottery shards together with other types of pottery, such as Aegean tableware and imported amphorae, show to modern researchers that even a marginal population living at the outskirts of the empire at the end of the 2nd and the first half of the 3rd century had access to goods procured by long-distance trade with different geographical region. And here is the case of simple farmers working their fields and dwelling in modest rural settlements, not military personnel guarding the Limes and being provisioned by the state through *annona militaris*.

⁴³ Baumann 1984, 232-233, fig. 74/74-75.

⁴⁴ Ivanov 2022, 81, fig. 36.

⁴⁵ Nicolić, Raičković Savić and Mitić 2023, 81, fig. 12a-d.

⁴⁶ Bolindeț 1993, 123-124.

⁴⁷ Popilian 1976, fig. 28-29.

⁴⁸ Bolondeț 1993, 123-124, fig. 1; For *Napoca*: Rusu-Bolindeț 2007, 370, pl. 80/425.

⁴⁹ Nicolić, Raičković Savić and Mitić 2023, 69, fig. 8.

⁵⁰ Nicolić, Raičković Savić and Mitić 2023, 50.

Summing up, the two pottery shards presented in this paper represent an interesting archaeological discovery. First and foremost, to discover such artefacts in a humble pit-house from a rural settlement on the outskirts of the Roman world is very unusual. These two jars were crafted somewhere in the Middle Danube area (i.e. Dacia, Pannonia or Upper Moesia) towards the end of the 2nd and the first half of the 3rd century. The vessel's profile is well-known in the area, with similar vessels of different dimensions being attested in various archaeological contexts, most of them domestic, but also in funeral and religious backgrounds. The shape can be traced in the pre-roman pottery of the region, either the Hellenistic, Celtic or belonging to the indigenous populations. The texture and morphological fabric traits alongside the Latin inscription and stamped decoration coupled with the very strange look of the rim make them truly unique. Unfortunately, due to its preserved length, the Latin inscription spelling **SATV** is hard to reconstitute precisely, but considering its characteristics is more likely to be a potter's mark, than a dedication to some deity. Taking into account all information available so far in the region of Danube Limes, one can conclude that these jars were most probably used as storage vessels, without totally excluding the other assumption presented in the current article.

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