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TOILETRY AND OTHER ITEMS FOR PERSONAL USE FROM OSIJEK (MURSA) – BARRACKS SITE

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Rescue archaeological excavations conducted on the position of the Faculty of Education (Učiteljski fakultet) in the former Barracks (Vojarna) area in the Lower town of Osijek offered a unique opportunity to research large areas of the ancient town hidden underneath modern and contemporary structures. The excavated area yielded numerous structures and finds from the Late Iron Age and Antiquity, the latter dating mostly to the 1st and first half of the 2nd century AD, with especially rich material of the Flavian era. Among numerous finds of various pottery categories and various metal objects are bronze implements that reflect personal hygiene or a possible medical use.

Keywords: Mursa, Antiquity, toiletry, medical instruments, tweezers, ear scoops, grooming.

Introduction

Rescue archaeological excavations conducted in the former Barracks (Vojarna) area in the Lower town of Osijek offered a unique opportunity to research large areas of the ancient town hidden underneath Modern and contemporary structures. The area of 2.700 m^2 excavated on the position of the Faculty of Education (Učiteljski fakultet) yielded numerous structures and finds from the Late Iron Age and Antiquity, with particularly striking finds of weaponry, horse gear and animal bones that are interpreted as traces of cult activities, more precisely the existence of a Late La Tène sanctuary (Dizdar & Filipović 2020). Roman finds date mostly to the 1st and first half of the 2nd century AD, with especially rich material of the Flavian era. Studies of selected pottery categories (terra sigillata, thin-walled wares and amphorae) conducted so far revealed a special flourishing around the Flavian era with strong connections with northern Italian production centres (Filipović & Crnković 2014; Crnković & Filipović 2016; Crnković 2017; Tonc & Filipović 2020). The possibility of the presence of Roman legionary units in this pre-colonial phase has also been suggested (Filipović 2010). Finds of Roman military equipment dated to the late 1st and 2nd century AD support this hypothesis, although the nature of the military presence remains unclear (Tonc *et al.* 2021). As a small contribution to our knowledge of everyday life in ancient Mursa in this, to be considered as pre-colonial phase, a selection of metal finds will be presented as a small note dedicated to Marina Milićević Bradač as a colleague and professor.

Toiletry and similar items from the site of Osijek – Barracks, Faculty of Education

Cosmetic utensils and medical instruments are curious objects that can offer us a glimps into everyday life. Even today, toiletry sets and associated make-up, lotions, parfumes etc. are considered as a private, intimate sphere. Strictly medical instruments, on the other hand, tend to be used by professionals, although certain basic items may still be part of one's medical cabinet. Categories sometimes mix and a particular item that could have been used for personal grooming can be regarded as a medical instrument according to context and associated finds. Although several types of instruments, such as scalpels, forceps or *specula*, are restricted to medical care for surgical and other treatments (see Künzl 1983; Jackson 1986), various instruments are multifunctional objects (see table in Gostenčnik 2013: 96). The latter can be distinguished among the bronze finds from the Barracks – Faculty of Education site, while strictly medical instruments have not been identified among the finds. Bronze objects that can be classified as toiletry will be presented here according to their type and function, defined using selected studies that widely discussed such items, with regard to analogies from other areas of southern Pannonia when available.

1. Ear scoops

Ear scoops (or ear spoons; Latin *auriscalpium*) are a rather common find in Roman assemblages and were a multifunctional item. They were used for cleaning the ear or as cuticle pushers, or for taking out essences from recipients before mixing or grinding them. Depending on the context, they can be also listed as medical instruments, for treating wounds etc. (Gregl 1982: 179–180; Riha 1986: 56; Latinović *et al*. 2017: 170).

Two examples represent the variant with undecorated neck (cat. nos. 1–2). This is the simplest and thus most common form that maintained its shape from the 1st to 4th century AD, serving both as toiletry and medical instruments (Riha 1986: variant E, 58, 60–63; Müller-Dürr 2015: 248–249). Several examples have been found in the Kupa riverbed in Sisak (Gregl 1982: Pl. 1: 3; Pl. 2: 2, 4; Pl. 3: 2–6; Latinović *et al*. 2017: 171, Fig. 89).

The other two pieces (cat. nos. 3–4) belong to the variant with simple decorated neck (Riha 1986: variant A, 58–59). Both have a twisted part of the handle, with undecorated section between the spoon-shaped upper part and the decoration. This decoration corresponds to variant A 2 according to M. Müller-Dürr (2015: 248). Similar examples come from Sisak (Gregl 1982: Pl. 1: 4, 6, 7; Latinović *et al*. 2017: 133, 173, Figs. 67, 91: 1–3).

2. Tweezers

The shape of tweezers changed little from ancient Roman times up to the present, as has their function of removing hairs, splinters or their use in medical treatments.

One pair (cat. no. 5) has equal width from the loop to the tip of the arms (blades) with straight, slightly inwards turned tips. It is a simple form made by a single, folded piece of bronze band. This shape corresponds to tweezers of variant G according to E. Riha, used throughout Antiquity primarily for personal grooming, but also for medical purposes (Riha 1986: 34, 36–37).

Another pair (cat. no. 6) has arms closely set next to each other beneath the loop, originally probably expanding after a knee-like transition like examples from Sisak (Gregl 1982: Pl. 7: 8, 10). Since there is no decoration the piece should also be regarded as an example of Riha's variant G.

3. Miscellaneous

A needle-like bronze item with thickened, spindle-shaped head and very thin middle section of the grip (cat. no. 7) could belong to a spatula probe (*Löffelsonde*). Such spindle-shaped tips are described as olivary (*Olivekernende*). They can sometimes break before the spatula and frequently bend on the thinnest part of the neck (see Riha 1986: 72, Pl. 49; also similar examples shown in Müller-Dürr 2015: Fig. 6: BW 14; Fig. 14: KÖ 12; Fig. 19: RO 11, RO 12; Fig. 23: RW 49, RW 52; Fig. 30 adn 40: WA 23). Similarly to the previoulsy mentioned instruments, spatula probes had a number of uses in medicine and cosmetics. The olivary terminals in particular were used in cosmetics for mixing, applying on the face or removing make-up; in medicine, for probing wounds, applying ointments or medicine, cauterizing, or wrapped in wool for treating teeth or nostrils (Riha 1986: 64; Jackson 1986: 158; Hibbs 1991: 117). Different variants of spatula probes with olivary terminals have been found in Sisak (Gregl 1982: Pl. 4: 2, 4, 5, 7; Pl. 5: 1–3, 5–7; Latinović *et al*. 2017: 97, 97, 99, Figs. 40, 46, 47). Perhaps less likely but nevertheless to be mentioned, the piece from Osijek could also be part a simpler, rather long probe used in cauterization, similarly to the double-headed probes from Sisak (Gregl 1982: 182, Pl. 8: 6; Latinović *et al*. 2017: 123, 170, Fig. 63, 92), Asia Minor (Künzl 1983: Fig. 16: 36) or Italy (Jackson 1986: 128, 157, Fig. 4: 27; Bliquez 1994: 161–162, cat. nos. 209–213). In that case, the fragment would actually represent just one half of the entire probe.

A possible other spatula probe would be a fragmented piece with spoon-like spatula, partially preserved (cat. no. 8). Usually spatula probes have a round or polygonal cross-section of the grip, while this piece has a flat, rectangular cross-section. Also, the grip is usually separated from the spatula by moulded thickenings which are not seen on the Mursa example, hence little evidence for defining the piece as a spatula probe. A somewhat similar implement with no decoration and rectangular cross-section of the grip is listed among the medical instruments of Porolissum, however the spatula is flat and not spoon-shaped (Varga 2015: Pl. V: 5). The identification of the item as a spatula is therefore insecure.

A particulary interesting piece is a rather small item with suspension loop and pointed tip (cat. no. 9). It could be defined as a toothpick or single pick. Toothpicks (*Zahnstocher*) could have been made from organic materials be-

fore being produced in metal, lasting to Medieval times when more elaborate shapes appear (Martin 1976; Riha 1986: 28). Such objects were paired with tweezers and/or ear probes and nail cleaners, in toiletry sets (necessaires) for personal hygiene (Riha 1986: 28; Miron 1989: 58 (type E sets with more than three elements), Figs. 6–7, 10, 14; Eckardt, Crummy 2008: 161; Müller-Dürr 2015: 241–242). In general it seems that single picks are not often found in Roman toiletry sets. A silver piece from the musem in Mannheim is a bit longer, with 4.5 cm (Müller-Dürr 2015: 325, Fig. 34: MM 10). Also made of silver and comparable in size to the Mannheim example is the one from Augst, decorated with a stylized animal head (Riha 1986: 28, Pl. 9: 79). Bronze examples from Roman Britain can be decorated with transversal grooves/incisions or have a moulded neck (Eckardt & Crummy 2008: 161, Fig. 104).

Finally, as part of toiletry implements two fragments of a polished bronze object should be mentioned (cat. no. 10). Given the highly polished surface they can be attributed to a mirror, most probably of rectangular form. The damages of the surface and fragmented state do not allow a more precise reconstruction. No traces of decoration are visible on the edges. Small rectangular mirrors without handle are classified as type A according to E. Lloyd-Morgan. They were produced from the 1st century AD with increase of production after the reign of Claudius, and widely distributed, including in Pannonia, with listed examples from Siscia (Lloyd-Morgan 1977: 185–190; Treister 1994: 417). It seems that rectangular mirrors appear in the Hungarian part of Pannonia mainly until the end of the 2nd century AD (Bózsa 2017: 425). Although fragmented, it seems that the Mursa example could fall into the category of small mirrors under 10.5 cm of lenght that typically appear in northern Italy and in the basins of the Sava river and lower Rhine (Treister 1994: 417).

Some remarks on toiletry and medical instruments from Mursa

Different toiletry or medical implements from ancient Mursa have been previously published. Among the bronze finds from Pristanište position in Osijek Lower town area M. Bulat listed tweezers with length of 13.4 cm, made of folded narrow bronze sheet (Bulat 1977: 45, nr. 4); a spatula probe (*Spatelsonde*) with spear-shaped tip, broken (Bulat 1977: 45, nr. 7, T. XIX: 8) that seems to correspond to Riha variant A (Riha 1986: 73, Pl. 50); a round spoon with just a small part of grip preserved (Bulat 1977, 45, nr. 10, T. XIX: 9), of the type used for measuring, heating or administring medications (Jackson 1996: 158; Hibbs 1991: 120). Interestingly, judging by the published finds from necropolises in ancient Mursa, it seems that cosmetic or medical utensils were not part of the standard burial assemblage. Mirrors and mirror handles have been documented and fragmented bronze and iron spoons and a comb (Göricke-Lukić 2000: 60–63; 2011: 118–119), with another possible bronze instrument found in a 2nd-century grave (Göricke-Lukić 2000: 62 (nr. 8), Pl. XVI: 4; 2011: 209, without illustration).

As mentioned, the Roman finds from the site of Barrack – Faculty of Education mostly belong to the 1st and first half of the 2nd century AD. Considering

that simple forms such as ear spoons or tweezers generally appear throughout Antiquity, their typology does not offer more precise chronological assessments. Some stratigraphic units yielded however other datable finds, especially thin-walled pottery that is more susceptible to changes and thus better for more precise dating. However, several layers at the Faculty of Education site encompassed rather large surfaces and show mixed material, so cannot be regarded as fully closed contexts. Some units can be nevertheless mentioned. The mirror fragments come from a large pit SU 132 that yielded Dressel 6B amphorae, thin-walled pottery of northern Italian, probably also of Pannonian production and a rather rare piece of so-called egg-shell pottery ascribed to Hispanic (Baetican) production, as well as terra sigillata forms, plate Consp. 39.1.1. (a typical form of the Flavian period and one of the most frequent terra sigillata forms on site) and Consp. 43 all allowing a dating from Claudius up to the Flavian era (Conspectus 2002: 120; Crnković & Filipović 2016: 550; Crnković 2017: 53–63, 72–74, 185, 242, T. 8: 2 (Hispanic production); Tonc & Filipović 2020: 277). One ear scoop comes from the well SU 428, that also included thin-walled pottery of northern Italian production dated to the second half of the 1st century AD (Crnković 2017: 60–63). Ear scoops and the possible fragment of a spatula probe were found in another well, SU 465, together with Northern Italian pottery produced in the second half of the 1st and beginning of 2nd c. AD (Crnković 2017: 53–59, 63–64) and Pannonian thin-walled pottery whose production extended into the 2nd century AD (Crnković 2017: 89–94).

Conclusively, the associated finds from stratigraphic units that contained the listed bronze implements allow us to date them into the second half of the 1st century or beginning of the 2nd century AD. As discussed on another occasion, namely when analysing olive oil amphorae or military equipment from the same site, this is an interesting period for studying the pre-colonial phase of the Roman settlement (Tonc & Filipović 2020, Tonc *et al*. 2021). Moreover, stamped olive oil amphorae could indicate the existence of individuals of higher status from the civilian and/or military population (Tonc & Filipović 2020: 282). Imports of northern Italian wares (Crnković 2017 with details on provenance for various fabrics) further support an influx of items of high quality intended for a lively market that served the needs of both newcomers of (presumably) Italian origin and members of the autochthonous community that embraced the new customs. Alhtough of course personal grooming should not be seen as a strictly Roman habit, given that cosmetic sets appear already in Prehistory (see Miron 1989; Eckardt & Crummy 2008: 17–24), the use of typically Roman implements indicates that among the newly adopted habits we should also include the preparation and use of cosmetics, such as oils, perfumes or essences for hair and skin. Of course, a possible medical use of specific objects should also be considered. As mentioned, no items usually considered as strictly medical instruments have been recovered, so given there is no real evidence for medical sets at the site the presented utensils could be regarded indeed as personal, possibly multifunctional objects. The mirror is certainly an item associated only to grooming, and more precisely to female grooming (Eckardt & Crummy 2008: 30). They seem to appear in

the Hungarian part of Pannonia around the Flavian era (Bósza 2017: 425), so roughly contemporary to the finds from the site of Faculty of Education in the Osijek Barracks area.

Conclusion

As a small but nevertheless interesting group of items that reflect ancient everyday practices, the presented toiletry (and/or medical) implements from the Barracks – Faculty of Education site in Osijek fall into a category that is somewhat poorly represented in the bibliography of southern Pannonia. There is for example not much evidence for the existence of toiletry sets that the single pick could have belonged to. It seems that more emphasis has been put on medicine, although in fact there are only few publications dealing with medical instruments in more detail, partially inspired by the capital work on Roman medicine by E. Künzl (Künzl 1983; Gregl 1982; 1984; Latinović *et al*. 2017[1]). A more elaborate analysis of body care and cosmetics in southern Pannonia, which of course is not the intention of this work, should also include other finds not mentioned here, such as combs, razors or stone palettes. Furthermore, wooden boxes for holding toiletries and other personal items, such as the one whose elements were found in Mursa (Göricke-Lukić 2011: 118–120, Fig. 14), could also be regarded as belonging to the intimate sphere. It should be noted that toiletry implements are not exclusively linked to the female domain and together with medical implements, toiletry appears not only in domestic, household contexts but also in Roman forts (Gui 2011 for Dacia). In this context, the presence of toiletry does not undermine the proposed military presence on the Faculy of Education position (Tonc *et al*. 2021). Although we cannot ascertain to whom the listed implements belonged, both sexes are an option, as well as civilian or military contexts. Whatever the case, at a certain point of the 1st century AD, Roman toiletry and medical instruments became part of the everyday life of the inhabitants of the ancient settlement known as Mursa.

1 For the province of Dalmatia, see for ex. Ivčević 1998 with cited bibliography; also Busuladžić 2015.

Catalogue

1. PPN[2] 6, SU 20, quad. D 8, el. 90.09; 01.10.2008; Inv. AMO 230699 (Table 1, 1)
Ear probe. Handle with round cross-section and pointed tip with oval recipient.
Copper alloy
Length: 8,3 cm; thickness: 0,2 cm; diameter of recipient: 0,5 cm.

2. PPN 356, SU 428, quad. N 7, el. 88.48; 27.05.2009; Inv. AMO 230724 (Table 1, 2)
Ear probe. Handle with round cross-section and rounded oval recipient – spoon.
Copper alloy
Length: 9,5 cm; spoon recipient: 0,4 cm; handle thickness: 0,2 cm.

3. PPN 564, SU 465, quad. 0 6, el. 87.90; 07.07.2009; Inv. AMO 230728 (Table 1, 3)
Ear probe. Handle with twisted body and rounded oval recipient – spoon.
Copper alloy
Length: 12 cm; thickness: 0,3 cm; recipient dimensions: 0,4 x 0,3 cm.

4. PPN 331, SU 465, quad. O 5, el. 89.4; 18.05.2009; Inv. AMO 230732 (Table 1, 4)
Fragment of a ear probe. Handle of rectangular cross-section and twisted body, with oval rounded recipient – spoon.
Copper alloy
Preserved length: 3,3 cm; thickness: 0,2 cm; recipient dimensions: 0,5 x 0,4 cm.

5. PPN 48, SU 122, quad. C 4, el. 89.66; 14.10.2008; Inv. AMO 230751 (Table 1, 5)
Tweezers. Straight arms, of even width, slightly inverted tips.
Copper alloy
Length: 7,4 cm; width: 0,7 cm; thickness: 0,1 cm; loop width: 0,5 cm.

6. PPN 74, SU 152, quad. K 10, el. 89.92; 22.10.2008; Inv. AMO 230703 (Table 1, 6)
Tweezers. Round loop and two arms of flat cross-section, bent.
Copper alloy
Preserved length of arms: around 4 cm; width: 0,3 cm; thickness: 0,1 cm; head diameter: 1,2 cm; loop diameter: 0,7 cm.

7. PPN 508, SU 465, quad. 0 6, el. 88.80; 18.06.2009; Inv. AMO 230727 (Table 1, 7)

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2 PPN- find number (posebni nalaz); SU – stratigraphic unit; quad. – quadrant on the excavation plan; el. – elevation (above sea level); date; Inv. - inventory number.

Bronze object, needle-like with spindle-shaped head. Round cross-section, very thin in the middle section.
Copper alloy
Length: around 8,5 cm; thickness: 0,2-0,3 cm, in the middle section: 0,1 cm.

8. PPN 73, SU 130, quad. E 8, el. 90.26; 22.10.2008; Inv. AMO 230694 (Table 1, 8)

Spatula? Flat handle that expands on one end, in a square shaped extension with raised edges (like a spoon). The other end is deformed, possibly also widens originally, but not certain.
Copper alloy
Preserved length: 6,8 cm; width of handle: 0,3 cm; thickness: 0,2 cm; width of widened part: 0,8 cm.

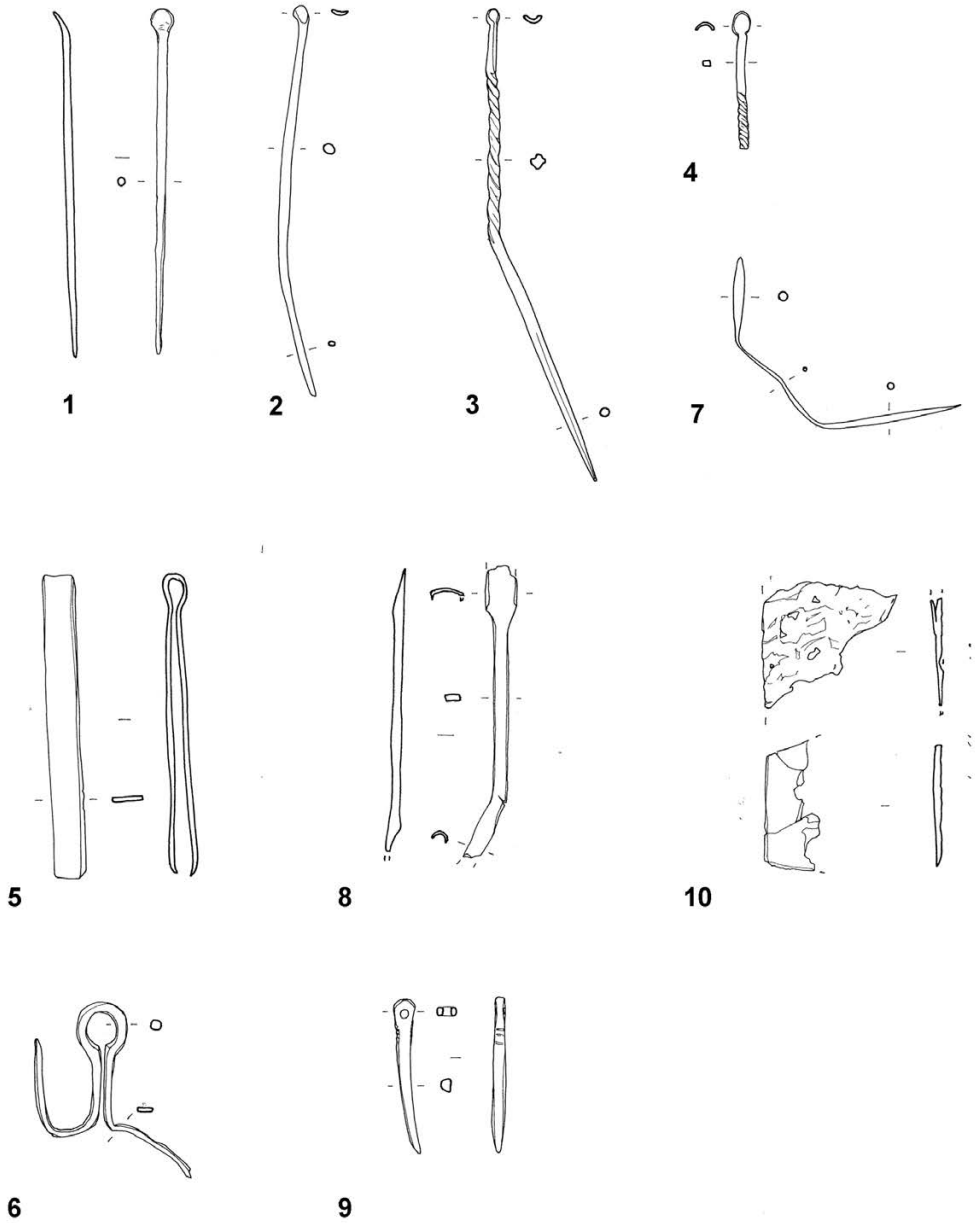
9. PPN 127, SU 22, quad. C 8, el. 88.41; 29.10.2008; Inv. AMO 230702 (Table 1, 9)

Tooth picker? Pointed object with polygonal loop and body with D-shaped cross-section. On one side, under the loop, there are parallel transversal incisions.
Copper alloy
Length: 3,8 cm; width of head: 0,5 cm; loop diameter: 0,2 cm; body thickness: 0,3 cm.

10. PPN 97, SU 132, quad. D 9, el. 88.70; 24.10.2008; Inv. AMO 230753 (Table 1, 10)

Two fragments of thin, very polished bronze sheet – probably of a mirror.
Copper alloy
Preserved dimensions: 3,2 x 2,5 cm and 3 x 1,3 cm; thickness: 0,2 cm.

Table 1. Toiletry and/or medical implements from Mursa – Barracks, Faculty of Education (drawings by: S. Čule).



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