

FOREWORD

*T*here are places [such as Vinkovci] and regions in which successions of people are born who share an affinity for a certain profession. Our Slavonia is one such region, since in this relatively small area in north-eastern Croatia a legion of eminent workers in the field of archaeology and history has been born... as we can see, the series has been almost uninterrupted for nearly two centuries. This was written by Vanja Radauš in 1973, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the death of the great Croatian archaeologist, and native of Vinkovci, Prof. Josip Brunšmid. We could expand this thesis and say that all archaeologists, once they have excavated in Vinkovci, remain strongly attached to this town of extremely rich archaeological heritage. The same is true of the author of this book, Dr. Ina Miloglav (or Gale, for those who remember her from the years she spent in Vinkovci), who worked in the Vinkovci Town Museum between 2001 and 2004, and has remained professionally (and through her friendships) tied to Vinkovci. Moreover, for her doctoral thesis, she chose the Vučedol sites of Ervenica, in Vinkovci, and Damića Gradina, in Stari Mikanovci.

The journal *Acta Musei Cibalensis*, published by the Vinkovci Town Museum, was launched in 1966; the author of the first issue was yet another renowned archaeologist from Vinkovci, Prof. Stojan Dimitrijević, whose scientific interests remained linked to Vinkovci throughout his life, and who explored and promoted various cultures which allow us to say that Vinkovci has been settled continuously for more than 8000 years. *Acta Musei Cibalensis* 7, n.s. 5 is a monograph dedicated to a single culture; actually, this is the revised doctoral thesis *Late Vučedol Culture in the Bosut Plain on the Basis of Pottery Finds*, to which the first part of the book has been added. This issue is dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the Vinkovci Town Museum, which was established thanks to the purchase of a collection (primarily archaeological) from the forester Mato Medvedović.

The book is divided into two parts: the first part stems from the author's position in the Subdepartment of Archaeometry and Methodology at the Department of Archaeology of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Zagreb University, where she deals with an aspect of archaeology which is not very popular among archaeologists: counting, classifying and typologically describing tens of thousands of pottery sherds. But, as the author herself put it, *We put together pieces of information as if piecing together a jigsaw puzzle, as though we were participating in the creation of the pottery vessels and entering the lives of the people who made them*. Pottery is one of the materials most frequently processed and analysed by archaeologists, since it provides infinite and important information about the cultural, social, economic, religious and technological achievements of a community and about the period in which the vessel was made. This part of the book discusses analytical techniques and theoretical frameworks of pottery technology, and parameters for the processing of archaeological pottery. As such, it is very useful and pertinent for any archaeologist dealing with pottery finds as the leading source of archaeological data.

The second part of the book is also interesting to a broader readership, and not just for experts. Much as archaeology is nowadays an interdisciplinary science – which can also be read from Ina Miloglav's book – we could not imagine reconstructing a landscape or the dietary habits of a population without archaeobotany, while archaeozoology studies animal remains found at archaeological sites. For example, we have learned that, in the period between around 2880–2480 BC,

the predominant economic activity of the Vučedol population of Ervenica was animal herding, and that they mostly raised cattle. Many analyses done on sherds of Vučedol pottery have yielded 'unimaginable' data on the pottery. The archaeological biomarkers from a cup recovered from Ervenica have revealed residues of milk fat, allowing us to interpret it as a milk cup, while the fat residues on a pottery strainer from Damića Gradina lead to the conclusion that the Vučedol population produced cheese. In addition, petrographic analysis of pottery sherds has shown that the mineral composition of the pottery corresponds to the mineral composition of the loess that Ervenica and Damića Gradina sit on, which confirms that vessels were produced from local raw materials. A standardization test has also been conducted on the pottery material, and its results suggest that the production of pottery was standardized, especially when it comes to a certain type of bowl. On the basis of the results obtained, the author has concluded that the pottery production in these two Vučedol settlements was organized and that it involved specialized potters.

The book also provides abundant data on ethnoarchaeological research, which allows archaeologists to verify information collected during archaeological investigations. Besides, it brings plenty of interesting ethnoarchaeological data, such as, for example, that the average distance between the settlement and the clay it exploited was between 3 and 4 km, that the lifespan of a cooking pot ranged between several months and 1.3 years, and that the majority of vessels for food consumption and serving were decorated, etc. Finally, combining archaeological data, ethnoarchaeology and experimental archaeology, patterns of past human behaviour are reconstructed.

We can recommend this book not only to students of archaeology and archaeologists who study pottery, but also as a general introduction to pottery, and for all those interested in learning about the Vučedol Culture. The book has been translated into English, and it comes with marvelous drawings by our prematurely deceased colleague, Krešimir Rončević. Before seriously tackling thousands of pottery sherds, every archaeologist should read this book; and, as the author herself puts it, *as archaeologists, we have the task of distinguishing between what we know and what we can assume about a pottery vessel, or about any other object which belongs to man's past material culture.*

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