9 PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF EXCAVATED POTTERY FROM THE SITES OF ERVENICA AND DAMIĆA GRADINA

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The typological classification of the pottery assemblage from the sites of Ervenica, in Vinkovci, and Damića Gradina, in Stari Mikanovci, was based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from the whole sample, with the data processed using descriptive statistics in the *SPSS* (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*) program. The first division into types was based on morphological data. Thus the main functional shapes were obtained, present at both sites: A – bowl, B – pot, C – cup, and D – jug. Three additional shapes have been identified at Damića Gradina: E – strainer, F – bottle, and G – lid (*Figs 35, 36, 37, pp. 91-92).*

Although the definition of the main vessel shapes and types depends on the pottery material under examination, which means on the type of site and the period it belongs to, classifications of vessel shapes are always based on the vessels' height and maximum diameter, and on the kind or size of orifice (Rice 1987: 215).

There are several classifications of vessel shapes, the best-known among them being the German and French. During the processing of the Vučedol Culture material, a combination of both these classifications was used to specify pottery shapes. A bowl was defined as a vessel which generally has no neck, although that is not a rule, and its height varies from being 1/3 of the vessel's maximum diameter to being equal to it. A pot is a vessel with or without a neck, with a restricted orifice, and a height which is usually greater than its maximum diameter. A cup is a vessel, with a handle, whose diameter is in most cases equal to its height. A jug is a necked vessel, with a handle, whose height is greater than its maximum diameter (Rice 1987: 216; Horvat 1999: 86).

When types were classified into groups, the structural approach was applied, which makes it possible to expand and complement the typology without limitations. It has been explained in detail in Chapter 7. New shapes that might emerge at another site of the Vučedol Culture can be introduced into this typology, which would thus be expanded, while those shapes that are the same can be compared to the existing ones. Each of the types featuring very specific characteristics (for example, type A – bowls), was further divided into subtypes (Type A 1) which feature very similar characteristics, but can be distinguished and classified on the basis of four typical points on the vessel's contour (e.g. Type A 1 comprises all bowls whose contour includes two extreme points on the rim and on the base). Such division into subtypes makes a typology less subjective, and, in addition, the division into subgroups is less prone to potential mistakes on the part of the person creating and defining the typology. Within each subtype, individual types have been identified and numbered (Type A 1a), on the basis of interlinked variables which allow measurement of the size and shape of pottery vessels (rim and base radius, height, wall thickness).

During the processing of the pottery assemblage, the large quantity of data was divided into several categories. Morphological data involved establishing the vessel's type, subtype and variant, type of rim, base, handle and grip; metrical data encompassed measurements of rim radius, base radius, vessel height and wall thickness; for decorated vessels, data were recorded about the decorating technique, the motif and its position on the vessel; technological data included

the identification of the external and internal colours of the sherd and the cross-section colour, which identified the firing atmosphere, and the external and internal surface treatment.

Due to the specific nature of the sites investigated, random sampling was applied at Ervenica, while the method selected for the site of Damića Gradina was judgement sampling. There are several reasons for the selection of different sampling methods, which support the fact mentioned above that every site demands a different approach to the processing of its pottery. In this case, our options were limited due to the incomplete stratigraphic context of the material. Such a situation should by no means result in a decision not to process sites of this kind, because excavated pottery can help us reconstruct some other processes – technological, economic and symbolic – as well as models which can reveal traces of social organization or specialization.

Although both the sites were investigated within the scope of rescue archaeological excavations, the site of Ervenica was investigated in 2007, and the Damića Gradina site in 1980. The methodology and documentation of archaeological excavation – the most important aspects of the archaeological profession – have developed over time, and the digs carried out today cannot be compared to those made 30 or more years ago. Nowadays the available technology and data enable us to process the sites faster, better and more precisely. The difference concerns not only the quality of excavation, but also the quality of data recording. The site of Damića Gradina was explored more than 35 years ago, on a limited excavation surface, where the positions of finds and layers were established in relation to the foundations and trenches (2 and 4 metres wide) which were dug for the local elementary school (*Figs 42, 43, p. 102*), which did not permit the establishing of an overall horizontal stratigraphy.

Given that the stratigraphic context was disturbed by the very excavation surface, during the processing, excavated material had to be checked several times in order to put together pieces which belonged to the same vessel. An additional complication was caused by the fact that the position of Damića Gradina had been inhabited from the period of the Sopot, Baden, Vučedol, Vinkovci and Bosut cultures, through to the late phase of the Middle La Tène period. It is virtually impossible to distinguish the coarse pottery vessels of the Vučedol Culture from those of the Vinkovci Culture (especially those whose bodies had been treated with barbotine), unless the stratigraphic context is clear. For this reason, and with a view to obtaining a chrono-cultural definition of the excavated pottery that would be as precise and reliable as possible, only those fragments which could undoubtedly be attributed to the Vučedol Culture were taken into consideration. This also determined the method of sampling.

Although efforts were invested in reconstructing vessels to the maximum extent possible, in the final interpretation, the approach based on specifying the minimum number of vessels would result in a deviant and unreliable picture of the pottery assemblage. Thus, after examining the pottery excavated at both sites, and putting together fragments of the same vessel, at Ervenica it was possible to specify the minimum number of vessels (MNV) using random sampling, whereas this was not possible at Damića Gradina. There, the maximum number of vessels was determined using judgement sampling.

Once the classification (which is descriptive) and the analytical purpose (which is interpretative) were defined, we had the basic requirements and guidelines which made it possible to reconstruct the activities of the Vučedol society on the basis of processed pottery assemblage.

The following chapters present the results of the analyses made; but, before that, let us look at the geological and geographical features of the landscape, positions and characteristics of the sites, and some general features of the Vučedol Culture.