18 USE-RELATED PROPERTIES AND THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF VUČEDOL POTTERY

Ceramic vessels are tools – objects used in specific activities to serve specific ends.
(Braun 1983: 107)

In the introductory chapter it was emphasized that pottery vessels were produced and used in a social context, that they were part of socio-cultural interactions, and that they can and must be seen, analysed and interpreted only as such. The production of pottery depended on the needs of the community, and potters adjusted to its demands, while respecting their traditional legacy. In this regard, the production of a certain type of vessel could be more or less intensive. In view of the fact that percentages of various types of vessels are nearly identical in both sites (*Figs 50-53*), it can be assumed that the two contemporary Vučedol settlements shared the same socio-economic needs. The comparative analysis of archaeological material and 14C dates have shown that the settlements at Ervenica and Damića Gradina existed at the same time (Miloglav 2012). During the same period, the Vučedol population also lived in the settlements of Sarvaš, Vučedol and Gomolava, although the majority of these places were already inhabited in the earlier phase (B-1) (Durman 1988; Forenbaher 1994; Balen 2005a; 2010; Petrović & Jovanović 2002; Rajković & Balen 2016).

The greater diversity of types present at Damića Gradina than at Ervenica can be attributed to the surface area excavated, and to a larger sample of pottery material. Actually, other sites of the Vučedol Culture in Vinkovci (at Ervenica and the Tržnica Tell) exhibit similar percentages of types to that at Damića Gradina (Dimitrijević 1979; Krznarić Škrivanko 1999; Durman 2000; Gale 2002; Miloglav 2007).

In view of their function, vessels could generally be used for cooking, serving and consumption of food, as well as storage and transportation. Depending on the future purpose of the vessel, potters made various technological choices, in order to obtain a paste whose quality would satisfy the vessel's presumed function. The paste recipe – which regulates the production process – is a result of the potter's knowledge and experience, a range of social norms, and technological and traditional practices. In the chain of operations, the paste recipe, surface treatment and shape all play key roles in defining the vessel's utilitarian aspect. In archaeological methodology, another one is the context of the find, which is relevant for identifying the location of final disposal.

Rice (1987: 224–226) writes about four interrelated morphological features that affect the vessel's use-related properties. These are:

a) *capacity,* which depends on the vessel's shape and size, and can be measured using the formula for volume (Rice 1987: 220–222). It should be borne in mind that vessels can have a maximum capacity and a real capacity. For example, cooking pots can never be filled to the brim, but only up to a half or three-quarters of their total capacity. Thus, the difference between their maximum and real capacities should be analysed using other indicators, such as use-wear analysis (e.g. carbonization of the internal wall).
b) *stability* is a property relating to shape, proportions and centre of gravity; it makes it possible for the vessel to stand upright. For example, vessels with flat bases or feet are very stable, while those with rounded bases have limited stability. This means that such vessels

need additional 'aids' to stand upright on a flat surface. Thus, some ethnoarchaeological studies provide examples of cooking vessels (with rounded bases and limited stability), once removed from the fire, being placed on some kind of tripod, on pot rests and on concavities in the hearth or floor (Skibo 2013: 32).

c) *accessibility* refers to the ability to access the vessel's contents, which depends on the shape of the vessel's orifice and neck. For example, vessels for storing liquids or seeds have restricted orifices, resulting in limited accessibility of the vessel's contents (using a hand or an object). Such vessels are intended for contents that can be poured directly from the vessel. On the other hand, cooking pots have relatively wide orifices, and the contents are completely accessible, allowing easier extraction or mixing of food.

d) *transportability* is the vessel's property relating to the ease of its movement from one place to another. The majority of vessels have low transportability, since their primary function is not transport. Some are rarely moved (for example, vessels for storing), and cooking pots feature a limited transportability, which is sufficient to allow them to be placed on and off the fire (Skibo 2013: 33). The vessel's shape and size, thinning of the walls, surface treatment (with barbotine, for example) which prevents the vessel from slipping from one's hands) and adding handles – these are some of the features the potter should consider when producing vessels intended for transport.

The identification of use-related properties of vessels has been discussed in chapter 8, and it has been emphasized that certain types of vessels can be associated with their primary functions through comparison of all the available data and results of analysis: the vessel's morphological and technological properties, results of archaeometric analyses and data on the archaeological context. Using the data available and the analysis presented in the second part of this book, in this chapter we will present indicators suggesting certain use-related properties of specific types of Vučedol pottery.

COOKING POTS

Cooking pots were discussed most extensively in the first part of the book. Bearing in mind their function, such vessels presented the greatest technological challenge for potters, since they had to ensure their strength, impermeability and resistance to thermal stress. In view of this, defining the function of a vessel that was used for cooking is a very complex task which depends on a number of parameters that can be identified during the processing of the pottery material.

Based on the data analysed, the assumption can be made that all vessels of types B 1 and B 3f were used for cooking foodstuffs of plant and/or animal origin (*Table 27*). The morphological and technological analyses have pointed to certain 'patterns' present in those vessels. Their slightly S-shaped contour allows even heat transfer and reduces breakage of vessels exposed to thermal stress. All vessels of these types feature flat bases, handles and/or grips for their easier lifting or appendage above a fire, and orifices that are wide enough to allow input and extraction of food. The rims are everted, the neck segments are polished or burnished, and the bodies are coated with barbotine (*Table 13, 16*).

The vessels' resistance to thermal stress was achieved through clay tempering with larger quantities of coarser grog, and more textured treatment (barbotine) of the vessels' exteriors, while the interiors were burnished. Barbotine increased the vessel's resistance to thermal stress, cracking and

breakage, and with its 'relief' surface, it also facilitated the vessel's transport, since fingers adhered better to the ridges left by the application of soft clay after the vessel's firing. This treatment of the vessel's exterior and interior granted it the necessary impermeability and strength, i.e. resistance to mechanical damage that could be caused by frequent stirring, extraction of food and cleaning.

Traces of soot and oxidation stains have been present on the majority of vessels of this type, and pottery hooks (*Fig. 26*) could indicate that some pots were suspended above a fire. Interestingly, ceramic hooks were present in large numbers at nearly all Vučedol sites (Durman 1988: 71; Balen 2005a: Pls 55, 56, 57: 215–217; Rajković & Balen 2016: Pl. 43: 270–278), while they are hardly known in the preceding cultures.

Residues of lipids discovered on a sherd of a pot of type B 1a (*Fig. 25*) have demonstrated that residues of ruminant fats were only present in the vessel's interior, which suggests that those are remains of its original contents.

Vessels with textured exterior wall (for example, coated with barbotine) are stronger and more resistant to thermal stress – these are the main features of cooking pots, especially if their secondary use was storage (Young & Stone 1990). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that vessels with textured exterior surface have longer use-life (Pierce 2005; Skibo 2013).

Heat transfer, a very important factor in the cooking process, was neglected in the majority of cases to the benefit of the vessel's resistance to thermal stress (Hein et al. 2015: 49). The terms used in archaeological literature discussing the study of heat transfer are heating effectiveness (Skibo et al. 1989; Schiffer 1990), heating rate (Young & Stone 1990), and cooking effectiveness (Pierce 2005). Heating effectiveness is a complex parameter that depends on thermal conductivity, heat capacity, permeability and the vessel's shape, as well as on some external limitations (Hein et al. 2015: 50). As for vessels used for cooking over a fire, this indicator is very relevant to the final interpretation of use-related properties. Here, experimental archaeology plays a great role, using diverse testing methods on vessels of various shapes (for example, with rounded and flat bases), containing various tempers and with differently treated surfaces (for example, polished or treated with barbotine) to determine their heating and cooling effectiveness (Skibo et al. 1989; Schiffer 1990; Young & Stone 1990; Pierce 2005; Hein et al. 2008; Hein et al. 2015).

The demand for cooking pots was nearly identical in both Vučedol settlements (*Fig. 52*), but their standardization has not been observed (*Table 25*). This could be a result of the vessels' dimensions, where the probability of manufacturing error increases linearly with the size of the vessel (Roux 2003a). Once they were damaged or broken, some of the vessels continued their use-life in their secondary function, as evidenced by repair marks noticed on some sherds (*Table 28*). Various ethnoarchaeological studies have stated that the average use-life of cooking vessels ranged between several months and 1.3 years, where high temperatures used for cooking and frequent movement of vessels from one place to another were the main reasons for their breakage (Longacre 1985; Tani & Longacre 1999; Arthur 2002). Since such vessels could no longer be used for cooking, they could function, for example, as storage containers for dry foodstuffs, such as grains. Repairing broken vessels which could not be used in their primary function any longer was evidently one of the usual methods of re-use of vessels in the Vučedol Culture. Repair marks have been observed on vessels from both sites discussed here, almost to the same degree. At Damića Gradina, such sherds make up 2.71%, and at Ervenica 2.80%.

Although their percentage is much lower, according to the parameters analysed, bowls of type A 6 could also be used for cooking (*Tables 9, 27*). They were produced using the same technology

as pots of type B 1, and the only difference is the vessels' morphology. The bowls have very large rim radiuses (min. 14.50 cm; max. 20.50 cm), and handles at their widest part; in addition, they were only made in large sizes. All sherds of this type of bowl contained oxidation stains. In contrast to pots which could be suspended above a fire, these vessels were placed directly in the fire, as indicated by their shape and size, and the positions of the oxidation stains.

Although their morphology is very simple, bowls of type A 1a are rather specific, and they had been produced since the Early Neolithic. These very shallow bowls with thick walls (12.51 mm on average) feature a rim diameter that is equal to the maximum diameter of the vessel (*Tables 4, 27*). Grips, as secondary elements, are integral parts of the morphology of these vessels, and they facilitate their holding and lifting. Traces of oxidation discoloration and soot were present on the exterior of all samples of this type, suggesting that they were placed in direct contact with the fire, while chemical analyses have shown that high concentrations of ruminant fats were present only in the vessels' interiors. This is an indication that the vessel had not absorbed organic residue from the environment, but that lipids are original residues of its contents. From the point of view of technology, thick walls were not an ideal choice for cooking vessels, because heat transfer through such walls is slower; however, they make it possible to maintain a constant temperature of the vessel's contents and contribute to a higher resistance to mechanical damage, that is, increase the vessel's strength. Still, some ethnoarchaeological studies have demonstrated that thick walls were an ordinary technological choice for cooking vessels (Henrickson & McDonald 1983).

The vessel's function cannot always be easily established on the basis of only one parameter, so it is necessary to consider all of its properties. A major role is played by the vessel's morphology, which in this case is very simple, without any sharp inflections of the vessel's contour, and with straight or partially conical walls, which additionally increases the vessel's resistance to thermal stress. Based on an analysed specimen from the site of Vinča, larger vessels of this type, with average rim diameter of around 30 cm, known in older literature as "Güveç vessels", have been described as vessels used for bread-baking (Vuković 2013). This interpretation has been confirmed by some ethnoarchaeological examples, too (Henrickson & McDonald 1983). The Vučedol vessels have much smaller rim diameter, and no large vessels have been recovered to date, making it likely that these vessels were used for thermal processing of foodstuffs of animal origin.

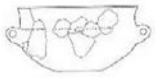
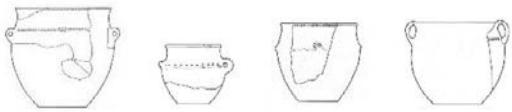
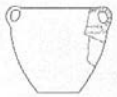
Presumed function	Type	Shape	Secondary use
cooking	A 1a		consumption
	A 6a		short-term storage of dry foodstuffs
	B 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d		storage of foodstuffs, transport
	B 3f		storage of dry foodstuffs, transport

Table 27 – Cooking vessels – presumed function on the basis of morphological and technological features

VESSELS FOR FOOD CONSUMPTION AND SERVING

This category includes vessels used for everyday consumption and serving of food, and for preparation of foodstuffs that did not require any thermal processing (e.g. oatmeal or mash) (*Table 29*). Such vessels could be used by individuals or groups of people, depending on their size.

Vessels of type A 2 are among those that belong to this category (*Table 5, 29*). The *omphalos* base, characteristic of this type, probably facilitated holding of the vessel in one hand, given the impression in the base. The type's morphology allowed liquid or semi-liquid food to be taken out of a relatively large vessel and consumed. It is known that the Vučedol population, and members of cultures preceding the Vučedol, used ceramic spoons for stirring food (*Fig. 84, p. 165*). Spoons and other utensils used for stirring food during cooking were also made of wood, but such objects are rarely found in archaeological contexts, because of the materials they were made of.

Residues of beeswax present on both interior and exterior sides of vessels of this type indicate that the surface was deliberately treated with wax to ensure its impermeability. In the first part of the book, it was noted that reducing the vessel's porosity through surface treatment with resin, wax or fruit juices was a frequent phenomenon (Rice 1987: 231; Schiffer et al. 1994). Furthermore, all vessels of this type display finely polished walls, both internal and external, which also contributed to their impermeability and strength, or resistance to various kinds of mechanical damage. Foodstuffs of plant or animal origin cooked in these vessels also affected their permeability, since fats present in them closed small pores in the pottery structure. In vessels not used for thermal processing of foodstuffs of plant or animal origin, their impermeability is ensured through special surface treatments (such as polishing).

No traces of soot or oxidation stains have been recorded on sherds of bowls of type A 2, corroborating the notion that such vessels were not used for thermal processing of food. Smaller vessels of this type could also be used as lids for storage vessels.

It has already been said in chapter 17 that bowls of this type do not exhibit signs of production standardization, and the coefficients of variation for their height and rim radius vary considerably. Some bowls of this type were probably used by the community for some special purposes (rituals, special events and celebrations, orders by some eminent persons, etc.).

Bowls of type A 4a-c (*Tables 7, 29*) were discussed more extensively in chapter 17. Here, the degree of intensive and standardized production suggests that this type was demanded by the community and that potters had greater experience in its making. The frequent and intensive use of such bowls also meant that they were worn faster, often deformed or broken, so some of them continued to be used in their secondary function. Repair marks present on pottery vessels, including perforations on both sides of the fracture, are present most frequently on bowls of type A 4, and those of type A 3a (*Table 28*). Bowls of type A 3a (*Tables 6, 29*) also display some degree of standardization and increased demand, and all of their features indicate that they can also be classified in this category.

Beeswax residues in the interior and exterior of vessels of type A 4a-c, lack of soot traces and oxidation stains, and the exceptionally sharp biconical profile, unsuitable for cooking above a fire since it causes unequal heat transfer, as well as the finely polished external and internal surfaces – these features indicate that this type of vessel was not used for thermal processing of food.

Ethnoarchaeological studies have shown that the majority of bowls used for food consumption and serving are decorated, and this corresponds to the results of the analysis of the Vučedol

material. At Damića Gradina, bowls of type A 2 are decorated in 58.70% of cases, and at Ervenica in 42.86%. The decorated bowls of type A 4 make up 70.32% of such bowls at Damića Gradina, while at Ervenica this percentage is somewhat lower and stands at 37.50%.

Type	no. of sherds	%
A 1d	1	4.76%
A 2a	1	4.76%
A 2b	1	4.76%
A 3a	6	28.57%
A 4a	3	14.29%
A 4b	1	4.76%
A 4c	4	19.05%
A 6a	1	4.76%
B 1a	2	9.52%
B 1b	1	4.76%
Σ	21	100.00%

Table 28 – Repair marks on pottery vessels from the site of Damića Gradina

Coating of the vessel's interior and exterior with beeswax has also been observed in cups of type C 1a (*Tables 17, 29*). Lipid residues on both the interior and exterior have been interpreted as residues of ruminant fats or dairy fats. While traces present in the vessel's interior indicate what the original vessel's contents were, it is possible that those on the exterior are results of spillage of those contents. Since we know that the Vučedol economy was based on animal herding, primarily on raising cattle (65.24%), pigs (25.00%) and sheep/goats (4.88%), and that dairy products had been used in human diet ever since the Early Neolithic (for an overview, see Salque 2012), we can assume that dairy was an element of the dietary habits of the Vučedol population, too. All vessels of type C display finely polished or burnished exteriors and interiors, with no traces that would suggest that they were exposed to fire. In view of the techno-functional characteristics of this type and its morphology, which corresponds to the consumption of liquid foodstuffs, we can say that vessels of this type were used for drinking. The lipid residues present on one specimen suggest that they were used for milk consumption.

As noted in chapter 15, ruminant fats discovered by chemical analyses on the interior of a strainer of type E 1a (*Tables 20, 29*) suggest that cheese was produced. Both specimens of this type feature polished internal and external walls, and drilled holes, suggesting that these vessels were used as strainers. Various types of strainers have been recorded even among the earliest cultures, so their presence within the inventory of a Vučedol household is not unusual.

Presumed function	Type	Shape	Secondary use
consumption, serving – food preparation without heat treatment	A 2a, 2b		lids, short-term storage of dry foodstuffs
	A 3a, 3c		short-term storage of dry foodstuffs
	A 4a, 4b, 4c		short-term storage of dry foodstuffs
	A 5a, 5b		short-term storage of liquid foodstuffs
	C 1a, 1b, 2a, 3a		
	E 1a, 2a		

Table 29 – Vessels for food consumption – presumed function on the basis of morphological and technological features

VESSELS FOR FOOD STORAGE AND PRESERVATION

There are two types of storage vessels, used for storing dry and liquid foodstuffs (*Table 30*). The surface treatment depended on the purpose of the vessels, given that those intended for storage of liquid foodstuffs had to have impermeable walls, in contrast to those used, for example, for keeping grains. Vessels in which oil was stored were an exception, since their contents also closed the pores. Furthermore, foodstuffs could be stored for a long or short period of time, and the shape and size of the vessels could reveal their function. Vessels for long-term storage were mostly static and large, while those intended for short-term storage were manipulated and moved more frequently (Henrickson & McDonald 1983).

In view of their morphology and technological features, vessels of types B 3b and B 3c (*Tables 15, 30*) were probably used for storing dry foodstuffs. These were large vessels with restricted orifices, displaying no traces of being exposed to fire. The restricted orifice prevented spillage of the contents, and, given that the interior wall was not treated in any special way to reduce its permeability, it is likely that such vessels were used for storing dry foodstuffs. The vessels were probably used with some kind of lid, which protected the contents from spillage, rodents and insects. Wear marks along the vessel's rim, which could have been caused by the rim's contact with the lid, have been recorded on several sherds of type B 3b. Besides, all vessels of this type had a flat

rim, which would allow the vessel to be closed more easily, whether with hide, or some kind of cloth, a ceramic or wooden lid, or another vessel. Although the Vučedol ceramography includes lids (Durman 1988: 130; Balen 2005a: Pl. 58: 225; Rajković & Balen 2016: Pl. 43: 279), they have been found very rarely within the regular pottery inventory (Pl. 33). It is likely that small bowls with rounded bases, such as type A 2, could have served this purpose. Such practice has also been confirmed by ethnoarchaeological studies (Hendricksom & McDonald 1983).

In chapter 14, various socio-economic aspects of the Vučedol society were presented, along with the results of archaeobotanic and osteological analyses pointing to the fact that the population engaged in animal herding, hunting and tilling. The consequent creation of food stocks affected the production of containers for storing foodstuffs, some of which were made of ceramics.

Unlike cups, which, in view of their small size, were used for consumption, jugs (type D) could also be used for short-term storage of liquids (*Tables 19, 30*). Their burnished interiors suggest that attempts were made to make them impermeable. Unfortunately, due to the small sample, non-abrasive traces that would suggest possible fermentation of the contents have not been observed on vessels of this type. It is well known that grains and dairy products ferment, and can thus cause damage to the vessel's exterior wall, and complete erosion of its interior wall (Arthur 2002: 337).

Due to their extremely small dimensions (min. 4.90; max. 8.50 cm), vessels of type A 9 (*Table 12, 30*) are very specific elements of the pottery assemblage and subject to diverse interpretations of their function. They have been described most often as vessels used for cult-related purposes, or as lamps or children's toys (Letica 1967; Balen-Letunić 1982; Balj 2009; 2010). Generally, small vessels mimic some existing larger vessels which belong to the standard inventory, and the technology applied in their production can reveal whether they were made by children or experienced

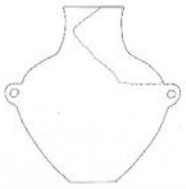
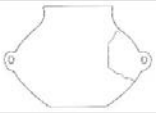
Presumed function	Type	Shape	Secondary use
Storage of dry foodstuffs – long-term	B 3b		transport
	B 3c		transport
Storage of dry foodstuffs – short-term	A 9a, 9b, 9c		consumption
Storage of liquid foodstuffs – short-term	D 1a, 2a		consumption

Table 30 – Vessels for storage – presumed function on the basis of morphological and technological features

potters. Children's handicrafts tend not to be skilfully shaped, their walls are thick and uneven, and they often bear fingerprints (Balj 2009). Such vessels have not been recorded among the material analysed, as all the vessels are shaped very skilfully and precisely, and, in respect of the working technique and surface treatment, they are no different from the larger vessels. The suspension holes recorded on type A 9c suggest that these vessels could have been hung in the kitchen area. Since such miniature vessels had emerged within pottery assemblages since the Neolithic, a symbolic role for them within the social organization should not be ruled out (Tomaž 2005).

TRANSPORT VESSELS

The main feature of transport vessels was thin walls, which made them lighter and easier to transport. Handles facilitated their lifting and manipulation, while their shape depended on the contents and distance (Henrickson & McDonald 1983). Tempering the paste used for such vessels with organic material contributed to their resistance to breakage and mechanical impact and to their transportability (Skibo et al. 1989).

Although the vessel's shape defines its function, it need not necessarily be reserved for only one kind of usage; that is to say, vessels could be multifunctional. For example, cooking vessels could also be used for food consumption, short-term storage of liquid foodstuffs or short-term transport. Similarly, some types of vessels for food consumption and serving could also be used for short-term storage of dry foodstuffs, while certain types of storage vessels could be used for transport. The majority of ethnographic studies have demonstrated that both vessels and storage locations were multifunctional (Hally 1983a: 177).

Besides, a certain type of vessel need not be reserved for the preparation of a single kind of foodstuff. The analysis of organic residues has shown that some of the vessel shapes were used for various cooking techniques. From the morphological perspective, the results indicate that vessels which were exposed to very high temperatures, and in which ingredients had to boil, had large, unrestricted orifices, while the S-profiled vessels were much more suitable for slow simmering and stewing (Eerkens 2005).

When interpreting vessel function, archaeologists are advised to proceed cautiously. Certain shapes of vessels are often interpreted only on the basis of a subjective impression, or on the basis of comparisons with contemporary or ethnographic examples. Unusual specimens, whose shape or decoration stand apart from the usual pottery inventory, have traditionally been described as 'cult vessels', without any additional analysis and interpretation.

An interesting example is that of the so-called milk jugs, whose shape is typical of cultures of the Middle and Late Aeneolithic. Analyses of organic residues have shown that the label applied to them, which suggests the utilitarian function of such vessels and stems from ethnological and historical comparisons, in fact does not correspond to their purpose. Of eight such vessels that have been analysed, dairy protein has been discovered in only one, while traces of dairy fats have been found in some other vessels, such as deep bowls and large storage pots (Craig et al. 2003). Furthermore, the Baden cups have usually been interpreted as cups used for drinking alcoholic beverages, but the analysis of organic residues in four such cups originating from two sites (Vučedol and Tomašanci - Palača) has not confirmed any traces of alcohol (Miloglav & Balen 2016). Clearly, this does not mean that milk jugs were not used for consumption or storage of

milk, or that Baden cups were not used for alcohol consumption; but it means that it is incorrect to attribute only one function to any such shape.

Various social and technological practices present in traditional communities should prompt us to approach this subject differently, and not be limited by traditional divisions into very 'rigid' phases and divisions of relative chronology. Social differentiation and its causes are a very complex process which depended on a range of interrelated factors that can be recognized in pottery technology and production. Although differences in style are sensitive to changes brought about by various periods and social influences, ethnographic studies have shown that changes in style can affect production in a very short period of time (Stark et al. 2000).

Interpretation of specific functional shapes also tends to be copied from outdated literature, without any additional analysis. Such an approach is dangerous not only as regards defining the vessel's functional type, but also for all other aspects of archaeological interpretation. Every archaeologist has a responsibility to provide high-quality and objective scientific interpretation, free of preconceived subjective positions and impressions concerning why and when something happened, was created or changed, and why, what and to whom it had some meaning.

In today's world of interdisciplinarity, we should focus on integrating those scientific disciplines that can help us understand and interpret archaeological data, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Given that today's archaeology is a collection of a large quantity of data (resulting from excavations, processing of finds, scholarly literature, comparative studies, various scientific and technical analyses, etc.), our task is to condense the data into an interpretation which is as comprehensive and objective as possible. We also need to be aware that data presented and interpreted are not 'set in stone', that they can be subject to reinterpretation both by their author and by other archaeologists, since new data are constantly emerging in the fields both of archaeological investigations and of processing of material.

In archaeological interpretations, *probability* is a very important term, because our awareness that the analysis has not encompassed all the data about a site (since very few have been investigated in their entirety) or the material processed (which is just part of the material evidence on the life of people in a certain area) enables us to continuously question our research methods and results, and thus enhance our archaeological interpretation.

What archaeologists should keep doing is asking questions: nowadays, we truly are in the position to ask questions, given the accessibility of diverse mechanism that can provide answers. Some answers will come more easily and will be much less painful, while others will cause more headaches, trials and errors.

Based on the large amount of data hidden in pottery material, and using an interdisciplinary approach to its processing, this book offers just some guidelines concerning the ways in which messages contained in a pottery vessel can be read and interpreted. At the end, I will repeat a sentence from chapter 8: *The task of archaeologists is to distinguish between what we know and what we can imagine about a ceramic vessel – which is, of course, also true of all other objects that belong to the past material culture of mankind.*