

**Zeitschrift:** Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte =  
Revue suisse d'art et d'archéologie = Rivista svizzera d'arte e  
d'archeologia = Journal of Swiss archeology and art history

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum

**Band:** 65 (2008)

**Heft:** 1-2: Internationaler Kongress CRAFTS 2007 : Handwerk und  
Gesellschaft in den römischen Provinzen = Congrès international  
CRAFTS 2007 : artisanat et société dans les provinces romaines

**Artikel:** Roman workshops in Poetovio (Panonnia)

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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-169816>

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# Roman Workshops in Poetovio (Panonnia)

by MOJCA VOMER GOJKOVIČ

Through centuries a merchant road, the so called Amber Road, winded in the valley between the hills of Haloze and Slovenske gorice, in the north-east part of today's Slovenia. It enabled the formation of settlements at the strategic crossing over the Drava River.

Poetovio,<sup>1</sup> the permanent settlement of legions contributed to a faster development of the area outside the camp fortifications where at peacetime the civilian settlement slowly began to develop into a strong commercial-tradesmen's centre.

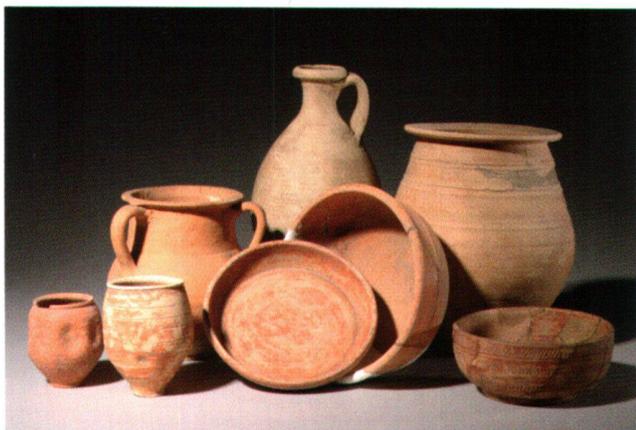


Fig. 1 Poetovio's ceramic production.

The economic prosperity is well visible. Rabelčja vas, the commercial-tradesmen's suburb of Poetovio, experienced its first prosperity in the era of the emperor Vespasian.

The early phase of the Roman era ends with the foundation of the town under Traianus, who displaced the military command to Vindobona and granted Poetovio self-governing rights together with a high town administrative rang of a colony. Traianus also gave the Poetovio's town tenure a cadastral register and he furthermore colonized the veterans of merit in Poetovio.

At that time the town was developing and spreading on both sides of the Drava River with a large hinterland and was divided into four quarters: the craft and administrative quarters on the left river bank, and the rich, spiritual and store quarters on the right river bank.<sup>2</sup> It soon became one of the biggest centres in Pannonia.<sup>3</sup>

In Poetovio various artisans' workshops have been found, some of them had a tradition even before the Roman era. Due to its strategic location, Poetovio had numerous economic advantages, which were not only visible in the wealth of its inhabitants but also in the variety of economic branches. One of these branches was obviously the pottery industry.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the town became the centre of Illyrian customs and an important harbour for the rich Pohorje hinterland from where timber, stone and ore were shipped to



Fig. 2 Smelting-pots, Spodnja Hajdina near Ptuj.

numerous industrial and manufacturing centres. Poetovio boasted countless craft workshops and powerful administration.

Poetovio had its heyday in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. Numerous craftsmen's workshops give evidence about the economic significance of Poetovio. The ceramic production had to be started in Poetovio already at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century which is proved by local copies of Italic *terra sigillata*, it culminates in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century with large potter's and brick production workshops.<sup>4</sup> The variety of ceramic products from the Roman Poetovio can be observed on their form and applicability.

The already mentioned pottery workshops hastened the development of pottery, which became the leading industry of the utmost importance in Poetovio. The majority of pottery workshops were situated on the left river bank along

the main road from Celeia to Savaria a tradesman's quarter, but a few number of the very first pottery kilns were found in the immediate vicinity of the military camp.<sup>5</sup> At first small potter's, respectively, brick production workshops<sup>6</sup> with rich clay deposit produced large quantities of pottery and bricks that was sufficient for the needs of neighbouring towns and provinces (fig. 1).

Different craftsmen mentioned in the town; shoemakers, blacksmiths, leather-workshops, glass-workshops,<sup>7</sup> metal-workshops<sup>8</sup> and other craftsmen established in the area. In the town quarter *Vicus Fortunae* on the right side of Drava River was found also a smelting-plant (fig. 2), in an administrative quarter existed a production of bone objects.

There were also discovered the traces of other trades. The Drava River was also navigable at that time and connected the town with places upwards and downwards the river. On the river and its tributaries heavy stone blocks were transported from Pohorje and from places situated in its upper stream. The marble from Pohorje, carved in Poetovio, also contributed to the wealth of this Roman provincial town. In the stonemason's workshops of Poetovio typical products had been produced that were then transported on the Drava River downwards.<sup>9</sup>

Very important was trading with marble products from quarries from the Pohorje Mountains and ceramic manufactured goods to other Roman provinces.

#### NOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> MIHOVIL ABRAMIČ, *Poetovio. Führer durch die Denkmäler der römischen Stadt*, Wien 1925. – MOJCA VOMER GOJKOVIČ, *Quarters of Roman Poetovio. Building complexes in different parts of Ptuj*, in: *Histria Antiqua* 11, Pula 2003, S. 221–227.
- <sup>3</sup> JANA HORVAT / MILAN LOVENJAK / ANDREJA DOLENC VIČIČ / MARIJA LUBŠINA-TUŠEK / MARJANA TOMANIČ-JEVREMOV / ZORKA ŠUBIČ, *Poetovio, Development and Topography*, in: MARJETA ŠAŠEL KOS / PETER SCHERRER (Hrsg.), *The Autonomous Towns of Noricum and Pannonia*, in: *Situla* 41, Ljubljana 2003, S. 153–189.
- <sup>4</sup> MOJCA VOMER GOJKOVIČ, *Lončarsko-opekarska delavnica v rimski obrtniški četrti na Ptuj / The Pottery-tile Workshop in the Roman Craft Quarter in Ptuj*, in: *Ptujski arheološki zbornik*, Ptuj 1993, S. 449–480.
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- <sup>6</sup> ZORKA ŠUBIČ, *Kompleks rimskih opekarskih peči v Ptuj*, in: *Arheološki vestnik* 19, Ljubljana 1968, S. 445–472.
- <sup>7</sup> IRENA LAZAR, *Rimsko steklo Slovenije / The Roman Glass of Slovenia*, in: *Opera Instituti archaeologici Sloveniae* 7, Ljubljana 2003, S. 219–230.
- <sup>8</sup> ZORKA ŠUBIČ, *Spodnja Hajdina*, in: *Varstvo spomenikov* 17–19/1, Ljubljana 1974, S. 152.
- <sup>9</sup> BOJAN DJURIČ, *The End of Roman Quarrying on Pohorje*, in: *Collection Of International Scientific Symposium Ptuj in the Roman Empire, Mithraism and its Era (= Archaeologia Poetovionensis 2)*, Ptuj 2001, S. 61–70. – BOJAN DJURIČ, *V Saksanovem svetu / In Saxonus' Welt*, in: MOJCA VOMER GOJKOVIČ (vgl. Anm. 1), S. 150–167.

#### PHOTO CREDIT

Fig. 1–2: Photoarchives of Regional Museum Ptuj.

#### SUMMARY

In the Roman era, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, *Poetovio* with its surroundings represented an important production centre of various trades, the ceramic and tile products belong to the most important ones.

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In römischer Zeit zwischen dem 1. und 5. Jahrhundert n. Chr. war *Poetovio* und seine Umgebung ein bedeutendes Produktionszentrum für verschiedene Handwerke, unter denen als wichtigste die Töpferei und Ziegelbrennerei zu nennen sind.

#### RÉSUMÉ

A l'époque romaine, entre le I<sup>er</sup> et le V<sup>e</sup> siècle, *Poetovio* et ses environs constituaient un centre important de production et d'activités commerciales, parmi lesquelles la fabrication de céramiques et de tuiles occupe une place de tout premier plan.

#### RIASSUNTO

In epoca romana, dal I al V secolo, *Poetovio* e le zone limitrofe erano un importante centro di produzione, dove, fra i vari settori, quelli della ceramica e della produzione di laterizi erano particolarmente importanti.