

TRADITIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND ITS VARIATIONS APPLIED IN MAKING BREAD BAKING PANS IN THE STARA PLANINA MT. (SERBIA)

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“Every home has its own customs, not to speak of a village.”

A bread baking pan maker from Gluovo, Macedonia (M. Filipović 1951)



Project *Intangible heritage:
Ethnoarchaeological
Researches of Traditional
Technologies of Ceramic
Production*
Investigations 2009–2011

36 villages
90 interviewed persons,
mostly women



Crepulja – bread baking pan

Female pottery

“This is women’s obligatory job, the same as knitting of stockings, weaving, washing, kneading and cooking are” (Petrović P. Ž. 1936: 21)



Three stages of the technological process:

1. Digging, transferring of clay and preparation of clay for treading
2. Treading of clay until it becomes a plastic body
3. Shaping of the clay body, initial drying and “baking” of bread baking pans



Choice of Day for treading bread baking pans

- Feast day dedicated to a powerful saint:

St. Nicholas (22nd May)

St. Elisha's Day (27th June)

St. Vid's Day (28th June)

St. Peter's Day (12th July)

St. Elijah (2nd August)

Nativity of the Mother of God Day
(21st September) etc.

- Any other appropriate day, mainly during warm weather period – from late spring to early autumn, depending of the households' needs.



Duration of bread baking pan making process

One to several days.
Depends on the distance
and accessibility of clay
mines and characteristic of
the available clay.



Clay mines, extraction and transportation of clay

- Mines – usually in the vicinity of villages
- One village could use clay from various mines
- Extraction by digging; sometimes digging out several meters deep holes
- Taking back in bags and sacks, carried on shoulders, horses, and carts



Clay mines

The best clay mines are in the village areas of:

- Visočki Odorovci
- Moinci
- Senokos
- Rosomač
- Dojkinci
- Velike Lukanje
- Zavoj
- Pokrevenik
- Topli Do



Clay descriptions

- Reddish without a trace of white clay and sand
- Reddish with traces of white clay
- Reddish with traces of fat clay
- White clay
- White-yellowish clay
- Greenish clay
- Fat clay
- Sandy clay etc.

The exact composition of clays is still unknown.

Mixing clay from two or three sites is often and makes it easy to achieve the desired plasticity of clay.

Place for treading

Depending on local tradition:

- Crossroads
- Roads
- Streets
- Courtyards
- Gates
- Live rocks in a public place
- Bridges
- Rivers or threshing floors
- Stables
- Room with hearth



Spaska Jovanović from Gostuša showing the place of treading in the courtyard

Preparation of clay

- Drying
- Sieving
- Cleaning impurities
- Clay gathered in heaps on flat surface
- Water (warm or cold) poured over it
- “Ageing” of clay (one hour to several days)



Treading of bread baking pans

- Work in group, mostly three or any other odd number of participants; *one exception from Petrlaš: only female members of one family
- Beginning at dawn
- Treading of prepared clay
- Adding of tempers
- Treading of clay with tempers (one to several days)
- Adding water during treading (cold or hot) usually making a hole from the top to the bottom of the pile or over a pile without hole
- Covering of clay during the preparation over the night (with large leaves of plant called *čobanka* or with sheets)
- Beating of clay during preparation - exceptionally



Tempers

- Goat's hairs (in 45 cases)
- Horse's hairs (in 7 cases)
- Cattle hairs (in 13 cases)
- Pig's bristle (in 11 cases)
- Tow – short or longer (in 64 cases)
- Straw (in 16 cases)
- Chaff (in 33 cases)
- Dung (in 2 cases)
- Salt (in 7 cases)



Straw in the structure of the bread baking pan from Temska

Combinations

- Goats hair – tow
 - Pig's bristle – tow – chaff
 - Hairs (pig's or horse's) – chaff
 - Goat's hair – dung - tow
- Etc.

Local recipes

For ten bread baking pans:

- Zavoj:

- less than one basket of goat's hairs
- more than one basket of short tow
- about one basket of chaff

- Gostuša:

- one *mernik* (wooden recipient, 10 kg volume) of oat straw



For fifteen bread baking pans:

- Protopopinci:

- One bag of raw horse dung

Treading

Group of women tread the clay moving in rounds as if dancing, in slow and rhythmic steps while using one leg to tread the clay and the other to lean on. After a time the clay would be turned over, gathered into a heap and the procedure would be repeated.



Shaping of bread baking pans

Experienced women would model the clay, on the earthen floor or on a surface covered with ash (or small chaff) in the place in which pans will later dry. Rarely a wooden board was used for that.

The entire process was made by hand, without any tool. Clay body was shaped flat. The rim was built by holding the ends of the clay with one hand (usually the left one) and with the right one pulling the clay body or pushing it from the center to the ends so as to form a frame – walls of a bread baking pan.



Shaping of bread baking pans

One palm is open and the other could be open too or could form a fist.

Only seldom walls of a pan would be made by adding a new batch of clay formed as a roller and pressed into the bottom (one case in Dojkinici village).



Dimensions

Wall thickness 3 – 5 cm

Height of the pan 7 – 13 cm

Diameter of the bottom 25 – 60 cm



Finishing and Decoration

- The finished pan would be burnished by wet hands using clean water or was coated with rarified mud. This could also be done with watered dung.
- The only decoration on bread baking pans, and it's not a rule, is the finger printed cross at the bottom
- Its purpose is more protective than decorative.



Drying

- Process could last from several days to several months.
- The place for drying depended on the characteristics of the clay.
- In some villages, during the first few days of drying bread baking pan was coated with diluted cow-dung, in order to avoid cracking of the vessel.

Firing

Female bread baking pans were not fired before their first use.

Their first use was the beginning of their firing.

The inside of bread baking pan was turned toward the hearth, placed on supports and heated on fire or in hot embers until the pans whitened.



Lids

- The use of ceramic lids not remember even the oldest woman from the Stara planina mountain



Supports (*popovi, popovčići*)

- Objects mostly shaped as truncated cone
- height 8 – 10 cm
- Support for the bread baking pan or any vessel placed on the hearth
- Weaving weights



Ovens

- All households with more members had a bread oven.
- Capacity of about ten loafs of breads, covering the weekly consumption.
- Support for the arch is made of elm wood, hazel wood rarely, sticks to the bottom side coated with a thick layer of clay.
- During the burning brushwood and burned remains of the vault of baking clay.
- They were made by men and women.
- They are now replaced by brick bread ovens made by men.



