

Decorative styles of Gaulish Samian ware

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MUNDANELY KNOWN AS CASEY STALTER



What is Samian Pottery

Also known by the names: Roman red-gloss pottery, Terra Sigillata ware, redware, red-glazed ware

Made from fine red earthen clay (the finer the clay the higher quality) coated in a fine slip (terra sigillata) and fired to produce a shiny appearing gloss on the final piece

Used throughout the areas of Roman influence from the late 1st century to the early 4th century A.D.

Made in a variety of standard shapes (i.e. cups, vases, bowls, and other vessels)

Made in various locations throughout the Roman empire and exported throughout the areas of Roman influence

Different locations are found to have produced wares with unique designs and styles

Four main decorative techniques: incised, barbotine, applied, relief-molded

Roman Gaul Region

Comprised the territory of Western Europe roughly equivalent to the modern day country as France.

Southern Gaul annexed as a roman Province in 121 BCE and consolidated under Augustus in 27-10 BCE. (Gregg, 2024)

Gaulish Pottery workshops (officinae) expanded with the growth of Rome in to the region

- Starting in Southern Gaul in La Graufesenque, Montans, Banassac, and around Millau
- Expanded to Central Gaul in the valley of the Allier, Les Martres de Veyre, and Lezoux
- Further expanded to Eastern Gaul encompassing scattered sites including Trier, and Rheinzabern (Johns, 1971)

Pottery was exported out of these regions throughout the Roman empire being found in Pompeii, Britian, Spain, and North Africa



Clay & Terra sigillata slip

Earthenware clay with high Iron content and fine platelet particles

The clay supply was likely near or within a short distance from various workshops

Clay was dug out of pits in quarries instead of underground

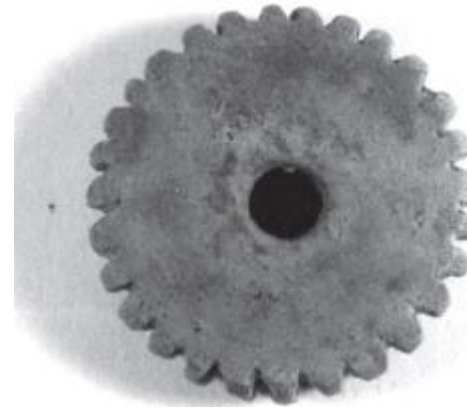
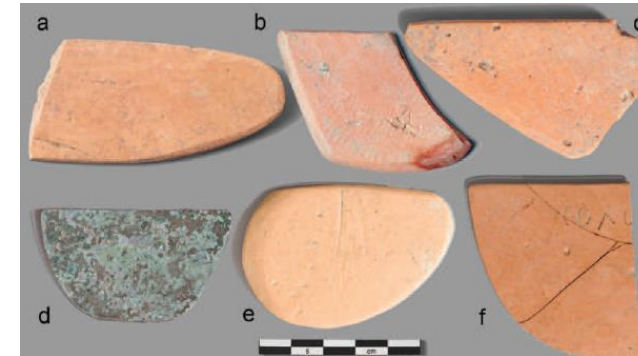
Slip created by adding deflocculant to water and clay

Roman Pottery Hand Tools

Tools which are held in the hand and used to build, shape, and decorate pottery pieces

Identification of pottery tools can be difficult

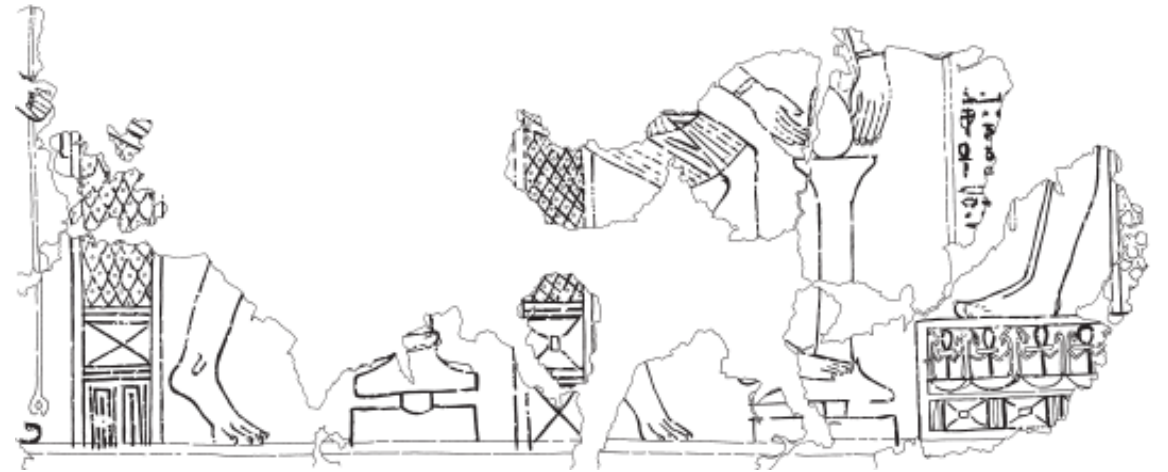
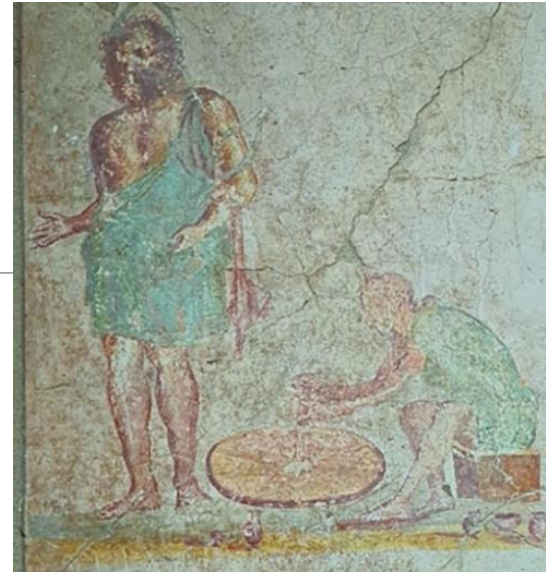
Stamps, polishing items, roulette wheel, ribs, point tools, slip trailer knife, chuck



Roman Pottery Wheels

Bulk of Roman pottery was produced on a fast wheel

Wheel type foot/kick wheels, hand wheels, or stick wheels

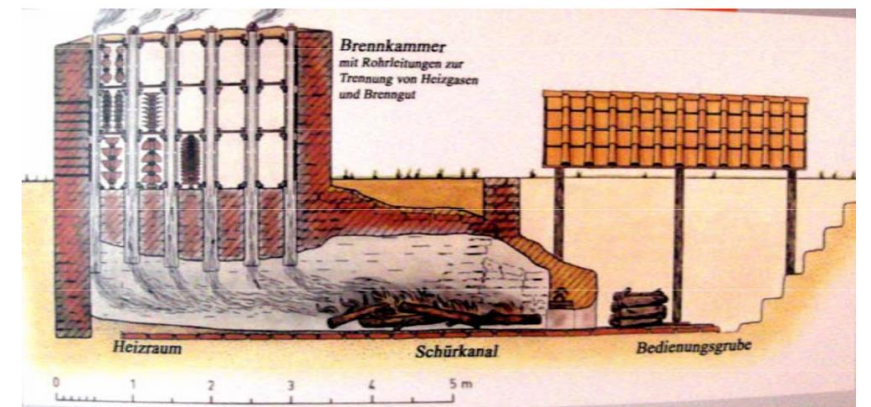


Roman Samian Kiln

Updraft kiln

Pipes to keep the smoke away from the vessels and control heat

Pieces fired to a temperature of 1000 C to 1100 C



Incised

Also called cut-glass, as this technique resembles cut glass vessels of the same period

It generally consists of star or leaf patterns cut out of the vessel



Barbotine

Also called slip-trailing method

Using slip (a liquid clay) on a finished piece to produce a design



Applied/Appiqué

One of less-common of the decorative styles used on Gaulish or Arretine ware

Decoration elements are cast/molded separately and then individually affixed using slip to the main vessel



Relief- Molded

One of the most well-known decorative styles of the Samian and Arrentine wares

Vessel formed by pressing clay into a decorated mold



Application of Terra sigillata slip

Dip or brush dried wares into slip

Burnish between layers (optional)

Dry and repeat four to six times

Allow a final drying and then fire in Kiln

Conclusion

Could have been completed using an assembly style method

Technique is highly efficient with pieces produced with only minutes of hands-on time

Research leads to more questions