

THE POTTERY SUPPLY OF DUISBURG, RHINELAND,  
IN THE NINTH - TENTH CENTURY

Antje Kluge-Pinsker  
Seminar für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main

Summary

This paper discusses a local pottery production in Duisburg of the 9th and 10th centuries. An attempt is made to show how this production developed and how it successfully competed with imported Vorgebirge ceramics. Two sources of the local pottery are discussed - one from kilns in Duisburg and the other from the settlement itself.

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Duisburg is situated on the east bank of the Rhine, a hundred kilometres north of the widely known Vorgebirge production centres around Badorf and Pingsdorf, between Bonn and Cologne.

In 1978/79 and 1981 two abandoned pottery kilns (filled with the waste of a subsequent production phase) were found in the city of Duisburg (Tromnau, 1983). The pottery found had been recognised before and called 'Ruhrmündungsware' (Tischler 1944-50) but the site of production had not been known. The distribution of the pottery within the kilns leads to the conclusion that the pots had already been broken and mixed before they were deposited in the kilns. It seems probable that each of the two collections represents the production of only a year or so.

The second main source of information presented here consists of contemporaneous pottery from the associated settlement of Duisburg, around 800 metres west of the pottery production site on the former Rhine bank. The recent excavations (Krause 1983), though done rapidly during construction works, brought to light a reasonable amount of 9th/10th century pottery from waste pits, wells, ditches and sunken featured huts. Due to excavation circumstances, these features could not be fitted into a stratigraphic sequence. Comparisons between the pottery groups from the different contexts, however, give us some idea about the development of the pottery supply in an early medieval village during the first century of its existence.

In the settlement, the local pottery with its very distinct fabric (Tischler 1944-50; van Es *et al* 1984, 8) can be easily distinguished from the high quality imported pottery, which comes mainly from the Vorgebirge area. For the period of time in question (the 9th and 10th centuries), the ratio of the major subgroups of the Vorgebirge pottery are relevant as different stages of local production can be related to characteristic collections of imported wares (Fig. 4). So far it is possible to sketch the following picture: a village was set up on the east bank of the Rhine near the mouth of the Ruhr around the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th century, perhaps by royal initiative. Local production of pottery must have started almost

immediately, using the clay deposits about 1.5 kilometres to the east of the village. The first vessel type produced there was a uniform, crude, handmade cooking pot - its crudeness being unique in this period and area (Fig. 1). It was used mainly alongside the Vorgebirge pottery of the classic Badorf type and Hunneschans ware. The hard-fired Mayen fabric only appears in very small numbers (and was therefore omitted from Fig. 4). This range of imported pottery can be compared to that of the later occupation of the Dorestad harbour area (pot types WI, II, I/II, rarely III) (van Es *et al* 1984).

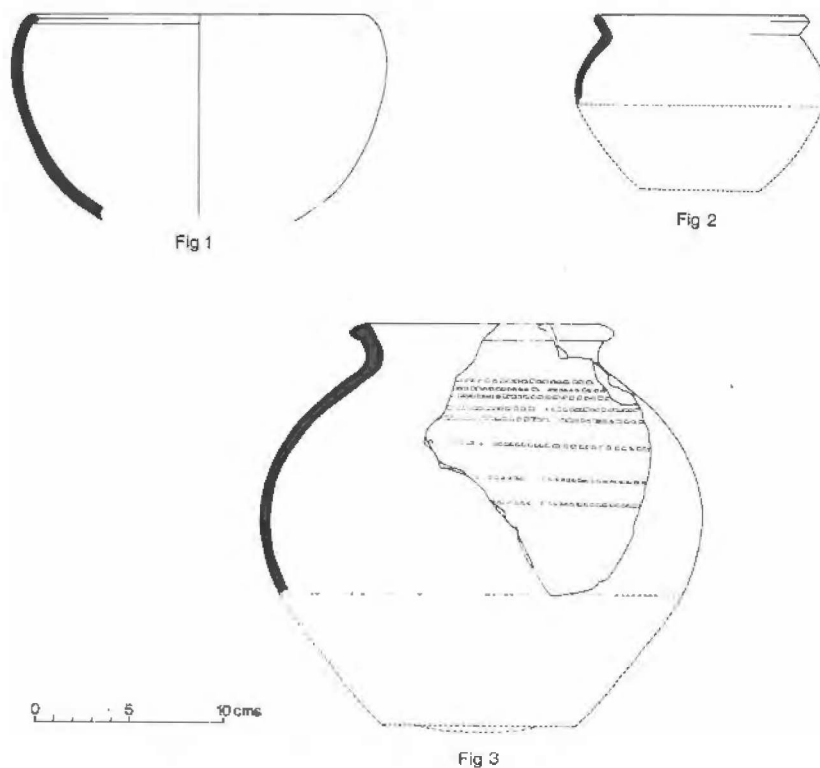


Fig. 1. handmade, local pottery  
first half 9th century

Fig. 2. local pottery, (partly) wheel-made  
mid - second half 9th century

Fig. 3. wheel-thrown, local pottery  
end 9th/first half 10th century

The quality of the local pottery was improved by using the wheel for finishing the pots. The vessel shape of this period is globular with a distinct rim and a flat base (Fig. 2). The pots are rarely decorated though some have an incised wavy line on the shoulder. The local production seems to have covered about half the demand of the local market, the rest still being met by the Vorgebirge

Context 1

Context 2

Context 3

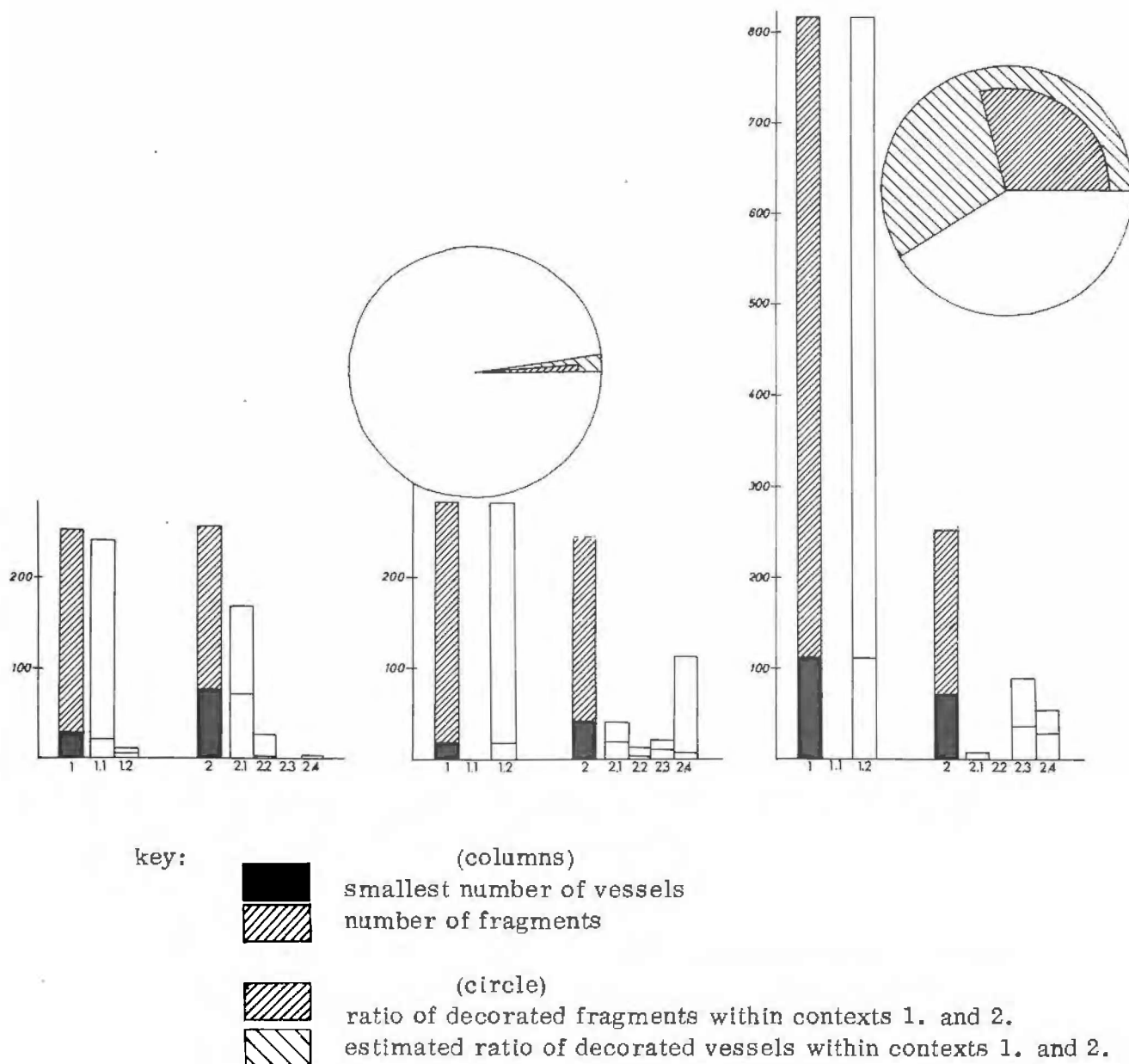


Fig. 4. Development of pottery supply in Duisburg.  
Distribution of local and imported pottery in  
three representative contexts:

1. first half 9th cent., 2. second half 9th cent.,
3. end 9th-beginning 10th cent.

- pottery groups:
1. Duisburg, total ... including
    - 1.1. handmade
    - 1.2. finished on wheel, wheel-thrown
  2. Vorgebirge, total ... including
    - 2.1. Badorf
    - 2.2. Hunneschans
    - 2.3. Early painted pottery
    - 2.4. Reliefbandamphorae

products including Badorf rouletted pots, Hunneschans ware and early painted pottery (Fig. 4, context 2). At this time the Duisburg potters did not produce a storage vessel which could replace the imported Reliefbandamphorae.

The major stage of production which followed is represented by the two pottery collections from the kiln fillings. These products were entirely wheel-made, with slightly sagging bases and typically rouletted (Fig. 3). Within the associated imported pottery groups the early painted wares clearly predominate over the rouletted Badorf pottery (Fig. 4, context 3). The local potter also now produced a large storage vessel of Reliefbandamphora dimensions, though both locally-produced and imported storage vessels continued to be used in the settlement. By the end of the 9th/beginning of the 10th century, however, the local products supplied most of the settlement's demands.

The two collections from the kiln fillings are very similar in many respects. A closer look, however, reveals differences which might reflect small changes in pottery production over a short period. For example, no individual stamp could be found in both collections. This later production of wheel-thrown pottery consists mainly of one type of globular cooking pot which was produced in a large range of sizes (Fig. 3). The large storage vessels represent a smaller distinct group. Only about 0.5% of the cooking pots have a spout and handle, and the percentage of flat-based bowls amounts to less than 0.3%.

It seems clear that the local potter took over the market for simple domestic pottery. The more prestigious demand was covered by the high quality imported wares, which were mostly equipped with a spout and handles to be used as pouring vessels. With the exception of the large storage vessels, the local potter never attacked this exclusive market. One reason might be that the only available clays near Duisburg cannot be fired to very high temperatures and fire to basic brownish colours, thus limiting the potter's ambition.

The production of wheel-made pottery in Duisburg ended during the 10th century. The transition to the production of high and late Medieval handmade Kugeltöpfe, (which may have been produced at a site south of Duisburg (Tischler 1944-50, 79) ), has yet to be explained. The very local character of the early medieval pottery production in Duisburg is indicated by the high ratio of imports in Duisburg and by the fact that the percentage of Duisburg pottery diminishes rapidly with increasing distance from its origin. One is unlikely to find a single sherd of it in Cologne, the market for the Vorgebirge pottery.

The distribution of the Duisburg pottery seems to be contained within an area about 50 kilometres in diameter (there is one more distant site (Janssen 1970) ). The initiation of this local pottery production, however, was almost certainly in response to the demand for cheap domestic pottery in Duisburg itself.

## REFERENCES

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