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brush and a can containing water is all she needs to make *tinajas* and *ollas*. Most of Crucita's pieces are pinched, but the tall ones she builds in coils. After completing a series of them, she waits until they are leather hard, then she trims the bottoms and the sides with a flat piece of wood, smooths the surface down with a pebble that she keeps by her side, and then applies a dark red terra sigillata. She burnishes each piece about eleven times, until it feels soft and looks shiny. She carves it later with nature-inspired designs. Following this process, Crucita stores her pieces in her cool workshop until they are almost bone dry. The morning of the day of the firing, she sets her creations out in the tropical sun (usually about 87°F) to dry before they go into the kiln she herself built out of clay.

Her kiln consists of a clay dome-shaped chamber with an opening in front and two small orifices, one on top and one on the back with which she controls the temperature. During the firing, Crucita covers the front of her kiln with a piece of tin. The firing process takes one-half to one hour, depending on the quality of wood. "The better the wood is, the faster the pieces will be fired."

While trimming a piece, Crucita talks to me and to one of her neighbors who happened to drop by to drink some dark, sweet coffee. When I ask them if their husbands help them with their work, they both laugh at my naiveté on this matter; and Crucita replies that "men do not make *tinajas*; this is women's work." The stereotype does not seem to intimidate this powerful woman who is the economic supporter of the family and the preserver of a fading craft. Her

tinajas and *ollas* lined up by her side are listening to her; she brought them to life.

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A MACEDONIAN POTTERY VILLAGE

I received a Fulbright Student Grant in 1992 to study folk pottery in Bulgaria. I learned immediately that village pottery had not been a continuous tradition and was in a state of decline like so much village pottery around the world. During 1946 almost all private businesses were forced to stop operation, including most potter's studios, which were padlocked. Some Bulgarian potters attempted to form larger cooperative studios in which they produced low quality porcelain but many found other work. In the early 1960s the communist government created a structure in which artisans could create and market pottery, weavings, embroideries, etc., for sale in government stores. This pottery is esteemed by Bulgarians for its more precise and uniform character, compared to the work made for village needs before 1946.

While in Bulgaria I conducted my research through interviews. By visiting villages around the perimeter of Bulgaria, I was able to get a clearer idea of turn-of-the-century operations in this entire region of the Balkans. In the neighboring Republic of Macedonia, which had been part of Yugoslavia, there still exists one village that produces pottery of the type formerly used in villages in Bulgaria. What follows is a short portrait of one family's pottery operation in the village of Vraneshtitsa,

Macedonia, located about 80 kilometers north of the city of Ohrid.

The Jovevski Family

Pottery making in the village of Vraneshtitsa is a family enterprise, with all members contributing in some way to the production process. I became acquainted with a family selling their wares at a market in Ohrid, Macedonia, and was invited to visit their home and studio. The population of Vraneshtitsa is about 850. In 1993 there were approximately 38 men working as potters and about 10 jokingly referred to as "on reserve". As had been the case for centuries in poorer areas in the Balkans, men seek work in other regions, then return to the village for part of the year.

The Jovevski household has about 10 members that are supported by their pottery production. Tsane and his brother Tsvetan Jovevski began learning pottery from their father when they were about 12 years old. After finishing seventh grade, they worked with their father full time; now they each have young children and teenagers, of which the oldest boys are beginning to throw ashtrays and flowerpots. Their grandfather, though still working, doesn't assist with throwing or even answer questions. He makes glaze, helps load the kiln and sands the finished work. Women in the family would never dream of forming the pieces, but they are responsible for decorating the ware with leaves and flowers, using automotive enamel colors before market.

Production consists primarily of vessels for pouring and/or drinking, open casseroles, bean pots, small cups, vases,

flowerpots, ashtrays, and large decorative vase forms. The ubiquitous *stomna* is used for transporting and drinking water. It has a tall neck and water is sucked out of what is called the "nipple" at the top of a hole going down through the lower part of the handle like a straw. In many Balkan villages, the form of the spouted *ebrik* (used by Muslims for washing in the bathroom) has been adopted for serving and drinking *rakia*—grape brandy popularized during the occupation of the Ottoman empire. I also encountered some Macedonian drinking vessels with fluted tops that I was told would be shared among friends. Other interesting forms include the *grgalka* (a *stomna* with numerous handles), doll pitchers and whistle-*stomni*.

Techniques

Clay.

Potters in Vraneshtitsa haul clay from one of several holes located about 10 minutes walking distance from the village. The clays are of different raw colors including pink, tan, deep red, white and yellow. The pink and tan are mixed to make the clay body. Others are for slip decoration. Before throwing, the potter will soften the clay by dropping it through a machine with two large rollers like those on a wringer washer. The clay is thrown onto the ground and is nicely pliable for wedging and throwing.

The slip clays are collected in small amounts and dried out. Water is added and they are stirred with a brush until smooth. These are slip-trailed as dots, circles, wavy lines, and writing over dry greenware with a piece of straw or a chicken feather. Sometimes a clay slip cup or cow's horn holds larger

amounts. When available, a green colorant is added to the slip. A Slovenian-produced stain had been available until the war in Yugoslavia began. In the past, green from copper oxide had been prepared by firing thin, worn-out copper utensils in an empty pot, then powdering the remains.

Glazes.

The colored slips are coated with a clear lead glaze. A shiny, opaque black glaze is also used, made from ground manganese and possibly cobalt. The potters burn the ore several times in successive firings to oxidize it, then powder it in a "butter churn". After the colorants are combined, the color is tested by the grandfather in a little campfire in the fire box. He sees the results in about twenty minutes. The glaze base recipe is: 1000 grams waste lead from a battery factory, plus 200 grams white rock (silica) from near Bitola.

Paint.

Experts disagree on when Vraneshitsa potters started to decorate with paint even after slip and glaze came into use. Some villagers said twenty years ago for the paint; historians said early in this century. Older villagers informed me that all the pottery used to be the color of sand with transparent green, brown or black glaze, like the flowerpots they currently make. Even glazing was an innovation remembered by some. They said their pots sold better with it. In my experience, the objects produced in Vraneshitsa differed not only from house to house, but from the beginning of the century until now, in order to suit a changing and shrinking market.

Firing.

The characteristically wide and shallow kilns in this village are

made from brick, stone or a combination of the two. Firing is done once a week, usually in the evenings by each of the Jovevski brothers, who share their father's kiln. Pottery gets loaded in the early afternoon. They single-fire glazed items without using shelves. Terracotta saggars hold smaller items and sit between the numerous flues on the kiln floor. Stacked around them are the *grgalki*, the bottles with numerous handles, leaning on the wall upside down. Their glazed lips rest on little pieces of flint rock which break off easily after firing, leaving almost no mark of the firing. All items are gently stacked on top of one another—strongest parts touching in three places. Small flint pieces separate any glazed surfaces that touch. A few large flat shards serve as shelves to help start a new row. The pottery is stacked almost to the top edge of the kiln and topped with several layers of shards to keep the heat in. Wood fuels the kilns.

The firings I witnessed started from candling to peak temperature, and ranged from an astonishingly-short three and one-half hours to six hours for firing glazed greenware. The Jovevskis informed me that they need to reach 750 degrees Centigrade, and they know when that occurs by the color in the kiln and the shine on the glaze. The reason they are able to single-fire complex glazed greenware forms is because they first thoroughly dry out the pieces on top of, and later inside, a small wood stove. This process lasts about an hour for each piece. Glazing happens later when convenient. Women generally unload the kiln after firing, and this occurs eight hours after peak temperature has been reached. If two

glazed pots stick together, water is splashed on them for separation, and if necessary they are pried apart with a knife. Very few seconds result. The pieces are easily sanded with brick, and minor flaws are touched up with the auto paint.

Marketing.

The Jovevski brothers have two kick wheels next to each other, all in the same room with the clay wringer, a stove, a bed and a few shelves as well as a stockpile of clay. They alternate working and firing in the family kiln. At the markets they sell next to each other. Each family produces different wares according to their interests and to suit their various sales territories. Marketing outlets have diminished and some older residents have barns full of production they cannot sell. Since the war began in the former Yugoslavia, tourism is slow, economic ties are unreliable, and there is a lack of job stability for the local people. I encountered one maverick entrepreneur who was seeking a market for three-foot-high decorative vases spray-painted with gold lacquer, as a sideline business for his tiny grocery.

In Vraneshitsa only the oldest potters can remember when guilds existed. Before WWII, pottery guilds had been powerful and well organized. They assured their members that they would be able to compete with industrially manufactured goods coming from Western Europe, and made sure wares were exported as widely as possible. Guilds examined apprentices and journeymen and awarded master's documents, without which one would not be allowed to work. No official permission is needed now.

Ritual Uses For Wares

Stomni (plural for *stomna*) and similar vessels are made for the tourist trade and ritual purposes. Though rituals vary, pottery is used for special occasions such as weddings, funerals and certain holidays. For example, at a Vraneshitsa wedding, the bride fills three *stomni* with *rakia*, or plum brandy. After the guests pass these around and finish off the brandy, the *stomni* are broken for luck and happiness. At a funeral, water is poured on the grave by the priest and family members who have brought it in a vessel appropriate to the age and sex of the deceased. For a child, the *stomna* will be small and usually have a whistle attached as a toy. For females, the *stomni* have one handle; two for males. Sometimes these are given at the time of the funeral to a person who has characteristics similar to the one who has died. Custom dictates that water be poured on the grave each day (or on certain days) for the first 40 days after the death. Sometimes the *stomni* are broken and left on the grave after the 40th day or, possibly, just taken home and used. Surviving friends and family pour water on the grave on the Orthodox All Soul's Day in July. Potters make *stomni* all year in preparation for this.

Innovations

Many Vraneshitsa families do a big business in "doll" vessels and the four- or six-handled jugs called *grgalki*. The primary consumers for both types of vessels are tourists and local Muslims. According to villagers, they have been made for 20-25 years. (According to experts at the Skopje ethnographic museum, they have been made since the turn of the century). It is natural, when village men

traveled, as they do now for part of the year to work, that some Western European porcelain figurines filtered into these more isolated regions. Some were used to make molds directly from, or were imitated and then grafted onto the usual production. A few guilds and individuals acquired some of the necessary materials and technology to make more colorful and elaborate pieces, primarily from their contacts in Germany. Almost all antique Vraneshitsa pottery examples resting in museums bear some kind of fading paint.

Summary

In the Balkans, the arrival of Communist governments forced many pottery villages to either shut down or change radically how production was accomplished. This was painfully apparent in Bulgaria where my Fulbright was assigned. Luckily this isolated part of Yugoslavia escaped the full impact of the social reformation. I was able, therefore, to see into the recent history of traditional pottery, and enjoy the inevitable and fascinating evolution of the cultural continuum, while appreciating the variations between families and craftsmen. This opportunity to delve into the traditional not only helped me understand local materials and customs, but expanded enormously what I was learning through my study of Balkan Pottery.

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JANET DARNELL LEACH 1918-1997

Janet Leach was considered by many to be a British potter; however, she was born in Grand Saline, Texas on March 15, 1918. In 1938 she left Texas for New York City where she studied sculpture at the Art Students League and then worked as an assistant to Robert Cronbach on sculpture for the Federal Art Project. In 1947 she became interested in ceramics and worked at the Inwood Pottery, and later she attended a summer session at Alfred University.

Janet's life changed when she met Hamada Shoji in 1952 at Black Mountain College, where he was participating in a seminar with Bernard Leach and Yanagi Soetsu. She had gone there because Bernard Leach's *A Potter's Book* had been her guide in searching for the essence of "the good pot". When she saw Hamada in the workshop sitting cross-legged in front of a treadle wheel making pots, she knew she had found a new direction. Hamada would become her mentor.

She began a two-year correspondence with Bernard Leach,

who made arrangements in 1954 for her to work in Mashiko, Japan under Hamada's auspices. Janet was the first American woman to study pottery in Japan, where they were then unaccustomed to seeing women working on the potter's wheel. She was a curiosity and often was distracted from her work by newsmen. Hamada advised her to expand her experiences by going to Tamba. Later she traveled around Japan visiting rural potteries, including the workshops of Kawai and Tomimoto.

In 1956 she left Japan for England to marry Bernard Leach and settle in St. Ives, Cornwall. In the spirit of Japanese concepts of pottery, she developed a deep red and black clay, and whenever possible used natural materials found in Cornwall. She employed two traditional Japanese wheels and continued to use the coil-and-throw method learned in Japan.

After Bernard's death in 1979, Janet divided her time between establishing a St. Ives museum for his work and maintaining the Leach Pottery. In 1982 she fired the Pottery's last kiln load of standard ware. Freed of business responsibilities, she was once again able to concentrate on her own pots and, in her final years, to pursue "the good pot" and fulfill her career as a potter by making the kind of pots she had been striving to make all her life.

Janet died on September 12, 1997.

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