

# ROMAN LAMPS FROM THE EXTRAMURAL AREA OF AEGYSSUS

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**Abstract:** In 2018, a rescue excavation that took place in the town of Tulcea, Tulcea county, Romania, offered new data regarding the habitation in the area around the ancient fortification of Aegyssus. At the property situated on Berzei Street no. 3, several artifacts dating from the Hellenistic period and up to the Early Byzantine period were unearthed. In this paper, we will focus on the lamps discovered during this excavation, out of which 11 specimens were chosen for a more detailed discussion about their production, circulation and iconography.

**Rezumat:** În 2018, o săpătură de salvare care a avut loc în orașul Tulcea, județul Tulcea, România, a oferit noi date cu privire la locuirea din jurul fortificației antice Aegyssus. La proprietatea situată pe strada Berzei nr. 3, au fost descoperite mai multe artefacte datând din perioada elenistică până în perioada bizantină timpurie. În acest articol, ne vom concentra asupra lămpilor descoperite în cadrul acestei săpături, din care 11 exemplare au fost alese pentru o discuție mai detaliată despre producția, circulația și iconografia lor.

**Keywords:** Moesia Inferior, Roman lamps, ancient habitation, Aegyssus, local production.

**Cuvinte cheie:** Moesia Inferior, lămpi romane, locuire antică, Aegyssus, producție locală.

## INTRODUCTION

Under the Monument Hill, in the modern town of Tulcea, in Dobruja region, Romania, lay the ruins of the ancient city *Aegyssus*. Due to its geographical position (Fig. 1), the fortress played a significant strategic role in the defensive system of the Danubian *limes* for the majority of its existence under the Roman authority.

Down the hill, the extramural settlements are now completely covered, and unfortunately destroyed, by the modern houses and streets constructed in a chaotic urbanistic development. While the intramural area of *Aegyssus* continues to be studied through systematic archaeological research, it is only through rescue excavations that we can obtain new information regarding the development of communities from outside the city walls.

Over the years, these offered valuable evidence for the presence and evolution of extramural settlements, and the correlation of already acquired data with future finds will be of great help in constructing a more detailed overview. We briefly mention the previously conducted excavations at Gloriei Street no. 62<sup>1</sup> and Veseliei Street no. 9<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Nuțu, Costea 2010.

where important discoveries related to ancient habitation were made. In this paper, we will focus on another excavation situated in the vicinity of these plots, on Berzei Street, particularly on the lamps found there<sup>3</sup>.

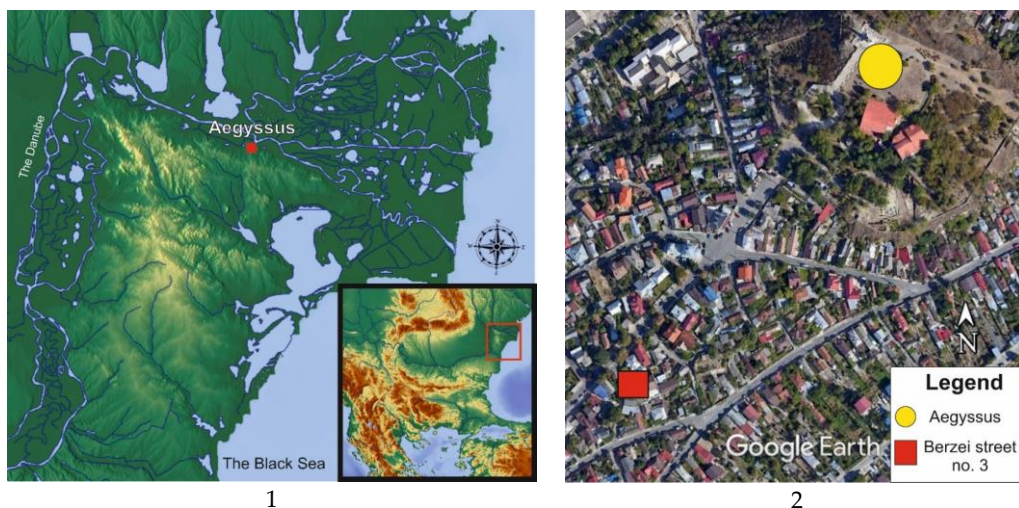


Fig. 1. Map of the geographical location of Aegyssus (1); The placement of Berzei Street no. 3 plot (2) (Google Earth).

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A rescue excavation was undertaken in the spring of 2018, at the property situated on Berzei Street no. 3 in Tulcea (Fig. 1), located at approximately 200 m south-west of the ancient city<sup>4</sup>. There, three sections oriented approximately on the east-west axis were excavated, in which the traces of two parallel walls, **Z1** and **Z2**, were found (Pl. 2). Unfortunately, these two segments were almost completely dismantled by modern interventions. Due to the recent habitation in the area, the ancient building was severely damaged, to the point in which the elevation and the functionality of this edifice is unknown.

Besides the two walls, other 13 archaeological features were unearthed, consisting of household pits and hearths. Almost all of the lamp fragments come from

<sup>2</sup> Paraschiv, Stănică 2004.

<sup>3</sup> From a total number of 18 fragmentary lamps we've selected 11 for this discussion, mainly because the poor state of preservation of the other 7 pieces does not allow us to group them in a typological category, nor could we draw any significant conclusions regarding them.

<sup>4</sup> This excavation was previously discussed in Mocanu, Nuțu 2023, 203-204 and in Nuțu 2022, 129-131.

the filling of one feature (Cx 12), a 2.65 × 2.15 m waste pit, where the most of the finds were also discovered. The depth at which the feature was discovered was -2.20/-2.30m. The pit itself is of semi-circular shape and stepped towards the center, with a depth of 1.30-1.50 m. The fill of the feature consists of brown soil with yellowish microlayers, brick pigment and ash<sup>5</sup>.

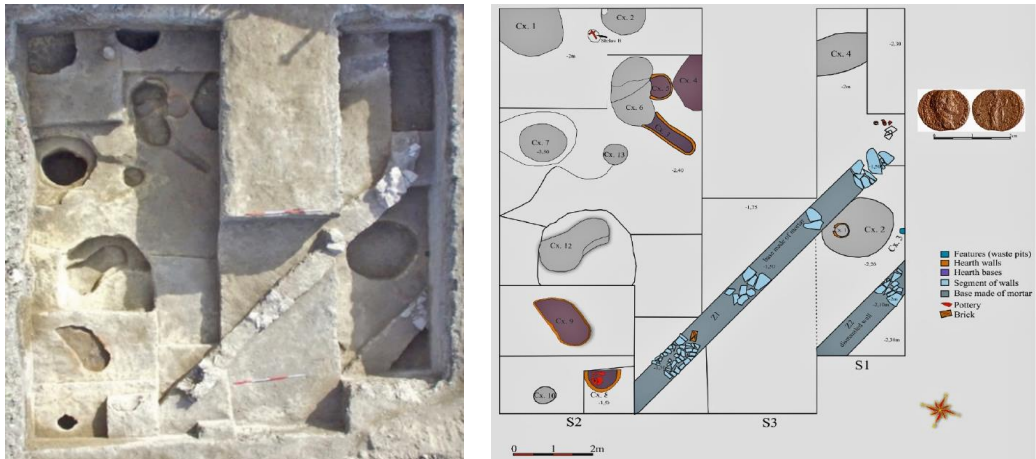


Fig. 2. Drone view and ground plan of the excavation (after Mocanu, Nuțu 2023, 214, Pl. II).

A coin issued by Antoninus Pius dates it to the middle/second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. Alongside the lamps, in Cx. 12 were found multiple pottery fragments of tableware, drinking vessels and terracotta figurines, as well as two pieces from a potential altar or a statute base<sup>6</sup>. The majority of the fragments can be dated to the first three centuries AD, mainly the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, but sporadic elements of Hellenistic and Late Roman period (4<sup>th</sup> century onwards) are present as well.

The finds from this survey correlate with the other rescue excavations mentioned above, located near the plot from Berzei Street no. 3, where archaeological materials from ancient habitation levels were also uncovered. However, it was only on the Berzei Street that ancient building structures were unveiled. At Gloriei Street no. 62 and Veseliei no. 9, both of them being located very near the plot on Berzei Street no. 3, a significant number of diverse pottery fragments were found. These excavations provide important evidence for the presence of extramural habitation, as well as the

<sup>5</sup> Mocanu, Nuțu 2023, 203-204; Nuțu 2022, 130-131.

<sup>6</sup> Nuțu 2022, 131-135.

influx of imported goods from different regions of the Roman Empire such as Asia Minor, Gaul, Greece, Italy, the Levant and Northern Africa<sup>7</sup> into the area.

## CATALOGUE

### A. Lamps with angular nozzle and volutes (Loeschcke Type I)

These lamps are amongst the earliest such products of the Roman imperial period, their manufacturing starting in the Italic Peninsula, at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and continuing up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. The angular nozzle is inspired by the lamps of the Hellenistic period, made initially in Greek workshops and, through trade, eventually reaching Italy where the romans made similar specimens<sup>8</sup>.

Two volutes accentuate the nozzle and separate it from the body of the lamps. The shoulder of these specimens is narrow, the discus is marked by one or multiple circular grooves and it is usually decorated by a variety of motifs. According to S. Loeschcke, a more precise chronology for the variants of this type can be proposed based on the shape of the nozzle and the size of it in relation with the rest of the lamp<sup>9</sup>. However, as D. M. Bailey points out, this approach should be made with caution<sup>10</sup>. The iconographic repertoire of this type is impressively various, with depictions of gods, mythological characters, everyday life, zoomorphic and naturalistic representations etc.

1. **Description:** Almost complete lamp, the handle is missing and the discus is broken. Circular small body, narrow shoulder with a circular incised groove separating it from the slightly concave discus. Some parts of the decoration are still barely noticeable, resembling the lower and upper parts of a staff (*thyrsus?*), but the representation is undistinguishable due to the poor preservation state. Short nozzle, flanked by volutes. Soot traces on the nozzle and the body. Flat ring-base. Poorly executed, made using worn moulds. The firing and the slip are uneven (Fig. 3/1).

**Context:** S I, Cx 4.

**Dimensions**<sup>11</sup>: L= 7.05 cm; W= 4.67 cm; H= 2.5 cm; Db= 2.3 cm; Dd=3.5 cm; Dfh= 1.1 cm; Dwh= 1.01 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 2.5YR 6/8 (light red).

**Dating:** 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD.

<sup>7</sup> See Mocanu 2023; Mocanu, Nuțu 2023; Nuțu, Costea 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Broneer 1930, 79.

<sup>9</sup> Loeschcke 1919, 24-26.

<sup>10</sup> Bailey 1980, 126.

<sup>11</sup> Abbreviations used for the dimensions in the catalogue: L= length; Lp= preserved length; W= width, Wp= preserved width; H= height; Hp= preserved height; Dd= discus diameter; Db= base diameter; Dfh= filling-hole diameter; Dwh= wick-hole diameter; Hw= handle width.

**Analogies:** Alicu, Nemeş 1977, 38, cat. no. 3, Pl. I/3; Кузманов 1992, 18, cat. no. 51; Loeschcke 1919, 25, Abb. 1/Type I variant B; Menzel 1969, 30, cat. no. 109, Abb27/1.

**Origin:** Provincial workshop.

## B. Lamps with rounded nozzle and volutes (Loeschcke Type IV)

Similar with the above-mentioned type, the main differences are the shape of the nozzle and the volutes. In the case of Loeschcke Type IV, the nozzle is circular, and both volutes have inverted tips, rather than just one inverted tip as in the case of Type I. Their production began in Italy in the early years of the Augustan period<sup>12</sup>, and they are found until the second half of the third century<sup>13</sup>. From a morphological point of view, lamps of this type have various shapes (the discus and the nozzle can vary in size and proportions) and the specimens can be with or without handles<sup>14</sup>. They were produced both in the western and eastern workshops.

2. **Description:** Almost complete lamp (part of the discus is broken), circular body, undecorated shoulder, slightly concave and broken discus, marked by three circular grooves. The decoration is still distinguishable and it depicts a centrally placed altar (*ara*) with flames on top, flanked by an *oinochoe* (to the right) and a *patera* (to the left). Ogival elongated nozzle, flanked by two rounded tip volutes with a trefoil motif in the middle. Filling-hole partially preserved, placed in the lower field. Pierced lamellar handle. Flat ring-base, with a *planta pedis* motif. Uniform slip and overall good quality (Fig. 3/2).

**Context:** S I, Cx 4.

**Dimensions:** L= 10.4 cm; W= 6.5 cm; H= 2.28 cm/3.63 cm; Db= 3.6 cm; Dd= 4.8 cm; Dwh= 1.10 cm; Hw= 0.8 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 10R 7/8 (light red); slip: 2.5YR 5/8 (red).

**Dating:** 1<sup>st</sup>- 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD.

**Analogies:** Identical in shape and decoration with two specimens from *Noviodunum*: Baumann 2009, 226, cat. no. 15 and 16.

**Origin:** Import (Italy?).

## C. Lamps with circular reservoir and short nozzle (Loeschcke Type VIII)

One of the most popular and wide spread types, its simple shape and the visual versatility offered by the discus resulted in a production of various specimens throughout all the Empire. At the same time, the diverse styles of the nozzle present in this type (circular, semi-circular, heart-shaped etc.) led to multiple established

<sup>12</sup> Loeschcke 1919, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Loeschcke 1919, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Bailey 1988, 154-183.

variants<sup>15</sup>. The lamps in our catalogue of which the nozzle or parts of it are still visible are of Loeschcke's H, K and R variants.<sup>16</sup>

3. **Description:** Fragmentary lamp, preserved in half. Circular body, undecorated narrow shoulder, slightly convex discus marked by a circular incised groove. On the discus part of the decoration is visible, resembling a curved tail and two legs of an animal (possibly a monkey). Short heart-shaped nozzle. Flat ring-base. Unevenly applied slip (Fig. 3/3).

**Context:** S I, Cx 4.

**Dimensions:** Lp= 6.56 cm; Wp= 3.4 cm; H= 2.4 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 5YR 6/1 (gray), slip: 7.5YR 4/1 (dark gray).

**Dating:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.

**Analogies:** Loeschcke 1919, Type VII; Ionomu 1967, type XX; Кузманов 1992, 26, cat. no. 142.

**Origin:** Import (?).

4. **Description:** Almost complete lamp, the nozzle and handle are missing and part of the discus is broken. Circular body, with a narrow, inclined shoulder decorated by a row of ovoids placed in a radial pattern. The discus is slightly concave, marked by two circular lines. Convex ring-base. Traces of soot from the usage of the lamps are visible in the nozzle area. Fine clay, with few mica and limestone inclusions. A thin layer of slip is still preserved (Fig. 3/4).

**Context:** S II, Cx 12.

**Dimensions:** L= 6.55 cm; w= 5.3 cm; H= 2.25 cm; Db= 3.05 cm; Dd= 3.7 cm.

**Colour:** 2.5 YR 6/8 (light red); slip: 2.5YR 5/6 (red).

**Dating:** 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

**Analogies:** Bailey 1988, 342. Q 2746, Pl. 84; Loeschcke 1919, 31, Type VIII, Abb. 7/Variant R.

**Origin:** Import (Asia Minor?).

5. **Description:** Fragmentary lamp, part of the discus and the handle are preserved. Circular discus, decorated by a rosette of which 12 petals are visible. Short and undecorated shoulder. Lamellar, not pierced handle, with two perpendicular incised grooves. Filling-hole placed centrally, in the middle of the motif (Fig. 4/5).

**Context:** S I, Cx 4.

**Dimensions:** Lp= 6.8 cm; Wp= 6 cm; Dfh= 0.6 cm; Hw= 1.1 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 2.5YR 7/8 (light red); slip: 2.5YR 5/4 (reddish brown).

**Dating:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.

**Analogies:** Bailey 1988, 343, Q2747, Pl. 84; Кузманов, Минчев 2018, 64, cat. no. 176 and Tbl. XIII; Ionomu 1967, 109, cat. no. 550, Fig. 131.

**Origin:** Provincial (?)

6. **Description:** Fragmentary lamp, part of the reservoir and the handle are preserved. Circular body, with a concave, undecorated shoulder. The discus is almost entirely broken, on its upper part a small trace of the decoration is still visible, but due to the fragmentary state it is

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed overview see Loeschcke 1919, Type VIII, 49-66.

<sup>16</sup> Loeschcke 1919, 31, Abb. 7.

undistinguishable. Annular pierced handle, with traces of soot on it. Flat ring-base. Fine clay with limestone particles. Heavily worn slip (Fig. 4/6).

**Context:** S II, Cx 12.

**Dimensions:** Lp= 2.25 cm; Wp= 6.23 cm; Db= 3.75 cm; Hw= 0.8 cm; H= 2.6/4.47 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 2.5YR 6/8 (light red); slip: 10R 5/8 (red).

**Dating:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.

**Analogies:** Bauman 2009, Type VII; Кузманов, Минчев 2018, Type XXVII, Variant 5; Topoleanu 2016, 72, cat. no. 14, Pl. II.

**Origin:** Provincial workshop (?).

7. **Description:** Fragmentary lamp, part of the reservoir. Circular, large body. Wide, undecorated shoulder. 4 petals from a rosette motif are still visible. Fine clay. Unevenly applied slip (Fig. 4/7).

**Context:** S II, Cx4.

**Dimensions:** Lp= 3.51 cm; Wp= 2.75 cm; Hp= 1.05 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 2.5YR 7/6 (light red), 2.5YR 6/8 (light red).

**Dating:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.

**Analogies:** see no. 5.

**Origin:** Provincial workshop (?).

8. **Description:** Fragmentary lamp, part of the discus and the shoulder are preserved. Heavily inclined shoulder, separated by the concave discus by two circular grooves. On the lower part, close to where the nozzle would have been placed, a spiral motif is still preserved. Fine clay with few limestone inclusions. Different colours, due to uneven firing (Fig. 4/8).

**Context:** S II, Cx 12.

**Dimensions:** Lp= 3.75, Wp= 4.17 cm; Hp= 2.65 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 2.5YR 7/8 (light red); slip: 5YR 6/8 (reddish yellow).

**Dating:** 2<sup>nd</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.

**Analogies:** Baumann 2009, 232, cat. no. 37 and Fig. 6; Buzdugan *et alii* 2000, nos. 4 and 5, Fig. 8; Iconomu 1967, 64, cat. no. 199 and Fig. 31;

**Origin:** Import (?).

9. **Description:** Fragmentary lamp, only a small part of the lamp is preserved. The discus is concave, shoulder decorated by a radial pattern of ovolos, poorly impressed. Short rounded nozzle, with traces of usage. Most of the slip is intact (Fig. 4/9).

**Context:** S II, Cx 12.

**Dimensions:** Lp= 2.82 cm; Wp= 3 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 10R 6/8 (light red); slip: 2.5YR 5/8 (red).

**Dating:** 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

**Analogies:** Baumann 2009, Type X; Bussière, Rivel 2012, 161, cat. no. 159; Iconomu 1967, type XX; Loeschcke 1919, 31, Type VIII, Abb. 7/ Variant K.

**Origin:** Provincial.



Fig. 3. Roman Lamps from Aegyssus.



#### D. *Firmalampen* (Loeschcke X)

This type of lamps is characterized by a circular body, with an elongated, bridged nozzle. Initially made in Northern Italy<sup>17</sup>, *firmalampen* type lamps (Loeschcke type IX and X) production quickly spread in different areas of the Roman world. They are strongly connected with the military settlements throughout the Empire, but can be also found they are found in various other contexts. The terminology, of German origin, translates to “factory lamp”, in order to emphasize the role of the stamp as a guarantee for the origin of the product, crafted by a professional, renowned lamp-maker.

Multiple marks of these producers are known in the region, mainly from the military sites along the Danube<sup>18</sup>. There are several such marks that circulated in *Moesia Inferior* between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, making *firmalampen* one of the most long-lasting types of lamps in the region<sup>19</sup>. One such lamp was found at Berzei no. 3, but due to the absence of the stamped base we cannot assign this piece to a specific producer or workshop.

10. **Description:** Fragmentary lamp, part of the nozzle channel is preserved. Bridged groove on the nozzle, continuing towards the discus. Fine clay, with no visible inclusions. Heavily worn slip. Traces of soot from the usage. (Fig. 4/10)

**Context:** S II, Cx 12.

**Dimensions:** Lp= 3.75 cm; pW= 4.17 cm; pH= 2.65 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 5YR 7/6 (reddish yellow); slip: 2.5YR 5/8 (red).

**Dating:** 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.

**Analogies:** Baumann 2009, 220-223, cat. no. 2-4 and Fig. 1-2; Topoleanu 2016, 82, cat. no. 38 and Pl. V; Кузманов, Минчев 2018, 97-98, cat. nos. 387-391 and Tbl XXVIII; Čičikova 1987, 169-170, cat. nos. 154-163 and Pl. XVIII-XX; Nicolae 1994, 199, cat. no. 2 and Pl. I-II.

**Origin:** Provincial (?).

#### E. Late Roman Micro-Asian lamps Broneer type XXIX

Also referred to as Ephesian-type or micro-Asian lamps, they were one of the most popular types in Late Antiquity. They were initially produced in *Ephesus*, hence the name of the type, and later in different workshops from Asia Minor<sup>20</sup> and other parts of the Empire, including in the province of *Scythia*, at *Halmyris*<sup>21</sup>. One characteristic of these lamps are the decorative patterns under the body<sup>22</sup>, also known as “fishtail” motifs. These

<sup>17</sup> Loeschcke 1919, 67-85.

<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed overview of circulation of *firmalampen* in the region see Ciur 2023, 55-65.

<sup>19</sup> Chrzanovski 2020, 216.

<sup>20</sup> Katsioti 2017, 215-223.

<sup>21</sup> Topoleanu 1996, 91-94; Topoleanu 2000, 208-215.

<sup>22</sup> Bailey 1988, 371, Fig. 162.

lamps have a great variety of decorations especially on the shoulder (globules, grapevines, circles), while on the discus Christian motifs are often depicted.

11. **Description:** Fragmented lamp, only the handle and a small part of the reservoir are preserved. Lamellar, not pierced handle. On the preserved parts of the shoulder, a motif resembling tendrils can still be seen. Fine clay, with inclusions of mica particles. The slip is heavily affected by limestone, parts of it are hardly visible. (Fig. 4/11)

**Context:** S II, Cx 12.

**Dimensions:** Lp= 2.95 cm; Wp= 5.04 cm; Hp= 25.1/38.7 cm; Hw=0.97 cm.

**Colour:** Clay: 7.5 YR6/3 (light brown); slip: 2.5YR 4/4 (reddish brown).

**Dating:** 5<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

**Analogies:** Bailey 1988, 388, cat. no. Q3162, Pl. 109; Broneer 1930, 281, cat. no. 1420, Pl. XX; Iconomu 1967, 134, cat. no. 696; Iliescu, Bottez 2019, 190, Fig. 4/1; Кузманов, Минчев 2018, 113, cat. no. 298, Tbl. XXXV; Menzel 1969, 97, cat. no. 629, Abb.80/5; Topoleanu 2000, 201, cat. no. 517, Pl. LXIV.

**Origin:** Import (Asia Minor, *Ephesus?*).

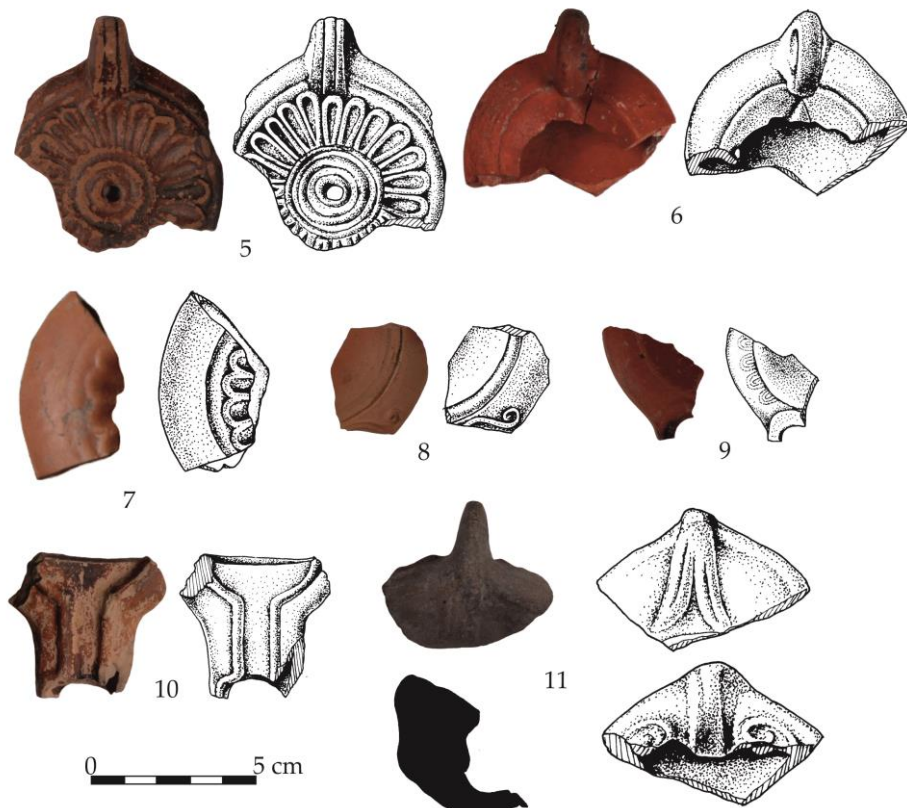


Fig. 4. Roman lamps from Aegyssus.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Currently, there is no concrete proof for a local production of lamps at or near *Aegyssus*, and the development of the modern town of Tulcea makes the research on this topic a complicated endeavour. However, if we take into consideration the presence of a Roman (and romanized) population throughout several centuries, the activity of a workshop or multiple workshops producing not only lamps, but also other pottery goods, is a possible scenario.

Moreover, the presence of the Roman fleet, *Classis Flavia Moesica* (epigraphically attested by two bricks bearing the stamp CLFM)<sup>23</sup>, a temporary presence of detachments of *Legio V Macedonica* (confirmed by a roof tile bearing the stamp LEG V MAC)<sup>24</sup> and of *Cohors II Flavia Brittonum* (a brick bearing the stamp CH II F BR was discovered inside the city walls, in a context dated to the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD)<sup>25</sup>, as well as the existence of a *vexilatio egissensis* (a unit of *Legio I Jovia*, attested by a funerary stela dedicated to a local equestrian, at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD)<sup>26</sup> and the overall strategic importance of *Aegyssus* imply the existence of an influx of products towards the city<sup>27</sup>. This would have been essential for both the military personnel and the civilians living inside and outside the city walls during the entire period of the Roman control over the area. Whether this supply was provided by workshops adjacent to the city or spread throughout the territory of *Aegyssus*, or even by the provincial lamp-producing centres<sup>28</sup>, it is still up for debate in the absence of conclusive evidence.

As for the circulation of the above-presented lamps, we should note the presence of the Loeschcke Type I specimen at *Aegyssus* (cat. no. 1) as this particular type is quite rare in the region of Dobruja, with similar finds currently known at *Callatis*<sup>29</sup> and *Tomis*<sup>30</sup>. In the rest of the province, they were discovered at *Novae*<sup>31</sup>, *Odessos*<sup>32</sup>, *Oescus*<sup>33</sup>. Being one of

<sup>23</sup> Gudea 2005, 460; Nuțu 2018, 204. For a more detailed discussion on the presence and activity of *Classis Flavia Moesica* in the region see Bounegru, Zahariade 1996, 7-22, 91-98; Matei-Popescu 2010, 245-255.

<sup>24</sup> Nuțu 2018, 203.

<sup>25</sup> Opaîț 1981, 297-298.

<sup>26</sup> Barnea 1950, 175-184.

<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed overview of the mentioned military units and their presence at *Aegyssus* and in the region see Aricescu 1997, 32-37, 110-112; Matei-Popescu 2010, 35-76, 198-199.

<sup>28</sup> Iconomu 1986, 127-154; Nuțu 2019, 166-172.

<sup>29</sup> Iconomu 1967, 57, cat. no. 168.

<sup>30</sup> Georgescu 2017, 45-46, cat. no. 3, Fig. 4; Iconomu 1967, 57 cat. nos. 165-167.

<sup>31</sup> Čičikova 1987, 154-155, cat. nos. 1-7, Pl. 1.; Кузманов 1992, 18, cat. no. 49.

<sup>32</sup> Кузманов, Минчев 2018, 55, cat. no. 147, Tbl. X.

the first types of Roman lamps made in the Augustan period, Loeschcke Type I specimens are representative not only for the beginnings of the imperial lamp-making industry, but also as evidence for the trading of Roman goods and the emergence of workshops in the newly conquered provinces in the first two centuries AD.

Considering the poor execution and the heavily worn-out moulds that were used in producing it, this particular piece can be interpreted as a local or regional product (possibly an imitation after an original lamp). In addition, the dating coincides with the peak of the imperial lamp-making production; hence, such a low-quality lamp is more likely to be the result of a less experienced producer or of a workshop focused on supplying a local clientele rather than taking part into a long-distance trading.

The other type of voluted lamp in our catalogue (Loeschcke IV) enjoyed a relatively more spread circulation in the region, with discoveries published from *Callatis*<sup>34</sup>, *Carsium*<sup>35</sup>, *Noviodunum*<sup>36</sup>, *Sacidava*<sup>37</sup>, *Tomis*<sup>38</sup>, *Troesmis*<sup>39</sup>. In *Moesia Inferior*, lamps of this type were also found at *Apollonia Pontica*<sup>40</sup> *Durostorum*<sup>41</sup>, *Novae*<sup>42</sup>, *Odessos*<sup>43</sup>, *Oescus*<sup>44</sup>. The specimen from *Aegyssus* (cat. no. 2) is identical with two pieces from *Noviodunum*<sup>45</sup>, in the same province. The motif of the altar can be found on several lamps depicted in similar matter, alongside different gods and deities such as *Athena/Minerva*<sup>46</sup>, *Eros*<sup>47</sup>, *Fortuna*<sup>48</sup>, *Isis*<sup>49</sup>, *lares*<sup>50</sup>, *maenads*<sup>51</sup>. In this case, the decoration can be interpreted from a symbolical standpoint as a ritualistic libation scene (?), and

<sup>33</sup> Торбов 2022, 107-109, nos. 31, 32, 38, 42 and 43.

<sup>34</sup> Topoleanu, Croitoru 2015, 96-98, cat. no. 22.

<sup>35</sup> Buzdugan *et alii* 2000, 439, cat. nos. 2-3, Fig. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Baumann 2009, 226-230, cat. nos. 15-29.

<sup>37</sup> Scorpan 1978, 157, cat. no. 6, Pl. I.

<sup>38</sup> Iconomu 1967, Type XI, 58-61.

<sup>39</sup> Topoleanu 2016, 64, cat. no. 1, Pl. I.

<sup>40</sup> Кузманов 1992, 19, nr. cat. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Кузманов, Бъчваров 1986, 44-45, cat. no. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Čičikova 1987, 155-157, cat. nos. 7-26, Pl. I-IV; Кузманов 1992, 19-20, cat. nos. 61, 64, 67 and 68.

<sup>43</sup> Кузманов 1992, 19-20, cat. nos. 62, 69 and 70.

<sup>44</sup> Кузманов 1992, 19, cat. no. 66.

<sup>45</sup> Baumann 2009, both lack traces of usage, like in our case, and one comes from the civilian settlement, and the other from a funerary context.

<sup>46</sup> Bailey 1980, Q1338; Bailey 1988, Q3290.

<sup>47</sup> Bailey 1988, Q2380, Q3022, Q3304.

<sup>48</sup> Bailey 1980, Q1100.

<sup>49</sup> Bailey 1988, Q1974.

<sup>50</sup> Bailey 1980, Q 1207; Deneauve 1969, cat. no. 594.

<sup>51</sup> Bailey 1980, Q905, Q1208.

one notable aspect in this regard is the discovery of the two fragments that could be part of a small domestic altar (or a statue base)<sup>52</sup>. However, in the absence of more compelling evidence for a religious context, we cannot prove the precise functionality, and the association between this lamp and the possible altar fragments is just a hypothesis worth mentioning.

Although a popular and widespread category of lamps, *firmalampen* (Loeschcke Type IX and X) are not as well attested at *Aegyssus* for the moment, as they are in other sites in the area, the main cause being the current state of research. Besides our no. 10, another fragment of *firmalampen* (of Loeschcke type IX) is known from the intramural area that, based on the poor quality of the execution, is most likely a regional (or even local) product<sup>53</sup>. In neither of the cases was the stamp preserved.

Only one fragment, no. 11, dates from the Late Roman period (4<sup>th</sup> century AD and onwards). The chronology of the Ephesian-type lamps is still a debated topic<sup>54</sup>, therefore our proposed chronological frame (5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD) covers the range of this type's circulation in the area, and a more precise dating can be problematic, especially if we take into account the disturbance of the archaeological strata. Unfortunately, its fragmentary state of conservation does not allow a more complex analysis, besides some typological and chronological considerations.

The symbolism behind the representations on lamps is a topic of high interest, which can provide insightful information regarding the cultural particularities of a person or a community. A. Crnobraj conducted a comprehensive study on the symbolic interpretation of different motifs found on the lamps from *Moesia Superior* and their potential meanings<sup>55</sup>. The items from Berzei Street no. 3 offer additional data for the iconographical repertoire of the province, and further research can improve our understanding of the symbolism of these motifs and, eventually, the different factors that may have influenced particular representations.

## CONCLUSIONS

The above presented lamps are, alongside the other findings from this plot, a significant source of information for the study of ancient habitation in the extramural area of *Aegyssus*, a rather difficult endeavour if we consider the urban evolution of the modern town of Tulcea. Unfortunately, it is only through these rescue excavations

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<sup>52</sup> Nuțu 2022, 131-133.

<sup>53</sup> Opaît, Sion, Vasiliu 1980, 272, Fig.7/2.

<sup>54</sup> Bailey 1988, 372; Katsioti 2017, 215-17.

<sup>55</sup> For a detailed overview see Crnobraj 2006.

that the extramural area of *Aegyssus* can be documented and interpreted, and this is another reason of why the findings from Berzei no. 3 are of an especially high interest.

In addition, the first two specimens from this catalogue enrich our knowledge on the circulation of the voluted lamps of Loeschcke types I and IV, which are, as stated above, quite rare findings in this region. The presence of these early-imperial products (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD) constitutes new evidence for the influx of western or western-inspired lamps in a conquered territory. As for the Broneer type XXIX lamp, it constitutes evidence for the continuity of the habitation in an area in which products from Asia Minor were still imported.

Lamps are an important part of the archaeological record, and in our case, they represent evidence for the development of a population aligned to the Roman lifestyle. Although the context in which this excavation took place was disturbed, these lamps offer new important information regarding the habitation of a local community in the area and, by correlating them with the other findings from the vicinity, we can significantly improve our knowledge about the ancient past of *Aegyssus* and its surroundings.

At the same time, on a macro level, they can be studied as indicators for the development of a complex system of production and trading at a large, interprovincial scale. The lamps presented in this paper, as well as the other findings from Berzei street no. 3, reflect the economic ties that the local community had with both the western and eastern markets of the Roman Empire<sup>56</sup>.

Finally, we can conclude that the data we have obtained from the excavation at the plot from Berzei Street no. 3 testify to the presence of communities with economic ties to a wide network of traded goods, as seen from the lamps presented in this paper, and from the other findings published previously as well. Together with the terracottas and the altar (?) fragments, they are important in the hypothetical reconstruction of local religious manifestations which, given the actual context of the modern Tulcea overlaying the ancient *Aegyssus*, is a strenuous effort.

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<sup>56</sup> For a detailed analysis of the origin of tableware fragments found at Berzei street no. 3, see Mocanu, Nuțu 2023, 204-208.

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