

## NOTE ON TWO POTTERY FINDINGS FROM TROPÆUM TRAIANI

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**Keywords:** *pottery, Roman vessel, amphora, cup, incised decoration.*

**Cuvinte cheie:** *ceramică, veselă romană, amforă, cupă, decor incizat.*

**Abstract:** *The aim of this article is to publish two ceramic pieces discovered near Tropaeum Traiani Roman city, Adamclisi village, Constanta county, in the context of an archaeological survey made in one of the ovens near the Roman city.*

**Rezumat:** *Scopul acestui articol este de a publica două piese din ceramică, descoperite lângă orașul roman Tropaeum Traiani, comuna Adamclisi, județul Constanța, în contextul unui sondaj arheologic, executat într-unul dintre cuptoarele de lângă orașul roman.*

The findings come from an archaeological survey made in 2008, in one of the ovens near the Roman city Tropaeum Traiani. The survey had the dimensions of 5 x 1 m, it was orientated on the north – south axis and it was carried out during the archaeological excavation campaign under the coordination of the head of the archaeological team<sup>1</sup>. At the time, the main objective of the survey was to find any traces of the local pottery production, to compare different variants of pottery categories found in the Roman city. The survey revealed that the oven, located at 800 m east of the Roman city Tropaeum Traiani, on the Urluia valley, in the “La Cișmele” point, was used for the lime burning, as it was demonstrated by the method of construction and the limes traces from the inside. The oven was constructed in the two steps method, the first discovered 1,35 m deep from the actual level and the second was found 1, 83 m deep. It is possible that other contemporary interventions have affected this archaeological complex, and because of this, the fragments of pottery which have been discovered are not necessarily related to the stratigraphic reality of the oven.

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<sup>1</sup> My gratitude goes to professor dr. Alexandru Barnea, for his support and his guidance in my research of some archaeological objects at the time when I was a member of the archaeological team at Tropaeum Traiani and on other occasions.

The main discoveries inside the oven were some pottery fragments of a Roman amphora and other fragments of an early Roman vessel with incised decoration. Since none of the two findings are common at Tropaeum Traiani, the initiative of publishing is part of the activity of emphasizing some relatively rare discoveries, completing other materials already published for this archaeological site<sup>2</sup>.

1. Fragmentary amphora type ZEEST 1960, types 64, 91-94, 104-105; PARASCHIV 2007, type 3; RĂDULESCU 1976, type 2 and 6; ARSEN'EVA, KASSAB-TEZGÖR, NAUMENKO, 1997; DYCZEK 2001, type 28; OPAIȚ 2004, type E -VI.

Three fragments from the same amphora type have been discovered inside the oven but they belong to different pieces, respectively parts of the rim, neck with handles and basis. The amphora rim is made of brick color fabric with particles of limestone and iron oxide, having the exterior diameter of 6, 5 cm. The rim is thickened on the outside, the neck is long and cylindrically shaped, the handles are arched and oval in section, with a longitudinal groove, the body is conical and the basis is tubular (Pl. I/1-3).

The amphora fragments from the neck with handle and the basis are made of a whitish fabric with black mica and iron oxide, the basis is tubular, 8 cm preserved height.

The rim fragment is similar to PARASCHIV 2007 variant B (2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) or variant C (2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century AD) but the neck with handle and the amphora basis resemble more variant A (1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) or the amphora RĂDULESCU 1976, type 6, dated by the author in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>3</sup>.

This type of amphora is categorised in a few types by some scholars<sup>4</sup> and in one single type with some variants by the others<sup>5</sup>.

The amphora is common for the majority of the Roman sites in the region<sup>6</sup>, and its origin is to be found in the Pontic workshops<sup>7</sup>. Regarding the content of the recipients, it seems that it was Pontic wine<sup>8</sup>, which was exported not only in the cities from the Black Sea region, but in other centers too, as some recent discoveries from Athens have proved<sup>9</sup>.

According to some calculations, this type of amphora had a capacity between 2, 5 and 5 liters, for the wine shipment, proven by *tituli picti* and olive oil, in the period of time often dated between 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, and less often in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> BOGDAN-CĂTĂNICIU, BARNEA 1979, *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> RĂDULESCU 1976, p. 106.

<sup>4</sup> ZEEST 1960 types 64, 91-94, 104-105.

<sup>5</sup> PARASCHIV 2006, type 3, p. 20 with 5 variants; DYCZEK 2001, p. 202, type 28 summing the types ZEEST 1960 nr. 50, 64, 94, 104 și 105.

<sup>6</sup> PARASCHIV 2006, p. 19-24.

<sup>7</sup> ARSEN'EVA, KASSAB-TEZGÖR, NAUMENKO, 1997, p. 187-198, about a workshop for this amphora at Alapi, near Herakleea.

<sup>8</sup> OPAIȚ 2004, p. 32 mentioning the olive oil; OPAIȚ 2010 p. 111 Pontic wine; PARASCHIV 2006 p. 24, note 107: wine or olive oil.

<sup>9</sup> OPAIȚ 2006, p. 108-130.

<sup>10</sup> DYCZEK 2001, p. 219.

At Tropaeum Traiani, this type of amphora is attested on the second layer which corresponds to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD<sup>11</sup>.

2. Cup/*kantharos* with two handles and incised decoration. There are fragments preserved from the superior part of the vessel, the median part and the basis (Pl. I/5-6). The vessel has a few registers with incised decoration on the median part, under the rim, representing stylized laurel leaves. The rim is slightly thickened and vertical, separated from the rest of the body by a groove. The neck is cylindrical, it widens to the median part where the vessel has the maximum diameter, with a slight thickening to the outside and the basis is flat. The rim diameter is 11 cm, maximum preserved diameter is 12,6 cm, the bottom diameter is 5 cm. The fabric is fine, light brick color with limestone particles and black mica and less often silver mica sparkles. In the matrix we can observe some micro fractures from the burning process. The surface treatment is painted red – brown on the outside and partially on the inside. Analogies: POPILIAN, BONDOC, 2012 (two-handled cups) p. 223, pl. CLXV/2 - the authors consider that this type of cup, dated in the first half of 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, is a miniature replica of a double-handled pot from the same period; POPILIAN 1997, p. 13, fig. 13/3-7, p.14, fig. 32/5; SULTOV 1985, table XXXVIII/4-7, type 11; SLANE 1990, p. 95, fig. 22/194 (the end of the first century AD); SLANE 1986, p. 287, pl. 65/61; SHAROV 2007, fig. 22/13, fig. 40/37; HAYES 2008, fig. 24/772 (Pl. 6717) – the first century AD, fig 49/1587 (P9149) – the first century AD; HAYES 1973, p. 462, pl. 90/197; SUCEVEANU 2000, p. 84-88, cups with two handles, type XXIII, pl. 33-34/1-27. Regarding the decoration, BRUKNER 1981, T. 55/14-15, T. 57/57, T. 174/24 (small bowls) without handles; KRAPIVINA 1993, pl. 59/4; DIMITROVA – MILČEVA 2000, T. 26/418. (Pl. I/5-6).

This type of cup with two handles is less common in the early Roman sites from the West – Pontic area. The clearest analogies (POPILIAN, BONDOC, 2012 - two-handled cups - p. 223, pl. CLXV/2; POPILIAN 1976, p. 109, type 2, pl. LVIII/688-696; POPILIAN 1997, p. 14, fig. 32/5;) are the cups/mugs discovered north of the Danube, at Sucidava and Romula; in both cases the authors consider that the cup is a miniature replica of a double - handled pot from the same period – eventually the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

The vessel from Romula has a fine red-yellow color fabric, covered with a red – brown paint, with cylindrical neck and flat base. Even though the shape of this cup resembles the double-handled pot, the functionality of the two categories is different.

At the same time, it is true that the shape of the rim is also similar to a pot with two handles mentioned by POPILIAN 1976 as type 4<sup>12</sup>, with analogies in Moesia Inferior and Novae, placed in the kitchen ware category, but also used as a funerary urn.

The prototype for this cup may be found in the south of the Danube, where some similar types were in use, but decorated in the technique of “en barbotine.”

<sup>11</sup> BOGDAN-CĂTĂNICIU, BARNEA 1979, p. 181, fig. 148/3.1.

<sup>12</sup> POPILIAN 1976, double handles pot type 4, pl. XXXIX/399-407 the first half of the 3<sup>th</sup> century AD.

The source or influence of the pottery workshops from Hotnica, Butovo or Pavlikeni in the territory of Nicopolis ad Istrum has been suggested both by Sultov<sup>13</sup> and Popilian<sup>14</sup>. This shape may have been imitated north of the Danube, in the Roman province of Dacia, as proved by the discoveries from Cioroiul Nou<sup>15</sup>. One similar vessel without decoration alongside other cups decorated with barbotine are to be found at POPILIAN 1997, p. 14 fig. 32/5.

The model for the cup from Tropaeum Traiani, as well as for the vessels from Roman province Dacia, may come from the south of the Danube, being imported, or imitating the shape, but the original vessels were probably produced on the territory of Roman city Nicopolis ad Istrum, having a decoration in the technique en barbotine.

It is quite difficult to identify the origin of this shape at Nicopolis ad Istrum. An oriental influence may be considered, although the shape could be placed in connection with the origin of some colonists at Nicopolis ad Istrum and its territory or with a custom or trend in the early Roman pottery production in Moesia. Since I was not able to identify perfect analogies of this shape in the group catalogued as *Pontic sigillata*, nor in *Eastern sigillata*, the origin of this cup may be Roman Moesia.

We can find a relatively close similarity for a pot with two handles at Durostorum – kantharos, even though this one is decorated with barbotine<sup>16</sup>. Another pot with two handles and resembling decoration – oblong alveoli made by pressing, ranged in two concentric registers – made of fine, brick fabric, painted red – brown on the outside, was discovered at Telița – Amza, and dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD<sup>17</sup>.

Considering the analogies between the shape of this cup and the vessels decorated with barbotine, from Nicopolis ad Istrum, it is necessary to make a parallel with the evolution of the last. Since for the luxury products decorated with barbotine some studies show a frequent occurrence of the occidental influence in the Danubian cities and a micro Asiatic influence in the centers Black Sea coast, by imports from Nicopolis ad Istrum or locally produced<sup>18</sup>, the incised decorated pottery did not receive an exhaustive analysis for this region.

For the period of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD it seems that the occidental imports prevail in the economy of the use of barbotine vessels, but in the next century the local production is decisive, keeping the traditional form from the previous period<sup>19</sup>. In support of the claim about the penetration of *terra sigillata* in the eastern provinces during imperial times, I have to mention that this pottery, rarely found in Bosphorus, comes to the area not by Black Sea routes, but by Danube *limes* ones<sup>20</sup>.

The presence of Nicopolis ad Istrum traditional pottery at Histria especially

<sup>13</sup> SULTOV 1985, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> POPILIAN 1976, p.52.

<sup>15</sup> BONDOC 2010, p. 41, Pl. XVIII/44 about a pot with a similar shape of the rim.

<sup>16</sup> MUȘEȚEANU 2003, p. 124, pl. 42/9.

<sup>17</sup> BAUMANN 2003, p. 190, nr. 43.

<sup>18</sup> BOUNEGRU 1989, p. 108.

<sup>19</sup> BOUNEGRU 1989, p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> ZHURAVLEV 2008, p. 111.

in the 2<sup>nd</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, demonstrates an important afflux of occidentals, possibly by military pathway<sup>21</sup>.

The presence of this shape at Tropaeum Traiani, a city situated in an intermediary zone<sup>22</sup>, having both Western and oriental influences, makes a parallel with Nicopolis ad Istrum possible, a Roman city founded by colonization both from the Orient and from the Western provinces of the empire<sup>23</sup>.

Finally we may conclude that this type of cup has a Moesian origin, being decorated in the barbotine technique south of the Danube and possibly undecorated north of the Danube, which appeared from Hellenistic and local tradition symbiosis<sup>24</sup>, into an oriental Romanity climate, so well defined in a masterful study as West – Pontic Romanity<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> SUCEVEANU 2000, p. 179.

<sup>22</sup> MUȘȚEANU 2003, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> SULTOV 1985, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> POPILIAN 1976, p. 52.

<sup>25</sup> SUCEVEANU 2010, p. 26.

(3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> c.c.), Thessaloniki, November 12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> 2006, vols.1 – 2. Thessaloniki 2010, p. 108–130.

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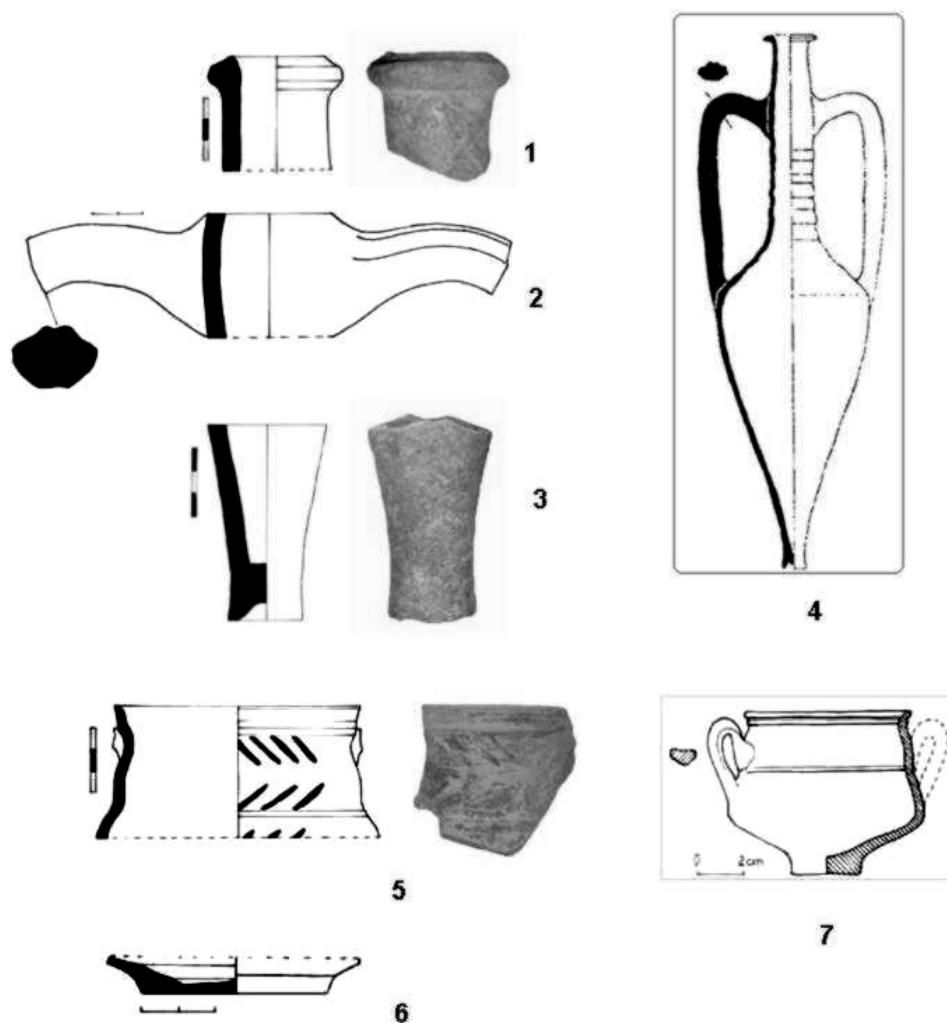
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Pl. I – 1, 2, 3: Tropaeum Traiani fragments of amphora Zeest 1960, types 64, 91-94, 104-105; 4: similar example: Noviodunum amphora *apud* Paraschiv 2007 type 3 (pl. I/5); 5,6: Tropaeum Traiani cup with two handles and incised decoration; 7: similar example: Sucidava two-handled cup *apud* Popilian, Bondoc 2012 (pl. CLXV/2).