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## STAMPED HISPANIC AMPHORAE FROM ROMAN DACIA

Approximately 60 stamped amphorae have been published from Roman Dacia, part of these being featured on Dressel 20 amphorae, found in Tibiscum (*M MAC SVR*), Arcidava (*C IV P, PLEGONT*), Aiton (*VIRGIN*), and Apulum (*DA(?) OPTATI, VINT*). In addition to these stamps, a number of anepigraphic sherds from Dressel 20 amphorae are known from Angustia, Sarmizegetusa, Cingșor, Tibiscum, and Romula. Two further pieces coming from Sarmizegetusa and Apulum feature *tituli picti* inscribed in red dye: *A I S* and *LEG XIII G*. The sites in Roman Dacia which produced Dressel type 20 amphorae are without exception dated between the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and the 60's of the same century. Furthermore a large part of these settlements are characterized by a considerable military presence. The situation is similar in the case of Pannonia Inferior and Moesia Superior, where the majority of Baetican amphorae also come from military sites. Statistically speaking, the number of Hispanic amphorae in Dacia is quite small, even in comparison to Moesia and Pannonia, probably due to the fact that Dacia was conquered only at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and only 50/60 years later the commercial routes were already shifting.

## Introduction

Approximately 60 stamped amphorae have hitherto been published<sup>1</sup> from Roman *Dacia* (106–270 AD)<sup>2</sup>, with around 10% being featured on Dressel type 20 Hispanic amphorae. These containers were commonly used for the transport of Baetican olive oil throughout the Empire.

Unfortunately the bulk of Hispanic amphorae from *Dacia*, both stamped and unstamped, remains unpublished to this day. Consequently it is difficult to put forward assertions concerning the supply and distribution of Baetican olive oil in the civilian and military environments of the province<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, the lack of epigraphic sources regarding certain aspects of military logistics, commercial centres, of merchants involved in this type of commerce, and indeed of the mechanisms through which the Roman army adjusted to the environment of the newly created province, further hinders the possibility of such reconstructions. It is still totally unknown, for example, whether there was any supply from the native population with products meant to substitute olive oil. Neither is there any archaeological record of other types of pottery, wooden (barrels) or animal skin containers which would have replaced Dressel type 20 amphorae on the land routes of the province. These shortcomings have led to the situation in which Roman *Dacia* is constantly being left out of the most important studies concerning the trade in Hispanic olive oil across the Empire.

The Dressel type 20 amphorae have produced the highest number of inscriptions among all Roman containers of this sort<sup>4</sup>. Despite this, only a limited number of such containers was actually stamped<sup>5</sup>. The stamps offer essential information concerning the production centres and individual producers by revealing the manufacturers' names (though often limited to the initials of their *tria nomina* or *duo nomina*), the names of the *figlinae* or the *portus*, the social status of the respective persons (e.g. *clarissimus vir*) or various combinations of their names and epithets. This variety accounts for the complex typology of Roman amphorae stamps<sup>6</sup>.

The stamps were applied most commonly on the containers' handles (*in ansa*) and only occasionally on the vessel's body. R. Étienne and F. Mayet analysed 3780 stamps on Dressel type 20 amphorae and concluded that the overwhelming majority (96.58 %) were found on the handle<sup>7</sup> (positions 2a–d – **fig. 1,7**). The figures are similar in the case of the material from Roman *Dacia*, in most cases the amphorae being stamped around the summit of the handle, with the inscription in relief, set in a rectangular frame displaying more or less straight angles. *Tabula ansata* inscriptions are yet unknown. The dimensions of the cartouche vary between 2.8–7 cm in length and 0.7–2 cm in width. The capital letters are all in a vertical position, predominantly arranged in a single row.

<sup>1</sup> IDR III/6, 325–332; POPA 1982; ARDET 2000; ARDET 2004, 29, 203–215; ARDET ET AL. 2003 (selective bibliography).

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the paper the generic term 'Roman *Dacia*' is used to signify the province founded by Emperor Trajan in 106 AD. Later this territory was reorganized under Hadrian and again under Marcus Aurelius, being separated into three provinces.

<sup>3</sup> See REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ 1986 (with regard to the Germanic *limes*).

<sup>4</sup> REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ 1986, 760.

<sup>5</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004a, 79.

<sup>6</sup> The exact purpose and functionality of stamps on Baetican amphorae is yet to be convincingly revealed, as the large amount of contradictory interpretations suggests (REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ 1998, 190). According to R. Étienne and F. Mayet it is still the case of 'l'obscurité qui entoure la composition et la signification des timbre amphoriques' (ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004a, 99).

<sup>7</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004a, 81.

A special feature of Baetican stamps is the abundant use of ligatures<sup>8</sup>, examples of which (**fig. 1,8**) were attested on two handles, from *Tibiscum* (*M MAC SVR*) and *Arcidava* (*PLEGONT*). In a single case the individual elements of the name were separated by decorative triangles (*C ▲ IV ▲ R*) (**fig. 1,2**).

37 % of the stamped oil-amphorae from the Roman Empire display stamps comprised of abbreviated *tria nomina* (predominantly as acronyms), while 12 % feature a single name, usually in the genitive<sup>9</sup>. For Roman *Dacia*, with regard to *tria nomina* stamps, we can mention the cases of *M MAC SVR*, *C IV P*, while for single names, i.e. possible *cognomina*, the case of *PLEGONT* or *OPTATI*. *Duo nomina* stamps are not attested at this point.

The containers discovered in *Dacia* (all fragmentary) have large globular bodies with thick, sharply bent handles with oval cross-section; short necks often with a concave rim, and coarse, sandy fabric, usually light reddish brown or dark orange in colour.

## Catalogue

### 1. *C ▲ IV ▲ R* (**fig. 1,2**)

**Description:** the stamp is placed on the outer side of the handle in a simple rectangular cartouche (7 × 2 cm) with rounded corners. The letters are in relief (*litteris extantibus*), arranged in a single row, representing a set of *tria nomina* separated by two triangles.

**Place of discovery:** the earth-and-timber fort from Vărădia-Chilii (ancient *Arcidava* ?), Caraş-Severin County, Romania<sup>10</sup>.

**Interpretation:** the stamp *C. Iu(li) R( )* probably accounts for the same family as in the case of the *C I R* stamps<sup>11</sup>. R. Étienne and F. Mayet identified three distinct types of *C IV R* stamps and cartouches (**fig. 2,1**)<sup>12</sup>. The stamp discovered at Vărădia belongs to the type Étienne/Mayet 685c, dated between the Flavian and Trajanic periods<sup>13</sup>.

### 2. *PLEGONT* (**fig. 1,3**)

**Description:** the stamp is placed on the outer side of the handle in a simple rectangular cartouche (4 × 1 cm) with rounded corners. The letters are in relief, arranged in a single row, representing probably a cognomen (*Plegont/Phlegont*?) ending in a ligature (NT). No analogies are known for this type of stamp.

**Place of discovery:** the earth-and-timber fort from Vărădia-Chilii (ancient *Arcidava* ?), Caraş-Severin County, Romania<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. *M MAC SVR* (**fig. 1,1**)

**Description:** the stamp is placed on the outer side of the handle in a simple rectangular cartouche with rounded

corners. The letters are in relief, arranged in a single row, representing a set of *tria nomina*. Both the *nomen* and the *cognomen* feature a ligature (MA and VR).

**Place of discovery:** the military *vicus* from *Tibiscum*, Caransebeş-Jupa, Caraş-Severin County, Romania<sup>15</sup>.

**Interpretation:** the name *M. M( ) C( ) Sur(i)*<sup>16</sup>, *M. Mac(oni) Sur(i)*<sup>17</sup> or *II M. C( ) S( ) Vr(si)*<sup>18</sup> is yet to be convincingly transcribed. The stamp from *Tibiscum* belongs to the type Étienne/Mayet 756f, dated to 161 AD and produced in El Tejarillo<sup>19</sup>. From a stratigraphic point of view the find from *Tibiscum* was ascribed to a similar timeframe, i.e. the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD<sup>20</sup>.

### 4. *VIRGIN* (**fig. 1,5**)

**Description:** the stamp is placed on the outer side of the handle inside a simple rectangular cartouche (4.5 × 1.1 cm) with rounded corners. The letters are in relief (H = 0.9 cm), arranged in a single row, representing probably the name of a *figlina*: *Virginensia*.

**Place of discovery:** stray find; Aiton, Cluj County, Romania<sup>21</sup>.

**Interpretation:** *Virgin* or [*figlinae*] *Virginensiae* stamp types reveal a high degree of variety, with at least 14 main types known, all dated to the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, the vessels being produced in Villar de Brenes<sup>22</sup>.

### 5. *DA(?) OPTATI* (**fig. 1,6**)

**Description:** the stamp is placed on the outer and inner surface of the handle inside a double cartouche with a rectangular lower part and an irregular and incomplete upper part (2.8 × 0.7 cm). The letters are in relief (H = 0.4 cm), arranged in two rows: *DA (?)* and *OPTATI*.

**Place of discovery:** *Colonia Nova Apulum*–Platoul Romanilor, Alba Iulia, Alba County, Romania<sup>23</sup>.

**Interpretation:** R. Étienne and F. Mayet identified three main versions of the *OPTATI* stamps, all dated to the Claudian period in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and produced in Azanaque-Castillejo or El Tejarillo, Alcolea Del Río<sup>24</sup>. The transcription of the upper line (*DA?*) remains unknown at the moment, while *Optatus* must be a *cognomen*.

### 6. *VIN (T?)* (**fig. 1,4**)

**Description:** *ante cocturam* graffito featuring a name written in reverse on the right edge of an amphora handle, on its outer side; the first three letters (VIN) are placed in a single line (H = 1.7 × 1.8), while a fourth letter (T ?) is found somewhat higher, not aligned with the previous ones.

<sup>8</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004a, 83.

<sup>9</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004a, 92, 94.

<sup>10</sup> ARDEȚ ET AL. 2003, 311 Pl. I.b.

<sup>11</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004b, 162.

<sup>12</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004b, 162.

<sup>13</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004b, 162; BERNI MILLET 2008, 564.

<sup>14</sup> ARDEȚ ET AL. 2003, 312 Pl. I.c.

<sup>15</sup> ARDEȚ 2000, 487 Abb. 2,3.

<sup>16</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004b, 178.

<sup>17</sup> FABIÃO/GUERRA 2016, 60.

<sup>18</sup> Kindly suggestion provided by J. M. Bermúdez Lorenzo.

<sup>19</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004b, 178; BERNI MILLET 2008, 278–279; FABIÃO/GUERRA 2016, 60–61.

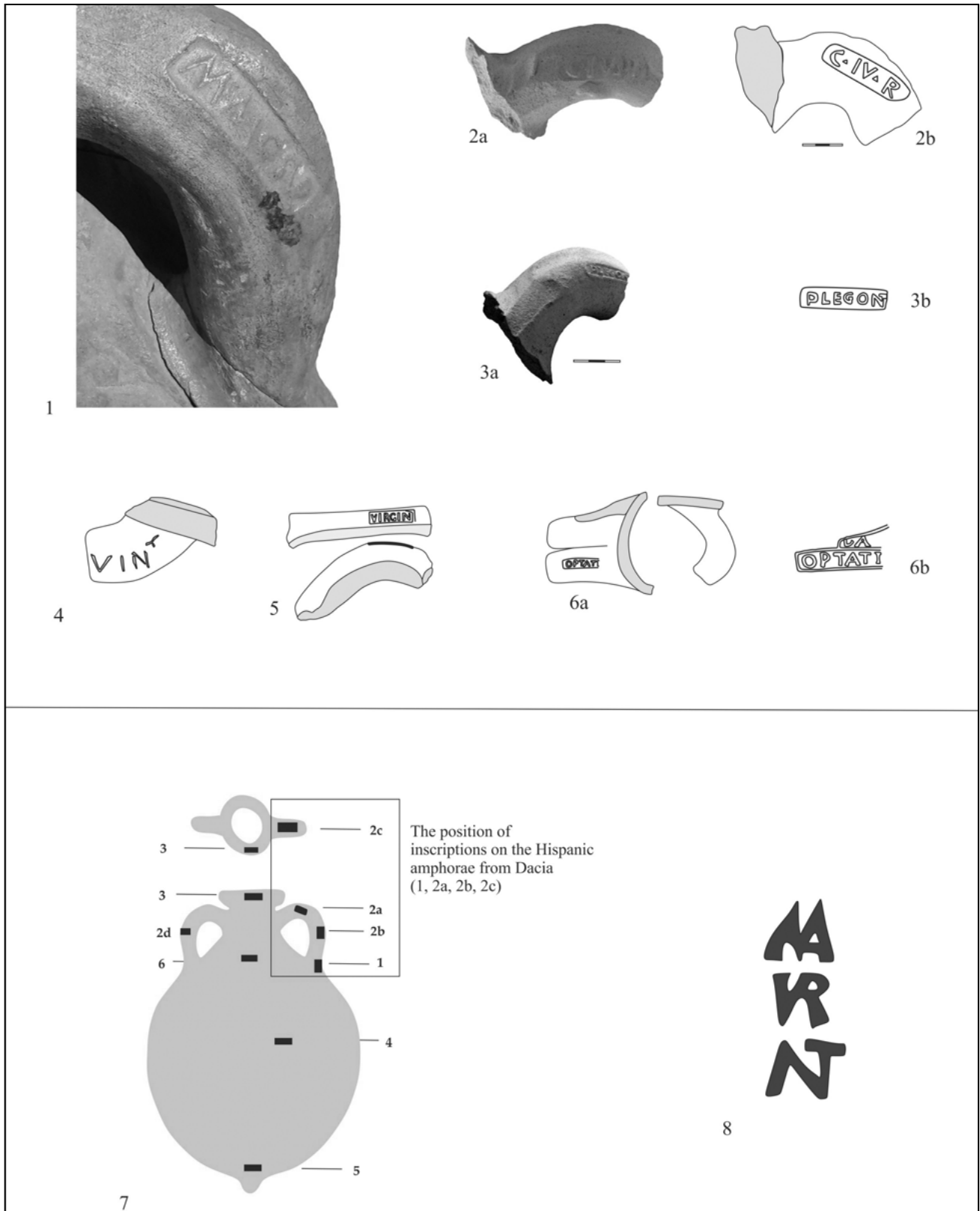
<sup>20</sup> ARDEȚ 2000, 489.

<sup>21</sup> POPA 1982, 71 Fig. 1,1.

<sup>22</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004b, 307; BERNI MILLET 2009, 244–245.

<sup>23</sup> A. Popa published the stamp as *OPTATI* (POPA 1982, 71 Fig. 1,2). Later it was republished with its complete inscription (*DA(?) OPTATI*) in IDR III/6, 171 Fig. 324.

<sup>24</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004b, 211.



**Fig. 1.** 1. *Tibiscum* (photo: MJERG Caransebeş; not to scale), 2.–3. *Arcidava* (redrawn after ARDEȚ ET AL. 2003; photos: O. Bozu); 4. *Apulum* (redrawn after POPA 1982); 5. *Aiton* (redrawn after POPA 1982); 6a. *Apulum* (redrawn after POPA 1982); 6b. *Apulum*, different drawing of the same stamp (redrawn after IDR III,6); 7. The position of stamps on the Hispanic amphorae from *Dacia* (redrawn after ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004a); 8. Types of ligatures from *Dacia* (not to scale).

**Place of discovery:** *Colonia Aurelia-Partoș, Alba Iulia, Alba County, Romania*<sup>25</sup>.

**Interpretation:** previously scholars considered that the graffito indicated the name *[Q]uint(us)*<sup>26</sup>, however graffiti are relatively rare at production centres in *Baetica*, which makes it difficult to relate them to stamps<sup>27</sup>. One cannot ignore the resemblance of this graffito with the Hispanic stamp partially transcribed as: *Vi(bi) N( )*<sup>28</sup>. The data regarding this stamp type is scarce, as is the information concerning graffiti on amphorae. Still the casual style of the letters on the aforementioned stamps shows some similarities with the graffito from *Apulum* (fig. 2,1).

## Dressel Type 20 Amphorae In Roman Dacia

The present catalogue illustrates the scarcity of Hispanic stamped amphorae in the province. In addition to the fragments discussed above, a number of anepigraphic sherds from Dressel type 20 amphorae are known from: *Angustia, Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa*, Cingșor, *Tibiscum* and *Romula*<sup>29</sup> (fig. 3,2). Two further pieces coming from *Sarmizegetusa* and *Apulum* feature *tituli picti* inscribed in red dye: *Λ I S* (fig. 2,2) and *LEG XIII G*<sup>30</sup> (fig. 2,3). The latter clearly refers to the *legio XIII Gemina* stationed at *Apulum* from the beginning of the province. Similar inscriptions mentioning the names of legions are known from the neighbouring provinces, at *Aquincum, Carnuntum, Novae*, etc., all dated in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD<sup>31</sup>. Military units are not commonly featured on amphorae, in these cases probably indicating the consumer entity, i.e. the units which ordered the olive oil probably as part of the soldiers' regular rations<sup>32</sup>.

It is a well-known fact that Dressel type 20 is one of the most common and widely distributed types of amphorae, mainly in the western Roman provinces, especially via the Rhône and the Rhine Rivers. However it also occurs in small numbers in the eastern Mediterranean, usually during the period of the early Empire<sup>33</sup>. On the Lower Danube the first imports of Baetican oil in these containers can be dated as early as the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, but higher quantities were imported only after the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD<sup>34</sup>. In Pannonia and Moesia Superior during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD, the main consumers of olive oil were the Roman army and the civilians

of Mediterranean origin<sup>35</sup>. The situation is similar for Roman *Dacia* as well: the Roman army was intensely supplied with olive oil both during the Dacian Wars<sup>36</sup>, as well as the first decades of the province<sup>37</sup> in the wake of the deployment of a large armed force and the arrival of Mediterranean settlers in considerable numbers. The sites in Roman *Dacia* which have yielded Dressel type 20 amphorae are without exception dated between the early-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and the 60s of the same century. Furthermore a large part of the respective sites represent essential elements of the provincial defensive system and as such are characterized by a considerable military presence: *legio XIII Gemina* at *Apulum*, *cohors I Vindelicorum* at *Arcidava*, *cohors I sagittariorum*, *Palmyrenii sagittarii*, and detachments of the *legio III Flavia Felix* and *XIII Gemina* at *Tibiscum*, etc.<sup>38</sup>. The situation is similar in the case of *Pannonia Inferior* and *Moesia Superior*, where the majority of Baetican amphorae also come from military sites (fig. 3,1)<sup>39</sup>.

In *Moesia Superior*, although out of nine West Mediterranean types (Bjelajac I–XI) four belong to Iberian amphorae (Bjelajac VI–IX) – their reduced numbers prompted the conclusion that the Hispanic importation was less intense than that from Northern Italy<sup>40</sup>. Already from the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, in *Moesia Superior* the West Mediterranean products gradually started to lose ground and eventually disappeared from this area by the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, when trade centres from the Aegean had become more convenient and cheaper, due to their proximity<sup>41</sup>.

Statistically speaking, the number of Hispanic amphorae in *Dacia* is quite small, even in comparison to *Moesia* and *Pannonia*, probably due to the fact that *Dacia* was conquered only at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and only 50/60 years later the commercial routes were already shifting. Starting with the latter part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, the olive oil and fish products were predominantly imported from the Pontic and East Mediterranean regions.

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<sup>25</sup> POPA 1982, 73; Fig. 2; IDR III/6, 172 Fig. 327.

<sup>26</sup> POPA 1982, 73; IDR III/6, 172.

<sup>27</sup> REMESAL RODRÍGUEZ 1998, 190.

<sup>28</sup> ÉTIENNE/MAYET 2004b, 307.

<sup>29</sup> ARDET 2004, 164–165.

<sup>30</sup> This sherd was published as a fragment from a Dressel type 20 amphora (EGRI/INEL 2006), however further fragments of this particular vessel, which have recently come to light in the National Unification Museum from Alba Iulia, indicate rather a Dressel type 24 amphora instead (information kindly provided by M. Egri).

<sup>31</sup> See EGRI/INEL 2006, 161 with further bibliography.

<sup>32</sup> EGRI/INEL 2006, 162.

<sup>33</sup> PEACOCK/WILLIAMS 1986, 136.

<sup>34</sup> BJELAJAC 1996, 32–34; EGRI 2007, 50.

<sup>35</sup> BJELAJAC 1996, 120; EGRI/INEL 2006, 162.

<sup>36</sup> Considerable quantities of amphorae (especially Dressel type 6B) were discovered in the Roman army's supply bases in the Iron Gates (Porțile de Fier) area set up for the operations of the Dacian Wars. During these military campaigns the main source of olive oil for the Danubian army were the producers in Istria (EGRI 2008, 48; 50 with further bibliography).






















<sup>37</sup> Periods of instability frequently ensued even after the founding of the province in 106 AD, usually triggered by attacks on Dacia and Pannonia by the neighbouring populations, especially the Sarmatians (e.g. 107/108 and 117/118 AD) – thus prompting the deployment of considerable Roman forces in the area of the Danubian provinces.

<sup>38</sup> The reference applies solely to the troops deployed until the 60's of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (for further bibliography see MARCU 2009, 176; 202–203).

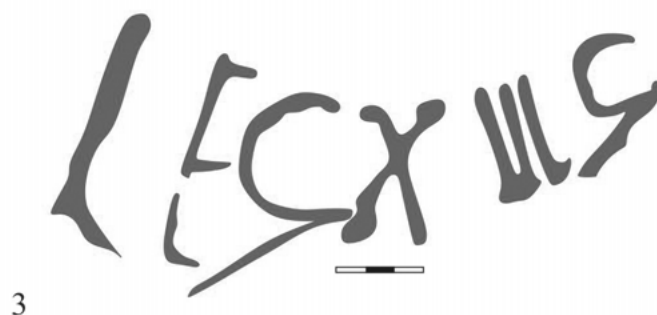
<sup>39</sup> EGRI 2007, 55: 'As for the olive oil consumption, the identified patterns suggest a constant legionary demand that also influenced the nearby civilian settlements. Within the latter category of sites, a rather reduced social group, including newcomers of Mediterranean origin, veterans, and perhaps some members of the indigenous elite, were looking for such foodstuff'.

<sup>40</sup> BJELAJAC 1996, 123.

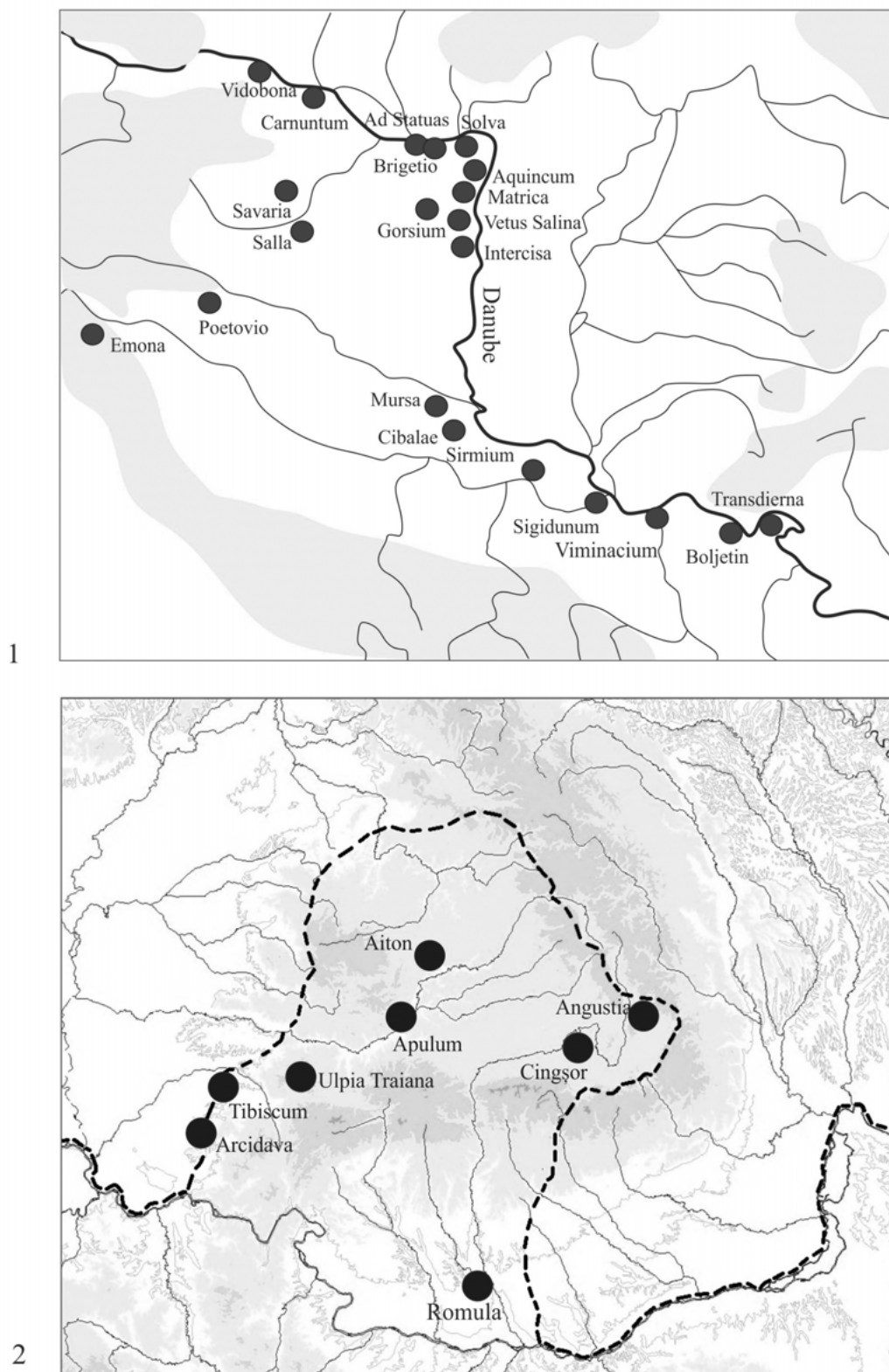
<sup>41</sup> BJELAJAC 1996, 123.

DACIA	Similar stamps in the Roman Empire (after Étienne/Mayet 2004)		
			
			
			
			
			
			

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**Fig. 2.** 1. Stamps in *Dacia* and in the Roman Empire; 2. *Tituli picti* from *Sarmizegetusa* (redrawn after ARDET 2004); 3. *Tituli picti* from *Apulum* (redrawn after EGRI/INEL 2006).



**Fig. 3. 1.** Distribution of Dressel type 20 amphorae in *Pannonia Superior, Inferior* and *Moesia Superior* (redrawn after EGRI 2007); **2.** Distribution of Dressel type 20 amphorae in *Dacia* (redrawn after ARDEȚ 2004).

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