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ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM *SARMIZEGETUSA REGIA*

Regarding Roman ceramic material in the capital of the Dacian kingdom, Sarmizegetusa Regia, there are many unknowns, in fact this material is barely mentioned in the specialized bibliography. Amphorae presence at Sarmizegetusa Regia was mentioned before but so far none has been published with the exception of three handles. Not just the production centers are diverse but also the content of amphorae, so we have specimens of wine but also others containing olive oil and fish-based products. About the main centers, so far unknown, of the specimens found at Sarmizegetusa, this study brings new information. On the one hand, new data regarding trade relations will be provided and also adding information about the presence of Roman military troops in the area. This study could provide more information and an additional indication of the Dacian kingdom's trade relations with the Roman world during the conflict between Domitian (85-89 AD) and Trajan's first war against Dacia (AD 101-102).

Dacia – *Sarmizegetusa Regia* – Roman amphorae – imports – stamped amphorae

1. Introduction

The ceramic material discovered in the capital of pre-Roman Dacia, Grădiștea de Munte-*Sarmizegetusa Regia*, is remarkable by its great diversity. The diversity consists of various forms of cooking pots, storing vessels or tableware, some of them published in this volume by C. Cristescu and G. Andreica. At *Sarmizegetusa*, the amphorae existence was first mentioned in Glodariu's work on Dacian trade with Hellenistic and Roman world (Glodariu 1974: 134, 139). As will be seen, the major centers from which the amphorae originates are, in this case, the Istrian Peninsula, the southern Italian area and farther production centers from Hispania. In this study I included a total number of seven unpublished amphorae, being just a selection from a greater number.¹ During my doctoral thesis research I performed an ample study on over 50 amphorae. This study includes fabric analogies with the rest of the examples discovered at *Sarmizegetusa Regia*, which are going to be published in the near future. In the present paper are provided only few examples due to the research stage of all amphorae, at this moment being identified typologically without doubt a relatively small number.

A general plan of the archaeological site of *Sarmizegetusa Regia* and the context of the material mentioned in this paper is published in this volume by C. Cristescu and G. Andreica (see Roman Cooking Wares Discovered at *Sarmizegetusa Regia*, fig. 1, 2).

2. The ceramic material

From the category of Baetican fish-based sauces, we have two specimens of Beltrán IIA, one Beltrán IIB and one Dressel 7-11. All of them were discovered inside the fortress. The Baetican amphorae often appear at the beginning of their spread in the military milieu, which seems to be the same case for those discovered at *Sarmizegetusa*. This fact is especially due to the presence of Legio IV Flavia Felix in the area, and thus archaeologically certify its activity within the fortification. In our context, these date back to the end of the 1st century AD until the first decade of the next century.

In the case of oil-containing amphorae type Dressel 6B, we have two examples, both of them being stamped. First is an imperial stamp (fig. 1, 1), from Loron (Callender 1965: 268, no. 1810c), bearing the inscription *Imp(eratoris) Nervae Aug(usti)*, and on the second one can be deciphered two 'S' letters (fig. 1, 2-3). Most likely the last one indicates one of *Caius Laecanius Bassus' officinae* in Fažana (Bezeczky 1995: 159). These were also discovered inside the fortress.

For a better understanding of the information, the history of these amphorae must be further detailed. Starting with Baetican amphorae we have to mention their context. The first one is a body part of a Beltrán IIA, from which also a large part of the handle is preserved (fig. 2, 1). It was found during the archaeological excavation in 1950, in the proximity of the fortress walls, near the 3rd terrace. The other one, a Beltrán IIB amphora, is represented by the lower part of the spike, in this case, a hollow one (fig. 2, 2). Its context is almost the same as the first one, being found in 1966 near the 3rd terrace. The last Baetican amphora in discussion is a rim of a Dressel 7-11 type, discovered more recently, in 2002 on the 3rd terrace (fig. 2, 3). As we can see, all these Baetican amphorae are concentrated in a restricted area of the fortress.

¹ National Museum of Transilvanian History (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) is the legal depository of the ceramic material. The drawings and photos are made by the author of this paper.

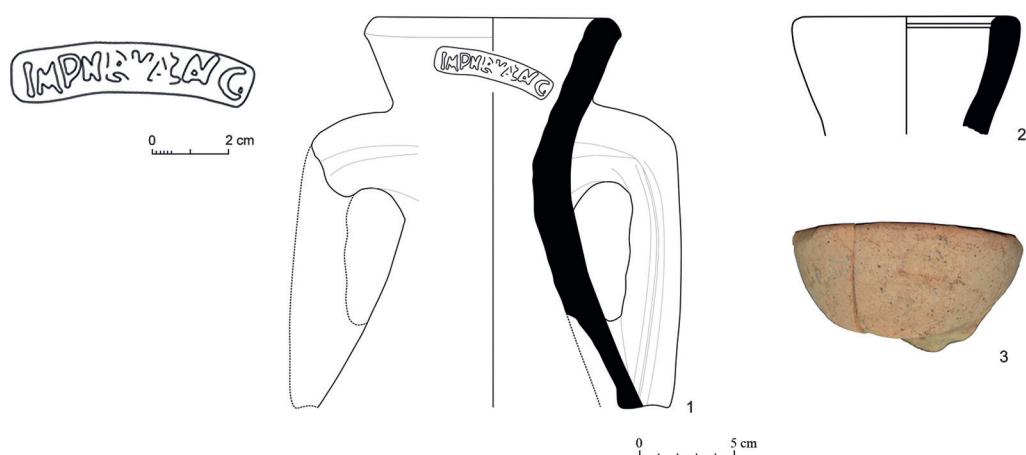


Fig. 1. 1. Nerva stamped Dressel 6B; 2-3. '...SS...' stamped Dressel 6B amphora.

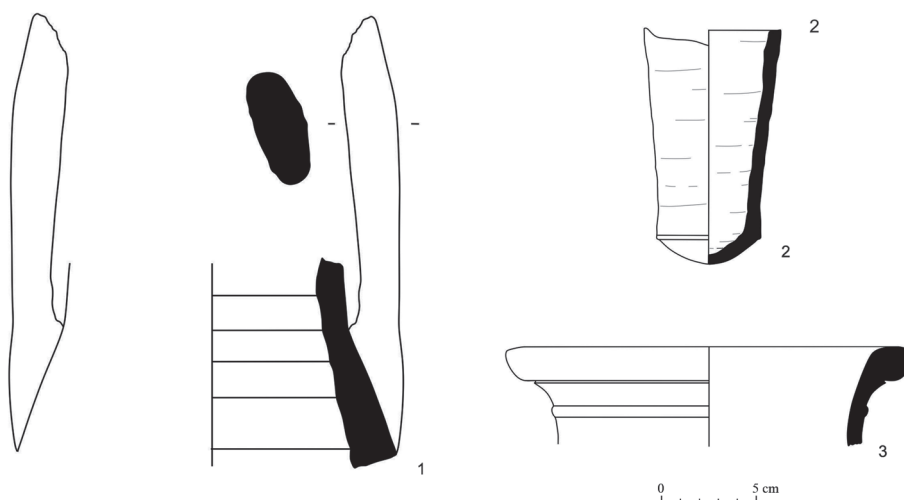


Fig. 2. 1. Beltrán IIA; 2. Beltrán IIB; 3. Dressel 7-11 amphora.

This might not be unusual if we take into account the fact that on this terrace were mentioned traces of a Roman barrack (Glodariu 1965: 124). It must be noticed that all Baetican amphorae contained fish-based sauces. As it is well known, Beltrán IIA (Beltrán Lloris 1977: 103), IIB (Framarin and Rizzo 2014: 43) and Dressel 7-11 (Hesnard 1980: 146-147; Logóstena 2004: 207-208), had such a content. Now it is quite clear that imports of such a content at *Sarmizegetusa Regia* prevail from the Hispanic region.

The Italic amphorae are represented in the former Dacia capital by a neck of an Italian Dressel 2-4 (fig. 3, 1). It was discovered on the same terrace as the Hispanic ones, inside a pit (Glodariu et al. 2003: 134). This one certifies the import of wine (Bezeczky 1998: 232; Tomber 2012: 206), in this case being especially brought from the Italian Peninsula. It is noteworthy that all the Dressel 2-4 Italian type amphorae discovered at *Sarmizegetusa Regia* presents the same morpho-

logy, especially the so-called 'black-sand' fabric (Arthur 1998: 243), specific to the volcanic areas of Campania (Ardeț 2006: 66; Bezeczky 1998: 233), Pompeii area, an aspect that determines its origins. Its fabric resembles all the other amphorae of the same type discovered at *Sarmizegetusa Regia*. Chronologically, Dressel 2-4 amphorae are not very widespread before the Flavian dynasty, especially in southern Pannonia, and contextually they are found only in environments where military presence is well known (Egri 2006: 42, fig. 2). Most likely this amphorae are either imports prior to the Roman conquest, or their presence is due to the Roman military troops quartered at *Sarmizegetusa Regia*.

Regarding Istrian amphorae, the information provided by the two stamped examples mentioned at the beginning should be developed. The first amphora was discovered in the vicinity of the wall. In the upper part of it, immediately below the rim has a well preserved cartridge bearing the inscription

IMP(eratoris) NERVAE AVG(usti) (**fig. 1, 1**), attesting its manufacture between 96-98 AD, being in circulation, most probably, until the beginning of the 2nd century AD.

The well-known property in the Istrian peninsula at Loron (Croatia), led by *Calvia Crispinilla*, becomes an imperial property starting with Domitian (Maggi and Marion 2011: 176; Quiri 2009: 295). Nerva's amphorae are represented by three distinct types (Tassaux 2010: 44), including the variant from *Sarmizegetusa Regia*. We also know the workshop of *Caius Laecanius Bassus* in Fažana, also located in the Istrian peninsula, which stamped imperial amphorae from 78-81 AD (Buchi 1971: 550-552; Starac 2010: 62). However, there are no examples of stamps in the form of *Imperatoris Nervae Augusti* but only *Imperatoris Nervae Caesaris*. Perhaps the most relevant aspect among the two *officinae* is, that at Loron are produced the most amphora stamps with Nerva, and the only one with the *Nerva Augustus* formula. Moreover, in the case of *Iulia Concordia* (Veneto), it is known that the Istrian oil amphorae come from Fažana between the reigns of Vespasian and Domitian, however, starting with Nerva, then continuing with Trajan and Hadrian, the *officina* of Loron becomes the main supply source (Cipriano 2008: 309; Cipriano 2009: 176).

In pre-Roman Dacia, such stamped amphorae are not known, but in the Roman province, we have an identical example at *Porolissum* (Gudea 1989: 446, Pl. VI/1; Rusu-Bolindeț and Botiș 2018: 28, no. 50; Tudor 1968: 392-393). This one was discovered in an alleged *favissa*. It is likely to have been reused, the original oil content being replaced by another, a quite common practice (Peña 2007: 69-70). If the presence of the amphora is related to the military environment, the chronological distance between its production (96-98 AD) and the first Roman military attestation at *Porolissum* (106 AD) is a decade (Pippidi and Russu 1975, 69). Nevertheless the oil retains its quality for a short time (Abdelhamid 2013: 95-96), under optimum conditions altering in about two years (Mattingly 1988: 22), so this supports the hypothesis of the amphora reuse. In the case of the amphora with the imperial stamp from *Sarmizegetusa Regia* must be brought into question, as I have proposed from the beginning, how and why it was brought to Dacia. For example at the end of the 1st century AD, Dressel 6B amphorae, spread in both *Pannonia* and *Moesia Superior*, reached a climax under Trajan and Hadrian, many of them being in military milieu near Drobeta where Traian built the bridge over the Danube during his first campaign against the Dacians (Egri 2006: 50, Fig. 6a, 9).

Belonging to a particular category, the amphora type Haltern 70 similis - Rhône Valley, is now attested in both Roman and pre-Roman Dacia for the very first time. In the case of the amphora discovered at *Sarmizegetusa Regia*, the archaeological context is unknown, coming from the researches carried out in 1950 (**fig. 3, 2**). Haltern 70 similis - Rhône Valley is believed to have the same content as Baetican Haltern 70 amphoras, namely whole olives (Schimmer 2009: 1200) or *defrutum* (Garrote and Marimon 2004: 87), a grape syrup. Its fabric has a yellow light colour due to the large amount of limestone in the composite (Desbat 2003: 45-49). The origin of this type is still debatable, although it is believed that there are two southern French areas, at Fréjus (Laubenheimer et al. 1991: 239) and, as it is given by the

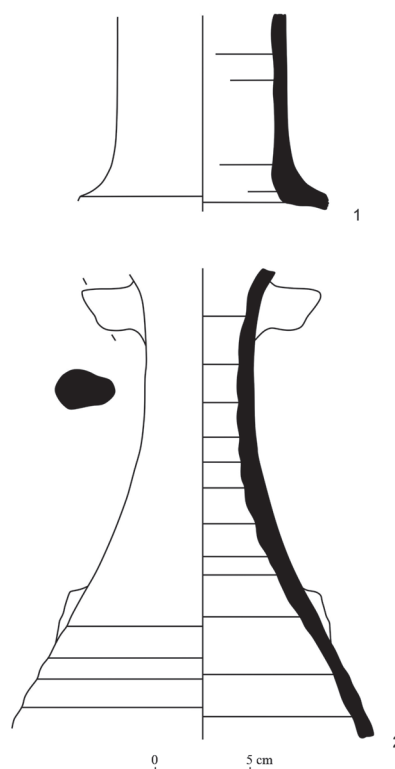


Fig. 3. 1. Dressel 2-4 Italian; 2. Haltern 70 *similis* – Rhône Valley amphora.

name, in the south of the Rhône Valley (Schmitt 1988: 32; Sealey and Tyers 1989: 63-65) and possibly in Lyon (Desbat and Dangréaux 1997: 726-727, no. 3869-3897, Pl. 181-183). Both the earliest and the latest amphorae can be found among the large number discovered at Augst, dated between 20 AD and the beginning of the 2nd century AD (Martin-Kilcher 1994: 726-727, no. 3869-3897, Pl. 181-183). In general, the findings of this amphora type appear to be predominantly in areas with a military presence. Examples in this regard can be found at *Verulamium* and *Londinium* (both in *Britannia*) and Augst, where most of them are framed chronologically towards the end of the 1st century AD (Carreras Monfort 1994: 92-97). I think it is necessary to put the amphora discovered at *Sarmizegetusa Regia* in the same context, namely on account of the military presence inside the fortification in the first decade of the 2nd century AD. This scenario could be confirmed by the legions *III Flavia Felix* and *II Adiutrix* as well as the *vexillatio* of the VI Ferrata known for having camped in the area of the former Dacian capital (Opresanu 2000: 79-87).

3. Conclusions

Although this study includes only amphorae discovered inside the fortification, it must be mentioned that their presence was also noticed inside the civilian settlements. Most likely, these are imports prior to the Roman conquest.

It is important to make a comparison of amphorae discovered at *Sarmizegetusa Regia* and those in Pannonia. Tamás

Bezeczky gathering the amphora discoveries in Pannonia, offers the opportunity to observe very well that they are typologically very similar in both areas (Bezeczky 1995: Tab. 8). Therefore, I think this is an additional argument for us to believe that most of the amphorae discovered at *Sarmizegetusa Regia* are part of the so-called legionary pottery, like those from Pannonia. Of course, given the context, the dates of the specimens from *Sarmizegetusa* fall chronologically at the end of the 1st century and the first decade of the 2nd century AD. The examples in Pannonia are not at all unintentional given the

history of *Legio II Adiutrix*. Its presence at Aquincum before Trajan's wars against the Dacians is well known, as well as its returning immediately after 106 AD. This assignment of the amphorae and their classification into the so-called legionary ceramics is also due to the various categories of Roman ceramics from *Sarmizegetusa*. I consider that the most important point for this analysis is the fact that although a small number of amphorae is presented it was possible for the first time to establish the main production centers and to bring new data regarding the amplitude of the commercial relations.

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