

Roman pottery in the countryside of Dobruja. Topolog as case study

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Abstract. *This paper presents a pottery assemblage discovered at Topolog (Tulcea County) in 2010, at approximately 500 m northwest of the village, in two refused pits severely affected by the extraction of clay by the locals. In the same area a rectangular kiln for the production of bricks and tiles was investigated. The pottery assemblage consists of transport amphorae for wine and salt fish (Shelov C and Zeest 84/85), fine ware (Pontic sigillata), drinking and cooking ware, and a number of hand-made pottery of La Tène tradition. These forms date back to the 2nd century AD and reflect the trade relations of a rural community from the periphery of the Empire with the north and south-eastern Pontic regions.*

Rezumat. *Acest articol prezintă un lot de ceramică descoperit la Topolog (jud. Tulcea) în anul 2010, la cca. 500 m nord-vest de localitate, în două gropi grav afectate de extragerea lutului de către localnici. În aceeași zonă a fost cercetat un cuptor rectangular pentru producția țiglelor și olanelor. Ceramica constă în amfore pentru transportul vinului și al peștelui sărat (Shelov C și Zeest 84/85), ceramică fină (Pontic sigillata), ceramică de băut, ceramică de bucătărie și un important lot de ceramică lucrată cu mâna de tradiție La Tène. Aceste forme sunt datate în secolul II p.Chr. și reflectă legăturile unei comunități rurale de la periferia Imperiului cu regiunile nord și sud-est pontice.*

Keywords: Moesia Inferior, Topolog, amphorae Shelov C, Zeest 84/85, Pontic sigillata, hand-made pottery, 2nd century AD.

Premises

Topolog village is situated in the south-western region of Tulcea county (Dobruja, SE Romania) on the central area of the Babadag plateau, in an area surrounded by forested hills (Figure 1). The Topolog and Valea Roștilor river valleys constituted since Antiquity areas suitable for living, as evidenced by numerous archaeological discoveries known to date³. Prior to 2010, when the field research was carried out and the results are presented in this paper, a series of archaeological materials from different periods, including epigraphic

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³ For an overview see NUȚU, MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2017, 169–172.

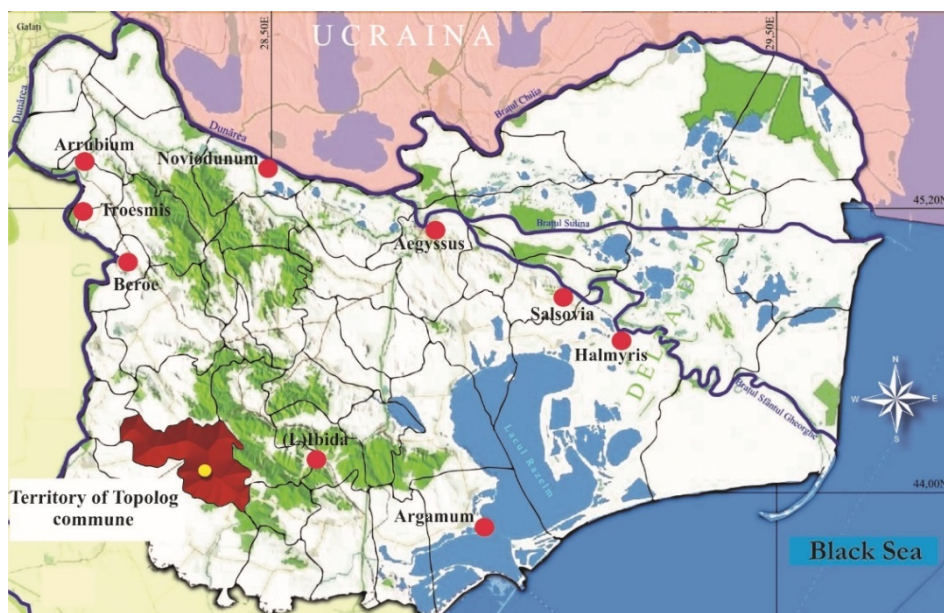


Figure 1. The geographic location of Topolog



Figure 2. Details of the area under survey (marked with a red circle on the map)

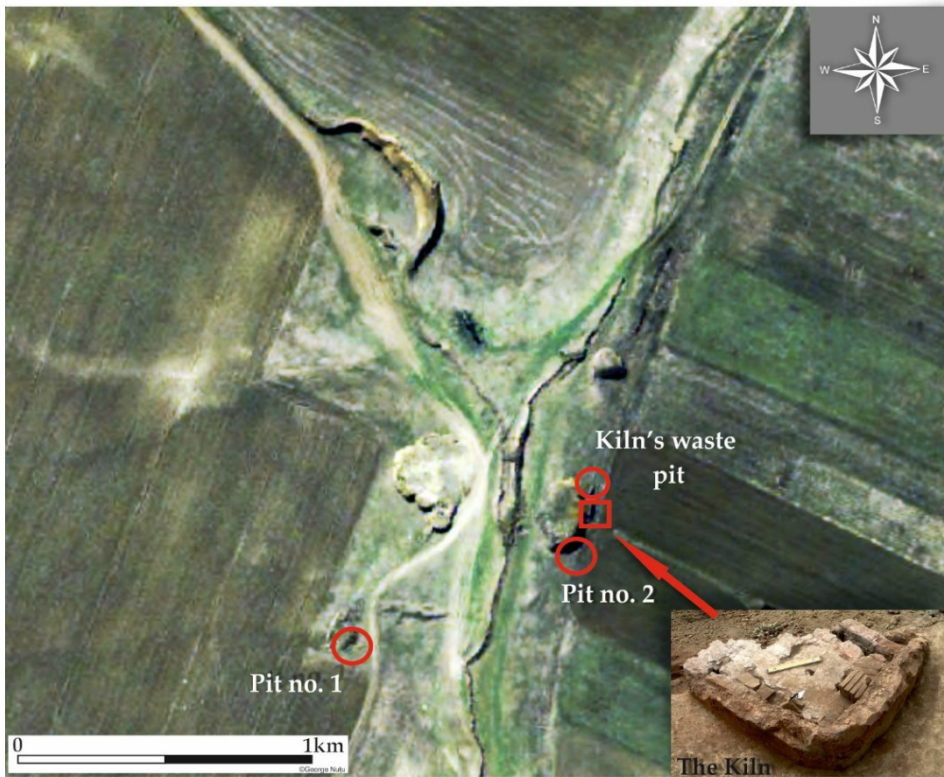


Figure 3. Details of the area under survey ('Stejarul lui Dobrică'/'Dobrică's oak'):
the two pits, the kiln and the kiln's waste pit

documents, were known on the Topolog territory⁴. The documents showed the existence of a heterogeneous population, including landowners originating in Asia Minor or Romanized Thracians (*veterani*).

In 2010, large-scale public works were carried out in Topolog village and we conducted a series of surveys approximatively 500 meters northwest of the locality (Figure 2). On this occasion, a kiln for bricks and tiles was investigated together with the waste pit and two other pits situated not far from the kiln (Figure 3). The pottery discovered in the two pits is the subject of this paper. The pits, together with the kiln, seem to delineate to the east the boundary of an early Roman settlement. Its surface is today in the agricultural network, and to the west a wind farm developed. It is probably one of the many *vici* or *villae* situated in this fertile area.

During these researches, a quantity of Roman and hand-made pottery was recovered. Brief observations have been made of two pits severely affected by clay extraction by locals. Pit 2 was observed at approximatively 15 m south of the kiln and was cut by erosion and clay extraction. It has a maximum diameter of 3.15 m and a maximum depth of 1.45 m (Figure 4); filling consists of layers of ash and adobe. Amphorae shards, hand-made pottery and cookingware were recovered from its base. The pit no. 1 is about 100 m from the pit no. 2 and is cut by a natural ravine for the discharge of the waters on the plateau. Because of this, it could not be fully investigated. Most numerous materials presented in this paper were recovered from this area.

From the same area, a series of Roman tiles, including one with the hoof of a donkey (?), and a series of clay projectiles have been recovered (Figure 4). The small village's museum has in his collections a series of pottery shards datable from the Neolithic to the late Roman period. They were discovered at various locations in the commune. Additionally, a small coin collection together with a 'Zwiebelknopffibel' Keller/Pröttel 3/4D is kept in the collection of Mr. Trofin that organized the local museum.

From the production areas point of view, the pottery from Topolog (Graphic 1) can be divided into imported **transport amphorae** from the south-eastern Black Sea region ('light clay narrow-necked' amphorae of Shelov C type) and the north-Pontic area (Zeest 84/85), fine ware (Pontic *sigillata*), small cups and cooking ware from the workshops of Moesia Inferior (**regional pottery**) and hand-made pottery of La Tène tradition (**local**). If the latter categories reflect purely functional types, the wine and salt fish transported in the aforementioned amphorae prove the economic vitality of this rural area and the trade relations with distant regions.

⁴ BAUMANN 1971, 597; ARICESCU 1973, 105–110; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2014, 303–307; 2015, 439–445; RUBEL 2015, 447–448.

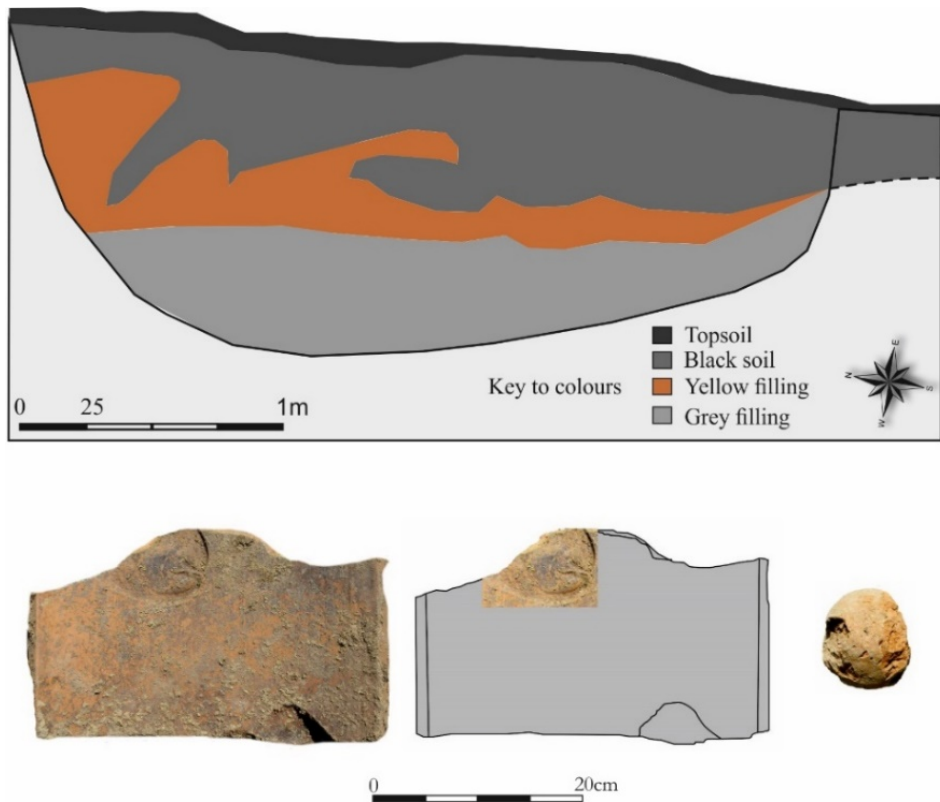
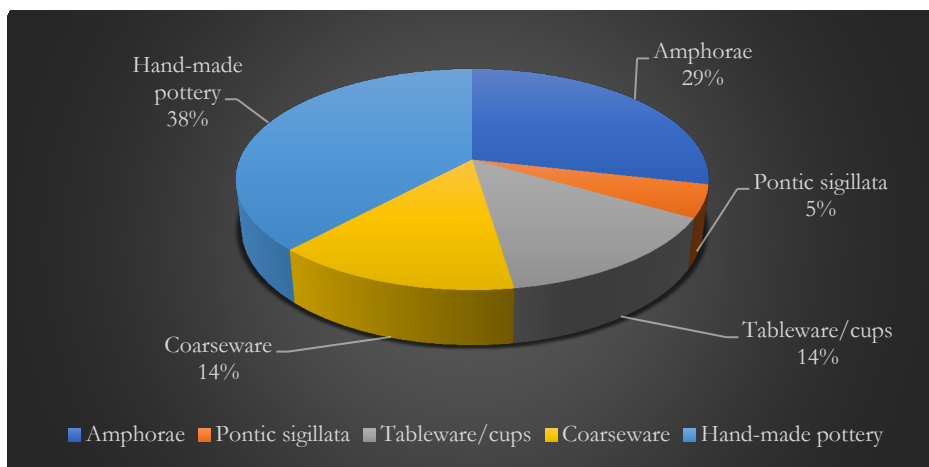


Figure 4. The pit no. 1 – photo and drawing of the cross-section; tile with a hoof (donkey?) print and a clay projectile from the same area



Graphic 1. The percentage of pottery discovered at Topolog

1. Amphorae

1.1. Zeest 94 / Shelov C / Vnukov SIN IV/C / Dyczeck type 28 / Paraschiv 3B

Amphorae of this type (Figure 5) are one of the most common in early Roman settlements from Dobruja and they have a regional diffusion mostly at the Pontic Basin⁵. Outside this area, they occur in small number and have been regarded as evidence for long-distance trade relations. The flourishing trade with Heracleean wine is also mirrored by the diffusion of Shelov C amphorae in the Black Sea basin, but also in the Mediterranean, being discovered even in small quantities at Ostia in Terme del Nuotatore⁶ and in the Athenian Agora⁷. In the east-Carpathians light clay narrow-necked amphorae clustered on the Siret Valley with only minor other occurrences farther north⁸. One of the few workshops that produced light clay narrow-necked amphorae was researched at Alapli, 12 kilometers south of Ereğli (Heracleea Pontica), where A-B and D-E variants were certified⁹, but the absence of the C variant was probably due to limited research. The production areas were certainly more numerous, but the origin of such amphorae must be sought on the south-eastern coast of the Black Sea. Sinope and its hinterland could be the starting point of this type based on petrographic analyses, but probably its origin must be sought in Heracleean and Sinopean workshops.

Starting with I.B. Zeest¹⁰, many scholars from the Pontic region analysed this type. D.B. Shelov set for these 'light clay narrow-necked amphorae' six variants. Apart from some morphological considerations, the author dates back these amphorae based on archaeological context from the north-Pontic region, generally in the 2nd century AD¹¹.

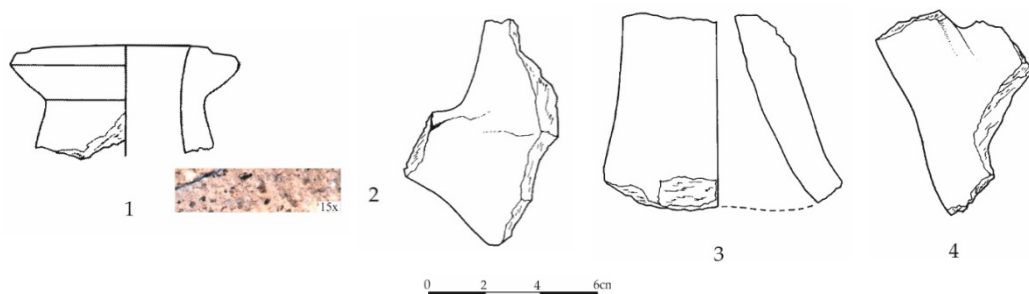


Figure 5. Light-clay narrow-necked amphorae shards

⁵ On the general distribution of this amphorae type, see DYCZEK 2001, 215.

⁶ RIZZO 2014, 562–563, fig. 6.1–2.

⁷ OPAIT 2006, 111, figs. 3a–c.

⁸ OPAIT 2017, 214.

⁹ ARSEN'EVA, KASSAB TEZGÖR, NAUMENKO 1997, 187–198.

¹⁰ ZEEST 1960, 118, pl. 38/94.

¹¹ ŠELOV 1986, 397, fig. 1/c.

D. Paraschiv analysed the diffusion area of this variant and showed that they were discovered in both, rural and urban milieus of Dobruja¹². Prior to this analysis, the author proposed a broad chronology for this type (2nd to 3rd centuries)¹³. The latter proposed dating is too high because on the basis of the well-dated Moesian contexts, variant Shelov C is dated between the 2nd century and the first half of the 3rd century¹⁴. Any extension of use of this type later in the 4th century AD is questionable. Recently, Vnukov set for the variant Shelov C two subtypes (C IV C1-C2) and dated back from AD 125 to AD 150¹⁵.

The percentage of these amphorae in the Dobruja's sites varies greatly. Two examples are relevant in this respect. At *villa rustica* from Niculițel-Tei Com, Shelov C type occupy the first place among transport amphorae with 81 finds. First place among the amphorae assemblage is occupied by the so-called table amphorae which are important for the dynamics of the local economy. Not incidentally, a calculation of the total quantity of wine based on amphorae finds from this villa reveals that wine imported from the south of the Black Sea is two times larger than wine imported from the Aegean¹⁶. On the other hand, at Argamum the amphorae of this variant occupy only 8.9% of the amphorae assemblage¹⁷, but in this case, the archaeological context is uncertain.

It is obvious that any statistical evaluation of the number of Shelov C in the Moesian settlements is useless if we take into account the findings from underwater research. This variant was known in the shallow waters off Dobruja since the '80s of the 20th century when two such amphorae were brought to the Tulcea Museum¹⁸. The first of these was recovered from the Sfântu Gheorghe area by local fishermen¹⁹. Second comes from Gura Portiței²⁰, a region where Greek and Roman pottery was recovered during the bygone decades in great number. In the last three years, underwater research in shallow water off Gura Portiței led to the discovery of extremely well-preserved 2nd century AD shipwreck with a cargo estimated of over 1000 amphorae of Shelov C type²¹. During 2017 campaign it became clear that the cargo was set on at least five rows and that the number initial estimation of the cargo should be increased. Amphorae found during underwater surveys in the Black Sea are not

¹² PARASCHIV 2006a, 21–22; OPAIȚ, IONESCU 2016, 59, pl. 2/7–8.

¹³ PARASCHIV 2013, 214.

¹⁴ DYCZEK 2001, 204, 220.

¹⁵ VNUKOV 2016, 42, fig. 4/1–10.

¹⁶ NUȚU, STANC, PARASCHIV 2014, 56–58, table 4.

¹⁷ PARASCHIV 2006b, 336, table 5.

¹⁸ PARASCHIV 2006a, 43, no. 12, pl. 2; PARASCHIV 2013, 213, fig. 1/2a–b.

¹⁹ The southernmost branch of the Danube is particularly known for the proofs of navigation during the Ottoman period of Dobruja as a fragment of a ship of this period was recovered a few years ago.

²⁰ PARASCHIV 2006a, 44, no. 13, pl. 2; 2013, 214.

²¹ NUȚU *et al.* 2017, 56–58.

uncommon²², as the primary cargo consists of them, but 'Portița A' is the first ship that carries this variant. Together with the similar amphorae from Sulina²³, Sfântu Gheorghe, Portița, Periboina-Edighiol²⁴ and farther south (Odessos, Mesembria) are important testimonies of an intense seaborne during the second half of the 2nd century AD and the beginning of the 3rd century. And the 'light clay narrow-necked' amphorae were a pan-Roman type, the most popular container in early Roman period in the Pontic basin²⁵.

Shelov C amphorae were traded along the seaborne routes and reach the city-harbours of the Black Sea coast. From these hubs, they were (re)distributed inland along the terrestrial routes, but were also shipped on the Danube (Figure 6). As for the content of this type of type amphorae, it was mainly wine²⁶. P. Dyczek mentioned an amphora discovered in the Black Sea near Nessebar, containing wood tar used mainly for preserving the hull of ancient ships²⁷.

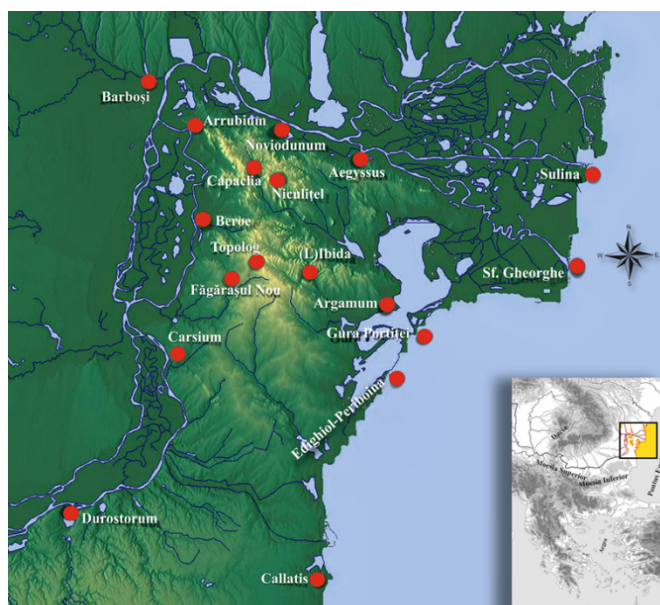


Figure 6. Distribution of the light-clay narrow-necked amphorae (*Shelov C*) in Dobruja

²² Generally, for underwater research see A.J. PARKER (1992) seminal book; for underwater surveys in the Black Sea see, in generally, WARD 1999, 4–6; BALLARD *et al.* 2001, 607–623; WARD, BALLARD 2004, 2–13; HORLINGS 2005; WARD 2010, 189–198, 541–542; BRENNAN *et al.* 2011, 179–188; DAVIS *et al.* 2018, 57–80.

²³ These amphorae shards were retrieved off the Black Sea south of Sulina branch of the Danube and their publication forthcoming.

²⁴ Unpublished finds in private collections.

²⁵ VNUKOV 2004, 415.

²⁶ Another amphora shard, probably of Zeest 72 type (also for wine transport, see PARASCHIV 2006a, 26) is kept in the collection of the small museum of the Topolog village, together with some shards of the ubiquitous late Roman and early Byzantine types LR 1 and LR 2.

²⁷ DYCZEK 2001, 219

1) TOP2010.pit 2 (Figure 5/1) – Amphora mouth, light pink fabric (7.5YR/8.4) with limestone granules and pyroxene in composition, surface whitish, medium rough (7.5YR/8.4). D²⁸ – 6.5 cm.

2) TOP2010.pit 2 (Figure 5/2) – Amphora fragment, probably related to ‘light clay narrow-necked’ amphorae Shelov C, pink fabric (7.5YR/8.4) with limestone granules and pyroxene in composition, surface pinkish, medium rough (7.5YR/8.4). Hp – 7.5 cm.

3) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 5/3) – Amphora neck, probably related to ‘light clay narrow-necked’ amphorae Shelov C, pink fabric (7.5YR/8.4) with limestone granules and pyroxene in composition, surface light grey engobe (7.5YR/8.4). Hp – 6 cm.

4) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 5/4) – Amphora fragment, fragmentary handle (only the starting point is preserved), related to ‘light clay narrow-necked’ (?), light pink fabric (7.5YR/8.4) with limestone granules and pyroxene in composition, grey surface (7.5YR/8.4). Hp – 5.8 cm.

1.2. Zeest 84-85

The shards nos. 5-6 (Figure 7) belongs to Pontic ‘fish amphorae’, large containers intended for trade in fish products with high capacity up to 80 litres. Just like the previous type, they are widely distributed in Moesia Inferior, where probably they were also produced, apart from the north-Pontic regions²⁹. In the rural settlements near the mouth of the Danube they were attested at Telița, Revărsarea, Sarichioi-Sărătura, Isaccea-Suhat³⁰ and in the territory of Argamum³¹. Archaeological contexts suggest that they are datable in 2nd-3rd centuries AD.

5) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 7/5) – Fragment of amphora rim, related to Zeest 69 type; dark reddish-brown fabric (2.5YR/7.3), uneven burning, lime and mica in composition, surface dull reddish (10R/7.6). Hp – 4 cm.

²⁸ Abbreviations used in the catalogue are as follows: Hp – preserved height; D – diameter.

²⁹ PARASCHIV 2006a, 25–26.

³⁰ PARASCHIV 2006a, 25.

³¹ MUȘAT-STREINU 2017, 284–285, fig. 5/1.

6) TOP2010.pit 2 (Figure 7/6) – Amphora mouth, related to Zeest 69 type; dark reddish-brown fabric (2.5YR/7.3), uneven burning, lime and mica flakes in composition, light red engobe (10R/7.6). Hp – 7.2 cm; D – 18 cm.

2. Tableware

2.1. Pontic sigillata

This pottery (Figure 8/7) is specific to Pontic area. Examples belonging to this form replicate the Italic wares and have a typical decoration *in solea*. H. Dragendorff identified for the first time this type based on some finds from Art Museum from Bonn³². J.W. Hayes made a review of this form in *Atlante II*³³. Latest approach belongs to D. Žhuravlev (Form 1.3.1). In the north-Pontic region fairly close parallels for the dish found at Topolog dates back in the second half of the 1st century AD³⁴. In Dobruja, this form was discovered at Sarichioi-Sărătura (North plateau) in a context (G20) dated to the middle of the 2nd century AD³⁵, together with hand-made pottery. Other finds were discovered in the Getian settlement from Hîrșova-La Moară³⁶, at Histria³⁷ and in the workshops from the territory of Nicopolis ad Istrum³⁸.

7) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 8/7) – Dish, upper side and fragmentary base decorated with wheel cog; dull reddish fabric, homogeneous (5YR/7.6) with small limestone flakes, reddish orange surface (10R/7.8). D – 20 cm; Hp – 2.8 cm.

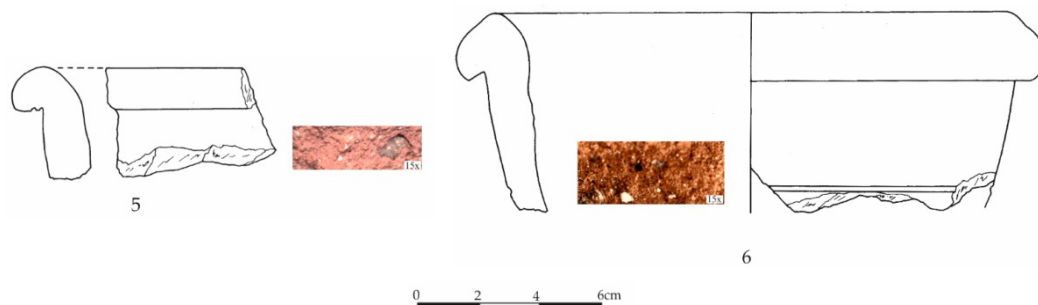


Figure 7. Zeest 84/85 amphorae

³² DRAGENDORFF 1980, 19–22.

³³ HAYES 1985, 93, pl. 22/7.

³⁴ ŽHURAVLEV 2010, 42, pl. 12/68.

³⁵ BAUMANN 1995, 183, 214, pl. 14/2.

³⁶ BOUNEGRU, HAȘOTTI, MURAT 1989, 287, fig. 7/11.

³⁷ SUCEVEANU 2000, 62–69, pl. 23.

³⁸ SULTOV 1985, 62, pl. 26/1

2.2. Cups

The two rims and a flat base (Figure 8/8-10) belong to small cups frequent in all archaeological contexts in Moesia Inferior. All known finds have globular body, short rim, and thin walls. The Dacian and the contexts from Moesia Inferior suggest a time frame in 2nd century AD³⁹. The examples found at Topolog have a brown-reddish fabric with slip of the same colour. They are rather crude and different from other examples from Dobruja and might have been of a local production, probably a workshop in the region which copy and multiply a well-known provincial form.

8) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 8/8) – Upper side of a cup; yellow reddish fabric, homogeneous (5YR/7.8) with rare limestone granules, yellow red surface (2.5YR/6.8). D – 6.6 cm; Hp – 4.2 cm.

9) TOP2010.pit 2 (Figure 8/9) –Upper side of a cup; yellow reddish fabric, homogeneous (5YR/7.8) with rare limestone granules, yellow red engobe (2.5YR/7.8); slightly overfired. D – 6.5 cm; Hp – 2.5 cm.

10) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 8/10) – Base of a cup; yellow reddish fabric, homogeneous (5YR/7.8) with rare limestone granules, yellow red surface (2.5YR/7.8); Annular base with concave centre. D – 6.5 cm; Hp – 2.5 cm.

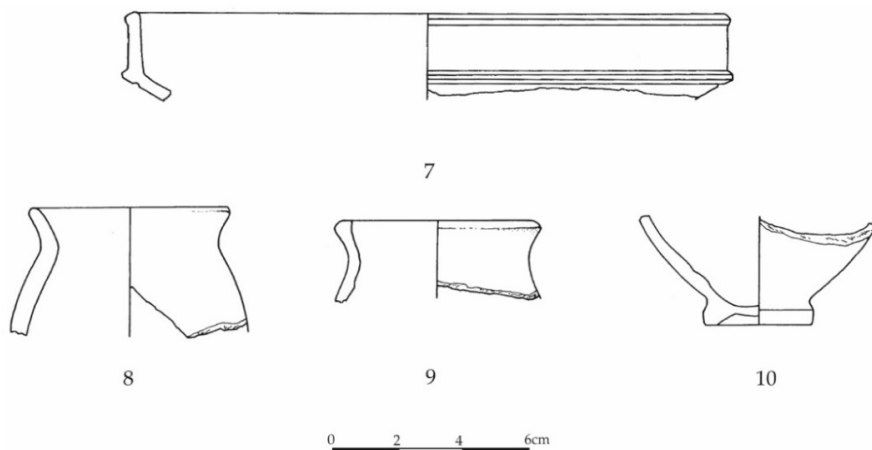


Figure 8. Pontic *sigillata* (no. 7); cups (nos. 8-10)

³⁹ OPAIȚ 1980, 336, pl. 8/7; BOUNEGRU, HAȘOTTI, MURAT 1989, 289, fig. 9/7; HONCU 2014, 85, nos. 195–196, pl. 25.

3. Coarseware

Three pots (Figure 9) were recovered and are made of beige fabric, homogeneous, with lime and sand inclusions. The exterior presents traces of secondary burning. The shape is common in early Roman Dobruja settlement.

The first pot (no. 11) has an oblique rim with rounded edge and a globular body. It is obviously well-made compared with the next type. The handles are lamellar in cross-section. The jars (nos. 12-13) are frequently encountered in Dobruja. The rim is concave to interior, and it has massive rounded edge to exterior. The rim was set to receive a lid, and the concave-shaped interior was designed to maintain a constant temperature. Although the handles are similar with the previous type, one can notice the oval-shaped cross-section and greater width. Both types are typical for the early Roman period and they are of a local (Moesian) origin. Similar wares found at Niculițel-Tei Com, Durostorum, (L)Ibida⁴⁰ or Aegyssus⁴¹ were dated in the 2nd-3rd centuries but the finds from Topolog fall in the 2nd century AD, although the cooking ware will not experience drastic changes of form over the next four centuries, except for diversification in dietary habits of the population⁴².

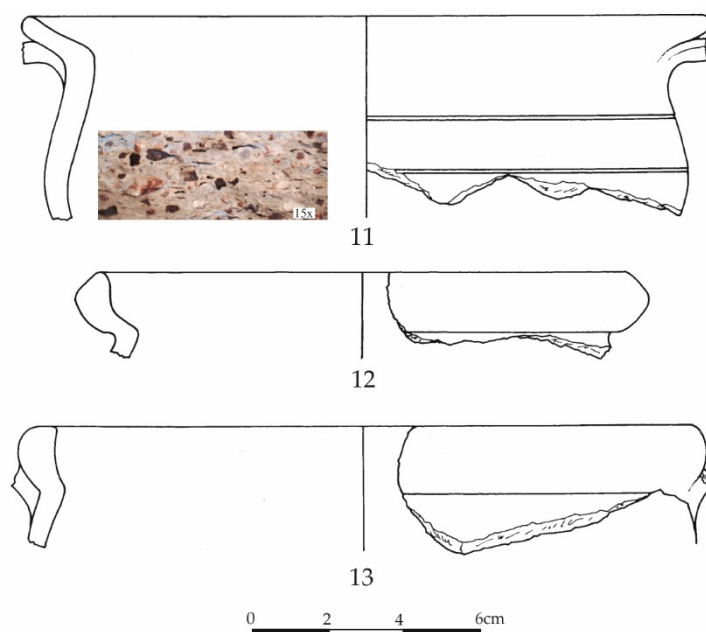


Figure 9. Coarseware

⁴⁰ HONCU 2017, 44–50, nos. 1–28, pls. 1–3.

⁴¹ NUȚU, STANC 2017, 616, fig. 2/1–2.

⁴² NUȚU, STANC 2017, 621.

11) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 9/11) – Mouth and body of a pot; crude beige fabric [2.5YR/8.6], with numerous mica flakes and sand; heavily secondary burning on the exterior, beneath the handle and on the rim; the body is decorated with two pairs of incisions. D – 19 cm; Hp – 5.5 cm.

12) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 9/12) – Fragmentary rim of a pot; beige fabric [2.5YR/4.7], with numerous mica flakes and sand; heavily secondary burning on the exterior, beneath the handle and on the rim. D – 19 cm; Hp – 3.5 cm.

13) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 9/13) – Fragmentary rim of a pot; beige fabric [2.5YR/8.6], with inclusions of mica and sand; slightly secondary burning. D – 16 cm; Hp – 2.5 cm.

4. Hand-made pottery

Hand-made pottery of local La Tène tradition is not uncommon in Roman contexts in the early Roman Dobruja. Analysis of many rural settlements near the mouth of the Danube showed that the proportion of hand-made pottery varies from site to site⁴³. At Niculițel, at a *villa rustica*, the percentage of hand-made jars is of 23% of the total of kitchenware discovered on the site. Chronologically, they flourished from the 1st century BC to 3rd century AD and gradually disappeared in the 4th century AD⁴⁴.

Not coincidentally, a higher percentage of hand-made pottery is discovered in 1st – 2nd AD rural settlements and was regarded as a cohabitation between the Romans and the autochthonous or as an evolution of the Romanisation process. One such example comes from the southern shore of the Lake Tașaul (Năvodari, Constanța district), where inside an early Roman rural settlement the hand-made pottery occupies 20% percent of the total⁴⁵. In this case, we have the same association as in the case of Topolog of hand-made and Roman pottery including similar forms as for example Getian cups and Pontic *sigillata*⁴⁶.

Another interesting situation is met in the case of rural settlement from Sarichioi – Sărătura where Roman pottery was found in many cases associated with hand-made jars, cups, and bowls. Refused pit no. 20 (G20) delivered a number of dishes, bowls, and kitchenware, including a fairly close analogy⁴⁷ for dish no. 7 discovered at Topolog. Refused

⁴³ For the distribution of this type in the region see BAUMANN 1995, 188.

⁴⁴ HONCU 2014, 99.

⁴⁵ ȘOVA 2015, 130.

⁴⁶ MATEI 1985, 133–136, pl. 4/1–5.

⁴⁷ BAUMANN 1995, 214, pl. 14/2.

pit no. 16 (G16) delivered a large assemblage of hand-made pottery associated with Roman forms⁴⁸.

The two contexts discussed previously offered Roman or hand-made pottery and the two types were associated. Same situation is met in the case of houses L-1, L-2, but the percentage inside the assemblage is between 8%-36%. The smaller ratio found at Sarichioi-Sărătura is almost similar with the average ratio of the hand-made pottery inside the assemblage of pottery from Fântânele, where the percentage of this type does not exceed 8%⁴⁹. Highest percentage (40%) may be seen in the case of the Getian settlement from Hîrșova-La Moară (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of hand-made pottery on selected sites from Dobruja

Place		Percentage of the hand-made pottery			Literature	
Niculițel — Roman <i>villa</i>		23%			HONCU 2014, 99	
Năvodari/Tașaul- ‘Limba oii’		20%			ȘOVA 2015, 130 based on data published by MATEI 1985, 133-136, pl. 4/1-5	
Sarichioi- <i>Sărătura</i> ⁵⁰ : House L1		8%			BAUMANN 1995, 218, pl. 18	
Sarichioi- <i>Sărătura</i> : House L2		36%			BAUMANN 1995, 219, pl. 19	
Sarichioi- <i>Sărătura</i> : dump pit no. 16		35%			BAUMANN 1995, 212-213, pl. 12/12-17; pl. 13.	
Fântânele	North habitation core	1 st habitation level (1 st -2 nd cent.)		2 nd habitation level (3 rd cent.)	Total/settlement 12%	ANGELESCU 1998, 217- 234.
		17%		21%		
	South habitation core	1 st habitation level (1 st - 3 rd cent.)	2 nd habitation level (2 nd – 3 rd cent.)	3 rd habitation level (4 th – 5 th cent.)		
		6%	8%	8%		
Hîrșova- <i>La Moară</i>		40%			BOUNEGRU, HAȘOTTI, MURAT 1989, 275	
Topolog- <i>Stejarul lui Dobrică</i>		38%			Present article	

⁴⁸ BAUMANN 1995, 212, pl. 12/12-17.

⁴⁹ ANGELESCU 1998, 217-234.

⁵⁰ Based on finds illustrated by V.H. BAUMANN (1995).

For other settlements from Dobruja, the information is too vague or the publication of the material was focused on either on Roman or hand-made pottery, separately. Unfortunately, we can not establish, even relative, the place occupied by hand-made pottery within the assemblage. One such example is the rural settlement between the villages Straja and Cumpana (Constanta county) researched during the works on the Danube-Black Sea Maritime Channel. The pottery assemblage is extremely rich, but no statistic is given and any estimation based on illustration is useless⁵¹. However, we can find a series of parallels for the hand-made pottery from Topolog⁵². The second example is the Getian settlement from Hîrșova-La Moară where rescue excavations delivered a large assemblage of pottery, but the hand-made percentage is smaller than Roman provincial⁵³. The first scholars which published the excavation state that the hand-made pottery occupies a 40% of all assemblage⁵⁴. However, other 73 finds were published later⁵⁵ and we have no clear data about the actual ratio between the two types (i.e. hand-made vs. Roman provincial pottery). This situation is similar in the case of the settlement from Bugeac-Valea lui Marinciu⁵⁶.

Recently, Honcu suggested that militaries used hand-made wares as a result of some shortage of pottery⁵⁷. It is obvious that at some point, during crisis, the *officinae* located within the *cannabae* could not cover the military demand, but this happened occasionally. Presumably, the high frequency of finding hand-made pottery in various sites across the Roman provinces is due to ease of production and of the low price comparing with the Roman pottery. Last but not least, let's do not forget that these wares intended for cooking the food did not have a long life. Thus, their frequent replacement requires cheap products.

Parallels for the hand-made pottery from Topolog (Figures 10 and 11) occurs frequently in Moesian settlements, as at Niculițel, Argamum, (L)Ibida, Histria, Troesmis⁵⁸, just to mention a few. Garlands on the shoulders and less often impressions with fingers on the rim are common. At Sarichioi-Sărătura large jars decorated with garlands on the shoulder occur in the same context with 2nd century AD Roman pottery⁵⁹. Their rim is simple, without decoration. For the cup no. 21 some parallels were found in rural settlements (Sarichioi-Sărătura)⁶⁰. Other similar forms come from Hîrșova-La Moară⁶¹. The chronology for these

⁵¹ TZONY 1979, 193–196.

⁵² TZONY 1979, fig. 1/8.

⁵³ BOUNEGRU, HAȘOTTI, MURAT 1989, 282.

⁵⁴ BOUNEGRU, HAȘOTTI, MURAT 1989, 275.

⁵⁵ NICOLAE 2009, 133–175.

⁵⁶ SCORPAN 1969, 43–79; SCORPAN 1970, 140–143.

⁵⁷ HONCU 2017, 158–159, 178.

⁵⁸ HONCU 2017, pls. 10–11/95–110.

⁵⁹ BAUMANN 1995, 221, pl. 11/10–11.

⁶⁰ BAUMANN 1995, 212, pl. 12/12–13.

⁶¹ NICOLAE 2009, 137–138, pl. 1/6–8.

parallels are framed between 1st-3rd centuries AD, but in the case of the pottery from Topolog we can propose the 2nd century AD.

14) TOP2010.pit 2 (Figure 10/14) – Fragmentary jar; crude fabric, yellowish [7.5YR/6.8], with numerous inclusions of limestone, pebble and organic (?) materials; the rim edge is decorated with ‘notches’, and the shoulder with buttons; very rough. D – 21 cm; Hp – 13 cm.

15) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 10/15) – Fragmentary jar; crude fabric, yellowish brown [[10YR/5.3], with numerous inclusions of limestone and pebble; the rim edge is decorated with ‘notches’. D – 26 cm; Hp – 11 cm.

16) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 10/16) – Fragmentary jar; crude fabric, yellowish brown [10YR/5.3], with numerous inclusions of limestone and pebble; the rim edge is decorated with ‘notches’. Hp – 6.4 cm.

17) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 10/17) – Fragmentary rim of a jar; crude fabric, strong brown [7.5/4.6], with numerous inclusions of limestone and pebble. The rim edge is plain. Hp – 4 cm.

18) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 10/18) – Fragmentary rim of a jar; crude fabric, yellowish brown [10YR/5.3], with numerous inclusions of limestone and pebble; the rim edge is decorated with ‘notches’. Hp – 8 cm.

19) TOP2010.pit 2 (Figure 10/19) – Fragmentary rim of a jar; crude fabric, strong brown [7.5/4.6], with numerous inclusions of limestone and pebble. The rim edge is plain. Hp – 4.3 cm.

20) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 10/20) – Fragmentary jar; crude fabric, yellowish brown [10YR/5.3], with numerous inclusions of limestone and pebble; the rim edge is decorated with ‘notches’. D – 23 cm; Hp – 8 cm.

21) TOP2010.pit 1 (Figure 10/21) – Fragmentary cup; crude fabric, strong brown [7.5YR/5.8], with numerous inclusions of limestone and pebble; self-slip of reddish yellow hue (7.5YR/7.8). The shape is typical for cups and was probably developed under the influence of so-called Getian cup. D – 21 cm; Hp – 6 cm.

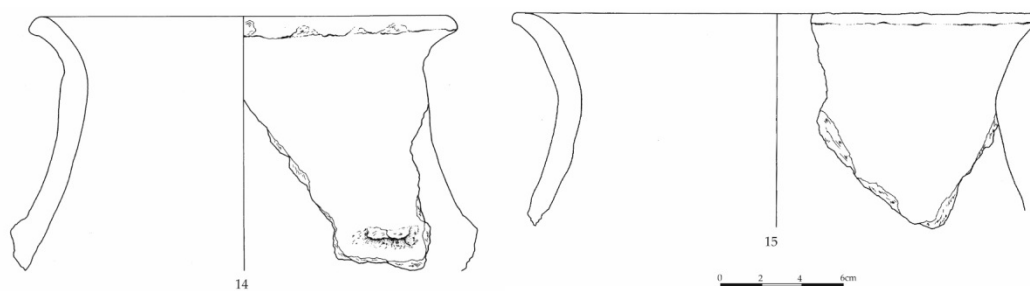


Figure 10. Hand-made pottery (jars)

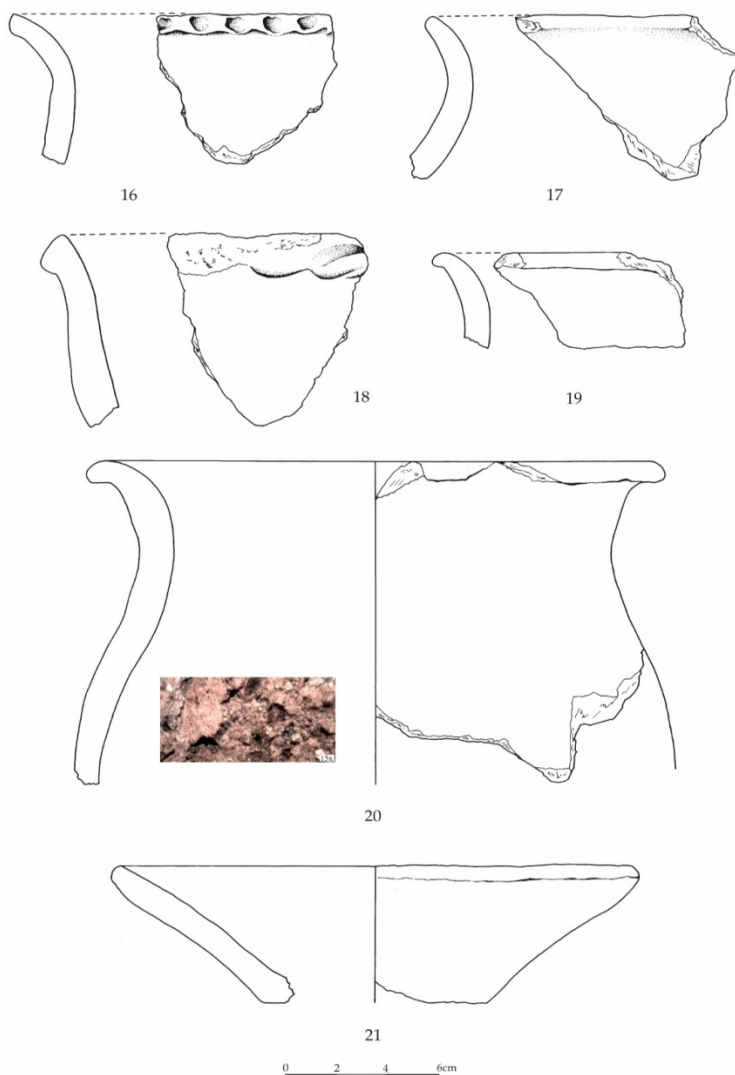


Figure 11. Hand-made pottery (jars)

Conclusive remarks

The small pottery assemblage from Topolog allow us to draw a few remarks on the local society in the 2nd century AD. Local traditions are illustrated by the discovery of hand-made pottery, a continuation of La Tène ware at the beginning of the Roman period. In addition to this, there are imports of fine ware (Pontic *sigillata*) from the provincial workshops. Although Pontic *sigillata* is considered of north-Pontic origin, it must have been produced in the south-Moesian workshops as well. Two other fragmentary cups, also belonging to the Pontic *sigillata* category were found, one in the fill of the kiln and the other in the waste pit. Another chronologically and economically important clue is the fragments of the transport amphorae discovered. Shelov C amphora type is the container with the highest frequency of discoveries during this period at the mouth of the Danube and was mainly destined for the transport of south-eastern Pontic wine. The Zeest 84/85 high capacity amphorae were designed for the transport of salt fish (*salsamenta*). Both products, the wine and salt fish, prove long-distance trade connections and the economic vitality of a Moesian rural community. The preservation of the La Tène traditions reflected in hand-made pottery and a series of epigraphic documents indicate the existence of a veteran's community in this area in the 2nd century AD.

For the dimensions of this rural community, the epigraphic record is significant⁶². An inscription on a funerary altar mentions a person coming from Asia Minor, more precisely Amorium–Aufidius *Helius*⁶³. Not far from Topolog, in the village of Cerbu, a stela attests two members of a citizens family, (A)*elius Auluseus* and his son, (A)*elius Marcus*. The texts is dating about the half of 2nd century AD⁶⁴. *Auluseus* (also in the form *Auluseus*) is a Thracian name having two occurrences in the epigraphic records, in two military diplomas, where the beneficiaries have the ethnonym *Bessus*. One is called *Auluseus Densatralis filius*⁶⁵, the other *Auluseus*⁶⁶. *Auluseus* from Topolog is a Thracian who was granted the citizenship; his son has already a Roman name. It is not the only Thracian being mentioned in the proximity. At Mihai Bravu, *Tarsa*, a former *tesserarius* in the fleet of Ravenna, is coming home after he was discharged in AD 71⁶⁷. At (L)Ibida, *Durisses Bithi*⁶⁸, *Othis Seuti*, *Bithidia Biti*, *Lupussis* (?) are also mentioned in the inscriptions⁶⁹. One can say that there was a quite strong *Bessi* community living in the rural milieu of the northern side of the province; they were colonized by

⁶² ARICESCU 1973, 105, footnote 3.

⁶³ BAUMANN 1971, 597; BAUMANN 1984, 228–229, no. 16, 626, fig. 69; ARICESCU 1973, 105. On *Aufidii*, see also MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA, DUMITRACHE 2012, 63–64. On *Helius*, see also MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2015, 443.

⁶⁴ BAUMANN (1984, 229–230, no. 18, 625, fig. 67) read *Aulusemius*, but on the stone we can see d'*Auluseus*.

⁶⁵ ECK, PANGERL 2008, 326.

⁶⁶ RMD V, 348.

⁶⁷ CHIRIAC, MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA, MATEI 2004, 265–269; PETOLESCU, POPESCU 2007, 147–152.

⁶⁸ ISM V, 229; see also MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2011, 108–109.

⁶⁹ ISM V, 228; see also MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2011, 107–108.

economic reasons (agriculture and surface mining)⁷⁰. From the village of Sâmbăta Nouă (after the information of the locals), an altar consecrated to Jupiter and Junon was erected by a certain *Lae(...) Comicus*, very probably at the half of 2nd century AD⁷¹. The dedications to Jupiter and Juno are frequent in the countryside of Moesia Inferior⁷².

Despite the scarcity of systematical archaeological researches, the epigraphic and archaeological records prove the existence of at least a *vicus* and many *villas* in this area. It seems that some inhabitants were veterans' descendants, if not veterans themselves, like *Aufidius Helius*, from Asia Minor. Himself or one of his ancestors was recruited during Trajan's Parthian wars or during Hadrian's Judaea war. His family was quite wealthy; he was, without doubt, a rural landlord in this region of Moesia Inferior. Another group of inhabitants was constituted by Roman citizens whose origin were unknown (like *P. Lae(...) Comicus*) and by Thracians (*peregrini*, like *Tarsa*, *Othis Seuti* et *Durisses Bithi*, or citizens, like *(A)elius Aulusenus*). The process of names 'romanisation' is visible (*Aulusenus*' son has the surname *Marcus*).

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⁷⁰ See MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2011, 118; 2015, 441.

⁷¹ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2014, 303–307; see also MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2015, 439–445.

⁷² See *CIL* III 7466; *ISM* I, 324–332 (MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2012, 93–98), 344, 346, 347, 368 (BĂLTĂC 2011, 252–253), 378 (BĂRBULESCU, BUZOIANU 2013, 183–184); *ISM* II, 141 (BOUNEGRU 2011, 238, BĂLTĂC 2011, 264); *ISM* V, 13–15, 17–18, 123, 62–64, 69, 129 (BĂLTĂC 2011, 239–240); *ILB* 235.

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