

## **A GREEK STAMP ON AN IMITATION RHODIAN AMPHORA FROM THE *DAVA* AT POPEȘTI (JUD. GIURGIU, SOUTH-EASTERN ROMANIA) AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR THE HELLENISTIC INFLUENCE IN THE NORTH-THRACIAN HINTERLAND**

The site at Popești is a multi-layered settlement of the proto-urban, fortified type called *dava*<sup>1</sup>. It is situated in south-eastern Romania, in the Danube Plain (fig. 1), and dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC/early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. This places it in an area and a time where antique written sources situate the northern Thracian population of the Getae: even if these sources do not use the term »Getae« rigorously, there is a certain consistency in attributing the area centred around the Danube and up to the Southern Carpathians to the Getae and this ethnonym will be used here as a proxy for the non-Greek inhabitants of this region. The Getae had contacts with Greeks of various trades, primarily due to exchange of merchandise (mostly Greek wine, luxury tableware and coins on the one hand, indigenous cereals and slaves on the other)<sup>2</sup>, to warfare<sup>3</sup>, the visits of authors of classical texts to the area<sup>4</sup> and possibly also to political marriages<sup>5</sup>. In the Late La Tène period (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> century AD), these contacts became frequent enough for scholars to talk about Hellenistic influences on the Getae (visible in local coin mints, architecture, consumption of wine, tableware, etc.)<sup>6</sup>.

From among the many exchange goods of Greek origin here of interest are the transport amphorae. The first ones appear in the study region in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, in connection with wine imports. In the following centuries, their number increases, albeit not at a constant rate. Most of them come from Rhodes, but also – in descending order of frequency – from Thasos, Heraclea Pontica, Sinope, Cos, Cnidos, etc.<sup>7</sup>. At some point, most probably close to 200 BC, they began to be imitated by the locals. Both categories – Greek originals and local imitations – are usually found in settlements, primarily in *davae*, while genuine ones are sometimes also found in graves – but the latter are extremely rare in the Late La Tène period. The amphorae's high degree of fragmentation (e.g., no locally imitated amphora was ever found whole or reconstructible<sup>8</sup>), the difficulty of distinguishing macroscopically, in many cases, sherds of local imitations from those of the imported amphorae as well as the state of research (which has failed to account for the immense quantities of pottery delivered by the *davae* and settlements in general) make impossible any realistic estimation of the number of amphorae, be they imported or locally imitated. Consequently, studies did not expand on the role of these amphorae/wine import for the local economy and limited themselves to noting the presence of the wine trade as a luxury/prestige good as well as the existence of a wide repertoire of local amphorae imitations in a number and manner unknown from any other place outside the Greco-Roman world and indicating, among other clues, the existence of local wine production. More detailed analyses were carried out only with respect to the stamps present on many – but not most – amphora handles, as the originals – most of them well-dated in the Greek world – are important for the dating of local archaeological contexts, while their imitation draws attention as a unique phenomenon in the Barbarian world<sup>9</sup>.

The imitation of Greek amphora stamps on northern Thracian amphorae is attested by numerous examples and has been discussed from different points of view on several occasions<sup>10</sup>. Nearly all the pieces known

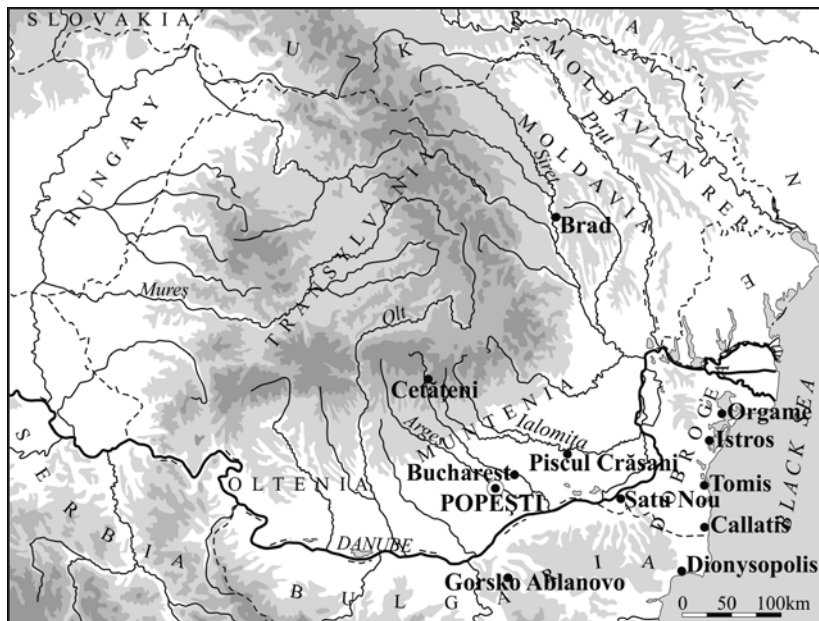


Fig. 1 Location of the sites mentioned in the text and of the Greek colonies closest to the study region. – (Base map I. Barnea).

so far bear exclusively geometric signs – horizontal grooves, waves in one or two registers, crossed or diagonal lines, rectangles, etc. – or, more rarely, vegetal motifs – in particular, leaves<sup>11</sup>. Very rarely, there are even schematic representations of human figures: on two amphora handles at Popești<sup>12</sup> and a die at București-»Tei«<sup>13</sup>. Important exceptions are one stamp found at Cetățeni (jud. Argeș/RO)<sup>14</sup> and another one at Gorsko Ablanovo (obl. Tărgoviște/BG)<sup>15</sup> – in that they show simple attempts to imitate Greek letters<sup>16</sup>. For the first exception, it was nevertheless argued that a radical known from other Thracian names can be recognised<sup>17</sup> – a characteristic that makes it comparable in intention (but not in writing skills) with a group of imitation amphora stamps with Thracian names written with Greek letters found as far away as Philippopolis, deep in the southern Thracian area<sup>18</sup>.

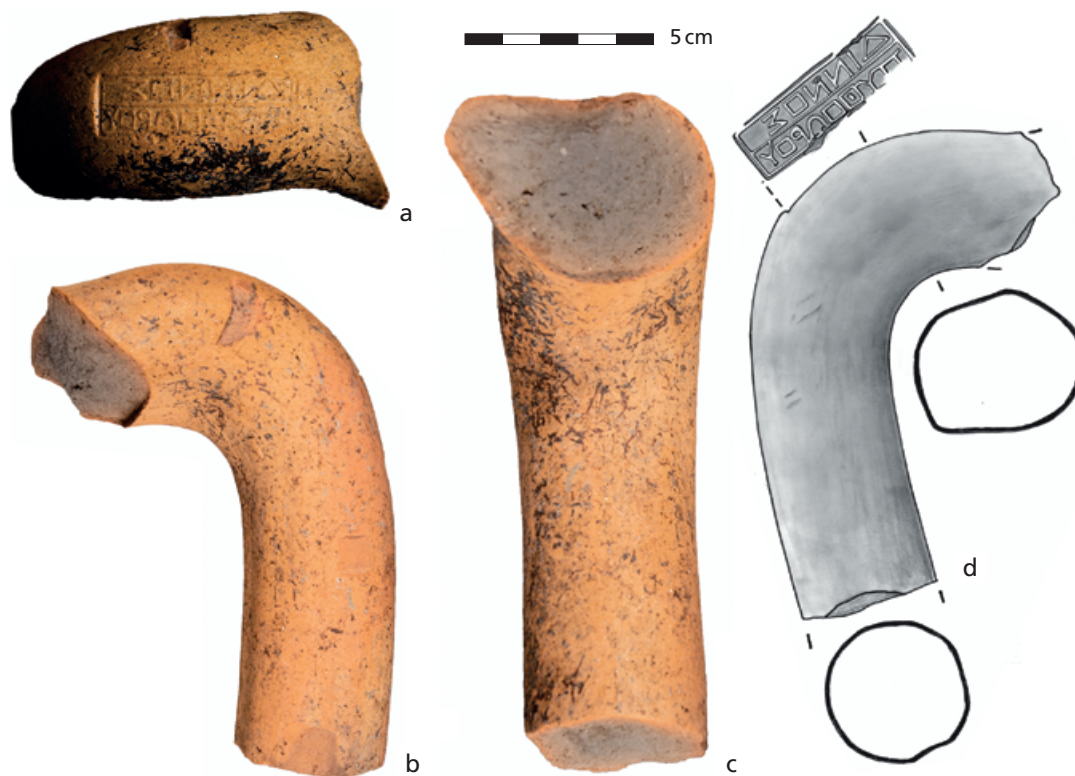
This article adds to the known types of stamps produced after Rhodian prototypes one sample, found in the well-known *dava* at Popești, which for the first time bears a genuine Greek inscription and examines the possible implications. The paper will first examine the piece itself, then situate it in the broader contexts of the *dava* as well as within that of wine production, trade and consumption in the Getic milieu north of the Danube, of which the *dava* at Popești was a part, and, finally, will try to assess the possible consequences of this discovery.

## THE STAMPED AMPHORA HANDLE FROM POPEȘTI

The shape of the handle (fig. 2) compares well with the form 1b of John Lund's typology of Rhodian amphorae – i. e., arched, with »a more rounded section and a shorter distance from the upper handle attachment to the lip« –, corresponding to the periods IIb-early IIc of the Rhodian stamping production – i. e., c. 218-206 BC<sup>19</sup>.

The stamp on the handle reads, in sinistrorse inscription (fig. 2a. d):

Δί<ο>ννος                    ←  
 Πυθο<δ>ώρου                ←  
 »Dionnos, son of Pythodoros«



**Fig. 2** Popești. Handle of an imitation Rhodian amphora stamped with Greek letters: **a** the stamp. – **b** side view. – **c** view from the rim. – **d** drawing of the handle and stamp. – (Photos C. I. Nicolae; drawing I. Barnea). – Scale 1:2.

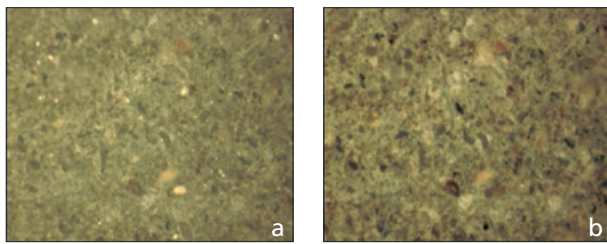
The letters  $\nu$ ,  $\sigma$  (l. 1) and  $\rho$  (l. 2) are retrograde, while  $\omicron$  (ll. 1-2) and  $\theta$  (l. 2) are square. Between the two lines of the inscription, there is a dividing stroke. The text contains two errors:  $\omicron$  is omitted in  $\Delta\text{INNO}\Sigma$  (l. 1) and  $\delta$  is omitted in  $\Pi\Upsilon\Theta\Omega\Omega\rho\Upsilon$ . It is quite strange that the cutter of the die used square shapes for the letters  $\omicron$  and  $\theta$ , while he was able to produce the other circular letter,  $\omega$ , which is more difficult to engrave. It cannot be determined whether this preference arose from a Greek model. Square letters are not attested in the Rhodian ceramic epigraphy and are extremely rare at this time in the entire Greek world. The shape of the  $\omega$  supports the same dating as the handle – i. e., the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, with a preference for its end<sup>20</sup>. The patronymic »Pythodoros« is a common Greek name, occurring very often not only in Rhodes but everywhere in the Greek world. In contrast, »Dionnos« is an extremely rare name in the Greek world in general, but, quite interestingly, in Rhodes it occurs rather frequently<sup>21</sup>:

IG XII 1, 46 = Badoud 2015, no. 33, col. b.II, ll. 60-61:  $\Delta\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu\nu\omicron\varsigma \Delta\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu\nu\omicron\upsilon \tau\omicron\upsilon \Delta\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu\nu\omicron\upsilon \tau\omicron\upsilon \Delta\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu\nu\omicron\upsilon$ , i. e. the same name preserved during four generations;

Badoud 2015, no. 13, col. d.II, l. 12:  $[\Delta\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu\nu\omicron\varsigma \Pi\alpha\upsilon\sigma\iota\mu\acute{\alpha}\chi\omicron\upsilon]$ ; etc.

In the Greek world outside Rhodes, the same name is attested twice in Delos<sup>22</sup> and once in Chersonesus Taurica<sup>23</sup>, as well as on several amphora stamps produced at Ainos (Thrace)<sup>24</sup>. However, these pieces will be left outside this discussion as, apart from the name Dionnos, no link between these and our piece can be established, since they differ in all other respects: the presence of representations of various devices and the way that the name »Dionnos« was inscribed (lacking any patronymic and written either on one or two lines with round letters), the profile of the handles<sup>25</sup> and – as we show below – the clay<sup>26</sup>.

Our amphora specimen's exterior colour was light red – more precisely, Munsell reddish-yellow (5YR 6/6) -light red (2.5YR 6/6) –, with 3 mm of the outer section red (2.5YR 5/8) and the interior reddish-grey (2.5YR 5/1). On the exterior, there is a very thin, and partly worn, clay wash with abundant mica flakes.



**Fig. 3** Popeşti. Polished section of the handle: **a** viewed in PPL: calcite matrix (yellowish-beige), quartz (light grey), voids (white) and opaque grains (dark brown/black). – **b** viewed in XPL: quartz (light grey), calcium carbonate (micrite) grains (yellowish and brown), and ferruginous stains (orange). Frame width is 500 µm. – (Observations made with an Olympus BX60 microscope; description by C. Haită).

The paste was observed on a polished section with an optical microscope using PPL (plane-polarised light) and XPL (cross-polarised light) and magnifying lenses of  $\times 5$ ,  $\times 10$  and  $\times 20$ . In PPL, the matrix appeared yellowish-beige with white areas, indicating a calcite matrix with voids (fig. 3a). In XPL, the polished section yielded a very fine calcareous paste with a calcite matrix and silt grains. The identified silt grains are quartz (10-40 µm), micrite (10-50 µm), opaque grains (10-30 µm) and small grains of charcoal (10-30 µm and sometimes of 50 µm). There are also larger inclusions of quartz (50-150 µm) and carbonate grains (100-150 µm). Porosity is represented

as 5-10 % vughy voids, usually as small as 50-250 µm, a few also as large as 1-3 mm (fig. 3b)<sup>27</sup>.

The characteristics of the fabric indicate that the handle from Popeşti cannot derive from an amphora made in Rhodes or its vicinity. First, the core of our sample is grey, most probably due to incomplete firing, while the core of Rhodian amphorae is typically red<sup>28</sup>. Secondly, the fabric of the Popeşti handle differs from the Rhodian ones because it neither contains (oxidised) serpentinite<sup>29</sup> nor is it a micaceous or fossiliferous fabric<sup>30</sup>. Thirdly, this handle differs from the amphorae made in the Rhodian Peraia because the latter lack any surface feature whatsoever<sup>31</sup>.

In sum, our handle is of Rhodian shape, bears a stamp with a Rhodian name, but with palaeographic characteristics that are not Rhodian and has a fabric that excludes Rhodes as well as the Rhodian Peraia as places of production.

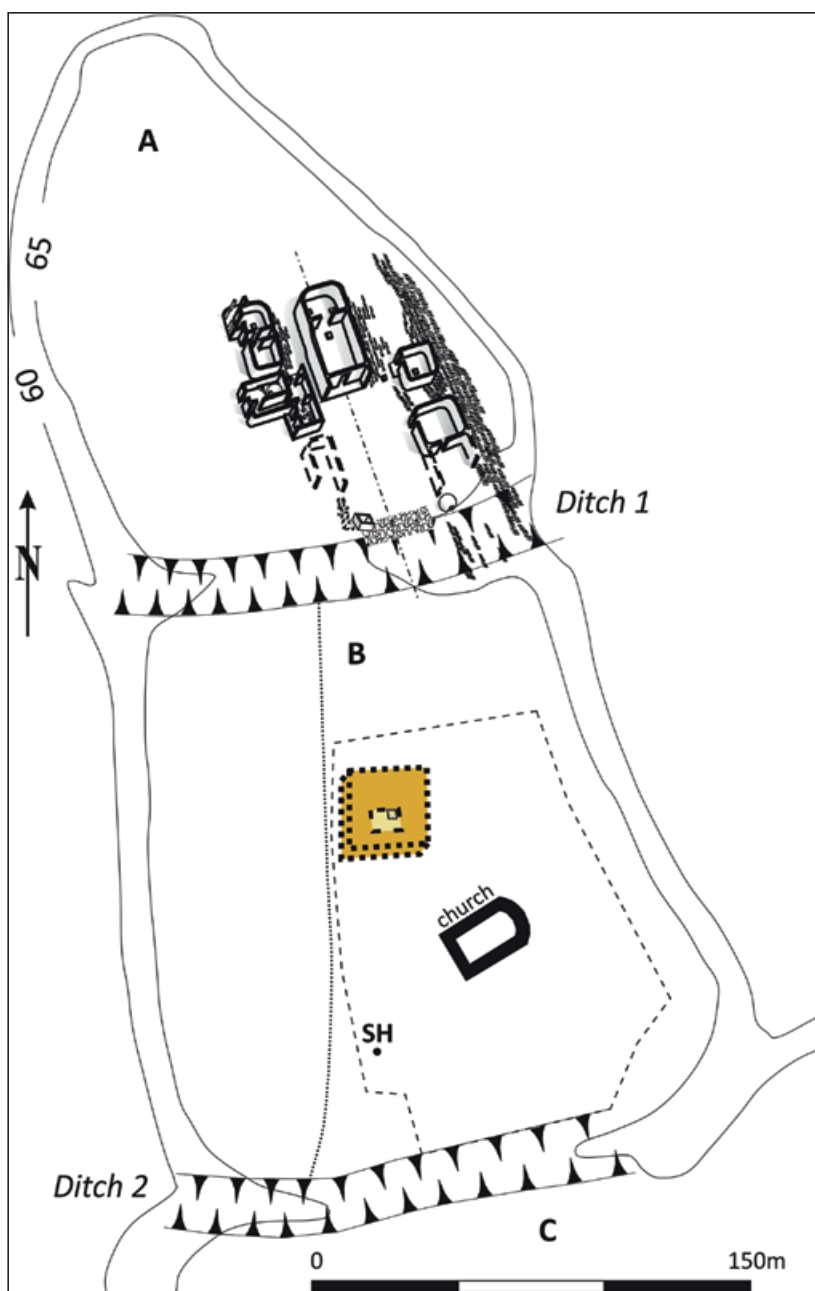
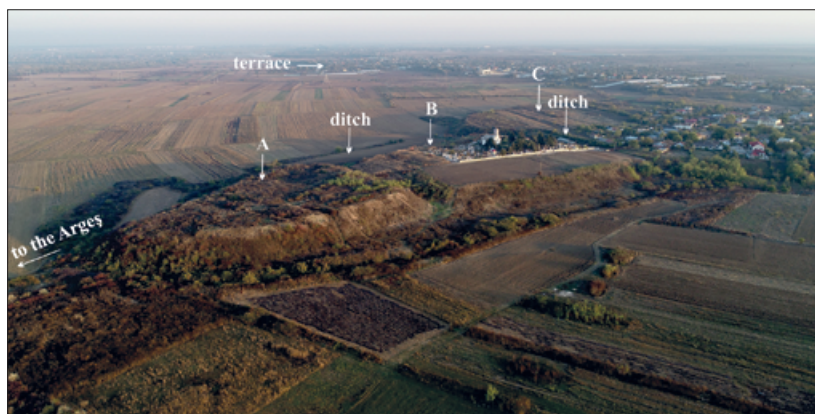
At the same time, the fabric of our piece compares well with the other imitation amphorae found in Popeşti (grey core, presence of mica and of white inclusions<sup>32</sup>) albeit only at macro-optic level, as archaeometric analyses are not yet available. Thus, the need for confirmation by archaeometric analysis notwithstanding, the most probable place of production becomes the Getic milieu from the Lower Danube, maybe even the settlement at Popeşti, where it was found, all the more that in this area imitation amphorae were produced in high numbers<sup>33</sup>. Such imitations not only copied the shapes of the Hellenistic – primarily Rhodian – prototypes but often the idea of stamp as well, while being – as already mentioned – usually anepigraphic, adapted to a population where only exceptional people could write<sup>34</sup>.

## THE DAVA AT POPEŞTI AS CONTEXT OF DISCOVERY

The *dava* at Popeşti (figs 1. 4-5), where the amphora handle was found, is located on a roughly triangular, nearly north-south-oriented promontory, almost 1 km long and c. 14m high, protruding from the first terrace of the river Argeş and continuing until close to the river. The promontory was cut by defensive ditches which divide the *dava* into three segments, called Settlements or Sectors A, B and C. Settlement C, covered by the northern half of the village, is only slightly known<sup>35</sup>. Settlement B, somewhat better researched, yielded the handle.

The site owes its renown among specialists to Settlement A. This is the northernmost sector, located between the tip of the promontory and the first ditch, on an unused piece of land called »Nucet« by the locals – a spot the name of which is used to designate the entire *dava*. Settlement A was researched intermittently between 1954 and 2001, but its main characteristics were identified already in the 1950s<sup>36</sup>. It has

**Fig. 4** Popești. Aerial photo of the site showing that it is situated on a promontory protruding from the first terrace of the river Argeș into the river's meadow, October 2019. From the northern end of the promontory to the river there are approx. 200 m. A, B and C: Settlements A, B and C, separated by defensive ditches. – (Base photo C. I. Nicolae).

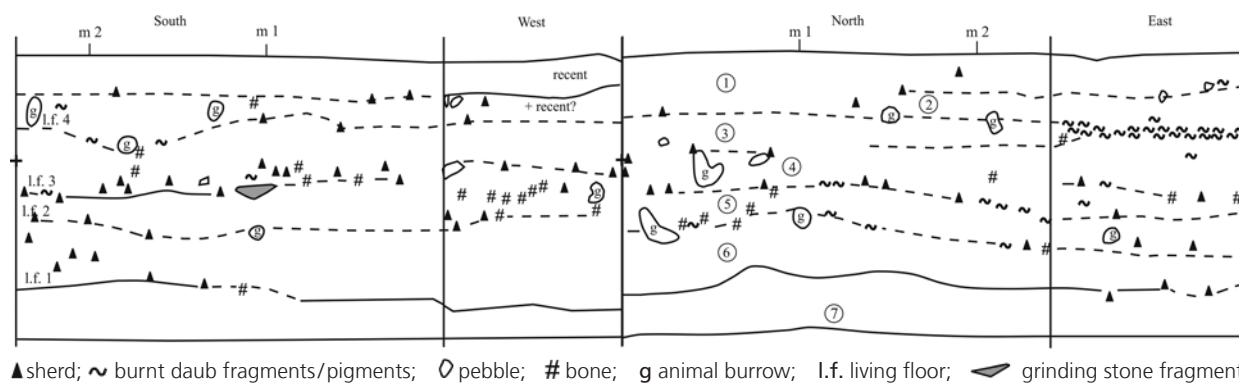
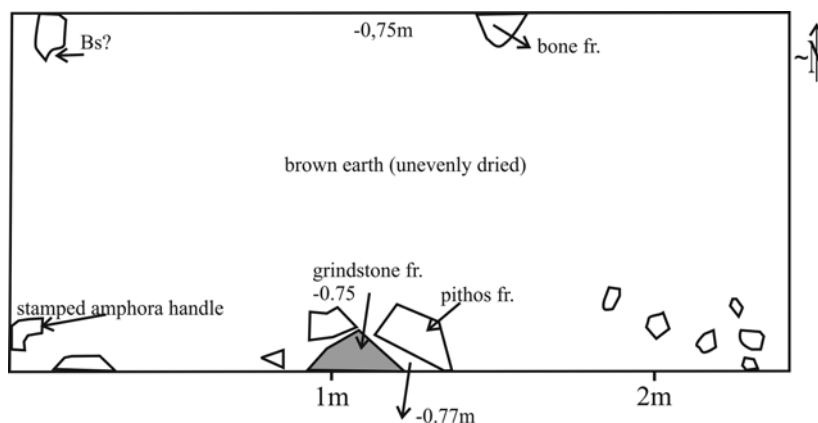


**Fig. 5** Popești. Plan of the *dava* with the location of the public buildings. – SH approx. location of the stamped amphora handle. – (After Palincaș 2021, fig. 19).

five widespread living floors, which superimpose earlier habitations, including one from the 4<sup>th</sup> (and possibly also 5<sup>th</sup>)-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC that was very strongly levelled when the earliest dwelling in the *dava* was built and from which only disparate objects survived: pottery and brooches with lateral spring and raised foot (also called Thracian brooch), primarily<sup>37</sup>. The five *dava* layers were dated from c. 150 BC – or a few decades earlier – through to c. AD 6, based mainly on the characteristics of the locally produced pottery, Hellenistic amphora stamps, one Roman coin and the interpretation of ancient written sources<sup>38</sup>. While most of the excavated areas yielded regular surface houses with adjacent cellars as well as, sometimes, decorated hearths, the south-eastern area of the settlement had architectonic remains interpreted as those of a palace of Hellenistic inspiration: a multiple-roomed building with a semi-circular apse and several decorated hearths, called the basilica, as well as the remains of several large workshops and warehouses, located according to a regular plan, observed in its main characteristics each time the area was rebuilt. It is this palace that made the excavator call this part of the *dava* »the Acropolis« – i.e., the place with the public buildings<sup>39</sup>. The Acropolis yielded the largest number of Hellenistic imports known so far from a single site anywhere in Dacia at this time – e.g., amphorae, pitchers, relief-decorated hemispherical cups, skyphoi, cantharoi, oenochoai, ceramic and metal vessels of various other types (balsamaria, oil lamps, etc.), grinding stones, etc.<sup>40</sup>. They were found together with locally-produced imitations of Hellenistic artefacts, ranging from roof tiles to ceramic vessels (e.g., pithoi, amphorae and relief-decorated hemispherical cups) and from coins to a variety of metal utensils<sup>41</sup>. The strong Hellenistic influence – which contrasts with the only few imports or objects' characteristics that could be related to the Central-European La Tène group –, the site's dimensions (the largest of its epoch) and architecture as well as its location on the Argeş River made Radu Vulpe argue that this must have been *Argedava* (the *dava* on the Ordessos/Ardessos/Argesis River) – the Getic *dava* mentioned (as ΑΡΓΕΔΑΥΟΝ) in the decree in honour of Akornion from Dionysopolis<sup>42</sup>, in the same context as the famous northern Thracian king Burebistas<sup>43</sup>. The idea is also supported by the numismatic discoveries as this is the *dava* with coins more numerous and more various than those of any other contemporaneous settlement after the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. They indicate the existence of a monetary economy with trade carried out primarily with the Greek cities on the West Black Sea coast and Thrace, but also with the Greco-Macedonian world<sup>44</sup>.

Settlement B of the *dava*, located between the first and the second ditch, is less well-researched due to the presence of the village cemetery and agricultural plots and has yielded impressive remains only recently. This roughly 3 ha area has a highly variable stratigraphy, known only from seven narrow trenches and approx. 50 very small and randomly distributed squares (mostly c. 2 m<sup>2</sup>) that resulted from grave-by-grave excavations in the cemetery area<sup>45</sup>. In the northern part of Settlement B, it could be observed that a layer datable to the 4<sup>th</sup> (possibly even 5<sup>th</sup>)-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC was disturbed but also covered by the earth resulting from the re-cutting of the first ditch (initially constructed in the Late Bronze Age) at the time of the construction of the first dwelling in the *dava*<sup>46</sup>. Whether there existed a chronological continuity with the following *dava* layers in Settlement B is impossible to assess at this time of research. Apart from this northern area, over the rest of the surface of Settlement B, no La Tène layers earlier than the layers from the *dava* period could be noted. The number of the latter varies between two and seven, irregularly over the surface, with no other possibility of correlation with the five general layers of Settlement A than that provided by ceramics, which only allows a broad attribution to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, the very beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD at the latest<sup>47</sup>. The handle studied here was found close to the southern margin of Settlement B, in the area of the village cemetery, during preventive excavations preceding the building of a small vault of 2.40 m × 1.10 m, belonging to the Cornea family (figs 5-7). Based on artefact distributions and pedological traits, four living floors were identified in this area: the earliest belonged to the Basarabi Culture, dated broadly to the mid-9<sup>th</sup>-mid-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, but also contained a few sherds that might be-

**Fig. 6** Popești. The Cornea vault: plan of living floor 3 with the location of the stamped amphora handle and of the Basarabi sherd (Bs?) (the latter was not noticed during the excavation, but its shape corresponds well with that of the sherd in the north-western corner of the plan drawing, an area with animal burrows clearly visible on the corresponding part of the northern section). – (Drawing N. Palincaș).



**Fig. 7** Popești. The Cornea vault: the four sections. – 1 dark grey earth with pebbles and sherds. – 2 dark brown earth with rare, small red pigments. – 3 brown earth with very rare, small red pigments. – 4 brown earth with small red pigments, rarer than in 3. – 5 dark brown earth with numerous small daub fragments, a few bone fragments and sherds. – 6 brown earth, of lighter shade than 5 and with nearly no pigments. – 7 subsoil. Note the many burrows at the western end of the northern section. – (Drawing N. Palincaș).

long to the Late Bronze Age; the following three layers belonged to the *dava* period and are dated, based on Late La Tène domestic pottery, to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC (figs 8-9) to which a few years at the very beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD could be added, as mentioned above, on historical grounds. The stamped handle was found on living floor 3 (i. e., the second living floor of the *dava* period) (figs 6-7), close to two pithos fragments, a few small amphora sherds and other small pieces of broken domestic pottery as well as two grinding stone fragments (figs 8, 1-3; 9); at the level of the same living floor there was also one Basarabi sherd (figs 6, 8, 4). The latter is the only artefact that is not compatible with the dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC /very beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and its presence in this context is most probably to be explained through the animal burrow visible near the northern section, approx. 1 m from the location of the stamped handle (fig. 7, comp. the southern and the northern sections). As no disturbance of the strata was present in the area of the stamped handle, this can safely be considered as found *in situ*. The handle itself has very sharp edges and no traces of weathering (fig. 2), indicating that it broke either immediately before or during the levelling of the living floor on which it was found. How much time elapsed between the moment of production of the imitation amphora until it was broken and discarded is not possible to determine, as amphorae were often reused<sup>48</sup>.

Settlement B was previously believed to have been the residential area of commoners, but turned out recently to have had a structure similar to that of the Acropolis, with large public buildings and areas dedicated to specialised economic activities such as wine production and iron metallurgy<sup>49</sup>. The context of dis-



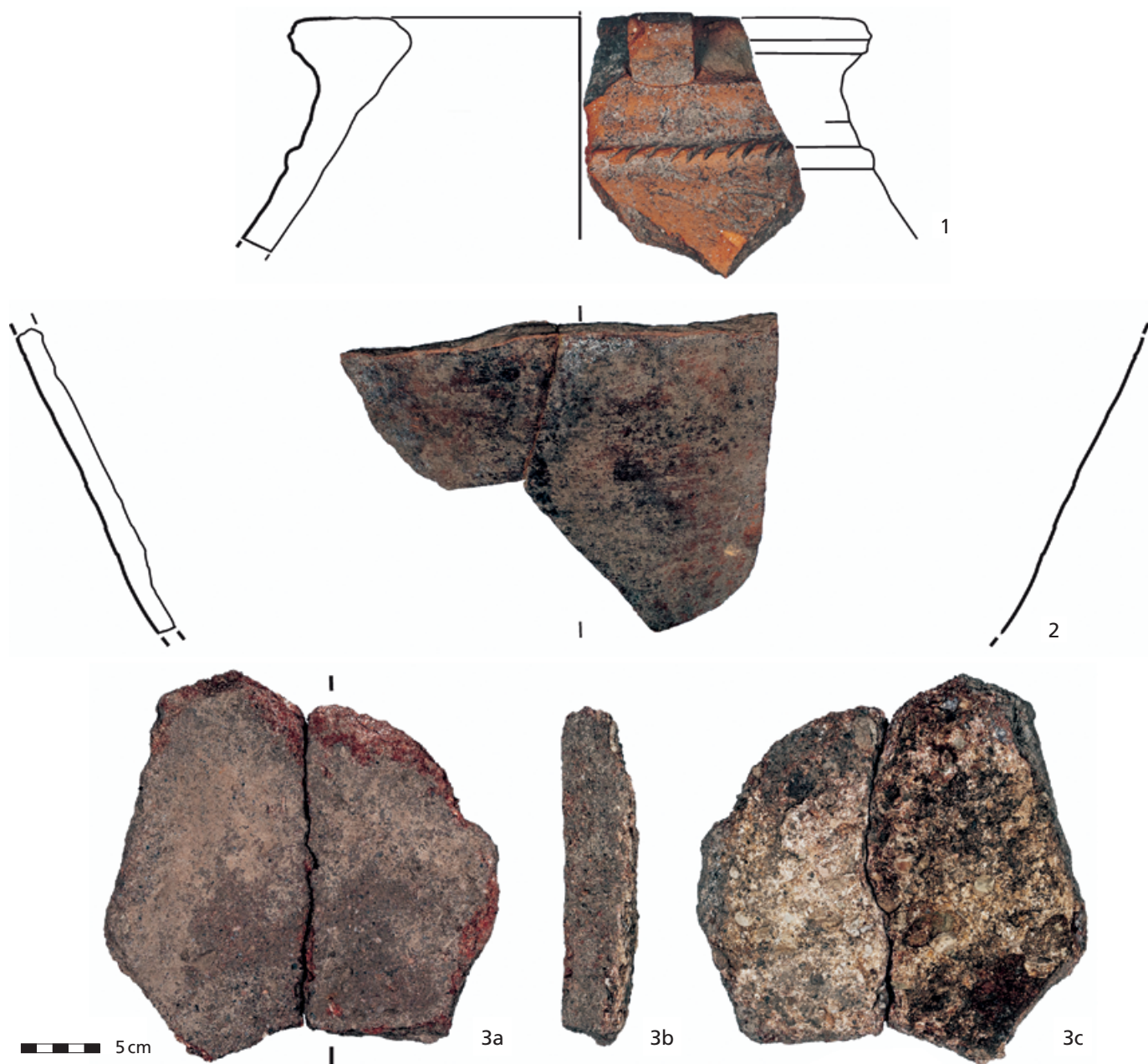
**Fig. 8** Popești. The Cornea vault: pottery from living floor 3 (i. e., found together with the stamped amphora handle): **1-2** grey ware typical of the Late La Tène pottery. – **3** amphora sherd (with worn surface and edges). – **4** sherd belonging to the Basarabi Culture (mid-9<sup>th</sup>-mid-7<sup>th</sup> c. BC). – (Drawings I. Barnea / N. Palincaș; photos C. I. Nicolae). – Scale 1:3.

covery of the stamped handle does not contain any clear clue as to the type of activity carried out on that precise spot – i. e., whether it was a regular dwelling or a production area. The grinding stone fragments and the numerous potsherds from domestic vessels suggest a household as a place of origin. The presence of pithos-sherds suggests a wine production related context, but the latter could also have been a household as it has been argued that the spatial distribution of pithoi – one per dugout (cellar?) over a wide area of the *dava* – can be interpreted as showing the participation of numerous households in the production of wine<sup>50</sup>. Nevertheless, the presence, among the freshly broken sherds, of a few that are obviously worn, including on the edges, suggests that the pottery could – but must not necessarily – have come from more than one context (e. g., from a household and a yard where some sherds were exposed to weathering or from a household and an earlier layer). This being the case, the most secure way of establishing the context of use of the stamped amphora handle is to consider the function of the vessel to which this handle belonged – i. e., a transport amphora: this suggests that the handle was most likely linked to the sphere of wine production and consumption.

## THE WINE INDUSTRY AND TRADE NORTH OF THE DANUBE

The interest in wine consumption becomes visible in the archaeological record beginning with the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC when the first Aegean wine imports can be identified due to transport amphorae<sup>51</sup>. Nevertheless, the Greek manner of drinking wine was introduced north of the Danube only starting in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, as proven by the import of craters and wine cups. The taste for wine extended gradually from the elites to a wider segment of the population so that over the study period – i. e., the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to the very beginning of the Common Era as this is the interval from the manufacturing of the handle under discussion through until the end of the *dava* at Popești, where it was found – a whole range of wine-related technolo-





**Fig. 9** Popești. The Cornea vault: **1** rim sherd from a large pithos from living floor 2. – **2** wall sherds of a pithos from living floor 3. – **3** grinding stone fragment from living floor 3 (see the trench profile **fig. 7** for the location of the right hand side fragment). – (Drawings I. Barnea / N. Palincaș; photos C. I. Nicolae). – Scale 1:4.

gies and practices developed to the point where it represented a major component of the economy, social relations and politics<sup>52</sup>.

Generally, in the study period, the Getae north of the Danube had two sources of wine. First, imports from the Aegean were documented by the large number of transport amphorae found in the *davae*<sup>53</sup>. Wine came from Rhodes – famous for its rigorously standardised and often stamped transport amphorae<sup>54</sup> –, but also from Thasos, Heraclea Pontica, Sinope, Cos, Cnidos, etc.<sup>55</sup>. As amphorae were found primarily in settlements, in a highly fragmented state, and given that there is no study based on a statistically representative quantity, the scale of wine imports is not clear<sup>56</sup>. Nevertheless, it seems that the rise of the Getic settlements in Muntenia and Moldavia during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC perfectly coincides with the apogee

of Rhodian amphora imports on the West coast of the Black Sea: more exactly, the climax seems to have been reached during the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, with the exception of Callatis, which shows a first peak already around 260-250 BC<sup>57</sup>. This coincides in turn with the penetration of Rhodian wine containers deep into the Getic hinterland<sup>58</sup>. Seemingly, Rhodian wine passed through what is believed to have been a re-distribution centre at Satu Nou on the Danube<sup>59</sup> and then further, along the Danube tributaries – in particular, the Argeş River. It is highly significant that this ware is best attested in Popeşti<sup>60</sup> and Cetăţeni<sup>61</sup>, both situated on and, respectively, close to the Argeş River<sup>62</sup>.

The second source of wine was local production. When the cultivation of grapes began north of the Danube is generally unknown. Direct proof of the local cultivation of grapevine (*Vitis vinifera*) does not go further back than the Late La Tène period and even then is scarce – e. g., the imprint of a grapevine leaf on the inner part of the hardened surface of a hearth from the most recent layer of Settlement A at Popeşti<sup>63</sup> and a few grape seeds found in the extra-Carpathian *davae* at Piscul Crăsani (jud. Ialomiţa/RO) and Brad (jud. Bacău/RO)<sup>64</sup>. But the presence of related utensils – typically, pruning knives<sup>65</sup> – and, more importantly, the large number of locally-produced wine-related ceramic vessels – primarily pithoi and amphorae – indicate the presence of impressive quantities of wine at Popeşti, followed more or less closely by other *davae* between the Carpathians and the Danube<sup>66</sup>. The morphological and technological traits of pithoi and amphorae show obvious Hellenistic inspiration<sup>67</sup>. The number of pithoi in particular in the *dava* at Popeşti exceeded by far any other known contemporaneous settlement<sup>68</sup>. The main type of imitation transport amphorae in this area is beyond any doubt the Rhodian<sup>69</sup>. Most of the imitation amphorae also come from the two Getic centres where Rhodian originals occur most frequently: Popeşti and Cetăţeni<sup>70</sup>. Nevertheless, no workshop for the production of amphorae or pithoi in the northern Thracian milieu has been identified so far, with the possible exception of Schitu-»La Rotundu« (jud. Giurgiu/RO), approx. 15 km from Popeşti, probably belonging to a satellite settlement of the *dava* and where it seems that production focussed on imitations of Coan amphorae<sup>71</sup>. Recently, it has been argued that a grapevine of Aegean origin was added to local grapevines through acclimatisation as only the former could have produced grapes with an alcohol content high enough to ensure the preservation of wine over several years and could thus explain the large number of wine-related containers – pithoi and transport amphorae – present in these *davae*<sup>72</sup>.

## **WHO COULD DIONNOS, SON OF PYTHODOROS, HAVE POSSIBLY BEEN AND WHAT WAS HE DOING IN THE LOWER DANUBE REGION?**

It has been argued before that

»Given the apparent prominence of Greek imported amphoras in elite indigenous burials and rituals, it is reasonable to view these ersatz Rhodian jars as local attempts to duplicate the symbols of power regardless of whether the jars were used for the same commercial and storage functions as intended in the Greek world. This sort of imitation is referred to as non-traditional formal imitation to indicate both the lack of a preexisting tradition of amphoras along Greek lines and the lack of clear function as utilitarian container«<sup>73</sup>.

The case of the Getae is, however, different: north of the Danube, an entire wine industry was organised, based on complex wine-related technologies and practices – viz., the development of the local grape cultivation and the acclimatisation of Aegean grapevine varieties, the development of local wine production and the large-scale imitation of Hellenistic ceramic recipients, destined for all the stages from fermentation, storage and transportation of wine to drinking itself. It was argued that this is a unique phenomenon in the

Barbarian world<sup>74</sup>. How does the stamped amphora handle from Popești fit into this general picture and who could Dionnos, son of Pythodoros, have possibly been?

It is certain that no eponym or producer known to have been active in Rhodes bore this name. At the same time, stamping in Getic milieux might have followed other rules, of which we are unaware, but which could have differed completely from the bureaucratic practices of the Rhodian magistrates in their home city<sup>75</sup>. Given the general context of wine production and trade north of the Danube, two scenarios are feasible. In the first, Dionnos could have produced wine locally, most probably from acclimatised Aegean grapevines. In the second scenario, Dionnos could have been a Rhodian potter in the service of a local dynast, working in Popești/Argedava or somewhere nearby, who managed a workshop producing imitations of Rhodian amphorae. In either case, Dionnos must have been directly implicated in the sphere of local wine production.

## OTHER GREEKS AMONG THE GETAE NORTH OF THE DANUBE

Proof of direct presence of Greeks among the Getae north of the Danube is very rare so far, but nevertheless not totally absent. One stems from Cetățeni: two cremation graves, each surrounded by an impressive stone wall (of the four sides, the one that is completely preserved is 15.47 m long) and the remains of a pyre with pieces of a chainmail, gold and silver ornaments, various beads and a bone bracelet, a brooch, Rhodian amphorae fragments as well as bird bones, etc. The anthropological analysis performed in the 1960s was able to establish that the cremated bones in Grave 1 belonged to an individual with Mediterranean features in his or her twenties. The finds are partly lost, but the earliest possible date for the Rhodian amphora would be 220-180 BC, while the rest of the inventory dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The stone funerary enclosure has good parallels in Greece<sup>76</sup> and the ensemble was interpreted as indicating the presence of Greeks – most probable Rhodian wine merchants in this settlement well-known for its numerous Rhodian amphorae<sup>77</sup>.

Another case concerns the Greek letters on pithoi (vessels with capacities of 2.5-4 hl), interpreted as the marks of Greek potters, also considering that the manufacture of pithoi required technological knowledge and skills new to the Getic hinterland<sup>78</sup>.

To these the debatable case of the relief-decorated hemispherical cups can be added, on the grounds that both the mould-casting technique and the preservation of some of the specific Mediterranean vegetal motifs indicated direct learning from Greek potters by local craftsmen, who then produced a large number of such cups, turning them into wider accessible goods rather than prestige goods<sup>79</sup>. However, the obvious difference in quality between the local pieces, with their very thick walls, and the Hellenistic ones is not accounted for, all the more that this difference contrasts with the case of the imitation transport amphorae, which are visually very similar to the Hellenistic ones.

Further, the presence in the *dava* at Radovanu (jud. Călărași/RO; c. 150-c. 60 BC) of a die with the portrait of Athena Parthenos among other utensils for metal casting<sup>80</sup> can best be explained as the workshop of a Greek metalsmith<sup>81</sup> – rather than, e. g., an import or booty.

## CONCLUSIONS

Previous research recognised that, as generally in Late Iron Age Europe, in the territories attributed to the northern Thracians, usually referred to as Dacia (i. e., the eastern part of the Carpathian Basin and the extra-Carpathian region), itinerant craftsmen of various origins were travelling in search for clients or at the request of the local rulers, desirous of social distinction and expressions of individual and group identity. These artisans

produced »desirable goods« for convivial and funerary practices, costumes and bodily adornment and, later, also built monumental features. Their presence was identified based on the – quite rare – suggestive grave goods as well as on the »hybrid objects« resulting from the adaptation of foreign objects to local taste<sup>82</sup> – although in the latter case it is not always possible to specify when foreign artisans worked in the local milieu and when local artisans imitated foreign objects arrived in the local milieu through long-distance trade, albeit one carried out in part by foreign merchants. In the North-Thracian hinterland of the Argeş Basin, as shown above, previous research identified as foreign artisans only the itinerant potters who specialised in the manufacture of pithoi<sup>83</sup> and metal luxury items, most probably vessels<sup>84</sup>, while the direct presence of Greek wine merchants was hypothesised by some<sup>85</sup> and contested by others<sup>86</sup>. Our piece from Popeşti expands the evidence for Greek participation in the local wine production by adding to the pithoi manufacturers proof of Greek participation in the manufacturing of transport amphorae – if not even in the entire process of grapes and wine production. The origin (Rhodes) and the date (end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) of our piece suggest that Greeks from the wine-producing area the most renowned among the northern Thracians were involved in the beginnings of the wine industry in the Getic hinterland. This shows that the role of Greek craftsmen was not limited to the occasional production of the bling exhibited by the elites in social competition, as previously believed<sup>87</sup>, but also extended to the direct participation in the development of the local economy.

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## Notes

- 1) Babeş/Suceveanu 1996, 27-28 s.v. *dava*: the term is considered to have been used in the northern Thracian territories to designate a town/city, based primarily on Ptol. III, 8, 4, where from 45 *poleis* with names ending in *-dava*, 35 are located north of the Haemus Mountains (Stara Planina/Balkan Mountains), in the territories generally attributed to the northern Thracians. Because the *davae* that could be identified according to Ptolemy's locations yielded some form of fortification, it is considered that all the *davae* were fortified. For the characteristics of a *dava* see Babeş 2001, 129-130.
- 2) See, e.g., Preda 1973; Glodariu 1976; Avram 1988; 2010a; Irimia 2007.
- 3) See, e.g., Avram 2010a; Petre 2004.
- 4) E.g., Petre 2004.
- 5) Avram 1988.
- 6) E.g., R. Vulpe 1955; 1976; Makiewicz 1976; Preda 1973.
- 7) See, e.g., Sîrbu 1983; Conovici 2005; Măndescu 2015; 2016.
- 8) Matei 2010, 40.
- 9) For an assessment of the state of the research on amphorae, see Opaït 2013.
- 10) Canarache 1957, 387-390 figs 78-79; Rosetti 1960; Eftimie-Andronescu 1967; Empereur/Hesnard 1987, 13 fig. 6; Garland 2000, 74; Lawall 2011, 55-56; Varbanov 2011.
- 11) For a tentative typology see, recently, Streinu 2016.
- 12) A. Vulpe 1965, fig. 3, 1-2.
- 13) Rosetti 1932, figs 1-2 a-c.
- 14) Eftimie-Andronescu 1967, fig. 1.
- 15) Vărbănov 2013, 176 fig. 2.
- 16) But note that in Tudor 1967, 50 no. 103 fig. 5, 103, another possible fragment of this kind is mentioned.
- 17) Eftimie-Andronescu 1967, 408-412.
- 18) Tzochev 2018, 554; pers. comm. Th. Castelli, 19 September 2021.
- 19) Lund 2019, 219 fig. 4.
- 20) See, e.g., Avram/Conovici in print, nos 32a; 39.
- 21) Eight entries in LGPN I, s.v. Δίοννος.
- 22) LGPN I, s.v. Δίοννος.
- 23) LGPN IV, s.v. Δίοννος.

- 24) Karadima 2004, 158 nos 4. 16 (SEG 54-627, 4. 16).
- 25) Karadima 2004, figs 31-32.
- 26) Karadima 2004, 157: »yellow to ochre clay containing specks of mica«.
- 27) Description of the polished section by C. Haită.
- 28) Grace 1934, 203; Whitbread 1995, 58-59.
- 29) Betina/Skaltsa 2018, 53; Whitbread 1995, 60-62.
- 30) Whitbread 1995, 61-63.
- 31) Betina/Skaltsa 2018, 53.
- 32) Streinu 2016, 113.
- 33) E. g., Streinu 2016, fig. 8.
- 34) E. g., Rosetti 1960, 397. 399; Eftimie-Andronescu 1967, 403. 418-419; Tudor 1967, 49-50; Glodariu 1976, 74-77. 159-164; Matei 2010, 40-42.
- 35) A. Vulpe 2004/2005, 19-22.
- 36) For a history of research, see A. Vulpe 2004/2005.
- 37) A. Vulpe 2004/2005, 22-23.
- 38) R. Vulpe 1960; Preda/Palincaş 2004/2005, 77-81; Palincaş 2021.
- 39) R. Vulpe 1959, 307-320; 1961, 320-333; A. Vulpe 2004/2005, 24 figs 3-4. 7.
- 40) R. Vulpe 1955, 249-253; 1976, 75-77; Popescu 2013, *passim*.
- 41) See, e. g., Preda 1973, *passim*; R. Vulpe 1976, 75-77; A. Vulpe/Gheorghită 1976; Trohani 1988; Opaïţ 2013, *passim*.
- 42) IGBulg<sup>12</sup> 13.
- 43) R. Vulpe 1976; for the reconstruction of the antique name of the Argeş River, see Petolescu 2001 and A. Vulpe 2004/2005, note 22.
- 44) Preda 1973, esp. 381-382. 427; Preda/Palincaş 2004/2005, 87.
- 45) For the reasons for the grave-by-grave excavations, see Palincaş 2021.
- 46) A. Vulpe 2004/2005, 22-23.
- 47) A. Vulpe/Gheorghită 1979; Palincaş 2021.
- 48) While the re-filling of amphorae is certainly known in the Greek world (see, e. g., Panagou 2016, 313 with further literature), it was not investigated so far in the Getic milieu. Nevertheless, for an example from Popeşti, see the amphora wall fragment mended with a lead wire: R. Vulpe 1957, 231 fig. 13, 4.
- 49) Palincaş 2021, 64.
- 50) Palincaş 2021, 66.
- 51) E. g., Sîrbu 1983.
- 52) See Opaïţ 2013 for a recent general picture of which here only the main arguments concerning the study region and period are reproduced.
- 53) E. g., Sîrbu 1983; 2003, 88; Opaïţ 2013, 23; Măndescu 2016, all with further literature.
- 54) Lawall 2011, esp. 67-69.
- 55) E. g., Sîrbu 1983; 2003, 88; Opaïţ 2013, 23-24; Măndescu 2016, 357.
- 56) For estimates of the quantities of imported wine, see Opaïţ 2013, 25 and Măndescu 2016, 373, both in agreement that current calculations – based exclusively on stamped amphora handles and ignoring handles without stamps as well as any other amphora fragments – result in negligible quantities (such as 21-22 litres of Rhodian wine per year at Cetăţeni: Măndescu 2016, 373).
- 57) Conovici 2005.
- 58) For the penetration of imported amphorae, in particular Rhodian ones, in Getic milieux, see Glodariu 1976, 11-17; Eftimie 1959; Tudor 1967; Opaïţ 2013.
- 59) Conovici/Irimia 1991; Irimia 2007; 2009; Avram 2010b.
- 60) R. Vulpe 1976, 76.
- 61) Măndescu 2016.
- 62) An interesting reconstruction of this main route has been suggested in Măndescu 2015.
- 63) Rosetti 1960, 397.
- 64) Cărciumaru 1996, 68. 100. 189.
- 65) Sîrbu 2003, 87; Dupoi/Sîrbu 2001, 30 fig. 33. For pruning knives from Popeşti, see Trohani 1997, 209-210 pls 16, 2. 14; 18, 7.
- 66) Pithoi and amphorae were primarily containers for wine – see, e. g., Stolba 2007; Panagou 2016; Opaïţ 2013, 23-27. 49-50 – even if sometimes they were also used for other wares: for amphorae, see Panagou 2016, tab. 5; for pithoi: R. Vulpe 1966, 33; Matei 2010, 37-38.
- 67) For amphorae, see: R. Vulpe 1955, 249; Glodariu 1976, 74-77; Empereur/Hesnard 1987, 13; Garlan 2000, 74; Lawall 2011; for pithoi, see R. Vulpe 1976, 76, who suggested a Hellenistic influence mediated by contacts with the South-Thracians, while Opaïţ 2013, 50 rightly indicates a direct Hellenistic one.
- 68) R. Vulpe 1976, 76; Opaïţ 2013, 49-50.
- 69) For the typology of Rhodian amphorae, see especially Monakhov 2003, 111-122; 2005; for some capacities see also Monakhov 1999, 613-614.
- 70) E. g., Tudor 1967, 41-42. 50-51 note 79; Eftimie-Andronescu 1967; Streinu 2016.
- 71) A. Vulpe/Gheorghită 1986; cf. also Streinu 2016, 114.
- 72) Opaïţ 2013, 28-29. 50-51.
- 73) Lawall 2011, 55.
- 74) Opaïţ 2013, 50.
- 75) See recently on this matter Badoud 2019.
- 76) Babeş 1999, 11-19.
- 77) Măndescu 2015, 259.
- 78) Opaïţ 2013, 29. 49.
- 79) Egri 2014, 237-238.
- 80) Morintz/Şerbănescu 1985, 22. 27-28 fig. 3, 1-4.
- 81) D. Şerbănescu, pers. comm., 2 July 2021.
- 82) E. g., Egri 2014; Rustoiu/Berecki 2014, both with further literature.
- 83) See above note 78.

84) See above notes 80-81.

85) Eftimie 1959, 208; Babeş 1999.

86) E. g., Tudor 1967, 45-46; Sirbu 1983, 67.

87) Egri 2014; Rustoiu/Berecki 2014.

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### Abbreviations

IG: Inscriptiones Graecae (Berlin 1873-).

IGBulg I<sup>2</sup>: G. Mihailov, Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae. I<sup>2</sup> (Sofia 1970).

LGPN I: P. M. Fraser / E. Matthews (eds), A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names. I: The Aegean Islands, Cyprus, Cyrenaica (Oxford 1987).

LGPN IV: P. M. Fraser / E. Matthews (eds), A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names. IV: Macedonia, Thrace, Northern Shores of the Black Sea (Oxford 2005).

Ptol.: C. Müller (ed.), Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia. I 1 (Paris 1883).

SEG: Supplementum epigraphicum Graecum (Leiden 1923-).

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**Ein griechischer Stempel auf einer nachgeahmten rhodischen Amphore aus dem *Dava* von Popești (jud. Giurgiu, Südostrumänien) und seine Bedeutung für den hellenistischen Einfluss im nordthrakischen Hinterland**

Dieser Artikel behandelt ein einzigartiges Stück: ein Henkelfragment einer nachgeahmten rhodischen Transportamphore mit einem Stempel eines rhodischen Namens in griechischen Buchstaben, das in der getischen *Dava* von Popești (jud. Giurgiu, Südostrumänien) gefunden wurde. Es ist seit langem bekannt, dass im nordthrakischen Hinterland Nachahmungen hellenistischer (vor allem rhodischer) Transportamphoren hergestellt wurden. Ihre Stempel sind aber anepigraphisch, besser geeignet für eine Welt, in der nur wenige Menschen lesen konnten. Kürzlich wurde argumentiert, dass nördlich der Donau ägäische Trauben akklimatisiert wurden und eine lokale Weinindustrie – auf Basis von akklimatisierten und lokalen Trauben – entwickelt wurde – ein einzigartiges Phänomen in der sog. barbarischen Welt. Betrachtet man den Henkel im größeren Kontext seiner Entdeckung, so argumentiert dieser Artikel, dass er von einem Rhodier hergestellt wurde, der unter den Geten in der lokalen Weinindustrie arbeitete. Dies wiederum weist darauf hin, dass sich der hellenistische Einfluss nicht nur – wie früher angenommen – auf die gelegentliche Produktion von Luxusgütern beschränkte, die von den Eliten im sozialen Wettbewerb zur Schau gestellt wurden, sondern auch auf die Entwicklung der lokalen Wirtschaft erstreckte.

**A Greek Stamp on an Imitation Rhodian Amphora from the *Dava* at Popești (Jud. Giurgiu, South-Eastern Romania) and Its Relevance for the Hellenistic Influence in the North-Thracian Hinterland**

This paper discusses a unique piece: a handle fragment of an imitation Rhodian transport amphora with a stamp with a Rhodian name written in Greek letters, found in the Getic *dava* at Popești (jud. Giurgiu, south-eastern Romania). It has been long known that imitations of Hellenistic (primarily Rhodian) transport amphorae were produced in the North-Thracian hinterland. Nevertheless, their stamps are anepigraphic, more suitable for a world where only exceptional people could read. Recently, it was argued that north of the Danube, Aegean grapevines were acclimatised and a local wine industry – based both on acclimatised as well as local grapes – was developed – a unique phenomenon in the Barbarian world. Considering the aforementioned piece in the wider context of its discovery, this paper argues that it resulted from a Rhodian working among the Getae in the local wine industry. This in turn indicates that the Hellenistic influence was not limited to the occasional production of the bling exhibited by the elites in social competition, as previously believed, but also extended to the development of the local economy.

**Un timbre grec sur une imitation d'amphore rhodienne provenant de la *dava* de Popești (jud. Giurgiu, sud-est de la Roumanie) et son importance pour l'influence hellénistique dans l'arrière-pays nord-thrace**

Cet article traite d'une pièce unique: un fragment d'anse d'une imitation d'amphore de transport rhodienne avec un timbre portant un nom rhodien écrit en lettres grecques, trouvé dans la *dava* gète de Popești (départ. Giurgiu, sud-est de la Roumanie). On sait depuis longtemps que des imitations d'amphores de transport hellénistiques (principalement rhodiennes) ont été produites dans l'arrière-pays nord-thrace. Néanmoins, leurs timbres sont anépigraphes, adaptés à un monde où seules de rares personnes savaient lire. Récemment, on a soutenu qu'au nord du Danube, des raisins du pourtour de la mer Égée ont été acclimatés et qu'une industrie vinicole locale – reposant à la fois sur des raisins acclimatés et locaux – a été développée – un phénomène unique dans le monde barbare. En considérant cette anse dans le contexte plus large de sa découverte, cet article soutient qu'elle est produite par un Rhodien travaillant parmi les Gètes dans l'industrie vinicole locale. Cela indique à son tour que l'influence hellénistique ne se limitait pas à la production occasionnelle de produits de luxe exhibés par les élites dans la compétition sociale, comme on le croyait auparavant, mais qu'elle s'étendait également à la participation directe au développement de l'économie locale.

Traduction: Th. Castelli

**Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots-clés**

Hellenistischer Einfluss / nachgeahmte rhodische Amphore / nachgeahmter Amphorenstempel / anepigraphischer Stempel / Geten / Weinindustrie

Hellenistic influence / imitation Rhodian amphora / imitation amphora stamp / anepigraphic stamp / Getae / wine industry

Influence hellénistique / imitation d'amphore rhodienne / imitation de timbre amphorique / timbre anépigraphique / Gètes / industrie vinicole

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