

ROMAN AMPHORAE FROM SLĂVENI, OLT COUNTY, ROMANIA¹

BY

DOREL BONDOC*

Abstract

This article focuses on the Roman amphorae, the type of vessels with the largest presence, found inside the Roman auxiliary fort and civilian settlement at Slăveni, Olt County, Romania. There have been published only a small number of vessels of this type coming from this area. During the excavations there were discovered more than one hundred fragments of Roman amphorae, of different types, as follows: Dressel 24, Dressel 24 similis, Kapitan II, Tezgör type Sinope I, Troesmis VIII, Agora M 126, Agora G 199, Dressel 2-4, Africana III B.

Keywords: Roman amphorae, Popilian, Slăveni, auxiliary fort, civilian settlement, oil, wine.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The Roman fort at Slăveni is located on the right bank of Olt River (Pl. I), 100 meters away from this valley (Pl. II/1), on the Roman road which, in antiquity, connected *Romula*, the capital of the *Dacia Inferior* province, to the line of the Danube. It was the greatest Roman fort made of stone in Oltenia (*Dacia Inferior/Malvensis*). Unfortunately, the ancient name is unknown.

Its importance arose very clearly from its geo-strategical position and also from the great and varied archaeological discoveries. Some reasons define the great interest of historians and the archaeologists in this fort, which was considered by D. Tudor to be the most important Roman defense point on the Olt river line (*Limes Alutanus*).

Located between the fort and the Olt river, but also in their vicinity, were the civilian settlement, the baths and, most probably, the necropolis or the necropolises².

The first phase of construction (Slăveni I) belongs to the earthen fort (Pl. II/2) which has a rectangular shape (190.40 × 169 m), and can be dated to the 2nd century, namely starting with the Emperor Trajan's wars against the Dacians³.

The perimeter of the fort was surrounded by two ditches and an earthen rampart. The first ditch (*Fossa 1*) was 4.80m wide and 3.50m deep. The second ditch (*Fossa 2*) was 4.20m wide and 3.15m deep. The two ditches were separated by a 4m thick rampart and were interrupted in front of the gates. The *ager* was approximately 6m wide, and the exterior patrolling road was 1.10m wide, being placed on the top of this *ager*. The moment when the earthen fort's existence ended may be suggested by a hoard which was buried inside the civilian settlement; the hoard can be dated to Emperor Marcus Aurelius' reign⁴.

The second phase (Slăveni II) belongs to the fort built of stone that has a rectangular shape (198 × 176.60m), with rounded corners and a surface bigger than the one of the previous one (Pl. III). This phase can

* The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova; dorelbondoc@yahoo.com.

¹ English translation by Dr. Mihaela Pena.

² TUDOR et al. 2011: 161, Fig. 117.

³ TUDOR 1978: 302.

⁴ POPILIAN 1971: 35-51.

be dated to the first half of the 3rd century, beginning with the year 205, as it is proved by the foundation inscription discovered by Gr. Tocilescu at the *porta praetoria*⁵.

The wall of the fort was made of stone and bricks, fragments of limestone and boulders from Olt River. It was provided with a 2.40m wide terrace. The two ditches of the earthen fort were preserved and there was excavated a third one which was not interrupted in front of the gates. The third ditch (*Fossa 3*) was 6m wide and 3.30m deep. The defensive system of the fort made of the three ditches and the three earthen walls was 25m wide. The work was performed by *Ala Hispanorum*⁶, which had a permanent garrison in this fort during that time.

The third phase (Slăveni III) consisted of a rebuilding process of the fort⁷ after the Carps had probably destroyed it in 247. So, 6m from the stone wall to the interior, the archaeological excavations revealed a second wall made of bricks (Pl. IV/1), 60cm thick, without any foundation. The end of the third phase and also of the fort was dated to the middle of the 3rd century, probably during the Goths' invasion in 248⁸.

Slăveni IV represents a phase during the 4th century, and it consists in some traces of inhabitation. From this period coins and late Roman pottery were discovered. Worth mentioning is a Christian basilica⁹ (Pl. IV/2), and a Chrismon incised on a fragment of calcareous stone (Pl. V/1). Most probably, the fort was used in this period by a civilian population.

The military units that can be certified by inscriptions and stamped bricks between the 2nd-3rd centuries¹⁰ are: *Ala Hispanorum*¹¹ (Pl. V/2); *Ala Claudia Gallorum Capitoniana*¹²; *Cohors I Brittanica*¹³; *Cohors I Flavia Commagenorum*¹⁴; *Numerus Surorum sagittariorum*¹⁵; *Legio V Macedonica*¹⁶; *Legio XIII Gemina*¹⁷.

This presentation focuses on the Roman amphorae, the type of vessels with the largest presence. There have been published only a small number of vessels of this type coming from Slăveni¹⁸. Now we can have a clear general view of the amphorae-type vessels discovered in this area¹⁹. Because the number of the amphorae coming from Slăveni is large (more than one hundred fragments), I had to make a selection. Today all these vessels are kept in the Museum of Oltenia, Craiova.

Even though some amphorae are of unknown date and context of the discovery (they come from old excavations!), these still bring a significant contribution to a view on the economic life of this site.

CATALOGUE

1. Amphora of Dressel 24²⁰ (Pl. V/3).

- 1.1. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay with fragments of mica, black inclusions, little stones and fragments of shells in the composition; fragment from the mouth and neck; funnel-shaped mouth, with straight rim, concave in the interior; cylindrical neck; diameter of the mouth - 18cm; preserved height - 16.5cm. Excavations by Gh. Popilian, 1977, ceramic workshop, S 2, square 2-3, -2.25m. Unpublished.

⁵ IDR, II, 496, with bibliography.

⁶ IDR, II, 496, with bibliography.

⁷ POPILIAN 1971: 634.

⁸ TUDOR et al. 2011: 47.

⁹ TUDOR 1979: 453-458.

¹⁰ TUDOR 1974-1975: 13-21; IDR, II, 196-197; TUDOR et al. 2011: 63-66.

¹¹ IDR, II, 496, 498, 499, 510, 526 a-b.

¹² IDR, II, 525.

¹³ IDR, II, 527.

¹⁴ IDR, II, 528.

¹⁵ IDR, II, 529-530.

¹⁶ IDR, II, 522.

¹⁷ IDR, II, 524.

¹⁸ POPILIAN 1976: 171, no. 198; 172, no. 202; ARDEȚ 2008: 177, no. 16; 189, no. 3; TUDOR et al. 2011: 169-170, Pl. X.

¹⁹ I would like to thank A. Opaiț, who read this paper before the publication.

²⁰ DRESSEL 1899, Pl. II; PANELLA 1986: 624-625.

2. *Amphora of Dressel 24 similis type*²¹ (Pl. V/4-5; VI/1-3).

- 2.1. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay; a fragment from the mouth, neck and handle; yellow slip on the surface; the inclusions of the clay are not visible with the naked eye; funnel-shaped mouth; truncated shaped neck; the handle is ovoid in section and starts from the neck of the amphora; on the neck, there was an inscription written in red paint, which has not been preserved; diameter of the mouth - 15.5cm; preserved height - 17cm; maximum diameter of the handle - 3.7cm.
The date and the context of the discovery are unknown. Unpublished. (Pl. V/4).
- 2.2. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay; fragment from the mouth and wall; funnel-shaped mouth; white-yellow slip on the surface; diameter of the mouth - 15.5cm; preserved height - 10cm.
The date and the context of the discovery are unknown. Unpublished. (Pl. V/5).
- 2.3. Amphora; it has been preserved only the funnel-shaped mouth; semi-fine, brick-coloured clay; diameter of the mouth - 15.5cm; preserved height - 15cm.
The date and the context of the discovery are unknown. Unpublished. (Pl. VI/1).
- 2.4. Amphora; semi-fine, brick-coloured clay; only the upper part (mouth, neck and handles) has been preserved; white-yellow slip on the surface; on the neck, there was an inscription with Greek letters of 3.7cm, 2 cm, and 2.5cm high: ΔΙΟ. Dating: late 2nd century – early 3rd century AD²². Sizes: preserved height - 28cm; height of the handles - 19cm; thickness of the handles - 4.5cm; diameter of the mouth - 12cm.
It was discovered inside the civilian settlement. (Pl. VI/2).
Bibliography: POPILIAN 1976: 41 și 171; nr. 198; IDR, II: 544; ARDEȚ 2006: 177, nr. 16; TUDOR *et al.* 2011: 169-170, nr. 40.
- 2.5. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay; fragment from the mouth; white-yellow slip on the surface; funnel-shaped mouth; diameter of the mouth - 15.5cm; preserved height - 9cm.
Excavations by Gh. Popilian, 1970, civilian settlement. Unpublished. (Pl. VI/3).

3. *Amphora of Kapitan II type*²³ (Pl. VII/1-3).

- 3.1. Amphora; rough brick-coloured clay with sand and white, black and brown inclusions in the composition; fragment from the mouth, neck and handle; narrow mouth, separated from the neck by a deep groove; grooved and truncated shaped neck; arched handles (it has been preserved only one of them); diameter of the mouth - 6.5cm; maximum diameter of the handles - 4.8cm; preserved height - 28cm.
The date and the context of the discovery are unknown. Unpublished. (Pl. VII/1).
- 3.2. Amphora; rough brick-coloured clay with little stones and black pigments in the composition; fragment from the mouth and wall; broken mouth; cylindrical and grooved neck; preserved height - 16cm; diameter of the neck - 7.5cm.
The date and the context of the discovery are unknown. Unpublished. (Pl. VII/2).
- 3.3. Amphora; rough brick-coloured clay, with little stones and red-brown pigments in the composition; fragment from the mouth; cylindrical foot, hollowed, grooved on the surface; preserved height - 9cm; diameter of the foot - 6cm.
Excavations of 1970, fort, *latus dextrum*. Unpublished. (Pl. VII/3).

4. *Amphora of Tezgör type Sinope I*²⁴ (Pl. VII/4-5).

- 4.1. Amphora; semi-fine pink-coloured clay with sand and black inclusions in the composition; only the upper part has been preserved; yellow slip on the surface; conical shape; preserved height - 14cm.
Excavations of 1970 (Gh. Popilian), civilian settlement. Unpublished. (Pl. VII/4).
- 4.2. Amphora; rough grey-pinkish-coloured clay with little stones, sand, fragments of mica, black and white pigments in the composition; a fragment from the inferior part has been preserved; conical shape; traces of the potter's wheel are visible especially on the interior; traces of lime on the surface; preserved height - 15.5cm; thickness of the wall - 1.5cm.
Excavations of 1972, fortress, *praetentura sinistra*. Unpublished. (Pl. VII/5).

²¹ OPAIȚ 2007: 627-642; OPAIȚ, TSARAVOPOULOS 2011: 275-323.

²² POPILIAN 1976: 40.

²³ KAPITĂN 1972: 246, Fig. 4; DYCZEK 2001: 137-144; ARDEȚ 2006: 128-130.

²⁴ TEZGÖR, TATLICAN 1998: 424, Figs. 5-6; TEZGÖR 2010: 125-127, type B Snp I, Pl. 15.

5. *Amphora of Troesmis VIII type*²⁵ (Pl. VII/6-8).

5.1. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay with black pigments in the composition; only the foot has been preserved; white-yellow slip on the surface; cylindrical shaped, profiled at the upper part, with a little button; preserved height - 13.5cm; diameter - 5cm.

Excavations of 1970 (Gh. Popilian), civilian settlement. Unpublished. (Pl. VII/6).

5.2. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay with black pigments in the composition; only the foot and a part from the wall have been preserved; white-yellow slip on the exterior; cylindrical, profiled at the inferior part, with a little button; preserved height - 23.5 cm; diameter - 5 cm.

The date and the context of the discovery are unknown. Unpublished. (Pl. VII/7).

5.3. Amphora; rough brick-coloured clay with fragments of mica in the composition; only the foot has been preserved. Sizes: preserved height - 16cm; the interior diameter - 4cm.

Excavations of 1978 (Gh. Popilian), *villa rustica*. Unpublished. (Pl. VII/8).

6. *Amphora of Agora M 126 type*²⁶ (Pl. VIII/1).

6.1. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay; it has been preserved fragmentarily, broken into many fragments, mended; the mouth, the neck, and the handles are lost; traces of black slip on the surface; horizontal grooves on the body. This amphora was probably used for preserving wine. Late 2nd – early 3rd century AD²⁷. Sizes: preserved height - 30cm; maximum diameter - 17.4cm.

It was discovered inside the fort, in a pit; excavations of 1970, *latus dextrum*. (Pl. VIII/1).

Bibliography: POPILIAN 1976: 45 și 172; nr. 202; Pl. XV.9; ARDEȚ 2008: 189 și 334; nr. 3; Pl. XXVI.206; TUDOR *et al.* 2011: 170, nr. 41.

7. *Amphora of Agora G 199 type*²⁸ (Pl. VIII/2).

7.1. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay; foot fragment; white-yellow slip on the surface; truncated cone-shaped, profiled at the inferior part, with a little button on the bottom; preserved height - 12cm; diameter - 5cm. Early 2nd century AD.

Excavations of 1970 (Gh. Popilian), the civilian settlement. Unpublished. (Pl. VIII/2)²⁹.

8. *Amphora of Dressel 2-4 type*³⁰ (Pl. VIII/3).

8.1. Amphora; handle fragment; fine yellow-brick-coloured clay; preserved height - 8.7cm; width - 5.3cm. Early 2nd century AD³¹.

Excavations of 1969, fortress, headquarters. Unpublished. (Pl. VIII/3).

9. *Amphora of Africana III B type (= Keay 25, subtype 3, variant K-V)*³² (Pl. VIII/4).

9.1. Amphora; mouth fragment; fine brick-coloured clay; rounded, thickened and upturned rim; white-yellow slip on the surface; rim diameter - 14cm; preserved height - 5.5cm. This type is dated to the 4th century³³. It comes from the civilian settlement.

The date and the context of the discovery are unknown. Unpublished. (Pl. VIII/4)³⁴.

10. *Amphora wall fragments with dipinti* (Pl. VIII/5-7).

These three wall fragments perhaps belong to the same vessel, or at least the same amphora type:

10.1. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay; fragment from the wall. The letter "O" was painted in red on the surface. It was probably an inscription. Preserved sizes: 8.6 × 4.4cm.

Excavations of 1964 (Gh. Popilian), baths. Unpublished. (Pl. VIII/5).

²⁵ OPAIȚ 1980: 306.

²⁶ ROBINSON 1959: 95-96, M 126; DYCZEK 2001: 163-170.

²⁷ POPILIAN 1976: 45.

²⁸ ROBINSON 1959: 43, G 199; SCIALANO, SIBELLA 1991: 97.

²⁹ For analogies and discussion, see DYCZEK 2001: 160-163; PARASCHIV 2006: 82-83, 109, no. 37/16-18.

³⁰ DRESSSEL 1899, Pl. II; ZEVI 1966: 208-247, Pl. 77-81; SCIALANO, SIBELLA 1991: 49.

³¹ ARDEȚ 2006: 66-67.

³² KEAY 1984: 187-189, Figs. 81-83.

³³ BONIFAY 2004: 119, Fig. 64.

³⁴ For analogies, see OPAIȚ 2004: 33; PARASCHIV 2006: 138-139, no. 59/11-15.

- 10.2. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay; fragment from the wall; yellow slip on the surface. Over this slip, a zigzag motif was painted in red. Above the zigzag line, a little circle (diameter - 1.8cm) was painted. The significance of the motif cannot be explained. Preserved sizes: 11 × 7 cm. Unpublished. (Pl. VIII/6).
- 10.3. Amphora; fine brick-coloured clay; fragment from the wall; yellow slip on the surface. Over this slip, different letters were painted in red: **CI** or **C(o)H(ors) ?**; fragmentarily preserved. Preserved sizes: 9.7 × 8.2cm. Unpublished. (Pl. VIII/7).

CONCLUSIONS

Although in many cases, the selected amphora fragments do not come from a well-dated closed context, they provide us with useful information. These discoveries come to confirm a situation present in many other military sites, such as Romula³⁵, Drobeta³⁶, Tibiscum³⁷, Răcari³⁸ and Cioroiu Nou³⁹. Remarkable is the impressive presence of the Aegean olive oil. Fine vintage also arrived from the same Aegean area, perhaps together with the olive oil. The Pontic fish products complete the picture. All these finds show how well-connected to the supply military lines the fortress of Slăveni was. However, although the main demand was to satisfy the army staff, we cannot rule out the existence of a similar demand of the inhabitants of the civilian settlement (see before, nos. 1.1, 2.4, 2.5, 4.1, 5.1, 5.3, 7.1, 9.1). Almost all these amphorae are dated to the 2nd-3rd centuries when this fortification was part of the Roman province.

In addition to the early Roman imports, worth mentioning is the amphora fragment (no. 9) of Africana III type, which is dated to the 4th century. The presence of this single find could be correlated to the latest phase of the site, Slăveni IV, well-exemplified by the late Roman church.

Together with the inscriptions, sculptural pieces, coins, etc., the amphorae completes the very complex image of the archaeological site of Slăveni.

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³⁵ POPILIAN 1976: 171-172, no. 196-197, 201, 205-211, 213.

³⁶ POPILIAN 1976: 172, no. 199, 204.

³⁷ ARDEȚ 2009: 53-74.

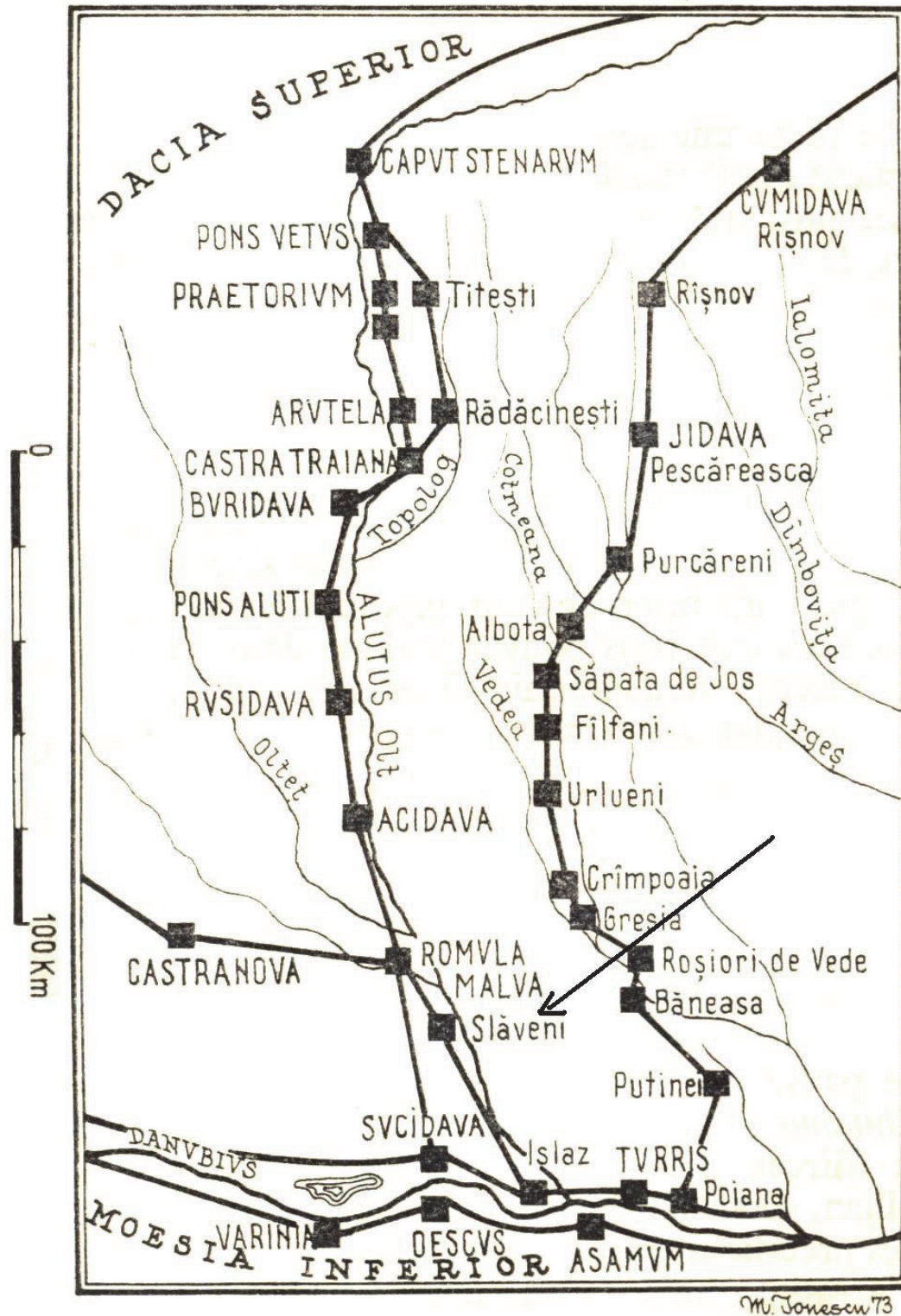
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³⁹ BONDOC 2014: 105-112.

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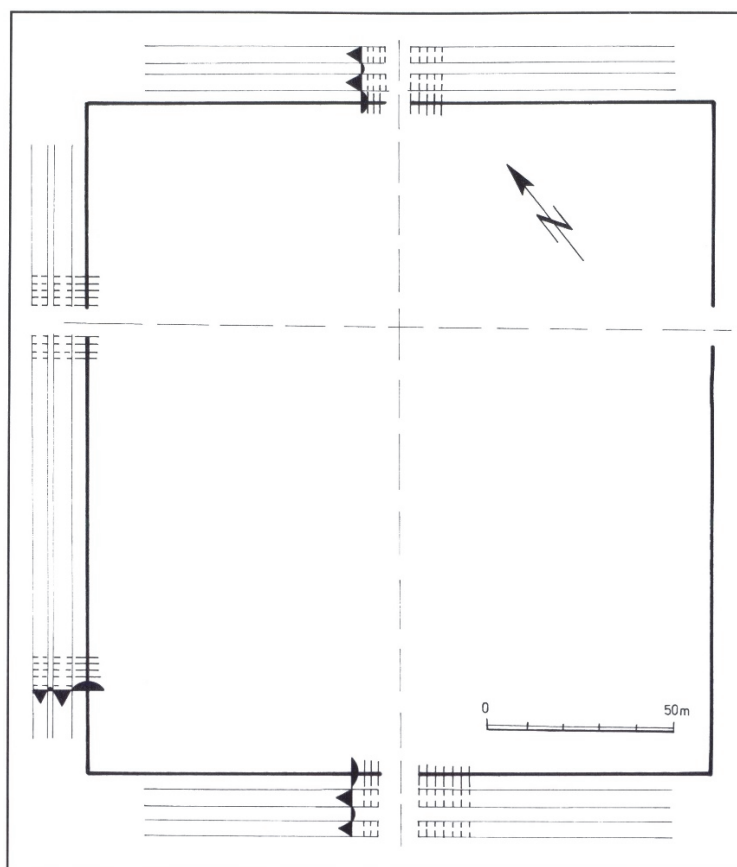
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PI. I. The so-called *Limes Alutanus* and the so-called *Limes Transalutanus*, after Tudor 1974, 236.
The location of the Roman auxiliary fort of Slăveni.

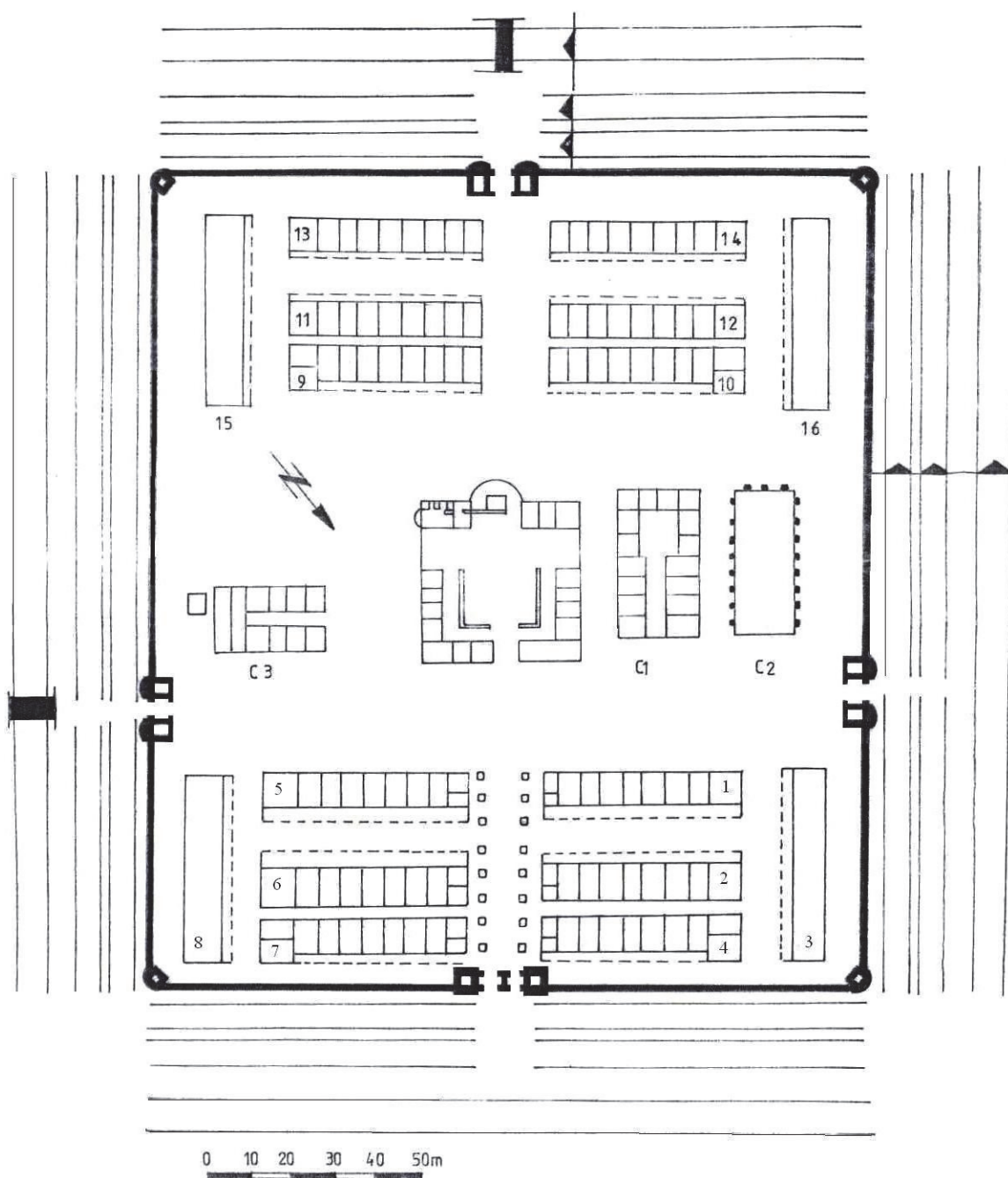


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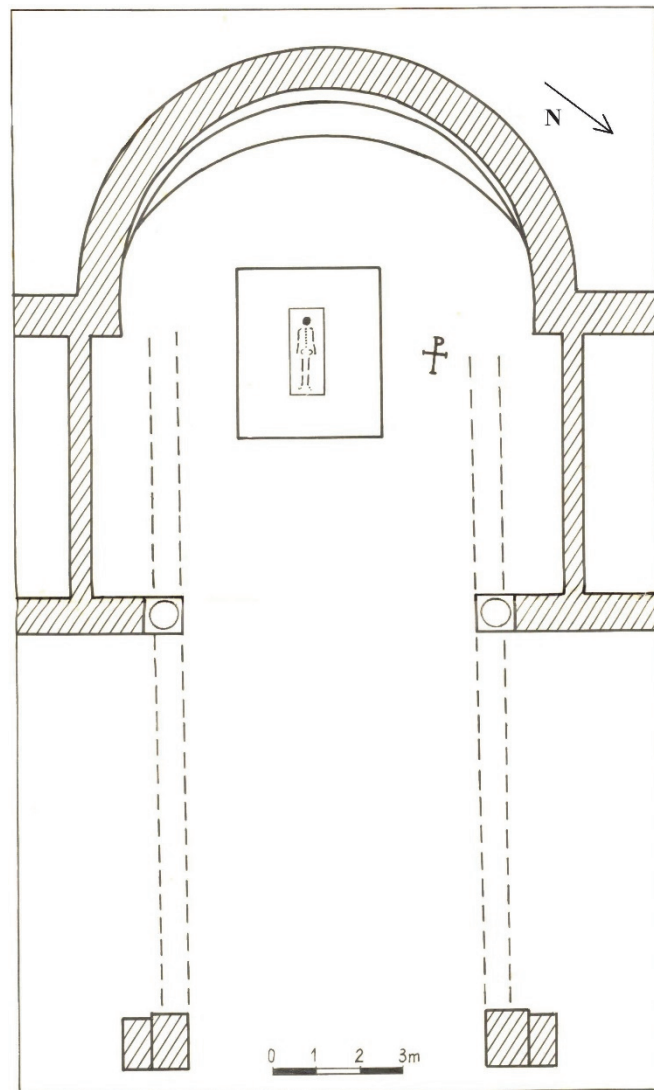
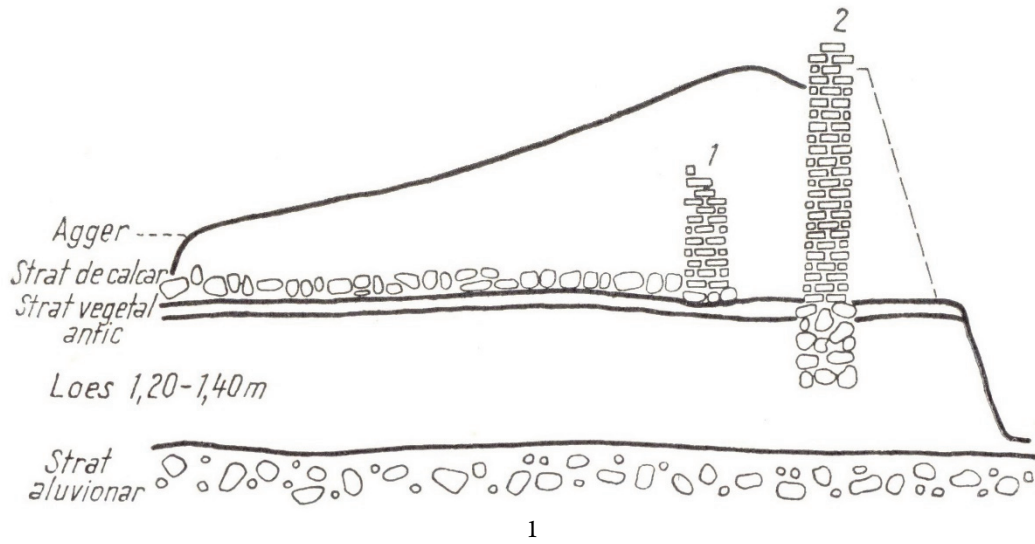


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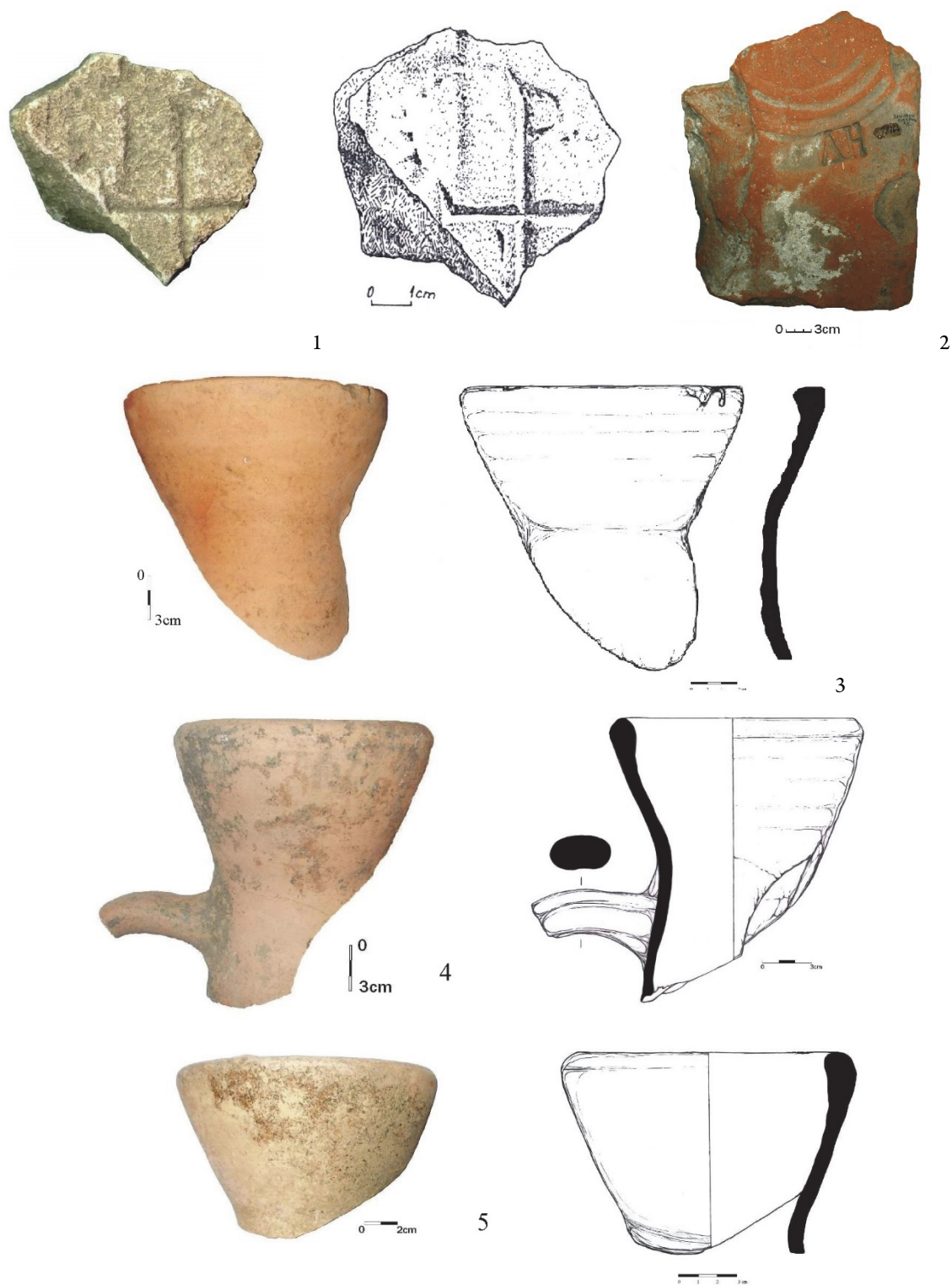
Pl. II. 1. Bird's-eye view of the Roman auxiliary fort of Slăveni. Photo I. Oltean, W. S. Hanson, 2010; courtesy Ovidiu Țentea; 2. The earthen and timber fort of Slăveni (phase I), after GUDEA 2005: 493, no. B 2.



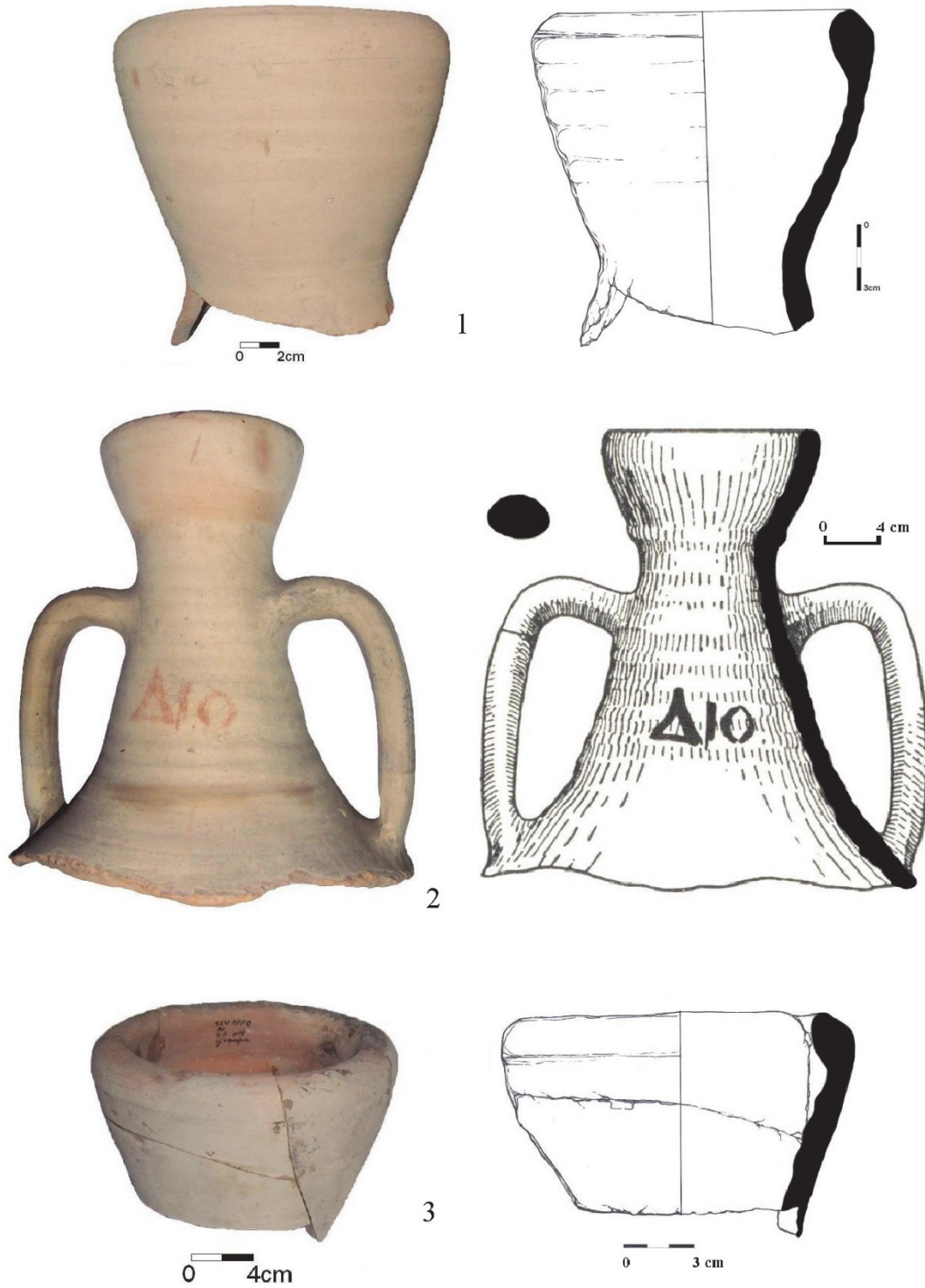
Pl. III. The stone fort of Slăveni (phase II), after TUDOR *et al.* 2011: 113, fig. 33.



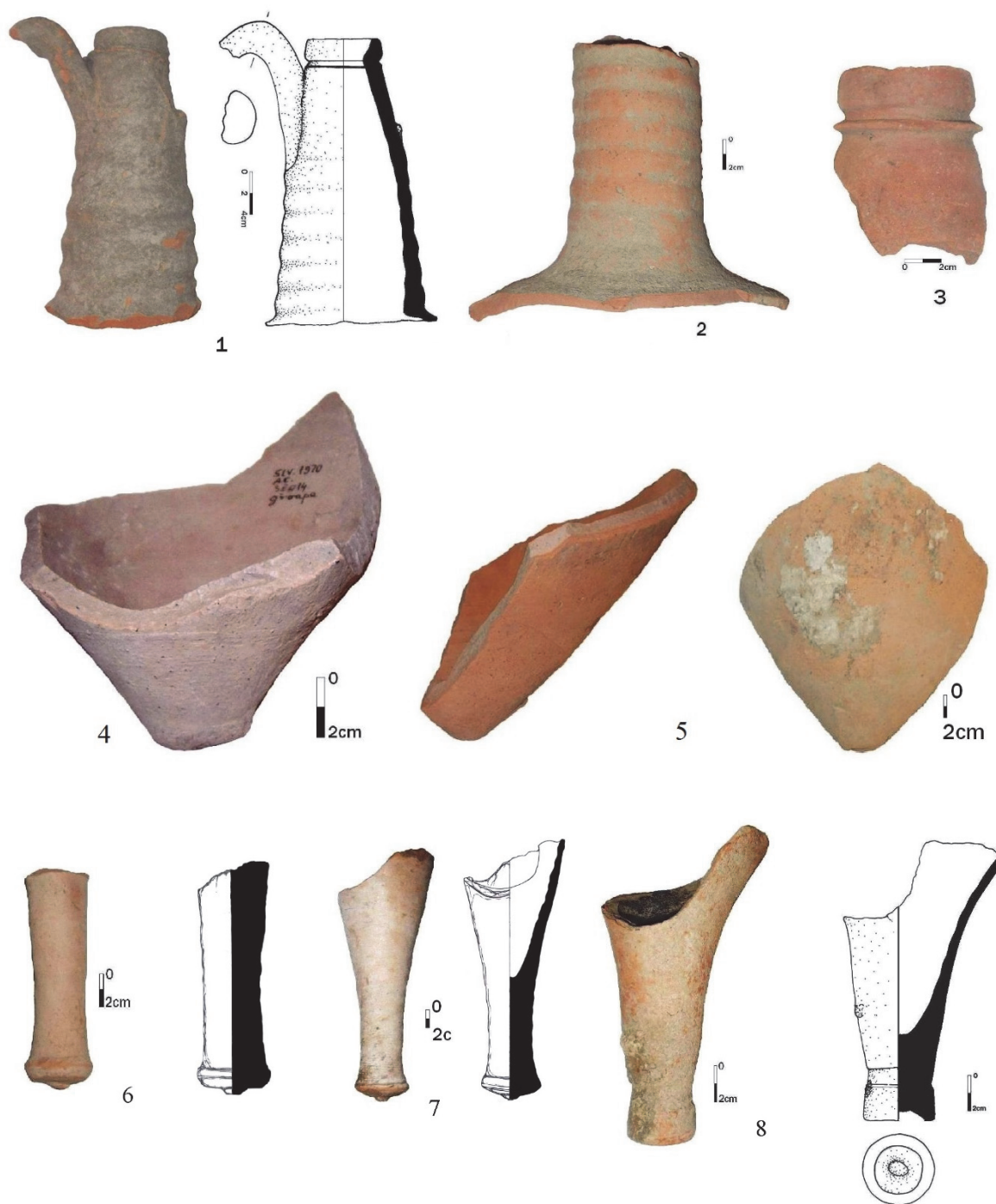
Pl. IV. 1. The two walls of the Roman fort of Slăveni, after TUDOR 1968: 308;
 2. The Christian basilica of Slăveni, after TUDOR 1979: 454.



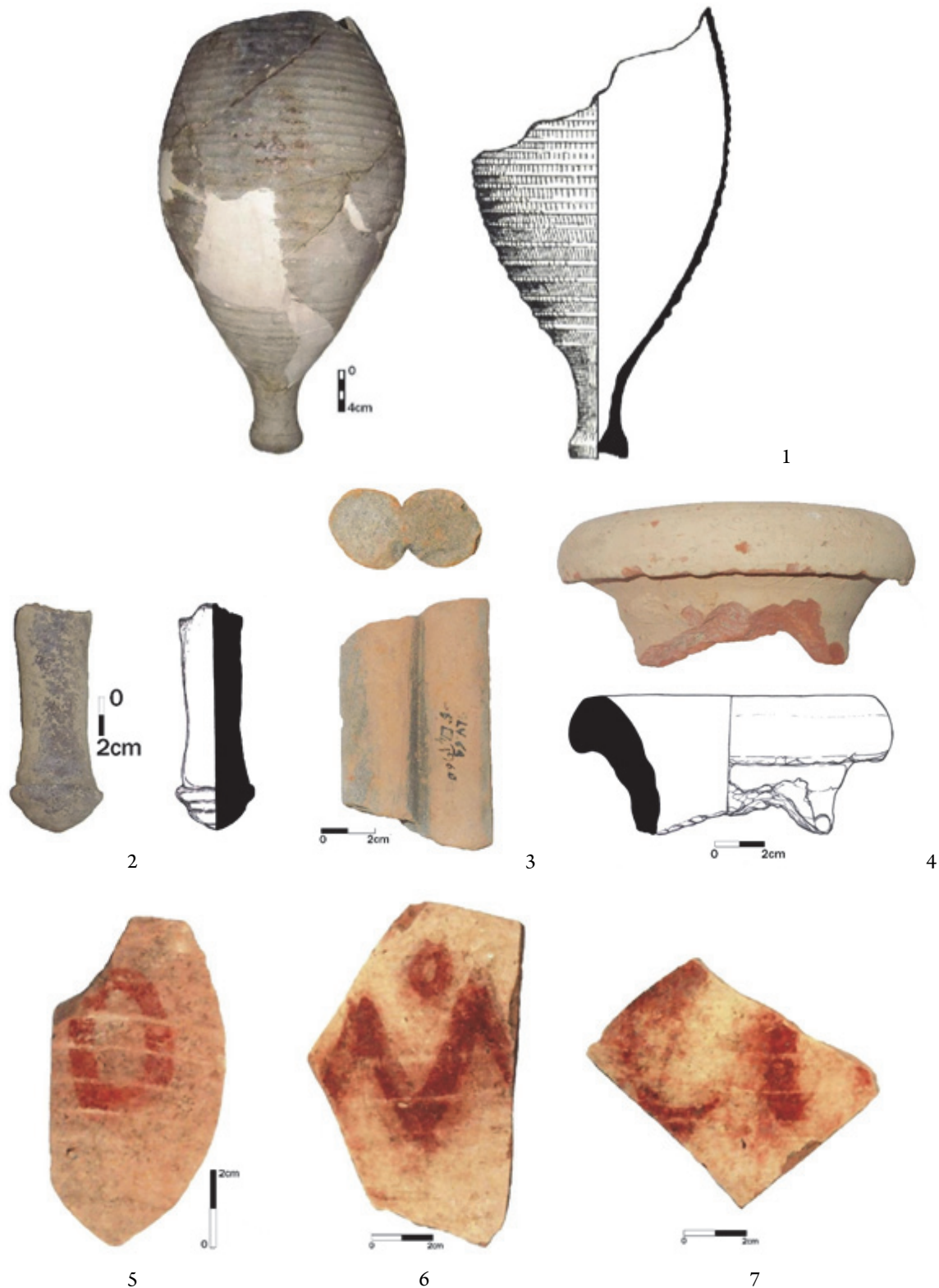
Pl. V. 1. A Chrismon incised on a fragment of calcareous stone, discovered inside the Christian basilica from Slăveni. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova, inv. 47372. Photo D. Bondoc; drawing after TUDOR 1979: 455,
 2. Brick with the stamp of Ala Hispanorum. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova, inv. 8364. Photo D. Bondoc;
 3. Amphora of Dressel 24 type. Photo D. Bondoc; 4-5. Amphorae of Dressel 24 similis type. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photos D. Bondoc.



Pl. VI. 1–3. Amphorae of Dressel 24 similis type. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photos D. Bondoc; drawing no. 2 after Popilian 1976, pl. XV/198.



Pl. VII. 1–3. Amphorae of Kapitan II type. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photos D. Bondoc;
4–5. Amphorae of Sinope type. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photos D. Bondoc; 6–8. Amphorae of Troesmis VIII
type. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photos D. Bondoc.



Pl. VIII. 1. Amphora of Agora M 126 type. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photo D. Bondoc; drawing after Popilian 1976, pl. XV/202; 2. Amphora of Agora G 199 type. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photo D. Bondoc; 3. Amphora of Dressel 2-4 type. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photo D. Bondoc; 4. Amphora of Africana III B type. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photo D. Bondoc; 5-7. Amphorae wall fragments with dipinti. The Museum of Oltenia, Craiova. Photos D. Bondoc.