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## **Aspects of Ancient Ceramics in Romania: from Secular to Paleo-Christian Pottery**

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## Instead of introduction

### A provincial art...

In a History of Art on the territory of Romania, ornamental arts should occupy one of the best places. And this happens especially in the old times, when this domain had a higher importance than painting or mosaic, for example, the helpfulness of products belongs to ceramics, glassware, metal working etc. justifies their omnipresence in the life of the people of these imperial border provinces (Dacia Traiana and Scythia Minor).

Before the conquest, there were fields of ornamental arts which were known by the autochthonous population from Dacia Traiana. Here, the beautiful art of toreutics had developed and also those of adornments, ceramics (painted ceramics – a special type). But Scythia Minor (the today's Dobrogea) was before the conquest under the direct influence of the Greek fortresses, in this place, ornamental arts burgeoned consonant with those from the Hellenistic East. Therefore, there is a local basis with different meanings and one should refer to it permanently, to prove first of all that Roman art does not appear *ex nihilo* in the two provinces on the territory of Romania and secondly, to support the idea of continuity, even if the message changes.

...of dissemination of the Roman features

Regarding ornamental arts, the Romans understood and applied, maybe as powerfully as in architecture (the field which they excelled in), the lessons learnt from the Greek artists. But, they brought them further, they adopted them, but they also adapted them to their own palate for beauty, the palate of some soldiers for which art needed to be utilitarian. The profitableness is translated in this case by the interest they showed to these means of political and then religious propaganda. For this, it was necessary that artifacts reached all corners of the Empire.

After the Roman conquest, on the territory of our county, different local workmanships developed to satisfy the increasing needs of the population. In the same time, Roman products came in and quickly effused, in most cases they were superior to the native-born ones. The art of the migrators also frames into the final centuries of Antiquity on our territory, the shining pieces of the treasuries – barbaric

or having Byzantium influences – also appear here, but they have little influence on the indigenous population; anyway, the message of the art of the migrators is different from the autochthonous imperial message or the Christian one. The treasures which they owned (discovered on the territory of our country) originated from pillage, heritage, tributes, taxes of the Roman-Byzantine emperors, but one should not forget the fact that most Germanic people from the Carpathian-Danubian territory were pagans in the first half of the 5th century A.D.

Therefore, in the context of ornamental arts, ceramics was a means of spreading the Roman features in the provinces. A few fragments of luxury ceramic represent a proof of political propaganda (the pots), but also religious one (especially the rush lights). The apparition of some imperial representations in decoration, but also of the Christian symbols which also decorated ceramic pots on the territory of Romania (just like they did this in the case of other artifacts of that time), proves that pottery could be an efficient means of political or religious propaganda, helping the stabilization of the political régime in all parts of the Empire and also the new developing religion, Christianity.

For us, the ones who live today, artifacts that lived through time have a special importance for knowledge regarding economic life, but also for the circulation of forms and ideas of those times.

## **Features of ancient ceramics**

### **Autochthonous hereditament**

The focus of the present study is represented only by pots, not by rush holders (another important category of ceramics on our territory).

Being containers for keeping or transporting liquids, ancient ceramic pots know a great variety of forms and decors on the territory of Romania. Imported vases and local pottery products were also found.

The oldest ceramic vases have appeared on our territory since Early Neolithic. They were handmade, but in the second Iron Age, the fast usage of the potter's wheel expands. Moreover, the relationships with the polis on the territory of Dobrogea bring forms and decorations in Dacia that will become models for inland pottery (amphorae, Greek

cups). In the Dacian ceramics, painted pots hold a special place – the most important centre of their production was the one from Sarmizegetusa (the 1st century A.D.), with geometrical and sketched motifs (the anthropomorphic representations are missing, but the zoomorphic are present) (Bărbulescu, Deletant, Hitchins, Papacostea, and Teodor, 2007). A beautiful yellowish painted cruse was found at Fețele Albe (which imitate a bronze cup having the bail ending in a human mask – here replaced by a core); it dates from the end of the 1st century A.D. and it has a décor, on the belly and neck, executed with reddish and black paint, made of geometrical and zoomorphic elements – small birds (Daicoviciu, Glodariu, and Piso, 1973).

### **The Phase of Synthesis**

After the Roman conquest, ceramics evolves in a special way, depending on the increased needs of the population. As far as the variety of forms and techniques is concerned, new superior methods appear (*terra sigilata*), depending on pottery's quantitative development. Generally speaking, the Roman ceramics from the 2nd – the 3rd century A.D. is represented by well-burnt long-necked red and yellowish pots (in the 2nd century A.D.), and friable short-necked purple and black pots (in the 3rd century A.D.). Specific forms of the Dacian culture are kept (the Dacian pot continued to be handmade) (Macrea, 2007), as a proof of the traditions' maintenance. Ancient and late ancient ceramics represent a provincial synthesis in which the indigenous traditions will be adapted to the technique, décor and form of the Roman ceramics. Furthermore, the ceramics of the migratory population was found in the late-ancient period: the one belonging to the Goths, the red Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov ceramics, the one from Histria (the Village of Istria, the County of Constanța), Dinogetia (the Village of Garvăn, the County of Tulcea), Beroe (Piatra Frecăței, the Village of Ostrov, the County of Tulcea) (Vulpe & Barnea, 1968).

Regarding the technique, a series of specific procedures of building and decorating are known for this art, some of them being from Neolithic times (polishing), others get in and spread in the entire Empire by colonizers, soldiers and clerks. More famous techniques were: *barbotine* (in the Roman Epoch, the typical vegetal décor made on pots *terra sigilata* was made by drops of *barbotine*); *varnish* (the black

one, characteristic to classical Greek pots, the olive one, to the Hellenistic ceramics, the red one, to the Roman ceramics); impression (in the Dacian times, the sketched estampés motifs appear (the pot with horses silhouettes from Zimnicea, the cup with three dancers from Popești), also practiced in the Roman time (*terra sigilata* of the Panonic type) and the Late Roman epoch (the examples from Histria having a Christian décor: a pan with the image of an emperor between the two effigies, Tomis, Capidava; the grey ceramics of the Gepid type from Morești); glazing (relatively rarely met in the Roman times: a green-yellowish enamel of the monochrome *terra sigillata* pots: the pots from Sucidava dating from the 4th century A.D., a rush light at Apulum); stamping (the Dacian provision pots (Zimnicea) with a rosette and riders décor; the Panonic *terra sigillata* (Transylvania); *terra estampata* (Dobrogea, the 4th century A.D.); polishing (has appeared since Neolithic times, but in the Bronze Age, a metallic light-brown type of polishing was used; in the first Iron Age, the gloss was black, in the second Iron Age, it was a light grey gloss and also a polished geometrical décor, maintained until Late Antiquity came (the ceramics of the Sântana de Mureș-Cerneahov and the Gepid types).

### Forms and Decorations

a) The **amphora** is a type of Greek-Roman pot of large dimensions, used for liquids and grain, having a rounded belly and a narrow neck; the oldest are the spheric Neolithic amphorae from the Cucuteni culture, and also amphorae from the Sărata Monteoru culture, the Bronze Age; furthermore, archaic Greek amphorae that were originally placed at the Temple lui Apollo (Histria) or the Hellenistic amphorae from Callatis (Mangalia, the County of Constanța) (il.1), Aegysus (Tulcea) (il.2). Greek amphorae were also found in the Dacian territory, in Crășani, Cetățeni, Baia de Fier and even in the Făgăraș Mountains, at Stoenești, then in Moldavia, at Poiana and Lunca Ciurei (the County of Iași) (Giurescu, 1973). The early Roman amphorae are cylindrical, large, round bottomed (Cristești); and the late ones are quasi-cylindrical, narrow, having a keen bottom and fluted sides, or they are long and strangled in the centre (Vulpe & Barnea, 1968), spheric with a décor of horizontal peddling striations on the superior side of the body, oval with a décor of "flanks" – as it is the case of the example from

Sucidava (Celei, the County of Olt), of 51cm height, just like other similar pots from the entire early Byzantine world (Florescu, 1080). Fragmentary amphorae from the 2nd – the 3rd century A.D. were found in Ampelum (Zlatna, the County of Alba), they were brought here through trade with other provinces of the Empire (Lipovan, 1994). The ones from Dobrogea have the biggest number. They have a superior quality past which is tile-coloured or yellowish. Except for those from Histria, Noviodunum (Isaccea, the County of Tulcea), Argamum/Orgame (the Village of Jurilovca, the County of Tulcea), we mention the amphorae from the *Edifice with mosaic* from Tomis (Constanța) (il.3) (with the customs insignia and the Greek inscriptions), imported from a centre from the Aegean Sea. The amphorae discovered in Halmyris (Murighiol, the County of Tulcea) are in the largest number here, being of several types, imported from the West or from the Orient; from the 4th century A.D. the north-African and oriental ones have started to multiply, after the capital of the Empire was moved to Constantinople (Suceveanu, Zahariade, Topoleanu, and Poenaru Bordea, 2003). Last, but not least: very many types of amphorae were discovered in Capidava (the County of Constanța), a classification and a complete study of ceramics in this ancient fortress were made by Ioan Carol Opriș (2003): originating from the west of Mediterranean, oriental amphorae or the Pontic provincials (for transport), and also table amphorae (having a larger mouth and a plan bottom).



II.1 Amforae, Callati



II.2 Amforae, Aegysu



II.3 Amforae, *The Edifice with Mosaic*, Tomis

b) What was specific to the Greek fortresses is represented by **küps (dolia)** – large pots (the biggest ancient pots), ovoid, in which aliments were deposited. They have been known since Neolithic times. From the Dacian period, we have large dimension küps (the Orăștiei Mountains) or smaller ones, in the plain cities (Zimnicea) (Florescu,

Daicoviciu, and Roșu, 1980). The late ancient ones from Dobrogea have a height of 1,5-2m, having a keen bottom buried in the ground – products of some local workshops, of a high level of technique (Vulpe & Barnea, 1968) (il.4). A great dolium from Capidava, with cannel and a geometric décor, of 50-60cm height, was probably made in a neighbourhood workshop (given the presence of a large number of vases found here) (Opriș, 2003).

c) A **oenochoe** is a type of pot designed as a one-lug cruse, known from Hellenistic times (in the tombs from Tomis and Callatis, oenochoea had a round body and a long cylindrical neck). In the Roman epoch, the type with an ovoid body and a short narrow neck spreads, the mouth gradually broadened and became like a club in later times (Florescu & al., 1980).

d) **The cup** – known since the Dacian times – is a type of Greek-Roman oenochoe having a larger mouth and a raised lug which knows a great diversity of forms and ornaments: from the end of the Neolithic period, the cup having an elevated lug and a décor on the entire belly, made from concentric triangles, radius situated – until the late ancient cup, with a bevel body (Racoviță, the County of Brăila) (Florescu & al., 1980). All the ones from Capidava have a trilobate mouth and they have big dimensions (up to 30cm height) or they have smaller dimensions (maximum 13,5cm) (Opriș, 2003). We mention two silver oenochoe found in a 4th century A.D. tomb in Tăuteu (the County of Bihor), probably produced in a west-Pontic workshop, having been brought here as a sumptuary dowery of a Germanic chief. The first cup has an ovoid shape, with a register of vegetal motifs, acanthus leaves on the neck, then two registers with figurative elements (with the representation of waves and, respectively, with characters: Neptun and Minerva, Belerofon, a lion and a fragmentary character). The second cup is fusiform, having a relatively short leg, with a six register décor, the one from the neck and the one from the basis (the first and the sixth) with an imbricat décor; the second from above has vegetal motifs, the third – a bucolic scene (a herd of bulls), the main register, the middle one (the fourth), with a Dionysiac cortege, and the fifth register with a marine retinue showing naiads and cupids on dolphins; the registers are separated by vegetal motifs (Florescu & al., 1980).

e) Another type of oenochoe is the **cruse**: the Hellenistic oenochoe, but also the Roman cruses, with a trilobate mouth or a spheric body (cruse fragments from the 2nd – the 3rd centuries A.D. were found at Ampelum) (Lipovan, 1994); the Spanțov cruses (the County of Călărași) are an example of late ancient ceramics, just like the cruses on the territory of Dobrogea, for example those from Capidava, with a trilobate mouth, or with a very narrow neck, or the type having a globular body (Opriș, 2003).

f) **The cup** is a type of drinking pot which has been used since the Bronze Age, having an elevated lug (the Coțofeni culture, il.5) and a simple incised décor, or a rich décor (Tei, Gârla Mare, the County of Mehedinți; Pecica, Otomani). The Dacian cups, then the Roman and the late Roman ones (from Brețcu, Orheiul Bistriței, Micia, Mehadia, Bumbesti, in the Roman cemetery from Potaissa (Turda, the County of Cluj) and in the Dacian-Roman one from Sopor de Câmpie, in the rural settlements from Cristești, Lechința de Mureș and Obreja) (Macrea, 2007), provincial versions of kantharos were found (the type of Greek pot found in the polises on the territory of Dobrogea, to mix wine with water, having elevated legs and lugs from the classical and Hellenistic period, and short, cylindrical-shaped, from the Roman times kantharos). The cups found in Capidava have canal body and a lug (Opriș, 2003).



II.4 "Chiup", Dobrogea  
(the Museum of Histria)

II.5 Pots, the culture of Coțofeni (the Museum from Aiud  
and from Zalău)

g) Even the **glass** is a recipient which could be made from ceramic, competing with the glass cup and it is specific to the art of the

migrators (the Sântana de Mureș culture – Cerneahov, Pianu de Jos, the County of Alba).

h) Last but not least, a constant element has been the bowl called **strachina**, known from the Middle Neolithic (the oldest exemplars) whose shape has been preserved during the millennia until today (the castrum from Feldioara, the County of Brașov, from the 2nd – the 3rd centuries A.D., **il.6**).



**Il.6** "Străchina", Feldioara (ție County of Brașov)

### Particular Types

1) In the Roman ceramics, a special type of pot regarding **form** is the one "with three floors" from Sucidava (Celei), not known in other parts (Tudor, 1966, 1968), with nine lugs, probably the product of a creative potter. Continuing to have form as a criterion, a special category is formed by the artistically moldabled pots, with a mould pressed relief, with a mythological topic: one of them has 12cm and it was discovered in Romula (Reșca, the County of Olt) representing a Satyr (or a Silen), the one from Napoca, on one of the three Moiras: Clotho with the spindle and the distaff; the one from Sucidava (Celei) represents the bust of Hekate, and the one from Cumidava (Râșnov, the County of Brașov), a beard head (Gramatopol, 2000); in Dobrogea, an ampulla (bota beg) from Tomis presents, in a provincial way, again a Dyonisiac moment: with Bachus and Pan chasing after a nymph in the middle of a grapevine spindle; similar fragments were also found in Histria.

2) A particular type of Roman ceramics regarding the **technique** was the luxurious *terra sigilata* – which has its origin in the Orient and Italy from the Hellenistic period (Tudor, 1957). At the beginning, these products were imported from Gallia (the workshops from Lezoux, Banassac and Graufesenque) (Protase & Suceveanu, 2010), then, during the reign of the Severus – when trade with this type of products bloomed – they were brought from the workshops in the east of the Rhine (Rheinzabern, Hedderheim and then the Rhenish centre Westerndorf) (Protase & Suceveanu, 2010) and even from the Pannonic and north-Italian workshops (Gramatopol, 2000). Famous potters from the West left their name on these pots: Albucius, B.F. Atto, Banoluccus, Lezoux, Cinnamus – the most appreciated one (Tudor, 1957), Cintusmus, Doecus, Maior, Suobnillius (Tudor, 1968). Being expensive because of the labour costs and transport, *terra sigilata* was accessible only to rich people. Its presence on our territory proves the connections with the other provinces of the Empire. This pottery – which knew a great variety of extremely elegant forms (pots, cruses, bowls) – with a shiny red varnish (in the 2nd century A.D.) and a figurative décor in relief – it is spread especially in Dacia Traiana (Romula, Drobeta, Sucidava, Tibiscum (Jupa, the county of Caraș-Severin), Napoca (Isac, 1980), Apulum (il.7) (Isac, Rusu, Băluță, and Cloșca, 1979), the beautiful pots from Feldioara (the County of Brașov) (il.8) or from Porolissum (Moigrad, the Village of Mirsid, the County of Sălaj) – very many pots have their origin here, being imported especially from Gallia (Isac & Gudea, 1980) (il.9). Authentic pots *terra sigilata* (which, from an artistic point of view, are as high as the level of the Greek painted pots) – have a metallic glitter (as a matter of fact, the desire to imitate the precious metal or glass pots worms itself into this pottery), the red paint adheres to the paste which the pot is made from, the paste itself being of good fine quality and the pot is well burnt. The reliefs – a repertoire of motifs which is abundant and specific to each producer (lockets with sphinxes or with masks, birds, left branches, vinegrape vine leaves, racers, philosophers' statues) (Tudor, 1957) – they are one with the pot's sides. In Scythia Minor, *terra sigilata* is very rare (Gramatopol, 2000): an oenochoe with an erotic topic was found at Tomis, a *kantharos*, at Histria.



**II.7** *Terra sigilata*, Apulum    **II.8** *Terra sigilata*, Feldioara    **II.9** Fragments of *terra sigilata*, Porolissum

After the 1st century A.D. and up to the 3rd century A.D., because of the increased demand, the *terra sigilata* products started to be imitated (Popa & Berciu, 1962) with moulds, later they were industrially produced, with an inferior technique, just like the décor. Such vases were made at Tibiscum (a cley pattern was found here) (Isac, 1981), Apulum (a cup pattern has its origin here), Ulpia Traiana, Sucidava (Celei), Romula, a pattern with the classical motif of the Cupids at harvesting the vineyard, dancing among the flowers, was found at Capidava (Florescu, 1965), another one with gladiators and dogs, at Porolissum (Isac & Gudea, 1980). Generally speaking, in the décor of the imitated pieces, rosettes, leaves, birds, animals, stars are mixed, being represented without delicacy and the proportions are neglected, the figures are not easily identifiable and decorations are no longer grouped according to a specific order; the paste is of low quality – of not well-bolted clay, pink or yellowish; the varnish does not have a metallic glaze and it comes off in scales (Tudor, 1957). *Terra sigilata* influenced the appearance of two types of décor in the local ceramics: one of them is imbricate, in relief, it covers the entire body of the pot, obtained by casting, covered in red paint; the second type with striate twines or bumps applied on the pot's belly or dug in the raw paste.

Moreover, pottery having a plumb enamel is special from a technical point of view (having micro Asian origins): such a vase from Tomis (imported from Alexandria, Egypt) has the form of a bowl with a leg, the décor is with heads of Maenads and lanceolate leaves (Tudor, 1957).

In Late Antiquity, *terra sigilata* is replaced with *terra estampata*: deepened reliefs (en creux) made by using estampage and a grey mat enamel – the preferred ones are the extended forms (cups) – and

figurative motifs (mythological and then Christian symbols). A fragment of patère with the representation of an emperor standing, dressed in a military suit, holding the lance and the globe (a symbol of his omnipotence), flanked by the sketched busts of two young men (probably Constantinus and two of his sons) (Histria), is a rare example of ceramic propagandistic art on the territory of our country, being imported from the North of Africa (Protase & Suceveanu, 2010). In Tomis also (*The Edifice with Mosaic*, the 4th century – the 6th century A.D.) (Opriș, 2003), in Tropaeum Traiani, Dinogetia, Salsovia (the Village of Mahmudia, the County of Tulcea), fragments of estampée ceramics were found. A plate fragment from the 4th century A.D. from Dinogetia has Hercules represented near Dionysos who is pouring wine to the panther (Vulpe & Barnea, 1968). In Capidava, the fragments of terra estampata have an animalist or vegetal décor. An example of a Dacian pot having an stamped décor is the one from Potaissa. Except for the daily usage Roman pots, the fragments of *terra sigiliata* and *terra estampata* were also found in the East of Moldavia (Sanie, 1981). The migratory people also bring, in the 4th – the 6th century A.D., their specific pottery, during these centuries, the technique of green-olive glare enamel glaze (Tudor, 1957) applied on paste (the glazing ceramics from Tibiscum is green or green-yellowish, green-brownish, being decorated with spindles of grape vines or ivy (Benea, 2004); workshops that produced glazed pots were also found in Ampelum (Popilian, 2010), **il.10**). After the pullback, local pottery knows a period of decadence in Dacia, the red harsh ceramics disappears, being replaced with the one from black well-burnt clay mixed with citrine (Tudor, 1957). After the re-annexation in the time of Constantinus, new Roman vases are met, either imported or locally made, of good quality. In Scythia Minor, the late-ancient ceramic continues the tradition of the Roman one: the technique used is of high quality – worked at the wheel, well burnt –, and the variety of forms and of the décor are highly appreciated. In this field, a decline of the craft is recorded, but only in the second half of the 6th century A.D., in the same time with the general decline of the province.



II.10 Enamel ceramic, Ampelum

### Paleochristianity

PaleoChristianity (from the end of Antiquity) brings forward the religious symbolics (a cross, birds, a dolphin), these pots also have a foreign origin. An amphora from Histria has a red fish represented on it (Lungu, 2000); Emilian Popescu describes it as having a Christian symbol, but this feature is not the only one, given the very early dating, the 3rd century A.D. (Zugravu, 1997). The Christian character of the *dipinti* amphora is also debated, the object was found in a tomb from the 3rd century A.D. from Barboși, maybe Christianized here in the first half of the 3rd century A.D. (Baumann, 2004); it is also possible to think about the pagan character of the red paint inscription on the shoulder of the pot, between the lugs (BΠ and XP could also mean the *chrismon* –, but also the ΠBP – 182 and X – denar) (Theodor, 1991).

The ceramic fragment found near Telița (the county of Tulcea) (in a buried settlement from the II<sup>nd</sup> – the III<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D.) – which has a snake represented on or the grape vine – and the ceramic pill with the sign of the Latin cross incised before burning – are the local products created near Noviodunum (Baumann, 2004). An amphora with a long body and sharpened bottom found in Histria, in the 6th century A.D., has the Christian inscription in Greek, painted on the belly: translated, it means "of Christ, God" (Florescu, 1980). More fragments of *terra estampata* from Tomis have Latin crosses in the middle, having widened extremities (il.11), and many luxury vases with the Christian signs come from the *Edifício with Mosaic* from Tomis

(Lungu, 2000). As far as the represented topics are concerned, there are some fragments from Capidava which attract the attention, they come from estampés pots. A fragment decorated with Christian iconography is preserved from a big plate (probably the topic is "The Saint Cross"): two masculine characters frontally represented, just sketched, dressed in a folded tunica, placed on each of the sides of a Latin cross decorated with rhombs and circles. The second example is also a big plate having the upper half preserved, on which two sketched characters can be noticed, surrounding the third character (an emperor? Christ? – the lack of clarity of this image does not allow us to figure it out whether there is an aura or a coiffure element above this character's head), having a globe and a sceptre or a lance in his hands. The artistic level of the lateral characters is inferior to the previous work. Another fragment does not preserve an anthropomorphic décor (thus, rarely met in Dobrogea), but only a Latin cross, with a double contour and widened ends, decorated with circles placed in rhombs (Oprîș, 2003). In Histria, there were discovered red-bricky fragments of plate, preserving the symbols of the cross with wide ends (Florescu, 1980). In Carsium (Hârșova, the County of Constanța), a pot fragment was discovered (probably an amphora from the 2nd – the 3rd century A.D.) with the Christian monogram painted in red: the *chi-rho* is accurately made, having slightly arched letters (Nicolae, 20007). The question regarding execution is connected to the very early period of its emergence (the beginning of the 4th century A.D., the latest), this symbol was so accurately executed (it would be possible that this piece is a proof of the existence of a Paleo-Christian basilica in this area).



II.11 Ceramic fragments with Christian insignia, Tomis

In Dacia Traiana, a rounded bottom of the plate called "strachină" (with a grey varnish) comes from Porolissum (a local product) has the PaleoChristian inscription and signs incised before burning (il.12). Inside the plate, there is a *chrismon* with lines which are not perfectly right, being inscribed in an asymmetric trapeze. Other geometrical shapes are the triangles having circles inside of them, a bird and a tree geometrically sketched, and also the representations of the sacred loaves of bread, and also the letters from which the inscription can be reconstructed: EGO [...]VIVS VOT(um) P[osui]. Outside of it, in the centre, there is a geometrical almost circular shape, divided in five unequal sectors, a series of signs or letters, and on the earring: I – the sign of the cross – V – TV M. Symbols of PaleoChristianity such as the tree of life, the dove or the sacred loaves of bread and also the *chrismon* are, like all the inscriptions which can be read here, specific to the period after the 4th century A.D. (*votum posui, in deo vivas, in Christum unum victoria, utere felix*), a sign of the praise of God (Gudea, 1993, 1996). This pot is a proof of the officiation of the Christian ritual and also of the functioning of a ceramic workshop of the Dacian-Romans who continued to exist on this territory and who used the Latin language after the Aurelian retreat (Gudea, 1979). Analogies can be made with another pot from Porolissum, Christianized after burning with the *chrismon* (il.13). On an autochthonous plate made of fine red paste, we find the same placing of a circle divided into 6 sectors on the bottom of the plate, having lines which are not right – because of the difficulty of the incision after burning –, with a "P" at the end of one of the axes. The same century from which it dates – the 4th century A.D. – proves the continuity of the Christianized Dacian-Roman population who lived here after the Roman retreat (Matei & Tamba, 1987). Similarly to the two pots from Porolissum, a pot bottom from Ulpia Traiana presents the monogram of Christ (it belongs to the first half of the 4th century A.D.) (it needs to be stated that in the Dacian capital, Christianity did not spread before the 4th century A.D.) (Daicoviciu & Alicu, 1984). At Sucidava (Celei), a fragment of amphora from the 5th – the 6th century A.D. has an inscription in Greek (which confirms the owner's affiliation or the place where the pot was brought from): "Mary gave birth to Christ, the Son of God", and the name of the priest Lukonochos, the son of Lykatios (Păcurariu, 2004). This settlement is the place where

other import amphorae with symbols have their origins (crosses, monograms, the letters A and Ω) and religious church inscriptions: "Christ was born from Mary", "The Virgin Mary", "the Son of God", "the Mercy of God", "the Almighty God", "the Light of God" (Tudor, 1966, p. 25).



**II.12** Bottom of pot with a Christian inscription symbols, exterior, Porolissum  
**II.13** Bottom of a pot with chrismon (+ detail), and Porolissum

Special attention should be paid to the small recipients having the form of a hip flask which contained holy water or chrism, coming from the Orient, decorated with symbols or with scenes having a Christian subject. These had an important role in spreading the iconography of the new religion. At Porolissum, it was found such a small hip flask with the image of Saint Mina (Bărbulescu et. al., 2007), at Dierna (Oprîș, 2003), and also at Tomis: three cruses or hip flasks with the face of the martyr between two camels, dating from the 5th –the 6th century A.D., from Egypt, from the great pilgrimage centre from Karm Abu Mina (near Alexandria), which proves the links between the fortress from Scythia Minor and Egypt. In Capidava also, such small hip flasks were discovered. One of them shows the saint as an orant, between two camels and two crosses, one on each side, it is rare the association with two concentric perled circles, impressed en creux (Oprîș, 2003); the other two ampullas from Syria-Palestina have a Greek relief cross, with widened arms, on both sides, the other cross does not have a Christian décor (incisions as waves) (Oprîș, 2003). Another microAsian ampulla was discovered in Callatis.

### A few conclusions

To sum up, whether we speak about rush lighters or about pots, the ceramic after the conquest proves the tendency towards luxury and meticulousness specific to the Romans. Ancient ceramic on the territory of Romania proves the existence of the interest for a great variety of forms and decorations, recording evolutions which keep up with the transformations through which the provinces pass. Step by step, Christian symbols appear and they decorate these pieces, proving once again the role of art in spreading the new religious ideology.

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