

EIGHT CENTURIES OF ANCIENT FOOD PRODUCTION AND COMMERCE SEEN FROM AN EASTERN ADRIATIC ISLAND

Támás Bezeczy (ed.): Amphora research in Castrum Villa on Brijuni Island. Contributors Tamás Bezeczy, Piero Berni Millet, Michel Bonifay, Claudio Capelli, Horacio González Cesteros, Sándor Józsa, Martino La Torre, Alexander Schobert, György Szakmány. Summeries by Tamás Bezeczy, in English and Croatian. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften 509. Archäologische Forschungen 29. Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, Wien 2019. – Paperback, 237 p., 37 plates – ISBN 978-3-7001-7972-6

The manuscript was cleared in 2017, and shortly afterwards, the chief editor T. Bezeczy passed away in 2018, which is a huge loss also for the amphora research. One of his main research interest was to study the Dressel 6B amphorae produced in the workshops of the Laecanius family for olive oil transportation. He was the one who set up the chronology of the stamps used in the Fažana workshop which was a property of the above mentioned family till the last member died without heir. This study began in the 1980s with the work on *Roman Amphorae from the Amber Route in Western Pannonia*, continued in the mid 1990s and had gather momentum again in the 2010s. The Castrum villa also belonged to the *gens Laecanius*, most likely from the mid-first c. BC to the reign of Vespasian. The finds from the excavations began at the end of the 19th c. AD, were kept in the archaeological collection of the Brijuni National Park. Other archaeological finds from this collection, such as architectural elements, tiles and ceramic finds were published previously (p. XI).

Chapter 1 (by T. Bezeczy, p. 3–10) starts the volume with a very brief historical background of Istria (p. 3–5) following with the introduction of the Fažana workshop on the Istrian peninsula (p. 5–10) operated from 40 BC to the early 3rd c. AD, with a likely short stand in the middle of the 2nd c. AD. This workshop produced not only Dressel 6B amphorae for olive oil, but dolia, stoppers, lamps, tiles and other architectural terracottas as well (p. 5). The chronology of the above mentioned type of amphora – as their shapes not change too much – is based mainly on the names of the landowner and the *vilicus* appear on the stamps (list and stamp types can be found in the Appendix, p. 209–218).

In **Chapter 2** (by M. La Torre and T. Bezeczy, p. 11–28) one can get an architectural introduction of the three excavated Roman villas of Brijuni: the luxurious *villa maritima* combined with a *villa rustica* at Val Catena; a *villa rustica* on Kolci hill; and the Castrum villa in Madona bay. It would be helpful to get the key to the map of Brijuni Islands (Fig. 2.1). It is true, that sometimes it is very hard to get exact dating information from the documentations of old excavations but possibly some time-frame of the building and using of the Val Catena and Kolci villas could have been added (both sites were excavated by A. Gnirs at the beginning of the 20th c. AD) (p. 11–17). One can get a more detailed picture of the Castrum villa, but the authors talk about „first”, „second”, and „third” villa on the site, which leads to a misunderstanding for first glance (p. 17–26). It would have been neater to call these three phases/periods of this complex, which became a fortified villa/settlement in the late Imperial/Byzantine period (p. 27–28.)

In **Chapter 3** (by A. Schobert, p. 29–37) one can read a paper on the early Christian churches of St Mary, the one within the walls of the Castrum site and in Val Catena, the church of St. Peter on the Petrovac hill. This chapter contains historical, architectural and archaeological data to give a detailed picture about these sites. The

residence of the *Episcopus Cessensis* could have been the terrace house found on the Petrovac hill in 1911 (p. 36–37).

The **second unit** (p. 41–122) deals with the different amphorae types came to light on the excavations at the Castrum villa. These finds cover the time-frame of the 1st c. BC – 7th c. AD. Only a selected 184 fragments of amphorae find are published in this volume (catalogue in **Chapter 9**, p. 79–99, Pl. 1–15.) trying to give an overview of the whole material. The drawings of amphora finds are supplemented with photomicrographs of 40 samples (Pl. 18–22). It's been said that „The Castrum villa was a place where olive oil and wine were produced” (p. XI), because the existence of fragmented dolia, a *cella oleariae*, a *lacus* and three presses. It is important to note that amphorae were not produced on the Castrum site, but transported from the Fažana workshop, located on the Istrian peninsula (p. 22). Next to these almost locally made Dressel 6B olive oil amphorae other vessels for transportation of imported foodstuffs (e.g. fish sauces, wines) are also known from the site.

In **Chapter 4** (by T. Bezeczy, p. 41–46) eight amphorae types produced in Italy and Istria are presented. In Lamboglia 2 and Dressel 6A amphorae Italian wine was imported. Till the time of Hadrian's reign, olive oil was produced on the Istrian peninsula (ante Dressel 6B, Dressel 6B), after that time it needed to be exported from Baetica in Dressel 20 amphorae. Fažana 1 type is not proven if was used to trading olive oil, nothing is said on this topic, but the type appears among the olive oil containing types (p. 44). It is also not explicated why Fažana 2 amphora type is regarded as an „Istrian fish sauce amphora” (p. 44). Very few is said on a very interesting type, Aquincum 78/Grado 1 and gives only one (his own) reference (p. 45). It is known due to the epigraphic data that this type was used to transport *liquamen* and *muria* from the Adriatic to the northern provinces (Pannonia, Noricum, Raetia). The workshops of this type and the Porto Recanati amphora type are not known, although the latter was surely produced in Picenum. Forlimpopoli amphorae fragments are also mentioned from the Castrum, but the drawings are not correctly referenced in the text (for Porto Recanati-type, see: Pl. 3.28–29, and for Forlimpopoli-type, see Pl. 3.30–31). The row of amphorae produced in Italy and the Istrian peninsula is closed by Dressel 2-4, Crypta Balbi 2 and Mid Roman 1-types. Although their place of production is not precisely known, a little more could be said on these types. No quantitative data or statistics are available in this chapter, which makes hard to interpret that „Amphorae produced in Italy and Istria make up 27% of all amphorae excavated at the Castrum villa” (p. 41).

In **Chapter 5** (by H. González Cesteros and P. Berni Millet, p. 47–54) eight types of amphorae produced on the Iberian Peninsula are presented. This chapter tries to give a general overview of the Hispanic amphora production and amphora-born commodities. Amphora finds of Baetican origin from the Dalmatian-North Adriatic and North Italian sites are listed (p. 48–49). The authors draw attention to the identification problems of the Lusitanian and Baetican products of the same types of amphorae (p. 51–52). From the Castrum site some Baetican Dressel 20, Dressel 7-11, Beltrán IIA, Dressel 14A and Beltrán 68, and Lusitanian Almagro 51A-B, Almagro 51C, Keay 22 finds came to light, but these are submitted without statistics referring to the whole amphora material. In the catalogue and the text 15 fragments belong to these types are presented.

In **Chapter 6** (by H. González Cesteros, p. 55–70) a study on the eastern Mediterranean amphorae exported to the North Adriatic region from the Republican to the Byzantine Period can be found. In the Castrum villa itself Rhodian, Koan, Knidian, Agora F65/66, AC 4,

Agora M125/126, Agora G 199, MRC 3, Agora M 240, Kapitän 1, Kapitän 2 type of vessels were found, datable to the early and mid-Roman period. It seems that LRA 1 and LRA 2 dated from the fourth to the seventh c. AD. came to light in big quantities from the site, but no information is available on the quantity of the total material nor in this chapter (p. 66). These two late Roman-Byzantine types are clearly in connection with the military unit manned the Castrum and the settlement around it. LRA 3, LRA 13, Agora M 235/6, Agora M273/Torone VII, Samos Cistern, Ephesus 56, TRC 1, TRC 2, TRC 4, LRA 4, AE 7 types are also turn up among the finds. This paper mentions some late antique products from the Black Sea coast, namely form C-Sinope II (p. 69).

Chapter 7 (by M. Bonifay and C. Capelli, p. 71–76) deals with amphorae of North African origin. Here at last one can get the information of the studied quantity of the material, sixty-one sherds, belonging to thirty different types and sub-types (Hammamet 2E or 3A, Africana IA, Africana IIA, Africana IIC, Africana IID, Africana III A, Africana IIIB, Africana IIIC, Spatheion 1, Spatheion 3, Keay 3/5, Keay 59/8B, Keay 11B, Keay 36, Keay 35A, Keay 35B, Keay 55, Keay 57, Albenga 11/12, Keay 62, Keay 61, Keay 8A, Keay 34, Keay 1B, African storage jars). After periodizing these types, it is clear that before the mid-second c. AD no amphora of North African origin was imported to the Castrum site, although table- and cooking wares are present in the archaeological material (p. 74). Olive oil, fish sauce and perhaps wine were imported from Sullecthum, Nabeul and Thanae from the mid-second c. AD to the end of the 3rd c. AD. Wine was imported in big quantities to the fortified settlement at the Castrum site from the 4th c. AD. In the period between the first half of the 5th c. to the first half of the 6th c. AD “is a time of massive inflow of African amphorae” (p. 75). The main problem with these types is that on the one hand their content is not known, on the other that some of these were not content-specific types (olive oil, wine or fish sauce could also be transported in them). Regarding the amphorae types and some tablewares, it is highly likely that in the time between the mid-sixth to the late 7th c. AD the Castrum site “had become a Byzantine military settlement” (p. 76), because it had an important leading role in this region.

Chapter 8 (by P. Berni Millet and T. Bezeczky, p. 77–78) is a catalogue of altogether 27 stamps and inscriptions, found on amphorae

from the site. A very detailed paper is presented in **Chapter 10** (by P. Berni Millet, p. 125–145) on the calendar graffiti on Dressel 20 amphorae, with helpful figures. The calendar graffiti found in the Castrum was inscribed with a stylus *ante cocturam* upside down, with cursive letters on a bottom of such an amphora. The amphora and the written message were produced most probably in the Antonine period (p. 136). **Chapter 11** (by P. Berni Millet, p. 147–171, Pl. 23–34) describes 131 inscriptions on laterite finds from the different archaeological sites on Brijuni and therefore one can think for the first sight that it doesn't belong closely to the Castrum amphora studies. On the other hand, this paper holds important cross references between amphora and laterite production as sometimes the same proprietor had a stake in both business' (eg. T. Sisenna Statilius Taurus, the Emperor Domitian, the Laecanii, and probably C. Flavius and the gens Petronia).

Chapter 12 (by Gy. Szakmány and S. Józsa, p. 187–196, Pl. 35–37) contains the very important results of the micropetrographical research of the amphorae produced in the Fažana workshop. These analyses shed light on the production technology of the Dressel 6B amphorae. The raw material rich in Istrian flysch was transported 60–70 km to Fažana from another property of the Laecani family, most probably situated between Umag and Trieste.

In the **Amphorae type index** (p. 221–222) 104 types and variants found at the Castrum site are listed. The Gauloise 4 and Gauloise 2 types are presented only in the catalogue, but no detailed information can be found about them in the text. A **Bibliography** is at the end of the volume (p. 223–236).

If the amphora database mentioned in the **Introduction** (p. XII) would be available in the future, it will complete the description of the material. The lack of this information hardens/encumbers to set the Brijuni finds against amphorae found somewhere else. The papers in this volume have a great importance as they lead to a better understanding of the food supply and trade connections not just that of the Brijuni Islands, but of the whole Northern Adriatic region from the middle of the 1st c. BC to the late 7th c. AD.

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