

AMPHORAE FOUND DURING EXCAVATIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE NAIM – BAS BASE IN PLISKA, BULGARIA¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of the analysis of amphorae found during excavations for construction of the new archaeological base of NAIM – BAS in Pliska. Significant quantities of amphorae from the Günsenin I and II classes that are datable to the second half of the 10th – the beginning of the 11th c. show that in this period Pliska grew as a large consumer center of food products. The variety of amphora profiles suggests that contacts were maintained with different, either synchronously or diachronically existing production centers in the Eastern Mediterranean basin. The food supplies were distributed through a well-organized and efficient trade network.

Key words: Günsenin I and II amphorae, stoppers, amphora stamps, dipinti, graffiti, Byzantine economy

In 2007 – 2008, emergency and rescue excavations were carried out at Pliska National Historical and Archaeological Reserve by a team directed by P. Georgiev, Ya. Dimitrov, St. Ivanov (from the Branch of NAIM – BAS in Shumen), and Radoslav Vasilev (NAIM – BAS). An area of 1700 m² was excavated along the inner face of the Inner City's northern fortress wall. This plot was intended for the construction of the new archaeological base of NAIM in Pliska. Remains from the metropolitan and post-metropolitan periods have been documented.

The most active habitation in this part of the city was during the last quarter of the 10th c. and the first four decades of the 11th c., when a residential and industrial district was developed here. This district consisted of semi-dug out dwellings, workshops, household and foundry furnaces, and garbage pits (Георгиев и др. 2008, 597 – 600; Георгиев и др. 2009, 566 – 570). Among the numerous finds were significant amounts of broken amphorae found in layers, dwellings, and garbage pits dated from the end of the 10th to the middle of the 11th c. The attendant discovery of anonymous foleis of classes A1, A2, B, C and D was also striking.²

The total number of documented amphora fragments (rims, necks, handles, walls from shoulders, lower parts, and bottoms) is 2972. To these should be added one completely preserved

¹The author worked with the material in 2008 as a part of her PhD thesis "Byzantine Amphorae from the Present-day Bulgarian Lands (7th – 14th c.)". I would like to express my gratitude to the dig directors – Assoc. Prof. P. Georgiev, PhD and Assist. Prof. Ya. Dimitrov, PhD for providing me with access to the materials and allowing me to use them in my doctoral thesis.

²This information was provided by Assoc. Prof. P. Georgiev, PhD, to whom I would again like to express my gratitude.

vessel (fragmented and restored) and fragments of ten other, partially-preserved amphorae. The most numerous and characteristic fragments were found in: Dwelling No. 54, Pit No. 30 with a furnace in Grid sq. No. 30, Pit No. 57, Pit No. 61, Pit No. 69, Pit No. 14, the Pit in Dwelling No. 87, Dwelling No. 14, Pit No. 1 in Grid sq. No. 8, Grid sq. No. 2/1, Grid sq. No. 10-west, and Grid sq. No. 23.

Günsenin I Amphorae

The amphora known in scholarly literature as the Günsenin I “type” is best represented (Günsenin 1989, 269 – 271, fig. 2 – 4; Günsenin 1990, 21 – 24, fig. 4 – 10, Pl. I – XXIX, Pl. LXXVII – LXXXII, Pl. LXXXIX). J. Hayes also identified this amphora as type 54 (Hayes 1992, 73 – 75, fig. 24.1 – 11, Pl. 12i, Pl. 15h), A. Romanchuk et al. as class 42 (Романчук и др. 1995, 66 – 68, Табл. 28¹⁴⁶, Табл. 33^{144, 145}), and A. Sazanov as type 45 (Sazanov 1997, 97, fig. 4₄₅). This type is dated generally to the 10th – early 12th c. and was distributed throughout the Mediterranean world (Тодорова 2012, 48 – 57 and the respective references). From the excavations for the construction of NAIM’s archaeological base, 1,489 fragments of amphora bottoms, walls, rims and handles; one completely preserved amphora (Cat. No. 1, fig. 1: 1); one amphora body without neck and handles (Cat. No. 2, fig. 1: 2); three upper halves of amphorae (Cat. Nos. 3 and 4, fig. 1: 3, 4); three more vessels in a poorly preserved state can be listed in this group.

The Günsenin I amphorae from the Pliska site were made on a kick-wheel. The fabric is well-purified and contains significant amounts of fine sand and mica. After firing, the fabric turned to a beige-orange, orange, or pink-orange color while the outer surface is covered with a dense cream-colored slip. With the exception of slight shading in the fabric’s color, which is a result of temperature conditions during firing, no significant differences in fabric composition are evident. Common to all vessels is the strongly bulging pear-shaped body with a rounded bottom. The vessel body is covered with shallow, horizontal relief ribs, which are narrower and set more closely together on the vessel’s shoulders and wider and farther apart on the lower part of the vessel. Regarding the shape of the rim, the height and ribbing of the neck, and handle placement, the Günsenin I amphorae provisionally can be divided into two groups.

The first (Cat. Nos. 1, 3 and 4, fig. 1: 1, 3, 4, fig. 2: 1 – 8) consists of amphorae with a cylindrical neck 8 – 10 cm high that bears three or four faint relief ribs. The thick round rim is curved outwards, and sometimes droops slightly, and forms a shallow groove between its lower edge and the wall of the neck. The handles are Γ-shaped with an irregular elliptical cross-section. They are attached to the neck below the rim, do not rise above the rim level, curve down to join the shoulders of the vessel. The diameter of the rim, in cases where it can be measured, is 9.4 – 11 cm.

The vessels in the second group (Cat. Nos. 5 – 8, fig. 1: 5 – 8, fig. 2: 9 – 17) have a short cylindrical or biconical neck (height 4 – 7 cm) most often with one and less commonly with two clearly shaped relief ribs. The rim is straight, thin, and slightly beveled inwards. The solid arched handles have an irregular elliptical cross-section. They are attached to the rim and rise up slightly to almost reach the rim level. There are many cases where the handles slightly surpass the rim level. The diameter of the rim is 7.5 – 9 cm.

As for what these features mean for dating, a 10-year-old study of medieval amphorae from the present-day territory of Bulgaria showed that there is a chronological relationship between the height of the neck and the place of handle attachment. The tendency is for the neck to become shorter and the handles to be elevated gradually above the rim level. Amphorae with high necks were dated to the second half of the 10th c. until the middle of the 11th c. Those with short necks date from the late 10th /early 11th c. to the end of the 11th c. (Тодорова 2012, 48 – 58).



Fig. 1. Günsenin I amphorae (Author: E. Todorova)

Обр. 1. Амфори Гюнсенин I (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

When it comes to applying this finding to the Günsenin I amphorae from the Pliska site, it should be noted that, with the exception of the fully preserved amphora (Cat. No. 1, fig. 1: 1) and the two partially preserved upper halves (Cat. Nos. 3 and 4, fig. 1: 3, 4), it is very rare to find well-preserved portions of amphorae among the remaining 52 documented fragments of rims and rims with handles in which the rim profile and the ribbing of the neck are clearly visible. In most cases, fragments have highly unrecognizable features or are very small in size, which also make it difficult to accurately measure rim diameter and neck height. Usually the amphorae broke where the handle was attached to the vessel body. This made it impossible to graphically document vessel profiles correctly since in order to attach handles to the vessel, potters used an additional amount of clay. This additional clay very often disfigures the rims and fills the depressions between the relief ribs of the neck. Despite the apparent predominance of fragments of amphorae with short necks (25 pieces) over those with long ones (12 pieces), conclusions based on the quantitative ratio between

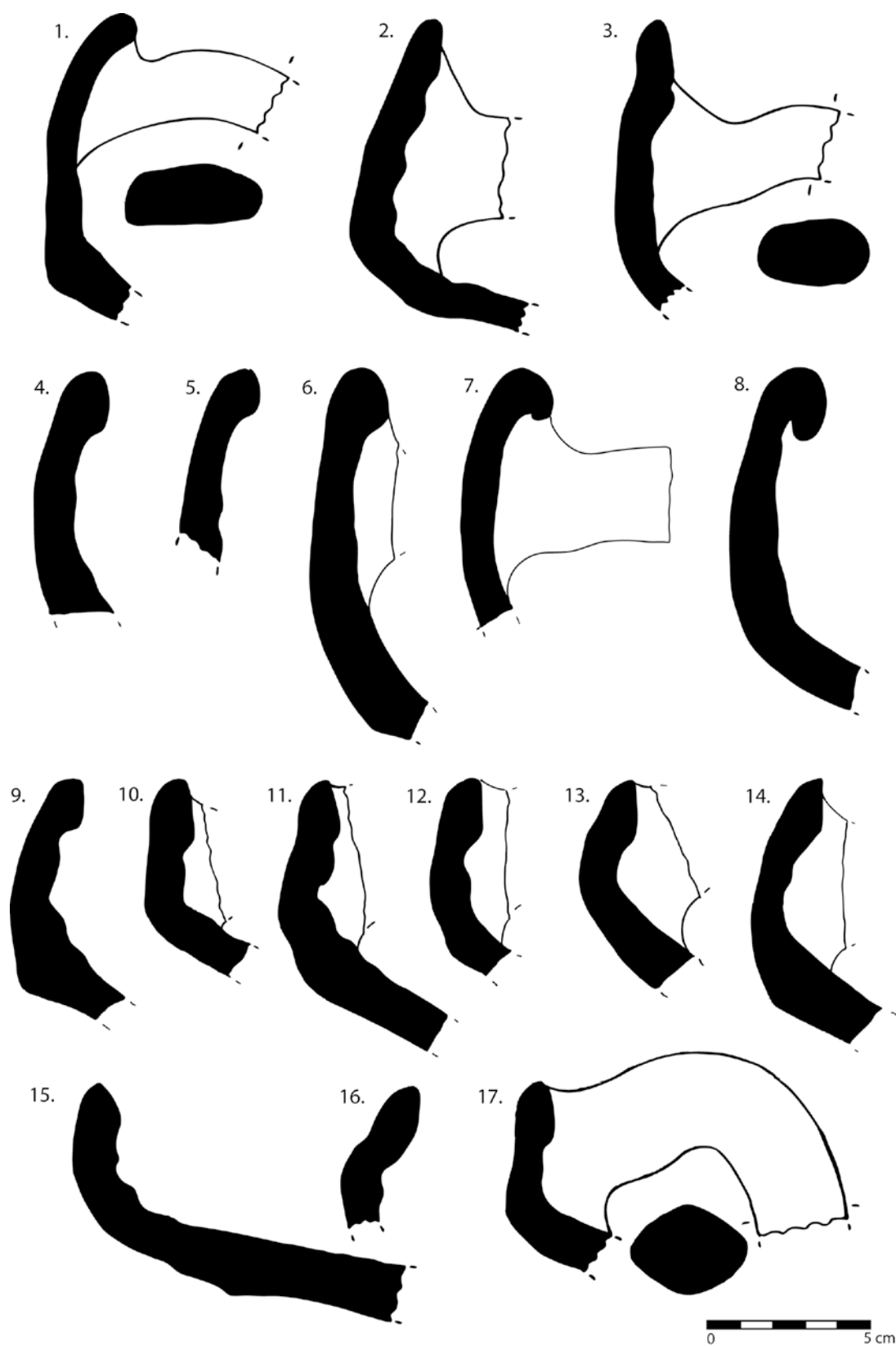


Fig. 2. Rim profiles of Günsenin I amphorae (Author: E. Todorova)
Обр. 2. Профили на амфори Гюнсенин I (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

the two groups should be considered relative and subject to corrections.

Regardless of the difficulties involved in documenting fragments of Günsenin I rims from the excavations in Pliska, it is striking that behind their apparent homogeneity lies a wide variety of profiles. This observation raises two very important questions. The answers to these would significantly change our understanding of the way the medieval Mediterranean economy was organized and functioned.

The first question is theoretical and concerns the amphorae's morphology. Variability in the shaping of the rim, the ribbing of the neck, and the position of the handles indicate that the Günsenin I amphorae should no longer be regarded as a single 'type'. They should instead be regarded from now on as one large "class" that unites many different types. The question of the species affiliation ("type" or "class") of the Günsenin I amphorae was first raised by F. van Doorninck Jr. based on his observations of the profiles of amphorae from the Serçe Limanı shipwreck (1030s) and their comparison with the profiles of already published amphorae (van Doorninck Jr. (forthcoming)).³ Only A. Romanchuk et al. use "class" as term in relation to the amphorae from the port area of Chersonesus. However, they only divide this class of amphorae into two types according to whether the rim edge is rounded or pointed (Романчук и др. 1995, 66 – 68), without considering other specific characteristics.

The second question concerns the Günsenin I amphorae's origin. It is logical to assume that if the ceramic containers in question are to be perceived as a "type," they should be characteristic of a single production center/area. The variety of species and the sheer number (several hundreds of thousands) of Günsenin I amphorae found worldwide suggest more than one production center. During his many years of meticulous work with the materials from Serçe Limanı, F. van Doorninck Jr. came to the important conclusion that Günsenin I amphorae were subject to high standardization during production. This was in terms not only of their capacity (van Doorninck, Jr. 1993; van Doorninck, Jr. 2015) but also of their formal characteristics. He finds that the rim profile and number of relief ribs on the neck are not arbitrary but are strictly defined in shape and number and so are indicative of a particular production area for any given amphora.⁴

To date, only one Günsenin I amphora production center is known. It is located on the northern coast of the Sea of Marmara near ancient Ganos in the vicinity of the modern villages of Şarköy, Hoşköy and Gaziköy. The area has been known since Antiquity for the cultivation of vines and production of wine. From the 10th c. onwards, it appears in written sources as the seat of a large monastic complex (Günsenin 1990, 47 – 56; Günsenin 1993; Günsenin 2002, 127). Two other workshops for the production of amphorae are located directly opposite Ganos – on the largest island in the Sea of Marmara near Topağaç and Saraylar. Near one of these workshops were found the remains of buildings, probably a metochion of the aforementioned monastery at Ganos (Günsenin 1999, 127, fig. 1; Günsenin 2002, 132 – 133). Although these three workshops belong to the same production center, chemical analyses of the clays of the amphorae produced at Ganos show that these clays differ in composition from those produced on the island. There are also differences in the rim profiles of the amphorae produced at Ganos and on the island (Günsenin, Hatcher 1997, 256, fig. 2b, fig. 5b).

Unfortunately, as was already noted, the amphorae considered in this article were highly fragmented. This did not allow any conclusions to be drawn regarding their capacities, the kinds

³ This is the place to express my immense gratitude to F. van Doorninck Jr. for sharing his as yet unpublished manuscript with me, as well as for the time spent discussing the typology of Byzantine amphorae.

⁴ This observation was shared in personal correspondence dated June 1st, 2017 and is to be included in Chapter 5 "The Transport Amphoras" of Volume III of the "Serçe Limanı" series. Here again I would like to thank him for his attention and the time devoted to discussing the matter.

of product they carried (white, red or sweet wine, grain products) (van Doorninck, Jr. 1993; van Doorninck, Jr. 2015, 35 – 48; Garver 1993, 162 – 173), or their origin.

It is still difficult to say whether or not the Günsenin I amphorae found in Pliska and in Bulgaria were produced at Ganos. Under macroscopic observation, the fabrics of almost all of the amphorae look the same. It is possible that some of the amphorae with short necks (the second group) were produced in Ganos (Günsenin 1993, fig. 9, fig. 10; Günsenin 1995, fig. 13). Therefore, it is necessary to carry out chemical and petrographic analyses of the clays so that the results can confirm/reject this assumption. Still, when considering the dating of the Günsenin I amphorae from the Pliska site, it should be emphasized that amphorae began to be produced at Ganos from the beginning of the 11th c. (Günsenin 1993, 194, 196; Günsenin 1999, 125). However, the amphorae from the shipwreck Yenikapı 12 from the Harbor of Theodosius in Istanbul (Kocabaş 2008, fig. 7; Kocabaş, Kocabaş 2008, p. 114, fig. 11 – 13; Shipwrecks of Yeni Kapı 2013, 205 – 209, Cat. Nos. 239 – 244, 246 – 254), as well as some materials from Bulgaria (Todorova 2018, Cat. Nos. 19 – 23, fig. 3₃₋₇), show that the earliest Günsenin I types should be dated to the 9th – 10th c. They differ from those produced at Ganos not only in their profiles but also in their fabrics and the absence of the cream-colored slip.

Günsenin II Amphorae

Fragments of the Günsenin II “type” amphorae are the second most prominent ceramic finds among the material from the Pliska excavations (Günsenin 1989, 271, fig. 5 – 7; Günsenin 1990, 26 – 27, 44, fig. 13 – 14, Pl. XXXIII – XXXVII, Pl. LIII_{2c}, Pl. LXXXIII, Pl. LXXXVII₂, Pl. XCI₁). This “type” has also been identified as type 60 by J. Hayes (Hayes 1992, 75 – 76, fig. 26.4), class 43 by A. Romanchuk et al. (Романчук и др. 1995, 68 – 70, Табл. 34₁₄₇₋₁₄₉), type XXI by I. Antonova et al. (Антонова и др. 1971, 93, рис. 22 – 23), and type 52 by A. Sazanov (Sazanov 1997, 98, fig. 4₅₂). These amphorae are generally dated to the end of the 10th – 11th c. They are widespread throughout the Eastern Mediterranean world, where they are always found together with Günsenin I amphorae (Todorova 2012, 63 – 67 and the respective references). A total of 1475 fragments of rims, handles, bottoms, and walls; two fragments of the upper and lower halves of the same amphora (Cat. No. 12, fig. 3: 4); and three upper halves of amphorae (Cat. Nos. 9 – 11, fig. 3: 1 – 3) were processed and documented. It is obvious that the quantitative advantage in favor of the Günsenin I amphora’s greater prevalence is insignificant and can be attributed to a negligible statistical error.

Common to the Günsenin II amphorae are a high conical neck and a strongly bulging but slightly pear-shaped body with a rounded bottom. Four to six shallowly incised horizontal lines, which form slightly pronounced relief ribs, are located on the vessel shoulders, where the handles are attached to the body, and on the lower half of the body near the bottom of the vessel. The diameter of the rim varies from 9 to 11.5 cm. There is great variability in terms of the rim’s shape, the position of the handles in relation to the rim level, and the composition, characteristics, and color of the vessel fabric. In general, however, the Günsenin II amphorae can be divided into two groups.

The first group (Cat. No. 9, fig. 3: 1, fig. 4: 1 – 28) includes vessels with a funnel-shaped rim and thick rim edge that strongly curves outwards. The handles are wide bands with a flattened elliptical cross-section. They are attached to the middle of the neck and join the belly of the vessel at its widest part. In some examples there is a tendency for the handles to rise in the direction of the rim, and often the lower part of the rim touches or flattens against the handles – a transitional variant to the second group (fig. 5: 1 – 9). Amphorae of this group sometimes show a decoration on the vessel’s shoulders that was incised before firing and consists of a single row of connected arches.

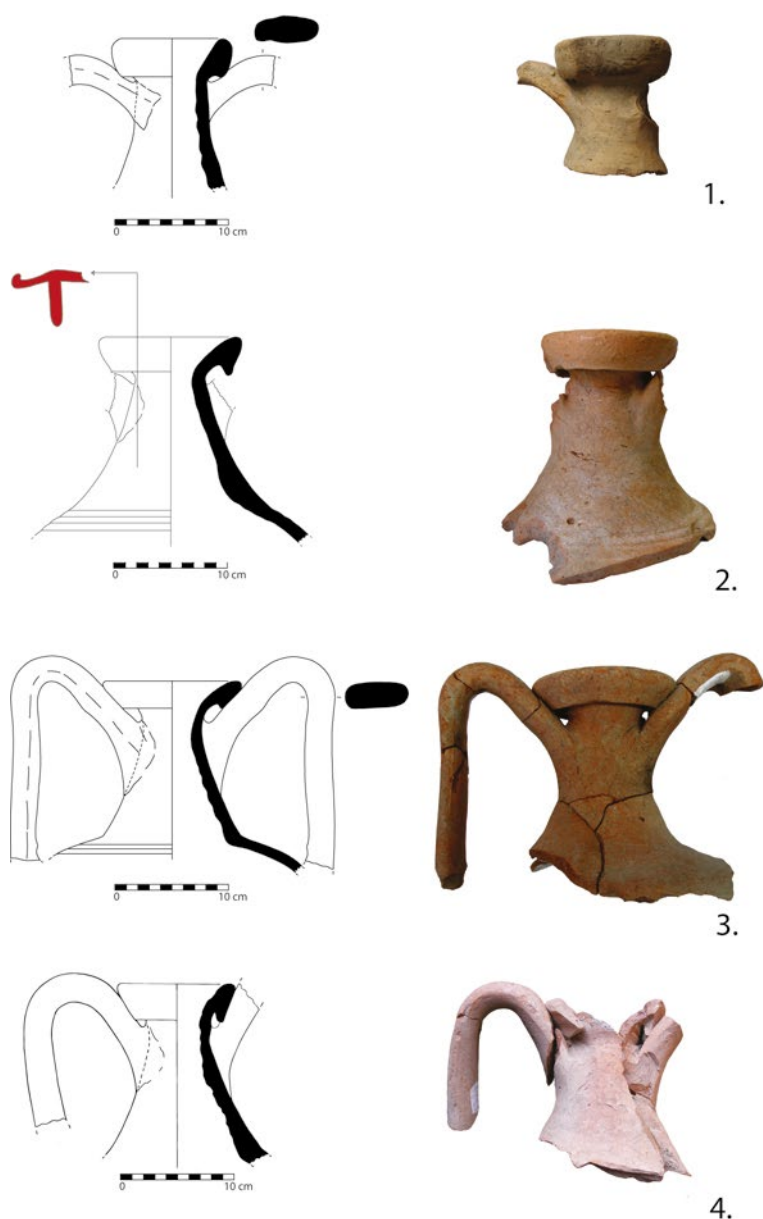


Fig. 3. Günsenin II amphorae (Author: E. Todorova)

Обр. 3. Амфори Гюнсенин II (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

The fabric, hard or softer in touch, has acquired a red, pinkish-orange, light orange, or pale yellow-orange color after firing. It is mixed with a large amount of coarse sand and single large limestone particles. There is no slip.

The second group (Cat. Nos. 10 – 12, fig. 3: 2 – 4, fig. 5: 19 – 31) includes vessels with a funnel-shaped rim. The rim edge, which curves strongly outward, forms a “collar” that is squeezed between band-like handles with an elliptical cross-section, which start from the neck and rise above the rim level. Sometimes the rim is highly deformed and so it is difficult to determine its profile. The characteristic fabric is either hard or chalky soft but it always contains large amounts of organic matter and large limestone particles. The color after firing varies from pale yellow and light orange

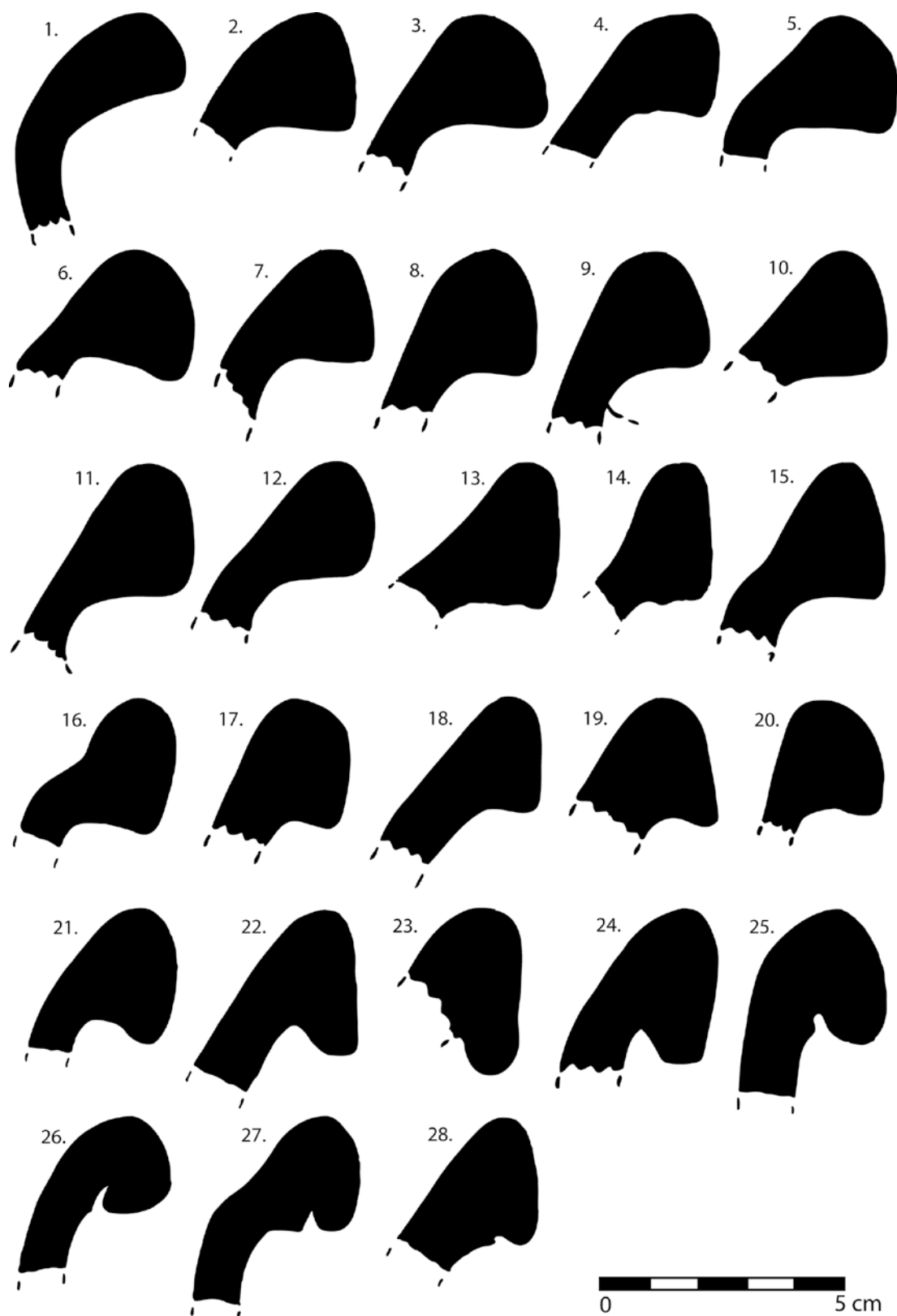


Fig. 4. Rim profiles of Günsenin II amphorae (Author: E. Todorova)
Обр. 4. Профили на амфори Гюнсенин II (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

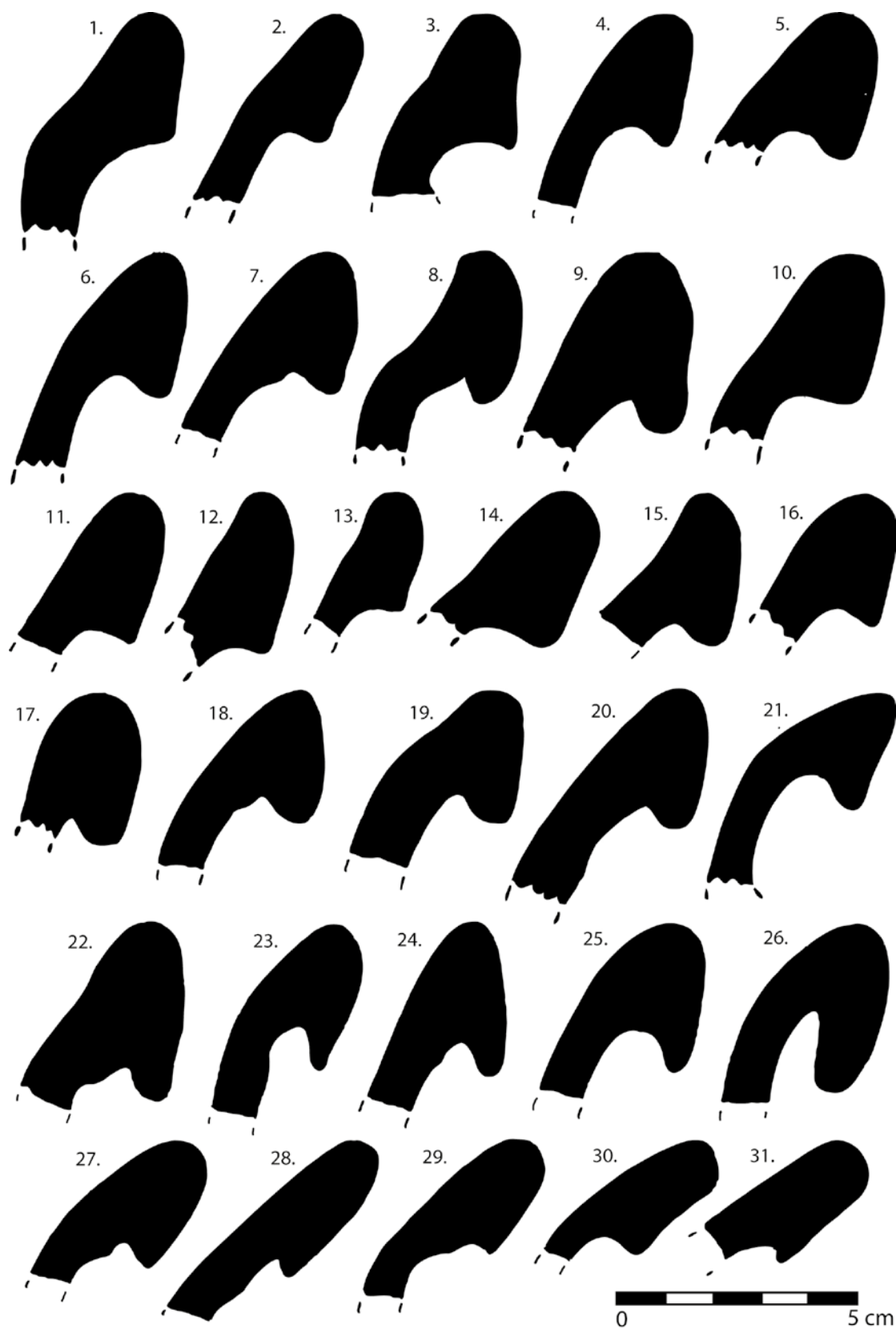


Fig. 5. Rim profiles of Günsenin II amphorae (Author: E. Todorova)
Обр. 5. Профили на амфори Гюнсенин II (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

to dark pink. There is no slip coating, as in the first group of Günsenin II amphorae.

Compared to the Günsenin I amphorae, the Günsenin II show even more diversity not only in rim profiles but also in fabric. As with the Günsenin I amphorae, then, the questions about their classification and the relationship between their form and origin are also of great interest here. It is obvious that the Günsenin II “type” unites heterogeneous but formally similar vessels. The “type” should therefore be named a “class,” within which types combining morphological characteristics with a certain chemical composition in their fabrics should be included.

Based on chemical analysis of the clay used in the Günsenin II amphorae, one production center has been identified for them and at least two additional, unidentified ones have been posited. The identified center is located in the vicinity of Chalcis on the Island of Euboea, Greece, where, in addition to Günsenin II vessels from the second group, Günsenin III containers were also produced. Transitional Günsenin II/III variants were seemingly manufactured here as well (Waksman et al. 2018; Todorova et al. (forthcoming)). During the primary processing of the amphorae from Chalcis, it proved impossible to relate the morphological characteristics of the vessel (rim profile and handle position) to the macroscopic observations of the fabric (color, composition, hardness). Even the results of the chemical analyses did not support such a correlation. Amphorae with the same fabric composition presented a wide variety of rim profiles (Waksman et al. 2018, fig. 1). Possibly, in the case of the Günsenin II amphorae, the rim profile and the position of the handles could be related to the transport of certain products or to a certain capacity of the vessel (Todorova et al. (forthcoming)), as was done for the Günsenin I containers (van Doorninck, Jr. 1993; van Doorninck, Jr. 2015). Unfortunately, no one has done such a study so far.

There are also no fully explored shipwrecks loaded with Günsenin II amphorae whose capacity can be investigated. The cargo of one of the sunken ships in Sudak Bay did contain Günsenin II amphorae (Зеленко 2001, 91), but they are all fragmented. This author’s personal observations during the processing of the materials from the territory of Bulgaria and from the shipwreck near Novy Svet⁵ show that the well-defined chronological tendency among Günsenin I amphorae towards shorter necks and handles elevated higher above the rim is not valid for Günsenin II vessels (Тодорова 2012, 60; Todorova et al. (forthcoming)). Although such an evolutionary development seems logical when it comes to the gradual thickening of the rim and the sagging of its lower end like a “hook” and the raising of the handles until they surpass the rim level to flatten the rim “collar,” the discovery of amphorae with different formal characteristics in the same complexes rejects this assumption.⁶ The situation can only be explained by the fact that the amphorae originated from different but contemporary production centers (Todorova et al. (forthcoming)).

The statistical comparison between the two groups of Günsenin II amphorae from the excavations in Pliska also leads to disputed results given the strong fragmentation of the material. A total of 63 rims have been preserved, most of which are very small in size. Of these rims, 35 sherds belong to the first group (Cat. No. 9, fig. 3: 1, fig. 4: 1 – 28), 19 sherds – to the second group (Cat. Nos. 10 – 12, fig. 3: 2 – 4, fig. 5: 19 – 31), and nine sherds – to the transitional variant between the two groups (fig. 5: 1 – 9), in which the lower edge of the rim touches the handles and is slightly flattened by them. Nine rim sherds remain undetermined (fig. 5: 10 – 18). Regarding the handles, 21 sherds belong to the first group, 28 sherds to the second, and 17 sherds to the transitional version while 81 sherds cannot be attributed with certainty. Again, as with the ratio between the Günsenin

⁵ Here I would like to express my gratitude to S. Zelenko and Y. Morozova from the Center for Underwater Archeology at Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv for giving me the opportunity to work with the materials from Novy svet.

⁶ The amphora material from Pliska published here fully supports this observation.

I and II amphorae, the ratio between the two groups of Günsenin II sherds is quite close, and the differences in the number of fragments are minimal.

Unidentified amphorae

In addition to the widespread Günsenin I and II amphorae, fragments of two as yet unidentified types were also documented among the examined materials. The first type includes fragments of the body and bottom of a vessel (Cat. No. 13, fig. 6: 1). They were made on a potter's wheel. The fabric turned to brown color after firing and contains large amount of mica and fine sand. No slip on the vessel's exterior was recorded. The body of this type of amphora is covered with wide (1 – 1.5 cm) horizontal relief ribs. Given that so little of the vessel has been preserved, it is difficult to say what its overall shape and height are. In all probability it had an elongated, spindle-shaped body, such as

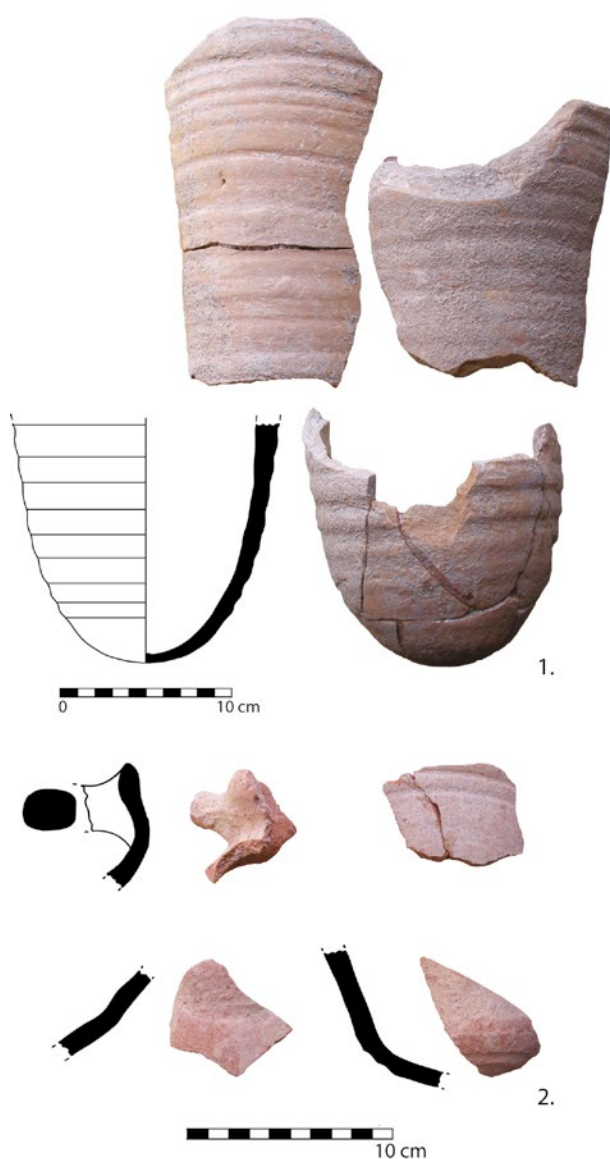


Fig. 6. Unidentified amphorae (Author: E. Todorova)

Обр. 6. Амфори – неидентифицирани типове (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

those known from various locations from this period (Тодорова 2012, 70 – 71 and the respective references, Табл. XXXIII 200 – 202, Табл. XCIII 200 – 201, Табл. XCIV 202).

Four fragments of one vessel belong to the second type – a rim with a handle, a part of the shoulders, the lower half of the body, and a sherd from the bottom (Cat. No. 14, fig. 6: 2). This vessel was made on a kick wheel. The fabric is extremely coarse, mixed with a large amount of coarse sand, and overfired, yielding a brick red color. The thin walls and small size of the vessel's fragments give reason to conclude that it is a small-sized amphora with a pear-shaped body and a rounded bottom. The neck is short, the rim is bevelled and curves slightly inward, the handles start from the rim and most likely reach the rim level without exceeding it. The vessel's fragmentary state does not allow exact parallels to be identified.

Stoppers

Among the amphora fragments, 5 “stoppers” with an irregular round shape were also found. Three of them are secondarily cut from clay putty (Cat. Nos. 15, 16, 18, fig. 7: 1, 2, 4). Their light yellow fabric is coarse and contains a large amount of organic matter and coarse sand. The remaining two stoppers (Cat. Nos. 17, 19, fig. 7: 3, 5) were carved from the walls of Günsenin II amphorae. Their diameter varies between 4.8 and 6.2 cm and their thickness from 1.6 to 3.5 cm. The stoppers were originally stuck in the necks of amphorae and were coated with resin so they would not fall out. They are very often found *in situ* in the necks of or inside amphorae from sunken ships of all eras (Bass, van Doorninck, Jr. 1982, 160 – 161, fig. 8 – 7; Hocker, Scafuri 1996, 6, fig. 6; Hocker 2005, 104; Günsenin 2001, 118; Günsenin 2003, 367, fig. 8). According to personally-obtained, unpublished information from F. van Doornink Jr., specially produced amphora stoppers were also subject to certain standardization. Stoppers of a certain diameter and thickness were supposed to close the rims of amphorae of a certain capacity.

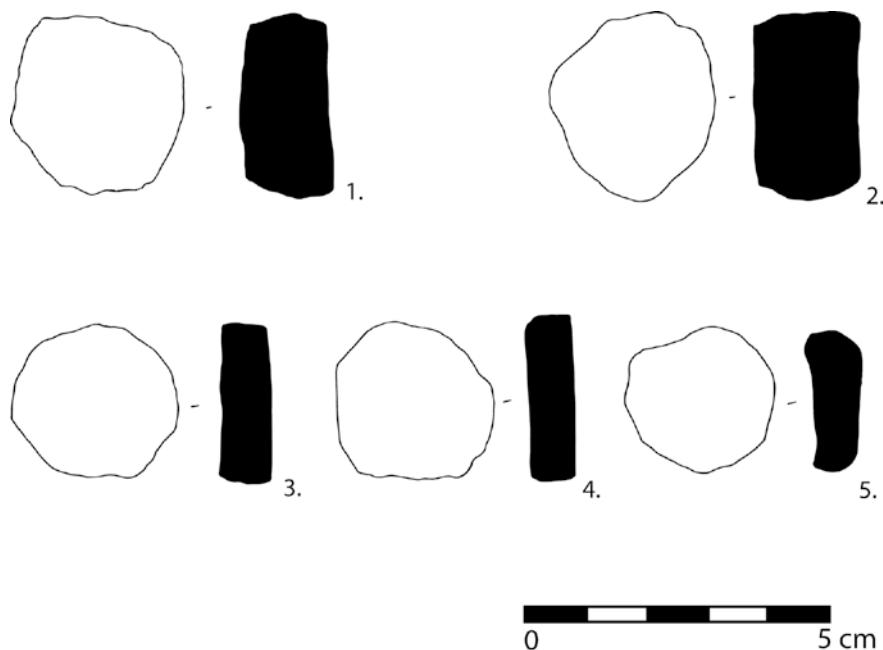


Fig. 7. Amphora stoppers (Author: E. Todorova)
Обр. 7. Запушалки за амфори (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

Amphora marks

Very often, different signs (stamps, dipinti or graffiti) are found by themselves or in combination on amphorae's handles, shoulders, and bodies. They are placed either before or after the vessel was fired.

Stamps

Only one stamp was documented among the examined materials from the excavations in Pliska (Cat. No. 20, fig. 8). It is located on the upper horizontal surface of a Günsenin I amphora handle, very close to where the handle curves to join the shoulders. The stamp is a negative one and was placed using a metal matrix before the vessel was fired. It shows four small circles with a dot in the center that are arranged in a diamond-shaped pattern. It was found out-of-context in Grid sq. No. 23. Among the more than 100 amphora stamps and matrices for stamping amphorae known to date worldwide, there is no exact parallel to the one from Pliska, which makes its interpretation and dating difficult. A detailed analysis of the location of the stamps on Günsenin I amphorae showed that those located on the upper surface of the handles usually belong to vessels with a high neck, in which the handles do not rise above the rim level. Therefore, the stamp can be dated in general to the second half of the 10th – the first half of the 11th c. (Тодорова 2012, 96).

The topic of the interpretation of amphora stamps – their meaning, who had the right to stamp amphorae, etc. – is extremely extensive and full of debate (Тодорова 2012, 102 – 109 and the respective references) so it will not be reviewed here. In light of recent discoveries (van Doorninck, Jr. 2015, van Doorninck Jr. (forthcoming), however, it can be assumed that in order for a high level of standardization and unification in amphora production to exist, it was necessary

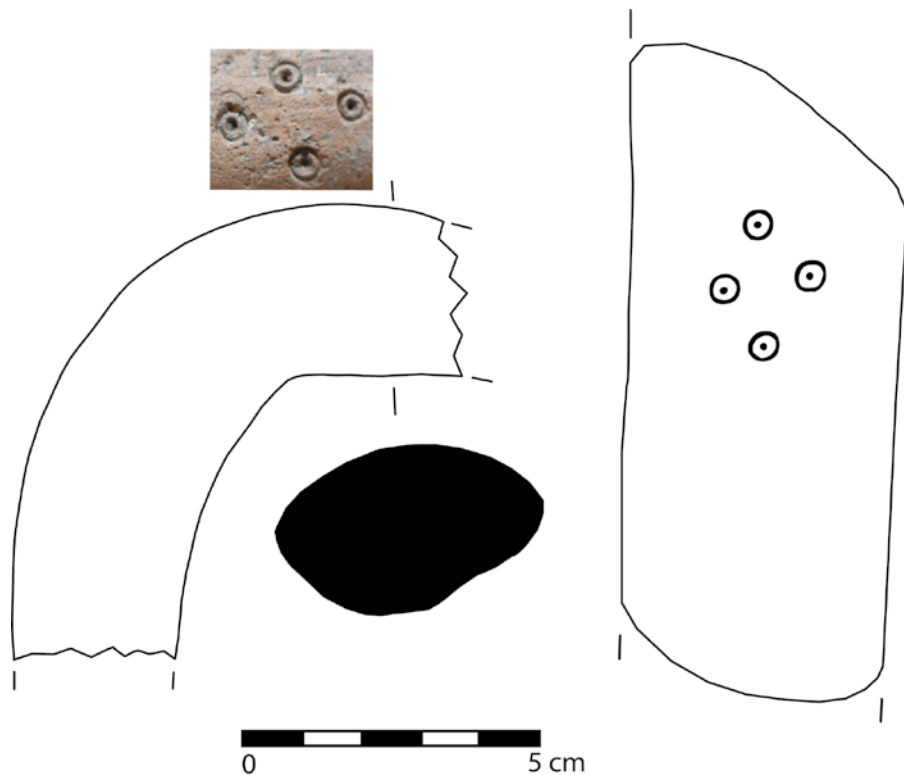


Fig. 8. Amphora stamp (Author: E. Todorova)

Обр. 8. Амфорен печат (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

to carry out strict control. Therefore, amphora stamps can often be interpreted, as in the case of the stamp from the Pliska site, as a sign of the workshop that belonged to a certain estate. This stamp guarantees that, after it has been inspected by a controlling authority, the manufactured batch of ceramic vessels meets quality and capacity expectations. At the same time, by representing a particular manufacturer, a stamp could provide information on the origin of and qualities of the goods in vessels to those who transported them.

Dipinti

Unlike Günsenin I amphorae, Günsenin II vessels were not stamped. Dipinti are found on them instead – letter abbreviations, signs, and even entire inscriptions that are applied with black or dark red organic paint on the neck of a vessel after it is fired. From the excavations for the construction of the archaeological base in Pliska, the upper half of an amphora (Cat. No. 10, fig. 3: 2) with handles squeezing the rim and a fragment of an amphora neck (Cat. No. 21, fig. 9) were found on which dipinti were applied with red paint. In the first case, the sign resembles the Greek letter “T” while in the second case, it is most likely a ligature containing the Greek letter “H”. Unfortunately, the latter dipinto has not been fully preserved.

Dipinti cannot always be read because of their brevity. In this case they were intended to be used only by people who were familiar with their meaning. In cases where it is possible to decipher them, it becomes clear that they carry additional information about: the contents of the amphora; the quality or origin of these contents; their volume or weight; the volume or weight of the empty amphora; the name of a vessel’s manufacturer, owner, seller, end customer, or customs magistrate; etc. (Stolba 2002, 237 – 238 and the respective references; Karagiorgou 2001, 138 – 139, 149 – 150; Demangel, Mamboury 1939, 149 – 152, fig. 200 – 201; Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2002, 146). Whatever the interpretation of the dipinti, they attest to administratively well-organized services dealing with the transport and distribution of various essential commodities.

Graffiti

Graffiti are marks incised/scratched with a sharp object onto the surface of ceramic vessels after they have been fired. Like dipinti, they carry coded information intended for a certain range of users, which is why their decryption is not always possible. Graffiti very often have nothing to do with the maker of the amphorae and are considered to be a sign of their repeated reuse, as evidenced by numerous, sometimes overlapping incised marks on the same vessel. They can be an invaluable tool for tracing trade routes, mapping distribution networks, and elucidating how the medieval economy was organized in different periods.

From the excavations in Pliska, graffiti were found on handles and walls (sherds from the shoulders, from the base of the neck or near the handles) of both Günsenin I and II amphorae⁷ (Cat. Nos. 3, 4 and 8, fig. 1: 3, 4, 8, fig. 10: 1 – 25). From the point of view of functionality, the places where the graffiti were located were the only visible after ceramic vessels were stacked in ships or storage rooms. The majority of graffiti are straight parallel or intersecting lines without clearly discernible forms and meanings. The reason must be sought in the size and degree of preservation of the sherds bearing graffiti. Some of the graffiti are a combination of letters (Cyrillic or Greek) (Cat. No. 8, fig. 1: 8, fig. 10: 1, 2). They should be interpreted as an abbreviation of the name of the owner/trader or consignee of the goods.

Two graffiti deserve attention: one is incised on the upper surface of one handle of a Günsenin I amphora (Cat. No. 3, fig. 1: 3) while the other is incised into the base of a Günsenin II amphora’s

⁷ Graffiti were not recorded on the other two types of studied amphorae due to the insignificant number of sherds.



Fig. 9. *Dipinti* (Author: E. Todorova)
Обр. 9. Дипинти (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

handle (fig. 10: 24). Although at first glance the two graffiti have nothing in common, they actually represent stylized versions of the emblem of the Rurik family. Similar emblems on amphora fragments from Bulgaria originate from Preslav (Тодорова 2012, Табл. LX/G58; Манолева-Войкова 2015, обр. 2₁₄) and Silistra (Тодорова 2012, Табл. LX/G59). They should be connected to the period of the Rus' presence in administrative key centers south of the Danube in the last third of the 10th c.

Others

A curious find was also discovered among the many broken amphorae from the excavations at Pliska. It is a sherd of a handle of a Günsenin II amphora from the second group. On its upper, relatively horizontal surface are two paw prints of a small predator that were left on the moist clay before the vessel was fired (Cat. No. 22, fig. 11). Similar traces of animals are often found, especially on building ceramics. They show that the finished but still unfired products were left unattended in an open place accessible to animals until the water contained in them evaporated and they were ready to be fired. Analysis of the prints by a zoologist could show whether the prints belong to a domestic (cat?) or wild animal.⁸ This information can help researchers to reconstruct the location and organizational policies of pottery workshops. Were these workshops built on the estates to which they belonged and so had a direct connection with other buildings of the complex or were they located in remote and sparsely populated places? Did workshops only function in certain seasons or year-round? To what extent did pottery production coexist with other production and economic activities (e.g. raising domestic animals, etc.)? One could also ask, based on the fauna of the places where the workshops were located, if it is possible to make assumptions about the topography and climate of the area in which workshops were located.

⁸ According to Forest Engineer Stiliyan Geraskov from the National Hunting and Fishing Association "Union of Hunters and Fishermen in Bulgaria", to whom I would like to thank for the information provided, the paw prints were most probably those of a domestic cat.

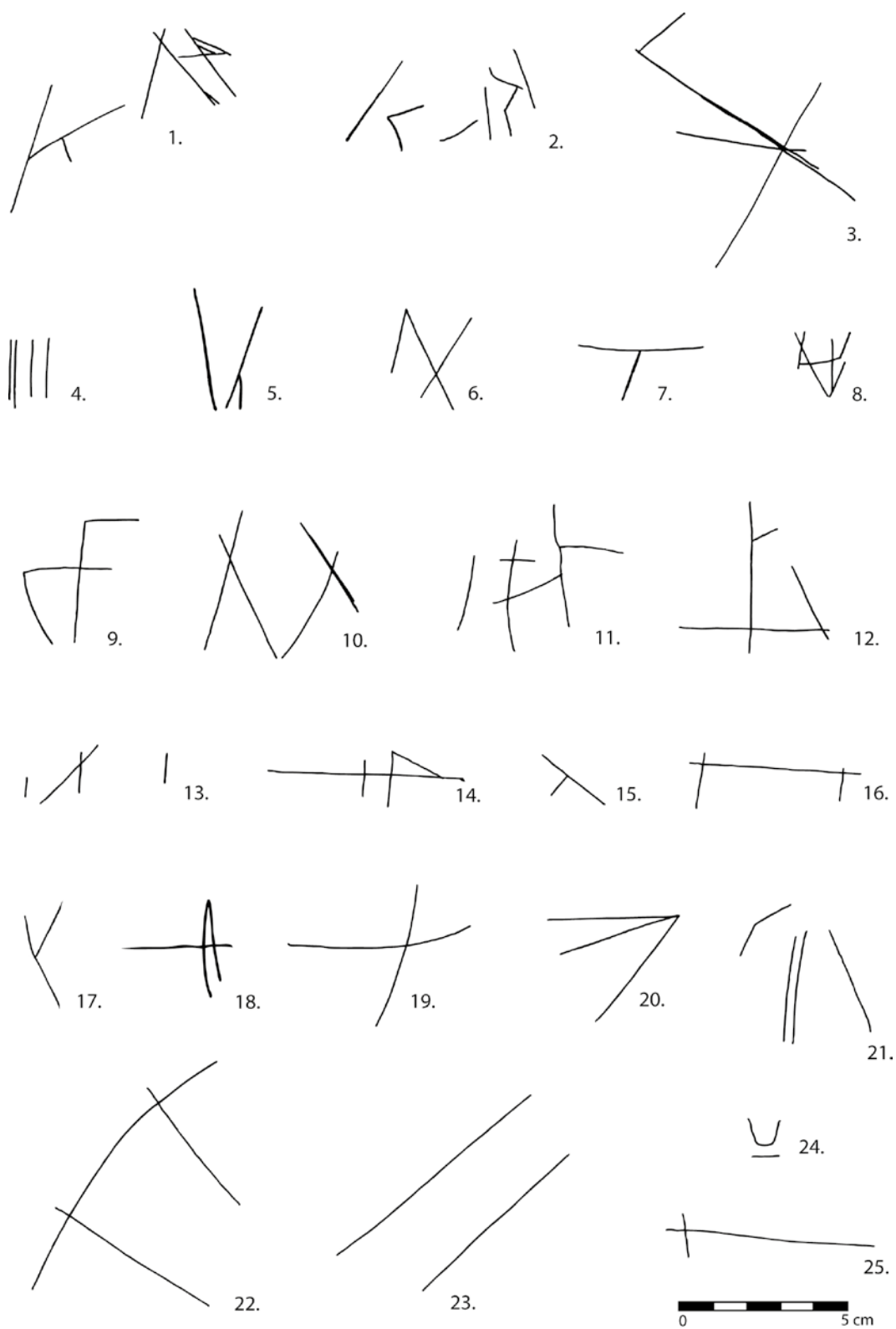


Fig. 10. Partially preserved graffiti on Günsenin I and II amphorae (Author: E. Todorova)
Обр. 10. Частично запазени графити върху амфори Гюнсенин I и II (Автор: Е. Тодорова)



Fig. 11. Günsenin II amphora handle with animal paw print (Author: E. Todorova)

Обр. 11. Дръжка от амфора Гюнсенин II със следи от животински лапи (Автор: Е. Тодорова)

Conclusion

Although at first glance the amphora material from the excavations for the construction of NAIM's new archaeological base of NAIM at Pliska seems highly fragmented, its detailed analysis allows valuable conclusions to be drawn. Significant quantities of amphorae from the Günsenin I and II classes that are datable to the second half of the 10th – the beginning of the 11th c. show that in this period Pliska grew as a large consumer center of food products, mainly wine and olive oil. The variety of amphora profiles suggests that contacts were maintained with different, either synchronously or diachronically existing production centers in the Eastern Mediterranean basin. These contacts were abruptly cut around the mid-11th c. The fact that vessels different in origin but produced according to the same standard reached Pliska means that their transport took place in a well-organized and efficient trade network. The forthcoming detailed treatment of the remaining finds and ceramics from the excavations for the construction of NAIM's base at Pliska will help to narrow the chronological boundaries of the individual amphora-containing structures. These analyses will also indicate whether or not ceramic vessels from different production centers arrived at the same time. If they did not, these analyses could shed light on the intervals of time in which did arrive and with what frequency they arrived.

Seen in the light of historical events, what has been concluded so far finds a logical explanation. The appearance of the Byzantines in the last third of the 10th c., the subsequent absorption of the lands south of the Danube into the Byzantine *thema* Paristrion, and the rise of Pliska as the seat of a high military administrator in the region all necessitated the implementation of centrally organized food supplies for the needs of the army and the civilian population of the city, the so-called *annona*. This would explain how, with the *annona*, amphorae from various production

centers reached Pliska. What products were supplied – whether only wine or olive oil and other goods – is still difficult to say. The different status of Pliska compared to that of other settlements in the *thema* is confirmed by both unidentified amphora types. Their small quantity and absence elsewhere should be interpreted as incidental supplies of less common or even rare and valuable goods (e.g. a special type of wine, essential oils, etc.). In all probability, their delivery was not part of the *annona* but was carried out in parallel with it by independent merchants trading goods in small quantities and volumes. The graffiti on the amphorae, which resulted from the reuse of the shipping containers, can be used to support this claim. The existence of a demand for goods of a certain quality by high dignitaries or people with a higher social status is evidenced by two of the graffiti with the emblem of the Rurik dynasty. They clearly show that for the Kiev prince Svetoslav and his associates, there were special supplies of food in the late 960s and early 970s. The sudden disappearance of amphorae after the mid-11th c. is explained by the cessation of life in Pliska as a result of attacks by the Pechenegs and the site's subsequent abandonment as an important strategic point in its larger administrative region.

CATALOGUE OF FINDS

Cat. No. 1

Fig. 1: 1

Location: Grid sq. No. 2/1, depth 0.00 – 0.40 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Part of the rim and one handle of the vessel are missing. The outer surface is covered with a thick layer of residues. Highly fragmented. Restored.

Size: H – 39 cm; Rim diameter – 9.4 cm; Maximum diameter – 32.5 cm.

Fabric: Fabric with beige-orange color after firing, containing fine sand. Due to the coating of residues, it is not possible to tell if a slip was applied on the outer surface.

Cat. No. 2

Fig. 1: 2

Location: Grid sq. No. 14, Dwelling No. 14, depth 0.90 m from ground level.

State of preservation: The rim, neck, two handles and bottom are missing. Highly fragmented. Partially restored.

Size: H – 26 cm (preserved); Maximum diameter – 28.3 cm.

Fabric: Fabric with pinkish-orange color after firing, containing large quantity of fine sand. Cream-colored slip covering the outer surface.

Cat. No. 3

Fig. 1: 3

Location: Grid sq. No. 30, Pit No. 30 with furnace, depth 1.30 – 1.80 m from ground level, found together with

Cat. No. 4.

State of preservation: Fragment from the upper half of an amphora. Parts of the rim, neck, handles and shoulders are preserved. Highly fragmented. Partially restored.

Size: H – 16.6 cm (preserved); Rim diameter – 10.5 cm.

Fabric: Fabric with beige-orange color after firing, containing mica and fine sand. Dense creamish slip covering the outer surface. Some sherds have stayed in a fire.

Graffiti: Rurik emblem on the handle curve, incised after firing.

Cat. No. 4

Fig. 1: 4

Location: Grid sq. No. 30, Pit No. 30 with furnace, depth 1.30 – 1.80 m from ground level, found together with

Cat. No. 3.

State of preservation: Some parts of the rim, the neck, handles, and shoulders of the vessel are preserved. Highly fragmented. Partially restored.

Size: H – 17.7 cm (preserved); Rim diameter – 10.4 x 11 cm; Maximum diameter – 34.5 cm.

Fabric: Fabric with orange color after firing, containing mica and fine sand. Dense cream-colored slip covering the outer surface. Some sherds have stayed in a fire.

Graffiti: Marks incised after firing on both sides of the shoulders and at the base of the neck. The marks are not completely preserved due to the fragmentary state of the vessel.

Cat. No. 5

Fig. 1: 5

Location: Trench No. III, Grid sq. No. 5/6, Pit No. 69, depth 0.60 – 1.90 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Parts of the rim and neck, one handle, and the shoulders are preserved. Graphically reconstructed.

Size: H – 15 cm (preserved); Rim diameter – ca. 8 cm.

Fabric: Fabric with orange color after firing, containing considerable amount of fine sand. Dense cream-colored slip covering the outer surface.

Cat. No. 6

Fig. 1: 6

Location: Grid sq. No. 26A, depth 0.40 – 0.60 m.

State of preservation: Sherd from the upper part of an amphora. Parts of the rim, the neck, and the shoulders are preserved.

Size: H – 11.8 cm (preserved); Rim diameter – 8 cm.

Fabric: Fabric with orange-beige color after firing, containing large amount of coarse sand. Cream-colored slip covering the outer surface.

Cat. No. 7

Fig. 1: 7

Location: Trench No. III/2-East, Dwelling No. 54, depth 0.60 – 0.90 from ground level.

State of preservation: Sherd from an amphora neck. Parts of the rim, the neck and the handle are preserved. Graphically reconstructed.

Size: H – 8.6 cm (preserved); Rim diameter – ca. 8 cm.

Fabric: Fabric with orange color after firing, containing considerable amount of fine sand. Cream-colored slip covering the outer surface.

Cat. No. 8

Fig. 1: 8

Location: Trench No. III/5, 6, depth 0.00 – 0.60 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Half from an upper part of an amphora. Parts of the rim, the neck, the shoulders, and the handles are preserved.

Size: H – 19 cm (preserved).

Fabric: Fabric with beige-orange color after firing, inclusions of mica and sand. Cream-colored slip covering the outer surface.

Graffiti: Two letter-like marks incised after firing – one on the shoulders and the other at the base of the handle.

Cat. No. 9

Fig. 3: 1

Location: Trench No. V/1–3, Pit No. 57, depth 0.80 – 2.30 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Part of an upper part of an amphora. The rim, the neck, and one handle are preserved.

Size: H – 12.7 cm (preserved); Rim diameter – 9 cm.

Fabric: Hard fabric with light orange color after firing, containing large amount of organic matter and large lime particles.

Cat. No. 10

Fig. 3: 2

Location: Trench No. V/1, Pit No. 61, depth 1 – 1.70 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Upper part of an amphora. The rim, the neck, and part of the shoulders are preserved. The joint between the neck and the body is clearly visible.

Size: H – 17.4 cm (preserved); Rim diameter – 10.7 x 11.5 cm.

Fabric: Hard fabric with light orange color after firing, containing large amount of organics and large lime particles.

Dipinti: A poorly preserved mark painted in red on the neck of the vessel, close to one handle.

Cat. No. 11

Fig. 3: 3

Location: Grid sq. No. 30, depth 1.60 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Upper part of an amphora. Parts of one handle and the shoulders are missing.

Size: H – 19 cm (preserved); Rim diameter – 11.3 cm.

Fabric: Hard fabric with light orange color after firing, containing large amount of organic matter and large lime particles.

Cat. No. 12

Fig. 3: 4

Location: Grid sq. No. 16, Pit No. 14, depth 0.60 – 2.20 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Part of an amphora. The neck, parts of the rim, a big part of one of the handles, large sherds from the body and the lower part of the vessel are preserved.

Size: H of neck – 19 cm (preserved); Rim diameter – 11.3 cm.

Fabric: Hard fabric with light pinkish-orange color after firing, containing coarse sand and single large stones.

Cat. No. 13

Fig. 6: 1

Location: Grid sq. No. 23, depth 1.10 – 1.20 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Sherds from the lower part of an amphora (fragmented and restored). Two more wall sherds from the body of the same vessel with no connection to the bottom.

Size: H of bottom – 14.2 cm (preserved).

Fabric: Hard fabric with beige-brown color after firing, containing large amount of mica and fine sand. No slip on the outer surface.

Cat. No. 14

Fig. 6: 2

Location: Grid sq. No. 26/28, Pit No. 20, depth 0.80 – 1.80 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Four small sherds from the same vessel: a sherd of the neck of an amphora with a rim and part of a handle; sherd from the transition between the neck and the shoulders; body sherd with two shallow horizontal relief ribs; a wall sherd from the lower half with a transition to the bottom with shallow horizontal relief ribs.

Size: H of the sherd with rim and neck – 6 cm (preserved).

Fabric: Coarse fabric containing large amount of coarse sand. It was overfired, and the sherds are light in weight. Brick red color after firing. The outer surface has a cream color, but this is not a slip.

Cat. No. 15

Fig. 7: 1

Location: Trench No. V, depth 1.40 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Amphora stopper. Secondary cut from clay putty.

Size: Diameter – 5.8 cm; Thickness – 2.9 cm.

Fabric: Very coarse fabric with light orange color after firing, containing large size lime particles and large chunks of organic material (straw).

Cat. No. 16

Fig. 7: 2

Location: Trench No. III/3, depth 0.00 – 2 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Amphora stopper. Secondary cut from clay putty.

Size: Diameter – 5.5 x 6.2 cm; Thickness – 3.5 cm.

Fabric: Whitish fabric containing large amount of sand and organic material.

Cat. No. 17

Fig. 7: 3

Location: Trench No. II/1B, depth 0.00 – 1 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Amphora stopper. Secondary cut from Günsenin II amphora sherd.

Size: Diameter – 5 x 5.6 cm; Thickness – 1.7 cm.

Fabric: Soft fabric with light orange color after firing, containing large amount of organic material and sand.

Cat. No. 18

Fig. 7: 4

Location: Trench No. III/6, Pit No. 73, depth 1 – 1.60 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Amphora stopper. Secondary cut from clay putty.

Size: Diameter – 5.2 cm; Thickness – 1.6 cm.

Fabric: Fabric with light orange color after firing, containing organic material and lime particles.

Cat. No. 19

Fig. 7: 5

Location: Trench No. I/5/6, depth 0.00 – 1 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Amphora stopper. Secondary cut from Günsenin II amphora sherd.

Size: Diameter – 5 cm; Thickness – 1.9 cm.

Fabric: Chalky soft fabric with light beige color after firing, containing large amount of organic matter.

Cat. No. 20

Fig. 8

Location: Grid sq. No. 23, depth 0.20 – 0.50 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Günsenin I amphora handle. A negative stamp was placed on the upper horizontal surface, near the break, before the vessel was fired. The stamp consists of four small circles with a dot in the center arranged in the shape of a rhombus.

Size: Diameter – 0.5 cm (of each circle with a dot ornament), 2 x 2.6 cm (of the stamp).

Fabric: Fabric with orange color after firing, containing large amount of coarse sand.

Cat. No. 21

Fig. 9

Location: Trench No. III/6, Pit No. 73, depth 1 – 1.60 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Sherd from a Günsenin II amphora neck with small size.

Size: 9.5 x 10 cm (preserved).

Fabric: Hard fabric with light orange color after firing, containing large amount of sand and single large size lime particles.

Dipinti: A partially preserved mark made with red paint on the neck of the vessel. Probably a letter ligature – H, K (?).

Cat. No. 22

Fig. 11

Location: Trench No. III/2A, Dwelling No. 54, depth 0.80 – 1.20 m from ground level.

State of preservation: Fragment of a handle from a Günsenin II amphora with a break curve and an imprint of the collar of the rim. There are two animal paw prints on the upper horizontal surface.

Size: 6.9 x 8.8 cm (preserved).

Fabric: Soft fabric with light orange color after firing, containing sand and small quantity of organic matter.

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АМФОРЕН МАТЕРИАЛ ОТ РАЗКОПКИТЕ ЗА СТРОЕЖА НА БАЗАТА НА НАИМ В ПЛИСКА

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РЕЗЮМЕ

През 2007 – 2008 г. в НИАР – Плиска се провеждат аварийно-спасителни разкопки на парцел, предназначен за строежа на новата археологическа база на НАИМ в Плиска. Проучена е площ от 1700 кв. м пред вътрешното лице на северната крепостна стена на Вътрешния град. Документирани са останки от столичния и следстоличния период. Най-активно е обитаването в този сектор през последната четвърт на X в. и първите четири десетилетия на XI в., когато тук се развива жилищно-производствен квартал, състоящ се от полуземлянки, работилници, битови и леярски пещи, стопански ями. Документирани са 2972 фрагмента от амфори, един изцяло запазен съд, както и още 10 частично запазени амфори.

Над 50% от фрагментите са от амфори Гюнсенин I (обр. 1, обр. 2). Амфорите са изработени на бързо грънчарско колело от добре пречистена глина с примесени в нея значително количество ситен пясък и слюда. След изпичането си глината е придобила бежово-оранжев, оранжев или розово-оранжев цвят. Външната повърхност е покрита с плътна беззникава ангоба. По отношение на оформянето на устийния ръб, височината и оребвяването на шийката, както и на разположението на дръжките амфорите Гюнсенин I са разделени условно на две групи: 1) съдове с висока шия с три или четири слабоизразени релефни ребра по нея, извито навън, удебелено и заоблено устие, дръжки, започващи от шията, под устийния ръб, без да го надвишават (обр. 1: 1, 3, 4, обр. 2: 1 – 8); и 2), съдове с къса шийка, най-често с едно, по-рядко с две ясно изразени релефни ребра, прав, изтънен и леко скосен навътре устиен ръб, масивни арковидни дръжки, които започват от устийния ръб, като леко се издигат нагоре, изравнявайки се почти или леко надвишавайки нивото му (обр. 1: 5 – 8, обр. 2: 9 – 17). Въз основа на относително наскоро завършилото изследване на автора върху средновековните амфори от територията на България е установена хронологическа зависимост между височината на шията и разположението на дръжките, като тенденцията е към скъсяване на шията и постепенното издигане

на дръжките над нивото на устието. Амфорите с висока шия са датирани във втората половина и края на Х в. до средата на ХІ в. Тези с къса шия се датират от края на Х/началото на ХІ в. до края на ХІ в.

Размерът на запазените фрагменти, както и тяхното състояние възпрепятстваха точното документиране, идентифицирането на профилите на устията и броя на релефните ребра по шията на някои от фрагментите. Все пак може да се каже, че амфорите Гюнсенин I с къса шия преобладават над тези с висока шия.

В терминологично отношение, въз основа на голямото разнообразие от устийни профили и орбраване на шийката при амфорите Гюнсенин I, е необходимо да се подчертае, че те вече не трябва да се разглеждат като тип, а по-скоро като клас амфори, съставени от множество типове с различен произход и форма. Тъй като не са извършени химични анализи на състава на глинено тесто на амфорите Гюнсенин I от Плиска, е невъзможно да се прецени дали някои от тези с къса шия са произведени в Ганос, или не.

Амфорите Гюнсенин II представляват втората по големина група, почти 50 % от всички фрагменти, съперничейки по брой на фрагментите от амфори Гюнсенин I (обр. 3 – 5). При тях е документирано още по-голямо разнообразие по отношение на формата на устието, позицията на дръжките и глинено тесто. Те също са разделени условно на две групи. В първата група (обр. 3: 1, обр. 4) попадат съдове с фуниевидно устие и силно извит навън и удебелен устийн ръб. Дръжките са широки, лентести, с приплеснато елипсовидно сечение. Започват от средата на шията и се прикрепят към търбуха на съда при най-широката му част. При някои екземпляри се наблюдава тенденция към издигане на дръжките по посока на устието, като нерядко долната част на устието докосва или се приплесква към дръжките – преходен вариант към втората група (обр. 5: 1 – 9). При амфорите от тази група понякога се наблюдава украса, връзана преди изпичането върху плещите на съда, състояща се от един ред свързани арковидни елементи. Глината, твърда или по-мека, е придобила след изпичането си червен, розово-оранжев, светлооранжев или блед жълто-оранжев цвят. Примесена е с голямо количество едър пясък и отделни едри варовикови частички. Няма ангоба. Във втората група (обр. 3: 2 – 4, обр. 5: 19 – 31) попадат съдове с фуниевидно устие със силно извит навън устийн ръб, оформящ „якичка“, който се заплесква в започващите от шията и издигащите се над него лентести дръжки с елипсовидно сечение. Понякога устието е силно деформирано и е трудно да се определи неговият профил. Характерната глина е два вида – твърда или тебеширено мека, но винаги е примесена с огромно количество органика и едри варовикови частици. Цветът след изпичането варира от бледожълт и светлооранжев до тъмнорозов. Няма покритие с ангоба.

За разлика от амфорите Гюнсенин I при съдовете Гюнсенин II не се установява еволюционно развитие във формата на устийния ръб и позицията на дръжките спрямо тялото и нивото на устието, което да бъде обвързано с определени хронологически граници. Откриването на амфори с различни формални характеристики в едни и същи комплекси опровергава това предположение. Ситуацията може да се обясни единствено с това, че амфорите произхождат от различни, но едновременно съществуващи производствени центрове. Заради това, подобно на амфорите Гюнсенин I, съдовете Гюнсенин II също трябва да бъдат разглеждани като клас, а не като тип.

Сред разглежданите материали са документираны фрагменти и от два все още неидентифицирани типа. Към първия тип се отнасят парчета от тяло и дъно от един съд (обр. 6: 1), изработен на грънчарско колело от изпечена до кафяво глина с примесено в нея голямо количество слюда и ситен пясък. Няма покритие от ангоба. Тялото на този тип амфори е покрито с широки хоризонтални релефни ребра. Към втория тип принадлежат четири фрагмента от един и същ съд (обр. 6: 2). Изработени са на бързо колело. Глината е изключително груба, примесена е с голямо количество едър пясък. Препечена е и е добила керемиденочервен цвят. Тънките стени и малките размери на фрагментите дават основание да се заключи, че става въпрос за амфора с малки размери с крушовидно тяло и заоблено дъно. Шията е къса, устийният ръб – леко завит навътре и скосен, дръжките започват от устието и най-вероятно се изравняват с нивото му, без да го надвишават.

Сред фрагментите от амфори са открити и 5 „запушалки“. Имат неправилна кръгла форма. Три от тях са вторично изрязани от глинени замазки (обр. 7: 1, 2, 4), а останалите са изрязани от стени на амфори Гюнсенин II (обр. 7: 3, 5).

Върху горната повърхност на дръжката на амфора Гюнсенин I е документиран негативен печат (обр. 8). Поставен е преди изпичането на съда с помощта на метална матрица. Представлява четири малки, ромбовидно разположени кръгчета с точка в средата. Сред известните до момента в световен мащаб амфорни печати и матрици за полагането им няма точен паралел на този от Плиска, което затруднява тълкуването и датирането му. Детайлен анализ на разположението на печатите върху амфори Гюнсенин I показва, че тези, разположени върху горната повърхност на дръжките, обикновено принадлежат на съдове с висока шия, при които дръжките не се издигат и не надминават нивото на устието. Следователно печатът може да бъде датиран най-общо във втората половина и края на X – първата половина на XI в.

Изхождайки от резултатите на последните изследвания, засягащи високото ниво на стандартизация и унификация при производството на амфорите в средновековна Византия, предполагахме, че амфорните печати могат да се тълкуват като знак на ателието производител, принадлежащо към определено поземлено имение. С този знак се гарантира, че произведената партида керамични контейнери отговаря на определените изисквания за качество и вместимост, след като съдовете са били подложени на проверка от страна на контролен орган. Едновременно с това, показвайки производителя, т.е. произхода на амфорите, са давали информация за произхода и качествата на превозваните в тях стоки.

От разкопките за строежа на археологическата база в Плиска са намерени една горна половина от амфора Гюнсенин II (обр. 3: 2) с дръжки, приплескващи устието и един фрагмент от шия на амфора Гюнсенин II (обр. 9), върху които са нанесени дипинти с червена боя. В първия случай знакът наподобява гръцката буква „Т“, докато във втория случай най-вероятно става дума за лигатура, съдържаща гръцката буква „Н“. За съжаление дешифрирането им беше невъзможно и така не можа да се определи дали са свързани със съдържанието на амфората, произхода и качеството на съдържанието, вместимостта на амфората, името на производителя, собственика, търговеца или клиента и т.н.

Върху част от дръжките и стените на амфорните фрагменти има графити (обр. 1: 3, 4, 8, обр. 10: 1 – 25). Повечето графити са прави – успоредни или пресичащи се линии, без ясно различима форма и смисъл. Причината трябва да бъде потърсена в размера и степента на запазеност на фрагментите с графити. Някои от графитите представляват комбинация от букви (кирилски или гръцки) (обр. 1: 8, обр. 10: 1, 2). Те трябва да се тълкуват като съкращение на името на собственика/търговеца или получателя на стоката. Вниманието заслужава да се обърне на два графита, представляващи стилизирани варианти на емблемата на Рюриковичите – единият е врязан върху горната повърхност на едната дръжка на амфора Гюнсенин I (обр. 1: 3), другият е врязан в основата на дръжка от амфора Гюнсенин II (обр. 10: 24). Те трябва да се свържат с присъствието на киевския княз Светослав и варягите в Плиска в края на 60-те и началото на 70-те години на X в.

Върху горната повърхност на дръжка от амфора Гюнсенин II има два отпечатъка от лапи на дребен хищник (вероятно котка), оставени върху влажната глина преди изпичането на съда (обр. 11). Подобни следи от животни се срещат често и показват, че готовите, но все още неизпечени съдове са били оставяни без специален надзор на открито и достъпно за животните място, докато съдържащата се в тях вода се изпари и станат готови за опалване в грънчарските пещи.

Появата на значителни количества амфори от класовете Гюнсенин I и II във втората половина на X в. – началото на XI в. показва, че в този период Плиска израства като голям потребителски център на хранителни продукти (основно вино и дървено масло). Разнообразието в профилите на амфорите подсказва, че са били поддържани контакти и са осъществявани доставки от различни, синхронно или диахронно съществуващи, производствени центрове в Източносредиземноморския басейн, които са прекратени рязко около средата на XI в. Фактът, че различни по произход, но произведени съгласно единни стандарти съдове са достигали до Плиска, означава, че транспортът им се е осъществявал в рамките на една много добре организирана и безпроблемно функционираща търговска мрежа.

Ключови думи: амфори Гюнсенин I и II, запушалки, амфорни печати, дипинти, графити, византийска икономика