

**ÎNTRE STEPĂ ȘI IMPERIU
ZWISCHEN DER STEPPE UND DEM REICH
BETWEEN THE STEPPE AND THE EMPIRE**

**Studii în onoarea lui Radu Harhoiu
Archäologische Studien für Radu Harhoiu zum 65. Geburtstag
Archeological Studies in honour of Radu Harhoiu at 65th
Anniversary**

Volum îngrijit de
Herausgegeben von
Edited by

Andrei Măgureanu – Erwin Gáll



Institutul de Arheologie „Vasile Pârvan”

Renaissance

București 2010

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Paul

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HANDMADE POTTERY FROM THE LATE ROMAN FORTRESS AT CAPIDAVA

Eugen S. Teodor

1. Introduction

In a recent paper regarding the handmade pottery from *Halmyris*-Murighiol — the Roman fort closest to the Danube embouchure — has been tried a fast analysis about the handmade pottery found in the proto-Byzantine fort from *Capidava*-Topalu¹. The resolution was then a negative one: the shapes from *Capidava* are not similar with those from *Halmyris*, which are of *Penkovka* type. The archaeological situation has an exciting historical outcome: at least a part of the Roman garrison from *Halmyris* — which made the “barbarian” pottery — can be safely considered as coming from the opposite bank of the Danube; the situation would be pretty much the same in *Dinogetia*-Garvăn and *Beroe*-Ostrov, both fortresses near the last bent of the Danube. One hundred kilometers southward, at *Capidava*, *Penkovka* pottery makes default. True, *Capidava* does not look to the northern plains from *Bessarabia*, or western *Moldavia*², but straight to the west, into the Romanian Plain, heading *Bucharest* of our days.

The first contact with this collection of “archaic” pottery dates back in 1997, when *Ioan Carol Opreș* gave me drawings and notes about it. There are 14 pots, from which 10 are complete, handmade except two of them, which are made on slow wheel³, one of the artifacts is a jug with one handle, handmade. They are so not “Roman”, but they were found in the blocked portico of the so-called “Guard House” along hundreds of quite Roman stuff – an impressive collection of Late Roman pottery. The context — burned and collapsed — dates back during the years of *Sophia* (565–578)⁴.

About that archaic pottery from *Capidava*, I presented some comments within my PhD thesis⁵, inside what was then *Compass System*⁶. The inventoried analogies were diffuse and afar, as *Străulești*, *Budureasca* and *Vadu Codrii* (from Romanian Plain), but also one match in the Slavic necropolis from *Sărata Monteoru*, and another in *Codîn* (Northern *Bucovina*). But the most interesting — and also strong — analogy found was with the shapes from *Garvăn*⁷, a site in northwestern *Bulgaria* dated during for the mid and late seventh century. Due to the chronological gap, the overall impression was then that the soldiers from *Capidava*, or at least the most barbarous part of them, left the ruined Roman fort and moved west of *Durostorum*-*Silistra*, joining the Slavic milieu⁸.

I am now, ten years later, in possession of an updated database, as number of recorded shapes, as well as improved analytic techniques. On this basis I will make another essay in understanding the origins of that hand-made pottery from *Capidava*. I have to begin stating the main technical means of the tentative.

¹ Topoleanu, Teodor 2009, p. 345.

² Breaking with the international practice, “politically correct” but for sure confusing, in this paper I will follow the Romanian practice, thus “Republic of *Moldavia*” will be called “*Bessarabia*”, and the western *Moldavia* (west of *Prut* River), part of today *Romania*, is denominated as “*Moldavia*”. Both are parts of mediaeval *Moldavia*, and perhaps the best practice would be just like that, Eastern and Western *Moldavia*. Historically, the core of the *Moldavian* state is its north-western part, to the junction of Northern and Eastern *Carpathian* Mountains.

³ In the preliminary notes from 1997, the author conveyed that only two of the pots in the group were made with a kind of slow wheel, a very primitive one. When the stuff was published, in 2003, he produced three groups: made on slow wheel (catalog 253, 255, 256, 259); handmade but possibly “helped” with a kind of potter’s wheel (cat. 251, 254, 257, 260), and the third category, made all with the bare hand – the rest. I saw and touched the pots and I can say that they are pretty much the same, rude and clumsy. The presumptive role played by the potter’s wheel does not affect the “archaic” character of the pots, even those considered lately as a slow wheel product; all are brown-reddish, poorly cooked, with many shades of color, even when not secondarily burned. Even the artifacts suspected as formed on wheel have sometimes “ridgy” rim and vertical marks of finishing (cat. 251), a clear hallmark of handmade pottery. See *Opreș* 2993, p. 120–121.

⁴ *Opreș* 2003, p. 33.

⁵ Teodor 2001, p. 81–82.

⁶ Teodor 1996.

⁷ *Koleva* 1992.

⁸ This analysis was retaken by *Ioan Opreș* in his book, but things did not turn clearer. *Opreș* 2003, p. 110–112.

2. The Compass System and its evolution

The main part of the system is an ensemble of data concerning the identification of the artifacts, their basic measurements (height, upper height, diameters, some angles, others) and procedures for processing and interpreting data.

The main measurements and ratios are almost the same as those published in 1996 and republished in 2001. They will not be retaken here, except some of them, if it will be necessary in the speech. Basically, those data were processed in scattered diagrams, studying their clustering. The procedure was slow and unsafe, because the main classification was done after two diagrams, but 16 different features, on 8 successive diagrams were to be analyzed. Worst – one can't use in one graph more that 100 objects, making thus difficult comparisons between large collections of data.

A breakthrough was done in 2005, when I succeeded to imagine a completely different procedure, analyzing all shapes from the database together, in a single process. This was named “The Cumulative Distance Method” (CDM). A relatively complete description was recently published⁹, therefore I will give here just some brief directions. Eight marks along the pot's shape are established, four on the upper part, the others on the lower part, calculated as coordinates, where the projection on the body of the radius of the middle diameter is always (x,y) 1,0 and its intersection with the axis of symmetry is 0,0. The coordinates of the first object in the database are compared with the same coordinates of all other objects. The differences between those positions, for each of those eight points, are rendered as distances and summed. More “ranks” of analogy were thus established; for instance, if the summed difference is below 0.5 (where 1 is the radius of the middle diameter), the rank is 1; if the difference is [0.5...0.7], then the rank is 2, and so one. These results are translated automatically on a new table. When the first object is classified, the application goes for the next, analyzing it against all other objects, excluding the first. The process is running around until all objects are reciprocally referenced, lasting, with a good computer, more than 24 hours for more than 2000 objects.

The new table, having some thousands records, has to be analyzed further, and needs another module of the application. The simple relationships, like object Ob1 is analogue to ObX or ObY, are converted in “groups”, sometimes as simple as Ob1~Ob2, other times quite intricate, involving more than a hundred objects of the database. The last procedure raised serious problems, because in this long chain of analogies, having the form Ob1~Ob2,..., Ob101~Ob102 etc, Ob1 is not an analogy for Ob100 or Ob101. The “chain” itself is not linear, having branches. The Cumulative Distance Method (or CDM) can't decide, in the actual form, where the chain could be broken, to form different groups or, better, subgroups. The problem with those super-groups can be solved with other means, like the multidimensional analyses, performed usually by different commercial software¹⁰. I decided yet to make myself a “multidimensional” graph, to be sure that I understand what the machine is doing.

The graphic used for discriminating subgroups is, more accurately, a graph for 8 dimensions. The Compass data are normalized, to express the same range of figures and calculated to fit the following chart (Fig. 1):

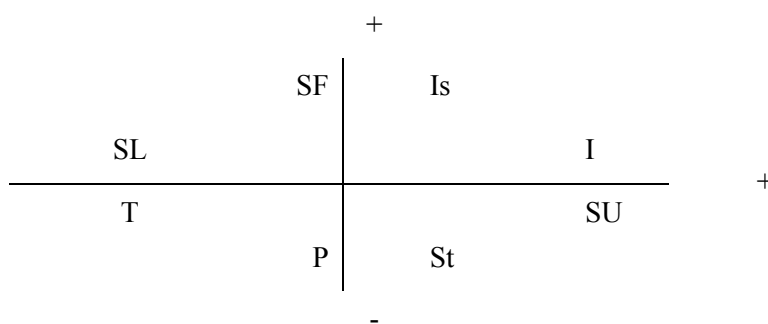


Fig. 1. Chart of the graph with 8 dimensions¹¹.

⁹ Teodor 2009.

¹⁰ As *Statistica*, vers.7, *NCSS*, vers.2000, *Matlab*, vers.2008, others.

¹¹ Where: I = relative height (ratio height/middle diameter); Is = upper height (ratio upper height/height); SU = upper angles difference (angle on rim – angle on neck); St = tangents difference (upper tangent angle – lower tangent angle); P = the height of the foot (as an average of the ratios with the lower height and bottom diameter); T = the height of the profiled foot (as ratio to the

The way in which the separation of the subgroups works is sampled in *Fig. 2*.

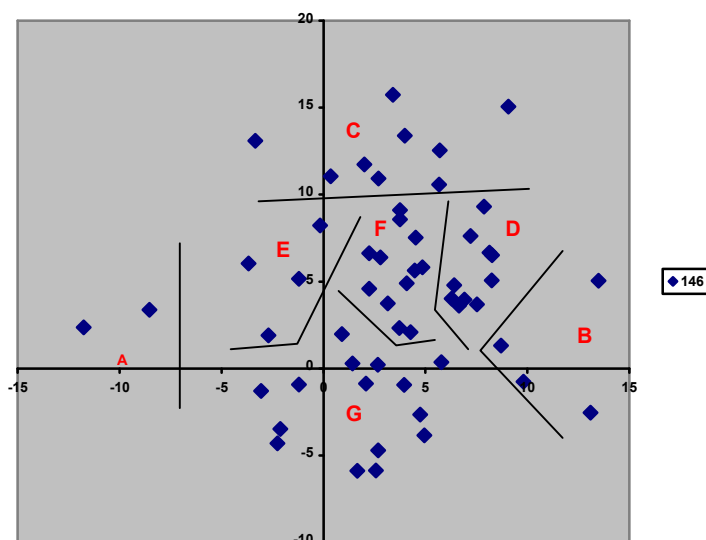


Fig. 2. Graph with 8 dimensions for discriminating subgroups.
Case group 146.

The result presented above is not the only one possible. In fact, any change in one parameter or another is bringing some different results. The scheme from *Fig. 1* is only the one chosen from three tested. The graph works with relative and dynamic values, not with absolute values, just because the Compass regular values are converted in “normalized data”, expressing the same range of figures. As a consequence, one could see changes in classification of the subgroups not changing parameters, but just adding comparative data; for instance, if we would add, along the group 146, another one in the same graph, let’s say 195, the values in the graph will be different, for each subject in the graph, and, possibly, even the subgroups could have other compositions. I am writing these because one has to understand that there is no “absolute true” about statistic data; the single possible true is a result at the intersection of the method and the artifacts compared.

Before analyzing the analogies encountered for Capidava “archaic” pottery, some statistic reports should be brought into attention. In the previous experiment¹² have been analyzed 1195 complete pots, from which 420 did not find any analogy, which means 35%. In the recent experiment (June 2010), 2135 shapes were analyzed, from which 473 did not find any analogy, which represents 22%. The moral is simple: the chance to find analogies is proportional with the database. There are no “unique” artifacts, there are only missing links.

3. Analogies for the “archaic” pottery from Capidava

This is not the place, neither the space, to list here all 295 Compass groups of the recent classification. We will visit just the groups and sub-groups where Capidava artefacts are popping up. Further on, we have a catalog of the morphological groups where the pots from Capidava are encountered.

<i>ID</i>	<i>Publication</i>	<i>figure</i>	<i>site</i>	<i>culture (milieu)</i>	<i>Technology</i>	<i>Comments</i>
group 140B						
8703	Opriş 2003	cat. 260	Capidava	Late Roman	handmade/slow wheel?	
8137	Şovan 2005	59/B50	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8203	Şovan 2005	79/10	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8579	Şovan 2005	216/B9	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	

entire foot height); SL = the difference of the Upper Broad (Ls) and Lower Broad (Li); SF = the difference between the Upper Format and Lower Format.

¹² Teodor 2009, esp. p. 460.

8667	Şovan 2005	267/B20	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
1432	Dolinescu Ferche 1986	14/1	Dulceanca 2	Ipoteşti–Cândeşti	Handmade	

Group description: middle-low pot (height 1.03)¹³, well balanced proportions, no foot or a very small one, medium-low range capacity (average 1.63 l).

The analogies are restricted in a relative proximal geography, in Moldavia (Mihălăşeni) and Muntenia (Dulceanca), pointing out an older form, regular and relatively frequent in Chernjakhov culture, copied and remade later on handmade technology. Previous detailed study proved that handmade forms from western Muntenia, like Dulceanca¹⁴, are almost always copies of the previous fast-wheel production, either Roman or something else (Getic, Chernjakhov). Such a possibility has to be considered even when the direct analogy in Ipoteşti–Cândeşti milieu is missing. Having here four Chernjakhov analogies, the copycat is sure.

Instructive can also be the list of the twin subgroup, 140A: three other pots from Mihălăşeni, another handmade pot from Dulceanca 2 and a sixth century fast wheel artifact from Oltenia¹⁵, we have here, explicitly, a fast wheel analogy in the proximal geography.

Although a direct analogy in Roman milieu is absent, there is little room left for doubt about the Roman origin of this shape, the generic ratios being usual on Roman pottery. One single problem could interfere with this rationale: the pot from Capidava has the rim decorated with fingerprints, a hallmark of the north-Pontic pottery, always handmade. The history of this kind of decoration is long, going deep in Prehistory, being also a hallmark of Dacian pottery, but also it can be rarely encountered on handmade pottery from Chernjakhov culture; in the Late Antiquity its appearances are rather scarce. Nevertheless, this type of decoration can be encountered on wheel artifacts from the northern plain of the Danube¹⁶, with the same chronology as Capidava item, if not earlier. Finally, such artifacts with Roman morphology but Sarmatian decoration should be considered as a result of a mixed culture, in a border area.

group 146D

699	Opriş 2003	cat. 255	Capidava	Late Roman	slow wheel	
202	Şovan 2005	79/9	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
447	Şovan 2005	174/86	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
637	Şovan 2005	249/E5	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
014	Muscă mss		Băleni	Ipoteşti–Cândeşti	fast wheel	
374	Vida 1999	cat. 290	Kecel-Határdülő	Romance under Avars	fast wheel	
376	Vida 1999	cat. 291	Kecel-Határdülő	Romance under Avars	fast wheel	
413	Vida 1999	cat. 379	Budakalász-Dunapart	Gepidic under Avars	slow wheel	
055	Fusek 1994	68/1	Želovce	Old Slavic	slow wheel	seventh century
007	Novšak 2002	2	Murska Sobota - Grofovsko	Old Slavic	slow wheel	seventh century

Group description: middle-low pot (height 1.06), middle diameter relatively low (upper height = 0.47), neck diameter relatively narrow (Ls = 26.8, i.e. 67% from the middle diameter), short foot, if any; middle class capacity (average = 1.9 l).

¹³ As a relative dimension, it is related at the value of the middle diameter; “1.03” means that the height is 3% greater than the middle diameter.

¹⁴ Teodor 2000, p. 311–312.

¹⁵ Şovan 2005, p. 171/A75, p. 186/A4, p. 272/B5; Dolinescu Ferche 1986, p. 7. 1; Popilian, Nica 1998, p. 23: L18/3.

¹⁶ Popilian, Nica 1998, p. 113, considered as slow-wheel made pot, disputable.

The group 146 is one the largest in Compass classification, counting 58 items, divided in 8 subgroups (see. *Fig. 2* and *Pl. 1*); the subgroup 146D counts 11 items, of which 3 come from the Chernjakhov necropolis from Mihălășeni and 3 from the Early Avaric age necropolises from Middle Danube; two of the last are considered by Tivadar Vida as Roman type pottery made in Avaric milieu, but the third is ascribed to late Gepidic culture in the same area (although the slow wheel is not accustomed).

The list of analogies is completed by a fast wheel pot from Băleni¹⁷ and two late wheel pots from Slavic milieu. These last can't help us in any way regarding the origin of the pottery from Capidava, being one century younger. The pot from Capidava is anyway peripheral into the subgroup 146D (see *Fig. 2*, the extreme upper-left). The most similar, as rendered by the graph from the *fig. 2*, is one shape from Mihălășeni (see also *Fig. 3*) and one of the Late Roman pots from the Middle Danube. The most similar form from the subgroup 146C is one from the Gepidic milieu *before* the Avars¹⁸.

Overall, the analogies are suggesting a strongly Romanized German milieu, as a possible origin of the potter from Capidava.

group 179

8701	Opriș 2003	cat. 258	Capidava	Late Roman	handmade	related with 8699 ¹⁹
1255	Grosu 1995	01/03	Ostroveț-Olecicina	Sarmatian	handmade	
2250	Fusek 1994	03/07	Bešeňov	Old Slavic	handmade	
3028	Fusek 1994	64/06	Výčapy-Opatovce - Cseterdülő	Old Slavic	slow wheel	late seventh century
6000	Guštin, Tiefengraber, 2002	07/01	Murska Sobota -Nova tabla	Old Slavic	handmade	

Group description: middle height (1.13), relatively low middle diameter (upper height is 0.49)²⁰, relatively large bottom (0.6 from the middle diameter) with no foot. The analogy with the east-Sarmatian form from the beginning of the millennium could be a suggestion about the prehistory of the shape. All others pots, from Slovenia and Slovakia, postdate Capidava, in western Slavic cultures. The main question here is if the recruits from Capidava could have been brought from such distant territories; rather not. We should think the other way around: groups of warriors which stood in Lower Danube around the mid sixth century, were to be found in the western areas of the Middle Danube (1000 km westward), one century later. The Avar invasion could be the promoter of such a shift.

On the other hand, the Old Slavic pottery could inherit some Sarmatian tradition directly on the Middle Danube area, from western Sarmatians, not from some recent migrant riders, the cultural connection being older than the second century.

The relationship between Compass IDs 8701 and 8699 (Opriș 2003, cat. 258 and 255), one of presumed Chernjakhov roots, the other with Sarmatian origins, is important because it underlines the role of local cultures for the “archaic” pottery from Capidava.

group 195C

8696	Opriș 2003	cat. 252	Capidava	Late Roman	handmade	
5701	Popilian 1976	333	Cioroiu Nou	High Empire	fast wheel	
5713	Popilian 1976	345	Orlea	High Empire	fast wheel	
8231	Șovan 2005	090/A1	Mihălășeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8274	Șovan 2005	112/76	Mihălășeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8294	Șovan 2005	116/B33	Mihălășeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	

¹⁷ Băleni-Români, Dâmbovița county, Muscă mss, PhD thesis presented in 2010. I had access to the data and drawings some years ago, as the older ID testify.

¹⁸ Bóna, Nagy, 2002, 3/5/2, from the necropolis in Békésszentandrás-Sírató, fast wheel made.

¹⁹ In the process of ascribing Capidava's artifacts to various groups, IDs 8701 and 8699 showed a direct relationship, second class; they went on different groups on pure statistic grounds; nevertheless, they are directly related in CDM procedure.

²⁰ That means 49% from the height.

8310	Şovan 2005	122/A5	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8357	Şovan 2005	144/5	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8403	Şovan 2005	160/E2	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8432	Şovan 2005	169/D1	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8492	Şovan 2005	191/12	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8588	Şovan 2005	220/5	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8596	Şovan 2005	229/C7	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
8618	Şovan 2005	236/11	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
2238	Fusek 1994	01/05	Abrahám - Diele	Old Slavic	slow wheel	end of the VII th century

Group description: middle height (1.12), well balanced proportions, relatively narrow neck (0.68 from the mid diameter), bent rim, arched upper body, usually without foot, middle class capacity (1.75 l).

This is another group without problems about its roots in Early Empire and recent history in the Gothic world. The twin subgroups are coming from the same milieu.

The pot from Capidava is the second example of Roman shape modeled by hand and decorated with fingerprints on the rim (see also 146F).

The twin groups 195A and B have Chernjakhov analogies and one pot from Târgşor²¹, in the cultural area Ipoteşti-Cândeşti.

group 213B

8702	Opriş 2003	cat. 259	Capidava	Late Roman	slow wheel	
5721	Popilian 1976	cat. 353	Stolniceni	High Empire	fast wheel	
8532	Şovan 2005	200/4	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	
5617	Teodor 1984	39/05	Botoşana	Costişa-Botoşana	Handmade	
2376	Fusek 1994	14/05	Galanta	Old Slavic	Handmade	

Group description: middle-tall shape (height is 1.15), well balanced proportions, with short and profiled foot, middle capacity class (2.5 l). The presence of High Empire pottery in this set of analogies explains its origins, and the presence of the Chernjakhov culture's pot explains its survival until the end of Antiquity. The single problem that shows up is the handmade pot from Slovakia. I dealt with the issue several times during recent years²², stating that the Slavic ware from the former borders of the Empire is more "Romanized" than stuff from more distant Slavic territories. As concerns Botoşana (southern Bucovina), the author himself defined it like a mix of Roman and Slavic traditions, although it is quite far from Lower Danube (about 400 km), and as well as from the former Roman Dacia founded by Trajanus (about 200 km across the mountains). This is only a case in which a Roman shape is built in non-Roman technical tradition. The pot from Capidava can be considered the same.

There are more twin groups here: 213A is one pot from Mihălăşeni²³, Chernyakhov culture; 213C comprises also a pot from Mihălăşeni²⁴, but also two shapes considered Penkovka type (not convincingly)²⁵. Maybe it is the right place to say that at least some of the Penkovka culture roots should be searched in Chernyakhov milieu. The analysis of the twin groups stresses out the good connection with regional Late Antique traditions.

group 225

8697	Opriş 2003	cat. 253	Capidava	Late Roman	slow wheel	
8281	Şovan 2005	115/A1	Mihălăşeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	Amphorette

²¹ Diaconu 1978, Fig. 3.4.

²² Teodor 2001, p. 86–89, 206; Teodor 2009, p. 464–470.

²³ Şovan 2005, Tomb 176, Fig. 96/A2.

²⁴ Şovan 2005, Tomb 427, Fig. 236.6.

²⁵ Rusanova 1976, 34/9, 14, respectively Selishte and Stetsovka. They were considered Penkovka just because they couldn't be Korchak, but their upper body is relatively nice arched.

8525	Șovan 2005	198/A5	Mihălășeni	Chernjakhov	fast wheel	Amphorette
7298	Vida 1999	10/2, cat. 071	Csákberény-Orondpuszta	Gepidic under Avars	fast wheel	
7299	Vida 1999	10/3, cat. 074	Csákberény-Orondpuszta	Gepidic under Avars	fast wheel	
7308	Vida 1999	13/3, cat. 174	Budakalász-Dunapart	Romance under Avars	fast wheel	
7315	Vida 1999	15/3, cat. 182	Környe	Romance under Avars	fast wheel	
7378	Vida 1999	34/1, cat. 322	Ordas	Romance under Avars	fast wheel	
7383	Vida 1999	35/1, cat. 332	unknown	Romance under Avars	fast wheel	
7388	Vida 1999	35/6, cat. 337	unknown	Romance under Avars	fast wheel	
7395	Vida 1999	37/1, cat. 324	Ordas	Romance under Avars	fast wheel	
6303	Vida 1999	73/4, cat. 640	Deszk G	Oriental (Avars)	handmade	

Group description: relatively tall pot (1.2), low middle diameter (upper height is 0.53), long and narrowed neck, the same size as the bottom, arched body, regularly no foot; middle low class of capacity (1.5 l); nevertheless, the pot from Capidava is the largest from the group, being estimated to 3.57 l (up to the neck).

The group is heavily dominated by shapes from Avaria, being mostly considered as Roman products in Early Khaganat, but also Gepidic or even Oriental. Avoiding here the question how Tivadar Vida has reached at such different resolutions for the same shape (fabrication criteria, of course), I should say that the analogies encountered in the necropolis from Mihălășeni can explain why the shape is present in such diverse milieus: they have two handles and have been considered “amphorettes”, or “table amphora”, for bringing the wine to the table.

group 295A

8695	Opriș 2003	cat. 251	Capidava	Late Roman	handmade/slow wheel?	
5805	Constantiniu 1963	10/07	Străulești-Lunca	Ipotești-Cândești	handmade	
5793	Constantiniu 1965	85/02	Străulești-Măicănești	Ipotești-Cândești	handmade	

Group description: tall shape (height is 1.35), with the neck as three quarters of the middle diameter and the bottom – half of it, with short and profiled foot. We have the capacity evaluation only for the ware from Capidava: 4.76 l.

This is the shortest list of analogies and the best directed: two neighbored sites north of Bucharest, more or less contemporary with the garrison from the Guard House in Capidava. Such tall pot shapes are coming more or less directly from Dacian culture, i.e. *Carpi* in this case. They can be encountered also in milieus where *Getae* were mixed with others (south-eastern Poland, the northern shore of the Black Sea). Other tall shapes appear in Tisza valley within Avars, but their origin is as well to be found north of the Black Sea²⁶.

²⁶ Bichir 1967, Fig. 12. 1–4, 18. 1 – for the culture of *Carpi*, II-III c; Bichir 1984, Fig. 12. 4, fig. 16. 8, fig. 17. 10, fig. 25. 8, fig. 37. 4, fig. 59. 7–8 – for Chilia-Militari culture, the so called “Free Dacians”, with the same chronology, a mix of local populations in southern Romania, under Roman control, in a “buffer area”; see also Popilian 1976, Cat. 351, 352, 946, 950, and Protase 1969, Fig. 9.2,5, for similar pots inside the Roman province Dacia. All with relative heights >1.45. Similar shapes, for the sixth century, in Moldavia (Gorecha, Suceava-Șipot, Bacău-Curtea Domnească) and Muntenia (Căscioarele-Șuvița Hotarului, Cățelu Nou,

4. Discussions

Let's have now a summary of the analysis just finished:

- two groups of old provincial Roman pottery, frequently encountered also in Chernjakhov milieu (groups 195C and 213B);
- two groups of shapes just casual in Chernjakhov culture, from the fourth century, for which there are (group 146D) or not (140B) analogies in Ipotești-Cândești culture;
- two groups (146D and 225) for which, along Chernjakhov analogies there are some relationships in the Middle Danube milieu, in Early Avaric Empire;
- two "local" groups, prolonging traditional cultures to the Lower Danube, as 179 (Sarmatic) and 295 (Ipotești-Cândești – local culture, in southern Romania, blooming in the sixth century, but with roots in a mix of Roman, Getic and Sarmatic traditions).

The dominant term in analysis is Chernjakhov culture. Secondary as frequency, but the main as importance, is the Early Roman pottery, and only the relatively limited number of measured pots prevented a dominant figure in the list of groups. The place of local cultures, pre-Roman or mixed Roman, is also very well established. The analogies with the Middle Danube Avaric milieu (most of it Late Roman!) are the single relevant connections on long range distance. Important to note – there are no analogies east or north of Prut River, and no analogies beyond the Middle Danube.

A mixed Romano-Germanic society from the Lower Danube seems the main actor in Capidava. Nevertheless, there is another actor: the "Eastern", as Sarmatians were; he might be "Northern", as *Carpi* were, indirectly referred to by those tall shapes from Străulești. The long list of Avaric analogies, from the group 225, with groups considered by Vida as Romance, Gepidic but even Oriental, looks to me more "Oriental" than anything else (see the *Pl. 2* with 225). There is also a detail which reveals the presence of a strong Oriental "ingredient": the decoration with fingerprints on the rim. The scientific file of this kind of decoration is difficult: extremely old in the area, quite casual in Dacian culture, it can be encountered in the Roman era relatively rare and connected with Sarmatian culture. It's second blooming dates to the final part of the Late Antiquity, and should be understood as a reloaded eastern influence. Despite this, it shouldn't be taken as an accurate symptom of a completely "Barbaric" culture; a "mixed" culture, on the Danube milieus, would be more appropriate. The decoration with fingerprints usually appears on handmade pottery, but exceptionally it can be encountered on wheel pottery of clear Roman origin²⁷. Beyond such theoretic considerations, two out of ten pots decorated with fingerprints, as in Capidava case, are rather much, and should point out an "Oriental" root in that Romano-German society as the fort from Capidava should be understood.

The sight of an Oriental fashion — like fingerprints on the pots — could be related, maybe, with the presence of the cavalry in the fort from Capidava²⁸. Nevertheless, a rider which makes pots is difficult to imagine. Therefore, we have to suppose that at least some of the Oriental militaries were accompanied by followers, either families of slaves of oriental extraction. Talking about Oriental folks we should add immediately that any connections with Penkovka culture are missing. We should decide then between older "Orientals" settled down centuries ago, in the direct vicinity of Capidava, no further than a hundred miles, or some newer "Orientals", conveying traditions from beyond Dnipre. A clear cut resolution is difficult now.

We have to recall the situation from that last defense of the Roman Danube, because the situation from Halmyris is paradigmatic: all identifiable barbaric pottery has analogies in Penkovka area, which supposes that the recruits were found some 100 km north of the fortress (in between was empty, a "safety no-man's-land"). Nothing as clear happens in Capidava, but some resemblances can be drawn: most part of the analogies come either from the older Chernjakhov culture or from contemporary cultures from Muntenia and Moldova – the nearest provinces on the opposite bank of the Danube. From this perspective, those "Orientals" should be just some neighbors...

One can easily see that this analysis is not congruent with the former (2001), resumed here in the introductory section of the paper. The misfit is rather normal than not, because at least two important things have changed in the meantime: the database doubled the number of entire shapes measured²⁹, and the

Budureasca 4 and 5, Băleni, Sărata Monteoru). For similar shapes on Tisza Valley, under Avar rule (see Vida 1999, Cat. 626, 657, 668, 706, 745, 755).

²⁷ Popilian, Nica 1998, p. 113, already cited. The Roman inheritance for the pottery from Groșani is difficult to challenge (Teodor 2001, p. 144–147).

²⁸ *Cuneus equitum Solensium*: Suceveanu, Barnea 1991, 212; the chronology of that military unit is for the fourth and the fifth centuries, but there is no information about the sixth (Zahariade 1988, p. 124), and no reason to suppose a change.

²⁹ The Compass System is projected to deal also with parts of the shape. This is why there are only some 2100 complete pots, but IDs over 8000.

analytic methods are different. But a third thing has changed as well: the drawings. The stuff from 1997 was not “public”; I was just entitled to measure and use it, for my PhD, in 2001. Two years later, Ioan Opreș published the book about the pottery from the Guard House, reviewing the drawings, the result being that the two sets of representations do not fit in the same groups in Compass classification...

Are we then so vulnerable to the accuracy of the drawings? Yes, we are, but this is no news³⁰. Nevertheless, the conclusions from 2001 are not completely worthless. I made a graph to picture this: *Fig. 3*. Using an 8 dimensional graph, I took the ceramic lots published by Ioan Opreș for Capidava, Rumiana Koleva for the Garvăn-Popina cultural group, and, as a comparison group, or a third party, the lot published by Suzana Dolinescu-Ferche for Ciurel (Bucharest). Interesting to note, a large part of the field is common for the three of them; there is a definite area (mainly X [0...5], Y [4...10]) which seems to be the core of all three. Capidava lot is present yet only in the positive quarter, right-up. In a direct comparison of Capidava shapes with the group Garvăn-Popina, the results from 2003 are more distant than those from 1997. This graph does not affect at all the conclusions drawn following the CDM results, but can add an important shade: the “archaic” pottery from Capidava, although has connections on longer distances, it is yet not completely stranger on the proximal geographic area.

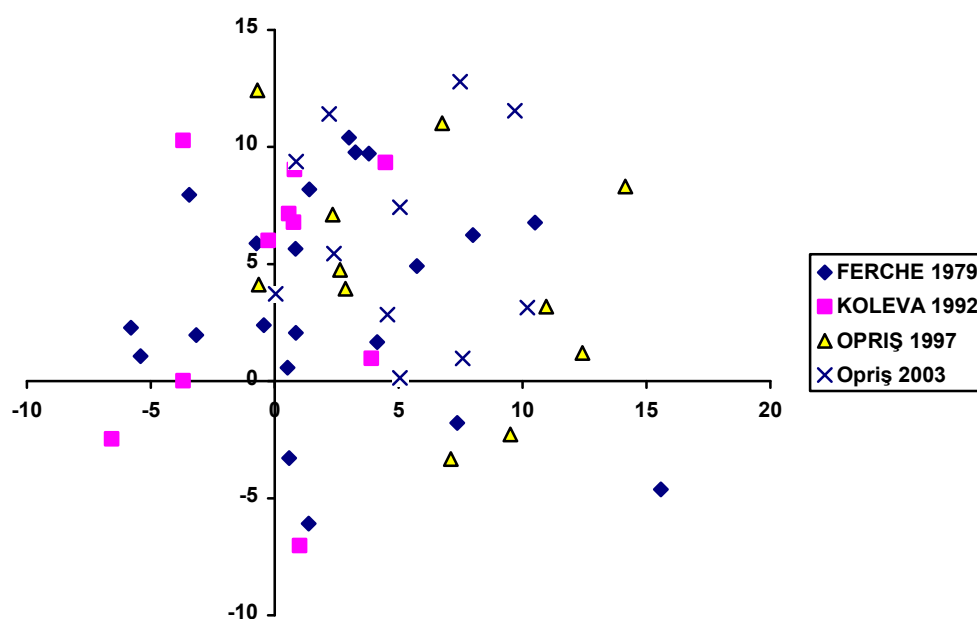


Fig. 3. The two sets of data for Capidava and other two comparative sets from the proximity.

Seven out of ten pots from Capidava found analogies in the database, which is close to the general average (78%); considering that Capidava lot is a small one, the integration of 70% is rather normal. Let's see, however, what one can say about those shapes not classified:

Capidava 250 is the tallest pot in the lot (relative height = 1.45), category discussed already in a footnote for the group 295. The Moldavian connection is stressed once more by the fabrication with crushed sherds.

Capidava 254 is, by contrast, a low shape (height = 1.03), as well as 257 (height 1.02); both have only sand and pebbles in the ceramic paste. They could have almost any origin and, in fact, they are not odd at all, although they meet no analogy, both in CDM procedure and in older “relative analogy” procedure³¹. Their shapes and capacities (0.75 and 1.42 l)³² recommend them less as cooking pots and more like drinking (large) cups, despite the fact that they do not express very well Roman capacity measures (one and half *sextarius*? three *sextarii*?).

Last but not least – the jug with the handle and clubs pouring mouth (catalog 295) is only one from 20 similar shapes³³, all except this wheel made and Roman by definition. Jugs with handle are extremely rare in Barbaricum³⁴, but they can't be taken as possible models, being obviously copies of the Roman artifacts.

³⁰ Teodor 1996, p. 13–14.

³¹ Teodor 2001, p. 31–33.

³² For capacity calculations see Teodor 2001, p. 36–38.

³³ Opreș 2003, p. 124.

This overview of the not classified shapes is meaningful, underlining the importance of local barbarian culture (catalog 250) or the fact that some of the archaic pottery from Capidava does not reproduce barbaric models, but Roman ones.

5. Conclusions

The new analysis has provided specific data about the cultural roots of the “archaic” pottery found in the Guard House at Capidava, dated for the late sixth century. The most of it represents old Provincial Roman pottery “reinterpreted” in Barbaricum, either as wheel made pottery in Chernjakhov culture, or as handmade pottery in the sixth century. The jug with a handle is a direct example of the connection with the Late Roman pottery.

Nevertheless, the contribution of Barbaric cultures, more or less Romanized, from the proximal geography, is also obvious, coming either from Sarmatian tradition, or from east-Dacian (*Carpi*) culture of its later developments (the central-eastern parts of Ipotești-Cândești culture).

Also, a Middle-Danube Germanic compound shouldn't be excluded.

The final outcome of the study would be an estimation about the conscription area of the border garrison from Capidava. The situation here is not as clear as that pictured for Halmyris, but the similarity is obvious: most of the barbarians recruited for Limes defense are coming from the opposite bank of the Danube, probably from a distance of 100–150 km beyond the border, just at the limit of the “safety no-man's-land”. For the rest, in a direct comparison between the handmade pottery in Halmyris and Capidava for the latest Antiquity, there is no connection, despite the distance of just over 100 km.

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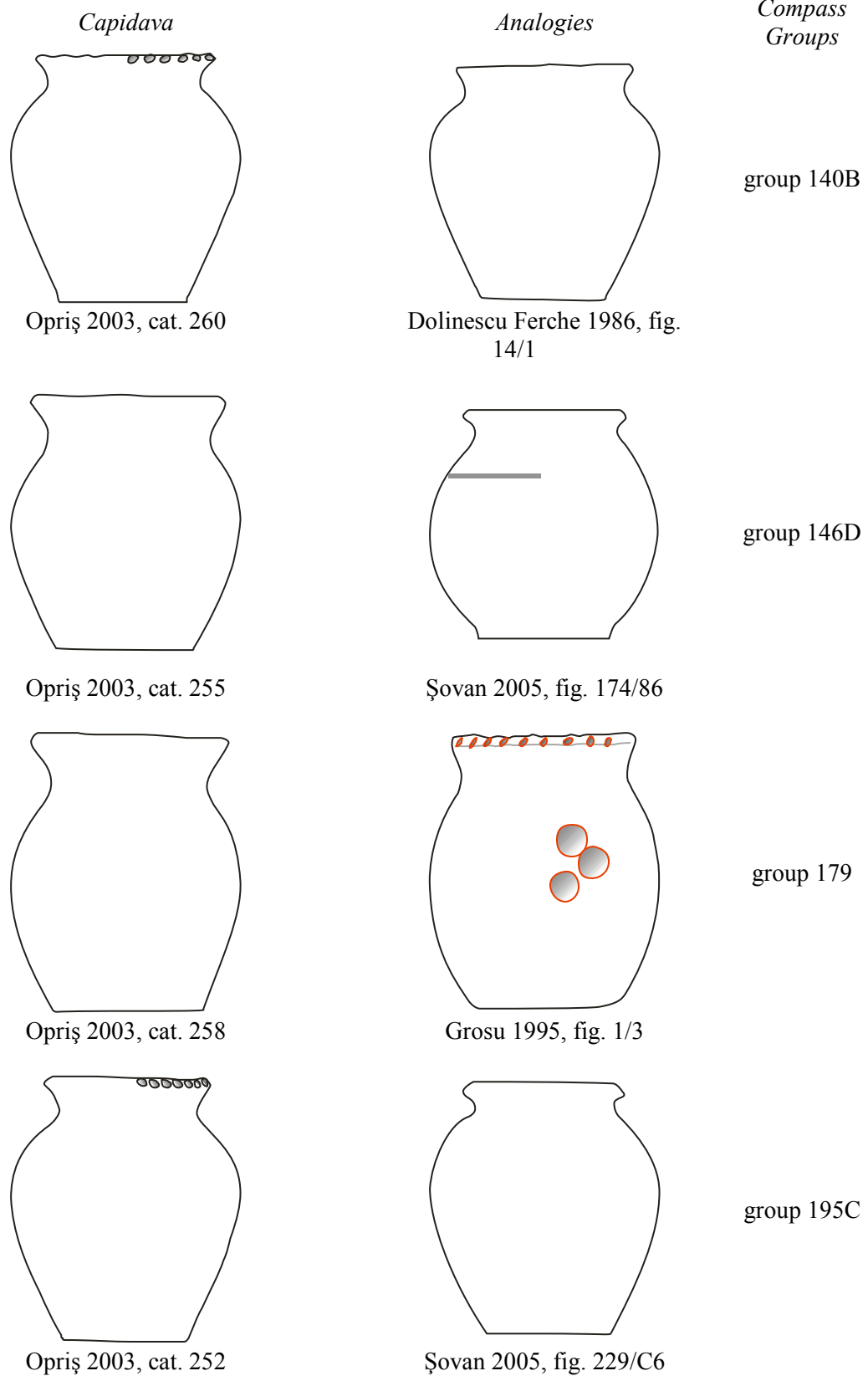
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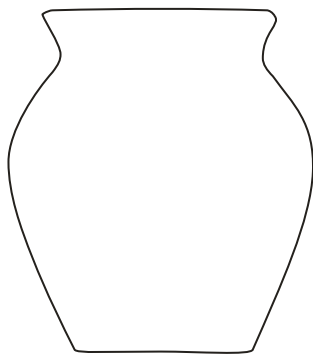
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³⁴ I know only one, from Ciurel (Dolinescu-Ferche 1979, Fig. 15. 1).

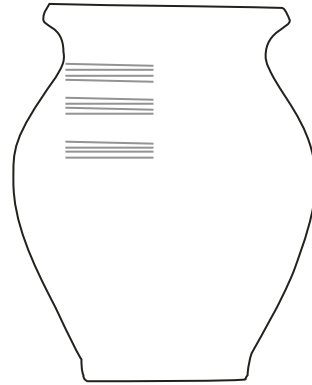
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Pl. 1. Pots from Capidava and some of their analogies.

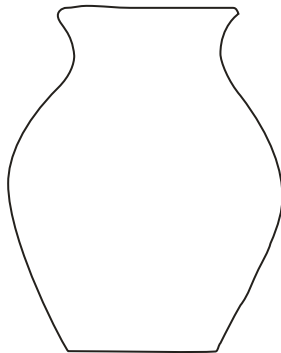


Opriş 2003, cat. 259

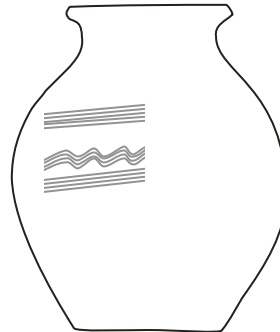


Popilian 1974, cat 353

group 213B

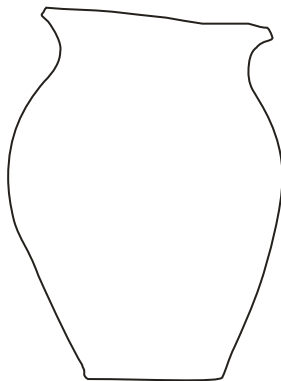


Opriş 2003, cat. 253

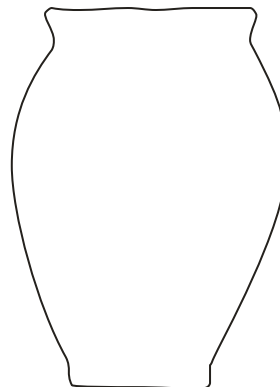


Vida 1999, cat 332

group 225



Opriş 2003, cat. 251



Constantiniu 1965, fig. 85/2

group 295

Pl. 2. Pots from Capidava and some of their analogies.