

The “Sanctuary” of Fortuna Salutaris and Jupiter Optimus Maximus at Ampelum (Zlatna/Zalatna, Alba County). Rethinking the Archaeological Evidence¹

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Abstract: In 1900, with the occasion of construction works caused by the expansion of the foundry of Zlatna, a group of five Roman bronze vessels, positioned upside down in a pit, were discovered. In the proximity of the pit, two altars dedicated to Fortuna Salutaris and Jupiter Optimus Maximus were identified. This situation made Gábor Téglás presume that a sanctuary dedicated to the two divinities existed in this area during the Roman period and that the vessels were employed in different cultic activities undertaken here. The paper focuses on the character of the discovery and on the composition of the bronze vessels assemblage. It states that the context of the discovery does not allow with certainty a correlation between the two altars and the five bronze vessels. In the present state of research, the vessels of *Ampelum* represent the only confirmed example from Roman Dacia of a bronze drinking assemblage and the most direct evidence for the preparation of *calda* (wine mixed with warm water).

Keywords: Roman Dacia, *Ampelum*, bronze vessels, wine preparation, imports.

Rezumat: “Sanctuarul” Fortunei Salutaris și al lui Iupiter Optimus Maximus de la Ampelum (Zlatna/Zalatna, județul Alba). Regândirea documentației arheologice. Cu ocazia lucrărilor de construcție efectuate în 1900 pentru extinderea topitoriei din Zlatna a fost identificată, printre altele, o groapă care a conținut cinci vase romane din bronz, așezate cu gura în jos. În apropierea gropii au fost descoperite două altare votive, dedicate Fortunei Salutaris și lui Iupiter Optimus Maximus. Situația arheologică l-a determinat pe Téglás Gábor să presupună că în zonă a existat un sanctuar dedicat celor două divinități și că vasele de bronz au fost folosite în cadrul activităților

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cultice desfășurate aici. Articolul analizează circumstanțele descoperirii și caracteristicile vaselor de bronz. Este susținut faptul că informațiile referitoare la contextul de descoperire nu sunt suficiente pentru a presupune o legătură directă între cele două altare și grupul de vase de bronz. De asemenea, în stadiul actual al cercetării, vasele de bronz descoperite la *Ampelum* reprezintă singurul serviciu din metal identificat până acum în Dacia romană, care a fost folosit, foarte probabil, pentru a prepara *calda* (vin amestecat cu apă caldă).

Cuvinte-cheie: Dacia romană, *Ampelum*, vase de bronz, prepararea vinului, importuri.

The ancient site of *Ampelum* is probably one of the least known urban sites of Roman Dacia, due to both the small number of archaeological excavations undertaken in the area and to the modern and contemporary industrial activity (a foundry and a copper factory) which affected the Roman ruins. Covering an area of approximately 3 km along the Ampoi river valley, it was the centre of the mining district and the seat of the *procurator aurarium*. The settlement seems to have become a *municipium* in the second half of the 2nd century or beginning of the 3rd century AD, sometime during the reign of Marcus Aurelius or Septimius Severus².

In 1900, clay extraction works were undertaken in the area of the Pătrângenii village for the manufacturing of bricks which were necessary for the extension of a foundry. The affected area covered, very probably, the outskirts of the ancient site of *Ampelum* and the extraction works led to the discovery of two votive altars dedicated to Fortuna Salutaris and Jupiter Optimus Maximus³ and five Roman bronze vessels. Due to the importance of the discovery, Gábor Téglás went to Zlatna in order to analyze the context of the discovery, but when he arrived the construction works had already been finalized. In this context, Téglás' first publication of the finds was done in 1902, but the information he provides on the context of discovery is highly dependent on what he learned from the supervising engineers⁴.

Regarding the context of the discovery, Téglás states that "in front of the foundry, on a property positioned along the road leading to Alba Iulia, the area was levelled and, after extracting a large quantity of bricks and tiles, among the ruins of several walls forming a building, iron nails,

² Ardevan 1998, 51-55; Cârjan 2010, 69.

³ IDR III/3, 301, 315.

⁴ Téglás 1902.

glass fragments, plaster, five bronze vessels, stamped tiles and two inscriptions have been identified". A sixth bronze vessel, lost today, similar to the bell-shaped bucket but of smaller dimensions, was also mentioned⁵. The presence of the altar dedicated to Fortuna determined Téglás to interpret the site as a temple or sanctuary and the five bronze vessels as cult vessels used for libations. Regarding the second altar, dedicated to Jupiter, we are informed that it was discovered one year later, in 1901, in the area of the foundry, without further topographical indications⁶.

In 1902 the vessels were donated to the Transylvanian Museum Society and in 1903 Márton Roska started archaeological excavations in the area. The results of the research led to the identification of two pits: a shallow one with no archaeological material and a second one, measuring 1.4 m in diameter and 12 m in depth. The second pit, considered by Roska a waste pit, contained pottery and glass fragments, as well as animal bones.

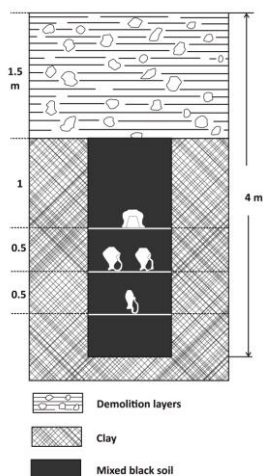


Fig. 1. Idealized section drawing made by József Novák after the account of Zsigmond Kurovszky (redrawn after Novák 1942, 233, fig. 1).

The results were not published by the author of the excavations, but in 1942 József Novák reopened the problem of the *Ampelum* discoveries⁷. He also published a part of the finds from the so-called "waste-pit" excavated by Roska: pottery fragments (among which jars, local and imported terra sigillata), glass fragments, a lamp, bone and metal needles, a ring, barbotine pottery, a terracotta statuette representing a *genius cucullatus*, and a green-brownish fragment of glazed pottery with the representation of Jupiter⁸.

On the basis of the documentation made available by Roska, Novák draws attention to the official report which was handed in together with the bronze vessels when they were donated to the Transylvanian Museum

⁵ Téglás 1902, 7-8.

⁶ Téglás 1902, 10.

⁷ Novák 1942.

⁸ Novák 1943.

Society of Cluj. The report describes the circumstances of the discovery based on the account of Zsigmond Kurovszky, the engineer who supervised the construction works in 1900. According to it, after removing the demolition layers, four dark areas were visible in the yellow clay, which turned out to be pits: two excavated in 1900 and the other two by Roska in 1903. Regarding the pits identified in 1900, the first contained only pottery fragments, bones and glass, while the second, measuring 4 m in depth, was the one in which the bronze vessels, placed upside down, were found: the bell-shaped bucket with the small bucket inside at a depth of 1 m from the contemporary stepping level, half a meter deeper in the ground the two bronze sheet spouted jugs and another half a meter deeper, the jug with raised handle⁹. No documentation was made on the spot and the section drawing published by Novák in 1942 represents an idealized image, drawn by him based on the description in the report¹⁰ (Fig. 1). The author of this article has tried to find in the archive of Cluj-Napoca the original official report mentioned by Novák, namely no. 275 of 17 November 1902. The registers for 1902 end with no. 197 and none of the entries for the autumn of 1902 correspond with such a report.

Concluding his analysis of the discovery, Novák considers the pit with the five vessels a *favissa* belonging to the sanctuary of Fortuna and Jupiter. The fact that the vessels were discovered at different depths inside the pit determined him to presume that they were not buried at the same time. He does not exclude the identification with a waste pit, but he considers this hypothesis very unlikely. The identification with a well is also excluded by the author, because no stone lining was present and, in his opinion, the vessels could not have been deposited in such a manner inside a well¹¹.

On the basis of those mentioned above, several further publications took the five bronze vessels for cultic vessels used for libations, in connection with a temple or sanctuary dedicated to Fortuna Salutaris which existed at *Ampelum*¹².

As mentioned before, the group of five bronze vessels under discussion consists of two bronze sheet spouted jugs, a bell-shaped bucket, a small bucket and a jug with raised handle (Fig. 2/1-5). It is not the intention of this paper to make a detailed technical description of the

⁹ Novák 1942, 232-233.

¹⁰ Novák 1942, 232, fig. 1.

¹¹ Novák 1942, 242-243.

¹² See e. g. Antique Bronzes 2003, 142-143, nos. 200-204; Ștefănescu-Onițiu 2008, 218.

vessels, as they have already been discussed several times from this point of view in the archaeological literature regarding Roman Dacia¹³.

However, I am summarizing hereinafter the main characteristics of the bronze vessel types, in order to offer a basis for the interpretation of the group.

The two bronze sheet spouted jugs (Fig. 2/1-2) belong to type Ib in the typology established by Margherita Bolla¹⁴. The type is well known during the 2nd century AD in Gallia Belgica and along the Rhone Valley. Starting with the mid-second century it appears to be imported into Pannonia, where a local production develops¹⁵. The bronze sheet spouted jugs are represented in Roman Dacia by a significant number of discoveries. Their distribution area within the province rather reflects the state of the research and publication, since this is one of the most common type of bronze vessels in the province. It is very likely that especially the Bolla Ib type was imported into Dacia after the mid-2nd century AD from the so-called Pannonian workshops¹⁶.

Based on the technical characteristics and on the traces of limescale found inside, the vessels were used for boiling the water necessary for the preparation of *calda* or in other daily activities. They represent the cheap version of the complex *authepsae*, which explains their popularity¹⁷.

The bell-shaped bucket (Fig. 2/3) belongs to type 35 in the typology developed by Boris Raev and unlike the other buckets of western origin, which display a bell-shaped body, it features two leaf-shaped appliqué made of sheet-bronze. The type was produced in workshops which functioned on the Lower Danube, most likely in Thrace, between the mid-2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century AD. This type was used for transporting liquids and, in contexts dated to the 3rd century, it is included in drinking sets and used for mixing the wine¹⁸.

¹³ Téglás 1902, 7-9; Novák 1942, 234-239, fig. 1-5; Wollman 1996, 211, pl. XII-XIII, XXIV/1, XCVI; Antique Bronzes 2003, 142-143, nos. 200-204; Ștefănescu-Onițiu 2008, 217-218, 226-228, pl. IV/3, V/1-2, VI/4.

¹⁴ Bolla 1979, 25-33, pl. V / group I.

¹⁵ Bolla 1979, 41-42.

¹⁶ See Mustață 2017, 111-116, 200.

¹⁷ For a recent discussion on the functionality of the bronze sheet spouted jugs, with the bibliography, see Mustață 2017, 111, 114.

¹⁸ Raev 1978, 628, 635, no. 4, pl. 33/2 (Balčik), 637, no. 36, pl. 28/1 (Kalojanovec), 639, no. 67, 69, pl. 15/5, 7 (Sliven and Sofia), 640, no. 79, pl. 28/2 (Stara Zagora); Castoldi 1986, 213; Sedlmayer 1999, 108; Mustață 2017, 142-143.

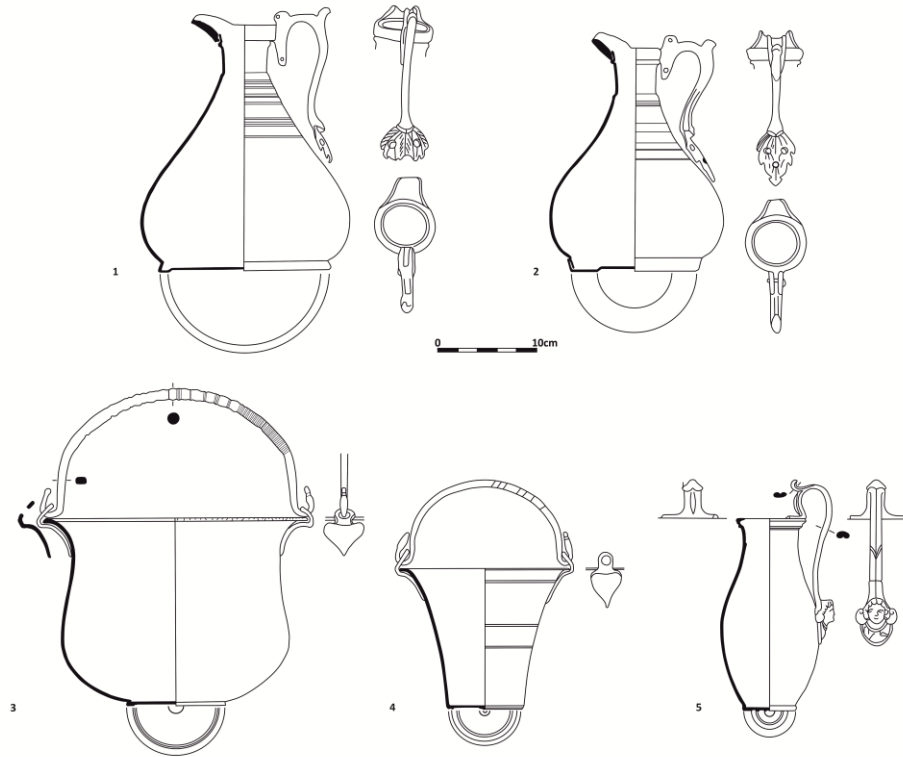


Fig. 2. The five bronze vessels discovered at *Ampelum* (redrawn after Novák 1942, 233, 235, 237, 239, 241, fig. 2-6).

The **bucket with concave sides** (Fig. 2/4) (type Raev 36) discovered at *Ampelum* comes very probably from the same workshops as the bell-shaped bucket. Produced during the second half of the 2nd century and at the beginning of 3rd century AD, this type displays the same sheet-bronze appliqués, typical for the eastern versions of the Eggers 36 buckets. Being part of drinking sets, they were also used for mixing the wine¹⁹.

The earliest vessel of the group, the **jug with raised handle** (Fig. 2/5), belongs to a type well known at Pompeii²⁰, in the western provinces (especially Gallia)²¹ and in the inventories of graves from Thrace and Moesia²². It was initially produced in Campania, during the 1st century AD, while in the 2nd century the production moved into the provinces. These jugs belonged to drinking sets and were used for serving the wine²³.

Considering the chronology of the types, one can suggest that the group of five bronze vessels entered the archaeological record earliest at the end of the 2nd century or in the first half of the 3rd century AD.

From a functional view point the five vessels represent a coherent assemblage, typical for this chronological interval, used for the preparation of the wine mixed with warm water: *calda*. The existence of such drinking sets is confirmed by both iconographic and archaeological sources. From the iconographic evidence, the most relevant is the depiction on the sarcophagus of Simpelveld (Limburg, Netherlands) which shows such an assemblage on a shelf inside a household: it is composed of a bronze sheet spouted jug for warming the water, a jug for serving, and Hemmoor buckets for mixing the wine with the warm water²⁴.

In the funerary inventories from Moesia and Thrace the Hemmoor buckets, which are otherwise typical for the western provinces, are replaced by the buckets belonging to the same types as the ones present in the assemblage from *Ampelum*. The inventory of grave number 4 from Balčik (Dobrici, Bulgaria) shows a similar composition to the *Ampelum* group (two bronze sheet spouted jugs, a jug for serving and buckets for mixing), together with components of the hand-washing sets²⁵.

¹⁹ Raev 1978, 629, 635, no. 4, pl. 33/3 (Balčik), 639, no. 62, pl. 15/1 (Rila), 640, no. 79, pl. 28/4 (Stara Zagora); Sedlmayer 1999, 103; Mustățã 2017, 140-142.

²⁰ Tassinari 1993, B1242, I: 34, II: 41-42.

²¹ Baratte *et al.* 1984, 63-64, 85-87, nos. 120-123, pl. XL-XLI.

²² Raev 1978, 620-621, 635, no. 4, pl. 33/7 (Balčik), 640, no. 73, pl. 21/4 (Stara Zagora).

²³ See Raev 1978, 620-621; Baratte *et al.* 1984, 63-64. For a discussion regarding another variant belonging to the type (Tassinari B1252) see: Sedlmayer 1999, 21-22.

²⁴ Cavalier 1988, 20; Gorecki 1994, 179, 181-182; Koster 1997, 30; Mustățã 2017, 47.

²⁵ Raev 1978, 635, no. 4, pl. 32, 33/1-3.

Moreover, in the present state of the research, the five vessels of *Ampelum* represent the only confirmed example in Roman Dacia of a bronze drinking assemblage and the most direct evidence for the preparation of *calda* in the province.

Coming back to the context of the discovery, the scarce and contradictory published information does not allow a clear interpretation. The five vessels are not cultic vessels by themselves. However, it cannot be excluded that they were dedicated at a certain point in a temple or sanctuary, just as it can be considered that they were used in such a context for daily activities, possibility reflected very well, for instance, by the inventory of the Dolichenian temple from Mauer an der Url (Mauer bei Amstetten, Lower Austria, Austria)²⁶.

From the information offered by Téglás and included in the official report of 1902, one can conclude that in the area of discovery there was a building together with four pits, among which two of considerable depth. The two altars dedicated to Fortuna and Jupiter were not discovered together. Therefore, the existence of a temple/sanctuary at *Ampelum*, dedicated to both Fortuna and Jupiter, remains questionable. Even if the cultic character of the activities undertaken in the area cannot be debated, there is no evidence to confirm that the four pits and the structure with walls belonged to the same phase of use.

The characteristics of the pit in which the vessels were identified, and the presence of another pit, nearby, measuring 12 m in depth, most likely indicate that the assemblage of bronze vessels was hidden in a well, in order to be subsequently retrieved. Novák's arguments against such an interpretation are questionable: the pit did not have a stone lining, but it could have been made of wood or wattle. The fact that, according to the official report, the vessels were placed upside down at different depths in the pit, is indeed confusing. However, one must not forget that the section drawing published by Novák does not reflect an archaeological reality, but rather the interpretation of a report written by a person who had no professional archaeological knowledge. The vessels could have been hanged with the help of ropes or chains to the wall of the well, in order to ease their recovery.

Cases of Roman bronze vessels and household metal inventories hidden in wells are well known in the western provinces. In this sense, one could mention wells nos. 7 and 13 in the Roman fort at Rainau Buch (Rainau, Baden-Württemberg, Germany) containing a rich inventory of

²⁶ Noll 1980, 80-90, pl. 28-34, Beilage VIII-IX.

bronze objects (among which vessels and statuettes) and iron tools²⁷. This type of depositions was included by Annemarie Kaufmann-Heinimann as part of the discussion regarding the *lararium* inventories discovered in secondary contexts, in the category of the so-called *Angstdepots*²⁸: hidden in a time of danger in order to be retrieved.

A ritual or symbolic interpretation of artefacts discovered in wells has been proposed as a possible solution for the discoveries made in the Roman fort at Newstead (Scotland)²⁹. Here, the archaeological excavations brought to light a large number of pits rich in finds (military equipment, iron tools, lamps, bronze vessels, human and animal bones etc.). Some of these pits are supposed to be wells, scattered in different areas inside and outside of the Roman fort, and they very likely belong to at least two different chronological phases. However, the situation found at Newstead is a particular one, without clear parallels elsewhere. The ritual character of the depositions, though debatable, is suggested by the frequency, the combination of finds, their presence at specific depths inside the pit according to type, as well as their association in some of the cases with human bones. The bronze vessels identified inside the pits, with one exception (pit LVII which contained three buckets), are singular depositions³⁰ and were not part of a set of artefacts with a specific composition.

Though the aforementioned possibility cannot be completely excluded, it is unlikely that a coherent assemblage of vessels as the one found at *Ampelum* would have been buried at different moments in time, as part of a ritual consecration.

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²⁷ Planck 1983, 330-335, fig. 131-134; for the uncertainty surrounding the context of the discovery of the deposit composed of Roman bronzes of Apt (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, France), the hypothesis that it could have been hidden in a well and other similar examples, see Cavalier 1988, 7-13, 100-101.

²⁸ Kaufmann-Heinimann 1998, 188-189.

²⁹ See Clarke 1997; Clarke 2000.

³⁰ Curle 1911, 273-275, pl. LIII-LVI; Eggers 1968, 109 (nos. 73 and 73A), 123-124, fig. 16-17.

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