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ROMAN AMPHORAE IN THE TRENTINO-SOUTH TYROL REGION (NORTHERN ITALY): AN OVERVIEW

In the last 20 years archaeological excavations have provided new and significant evidence of the import of pottery in the Trentino – South Tyrol Region (Northern Italy) during the Roman and Late Antique period. In particular, although the material was mostly found in a highly fragmentary state, the evidence of amphora sherds unearthed in urban and rural sites, points out that in this territory from the 1st century BC to the Early Medieval period there was an almost constant demand for essential goods (especially wine, olive oil and fish sauces) usually transported in amphorae and that the region was part of a long distance exchange circuit supplied by seaborne trade. The recorded amphora types are quite numerous and show a provision of foodstuff both from Italy (especially between the 1st century BC and the 2nd century AD) and from different Mediterranean regions (Greece and Spain particularly in the first two centuries AD; North Africa and the Near East especially in the 4th–7th centuries AD). This supply was available thanks to a commercial circuit mainly East oriented through the North-East Adriatic Region, thanks to a well developed waterways network connected to the River Adige and a road system based on the via Claudia Augusta. This contribution presents a synthesis of the more recent data on the presence of Roman and late antique amphorae in urban and rural contexts and their meaning for the regional economy.

The archaeological research of the last twenty years in the Trentino – South Tyrol Region has revealed significant data on the importation of food products in amphorae during the Roman Age and Late Antiquity. While at present we lack archaeological evidence of local production of terracotta containers for transportation, minero-petrographic analyses have almost always confirmed the origin of production as outside the region¹. The study of amphorae for transport found in various localities, both urban and rural types (**fig. 1**), indicates that from the 1st century BC to the threshold of the early Middle Ages there was a constant request for basic foodstuffs commonly carried in amphoral receptacles, in particular wine, olive oil and fish sauces. These supplies were guaranteed by the regional markets being part of a commercial network oriented towards the East, that is the north-eastern Adriatic area.

Italic Production

The oldest containers for transport during the Roman period found in Trentino – South Tyrol are wine amphorae Dressel 1A, produced in the central Tyrrhenian area between c.130 and mid 1st century BC whose sporadic presence in the Valli Giudicarie (**fig. 2,1**) could be connected to wine consumption

for religious purposes². Roman amphorae from the mid 1st century on are more frequently found in the region, when the Dressel 1 were substituted by the Dressel 2–4 (**figs. 2,2–3**): these are present in the urban contexts of *Tridentum* (Palazzo Tabarelli, San Vigilio and *Porta Veronensis*)³, Isera (where some have been found with Adriatic fabrics)⁴, Riva del Garda-Arco⁵, Monte S. Martino⁶, Bolzano/Bozen⁷ and Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck⁸.

Containers for transport produced in mid Italy and the northern Adriatic, from *Picenum* to the *Venetia* were decidedly more numerous. For the transport of wines produced here, the Lamboglia 2 was used, as is shown in the context of Palazzo Tabarelli at Trento⁹, Isera¹⁰, Stenico¹¹ and in the settlement of S. Ippolito near Castel Tesino¹² (**figs. 2,4–5**). In the last decades of the 1st century BC this was replaced by Dressel 6A, a wine amphora produced in a vast region including *Histria*, the eastern part of *Venetia*, *Aemilia* and *Picenum*. The shape is attested at *Tridentum*-Palazzo Tabarelli, where two fragments of rims stamped by *Coponius*

¹ See the thin section minero-petrographic analysis carried out by Claudio Capelli on samples of amphorae from Loppio - S. Andrea (MAURINA/CAPELLI 2006 and 2007; CAPELLI/PIAZZA/CABELLA 2016), Isera (CAPELLI 2011), Villandro/Villanders (DAL RI/MAURINA/CAPELLI 2013, 25–26), Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck (unpublished). Thin section analysis on samples coming from Appiano/Eppan have been also recently published by Benno Baumgarten (BAUMGARTEN 2015).

² MARZATICO 1992, 332–333; CIURLETTI 1996, 460.

³ MAURINA 1995, 232–234; OBEROSLER 2002, 337–338; 349; PERINELLI 2002–2003, 34; 104–105.

⁴ MAURINA 2011, 199–205.

⁵ CIURLETTI 1996, 460 fig. 11,4–5.

⁶ LORENZI 2010–2011, 33–34.

⁷ BONFANTI/DAL RI 1985, 33.

⁸ The study of the findings coming from Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck is still in progress. In this contribution the preliminary results of this research are presented.

⁹ MAURINA 1995, 213–214.

¹⁰ MAURINA 2011, 197.

¹¹ MARZATICO 1992, 332–334; CIURLETTI 1996, 460 fig. 12.

¹² CIURLETTI 1996, 460.

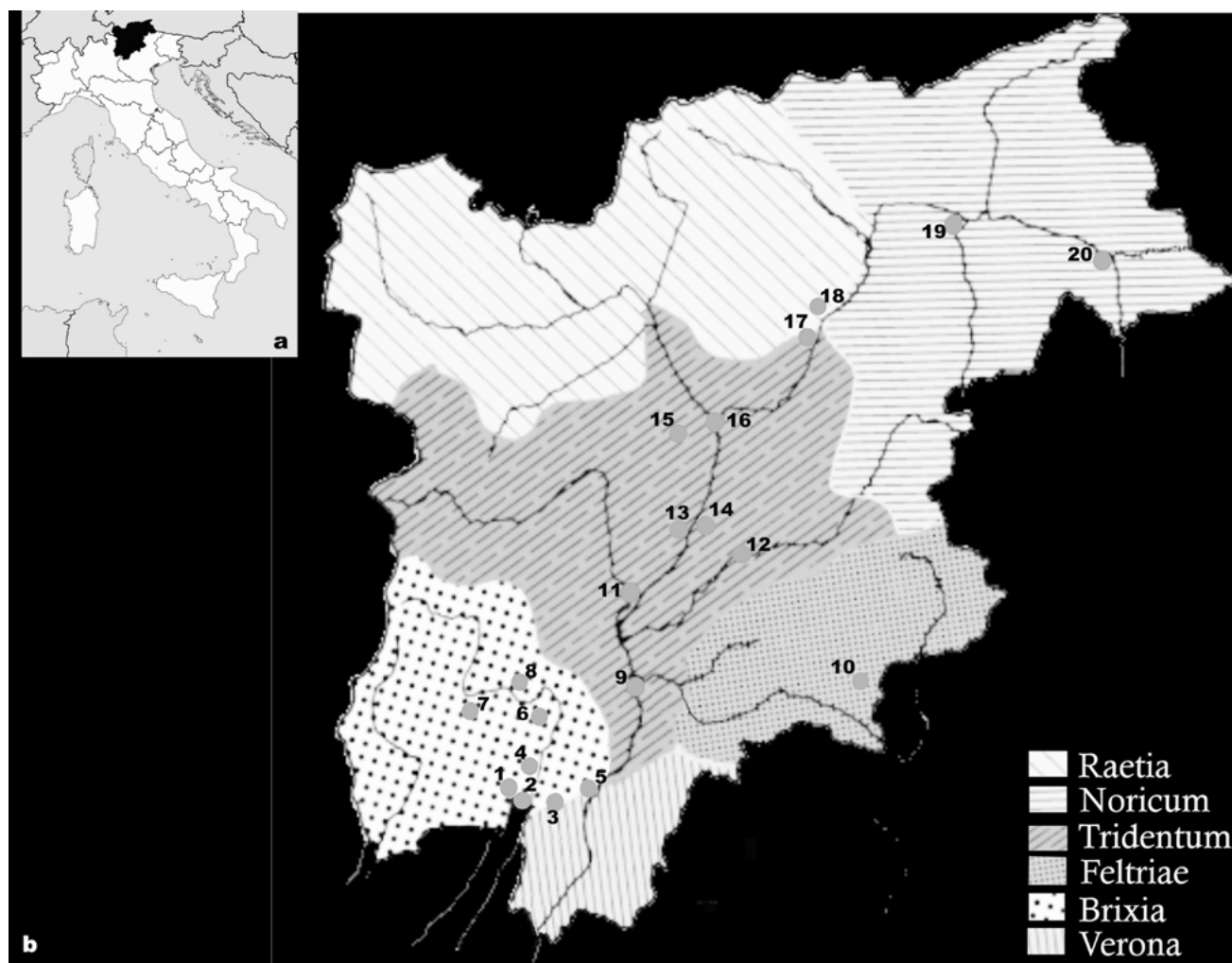


Fig. 1. **a** Localization of the region Trentino-South Tyrol; **b** Administrative division of the regions territory during the Roman period and localization of the sites mentioned in the text: **1** Riva del Garda; **2** Monte S. Martino; **3** Loppio-S. Andrea; **4** Arco; **5** Isera; **6** S. Martino di Lundo; **7** Bondo; **8** Stenico; **9** Trento/*Tridentum*; **10** S. Ippolito; **11** Mezzocorona; **12** Doss Zelór; **13** Cortaccia/Kurtatsch; **14** Egna/Neumarkt; **15** Appiano/Eppan; **16** Bolzano/Bozen; **17** Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck; **18** Villandro/Villanders; **19** S. Lorenzo di Sebato/St. Lorenzen; **20** S. Candido/Innichen.

and *P. Petronius* were found¹³ (figs. 3,1–3), at Isera¹⁴, Arco¹⁵ and Egna/Neumarkt¹⁶. Again for carrying wine, between the end of the 1st and first half of the 3rd centuries AD, the flat bottomed amphorae or Forlimpopoli type of the mid and high Adriatic were probably used. These were a rather diversified family of which there is sporadic evidence at *Tridentum*-Cathedral of S. Vigilio¹⁷, at S. Candido/Innichen¹⁸ and at Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck (figs. 3,4–5).

Along with wine, olive oil was also imported from the Adriatic area. The oldest oil amphorae found are those of Brindisi produced in the *ager brindisinus* between the second quarter of the 2nd century BC and the second half of the 1st century BC, of which there are traces in the excavations at

*Tridentum*¹⁹. Here there have been sporadic finds of Adriatic ovoid amphorae, a type probably related to the one mentioned previously²⁰. Oil continued to be imported in the region in the first Imperial Age with the Dressel 6B (figs. 3,6–12) and with the amphora with funnel neck (figs. 4,1–6). In the region, imports of the first type are well documented at *Tridentum* (San Vigilio²¹, *Porta Veronensis*²² and Palazzo Tabarelli²³), Monte S. Martino²⁴, Mezzocorona²⁵, San Lorenzo di Sebato/St. Lorenzen²⁶, Egna/Neumarkt²⁷, S. Candido/Innichen²⁸, Villandro/Villanders²⁹ and, perhaps, also at Cortaccia/Kur-

¹³ MAURINA 1995, 215–221.

¹⁴ MAURINA 2011, 197–198.

¹⁵ SABATO 1995, 40–41.

¹⁶ DI STEFANO 2002; MAURINA 2007, 595 footnote 32.

¹⁷ OBEROSLER 2002, 346.

¹⁸ DAL RI/DI STEFANO/LEITNER 2002, 960; MAURINA 2005, 400–401.

¹⁹ MAURINA 1995, 231–232.

²⁰ MAURINA 1995, 214–215.

²¹ OBEROSLER 2002, 336; 345.

²² PERINELLI 2002–2003, 33; 106–108.

²³ MAURINA 1995, 221–230.

²⁴ BASSI 2007, 268–270; LORENZI 2010–2011, 35–37.

²⁵ BASSI 1994, 124.

²⁶ MAURINA 2001 tab. 8,5–6.

²⁷ DI STEFANO 2002, 204.

²⁸ DAL RI/DI STEFANO/LEITNER 2002, 960; MAURINA 2005, 397–398.

²⁹ DAL RI/MAURINA/CAPELLI 2013, 13–15.

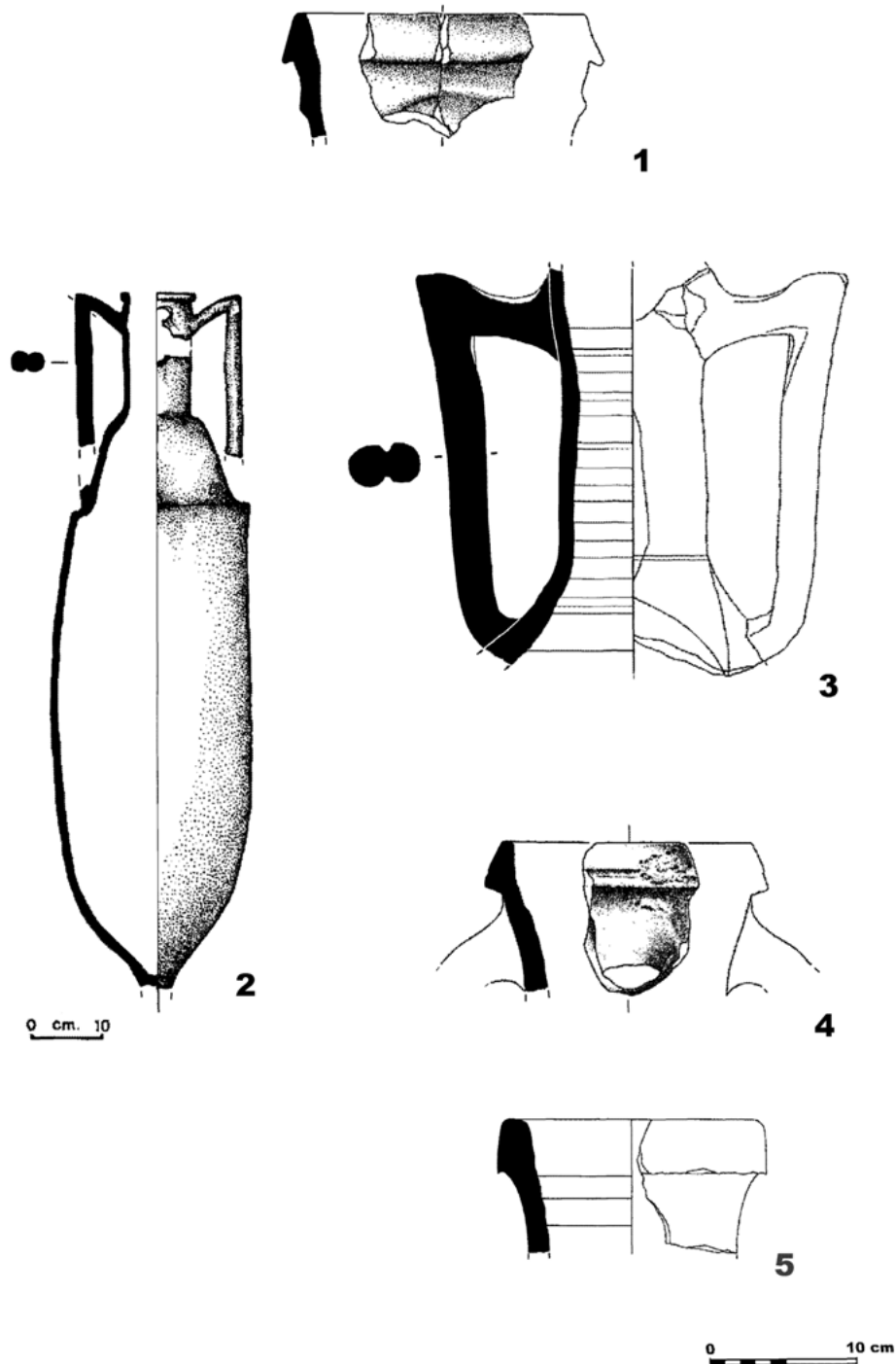


Fig. 2. Dressel 1A from Stenico, Valli Giudicarie (1); Dressel 2–4 from Riva del Garda (2) and Isera (3); Lamboglia 2 from Stenico (4) and Isera (5).

tatsch³⁰. Stamped exemplars come from Trento³¹, Monte S. Martino³² and S. Lorenzo di Sebato/St. Lorenzen³³. The amphora with funnel neck is well documented in the region, in particular at *Tridentum* (sites of Palazzo Tabarelli³⁴, San

Vigilio³⁵ and *Porta Veronensis*³⁶), Monte S. Martino³⁷ S. Candido/Innichen³⁸, Villandro/Villanders³⁹ and Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck; some exemplar has also been found at the site of Doss Zelór in Val di Fiemme⁴⁰.

³⁰ BUONOPANE 2000, 165.

³¹ MAURINA 1995 fig. 2,1; OBEROSLER 2002, 336.

³² BASSI 2007, 268–270 fig. 1.

³³ MAURINA 2001, 567 nota 28 tav. 8,5–6.

³⁴ MAURINA 1995, 230–231.

³⁵ OBEROSLER 2002, 336 fig. 10,3.

³⁶ PERINELLI 2002–2003, 33; 106–108.

³⁷ BASSI 2007, 270–272; LORENZI 2010–2011, 38–40.

³⁸ MAURINA 2005, 399–400.

³⁹ DAL RI/MAURINA/CAPELLI 2013, 17–18.

⁴⁰ PANCIERA/MENGOTTI 1991, 151 fig. 172.

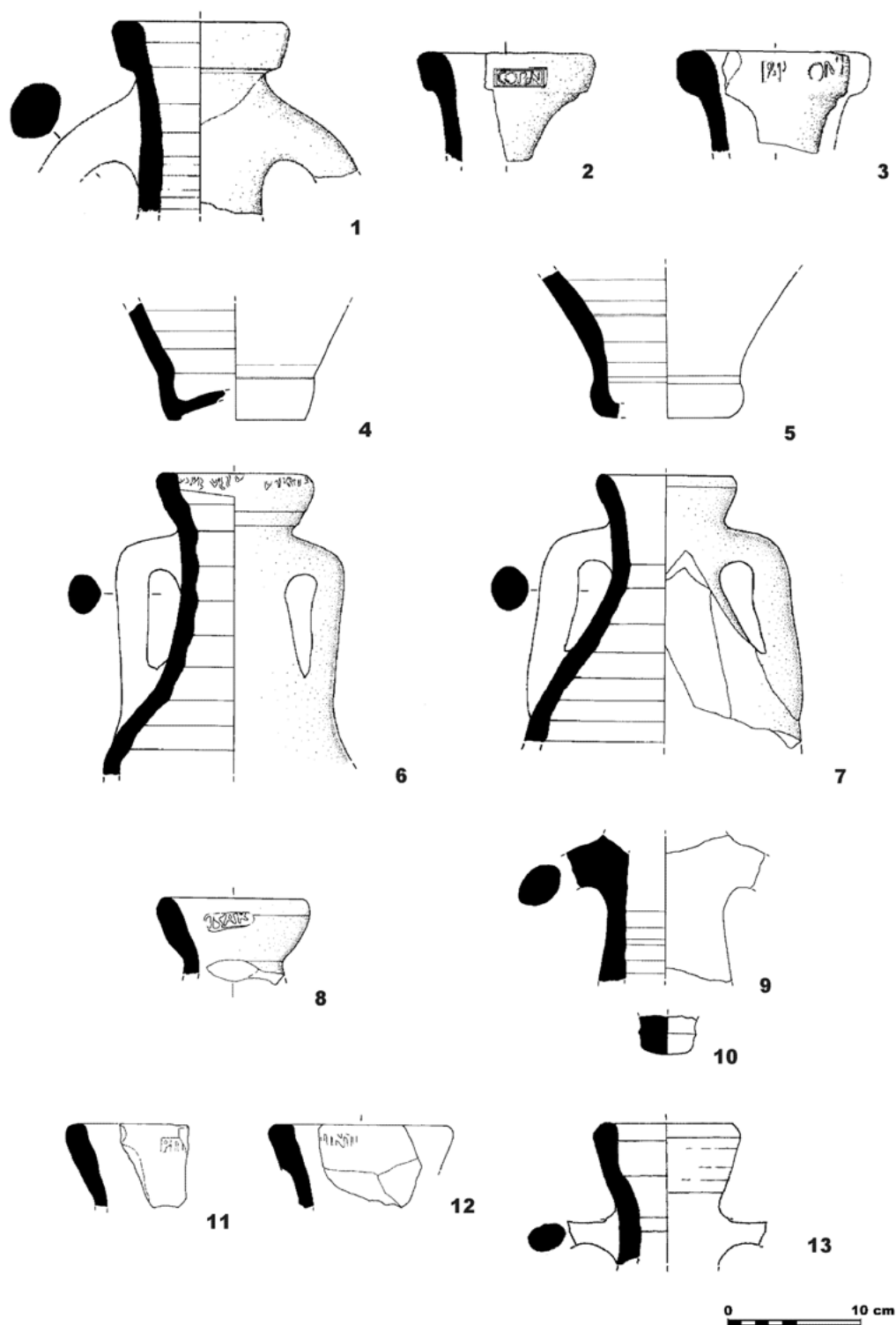


Fig. 3. Dressel 6A from Trento, Palazzo Tabarelli (1–3); Forlimpopoli type from Ponte Gardena/Waidbuck (4–5); Dressel 6B from Trento-Palazzo Tabarelli (6–8), Isera (9–10), S. Lorenzo di Sebato/St. Lorenzen (11–12), Villandro/Villanders (13).

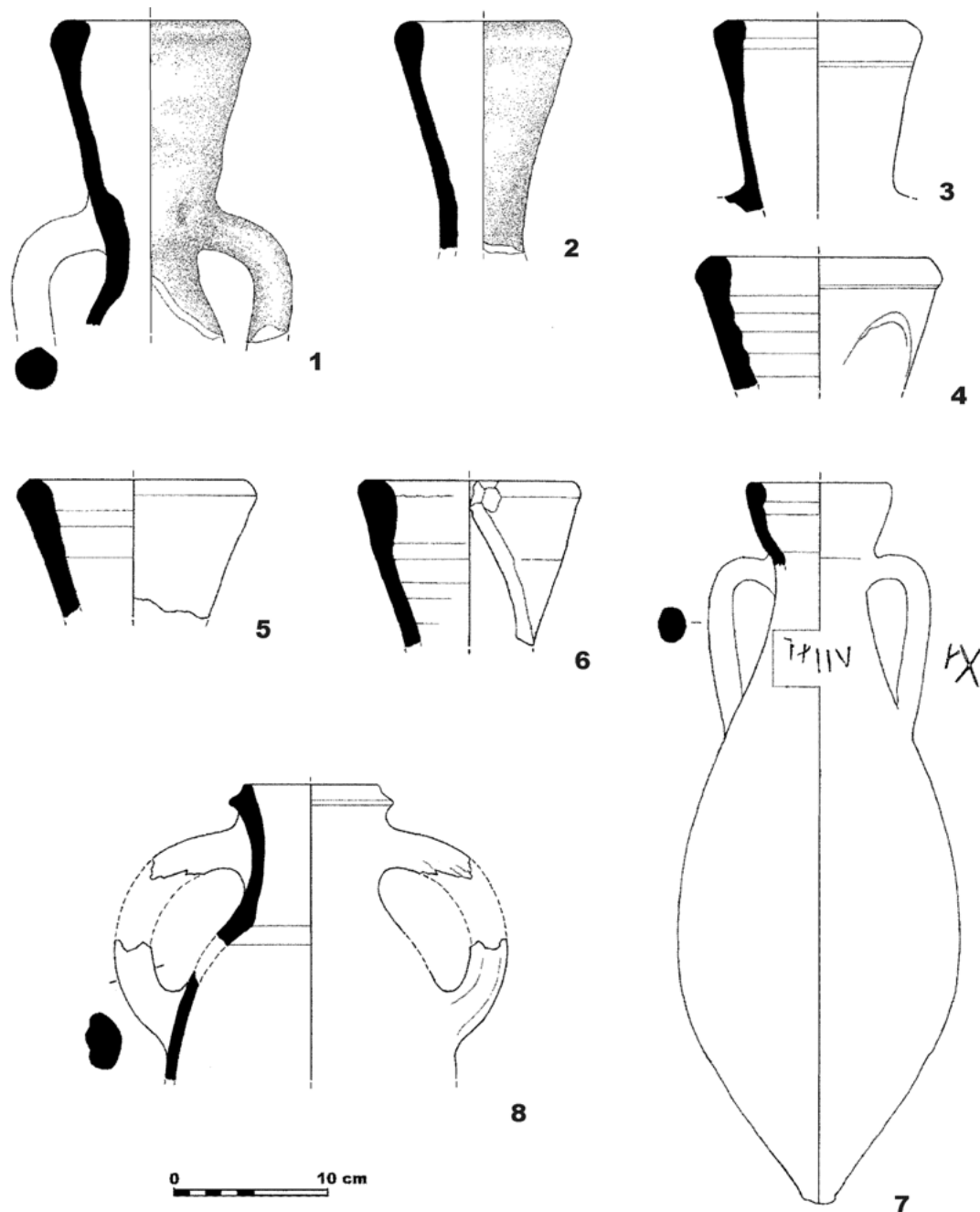


Fig. 4. Amphorae with funnel neck from Monte S. Martino (1–2), Ponte Gardena/Waidbuck (3–4) and S. Candido/Innichen (5–6); small-sized North Italic amphora from S. Candido/Innichen (7); Keay LII from Loppio-S. Andrea (8).

At Monte S. Martino⁴¹ and S. Candido/Innichen⁴² small-sized containers for fish sauces called *anforette italiche* and produced on the North Adriatic coast in the 2nd century AD have been found. At S. Candido/Innichen a reassembled exemplar c.46 cm high (fig. 4,7) seems to testify to the production of smaller ones than have so far been documented; the sign *TP IIX* (8 *libra* corresponding to 2619.6 g) scratched at the neck base possibly refers to the tare⁴³.

In the 2nd century AD most of the Italic production of amphorae seems to have petered out. In general on the market in the peninsula, amphorae of provincial production began to prevail; then in mid and late Roman period those from North Africa and in particular from the Middle East appeared to become over time almost exclusive. Among the few of Italic production still circulating in Trentino – South Tyrol in the Late Antiquity, we note the Keay LII, probably a wine amphora produced in Calabria and on the Eastern coast of Sicily between the 4th and 7th centuries AD, found sporadically at the site of Loppio-S. Andrea in southern Trentino⁴⁴ (fig. 4,8).

⁴¹ BASSI 2007, 272–273.

⁴² BASSI 2007, 398–399.

⁴³ MAURINA 2005, 398–399 tab. 1,2.

⁴⁴ MAURINA 2016, 395–397.

Provincial Production

Since the Augustan Age evidence is not lacking of the importation of provincial products, above all wine, which was probably destined to a relatively restricted circle of consumers. In the first two centuries of the Imperial Age Greek wine must have been the content of the amphorae with sharp peaked handles, like the Camulodunum 184 made at Rhodes and in Rhodian Perea, and its probable smaller imitation, the Crétoise 4/Dressel 43 (figs. 5,1–3). These receptacles appear at Trento (excavations of Palazzo Tabarelli⁴⁵ and Cathedral of S. Vigilio⁴⁶), at Monte S. Martino at Lake Garda⁴⁷, Egna/Neumarkt⁴⁸, Villandro/Villanders⁴⁹, San Candido/Innichen⁵⁰ and Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck. At Palazzo Tabarelli there are also documented fragments of sharp peaked handles with a western type of fabric, maybe related to trade in counterfeit Greek wine. In the same period in various sites in the Aegean area the Dressel 2–5 was made, found at Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck and the amphora Athenian Agorà G 197, found sporadically at the site of Mezzocorona-Drei Canè⁵¹. Probably produced in the eastern Aegean area between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD were some containers similar to the Dressel 25 and the Ostia I fig. 568–569/Alba 41, sporadically found at the site of Monte S. Martino⁵². The type S. Lorenzo 7 (figs. 5,4–6), presumably also came from the Eastern Mediterranean, this label including a rather heterogeneous series of amphorae, probably for wine, common between the 2nd/3rd and 4th/5th centuries AD. Such containers were significantly present at Monte S. Martino⁵³, Villandro/Villanders⁵⁴ and Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck; some odd pieces seem to have been found at Bondo in the lower Giudicarie⁵⁵ and in the excavations at *Porta Veronensis* at Trento⁵⁶.

If in the first Imperial Age wine was above all imported from the Eastern provinces, other foodstuffs seem to have been imported from the Western ones, like *salsamenta* and olive oil. From the Iberian peninsula, in particular, must have come, even if sporadically, apart from possible imitations of Dressel 2–4⁵⁷, also Dressel 7–11, typical amphorae for *garum* produced between the Augustan Age and the 3rd century AD, brought to light at *Tridentum*⁵⁸ and Isera⁵⁹, or the Beltrán II, till now found only at S. Candido/Innichen⁶⁰. The importation of Iberian oil can be seen from the rare fragments of Dressel 20 coming from Trento⁶¹. Other containers, probably for oil, produced between the 1st/2nd and the 3rd/4th centuries AD in the area of Eastern Greece, like the ones similar to the Knossos

18 and the Dressel 24, are sporadically present in the region at the site of Monte S. Martino⁶² and Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck.

In the mid Imperial Age there begin to be seen amphorae from North Africa, traditionally thought to contain mainly olive oil. Apart from sporadic cases, most findings consist of difficult to diagnose fragments which do not allow a punctual typology identification nor their exact chronological collocation. This is the case of the findings in the excavations at *Porta Veronensis* and the Cathedral of S. Vigilio at Trento⁶³, Mezzocorona⁶⁴, Isera⁶⁵, Monte S. Martino⁶⁶, S. Lorenzo di Sebato⁶⁷, S. Candido/Innichen⁶⁸ and partly also Loppio-S. Andrea⁶⁹. Among the few certain identifications, for the period between the 2nd and the 3rd/4th centuries AD there are the form Africana I at Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck (fig. 6,1) and the Africana IIA at the site of Palazzo Tabarelli at Trento⁷⁰; more problematic is the identification of a Mid Roman 8 at Monte S. Marino on Lake Garda⁷¹. Imports from North Africa continued in Late Antiquity, as is indicated by the fragments of small *spatheia* and the spike of Keay LXII found at the fortified site at Loppio-S. Andrea⁷² (figs. 6,2–4).

In Late Antiquity, besides the African products, several types of amphorae from the eastern Mediterranean were present on the markets of the region, once again mainly designated for carrying wine. Among these, the most numerous were Palestinian amphorae known as Late Roman Amphora 4, attested to in the variants of the 4th/5th, 5th/6th and 6th/7th centuries, at *Tridentum*⁷³ (fig. 6,5), Isera⁷⁴, S. Martino di Lundo⁷⁵ and Loppio-S. Andrea⁷⁶ (fig. 6,6). From Loppio-S. Andrea⁷⁷, as well as from Palazzo Tabarelli at Trento⁷⁸ and perhaps from the Roman Villa at Isera⁷⁹, come some fragments of the Asia Minor Late Roman Amphora 3, a small container probably designated for the transport of oil or wine. From the excavation at S. Andrea also come fragments of amphora ascribable to other Eastern typologies perhaps used for trade in wine produced in the Aegean area and widespread in Italy between the 4th and 7th centuries but which for the moment do not find further certain attestations in the region, such as the Late Roman Amphora 1, the Late Roman Amphora 2 and the Samos-Cistern-Type⁸⁰, while on the site of Appiano/Eppan the finding of some fragments of Bag shaped amphora LRA5/6 remains isolated⁸¹. To be noted, however, is the presence of ribbed walls, in all likelihood

⁴⁵ MAURINA 1995, 238–239 figs. 5,9–10.

⁴⁶ OBEROSLER 2002, 338 fig. 10,13.

⁴⁷ BASSI 2007, 273; LORENZI 2010–2011, 58–59.

⁴⁸ DI STEFANO 2002, 204 fig. 76 tab. 20,123–124.

⁴⁹ DAL RI/MAURINA/CAPELLI 2013, 19–21.

⁵⁰ MAURINA 2005, 401.

⁵¹ BASSI 1994, 123–124 fig. 79.

⁵² LORENZI 2010–2011, 54–57.

⁵³ BASSI 2007, 273–275; LORENZI 2010–2011, 47–51.

⁵⁴ DAL RI/MAURINA/CAPELLI 2013, 21–23.

⁵⁵ CAVADA 1992, 375 fig. 6,1; BASSI 2007, 275.

⁵⁶ PERINELLI 2002–2003, 110.

⁵⁷ MAURINA 2011, 204.

⁵⁸ MAURINA 1995, 236–238; OBEROSLER 2002, 338; 349.

⁵⁹ MAURINA 2011, 205–206.

⁶⁰ DAL RI/DI STEFANO/LEITNER 2002, 960; MAURINA 2005, 403.

⁶¹ MAURINA 1995, 235–236.

⁶² LORENZI 2010–2011, 52–53; 60–62.

⁶³ PERINELLI 2002–2003, 110–111; OBEROSLER 2002, 338; 349.

⁶⁴ BASSI 1994, 125.

⁶⁵ MAURINA 2011, 206.

⁶⁶ LORENZI 2010–2011, 63–69.

⁶⁷ MAURINA 2001, 573.

⁶⁸ MAURINA 2005, 404.

⁶⁹ MAURINA 2016, 403–404.

⁷⁰ MAURINA 2005, 241.

⁷¹ BASSI 2007, 275–276.

⁷² MAURINA 2016, 395–397.

⁷³ MAURINA 1995, 244–245; BASSI/CIURLETTI/ENDRIZZI 1997, 177; PERINELLI 2002–2003, 36; 109–110.

⁷⁴ MAURINA 2011, 207–208.

⁷⁵ ZAGERMANN/CAVADA 2014: 212–213.

⁷⁶ MAURINA 2016, 415–420 with bibliography.

⁷⁷ MAURINA 2016, 414–415 with bibliography.

⁷⁸ MAURINA 1995, 242.

⁷⁹ MAURINA 2011, 207.

⁸⁰ MAURINA 2016, 405–414; 420–422 with bibliography.

⁸¹ KAUFMANN 2015, 229 tab. 10,1–2.

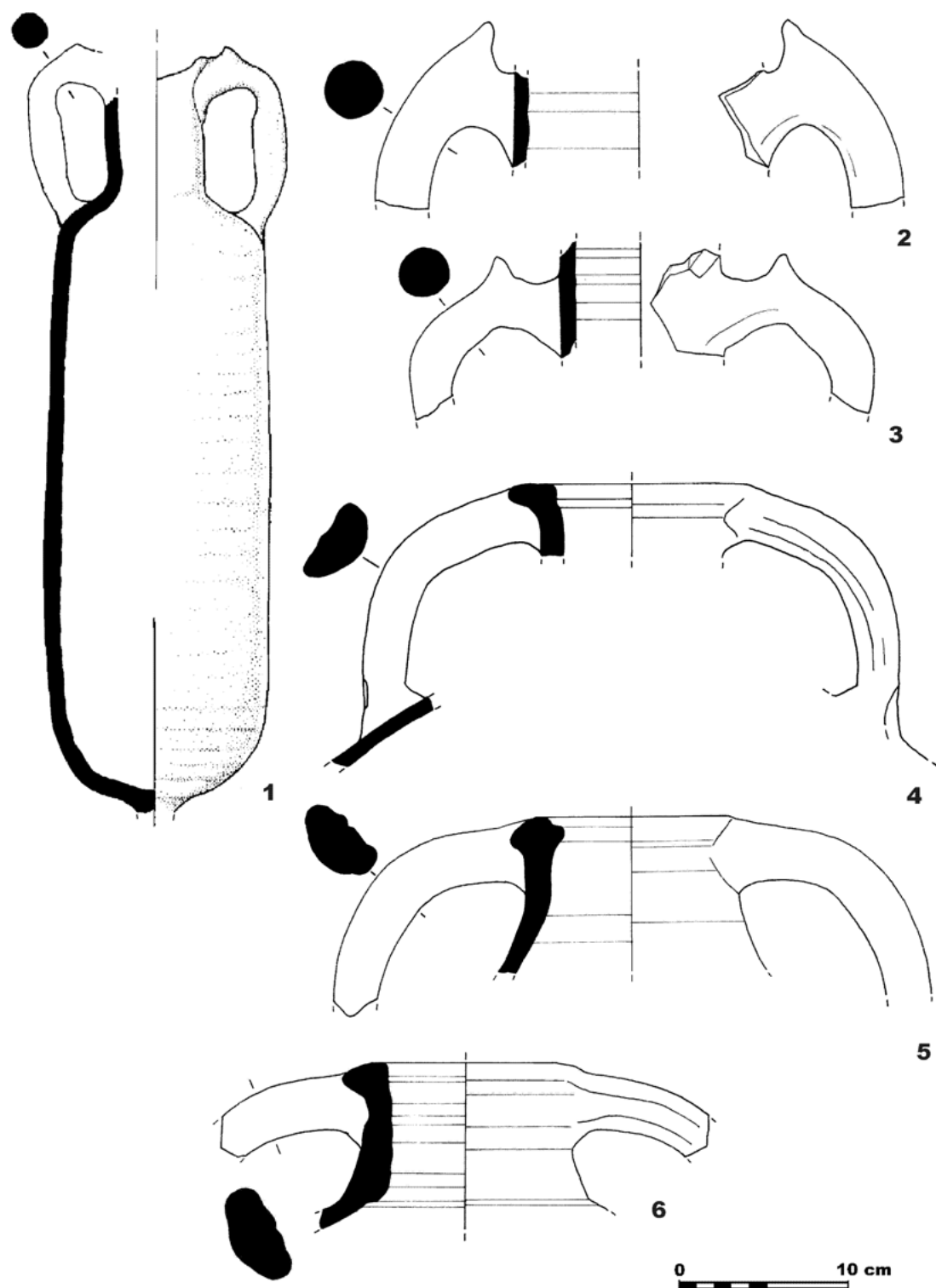


Fig. 5. Crétoise 4/Dressel 43 from Trento, Palazzo Tabarelli (1); amphorae with peaked handles from Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck (2–3); S. Lorenzo 7 from Villandro/Villanders (4) and Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck (5–6).

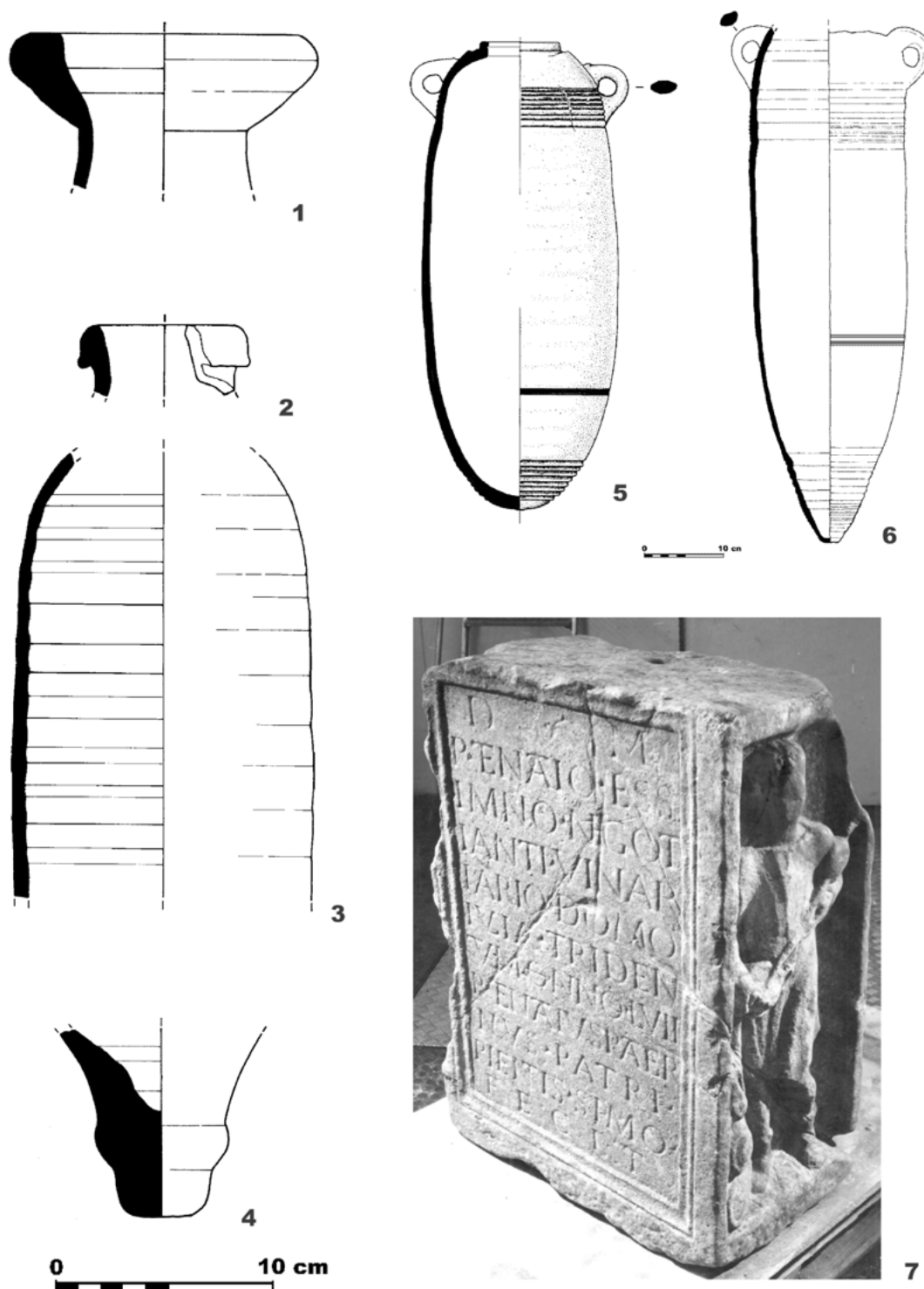


Fig. 6. Africana I from Ponte Gardena/Waidbruck (1); spatheia and Keay LXII from Loppio-S. Andrea (2–4); Late Roman Amphora 4 from Trento-Palazzo Tabarelli (5) and Loppio-S. Andrea (6); funerary monument of Publius Tenatius Essimnus found at Passau, 2nd/3rd century AD (7).

attributable to Eastern late antique amphorae, coming from various sites of the region, for example at Monte S. Martino near Riva del Garda⁸².

Some Considerations in Conclusion

The panorama offered by the amphora remains enables us to understand some important aspects related to the importation of foodstuffs into the territory of the present Trentino-South Tyrol between the Roman period and the early Middle Ages. The terracotta containers are considered to have been used only for imported foodstuffs, while there is little or no evidence relating to the nature and volume of the local products traded in the region or exported outside. The absence of production of amphorae at a local level can probably be attributed to the use of other kinds of receptacles, like wooden barrels, as shown for example in the funeral epigraphy of Publius Tenatius Essimnus, a wine merchant resident in Trento⁸³ (fig. 6,7). The fact that the major import in amphorae was probably wine, in an area where vine cultivation and wine making were already established in the 5th/4th centuries BC and which is still known for a strong inclination towards viticulture, has not failed to elicit surprise⁸⁴. It must

be considered, however, that the local produce, the exact identity of which is unknown, must not have been able on its own to satisfy the local demand, which may have been more articulated than has been imagined. The archaeological evidence furnished by the amphorae, their varied typology showing the request for products from all over the Empire, in particular from the East, indicates that the region in question was well integrated in a network of trade over a medium and long range, prevailing towards the Adriatic. This tendency was in a certain sense obligatory, given the waterway of the Adige, which provided a natural commercial route, and the *via Claudia Augusta*, the main overland artery linking the ancient Trentino-South Tyrol area with the eastern Po Valley. As for the northern part of the Region, the findings distribution confirms the particular importance of the Val d'Isarco and Val Pusteria waterway system from the commercial point of view. That economic circuit remained probably vital not only throughout the whole Roman era, but also in Late Antiquity/early Middle Ages. The apparent absence of evidence for this latter period, which until recently was interpreted as the central Alpine region being excluded from overseas trade⁸⁵, is today being reconsidered thanks to the recent archaeological research in the field.

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⁸² LORENZI 2010–2011, 73–8.

⁸³ MAURINA 2007, 615–616 with bibliography.

⁸⁴ CIURLETTI 1996, 460–461.

⁸⁵ ZANINI 1998, 324.

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