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## THE WORKSHOP OF LAECANIUS AT FAŽANA

## Some recent testimonies

The main subject of this paper is the activity of the Laecanius workshop in the light of some recent unpublished discoveries in Fažana and the nearby site of Dragonera.

## Fažana

Rescue excavations conducted in the year 2002, in the ancient centre of Fažana, near the church of Saints Cosimus and Damianus, yielded five hundred fragments of amphorae, exclusively from the local workshop of Laecanius<sup>1</sup>. Five fragments, i.e. one percent, carry stamps: two stamps of the master LAEK (cat. nos. 1–2), two of the estate managers COM (cat. no. 4) and FVS (cat. no. 3; **fig. 1,3**), while one is illegible. Various rim forms are attested, as well as different dimensions. In general, there are two groups with respect to their dimensions: smaller and larger Laecanius amphorae. All the stamps come from the group of larger amphorae, confirming again the known fact that the smaller form does not carry stamps. The ratio between these groups is 24 % of large amphorae and 76 % in favour of small amphorae. Such a result is not typical, and must be connected to some special conditions of storage, commercial use and organisation of the productive unit in Fažana. Important quantities of small Istrian amphorae have recently been reported in another great workshop centre, Loron, in the stratigraphical layers of the third and fourth centuries<sup>2</sup>. Small amphorae of form Dressel 6B, generally known as “north Italic small amphorae”, were attested in north Italy in various contexts and in different periods<sup>3</sup>. Liquamen or fish sauce was the most probable contents of these small amphorae, as is shown by the finds from Grado<sup>4</sup>.

## Dragonera

The Roman and Late Roman *villa maritima* of Dragonera South, with a surface area of 2.268 sq m was discovered in archaeological rescue excavations on the south-west coast of Istria, opposite to the islands of Brijuni. The central complex covers a surface of 1800 sq m and consists of four connected wings with internal yard. The first owner of the villa was a *praefectus fabrum*, who reached equestrian rank through a municipal career as *aedilis* and *duumvir* of the colony of Pola. In the thermal complexes and around a cistern were found many fragments of Dressel 6B amphorae,

of large and small size in almost equal quantity. The cistern, 80 sq m in area, is situated in the north wing. The plaster on the walls of the cistern contains fragments of amphorae in abundance. All of these come from Dressel type 6B amphorae. Their stamps are datable between the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and the end of the reign of the emperor Titus in 81. Six fragments of amphora rims carry stamps of Laecanius' figlina in Fažana: four of them are signed with names of estate managers (*vilici*) dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and two stamps carry imperial marks. EVCHAR (cat. no. 12), a stamp of Eucharistus, belongs to the period AD 15–45/50. The stamp BERENT2 (S reversed) (cat. nos. 22–31; **fig. 1,22–24**) marks the vilicus whose name can perhaps be resolved as Berenicianus. It has been recorded on corresponding amphorae from the Fažana workshop, along with an imperial stamp dated to the period of Titus. Stamps IMPE. VESP. (78–79) (cat. no. 14; **fig. 1,14**) and IMP (78/80–81) (cat. nos. 15–19; **fig. 1,16**) are correlated to the emperors Vespasian and Titus. The general absence of later stamps of Domitian, as well as the absence of funnel-shaped rims characteristic of Istrian Dressel 6B amphorae in the last few years of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, imply that construction of the cistern with all probability can be dated around 79–81. Fragments of amphorae with stamps of Laecanius' workshop were found in other sectors of complex also, always in the stratigraphic units between two floor levels, between the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the 1<sup>st</sup> century floor level. The largest quantity of the 1<sup>st</sup> century amphorae with stamps was found in a stratigraphic unit dated to the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, above the Early Roman floor of the oecus. There are stamps of [C. LA]EK [BASSI?], BAR, CLYME, DAT, [IM(P) T] CAES A[VG?] + DAT, IMP (retro), [..]VE, BERENT2 (cat. nos. 5–8; 10–11; 16–17; 20–21; 25–26; 28; 31).

Some fragments of Dressel 6B amphorae carry stamps of uncertain interpretation, such as [.]HOST (cat. no. 32). Stamp [.]HOST is completely unknown on Dressel 6 B amphorae.

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<sup>2</sup> MARION/STARAC 2001, 117.

<sup>3</sup> CARRE/PESAVENTO MATTIOLI 2003a, 277; id. 2003b, 471.

<sup>4</sup> AURIEMMA 2000, 34–7.

## The chronological framework of the stamps

The dating of the early amphorae of the Laecanius workshop is possible on the basis of the contents of stratigraphic layers on the Magdalensberg<sup>5</sup>. The earliest stamps on the Laecanian amphorae occur there in layers dated to the middle–late Augustan period<sup>6</sup>. The production under the patronage of the Laecanii lasted more than six decades, until the end of the family. The workshop was taken over by the Imperial house after the Laecanius family died out<sup>7</sup>.

Stamps reading C. LAEK. BASSI and LAEK were found in late Augustan layers<sup>8</sup>. The same types of *dominus*-stamps were used later, in the Tiberian and Claudian periods<sup>9</sup>. *Vilicus*-stamps give much more possibilities for chronological interpretation. Stamps BAR, COM and EVCHAR appear in Magdalensberg in Tiberian and Claudian layers, in the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>10</sup>. Unfortunately, it is not possible to establish reliable temporal distinctions among the types of stamps of the post-Magdalensberg period that lasted from Claudian to Vespasianic times. Certain stamps represent an exception to this: stamps CLYME and DAT co-occur with the stamps of Emperors (IMP, IMPE. VESP) among the last stamps of the workshop, and can be dated to the period between 70/75 and 81<sup>11</sup>. These stamps were not found on the Magdalensberg. At Dragonera was found a fragment with two stamps, one of uncertain reading, possibly [IM(P) T] CAES A[VG?], and the other stamp DAT (cat. no. 20; **fig. 1,20**), confirming a possibility of the chronological relation between the vilicus Dat(ianus?) and the emperor Titus.

The territorial distribution of various stamps shows rather significant differences. While the stamps BAR, DAT and EVCHAR occur frequently in Istria as well as in Pannonia, Noricum and northern Italy<sup>12</sup>, stamp CLYME is restricted to the area of Istria and northern Italy<sup>13</sup>. The variant of stamp COM which occurs in the specimen from Fažana (cat. no. 4), was previously rarely attested, in Patavium and Magdalensberg only, but evidently it covered an equally wide region including Istria<sup>14</sup>. Another variant of the same stamp COM is well documented throughout the whole area of distribution of Laecanius amphorae.

The abbreviated names can be read in various ways. The stamp COM can be identified with Comus, a name attested on stamps from Laecanius workshop<sup>15</sup>. There are no doubts in case of the stamp EVCHAR, that can be resolved as Eucharistus. Regarding the most usual and frequent names, the abbreviation BAR can be interpreted as Barbarus. The abbreviation DAT has been interpreted as Datianus or Datus<sup>16</sup>.

The stamp FVS (cat. no. 3; **fig. 1,3**) is new. The same name probably could be recognized in FVI, a stamp attested in Pannonia, Noricum and northern Italy, present on the Magdalensberg in Tiberian and Claudian layers<sup>17</sup>.

The stamp IMP is one of the most indicative among the last stamps from the Laecanius workshop, revealing the change of ownership and entrance into the imperial fiscus in the period AD 78–81. Vespasian stamped the amphorae with the IMP stamp for a very brief period in 78–79, between the death of the elderly C. Laecanius Bassus, consul suffectus in AD 40, and his own death in June 79.<sup>18</sup> The

distribution of the IMP stamp is concentrated in the vicinity of the production centre at Fažana, but there are finds in north Italy also<sup>19</sup>. The same chronological frame is valid for stamps IMPE VESP and IMPE. VES, but these stamps, as attested in Istria, Noricum and north Italy, do seem more widespread. Although chronologically limited to the brief period of 78 – June 79, the stamp of Vespasian shows a number of variants: IMPE.VE[?][?] with S turned backward<sup>20</sup>, IMPE.VESP<sup>21</sup> that possibly could be identified with previous variant, and [IMP]E VESP. with VE ligatured, noted at Dragonera (cat. no. 14; **fig. 1,14**). A stamp of an unknown vilicus beginning with G[.] (cat. no. 14; **fig. 1,14**) appears at Dragonera associated with the last-mentioned, and was possibly identical to the stamp G[.]MI[.] registered in association with the stamp IMP<sup>22</sup>.

Another of the latest stamps from the workshop in Fažana, BERENT2, on certain already published amphorae, occurs together with stamp IM(P) T CAE AVG, on cat. no. 22. found at Dragonera (**fig. 1,22**), and dates between 25 June 79 and 13 September 81<sup>23</sup>. The stamp BERENT2 is attested in Istria, Aquileia, Noricum. It offers various possibilities of interpretation: it cannot be simply resolved into a personal or family name. The last character, S backward, could represent a decorative motif that occurs relatively often on stamps. The reading BERENT without the last character resulted from badly preserved or incomplete stamps.

## Conclusion

Excavations at Fažana in 2002 offered certain quantitative values regarding the number of Laecanius amphorae and variants of smaller dimensions. These values spoke in favour of production and storage of amphorae of small dimensions in a quantity more significant than was previously noted in the production site itself. The other novelty is the possible interpretation of FVS as an abbreviation of Fus(cus), and its association with the stamp previously recorded as FVI.

As for Dragonera, that is a coastal site less than 10 km distant from the production centre in Fažana, and it offers

<sup>5</sup> SCHINDLER-KAUDELKA 1989, 24; BEZECZKY 1998, 22.

<sup>6</sup> SCHINDLER-KAUDELKA 1996, 362.

<sup>7</sup> BALDACCI 1969, 34; STARAC 1997, 145; BEZECZKY 2001, 421.

<sup>8</sup> SCHINDLER-KAUDELKA 1989, 26.

<sup>9</sup> BEZECZKY 1998, 24.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 30 nr. 5.; CIPRIANO/FERRARINI 2000, 154–5.

<sup>11</sup> DAT: GNIRS 1910 fig. 27; BEZECZKY 1998, 28; ID. 2001, 422. CLYME + IMP: BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI 1987 Tav. 18,1.

<sup>12</sup> BAR: [?] BEZECZKY 1998, 30 nr. 5; DAT: ibid. 32 nr. 15; 41 nr. 55; EVCHAR: ibid. 33 nr. 17.

<sup>13</sup> BEZECZKY 1998, 31 nr. 59.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 32, nr. 12a.; CIPRIANO/FERRARINI 2000, 152–3.

<sup>15</sup> BEZECZKY 1998, 40 nr. 41.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 32 nr. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 35 nr. 23.; CIPRIANO/FERRARINI 2000, 161.

<sup>18</sup> BEZECZKY 1998, 42 nr. 58; ID. 2001, 422.

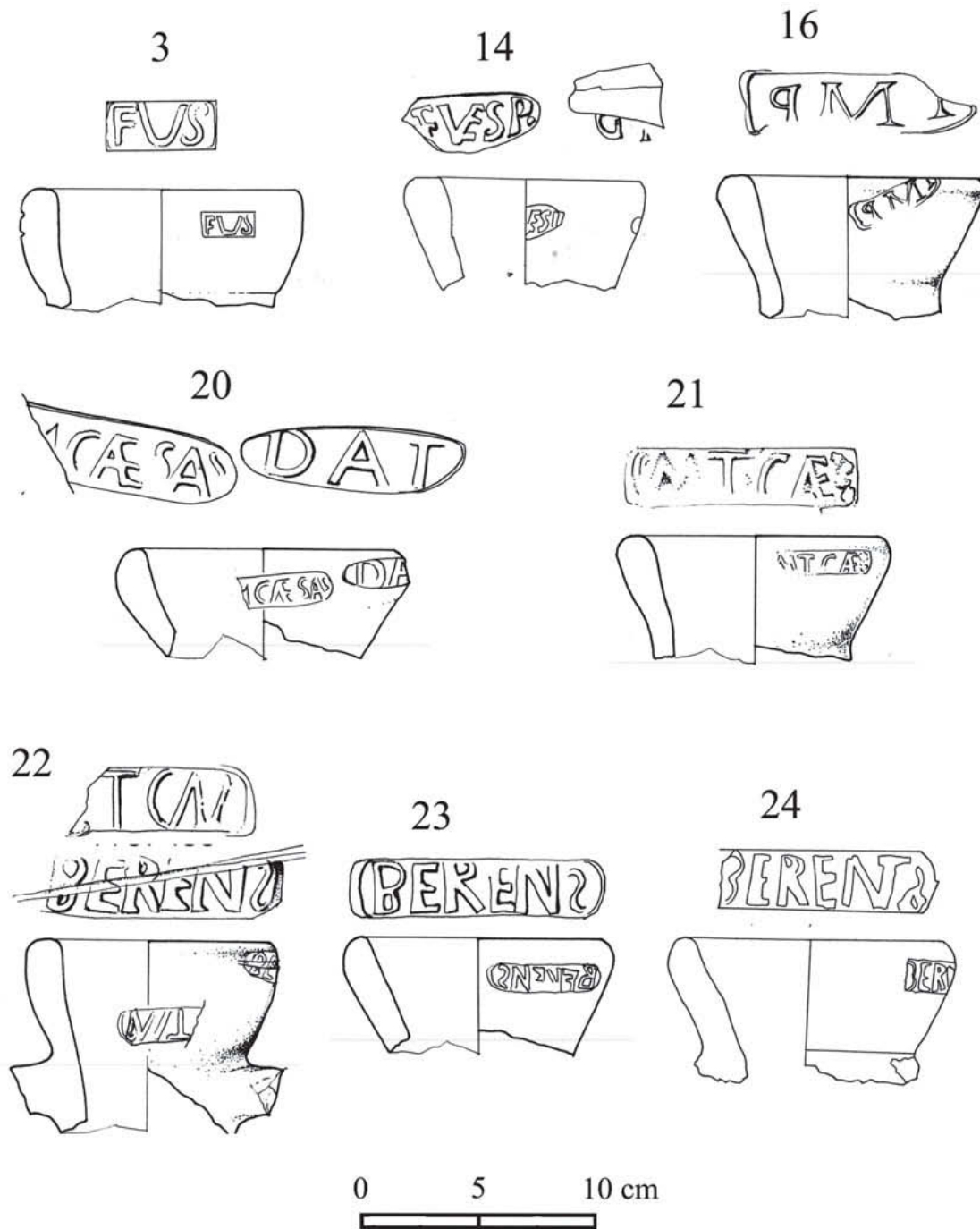
<sup>19</sup> GNIRS 1911, 37 fig. 40; BEZECZKY/PAVLETIĆ 1996, 155 nr. 1–3.8–9; BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI 1987 Tav. 17,3–4; 18,1; 23,2.

<sup>20</sup> STARAC 1997, 148 T. 2,1.

<sup>21</sup> BRECCIAROLI TABORELLI 1987 Tav. 17,1.

<sup>22</sup> GNIRS 1911, 37 fig. 40.

<sup>23</sup> STARAC 1997, 157 T. 2,2; BEZECZKY 1998, 43 nr. 64.; ID. 2001, 424.



**Fig.1.** Stamps: Cat.no. 3 FVS; cat.no. 14.1 [IMP]E VESP; cat.no. 14.2 G[—]; 16 IMP; cat.no. 20.1 [IM(P) T] CAES A[VG?]; cat.no.20.2. DAT; cat.no. 21 [IM(P)]T CAE[.];cat.no. 22.1 [IM(P)] T CA[E AVG]; cat.no. 22.2. BEREN[T]2; cat.no. 23 BEREN[T]2; cat.no. 24 BERENT[2].

information about the radius of the Laecanius workshop circle. Some important points can be drawn from the stratigraphic data at Dragonera. There must be noted the rather frequent occurrence of the imperial stamps IMP, IMPE VES and IM T CAE AVG together with the stamp of a vilicus (for example BERENT2, cat. no. 22; **fig. 1,22**) on the same amphora rim, that can be explained as the heritage of a specific and long-term tradition for Laecanius. The stamp [IM(P) T] CAES A[VG?] of uncertain reading, associated with stamp of Laecanius' vilicus Dat(ianus?) (cat. no. 20, **fig. 1,20**), represents a single case of such a combination.

The Laecanius workshop evidently furnished the property with amphorae during its construction, in the last third of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Although the villa had its own production of olive oil, it is doubtful whether the amphorae arrived exclusively to be used in the storage and transport of oil, because of the fact that only stamps of the last third of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD were attested. More recent (i.e. imperial) stamps of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, well known in Fažana<sup>24</sup>, completely

<sup>24</sup> STARAC 1997, 150 T. 3,2.

lack at the site. So we can conclude that Laecanius amphorae arrived at Dragonera during the period of its construction in the last third of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, for the needs of working slaves and as a waste material for building purposes. The strongest evidence for this theory is the significant quantity of amphora fragments with stamps of the second and third quarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> century included in the mortar on the walls of a cistern. The question arose, why at Dragonera are there no Laecanius amphorae with stamps of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century? Can it be a sign of the suspension of supply from the Laecanius workshop? Is it possible that 1<sup>st</sup> century amphorae were utilised for 40 years or more until their termination? If there was no need either to produce on site or to import amphorae for olive oil, that could be interpreted in the sense of a minor production of olive oil, exclusively for domestic use. Regarding the limited production of oil, a small quantity of the 1<sup>st</sup> century amphorae could satisfy the modest needs of the *villa rustica* through a long period by using the same old amphorae repeatedly many times.

## Catalogue

### LAECANIUS stamps

1. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 16 cm. Stamp: [L]AEK. Height 1,6 cm, length 2,7 cm (incomplete). Site: Fažana. Inv. no. A 27317.
2. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 17 cm. Stamp: LAEK. Height 1,8 cm, length 4 cm (complete). Site: Fažana. Inv. no. A 27270.
3. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 15,4 cm. Stamp: FUS. Height 1,4 cm, length 3,0 cm (complete). Site: Fažana. Inv. no. A 27283. About AD 15–50. **Fig. 1,3.**
4. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 15 cm. Stamp: COM. Height 1,4 cm, length 3,5 cm (complete). Site: Fažana. Inv. no. A 27276. About AD 15–50.
5. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: [C. LA]EK [BASSI?]. Height 1,5 cm, length 5,2 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 37455.
6. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: BAR. Height 1,5 cm, length 3,6 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 43406. About AD 15–80.
7. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: DA[T]. Height 1,5 cm, length 4,8 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 43409. About AD 50–81.
8. Amphora, thickened lip. Red clay. Diameter 15 cm. Stamp: DAT. Height 1,5 cm, length 4,6 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 37474. About AD 50–81.
9. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 16 cm. Stamp: CLYME. Height 1,7 cm, length 5,8 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 10. Inv. no. A 30009. About AD 78–81.
10. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14,3 cm. Stamp: CLYME. Height 1,8 cm, length 4,8 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 43407. About AD 78–81.
11. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: C[LYME?]. Height 1,6 cm, length 2,7 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 34057.
12. Amphora, thickened rim. Red clay. Diameter 13,5 cm. Stamp: [E]VCH[A]R above handle. Height 1,5 cm, length 4,7 cm (almost complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 4 (cistern). Inv. no. A 33601. About AD 15–50.

### Imperial stamps

#### IMPE. VESP.

13. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 16 cm. Stamp: [..]VE. Height 1,5 cm, length 3,5 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 10. Inv. no. A 43415. AD 78–June 79.
14. Amphora, thickened rim. Red clay. Diameter 12,8 cm. Stamps: 1: [IMP]E VESP. VE ligatured. Central position between handles. Height 1,5 cm, length 3,8 cm (incomplete). 2: G[.] above handle. Height 0,7 cm (incomplete), length 0,8 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 4 (cistern). Inv. no. A 37799. AD 78–June 79. **Fig. 1,14.**

#### IMP

15. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: IM[P]. Height 1,5 cm, length 4 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 2 / P 30. Inv. no. A 43417. About AD 78–81.
16. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: IMP retrograde. Height 1,3 cm, length 6,1 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 37458. About AD 78–81. **Fig. 1,16.**
17. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: [I]MP retrograde. Height 1,5 cm, length 2 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 43413. About AD 78–81.
18. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: IMP retrograde. Height 1,5 cm, length 5,2 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 4 (cistern). Inv. no. A 30623. About AD 78–81.
19. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: IM[P] retrograde. Height 1,3 cm, length 3,7 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 10. Inv. no. A 40871. About AD 78–81.

#### [IM(P) T] CAES A[VG?]

(+ DAT, + BERENT2 (S reversed))

20. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 15 cm. Stamps: 1: [IM(P) T] CAES A[VG?] in central position between handles. Height 1,5 cm, length 6,8 cm (complete). 2: DAT above handle. Height 1,6 cm, length 3,8 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 34050. AD 79–81. **Fig. 1,20.**
21. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: [IM(P)]T CAE[.]. AE ligatured. Missing left part;

- above handle. Height 1,3 cm, length 3,5 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 40811. AD 79–81. **Fig. 1,21.**
22. Amphora, thickened rim. Red clay. Diameter 13,2 cm. Stamps: 1: [IM(P)] T CA[E AVG] in central position between handles. Height 1,9 cm, length 4 cm (incomplete). 2: BEREN[T]2, NT ligatured; above handle. Height 1,6 cm, length 6 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 10. Inv. no. A 37466. AD 79–81. **Fig. 1, 22.**
- BERENT2 (S reversed?)
23. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 13 cm. Stamp: BEREN[T]2, upside down, NT ligatured. Height 1,5 cm, length 5 cm (complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3, east of wall 5. Inv. no. A 35582. AD 79–81. **Fig. 1,23.**
24. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 15,3 cm. Stamp: BERENT2, NT ligatured. Height 1,6 cm, length 5,7 cm (almost complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 10. Inv. no. A 30004. AD 79–81. **Fig. 1,24.**
25. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14,3 cm. Stamp: BE[RENT]2, upside down. Height 1,7 cm, length 2,9 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 37463. AD 79–81.
26. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 15 cm. Stamp: BERENT[2], upside down, NT ligatured. Height 1,5 cm, length 6 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 34049. AD 79–81.
27. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 13 cm. Stamp: BERENT[2], NT ligatured; above handle. Height 1,7 cm, length 5,2 cm (almost complete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 4 (cistern). Inv. no. A 37800. AD 79–81.
28. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: [B]ERE[NT]2, upside down. Height 1,7 cm, length 4,8 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P 8. Inv. no. A 34051. AD 79–81.
29. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: BER[ENT]2, upside down. Height 1,3 cm, length 4 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P7-12. Inv. no. A 41076. AD 79–81.
30. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 14 cm. Stamp: [BERE]NT2, NT ligatured. Height 1,5 cm, length 3,8 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 4 / P14. Inv. no. A 33918. AD 79–81.
31. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 13 cm. Stamp: [BERE]NT[2], NT ligatured. Height 1,7 cm, length 3,0 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 3 / P8. Inv. no. A 34046. AD 79–81.

## VARIOUS

32. Amphora, thickened rim. Orange clay. Diameter 16 cm. Stamp: [..]HOST, upside down. Height 1,9 cm, length 4,5 cm (incomplete). Site: Dragonera South. Layer: 4 / P 14. Inv. no. A 43410.

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