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serie nouă



**XI/2025**

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ISSN 2457 – 3809

ISSN – L 2457 – 3809

<https://cicsaunibuc.wordpress.com/revista/revista-online>

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# **Roman glass vessels in funerary contexts from Tomis and Callatis.**

## **A reassessment of older publications**

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<https://www.doi.org/10.31178/cicsa.2025.11.12>

**Abstract:** This paper represents an attempt to draw the attention on the great potential, still incompletely explored in the Romanian archaeology, represented by this category of finds from the point of view of identifying contacts between individuals and communities, often with very different cultural foundation, in the framework of the Roman world. Based on an assessment of the old publications presenting funerary contexts from two cities from the western coast of the Black Sea, Tomis (Constanța) and Callatis (Mangalia), with glass vessels as part of their grave goods, the authors will discuss the presence of this category of archaeological material on these two sites, with a special focus on the category of *unguentaria* or toilet-bottles.

**Keywords:** Roman glass, *unguentaria*, Tomis, Callatis, funerary contexts, blown glass.

### **Introduction**

This paper re-examines funerary contexts from the ancient cities of Tomis (Constanța) and Callatis (Mangalia), documented in publications dating from the 1960s to the 1990s. The intention of the authors is to reconfirm the valuable role of funerary archaeology in understanding the interactions between individuals and communities in the Roman world, including in these two urban centres, and to highlight glass vessels, especially *unguentaria*, as significant indicators of social practices, trade, and cultural exchange. These glass vessels continue to hold significant potential for future reinterpretations as local and regional research makes further progress.

### **The glass finds from Tomis and Callatis: an overview of older publications**

The work of Mihai Bucovală, researcher at the Museum of Archaeology Constanța<sup>1</sup> starting with 1963, represents an important contribution to the study of ancient glass vessels from Tomis. His catalogue, *Vase antice de sticlă la Tomis*, published in 1968, offers a typological perspective of the glass vessels found during archaeological research in the city, mainly during the 1960s, when a large number of burials were excavated.<sup>2</sup> The author analyses various types of vessels, including among them a part of the *unguentaria* found in the museum's collections at that moment. In fact, the author himself mentions the significant number of Roman glass vessels found in the collections of the museum in Constanța, considering this category of archaeological material as extremely valuable from the point of view of the volume of glass, as well as variety and originality of shapes.<sup>3</sup> Although more than 100 *unguentaria* are mentioned in the book, these vessels were not treated in a homogeneous manner. While an important part was presented as such, using this term,<sup>4</sup> others, despite presenting similar characteristics, were analysed separately and included in the category of *vessels with various shapes*.<sup>5</sup> Thus, there can be noticed variations and uncertainties in the classification of the shapes/forms from the early stages of glass research for this part of the Roman world. It should be also remarked upon the fact that the discussion of the items does not always cover analogies or references to similar finds from other parts of the empire, situation easily explained by the characteristics of the period in which the book was written. This work continues to be cited frequently in the Romanian and international archaeological literature on ancient glass, due to the valuable information offered by both the vessels themselves and their archaeological context.

The archaeological excavations taking place in Constanța starting with the second half of 1967 and published in *Pontice* 1 brought to light numerous burials dated to the Hellenistic and Early Roman periods.<sup>6</sup> Only three burials were selected for detailed publication in this article, but they are remarkable from the point of view of the variety and richness of their grave goods, covering a large range of materials (clay – including an important number of ceramic

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<sup>1</sup> Later Museum of National History and Archaeology (Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie Constanța - MINAC).

<sup>2</sup> Bucovală 1968a.

<sup>3</sup> Now the Museum of National History and Archaeology Constanța (Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie Constanța) – from now on in this paper MINAC.

<sup>4</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 84-130.

<sup>5</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 56-57.

<sup>6</sup> The archaeological excavations covered vast areas of the modern city, and more than 40 burials were uncovered (Bucovală 1968b, 269-306).

*unguentaria*, glass, bronze, gold, and bone). Several glass recipients were found, with various shapes and colours. Among them, it should be emphasised the presence of a fragmentary glass spindle-shaped (fusiform) *unguentarium* with a pointed base.<sup>7</sup> This specific shape is a rarer characteristic of the spindle-shaped *unguentaria*, most of which are dated to later periods, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, and which have a rounded base. The early dating of this shape is ensured by both the archaeological context, dated to the second half of the 1st – 2nd c. AD, and analogies with items belonging to other collections.<sup>8</sup>

Another paper including glass finds published in the same issue of the journal brings information about funerary contexts from the territory of Callatis. As part of the grave goods remarkable glass items are discussed, in some cases also illustrated, such as the cup in the shape of a male head with ethnic features or the fragmentary lotus-bud beaker, rare or even unique finds in the region.<sup>9</sup>

An interesting aspect noticed in the case of the funerary contexts from Tomis is the continuity of the functionality and aesthetics of the *unguentarium* type vessels between the ceramic items and the glass items. This observation was discussed in the paper published in *Pontice 2*, where the ceramic *unguentaria* – spindle-shaped, pear-shaped, with ovoid or spherical body –, characteristic to both Greek and Roman material culture, are studied from the perspective of the evolution of their shapes at Tomis. These ceramic vessels, found in funerary contexts dated from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD, are interpreted, from a functional perspective, as **toilet-bottles**.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the presence of both materials (clay and glass) indicates coexistence from the Hellenistic period and continuing during the Early Roman period. The shapes initially created in clay were later adapted and diversified in glass, when glassblowing was invented – a natural evolution, visible in the case of the finds from Tomis dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD. The typological continuity emphasises the aesthetic preferences of the Roman society, the preservation of traditions and functional attributions of vessels. At the same time, it reflects the sustained contacts between the communities from the western coast of the Black Sea with other regions of the Roman world, facilitated by the strategic position of Tomis in the commercial and cultural networks of the period.

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<sup>7</sup> Bucovală 1968b, 293.

<sup>8</sup> For example, an item from the collection of The Princeton University Art Museum (cat. no. 322), dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD (Antonaras, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Iconomu 1968, 235-268.

<sup>10</sup> Bucovală 1969, 297-332.

Important glass finds are published also in a paper from *Pontica* 3, in which the author presents the results of rescue excavations, with focus on two burials of Roman period from the north-eastern part of the modern city, considered extremely relevant for the reflection of the social status of the deceased by the grave goods. The glass objects are well represented both in the single burial and in the double burial. Alongside fragments of decanter-type vessels, there were present *unguentaria* with distinctive shapes: one with spherical body (dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD) and one with a sack-shaped body (dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD)<sup>11</sup>. The two *unguentaria* could be identified as belonging to the batch of vessels previously published in the catalogue from 1968, included in the chapter dedicated to the *vessels with various shapes*.<sup>12</sup>

The subsequent archaeological research from Tomis sustained the observations made by M. Bucovală, regarding the frequent presence of glass items in the funerary contexts of the ancient city.<sup>13</sup> This situation is easily explained by the higher chances of conservation of the objects placed as grave goods in comparison with objects from habitation contexts, much more prone to destruction or fragmentation. Therefore, funerary contexts, dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, become an important source of information, allowing the extraction of valuable data regarding aspects such as social status or economic and cultural relations with other areas.<sup>14</sup> Still, it should be emphasised at this point that the ancient city suffered drastic loss during the communist period, when numerous burials became inaccessible, being covered by modern buildings, or were downright destroyed during the architectural and urban changes triggered by the reorganisation of the modern city of Constanța.

The glass finds from other Greek and Roman sites of the area also represent important elements in deciphering the function and aesthetics of the *unguentaria* from the MINAC collections. One of the most remarkable finds was made in 1970 at Callatis (present-day Mangalia), an Early Roman sarcophagus burial with rich grave goods, published in *Pontica* 6<sup>15</sup>. The complex character of this finds from Moesia Inferior, due to the exceptional conservation of the grave goods (including preserved organic materials), is reflected also in the quality and rarity of the glass objects.

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<sup>11</sup> Bucovală 1970, 189-209.

<sup>12</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 56, 77.

<sup>13</sup> Barbu 1977, 203-214.

<sup>14</sup> Barbu 1977, 203-214.

<sup>15</sup> Rădulescu et al. 1973.



The vessels are characterised by the robustness of the glass and the refinement of the technical execution. The grave goods include, alongside three large bell-shaped *unguentaria* made of naturally coloured or colourless glass<sup>16</sup>, five small square bottles or jars<sup>17</sup> – all still preserving powder contents – and a bucket<sup>18</sup> with separate torsion handle made entirely of white transparent glass. The burial, dated to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD, also contained vegetal material (wreaths and garlands), fragments of textiles, shoes made of wood and leather (six pairs), a gold diadem with gems, gold earrings, necklaces, two wooden caskets (one for preserving the cosmetic jars), coins, a mirror made of gilded bronze, various bone and metal utensils.<sup>19</sup>

Going back to the glass grave goods, it should also be emphasised the complexity of the context in which they were carefully integrated and personalised, in order to reflect the personality, interests and habits of the deceased, creating the image of a female character with high status.

The three *unguentaria* from the Callatis sarcophagus, which can be included in Isings form 82/A1,<sup>20</sup> present similarities with *unguentaria* found in funerary contexts from Tomis, in 1959, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD; the main differences seem to be the quality of glass, the dimensions (the vessels from Callatis are large), and also some base and shape details.<sup>21</sup> Analogies for the Callatis *unguentaria* were identified also in the collections of the Museum of Ancient Glass from Zadar. Vessels with stylised geometric body, in the shape of a truncated cone, with neck approximately half of total height, ringed rim, and rounded shoulders, are frequent finds in funerary contexts from Zadar and Starigrad, being dated from the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD till the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD.<sup>22</sup> Bucovală associates similar vessels from Dalmatia, Cyprus, and Egypt with the *unguentaria with the body in the shape of a tall, large bell* found at Tomis and dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD.<sup>23</sup> In the collections of the Royal Museum Ontario,

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<sup>16</sup> MINAC Inv. Nos. 12741-12743.

<sup>17</sup> MINAC Inv. Nos. 12745-12749.

<sup>18</sup> MINAC Inv. No. 12767.

<sup>19</sup> Rădulescu et al. 1973, 247-265.

<sup>20</sup> Isings 1957, 97, form 82. Although the vessels from Callatis are characterized by a truncated body, they cannot, in our opinion, be included in Isings form 82/A2, since the body is high, not flattened, more similar to the bell-shaped variants, but with straighter walls.

<sup>21</sup> Bucovală 1968, 112, figs. 227-228. In the case of the vessels from Tomis, the quality of the glass is described as low, and they have a kicked-in base.

<sup>22</sup> Borzić – Štefanac 2021, 48-51, cat. nos. 67-68, 75, 80.

<sup>23</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 149.

published by Hayes, there are similar items, dated approximately to the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. Such vessels are included in the category of *unguentaria*, with uncertain provenance, and displaying characteristics placing them at the border between the Cypriot production and the Syrian production.<sup>24</sup>

Gluščević, analysing a larger batch of such vessels from the necropolis in Zadar (34 items, of which 21 complete), does not include them in Isings form 82/A1. The author considers that they represent a distinct category of vessels, suggesting a local typology (the Zadar *type*), and implicitly a local production. This hypothesis is based on one hand on the large number of finds in the area, and on another hand on the ratio of 1:1 between the height of the neck and the height of the body. This characteristic differentiates these vessels from the form proposed by Isings, in the case of which the body is shorter than the neck, even if the total height is similar, approximately 16 cm.<sup>25</sup>

In our opinion, at least for the moment, the vessels from Tomis and Callatis could be considered a variant of Isings form 82/A1, taking into account the malleability of glass as raw material, allowing for adaptations of shapes and proportions. Similar to what happens in other parts of the Roman world, the vessels from Tomis and Callatis show a dynamic continuity of shapes or continuous reinterpretations, with each variant preserving the function of the reference form, in this case Isings form 82/A1. The integration of particularities concerning proportions, shapes, colour, or quality of execution leads to a typological *perpetuum mobile*, sometimes with specific morphological particularities (as for example the vessels from Zadar), or expressions of aesthetic preferences, such as degree of transparency, clarity, and attention to detail – possibly also influenced by the social status of the owner.

V. Barbu published the results of archaeological excavations taking place at Tomis during 1959 and 1960 in the third issue of the *Studii Clasice* journal.<sup>26</sup> The author analyses a wide chronological framework, offering valuable information regarding the limits of the extra-mural Hellenistic and Roman necropolises, as well as regarding the funerary practices and the categories of grave goods.<sup>27</sup> This ample article focused on archaeological material selected and

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<sup>24</sup> Hayes 1975, 123-124, pl. 32, cat. nos. 499-500. From a stylistic point of view, such vessels are closer to the Cypriot production centres, but a Syrian origin cannot be completely excluded.

<sup>25</sup> Gluščević 1998, 185-188.

<sup>26</sup> Barbu 1961, 203-226.

<sup>27</sup> Barbu 1961, 204-210.

analysed exclusively based on the coins found in the funerary contexts.<sup>28</sup> The author considered the use of coinage issues – *criterion A* – as the safest way of dating burials. No matter the objects constituting the grave goods (pottery, glass, metal), Barbu begins with the coin(s) found in the respective context as a chronological landmark, subsequently completed with a comparative analysis.<sup>29</sup>

It can be noticed that, both as number of items and as number of contexts, glass is best represented in the necropolises II and IV<sup>30</sup>, in which predominate inhumation burials in limestone sarcophagi, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD – period reflecting, in the author's opinion, a prosperous phase in the life of the city.<sup>31</sup>

The glass vessels found in these funerary contexts are neither analysed morphologically nor classified typologically – a consequence of the fact that the article focuses on the delimitation of the funerary spaces, identification of funerary practices, and establishing their chronology. Still, the category/type of some of the vessels can be identified based on shape, unfortunately without further information regarding colours, quality or technological details. In addition, it is clear that the glass vessels cluster in the chronological framework of the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, becoming scarcer in the late necropolises, dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, in general lacking grave goods.<sup>32</sup>

Among the burials analysed in more detail in the paper, graves nos. 35 and 38 stand out from the point of view of glass grave goods. Most of these vessels can be included in the category of *unguentaria*, being dated based on their association with coins. In the grave no. 35, together with a coin issued for Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161), pottery and metal items, there were identified seven free-blown glass vessels, out of which six *unguentaria*. An identifiable form based on the illustration offered in the text is the *candlestick unguentarium* (Isings form 82/B).<sup>33</sup> These vessels were also analysed by Bucovaľă in his catalogue, described as vessels with *conical body and cylindrical high narrow neck*<sup>34</sup>. A similar vessel, with a comparable profile, found in a funerary context from Poarta Albă – Constanța, dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD,

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<sup>28</sup> Barbu 1961, 205.

<sup>29</sup> Barbu 1961, 207.

<sup>30</sup> Barbu 1961, 205.

<sup>31</sup> Barbu 1961, 207.

<sup>32</sup> Barbu 1961, 207-208.

<sup>33</sup> Barbu 1961, 218, fig. 7, nos. 5-9, 11.

<sup>34</sup> Bucovaľă 1968a, 99-103; a further division could be made based on the presence/absence of constriction between neck and body.

was published recently in a catalogue dedicated to the ancient glass vessels in the collections of the National History Museum of Romania.<sup>35</sup> This type of vessel is well attested at Tomis in funerary contexts dated at the latest to the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD.<sup>36</sup>

In the grave no. 38, the best-represented grave goods are jewellery and glass vessels, together with coins issued for Aurelian (AD 270-275) and Probus (AD 276-282).<sup>37</sup> There were identified five glass vessels, four of them with spherical body and one with ovoid body, all in a good state of preservation, dated based on their association with the coins to the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD.<sup>38</sup>

Archaeological research conducted in 1971 at Tomis led to the discovery of five skeletons, out of which two were considered as belonging to female deceased. The grave goods recovered from the graves are rich and varied, consisting of objects made of glass, clay, metal, and bone, all in a good state of preservation. Among these finds, there are six glass items, including *unguentaria*. A. Panaitescu published the results of the excavations in *Pontica* 10. The author discussed in detail a double inhumation burial, dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD and possibly to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD.<sup>39</sup> Among the bell-shaped *unguentaria* (a variant of candlestick *unguentarium*), together with complete items, it is remarked upon a glass vessel (Inv. No. 20.556), which seemed to have been broken in place, possibly as part of the funerary ritual.<sup>40</sup> Still, the particularities of the funerary structure – a tomb with lid, made of limestone, with wooden coffins placed inside – could explain the degree of fragmentation of the glass items.<sup>41</sup>

The rescue excavations in the necropolises of Tomis continued from the fall of 1977. Unfortunately, from the point of view of glass finds, the results were modest, most objects being recovered in an advanced state of fragmentation, despite the large number of investigated burials.<sup>42</sup> The results of these excavations were published in *Pontica* 12, including the description of a glass *unguentarium*,<sup>43</sup> dated to the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD, with intact profile, made of

<sup>35</sup> Băltăc 2024, 101, cat. no. 59.

<sup>36</sup> Bucovaia 1968a, 146; with similar items discussed for his type XIV (*candlestick unguentarium*).

<sup>37</sup> Barbu 1961, 213.

<sup>38</sup> Barbu 1961, 220.

<sup>39</sup> Panaitescu 1977, 339-343.

<sup>40</sup> Panaitescu 1977, 342, fig. 5/3.

<sup>41</sup> Panaitescu 1977, 339.

<sup>42</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu 1979, 247-250.

<sup>43</sup> The absence of an inventory number impeded so far the identification of the vessel in the museum's collections, for verification and eventually determination of further details.

dense glass and characterised by a constriction between body and neck.<sup>44</sup> The author mentions the possibility of a local production.<sup>45</sup>

In the necropolises of Tomis were excavated numerous Late Antique burials, with a wide typological diversity. The predominant types are funerary structures with one or two niches and access rooms, followed by simple graves or graves with tiles, all of them of inhumation.<sup>46</sup> Details regarding this Late Antique necropolis were published in *Pontica* 15. The grave goods associated to the 50 burials are modest. Although the number of the objects is low, in relation to the number of funerary structures, their typological variety is remarkable. The authors discuss coins issued for the emperors Maximianus, Licinius and Constantine I,<sup>47</sup> metal accessories, jewellery made of gold, bronze and glass, as well as pottery, this last category with a very scarce presence during this chronological framework.<sup>48</sup> The glass items dominate the grave goods of this period, represented especially by *unguentaria*, most probably in association with ritual practices or symbolic meanings. The sobriety of the grave goods reflects the introduction of Christian funerary practices in this area. The glass vessels are represented by one small recipient, a jar, dated based on analogies to the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, and 14 *unguentaria*, dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD.<sup>49</sup> Two of the *unguentaria* are characterised by a spherical body and a long neck, but the predominant shape is the one known in the archaeological literature as toilet-bottles of Isings form 105.<sup>50</sup> This type of glass vessel, included by Bucovală in the category of *unguentaria*,<sup>51</sup> is visibly distinguishable from an aesthetic perspective from its earlier counterparts found at Tomis. The Isings form 105 *unguentaria* are characterised by a spindle (fusiform) shape, a bulbous middle section, a ringed rim, and variable dimensions, of both height and maximum diameter, as well as quite a wide variation in colour/tinge. Variations of the Isings form 105 are frequently found in funerary contexts dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, both at Tomis and Callatis.

The beginning of the 1980s witnessed new developments of the modern city of Constanța, which made necessary the continuation of the rescue excavations. The results of the archaeological research, published in *Pontica* 16, bring information regarding Late Antique

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<sup>44</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu 1979, 249, fig. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu 1979, 248.

<sup>46</sup> Lungu – Chera-Mărgineanu 1982, 175-199.

<sup>47</sup> Lungu – Chera-Mărgineanu 1982, 182.

<sup>48</sup> Lungu – Chera-Mărgineanu 1982, 188.

<sup>49</sup> Lungu – Chera-Mărgineanu 1982, 189-190.

<sup>50</sup> Isings 1957, 126, form 105.

<sup>51</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 121-130.

burials and their grave goods, containing pottery, glass and metal objects, some of them showing influences or displaying Christian symbols.<sup>52</sup> The 23 graves analysed in this paper show that, while pottery tends to be scarce, the glass vessels, found both fragmentary and in a complete state of preservation, dominate the grave goods.<sup>53</sup> Out of the five *unguentaria*, the majority are the spindle-shaped type,<sup>54</sup> only one item being a vessel with spherical body. All these vessels were dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, either based on their find contexts or based on typological analogies, inclusively with items found in the necropolises of Callatis.<sup>55</sup> The areas investigated during 1983, also as result of the urban development of Constanța, published in *Pontica* 17, offered rich archaeological materials.<sup>56</sup> The funerary contexts cover a chronological framework between the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD and the 6<sup>th</sup> c. AD.<sup>57</sup> Out of the excavated burials, 29 were dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD. Grave no. 30 was dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> c. AD. The dating of the contexts was proposed based on grave goods, funerary rites and coins. From the point of view of the typology of the funerary structures, they consist of niches with access chamber, and the characteristic disposal of the body is inhumation.<sup>58</sup> It was considered that the decoration of the various grave goods shows the transition from Roman motives to early Christian ones.<sup>59</sup>

Another observation regards the glass vessels, considered as the most numerous finds after pottery, both in the case of the Early Roman graves and the Late Antique graves.<sup>60</sup> As in the previously discussed situations, the glass items are remarkable in terms of diversity of shapes, colours and dimensions. The authors propose a typological separation between the *decanter-type* vessels and the *unguentarium-type* vessels, the latter group being treated as a distinct category in the analysis of the grave goods. Still, several glass containers, found in burial no. 2, are not included in a specific typology; they are analysed against vessels with similar shapes, based on the geometric particularities of their body and neck, which is cracked-off. These vessels are

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<sup>52</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1983, 217-230.

<sup>53</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1983, 221.

<sup>54</sup> As already mentioned, this type is well represented in the funerary contexts from Tomis, being found items with a variety of dimensions (height up to 44 cm) and colours.

<sup>55</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1983, 223.

<sup>56</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 109-130.

<sup>57</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 124.

<sup>58</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 109.

<sup>59</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 128-129. The authors emphasise the presence of two clay lamps with Christian decoration in graves dated to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. Based on the archaeological context and analogies, these finds are considered early proofs of the existence of a Christian community, either local or arrived from the already Christianized Orient.

<sup>60</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 113.

distinguished also by other particularities, such as, in some cases, their colour. For example, the vessel with Inv. No. 31158, which was included based on aesthetic and functional details in Isings form 103,<sup>61</sup> is described as characterised by a “sour cherry-red” colour, a very rare occurrence in the local funerary contexts<sup>62</sup>. The dating of these vessels, based on association with coins, situates them at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD and the beginning of the next century. As already mentioned, the vessels from burial no. 2, characterised by a spherical body and a undefined cut rim, are treated as items different from *unguentaria*.

Although not clearly stated, this separation seems based either on the almost 1:1 ratio between body height and neck height or the peculiarities of the rim and mouth<sup>63</sup>. Therefore, such a separation seems to be triggered rather by the shape of these vessels than their probable use, although functionally they could have served the same purpose as the vessels included by the authors in the category of *unguentaria*.

Regarding the typological attribution of similar glass containers from Tomis, with spherical body, slightly elongated below the constriction, and associated by M. Bucovală with Isings form 103<sup>64</sup>, in our opinion a more adequate attribution would be Isings form 6,<sup>65</sup> especially for the variants with short ground neck. Their flat or slightly concave base sustains this attribution, although the same typological detail brings them close also to Isings form 26a<sup>66</sup> – for which Isings discusses also early representatives characterised by constriction between neck and body. In this context, the association of the three vessels from burial no. 2 by the authors to the Isings form 103<sup>67</sup> needs a new discussion.

The vessels included by Isings in her form 103 are characterised by a strongly spherical body, a marked constriction between body and neck, and incised decoration<sup>68</sup>. Therefore, the “sour cherry red” vessel from Tomis presents some similarities, but more differences when compared with the representatives of form 103, as it has a less spherical body, flat base, marked constriction, no decoration, and its rim is cracked-off and ground. This combination of traits

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<sup>61</sup> Isings 1957, 121-122, form 103.

<sup>62</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 115, pl. I, fig. 12. Still, if possible, it should be investigated in the future if what is described as such (“sour cherry-red”) is not in fact an instance of use of purple glass (Mn-coloured).

<sup>63</sup> This type of vessel is frequently attested at Tomis, and it was included by Bucovală (1968a, 62-63) into his type XXVIII – *vessels with spherical body, cylindrical cut and ground neck*.

<sup>64</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 62-63.

<sup>65</sup> Isings 1957, 22, form 6; Isings 1971, 6, cat. no. 1; 45, cat. no. 1, fig. I; 59, cat. no. I, pl. I.

<sup>66</sup> Isings 1957, 40, form 26°.

<sup>67</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 115, pl. IV, figs. 4, 9, 12.

<sup>68</sup> Isings 1957, 121-122, form 103; Biaggio-Simona 2003, 109, 77.

brings it closer to forms 6 and 26a. It could be considered that this vessel represents an intermediary step between Isings form 6 and Isings form 26a – possibly an early variant, made of coloured glass, of Isings form 26a.

The other two vessels, with Inv. Nos. 31157 and 31158, are characterised by a smooth transition between neck and body, a more elongated, less spherical, body, and relatively flat base. Taking into consideration these details, they cannot be included into Isings form 103, as proposed by the authors. Again, these vessels seem to oscillate between Isings form 6 and Isings form 26a. In our opinion, the closest attribution in their case would be to late representatives of Isings form 26a, as described by this author.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, also the items included by Bucovală in Isings form 103<sup>70</sup> should be re-attributed. Their typological details make them intermediary forms between Isings form 6 and Isings form 26a, the latter being described by Isings as a natural evolution of the first.<sup>71</sup> From a chronological perspective, these types of vessels were produced in the Roman Empire as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD. Still, in the case of the vessels from Tomis, their association in graves with pottery dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD ensures a later chronological framework. In the specific case of the three vessels from burial no. 2 from Tomis, the dating of the context was possible based on one legible coin, issued for Julia Domna (193-211), the other four coins from the grave being unidentifiable.<sup>72</sup>

Several shapes of *unguentaria* are represented in these funerary contexts. Spindle-shaped (fusiform) *unguentaria*, most of them in a good state of preservation, are present, being dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD. They are variations of Isings form 105, already known from other funerary contexts at Tomis,<sup>73</sup> both in the details of the median bulb (sometimes slightly indented) and in the dimensions of the vessels. Variants of spindle-shaped *unguentaria* identified at Tomis in 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD contexts present a less prominent bulb, and the vessel in its entirety is characterised by an elongated, slim shape.<sup>74</sup> Alongside the fusiform *unguentaria*, there is also present a bell-shaped

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<sup>69</sup> Isings 1957, 40.

<sup>70</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 62, fig. 80a-c.

<sup>71</sup> Isings 1957, 40-41.

<sup>72</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 119.

<sup>73</sup> Lungu – Chera-Mărgineanu 1982, 185, pl. II, fig. 1; 191, pl. IV, figs. 11-13.

<sup>74</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 152, fig. XI; Lungu – Chera-Mărgineanu 1982, 185, pl. II, fig. 5; pl. IV, fig. 10; pl. V, figs. 16, 20; Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 123, pl. 5, figs. 46-47.



*unguentarium*, another shape already discussed above, but in this case with the notable detail of a cut neck.<sup>75</sup>

During the same archaeological excavations, there were found *unguentaria* already known at Tomis,<sup>76</sup> with a loose dating in the Roman world, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD. As part of the grave goods in burial no. 10, there were placed two miniature items, of which one was found complete (Inv. No. 31182) and the other in a fragmentary condition. The first vessel, presenting on the body indentations, can be included in Isings form 84. The second one seems to represent a variant of the same form, but with a more pointed base.<sup>77</sup>

The so-called tube-shaped *unguentaria*, also known in the archaeological literature as teardrop-shaped or tubular *unguentaria*, are represented in funerary contexts from Tomis, inclusively in graves published in *Pontica* 17. The item found in burial no. 1 (Inv. No. 31155) was previously attributed to Isings form 82/B1,<sup>78</sup> but again in this case there are some typological problems.

The Isings form 82/B1 is a subdivision of the Isings form 82 – the famous candlestick *unguentarium* – already documented at Tomis in multiple variants. Representative for this subdivision is a vessel found in 1959, and dated based on its association with a coin to the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD.<sup>79</sup> In their turn, the tube-shaped or tubular *unguentaria* are present also as earlier variants, with delimitation between neck and body, representing intermediary forms between Isings form 8 and Isings form 28a.<sup>80</sup> In the case of the *unguentarium* with Inv. No. 31155 from burial no. 1, its morphology brings it closer to Isings form 27. This attribution is proposed based on the description offered by the authors in the article and the illustration.<sup>81</sup> This vessel is similar to items previously published by Bucovală,<sup>82</sup> dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD in contexts from Tomis, and even to the 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD in the rest of the empire.<sup>83</sup>

*Roman Glass Vessels Discovered in Dobrudja* presents, in the context of recent, at that time, finds dated to the Roman period, a series of vessels of complex shapes and decorations.

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<sup>75</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 115, pl. 1, fig. 5.

<sup>76</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 96, fig. 96.

<sup>77</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 120, pl. 4, figs. 38-39.

<sup>78</sup> Isings 1957, 97-99.

<sup>79</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 99, fig. 183.

<sup>80</sup> Paraschiv *et al.*, in preparation.

<sup>81</sup> Chera-Mărgineanu – Lungu 1984, 115, fig. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Bucovală 1968a, 122, fig. 251.

<sup>83</sup> Isings 1957, 41.

The author emphasises the economic potential of the main ancient harbour-cities from Dobrudja (Histria, Callatis, and Tomis) during Roman times and the refinement of their material culture, in this case the focus being on the impressive quantity of glass items.<sup>84</sup> Given the fact that the author was interested rather in presenting rarer finds, no *unguentaria* were taken into consideration in this paper.

The archaeological excavations taking place during 1987-1988 brought to light an important number of funerary contexts, with a variety of grave goods. One of the burials, with rich grave goods, was discussed by Bucovală in an issue of *Dacia* journal. The grave contained, together with coins, gold jewellery, bronze and wood objects, and glass vessels. The majority of the glass vessels were still intact – six vessels out of the total of seven. The author identified explicitly only one vessel of *unguentarium* type, in the *category B* of the grave goods, among these vessels. The container is described as a bell-shaped *unguentarium*, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD.<sup>85</sup> Still, consulting the illustration, and based on the available documentation regarding the typological classification of *unguentaria*, it can be proposed in fact the existence of three *unguentaria* in this funerary context, belonging each to another type, showing differences in the shape of their body. At that moment, Bucovală included the other three analysed glass vessels (two complete and the fragmentary one) in the category of *vessels for unguents, with flattened spherical body and tall, wide cylindrical neck*, dating them to the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, based on their archaeological context.<sup>86</sup>

During this preliminary stage of the documentation, based on the typology of *unguentaria* discussed in the archaeological literature, we identified in this case four vessels which could be attributed to Isings form 82. The main difference between the two variants present in this funerary context is the variation in the shape of the body – flattened spherical and bell-shaped respectively – without affecting in any way their functionality.<sup>87</sup>

The funerary contexts reflect the diversification of religious traditions present in the region. In this context, we could mention at least two *hypogeum* burials, excavated at Tomis and

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<sup>84</sup> Bucovală 1984, 59-63.

<sup>85</sup> Bucovală 1991, 189-190.

<sup>86</sup> Bucovală 1991, 189-190, 198, fig. 15/a-b.

<sup>87</sup> Bucovală 1991, 198, fig. 15/a-b.

dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD. The authors discussing these finds include them with certainty in the category of the early Christian burials of the city.<sup>88</sup>

One of the best-preserved *hypogeum* structures, from the point of view of both paintings and grave goods, is the one found in 1988 in Constanța, close to the crossroads between Ștefan cel Mare Street and Mircea cel Bătrân Street. The grave goods, although consisting of a limited number of items, are typologically significant. Among the objects placed inside the funerary structure there are two bronze bracelets, faceted beads, a *philacterium*, and a glass vessel. This last item, belonging to the category of spindle-shaped *unguentaria*, frequently found in the province of Scythia, offers valuable information regarding the chronological framework and cultural context in the region.<sup>89</sup>

An overview of mould-blown vessels from Tomis was published in *Pontica* 25. The authors analyse vessels considered luxury commodities, such as ribbed bowls, poly-faceted bottles and the mythological beaker, from the MINAC collections.<sup>90</sup> Based on the association with other grave goods and analogies with similar finds from other regions of the Roman Empire, these items are dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD. The presence of such luxury goods is considered as a valuable indicator of the intensity of the imports of glass items in the area.<sup>91</sup>

In the same issue of the *Pontica* journal, another paper focuses on recent archaeological research in the western necropolis of Tomis. The authors discuss 47 burials, dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, with varied grave goods – coins, pottery, clay lamps, jewellery, and glass vessels. The characteristics of the items belonging to the last mentioned category of finds encouraged the authors to advance the hypothesis of a local secondary production.<sup>92</sup>

It can be easily noticed that the Roman glass in the archaeological record from Tomis and Callatis comes from funerary contexts, in the case of older finds. This type of archaeological context provides a high probability for the vessels to be found intact or at least in a tolerable state of preservation, allowing the identification of shape and technological details. In addition, the retrieval of glass vessels from funerary contexts ensures in many cases a more precise dating, based on their association with other categories of objects as grave goods. Still, the analysis of this category of material comes with serious challenges.

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<sup>88</sup> Barbet – Bucovăla 1996, 105-158.

<sup>89</sup> Chera – Lungu 1988, 11-14.

<sup>90</sup> Lungu – Chera 1992, 279.

<sup>91</sup> Lungu – Chera 1992, 273-280.

<sup>92</sup> Bucovăla – Pașca 1992, 270.

An important aspect of the glass studies regards the identification of production centres for the secondary production, turning the raw glass into various items. As it was already discussed above, questions regarding the possible origin of the glass vessels found at Tomis and Callatis were frequently present in the older publications, as well as struggles for determining if specific items or types were imported – and from where – or represented a proof of local production. Unfortunately, despite the inherent difficulties, this line of research cannot be neglected, as the information regarding origin/area of production/workshop is an essential part when dealing with glass production, for economic, commercial, and cultural reasons.

For example, in the case of Early Roman *unguentaria* from Tomis, as part of the (re)evaluation of this category of vessels from MINAC collections, it was determined the existence of a number of items possibly produced in Egyptian workshops.<sup>93</sup> A part of these *unguentaria* present similar characteristics to vessels from Karanis (Egypt).<sup>94</sup> The technical description of the vessels, offered by Harden for several types of vessels of possible local production found at this site, corresponds directly with that of some of the *unguentaria* from Tomis. Other common traits between the selected vessels from Tomis and those from Karanis could be identified: the solidity of the items and their thick walls (influencing also their weight), their strong colour (vivid green, vivid bluish green) – partially intensified by the thickness of glass. Among the *unguentaria* from Tomis, it could be also noticed the presence of an item with very thick walls and base, but a much reduced internal volume. Such vessels, recovered during excavations in Egypt and dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD, are part of the collections of the Louvre Museum.<sup>95</sup>

Mediterranean production centres are also possibly represented in the MINAC collections by another group of glass vessels, among which *unguentaria*. These items were already discussed above, as they belonged to a funerary context from Callatis, the sarcophagus burial discovered in 1970.

Beyond their functional, aesthetic and symbolic value, the high frequency with which glass vessels are deposited as grave goods during the 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD could sustain the hypothesis of a commercial route between the production areas – secondary glass workshops – from other regions of the empire and Moesia Inferior, and later Scythia. The existence at Tomis of small

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<sup>93</sup> Paraschiv *et al.*, in preparation.

<sup>94</sup> Harden 1936.

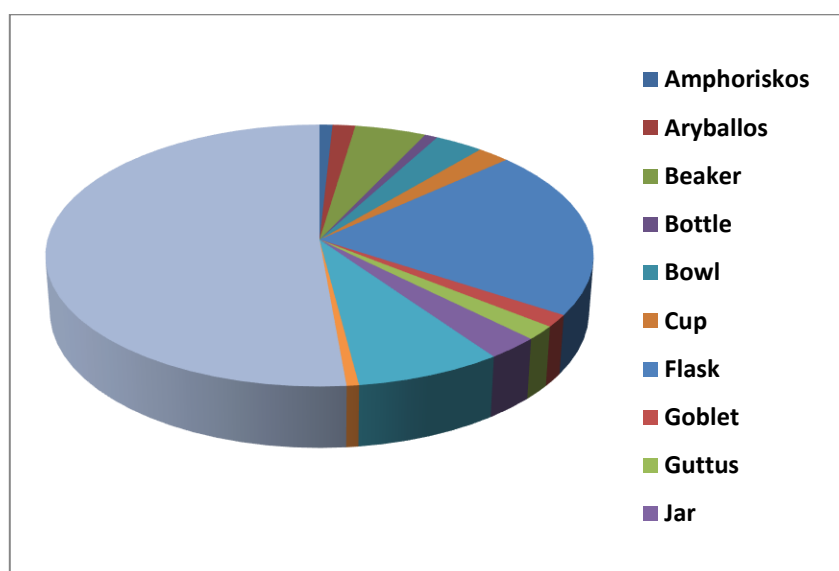
<sup>95</sup> Arveiller-Dulong – Nenna 2005.

toilet-bottles, some of them mould-blown, belonging to types/forms for which in the dedicated literature was proposed a production in Sidon workshops,<sup>96</sup> brings strength to such a hypothesis. On another hand, the invention, development, and following spread of the glass blowing technique during the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD means that a local production of some types or variants of vessels, *unguentaria* included, cannot be completely dismissed. The existence of remains of secondary glass kilns and unfinished glass vessels at Tomis, most probably functioning sometime in the interval between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD lends some strength to this hypothesis.<sup>97</sup>

### The glass finds from Tomis and Callatis: a view from the graves

The consultation of the older publications (years 1960s-1990s) presenting glass finds from Tomis and Callatis offers valuable information regarding this category of archaeological material recovered from these two sites.

The extracted information allows the identification of several categories of glass items dated to the Roman period and found in funerary contexts from Tomis and Callatis.<sup>98</sup> Their total number amounts to 465 items, of which: 4 amphoriskoi; 7 aryballoi; 22 beakers; 4 bottles; 15 bowls; 10 cups; 97 flasks; 7 goblets; 8 gutti; 13 jars; 36 jugs; 3 stirring rods; 239 *unguentaria* (Fig. 1).



<sup>96</sup> Bucovală 1977-1980, 223-230.

<sup>97</sup> Cliante – Țârlea 2020.

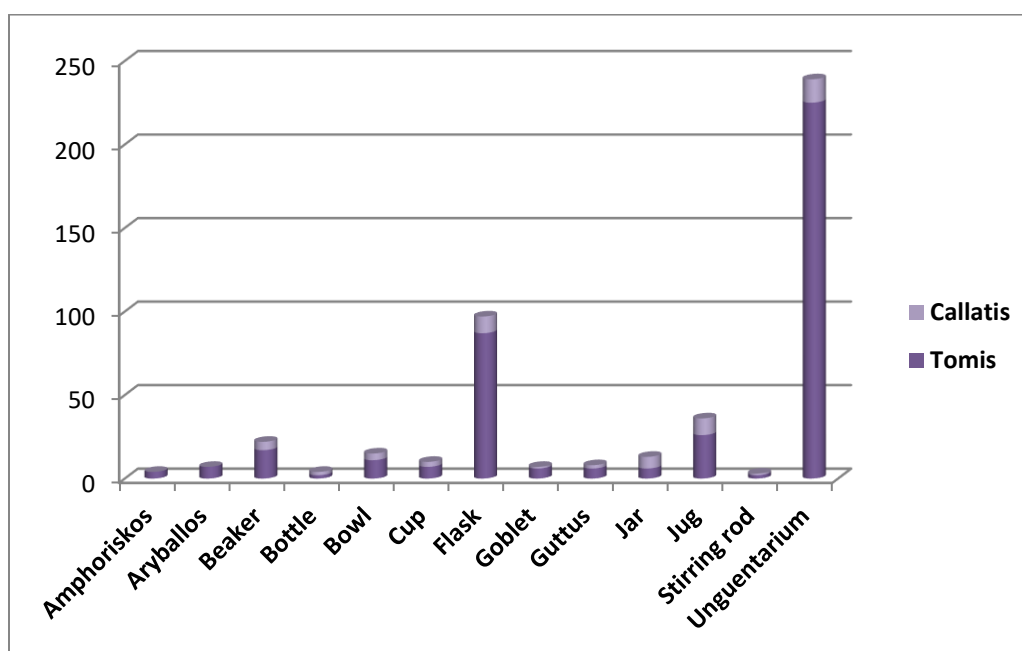
<sup>98</sup> The glass ornaments were not taken into consideration for the present discussion.

**Fig. 1. The categories of glass items found in funerary contexts from Tomis and Callatis based on older publications**

Out of this total, from Tomis come 406 items of which 4 amphoriskoi; 7 aryballoi; 17 beakers; 2 bottles; 11 bowls; 7 cups; 87 flasks; 6 goblets; 6 gutti; 6 jars; 26 jugs; 2 stirring rods; 225 *unguentaria*.

From Callatis come 59 items of which 5 beakers; 2 bottles; 4 bowls; 3 cups; 10 flasks; 1 goblet; 2 gutti; 7 jars; 10 jugs; 1 stirring-rod; 14 *unguentaria*.

This situation of the glass finds from the two sites is also expressed in visual form below (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2. The categories of glass items from Tomis and Callatis (expressed in numbers)**

Prior to discussing the resulting image in more detail, it is extremely important to emphasise a series of weaknesses and limitations of this approach, on several levels.

As already mentioned above, this statistic is based only on the published material, resulting from older excavations. Most of these publications represent in fact archaeological reports, only in a few cases being papers – either articles or even books – focusing on glass vessels as a specific category. Rescue excavations are a constant for the ancient sites of both Tomis and Callatis, from the 1960s to the 1990s (and continuing until present), due to the evolution of the modern cities and their periphery. As a result, the archaeologists were dealing in

the majority of cases with huge amounts of excavated contexts each year. This situation is reflected by the publication of the material, in which sometimes dozens, sometimes hundreds of funerary contexts had to be “squeezed” in a tolerable number of pages. Therefore, various attempts of controlling the avalanche of information can be detected in these papers. The main ways of dealing with the material was either publishing what was deemed as essential information for a large number of contexts – resulting in a brief presentation of the grave goods or presenting several general data and then focusing on a selected number of more interesting contexts. As glass items represent only one category of grave goods, found frequently in association with jewellery, pottery, coins, and other categories of archaeological material, there are rare the cases in which this category represents a priority for publication. The fact that blown glass, especially, does not represent a very thorough/narrow chronological indicator, combined with the limited number of specialists on this category of material in the Romanian archaeology during the decades considered here, led in many cases to only a general discussion in the published texts and a reduced presence in the illustration.

Considering these circumstances, it is only reasonable to presume that an important number of glass vessels remained unpublished – especially in those cases in which their state of preservation / degree of fragmentation impeded identification of category / type / shape. Even more, the published vessels present inherent problems, covering quite a large spectrum, some of them reflecting issues with which generations of archaeologists worldwide, working with this category, had to fight. For instance, the attribution of the vessels to a specific functional category is a very “thorny” aspect of the field of glass studies, due to lack of clear criteria or overlapping of criteria, and it is often reflected in terminological dithering. As an example, the separation between cups and beakers, between bowls and plates, or between flasks, bottles, and *unguentaria* tends to be less clear than one would desire, and various works present various approaches (applied terminology included) to identifiable categories and types. As discussed in the first part of this paper, in many cases becomes unclear what kinds of vessels were in fact found, based only on their description. Unfortunately, even in the case of items for which description is matched by illustration, the quality of the latter (another inherent aspect of Romanian older publications – due to the quality of paper of the journals and books during communist times and a period after) impedes in most cases the identification of necessary details.

Consequently, there are very good chances that, on one hand, the number of published vessels taken into consideration in this paper represents only a part of the real number of items recovered from the excavated funerary contexts, and, on another hand, their attribution to a specific category is faulty in some cases. Another issue identified during our research concerns the publication in some instances of the same glass items in different publications. Normally, as long as the original publication is cited, there should be no problems. Still, there are cases in which the same vessels were published in parallel, so in the same year, by different authors or by the same author in different papers. In combination with variations in description, absence/presence of illustration, and only partial attribution of inventory numbers at the moment of their publication, this leads to the unpleasant feeling that it is possible that some glass items were counted twice for the present statistics. Especially “serial” products, the vessels that are not singled out by technological or typological details are encumbered by the risk of either being counted twice, or, on the contrary, mistaken for items already taken into account. Unfortunately, by default the vessels that can be considered *unguentaria* or toilet-bottles enter this category.

Thus, the results of this statistical attempt should be considered rather in terms of determining trends in the presence and treatment of glass in funerary contexts from Tomis and Callatis, than a complete and immovable image.

After determining that this discussion is built on a somewhat questionable foundation, we will try to look at the image created by the glass finds in total and from each of the two sites. The first graph (Fig. 1) displays the clear dominance of *unguentaria* (either vessels identified as such in the respective publications or described as toilet-bottles), followed far behind by flasks and jugs. It is interesting to notice that most categories of tableware, such as beakers and goblets, cups, bowls, and plates, are either relatively rarely placed in graves or practically absent.

As it could already be noticed by consulting one of the previous graphs (Fig. 2), there is a clear discrepancy in number of finds between the two ancient sites, in favour of Tomis. Therefore, it cannot come as a surprise that the degree of the representation of the categories of vessels in the total of finds is strongly influenced by the situation of glass as grave goods in the funerary contexts from Tomis (compare Fig. 1 and Fig. 3). The first three positions of the hierarchy are again occupied by *unguentaria* / toilet-bottles, flasks, and jugs, followed by the other categories far behind.



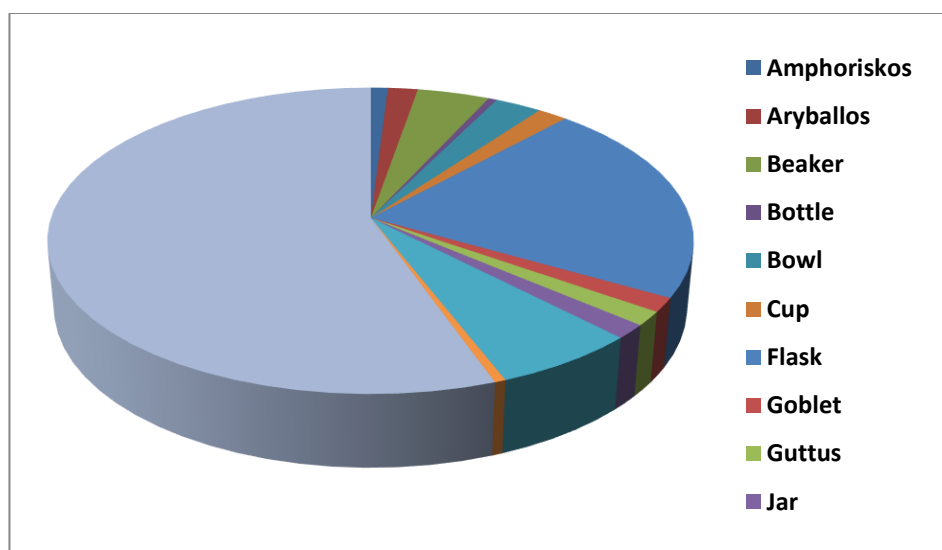


Fig. 3. The categories of glass items found in funerary contexts from Tomis

Callatis, with much smaller numbers for all the categories of glass vessels coming from this site, seems to present a different image (Fig. 4). Although there are the same three categories leading the hierarchy – *unguentaria* / toilet-bottles, flasks, and jugs – the numbers of representatives in this case are much closer to each other. It is less clear, at this point, if this image reflects the reality of the funerary customs in the Callatis necropoleis or the state of research/publication (consulting the bibliography it is clear that a smaller number of graves were published for Callatis compared to Tomis, during the 1960s-1990s).

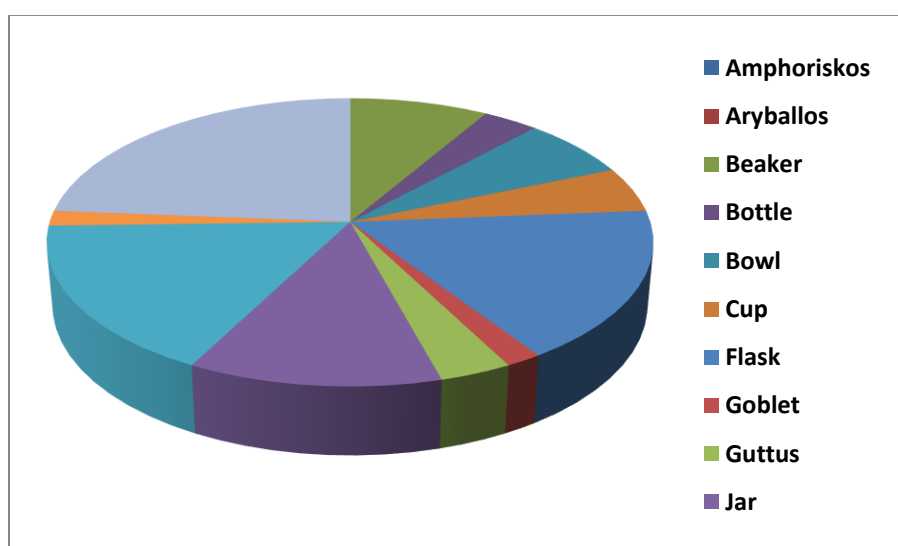


Fig. 4. The categories of glass items found in funerary contexts from Callatis

In an attempt to determine if the image created by the previous two graphs (Figs. 3-4) has chances to reflect the reality of ancient times, rather than the levels of excavations/publications, we created a graph showing in a different visual form the situation of the glass finds from Tomis and Callatis (Fig. 5). The resulting image is useful in that it clearly shows – albeit with different intensity, we could say – the same depositional trends in the case of both ancient cities during Roman times. The same peaks noticed in the case of Tomis – flasks, jugs, and unguentaria – are mirrored in the case of Callatis. Even in the case of other categories, a similar rhythm is visible. Therefore, it seems possible that the two communities had a relatively homogeneous approach to the treatment of glass as an appropriate category of material to be placed in funerary contexts, and a similar interest in specific categories/types or displaying specific functions/uses.

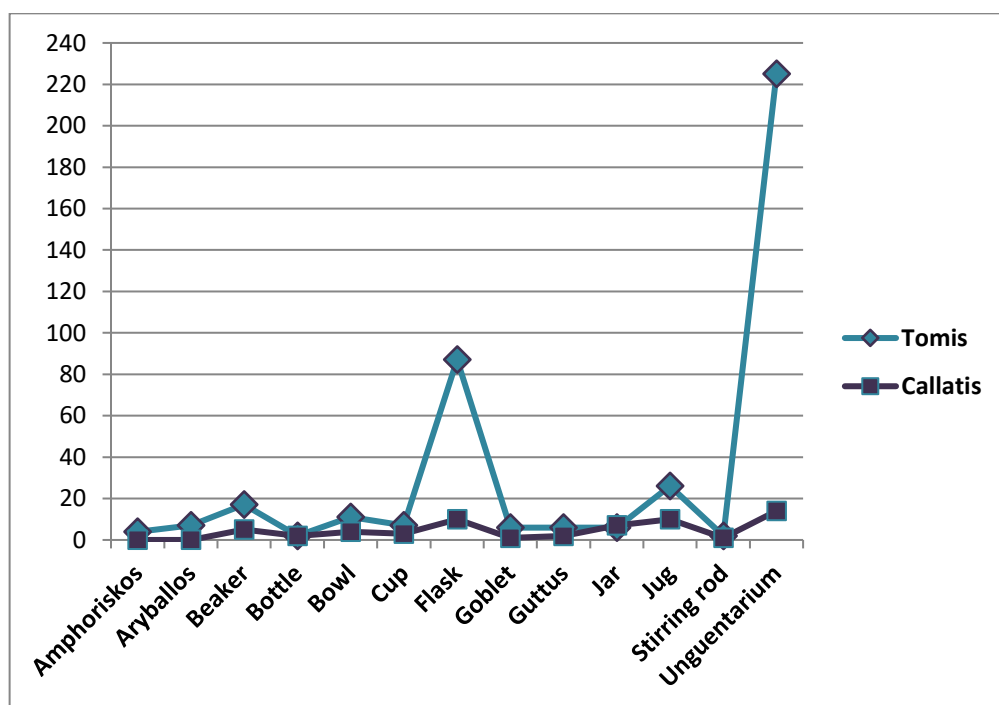


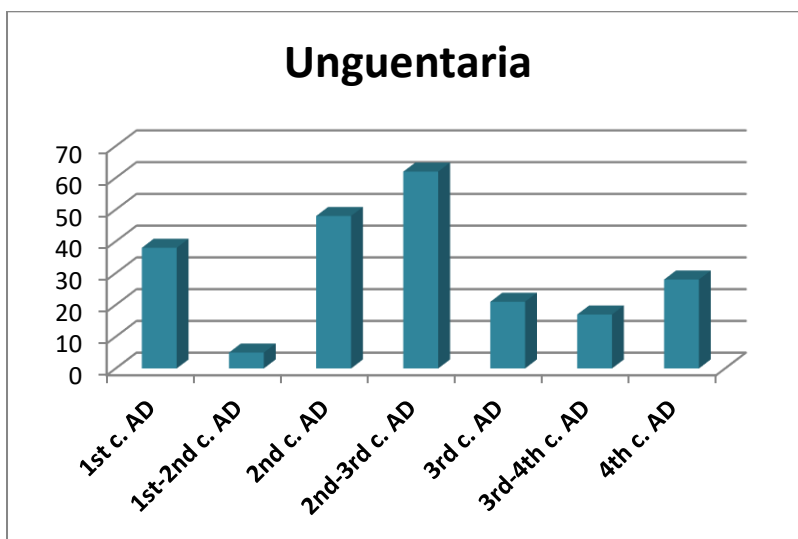
Fig. 5. The glass vessels in funerary contexts at Tomis and Callatis

### The place of *unguentaria* / toilet-bottles in the larger context of glass finds from Tomis and Callatis

As it was made very clear by the previous considerations, the vessels that were published as *unguentaria* or toilet-bottles rule incontestably the glass grave goods landscape of Tomis and

Callatis. The frequency of their presence in funerary contexts from both sites against their chronological framework is expressed in the graphs below (fig. 6-7).

Several observations should be made at this point. The graph in Fig. 6 clearly shows that there is an important amount of overlapping of the chronological sequences to which various types/forms of *unguentaria* were allotted in the archaeological literature. This situation is the combined result of the two main criteria applied in general for the dating of Roman glass vessels: dating of the context they were found in and typological – technological characteristics of the glass vessels themselves. This is not to say that there are not good chances for the resulting chronological framework to be correct in both cases, it only means that this chronological framework cannot as a rule be narrowed down too much. Adding to this the unfortunate tendency of many forms of glassware to be produced, used, and trendy during relatively long time spans, and we end with types frequently covering two-three centuries of existence, and partially overlapping each other chronologically. This situation is extremely visible in the case of *unguentaria*, with many types/forms identified as appearing during the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD and still being produced during the next century, or starting to be produced during the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD and still going strong during the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD.



**Fig. 6. The chronological attribution of *unguentaria* from funerary contexts from Tomis and Callatis**

Still, a trend can be noticed in this graph (Fig. 6), with the highest numbers of finds dated to either the 2nd c. AD or the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. Therefore, a further clustering of the finds based on the chronological criterion was attempted (Fig. 7).

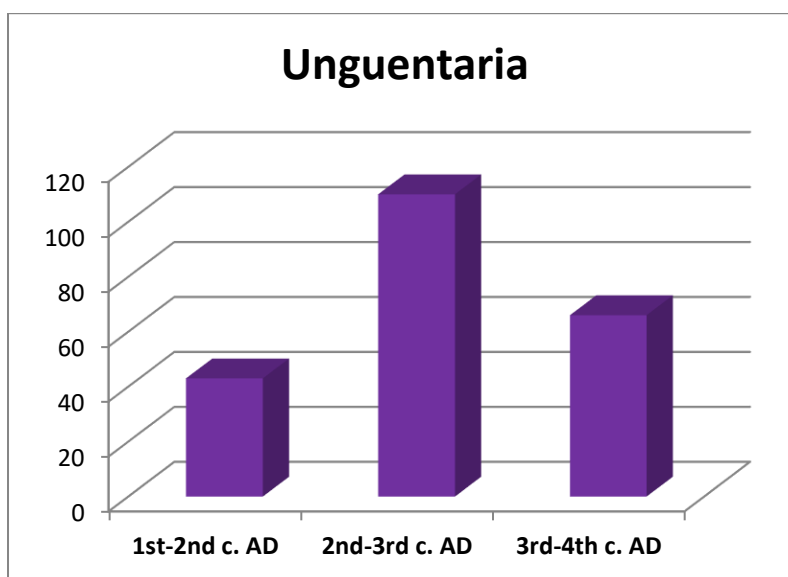


Fig. 7. The chronological attribution of *unguentaria* from funerary contexts from Tomis and Callatis

This graph shows a good presence in funerary contexts of early types/forms of *unguentaria*, followed by a peak for the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, when the number of items almost tripled in comparison, and a decrease in representation with the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, to almost half of the previous number. Taking into consideration this situation it was considered useful to represent this evolution also as a line graph (Fig. 8).

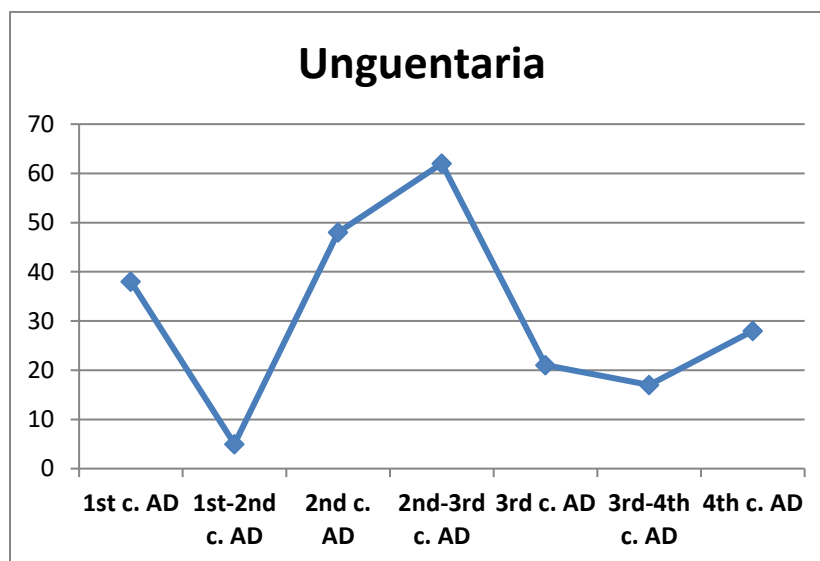
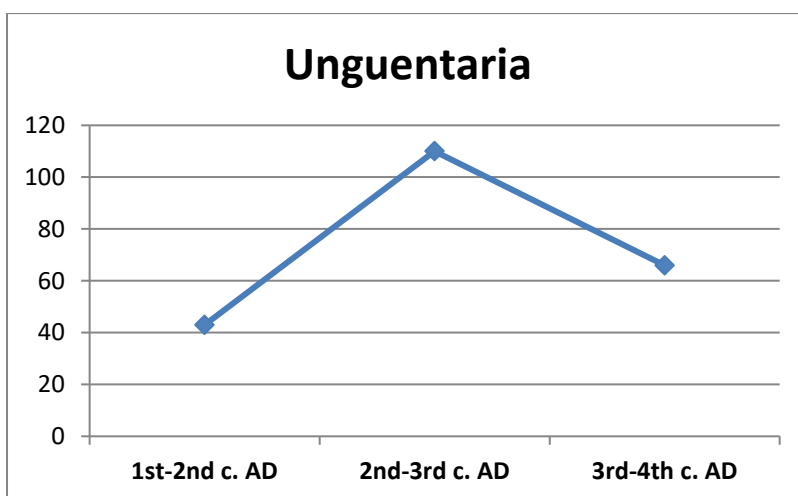


Fig. 8. The evolution in time of the glass *unguentaria* in funerary contexts from Tomis and Callatis

This graph (Fig. 8) shows that there is an important number of glass *unguentaria* published during the 1960s-1990s with a firm dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD. This chronological attribution was established in various papers, as already mentioned, based either on the dating of associated grave goods or on typological and technological details, or both. A much smaller number of vessels were dated more loosely to the 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD. It should be emphasised at this point that this drop in the graph does not reflect the reality. In other words, it does not indicate an interval with fewer glass *unguentaria* deposited as grave goods, but only that for a small number of finds it was not clear if they were chronologically restricted only to the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD. The same observation is valid for the next discussed *unguentaria*. The number of finds strongly increases with items dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. AD and reaches a peak with the *unguentaria* dated more loosely to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD. The numbers drop for glass containers dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD and the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, respectively, the line climbing again with the finds dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD. It becomes clear that a more detailed analysis should be made, taking into consideration the main types/forms accepted in the archaeological literature, but, at the same time, again the same obstacle, of production prolonged over centuries for many of them, will hamper such an attempt.



**Fig. 9.** The evolution in time of *unguentaria* in funerary contexts from Tomis and Callatis

The graph above (Fig. 9) shows in a broader form the chronological evolution of the presence of glass *unguentaria* as grave goods in the funerary contexts from Tomis and Callatis. The peak in deposition is recorded for types/shapes dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, followed by a decrease in representation of later types/forms.

## Conclusions

All these graphs (and especially Figs. 6 and 8) emphasise an interesting detail: the comparatively large number of early glass *unguentaria* found in graves. In other words, the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD blown glass *unguentaria* are remarkably well represented in funerary contexts. Of course, it would be ideal to determine the evolution in their funerary deposition along this century, in order to decide if it is a sudden phenomenon or a gradual increase in numbers from the beginning (or a specific moment/interval) of the century. Still, when looking at the 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD in comparison to what comes next, it can be said that the deposition of blown glass *unguentaria* in graves represents a strong trend from the beginning of their existence.

This situation deserves further analysis, as it could have different explanations, or it could be the result of cumulating factors. A possible reason for their strong funerary representation from the beginning is that the communities involved in these funerary practices had already established customs regarding the deposition of *unguentaria*, only that made of another material – clay. The glass variants would have been considered as similar, due to their shared function, despite the difference in material, and would have ended superseding their ceramic counterparts relatively quickly. Another explanation, which could be seen as running along the previous one or on the contrary opposing it, could be that these communities were open to novelties and eager to adopt them. Following this line of thought, these vessels can be described as such – combining a new technique and a probably already familiar material but with definite new characteristics (colourlessness, transparency, clarity, thinness of the walls). In consequence, they would have been deemed appropriate for reflecting the social status and cultural behaviours of both the deceased and of those left behind, as well as their connections to other parts of the Roman world.

The massive presence in graves of the *unguentaria* types that appear and evolve during the 2<sup>nd</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD is not surprising. It rather reflects the general situation noticed for the Roman world, with the largest number of finds in funerary contexts, both of forms identified as *unguentaria* or toilet-bottles and of glass vessels in general, characteristic for these centuries.

Starting probably already with the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD, and especially visible during 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, there is a decrease in the presence of glass vessels as grave goods, at the same time with substantial changes in the glass shapes. The more in-depth analysis of these aspects could open new directions in the research regarding the aesthetic and technical evolution of glass production, with implications connected to cultural practices involving this category of objects.

Taking into consideration that the present paper focuses only on the earliest decades of publication of funerary contexts, it does not reflect completely the evolution of Roman glass finds as grave goods. Therefore, it remains open the opportunity of ampler and clearer statistical analyses in the case of these two ancient cities.

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