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UNDERWATER FINDS FROM RISAN (MONTENEGRO) SEASON 2011¹

Abstract: An underwater archaeological prospection project has been carried out for several seasons, from 2003 to 2011, in Risan Bay around the town of Risan in modern Montenegro. An array of artifacts was raised from the sea bottom, most of them amphorae of different type. These were mainly Greek-Italic MGS V and MGS VI, and Lamboglia 2, dating from the fourth century BC. The article presents objects lifted from areas “R” and “S” in the 2011 season: 13 amphora sherds, 2 black gloss bowls, a lid and an amphora stopper. One of the amphora stamps has a parallel in Croatia.

Key words: Risan, amphorae, underwater research, amphora stamps, amphora stoppers

Risan is a small town in Montenegro, located in Risan Bay, which is itself part of Kotor Bay. It was called Rhizon (in Greek) or Risinium (in Latin) and was an important center of exchange (considering the numerous storerooms with amphorae found there²) on the trade route running along the eastern coast of the Adriatic. It has been the object of archeological research since 2001, the excavations carried out by archeologists from Poland (Center for Research on the Antiquity of Southeastern Europe, University of Warsaw) and Montenegro.³

Stone structures and amphorae were signaled underwater already in the nineteenth century.⁴ Amphorae were also brought up repeatedly, entangled in fishermen’s nets. All the chance finds suggested that it would be worthwhile to carry out underwater prospection in order to locate the ancient port (if such existed), possible shipwrecks and other objects connected with maritime activity in the area of the bay. The bottom of the bay was first examined with sonar and the more interesting anomalies were verified by divers: the anchorage of ancient Risan, a few clusters of amphorae and scattered stone blocks from ancient walls.⁵ The results of the underwater investigations in 2003–2010 were published in 2010 by the head of the underwater prospection project, Rafał Karpiński.⁶

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² DYCZEK *et alii* 2007, p. 130.

³ For ground excavation results, see: DYCZEK *et alii* 2004, DYCZEK *et alii* 2007 and DYCZEK *et alii* 2011–2012.

⁴ CONS 1881, pp. 249–250; EVANS 1883, p. 40; KARPIŃSKI 2010, p. 138; RICHLÝ 1898, p. 146.

⁵ Stone blocks were found next to the Teuta hotel and in the Spila river.

⁶ KARPIŃSKI 2010.

Underwater research

Underwater prospection of the bay, which started in 2003, located ancient pottery lying on the bottom. Research with a Simrad EK 60 echo sounder in 2004 established two clusters of artifacts, in areas “W” and “S”. In 2004, the investigations concentrated on the remains of ancient city fortifications submerged in the Spila river. Numerous potsherds were found in 2005 and 2006 in area “R”, assumed to be the probable anchorage. The search for the port started in 2006 with surveying alongside Hotel Teuta. A trial trench was opened in 2010 in order to locate the port buildings. In the most recent season of underwater research in 2011, single artifacts were lifted from the bottom in areas “R” and “S”.

The diagnostic sherds picked up from the bottom of the bay over the course of four seasons included two ceramic stoppers, three black-gloss bowls, one lid, one roof tile and 98 sherds of amphorae, mostly Greek-Italic forms MGS V and MGS VI, Lamboglia 2 and Dressel 6A.

Season 2011

Research was reported in area “R”, the so-called “anchorage”, and in area “S”. The “anchorage” is located by the Rtc Cape, about 1050 meters in a straight line to the south of the modern port of Risan. A large cluster of ceramics containing mainly amphorae was scattered over an area of ellipsoid shape, about 140 m by 60 meters on the two axes. Not one artifact was preserved complete, suggesting that the site was the actual anchorage.⁷ The material raised from the sea bottom between 2005 and 2010 consisted mainly of different types of amphorae from the Hellenistic period through late antiquity to Turkish times.⁸ As for area “S”, it is located in the northern part of the bay near the Sopot Cave. This area was first investigated with the echo sounder in 2004; the first diagnostic material was picked up in 2011.

Altogether 17 artifacts were picked up from areas “R” and “S” in 2011. They represented mostly storage vessels or utility ware. Seven fragmentary amphorae and two incomplete black gloss bowls [Fig. 1] were found in the anchorage, and six amphorae sherds, one stopper and one lid from the other area.

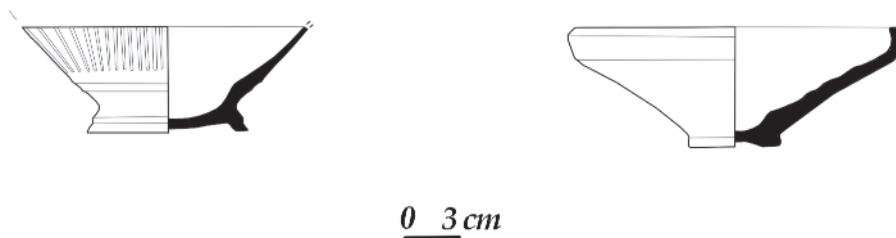


Fig. 1. Black-gloss bowls (graphics M. Różycka)

⁷ KARPIŃSKI 2010, p. 146.

⁸ KARPIŃSKI 2010, pp. 146, 148.

The state of preservation of amphorae from area “R” is sufficient to determine the types. All seven pieces preserved the rim, neck and handles. One of the amphorae had a stamped rim [Fig. 2]. The following types are represented: Greek-Italic MGS VI (four) [Fig. 3], Lamboglia 2 (two) [Fig. 4] and Dressel 6B (one) [Fig. 5].

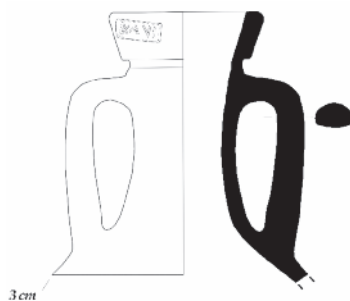


Fig. 2. Amphora Lamboglia 2 with stamp (graphics M. Różycka)



Fig. 3. Greek-Italic amphorae, type MGS VI, from area “R” (photo J. Reclaw, graphics M. Bajtler)



Fig. 4. Amphorae Lamboglia 2, from area “R” (photo J. Reclaw, graphics M. Bajtler)



Fig. 5. Amphora Dressel 6B (photo J. Reclaw, graphics M. Bajtler)

Vessels from area “S” were more difficult to determine. They were represented by two feet, one of which is broken, and three fragments of neck with the rim, two of which were Greek-Italic amphorae MGS VI [Fig. 6]. A ceramic stopper [Fig. 7] has hundreds of parallels from the land-based excavation, found here in context with MGS VI amphorae (that is, 3rd and 2nd century BC).⁹ The diagnostic rim fragments were more easily identified than the feet which bear no characteristic features allowing attribution to a specific find.

⁹ DYCZEK *et alii* 2007, p. 130; BAJTLER 2013.

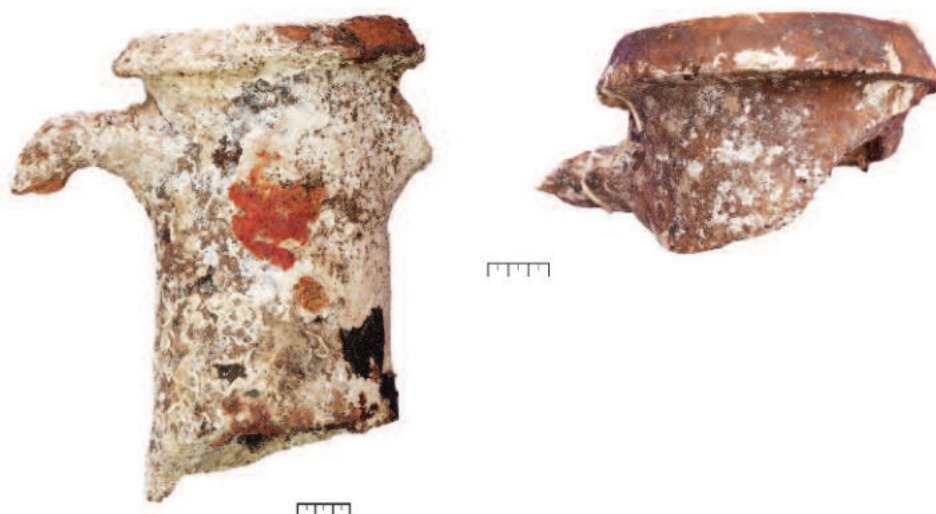


Fig. 6. Greek-Italic amphorae, type MGS VI, from area “S” (photo J. Reclaw, graphics M. Bajtler)



Fig. 7. Ceramic stopper (photo J. Reclaw, graphics M. Bajtler)

Amphorae

It is important to note that there was typological continuity between the Greek-Italic amphorae of MGS VI type (3rd–2nd century BC) and the Lamboglia 2 (end of 2nd century BC – 1st century AD) and Dressel 6A (end of 1st century BC – 2nd century AD) types. All of them were produced in the Adriatic region and contained wine. However, there exist transitional types displaying characteristic morphological features that confirm the evolution from one form to another.

Dressel 6B was an amphora intended for olive oil, produced in the Istria peninsula. The fabric of this type was similar to that of the amphorae described above and they were sealed with similar ceramic plugs (with decoration and inscriptions).

Stamps

One of the Lamboglia 2 amphorae¹⁰ bears two stamps on the rim [Fig. 8]. One of them reads: KANI, the other is illegible. Parallels for the KANI stamp are known from the Stanići-Čelina wreck near Omiš, which was explored in the 1970s.¹¹ All examples of the stamp on Lamboglia 2 amphorae, including the Risan stamp, display a characteristic form of the letter “K” [Fig. 9]. One of the KANI stamps from Croatia is accompanied by another stamp, ABING, which suggests the content of the other, illegible stamp on the amphora rim from Risan.



Fig. 8. Stamps on a Lamboglia 2 amphora, from Risan (graphics M. Rózycka)

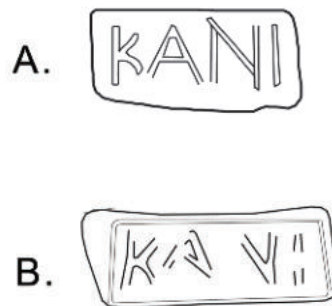


Fig. 9. KANI stamps: A) from the Stanići-Čelina wreck (graphics M. Bajtler after CAMBI 1989); B) from Risan (graphics M. Rózycka)

An interesting association can be made with an inscription discovered in Tasovčići near ancient Naronna (Croatia), which was an important trade port and Roman colony. The inscription commemorated Octavian’s victory over Sextus Pompeius in Sicilian waters in 36 BC. It mentioned two brothers, Marcus Papius Kanus and Caius Papius Celto, who were both landowners. Moreover, the letter “K” in the cognomen of Kanus in this inscription has a very characteristic form that is similar to that of the letter on the KANI stamp.¹² Could the two brothers mentioned in the inscription have been connected with amphorae production?

¹⁰ It could be a later form of Lamboglia 2 or early of Dressel 6A.

¹¹ CAMBI 1989, p. 315.

¹² CAMBI 1989, p. 321.

Conclusion

The types of amphorae making up this underwater assemblage are reflected in artifacts discovered during land excavations in Risan. MGS VI and early Lamboglia 2 forms, as well as the plugs closing them, were found in large quantities in the amphora stores explored in recent work by the archaeological team in Carine.¹³

The underwater finds from the 2011 season exemplify a typological continuity of the containers from the third century BC to the first century AD. They evince an intensive trade in Kotor Bay in this period, which was amplified in the following centuries, justifying the abundance of amphora finds from the area.

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¹³ DYCZEK *et alii* 2007, p. 130.

Streszczenie

Podwodne znaleziska w Risan (Czarnogóra) w roku 2011

Od 2003 do 2011 roku na obszarze Zalewu Risańskiego, nad którym położone jest miasteczko Risan (gr. Rhizon, łac. Risinium), prowadzona była podwodna prospekcja archeologiczna. Prace badawcze odbywały się w kilku lokalizacjach. Efekty badań podwodnych z lat 2003–2010 opublikowane zostały przez kierownika tych prac, Rafała Karpińskiego (KARPIŃSKI 2010).

W niniejszym opracowaniu omówione zostało 17 zabytków podniesionych z dna Zatoki Risańskiej — z obszaru „R” (tzw. kotwiczowisko) oraz obszaru „S” — w sezonie 2011. Z obszaru „R” pochodzą amfory grecko-italskie MGS VI (cztery egzemplarze), Lamboglia 2 (dwa egzemplarze), Dressel 6B (jeden egzemplarz) oraz dwie miseczki czarnopokostowane tzw. *black gloss pottery*, a z obszaru „S” dwie stopy amfor, trzy wylewy amfor (dwa egzemplarze grecko-italskiej MGS VI), pokrywka oraz ceramiczny korek. Jedna z amfor Lamboglia 2 pochodząca z kotwiczowiska posiada stempel KANI oraz drugi, nieczytelny. Dla formy KANI znane są analogie z wraku Stanići-Čelina (Chorwacja).

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