

Amphorae from Unidentified Centres in the Northern Aegean

(the so-called “proto-Thasian” series
according to I.B. Zeest)

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Some time ago, V. Grace and I.B. Zeest distinguished the series of “Samian” and “proto-Thasian” amphorae, which in fact have nothing to do with either Samos or Thasos, as recently established by P. Dupont on the basis of a comparative analysis of the clays.¹ The two series are related by a certain morphological uniformity – the ovoid shape of the body, the cylindrical neck with a massive out-turned rim, and especially the characteristic shape of the profiled toe with a chamfered base, which reminds one slightly of the toes of the Thasian amphorae of the 4th century BC. Long ago it was also noted, that the fabric and the shape of the amphorae vary significantly, suggesting that they come from several different manufacturing centres rather than from a single one.² V.V. Ruban, though, attributed all or nearly all amphorae with a “profiled” toe (proto-Thasian) of the 6th and first half of the 5th century BC to Milesian workshops.³

These amphorae are fairly common at sites in the Black Sea area, but they are practically absent from southern Ionia. This circumstance suggests a North-Aegean provenance for some of the series of amphorae, the more so since evidence has recently appeared which indicates that some of them were possibly produced on Thasos⁴ and in Abdera, the colony of Teos on the coast of Thrace.⁵ This hypothesis of P. Dupont seems quite justifiable.⁶

Out of the entire collection of amphorae with a “profiled toe” (“proto-Thasian” according to I.B. Zeest), two series, judging by the outward appearance, must be considered as the earliest.

The first series

The first (pithoid) series is represented by an amphora in the Odessa Museum kept among a number of undocumented Olbian finds (Fig. 1.1)⁷ and by a similar amphora with a relief stamp in the form of the letter “E” on its handle in the museum in Nicosia.⁸ The rather low neck passes smoothly into a slightly sloping shoulder and a broad, almost spherical body. The massive rim is semi-cylindrical in shape; the foot is low and broad – c. 7 cm in

diameter. The fabric of the Olbian example is red and dense, containing no special tempers. There are no reliable grounds on which the aforementioned vessels can be dated, but the neck of a similar amphora was found in Well no. 5 on Berezan' (Fig. 1.2),⁹ suggesting that the entire series may be dated to the middle or third quarter of the 6th century BC. Vessels which should be considered as a later continuation of the same series are two amphorae from the complex of the Athenian Well Q 12:3,¹⁰ which is dated to the end of the 6th to the beginning of the 5th century BC. These examples have a slightly shorter neck, while the toe is taller and has a smaller diameter (Fig. 1.3).

The second series

This series is distinguished by its tall neck of cylindrical or funnel-like shape which is quite distinct from the shoulder and has an out-turned rim, 2-2.5 cm high; the body is slightly more elongated than that of the first series. The peculiarities of the morphology of the second series are well demonstrated by the two amphorae from the Olbian necropolis. One was found in Grave no. 38/1909 excavated by B.V. Farmakovskij (Fig. 1.4),¹¹ the second was uncovered in Burial M1 in 1989 (Fig. 1.5).¹² The difference in fabric of these two morphologically identical examples is clearly discernible: in the first case the red clay contains sparse white inclusions, while in the second it is very rich in finely dispersed mica. In addition, two other amphorae from the Athenian Well Q 12:3,¹³ one jar from the necropolis of Nymphaion,¹⁴ as well as two amphorae from the Nesebur and Burgas museums,¹⁵ which are distinguished from those described above by the larger body diameter (Fig. 1.6), can possibly be attributed to the second series. The basis for a reliable dating is provided only by the first of the Olbian examples. In the grave excavated in 1909, a black-glazed *kylix* of the third quarter of the 6th century BC was found. However, the Athenian finds suggest that such containers may have been manufactured until at least the turn of the 6th and 5th century BC.

Thus the amphorae of the first two series appeared about the middle of the 6th century BC and were manufactured throughout the entire second half of that century.¹⁶ In the last quarter of the 6th century, however, the tendency became prevalent to elongate the proportions, shorten the foot and separate more distinctly the neck from the shoulder, as the materials from Athenian Well Q 12:3 indicate. The first series of amphorae, i.e. those characterised by the smooth profile of the boundary between the neck and the shoulder, was still manufactured with slight modifications even at the beginning of the 5th century BC.¹⁷

However in general, most of the proto-Thasian amphorae from the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 5th century BC are distinguishable by their more slender proportions, the body being almost conical, the toe as a rule of a small diameter (4.5-6.5 cm), and the rim semi-cylindrical in

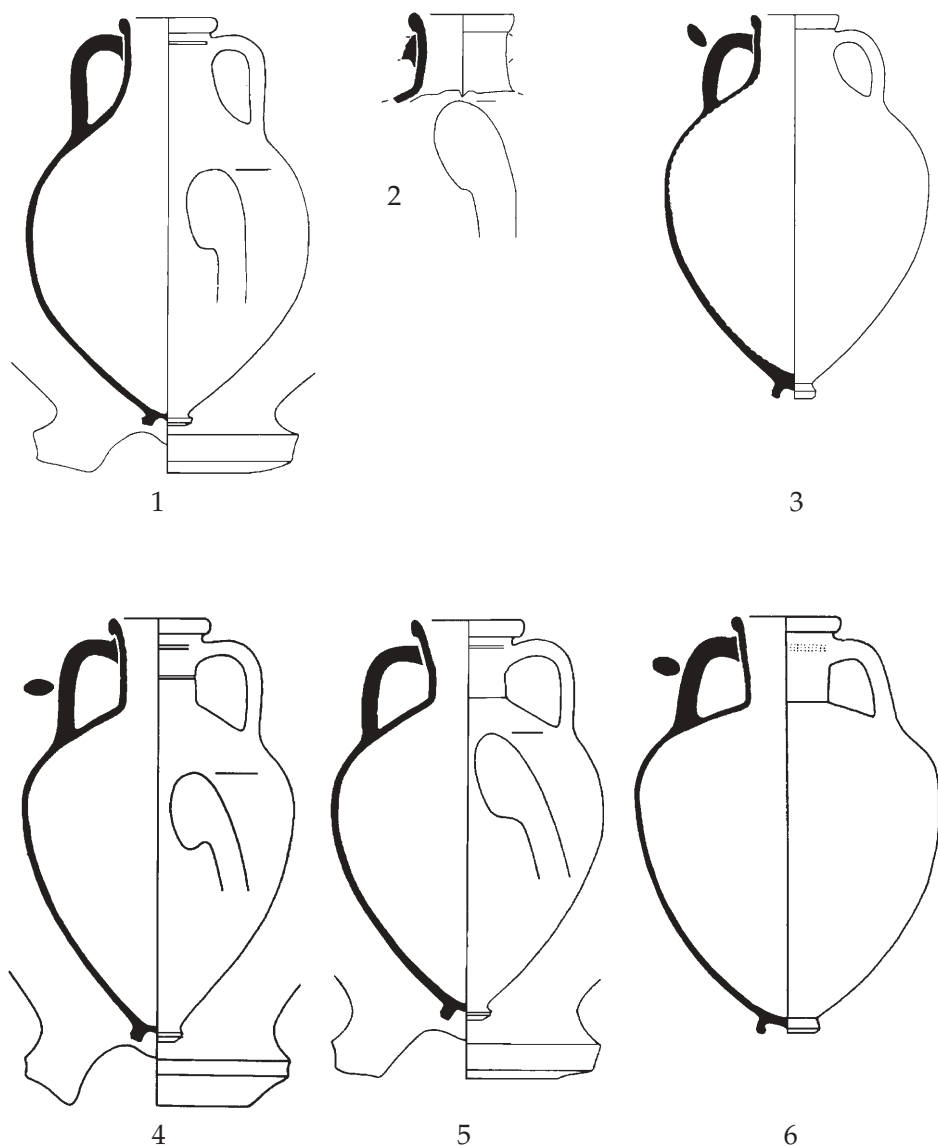


Fig. 1. Amphorae with "profiled" toe of series I (nos. 1-3) and II (nos. 4-6) from 1) the Odessa Museum; 2) the Berezan' well no. 5; 3) the Athenian well Q12:3 (after Roberts 1986, no. 441); 4) the Olbian grave 38/1909; 5) the Olbian grave M 1/1989; 6) the Nesebur Museum (after M. Lazarov).

shape, sometimes fairly massive. The lower part of the neck is almost always rendered distinct from the shoulder. On the basis of particular morphological features it is possible among the rather numerous examples of this type to identify yet a third and fourth series, which are likely to comprise containers from more than just two production centres.

The third series

The containers of this series has a height of about 50 cm and is distinguished from the later jars by a funnel-shaped neck ending in the out-turned rim and by a conical shape of the body combined with the rather smoothly sloping shoulder. Attributed to this series may be an amphora from the village of Rigi (Fig. 2.1),¹⁸ two amphorae from the Berezan' Well no. 4 (Fig. 2.2), and some jars from the Chersonesos Museum (Fig. 2.3),¹⁹ the excavation of 1967 at the Berezan' necropolis (Fig. 2.4),²⁰ and a number of others.²¹ Of special interest among this series are the stamped examples, among which I am aware of two amphorae from the excavations of 1975 and 1988 at the Olbian necropolis (Figs. 2.5-6),²² one from the settlement near the village of Staraja Bogdanovka (Fig. 3.1),²³ and another from Hermonassa (Fig. 3.2).²⁴ In all these cases, the relief stamps are positioned on the handles: the first three vessels bear the stamp in the form of the letter "E", and the last – "Σ" within an oval frame. The stamps with the letter "E" are recorded on many finds both from the Black Sea area²⁵ and from the Aegean region,²⁶ including the already mentioned intact amphora of the first series in the Nicosia Museum. A date between the end of the 6th – beginning of the 5th century is suggested by the vessels from the Berezan' Well no. 4, but the stamp "E" is also recorded on the earlier amphora of the first series from Nicosia.

The fourth series

In contrast to the third, the fourth series of "proto-Thasian" amphorae is characterised by a shorter neck of cylindrical rather than funnel-like shape. On the neck and shoulder of these amphorae, dipinti marks in black or red paint in the form of the letter "Θ" are fairly common. The majority of these amphorae come from accidental finds or rather broadly dated complexes. Useful examples include the vessels from the excavations of the town-site (Figs. 3.4-5)²⁷ and necropolis of Olbia (Fig. 4.2-3),²⁸ the Berezan' settlement and necropolis (Figs. 3.3, 6),²⁹ and from Porthmion (Fig. 4.4).³⁰ There are numerous undocumented finds in different museum collections, in particular, in the Odessa Museum (Fig. 4.1).³¹ In addition, mention should be made of the complex from the burial excavated in Myrmekion in 1938,³² among others.³³ In those cases where accompanying finds, in particular the fine ware, supply dating criteria, these amphorae belong to the first third of the 5th century BC.

The fifth series

The amphorae of the fifth series with a profiled toe is more varied than the preceding ones. Its main distinguishing feature is the conical shape of the body and fairly distinct separation between the neck and the shoulder. To this series may be assigned vessels from Berezan' (Fig. 4.5) and the settle-

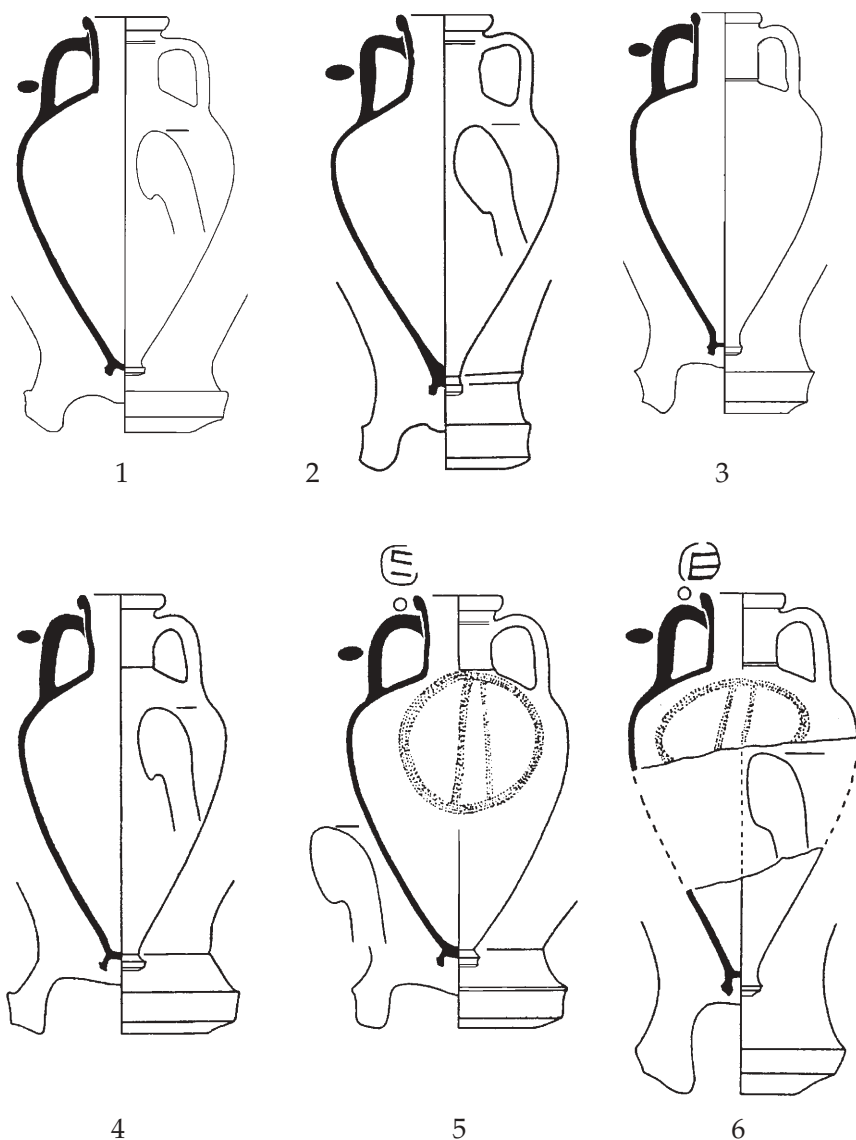


Fig. 2. Amphorae with the "profiled" toe of series III from: 1) tumulus near the village of Rigi; 2) the Berezan' well no. 4; 3) Chersonesos (no. 3156); 4) necropolis of Berezan' (SHM, B.67.50); 5) necropolis of Olbia, 1975; 6) necropolis of Olbia, 1988.

ment of Stanislav in the *chora* of Olbia (Fig. 4.6),³⁴ as well as a number of undocumented finds kept in the Odessa Museum (Fig. 4.7).³⁵ Similar characteristics are exhibited by an amphora from the Kavala Museum which has been identified as a product of Abdera.³⁶ Also closely morphologically related are some amphorae from Burial 12 near the *khutor* (farmstead) of Rassvet

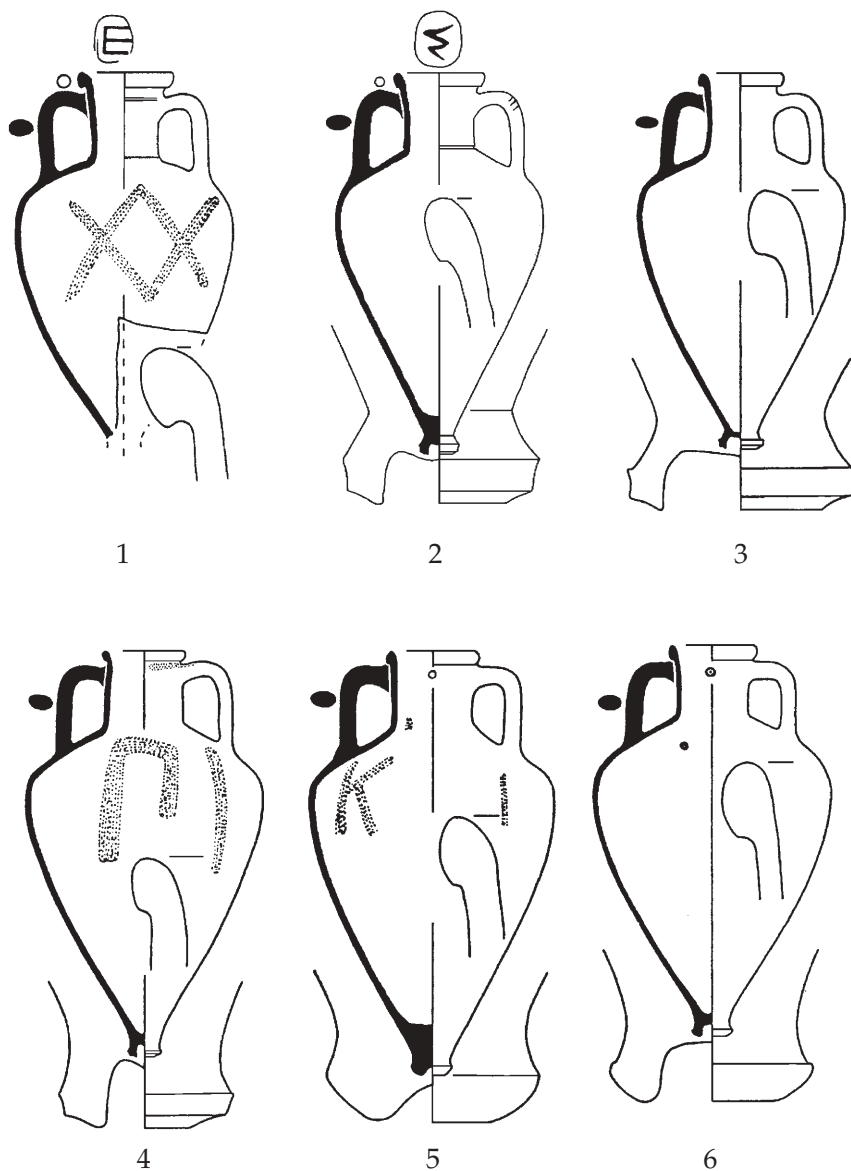


Fig. 3. Amphorae with “profiled” toe of series III (nos. 1-2) and IV (nos. 3-6) from: 1) Staraja Bogdanovka; 2) Hermonassa, 1984; 3) necropolis of Berezan’ (SHM, B.67.21); 4-5) the town-site of Olbia; 6) necropolis of Berezan’ (SHM, B.67.174).

(Fig. 5.1),³⁷ Kurgan 16 at the Pereščepino cemetery near the settlement-site of Bel’skoe,³⁸ the *khutor* of Suvorovo-Čerkesskij (Fig. 5.2),³⁹ and the burial excavated in 1913 near the village of Tamanskaja (Fig. 5.3);⁴⁰ all the latter

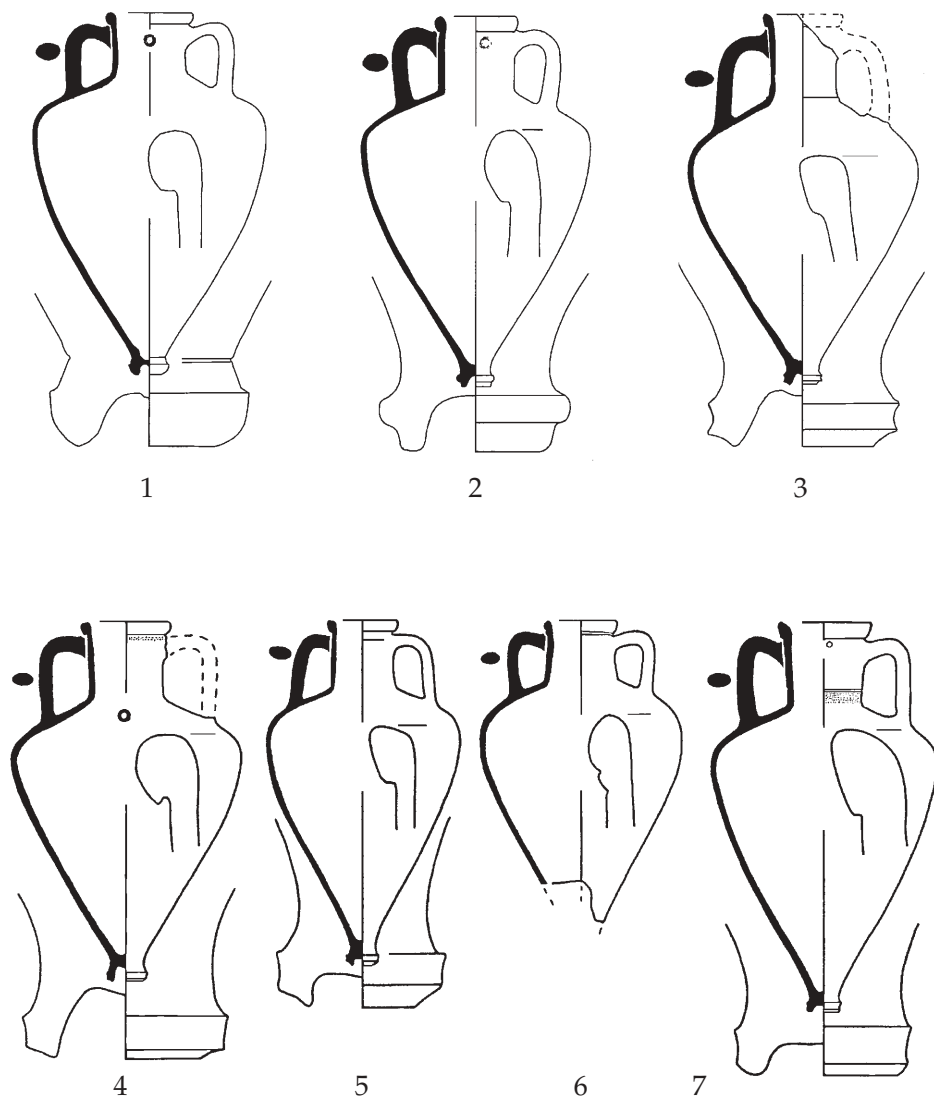


Fig. 4. Amphorae with "profiled" toe of series IV (nos. 1-4) and V (nos. 5-7) from: 1) the Odessa Museum (OAM, no. 250300); 2) necropolis of Olbia (grave 7/1992); 3) necropolis of Olbia, 1994; 4) Porthmion, 1988; 5) excavations in Berezan' (SHM, B.84.402); 6) the settlement of Stanislav; 7) the Odessa Museum (OAM, no. 25033).

examples, though, are distinguished by still more slender proportions, in particular the absolutely conical body, tall neck, and rather short rim and toe. This series is dated to the first half of the 5th century BC. In a pit at the settlement of Stanislav, along with the aforementioned amphora, beaker-shaped feet of Lesbian amphorae of the specified period were found; the

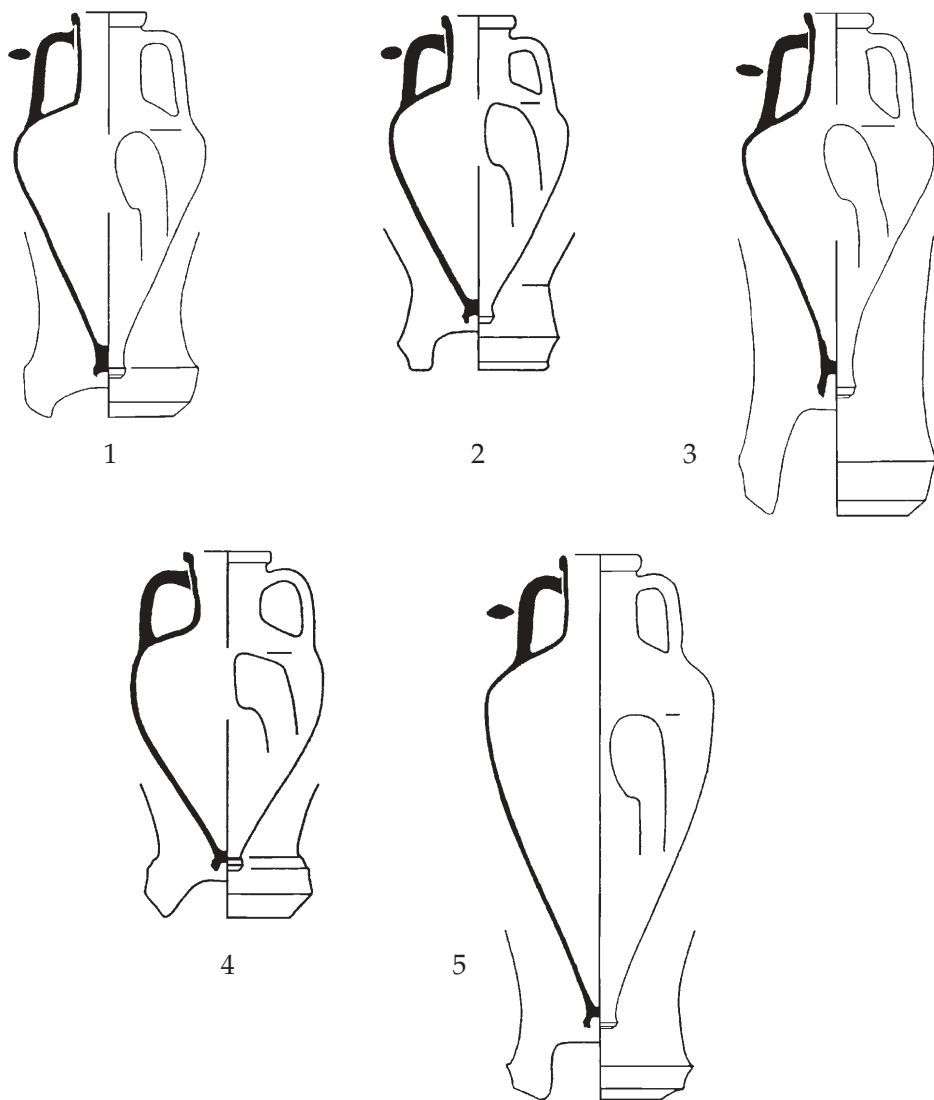


Fig. 5. Amphorae with the “profiled” toe of series V (nos. 1-3) and “isolated” (nos. 4-5) from: 1) the khutor of Rassvet; 2) the khutor of Suvorovo-Čerkesskij; 3) Taman’; 4) the Simferopol Museum; 5) excavations in Olbia, 1981.

amphora from Kavala is dated to the second quarter of the 5th century BC on the basis of the coins bearing representations of similar amphorae.

Among the amphorae with profiled toe there are several examples, which do not match any of the series mentioned above, and therefore must be classed as individual examples. Thus, one undocumented amphora from

Findspot/Present location	Dimensions, mm						Capacity	Stamps	Plate
	H	H ₁	H ₂	H ₃	D	d			
<i>l</i>	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Series I</i>									
OAM, 48660	532	518	285	110	361	98	25,00		1.1
Berezan', well 5				90					1.2
Athens, Roberts, no. 441	518				338				1.3
Athens, Roberts, no. 440	524				359				
Athens, Roberts, no. 412	560				376				
Athens, Roberts, no. 413	546				385				
<i>Series II</i>									
SHM, Ol.1909.110 P.38/1909	550	535	245	110	344	100			1.4
APO, M 1/1989	526	508	255	105	346	120			1.5
Nesebur, no. 411 according to Lazarov	540	520	220	110	390	107			1.6
<i>Series III</i>									
Tumulus near the village of Rigi	475	462	205	92	285	85			2.1
Berezan', well 4	503	464	200	105	300	88	12,00		2.2
Berezan', well 4		500	195	95	300	85	13,50		
NTPCh no. 3156	453	438	165	91	254	70	8,73*		2.3
SHM, B.67.50	496	473	190	98	274	84	10,14*		2.4
APO, necropolis 1975, findl. O-75/472	490	465	195	100	296	86		E	2.5
APO, necropolis 1988			195	100	307	86		E	2.6
APO, 77/4715, St. Bogdanovka-2		490	225	115	285	90		E	3.1
Hermonassa, 1984	495	455	200	100	275	100		Σ	3.2
FM, tumulus 9 near the v. Krylovtsy	465	450	170	100	272	74			
<i>Series IV</i>									
SHM, B.67.21	496	476	185	100	278	80	10,96*		3.3
APO, O-87/1203	544	513	200	100	314	87			3.4
APO, O-89/996	568	500	210	100	324	90			3.5
SHM, V.67.174	520	490	200	88	315	90	15,00*		3.6
OAM, no. 25030		463	160	80	308	88	13,70		4.1
APO, O-92/75, necropolis, grave 7	490	462	175	95	302	80			4.2
APO, O-94/157A	490	460	210	112	304	78			4.3
IHMC, Porthmion, 1988	472	438	180	92	304	90	12,44*		4.4
IHMC, Porthmion, 1988		500	195	98	295	90	11,40*		
APO, O-72/8611		450	180	90	300	80			
<i>Series V</i>									
SHM, B.84.402	456	424	165	88	256	70	7,16*		4.5
IHMC, Stanislav, pit 7/1988			166	78	268	75	8,53*		4.6
OAM, no. 25033	515	487	190	105	300	86	12,00		4.7
AAM, no.10169, khutor Rassvet	488	444	190	120	257	74	7,00*		5.1
AAM, no. 10096, khutor Suvorovo-Cherkassky	412	380	160	86	235	69	5,90		5.2
KM, no. 6629/59, Taman' 1913	504	460	188	110	259	70	6,91*		5.3
Pereshchepino burial ground, tumulus 16	465				270				
Kavala Museum, no. A3908	440				260				
<i>Isolated</i>									
SMRS, no no.	416	390	180	90	244	90	7,15		5.4
IHMC, Olbia, 1981, no. 543		603	210	110	307	83	17,80		5.5

Fig. 6. The metric characteristics of the North Aegean amphorae (the so-called "proto-Thasian" series of I.B. Zeest). The capacities are measured with water or grain; those marked with an asterisk (*) are calculated on the basis of drawings made in scale 1:1.

the Simferopol Museum has a very short, broad body with a plump shoulder (Fig. 5.4).⁴¹ By contrast, the amphora from the pit of 1981 in Olbia has an elongated body of almost conical shape (Fig. 5.5).⁴² This latter vessel is dated roughly to the middle of the 5th century BC on the basis of the necks of the late plump-necked Chian amphorae found in the same context.

To sum up the review of this extremely varied group of amphorae with profiled toe, we are drawn to the conclusion that we are dealing with containers from a number of manufacturing centres, probably from the Thracian coast of the Aegean where wine-making was intensively developed from the Archaic period onwards.⁴³ The apt comparison of some amphorae from the fifth series with the coin series of Abdera of the second quarter of the 5th century BC is noteworthy in this context.⁴⁴ The fact that such vessels were manufactured in different centres of this region is suggested by their extremely varied clays. The prevailing clays are red with admixtures of mica, but fabrics with inclusions of limestone and even pyroxenes have also been recorded. The evolution of the shape of these containers has been traced throughout approximately one century – from the middle of the 6th to the middle of the 5th century BC. During that period, the body of the amphorae gradually became more elongated, having changed from pithoid or ovoid to conical. The toe developed from low, broad shapes towards relatively tall and slender ones, first with a distinct separation at the place of transition to the body, which was later replaced by a rather smooth curve. At the same time, a great number of diverse variants of such toes have been recorded, especially for the last three to four decades of the manufacture of these containers. The rim likewise displays great variation. It is normally of out-turned, semi-cylindrical shape, but some examples with a flat chamfer both on the inner and on the outer surface have been encountered.

The capacities are also very diverse, varying from 23-25 l for the amphorae of the first series to 6-7 l for the amphorae of the fifth series. The general tendency towards smaller dimensions is quite obvious (Fig. 6). However, no reconstruction of the metric characteristics is possible, at least until we are able to attribute the amphorae to the different manufacturing centres.

Notes

1. Cook & Dupont 1998, 178-186, fig. 23.10-12; Dupont 1999, 153-157, pls. 5-7.
2. Lejpunskaja 1981, 23.
3. Ruban 1991.
4. Koukouli-Chrisanthaki 1979, pl. 142.
5. Peristeri-Otatzis 1986, 496, fig. 13.
6. Dupont 1999, 153.
7. OAM, inv. no. 48660 on display. This may be the amphora that was published by Dupont (1999, 156, pl. 5.5).
8. Nicolaou 1986, 531, fig. 15.

9. Monachov 1999, 48, pl. 6.2.
10. Monachov 1999, 62, pls. 10-13, nos. 440-441.
11. SHM, inv. no. Ol. 1909.110. Evidently, it is this amphora that was regarded as Samian by I.B. Brašinskij (Brašinskij 1967, 24; 1984, 101, pls. II.5 and XII.3). The context can be dated quite precisely on the basis of a black-figured *kylix* from the third quarter of the 6th century BC, see Skudnova 1988, 47.
12. APO, find list O-89/26, unpublished.
13. Monachov 1999, 62, pls. 10-13, amphorae nos. 412 and 413. According to Roberts (1986, 65) these are Samian.
14. Grač 1999, 43, fig. 7. GE, inv. no. NNF.74.55. This amphora was found out of context (Object A34).
15. Lazarov 1973, 17-18, pls. VI-VII, nos. 65, 72.
16. A similar conclusion had been drawn earlier, see Johnston 1981, 42, no. 48, pl. 29; Johnston 1981; 1990, 60-62, nos. 105-106, fig. 7.
17. Monachov 1999, 62.
18. Kurgan no. 1 near v. Rigi in the Poltava Region, excavations of 1983. Once kept in the Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, it was handed over in 1933 to the regional museum.
19. Monachov & Abrosimov 1993, 120, pl. 1.1.
20. From excavations at the Berezan' necropolis: SHM, inv. no. B.67.50.
21. E.g. the amphora from Kurgan 9 near v. Krylovcy of the Pervomajskij Region in the Crimea. See Solomonik 1993, 110, no. 31, fig. 5.
22. APO, find list O-75/472 and APO, find list O-88/58.
23. APO, find list St. B.-2/77/4715.
24. PMFA, find list TMGS-84, pit 2.
25. *IOSPE* III, 187-194. Predominantly in Olbia, but also in Pantikapaion and Porthmion, see Gajdukevič (ed.) 1964, fig. 3.2.
26. Johnston 1990, 51, fig. 10, no. 122.
27. APO, find list O-87, AGD/1203; find list O-89, NGS/996.
28. APO, find list O-92/75. Burial no. 7 (1991). Together with this amphora a black-glazed Attic *kylix* of the beginning of the 5th century BC was found, see Papanova 1993, 36, fig. 15; APO, find list Ol-94.nekr.-157A.
29. SHM, inv. no. B. 67.21. Grave 9; SHM, inv. no. B. 67.174. Area I.
30. Excavations of 1988. Two amphorae kept in IHMC, St Petersburg.
31. OAM, inv. no. 25030.
32. The burial is dated not later than 470 BC by a black-figured *lekythos* of the Chaimon's group, see Monachov 1999, 103, pl. 31.
33. One such amphora was found in Tyritake (Gajdukevič 1952, 85, no. 25, fig. 104.3). Another was found at a necropolis on the Taman Peninsula (Paromov & Sudarev 2000, 203, fig. 4).
34. Berezan': SHM B.84.402; Stanislav: pit no. 7 (1988) containing material of the end of the 6th to the beginning of the 5th century BC, kept in IHMC.
35. OAM, inv. no. 25033.
36. Peristeri-Otatzí 1986, 496, fig. 13.
37. Burial no. 12 excavated in 1969 near the *khutor* of Rassvet: The Anapa Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 10169.
38. Known to me only from the publication: Murzin, Rolle, Hern, Machortych & Belozor 1998, 34, fig. 30.
39. The Anapa Archaeological Museum, inv. no. AM-10096.
40. The Krasnodar Museum, inv. no. 6629/59.
41. The Simferopol Museum, no inv. no.

42. Kept in IHMC, find list O-81/543. Excavations of V.I. Pruglo-Denisova.
43. Salviat 1986, 145-146; Salviat 1990, 457-476.
44. Peristeri-Otatzi 1986, 496, fig. 13.

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Abbreviations

AAM	The Anapa Archaeological Museum.
APO	The Archaeological Preserve "Olbia", Parutino.
FM	The Feodosia Museum.
IHMC	The Institute of the History of Material Culture RAS, St Petersburg.
IOSPE	B. Latyshev, <i>Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini Graecae et Latinae</i> . Petropolis 1885-1916.
KM	The Kuban Museum, Krasnodar.
NPTCh	National Preserve "Taurian Chersonesos", Sevastopol.
OAM	The Odessa Archaeological Museum.
PMFA	The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.
SHM	The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg.
SMRS	The Simferopol Museum of Regional Studies.