

THE AMPHORA ASSEMBLAGE OF 1948–1949 FROM HILL ‘G’ IN PHANAGORIA: THE FULL CONTEXT*

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Abstract

The paper analyses the assemblage of 18 amphorae from different manufacturing centres of the mid-5th century BC from excavations of 1948–49 in Phanagoria. It has proved possible to define the full context of the complex, to date all the vessels constituting it through analogues from other Black Sea complexes, and to obtain a narrow date for the complex under study.

An accumulation of 18 amphorae set vertically was revealed on Hill ‘G’ in Phanagoria in 1948 at a small excavation with the area of 60 m² at the depth of 6.1 m. This structure continued into the edge of the excavation area. In the following year, the continuation of this complex was uncovered with yet another 17 vessels. It became clear that 25 amphorae were half dug with their toes upwards into the virgin soil in a trench. This lower row of amphorae was covered with sand and, into the layer of sand, amphorae of the second row were stuck with their toes downwards. The lower series of amphorae consisted of complete vessels while the upper row included mostly crushed ones.

M.M. Kobylina, the Director of the excavations, initially assumed that she was dealing with remains of a storeroom.¹ Later, she supposed, with a reference to an analogous accumulation of several thousand amphorae in Carthage, that this was an engineering structure preventing landslip on the slope.² Something of the same kind has recently been discovered in Panticpaeum.³ It is of note that the Phanagorian masonry of amphorae has not been investigated to the end, the structure continuing into the edge of the excavation area of 1949.⁴ No further investigations have been carried out in this area of the settlement.

The assemblage under consideration is well known but has never been comprehensively published. Some idea of it can be obtained from publications by Kobylina with a brief description of the stratigraphic situation and photographs of two amphorae,⁵ as well as through schematic drawings in the monograph by I.B. Zeest.⁶ In the 1950s, B.N. Grakov measured the volumes and described the morphology. The data (parameters, volume) from his manuscript are presented in the later book by I.B. Brashinskii.⁷

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¹ Kobylina 1951.

² Kobylina 1956, 21; Schulten 1907, 164. Abb. 1.

³ Tolstikov and Lomtadze 2016.

⁴ Kobylina 1949, fol. 3.

⁵ Kobylina 1951; 1956, 20–23.

⁶ Zeest 1960, 73, 76 and 81, and pls. II.7, IV.11r, VI.166.

⁷ Brashinskii 1984, 132.

In the late 1990s, while preparing a book on complexes of ceramic containers, I had to use only the published data,⁸ having no possibility to examine the materials themselves at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow. The fact is that most of the amphorae from this museum collection were placed in the 'Greek Yard', inside a gypsum copy of the portico with caryatids of the Erechtheion, to which there was no separate entrance. This is exactly why, after Zeest, neither Brashinskii nor any other researcher had access to these materials. At last, in 2002, owing to the kind help of E.A. Savostina, I obtained the chance to sketch some of the amphorae from the assemblage under study. A number of these drawings were included in the monograph of 2003.⁹ It must be noted at once that neither in 1999 nor in 2003, without Kobylina's reports available to me, had I practically any doubt that this was an amphora store, the more so since Brashinskii had been of the same opinion. As became clear later, this was a mistake.

The next phase of the treatment of the materials from the Phanagorian assemblage is connected with A.A. Zavoikin. In his book of 2004, he planned to devote one of the appendices to this complex and for this purpose he reviewed the reports by Kobylina, while he obtained the drawings of the amphorae from me. Zavoikin examined in detail the stratigraphy of the area on Hill 'G' and convincingly proved that this was not an amphora store but, most probably, an engineering structure. In addition, he proposed chronological definitions for all of the amphorae known to him.¹⁰ Recently, Zavoikin returned again to this material and has analysed the Phanagorian complex in detail within the very wide context of Chian amphorae of the 6th–5th centuries BC yielded by many decades of the excavations in Phanagoria.¹¹

Thus, according to Kobylina's description, 24 complete Chian amphorae from the lower row and a further two from the upper row were found; one crushed grey ware Lesbian amphora was in the lower row and eight Thasian amphorae, one of them complete, were in the upper row. It is unknown how many amphorae were passed to the collection at the Pushkin State Museum by Kobylina, but the inventory numbers of the amphorae, both from the assemblage under consideration and from excavations in Phanagoria in general, are labelled with letter 'Φ' followed by a hyphen and ordinal number. It is of importance that Zavoikin, in his monograph of 2004, published photographs of the amphorae *in situ* within the structure and included in it photographs of 12 Chian amphorae taken by Kobylina in the field.¹² This fact allows scholars to identify fairly reliably almost all the vessels from the excavation on Hill 'G' and to publish this assemblage completely.

In April 2019, I and my assistants were given an opportunity to study the amphora collection of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts under the auspices of a project of the Russian Science Foundation 'Greek amphorae (7th–2nd centuries BC) from the northern shores of the Pontus: the creation of museum catalogues and interactive databases (APE)'. During the total examination of the collection, several other vessels from the assemblage under consideration have been identified which were not considered by

⁸ Monakhov 1999, 121–24.

⁹ Monakhov 2003, pls. 5.4, 6.5, 7.1, 28.2, 40.2.

¹⁰ Zavoikin 2004, 140–47, tables LXXVIII–LXXXIV.

¹¹ Zavoikin 2013.

¹² Zavoikin 2004, 239–41.

me in 2002 and were unknown to Zavoikin. Besides, it became clear that there was disorder in the inventory numbers of the amphorae. Thus, number Φ -472 was assigned to the single Lesbian amphora (Fig. 2.2) and, simultaneously, to one of the Chian examples (Fig. 4.12); number Φ -436 was assigned simultaneously to two different Chian amphorae (Figs. 1.1, 2.6), and similarly, number Φ -440 appears on two other Chian vessels (Figs. 1.3, 3.7). The situation seemed hopeless but we managed to solve it. The point is that all the amphorae from the Phanagorian complex on Hill 'G', by contrast to the other pottery from excavations in Phanagoria, bear a specific surface deposition and taint. At the lower body there is a black colouring alternated with white spots. The origin of this feature is not quite clear but probably this is an effect of the peculiarities of the soil in which the amphorae were found.

Finally, it became possible to exclude from the assemblage several vessels with similar inventory numbers. Thus one of the Chian amphorae marked Φ -436 (Fig. 1.1) was glued from numerous fragments that is absolutely untypical of other vessels from the complex from Hill 'G'; in addition, it had no specific deposition traces left by the soil. And finally, it was manifestly much earlier than the other Chian amphorae – its rim was painted with red gloss and, with the same gloss, horizontal bands were rendered on its shoulder and body, while there were narrow vertical bands of gloss on the handles down to the middle of the body. In the end, it became clear that this vessel comes not from Phanagoria but from excavations of Panticapaeum in 1972: the code number Φ -436 was assigned to it by mistake. The second amphora under the same number Φ -436 (Fig. 2.6) undoubtedly comes from the Phanagorian assemblage.

In the same way, we must exclude from the complex the complete Chian amphora Φ -432 (Fig. 1.2) which has no specific colouring and, in addition, is clearly more ancient than the pottery from the assemblage from Hill 'G'. This amphora had been erroneously attributed by me and Zavoikin to this complex.¹³

As already mentioned above, mark Φ -440 is present on two Chian amphorae. One of them, without lower body and foot, undoubtedly comes from the Phanagorian complex (Fig. 3.7). As to the other Chian vessel under the same number there are serious doubts as to its provenance from the excavation on Hill 'G' (Fig. 1.3). This amphora has no traces of colouring on the outer surface in the form of a black deposition and white spots; in addition, it has dipinti in the form of letter 'Θ' rendered in brown gloss near the lower attachments of the handles. The latter fact is a characteristic feature dating the vessel to the beginning of the second quarter of the 5th century.

Another amphora (Φ -474) from an unidentified Mediterranean centre (Fig. 1.4), according to its inventory number, should have belonged to the Phanagorian assemblage. However, in the monograph by Zeest, this amphora attributed as a product of Phanagorian workshops and marked with another number (no. 660), is mentioned as a find of 1955.¹⁴ It thus does not belong to the composition of the complex uncovered in 1948–49.

¹³ Monakhov 2003, pl. 5.4; Zavoikin 2004, pl. LXXX.1.

¹⁴ Zeest 1960, 97 and pl. XX.366.

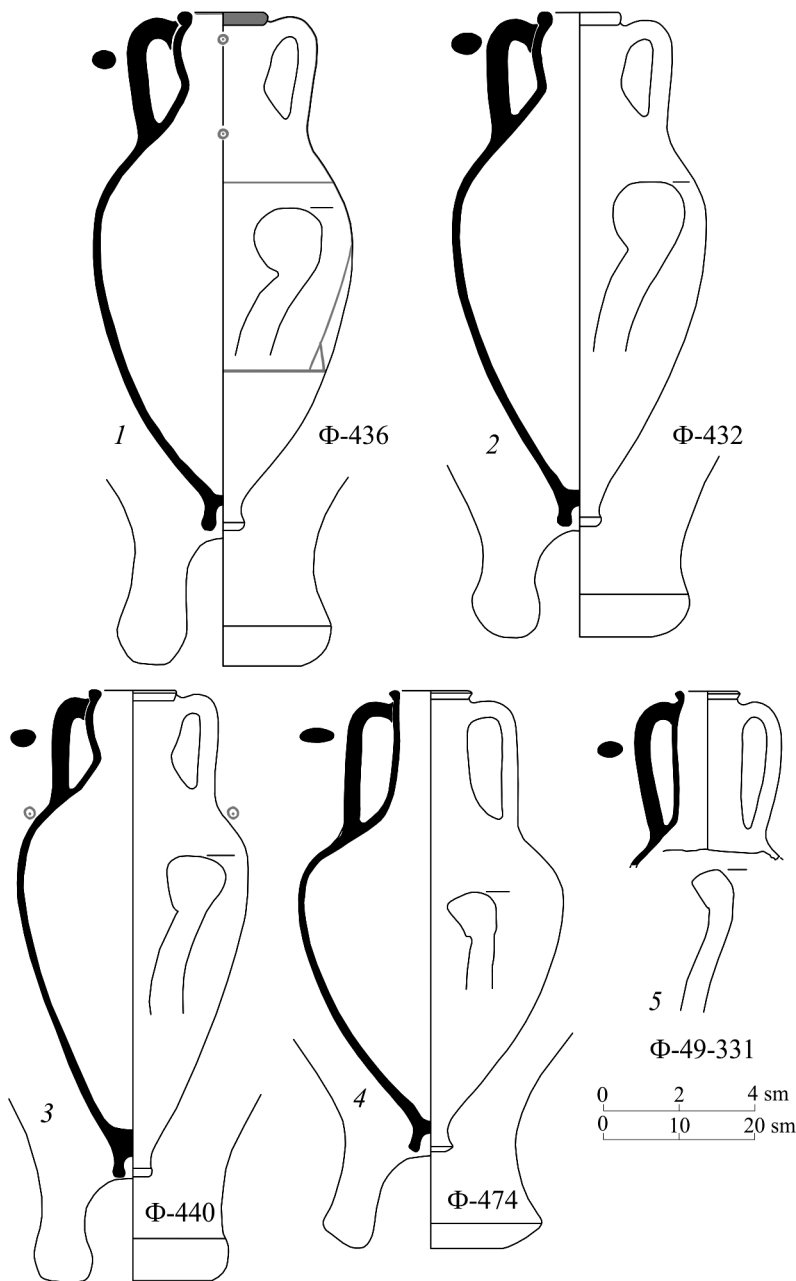


Fig. 1. Amphorae unrelated with the Phanagorian assemblage from Hill 'G'.

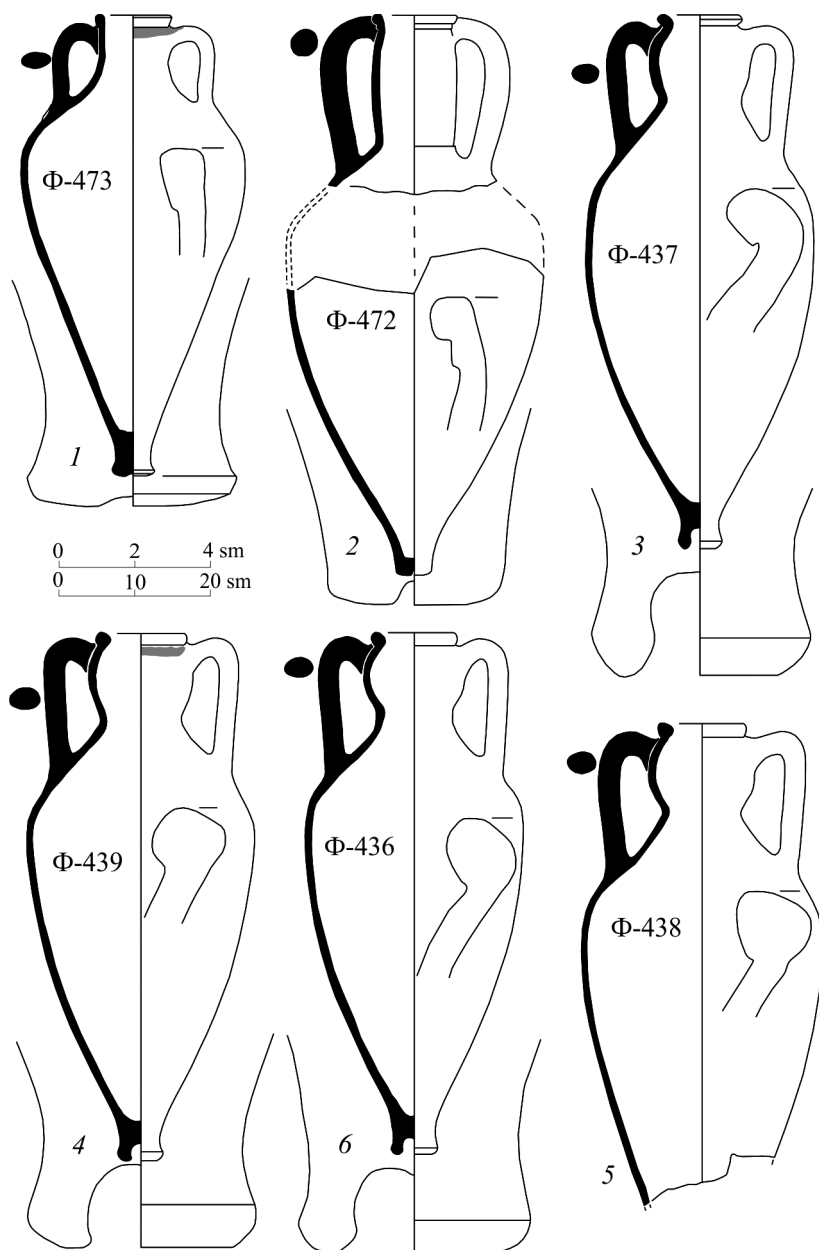


Fig. 2. Amphorae from the Phanagorian assemblage on Hill ‘G’:
1 – Thasos; 2 – Lesbos; 3–6 – Chios.

Finally, under the inventory number Φ -49/331, the collection of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts includes the amphora neck produced in Ainos.¹⁵ There are no traces of colouring on this amphora; no. 331 in the inventory list is far from the numbers of the predominant quantity of the vessels. There are no grounds to include this neck (Fig. 1.5) into the composition of the assemblage under consideration.

Now a last clarity is left to introduce: the Chian amphora from the Phanagorian complex which was numbered Φ -474¹⁶ really has inventory number Φ -471.

Thus, presently 18 vessels from the Phanagorian assemblage of 1948–49 are more or less reliably identified making their total number considerably greater than that considered by me in 2002. They are presented in Table 1 in the increasing order of their inventory numbers. The parameters of the vessels also are noted in this table.

Table 1: Composition of the amphorae assemblage from the structure on Hill 'G' and their parameters (mm)

Centre	Inv. No.	H	H ₀	H ₁	H ₃	D	d
Chios	Φ -430	–	–	275	180	286	76
Chios	Φ -431	720	665	265	150	304	88
Chios	Φ -433	750	684	260	170	290	68
Chios	Φ -434	–	–	275	165	304	74
Chios	Φ -435	720	652	260	160	300	72
Chios	Φ -436	690	640	270	105	290	75
Chios	Φ -437	706	645	310	112	302	74
Chios	Φ -438	–	–	300	118	322	80
Chios	Φ -439	698	648	270	118	300	90
Chios	Φ -440	–	–	280	180	310	83
Chios	Φ -441	744	698	260	142	290	88
Chios	Φ -469	770	703	300	195	304	78
Chios	Φ -470	712	662	260	150	292	90
Chios	Φ -471	758	717	265	170	300	90
Chios	Φ -472	795	728	285	190	286	83
Chios	Φ -1948, no. 1188	–	–	260	165	298	77
Lesbos	Φ -472	~740	~720	~310	174	330	85
Thasos	Φ -473	610	552	210	85	295	76

¹⁵ Until recently, such amphorae were called 'amphorae with swollen neck', cf. Zeest 1960, pl. XIII.27.

¹⁶ Zavoikin 2004, pl. LXXX.5.

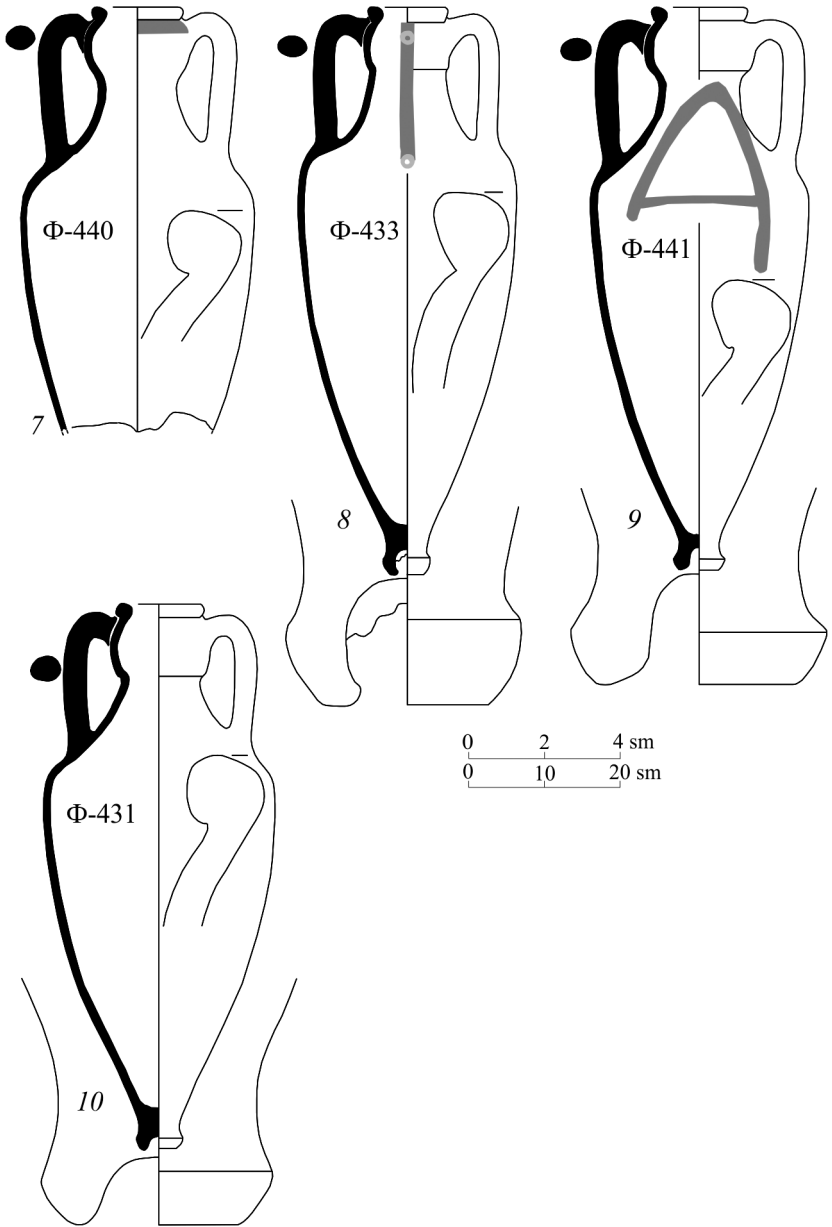


Fig. 3. Chian amphorae (nos. 7–10) from the Phanagorian assemblage from Hill ‘G’.

Now we will attempt to consider in turn all the amphora groups from the assemblage. We will begin with the Thasian ones. Of the latter, eight items have been found but in reality only Φ -473 (Fig. 2.1) is now available. It is the single one which passed to the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts while the others were badly fragmented and consequently rejected. Zeest assigned similar vessels to a category of 'Thasian unstamped' examples.¹⁷ Brashinskii distinguished them as a special type of 'Phanagorian Hill G'.¹⁸ Now they are attributed to the 'proto-biconical' series of the 'Phanagorian' variant dated most often to the third quarter of the 5th century.¹⁹

Full analogues to the Thasian amphora from the Phanagorian complex were found in *kurgans* no. 17 and no. 45 at the cemetery of Elizavetinskoe.²⁰ Unfortunately, however, these were out of a reliable chronological context. Relatively not long ago, amphorae of this type were found in Thasos itself in the complex near the Gate of Silenus.²¹ Two vessels from burial no. 6 at the cemetery of Pichvnari (excavation of 1967) define the chronology of this series more exactly. There they were accompanied by an electrum stater of Kyzikos of 460–440 BC.²² There are also other finds from reliably dated strata. In particular, several amphorae of this kind were encountered in the Nymphaeum storeroom of 1978 which is dated to the period before the middle of the third quarter of the 5th century.²³ It seems, moreover, that the more slender amphorae from the Nymphaeum storeroom of 1978, exactly like the vessels from the Olbian bothros (1979) and Nikonian storeroom no. 3 (1960),²⁴ are somewhat younger than the vessels from the Phanagorian assemblage. Thus the place of the Thasian amphora from the excavation on Hill 'G' seems to be at the very beginning of the typological series of the 'Phanagorian' variant of the containers. It cannot be excluded that it must be dated to as early as the end of the second quarter of the 5th century.

The single grey ware Lesbian amphora Φ -472 from the Phanagorian complex,²⁵ unfortunately, has lost part of the shoulder and now only the neck and most of the body are available to us.²⁶ It belongs to variant II-A of the 'Nadlimanskii' type having an out-turned roller shaped rim with a platform on the top and a ledge below it. The neck is rather swollen in its middle part, and at the transition to the shoulder there is also a ledge. The body is ovoid, close to a conical, the toe is conical with a small conical depression on its sole (Fig. 2.2).

The closest parallels to this vessel come from the complexes of an Olbian pit-house excavated in 1985 (dated to the 450s–440s BC), *kurgan* no. 3 near the village of Steblev (440s BC), and the slightly later Nikonian warehouse no. 3 and Olbian storeroom no. 2 (440–420s BC).²⁷ A similar vessel was raised from the sea bottom in the Strait of Kerch in

¹⁷ Kobylina 1951, fig. 77 right; Zeest 1960, 80–81, pl. VI.16 6 – the drawing is inexact.

¹⁸ Brashinskii 1984, 179, table 6.9; measurements by B.N. Grakov.

¹⁹ Monakhov 2003, 65–66, pls. 40, 41; Zavoikin 2004, 145, pl. LXXXI.1.

²⁰ Brashinskii 1980, 109, 110; Monakhov 2003, pls. 40.3, 41.1–4.

²¹ Grandjean 1992, 564, no. 72.

²² Kakhidze 1975, 95, fig. 31.2, 3, pl. XXVII.1, 2.

²³ Monakhov 1999, 125–26, pl. 40; 2003, pl. 40.4; Monakhov *et al.* 2019, 40, 121, th. 3.

²⁴ Monakhov 1999, 131–53.

²⁵ Zeest 1960, 73, pl. 2.7.

²⁶ Monakhov 2003, pl. 28.2; Zavoikin 2004, 146, pl. LXXXI.2.

²⁷ Monakhov 1999, 118–21, 131–32, 140–43, pls. 37, 38, 43, 48; 2003, 46–47, pl. 28.

1970.²⁸ The same kind of pottery is found also among the materials from Athenian excavations.²⁹ Fragmentary necks of these amphorae were encountered in Histria where they are dated through analogies to within the 450s–410s BC.³⁰ They are fairly numerous also in museum collections of Turkey where they are widely synchronised to within the limits of the second half of the 5th century.³¹

The morphological peculiarities of the Lesbian amphora from the Phanagorian complex suggest that it occupies in the typological series an intermediate place between the amphorae from Steblev *kurgan* no. 3 and the third Nikonian warehouse of 1960, i.e. it is to be dated to within the limits of the very beginning of the third quarter of the 5th century.

The majority of the amphorae from the Phanagorian assemblage are represented by Chian containers of the so-called ‘swollen-necked’ type. However these amphorae belong to at least two different variants. Five of them (Φ-436–440: Figs. 2.3–6, 3.7) are of the ‘advanced’ variant without an intercept on the neck or with a scarcely traceable intercept and with an unpainted rim.³² Moreover, some of them are of the full standard while the others are fractional. Such vessels are widely distributed, *inter alia*, in the complexes from Velikoznamenskoe *kurgan* no. 13³³ and Elizavetovskoe *kurgans* no. 15 and no. 40³⁴ dated to the end of the second quarter–middle of the 5th century. In all probability, the amphorae from the Phanagorian assemblage represent the latest series of this variant and are dated to the period when it was replaced or some time coexisted with the subsequent variant of Chian amphorae with an intercept in the lower part of the neck.

The majority of the amphorae from the complex however belong exactly to the last ‘late swollen-necked’ variant of the Chian containers. These are 11 vessels under numbers Φ-430, 431, 433–435, 441, 469–472 and Φ-1948 (Figs. 3–5). They include both full-standard and fractional examples; for all of them, a smooth bend of the shoulder and a relatively low neck ending in a sharp intercept are characteristic.³⁵ Yet another feature is of note – the character of the depression in the sole of the foot. Only in one case (Φ-433), this depression is of a mushroom-shaped profile characteristic of the earlier amphorae of the ‘advanced’ variant (Fig. 3.8); in all other cases this depression is of a more or less conical form. On many of the vessels, large dipinti in the form of letters ‘A’ and ‘Λ’ are applied.

Chian amphorae of the ‘late swollen-necked’ variant were used for a fairly long period. The items from the Phanagorian assemblage belong to the earliest series (approximately the late 450s–440s BC). The latter is characterised by a smooth bend of the shoulder and relatively low neck. Such amphorae, in particular, have been recorded in the complex of ritual deposits in *kurgan* no. 4 of the ‘Dedova Mogila’ group, where a ‘swollen-necked’ amphora was found in association with a Chian ‘straight-necked’, one enabling us to date

²⁸ Monakhov *et al.* 2016, 80, LG.2.

²⁹ Clinkenbeard 1982, pl. 71.5, 6.

³⁰ Birzescu 2012, 239, tafl. 8.93–99.

³¹ Sezgin 2012, 231, Gles5.04.

³² Brashinskii 1984, nos. 57–62; Monakhov 2003, 17–18, pls. 5, 6.

³³ Monakhov 1999, 106–11, pls. 34, 35; 2003, pl. 6.6–8; Polin 2014, 195, fig. 109.

³⁴ Brashinskii 1980, 107, I.2–3; Monakhov 2003, pl. 6.2, 4.

³⁵ Monakhov 2003, pl. 7.1–2; Zavoikin 2004, 144, pl. LXXX.

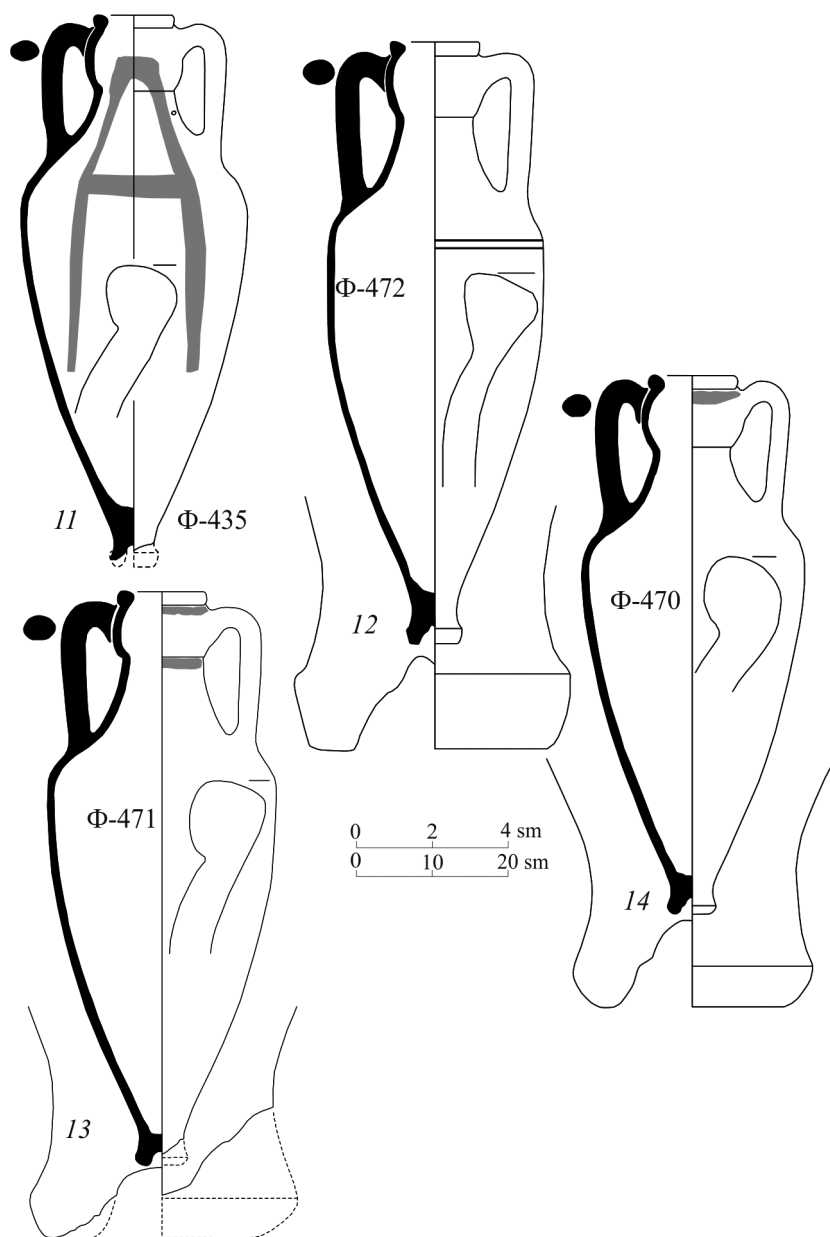


Fig. 4. Chian amphorae (nos. 11–14) from the Phanagorian assemblage from Hill 'G'.

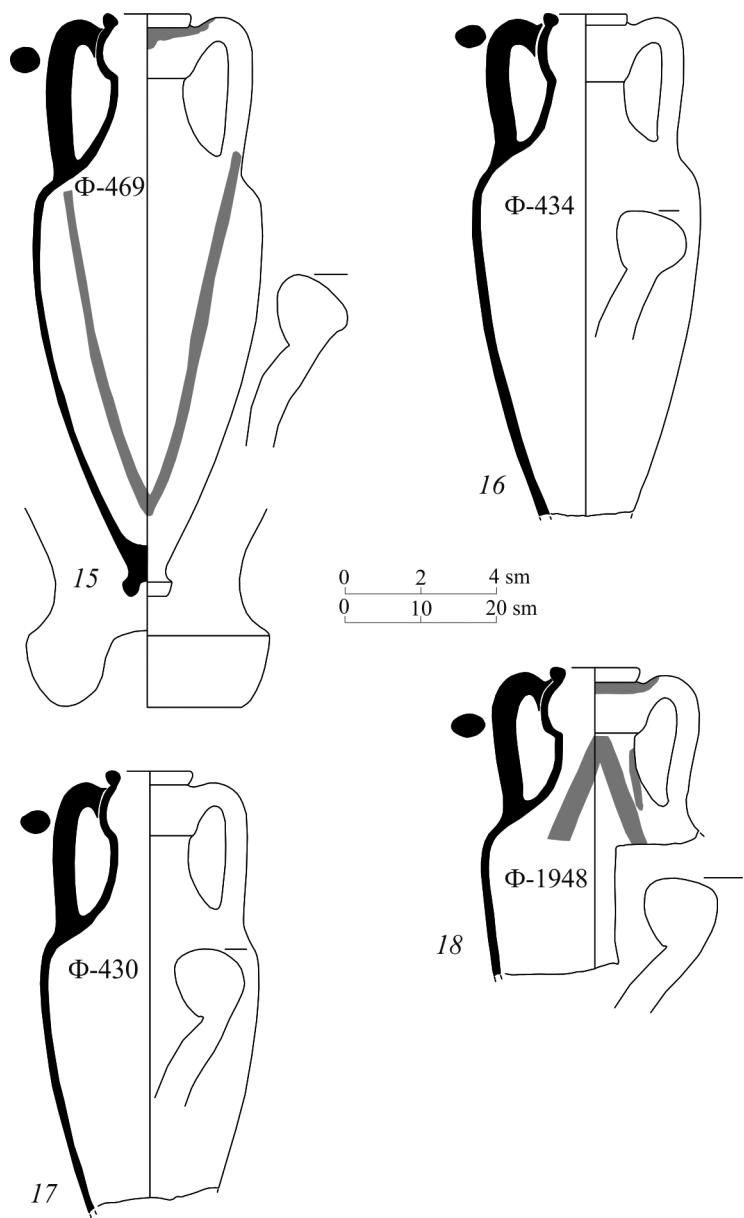


Fig. 5. Chian amphorae (nos. 15–18) from the Phanagorian assemblage from Hill ‘G’.

them to within the third quarter of the 5th century.³⁶ Another 'swollen-necked' amphora was recorded in a slightly later complex of the Olbian warehouse no. 1 (1971).³⁷ A fairly large quantity of such vessels are kept in the Kerch Museum of Antiquities.³⁸

Zavoikin proposes to date this series of the 'late swollen-necked' variant to the same chronological period.³⁹ In general, it is notable that if initially these amphorae had coexisted with the 'early plump-necked' ones (450s BC), then later (440–430s BC), they were manufactured simultaneously with amphorae with a 'straight neck' and had continued until the early 420s.

Cross-dating of the three groups of containers from the Phanagorian assemblage allows us to agree with the view proposed earlier by Brashinskii according to which it must be dated to the very beginning of the third quarter of the 5th century, most probably the 440s BC.

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³⁶ Polin 2014, 218, fig. 136.

³⁷ Monakhov 1999, 144–45, pl. 49.

³⁸ Monakhov *et al.* 2016, 66–67.

³⁹ Zavoikin 2013, 139.

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