

Nadezhda Borislavova

SUB-RHODIAN AMPHORAE IN THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF THRACE. IS THE FORM A TRADEMARK FOR THE CONTENT?

The aim of the research is to discuss the issue of derivative forms of the Rhodian type amphorae and the possible connection between the content and the shape of the vessels. The problem of reproduction of the Rhodian form in different regions of the eastern Roman provinces is discussed in the context of the finds from the Roman province of Thrace. The different subtypes were distinguished for their regional morphological features. Some of them are related to a probable region of origin. Almost all of the derivative forms were presented in Thrace but some of them predominate. Their wide distribution, extending over the markets of the urban centres and the rural areas, is an evidence for the traditional economic relations between Thrace, Aegean Islands and Western Asia Minor.

Amphorae – Sub-Rhodian – Thrace – Asia Minor – Aegean

1. Introduction

The aim of this research is to present a group of amphora types found in the Roman province of Thrace.¹ This group derived from the Rhodian type, which was highly identifiable in the Mediterranean area. That raises issues of their origin, content, or the purpose of imitating the Rhodian form.

The production of the same amphora type in different regions of the Eastern provinces is rooted in the Hellenistic period. There are many examples of trade with certain commodities, which were distributed in containers with similar typological features but exhibiting some regional characteristics. A significant illustration is the Dressel 24/Dressel 24 *similis* type with many variations used in the olive oil trade and originating from the wide area of western Asia Minor and the Aegean islands (Opař and Tsaravopoulos 2011: 305). Another example is the wine amphora Dressel 2-4 (Kos) type, which was produced in the islands of Kos, Rhodes, western Asia Minor – Halicarnassos, Myndos, Knidos, the Pontic coast – Heraclea Pontica and Sinope, Cilicia, Egypt, etc. (Empereur and Picon 1986: 110-112, fig. 13; Bezeczky 2013: 57-58; Vnukov 2004: 407). The Koan wine was well known by its characteristics. The addition of sea water to the must was a stage of the production process of that wine (Pliny NH XIV: 10. 77-78). The wide reproduction of the Dressel 2-4 type was probably due to the spreading of that wine production technology.²

The issue of derivative forms of the Rhodian type amphorae could be considered in the same respect. During the Hellenistic period Rhodes transferred a part of the production of its wine to the Rhodian *Peraea* and that wine was distributed as Rhodian (Empereur, Picon 1989: 225). The establishing of the Roman control in Asia Minor and the Aegean led to the extension of the markets for Rhodian wine. The production of Rhodian type amphorae increased and new derivative types appeared. Some of them became more prevalent than the original.

2. Rhodian type

The Rhodian type, which was spread during the Roman period, developed as a modification of the Hellenistic form – the body became narrower and elongated; the stamping on the handles declined and until the second half of the 1st century AD the handles became peaked (Finkielsztejn 2001: 231; Bezeczky 2013: 35-36). Peaked handles were the most distinctive feature of the Rhodian type during the Roman period and respectively – for all derivative forms.

A number of production sites have been researched in Rhodes. A workshop with kilns dated to the 3rd century AD was excavated in Rhodes City (Bezeczky 2013: 38). According to a *titulus pictus* on the neck of an amphora found in Lyon, the territory of Miletus was included in the production areas of the type (Desbat, Lequément, Liou 1987: 151-153, fig. 5, 6: L13). Similar to Kos and Chios, Italian aristocrats or their agents were involved in the distribution and trade with Rhodian wine. This amphora type was widespread in

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. M. Ivanov (NAIM-BAS), D. Agre (NAIM-BAS), D. Dimitrova (NAIM-BAS), M. Martinova (Plovdiv Archaeological Museum), Assoc. Prof. Dr. P. Vladkova (Veliko Tarnovo Regional Historical Museum) for the opportunity to study unpublished amphorae from excavations they have directed.

² For example, according to the *tituli picti* on AC 2 type – Cretan imitation of Dressel 2-4 type – the content of one amphora was μυρτίνης οἶνος

(Marangou-Lerat 1995: 141, P62). The myrtle wine was made with salted must and berries of wild myrtle (Pliny XIV: 19.104).

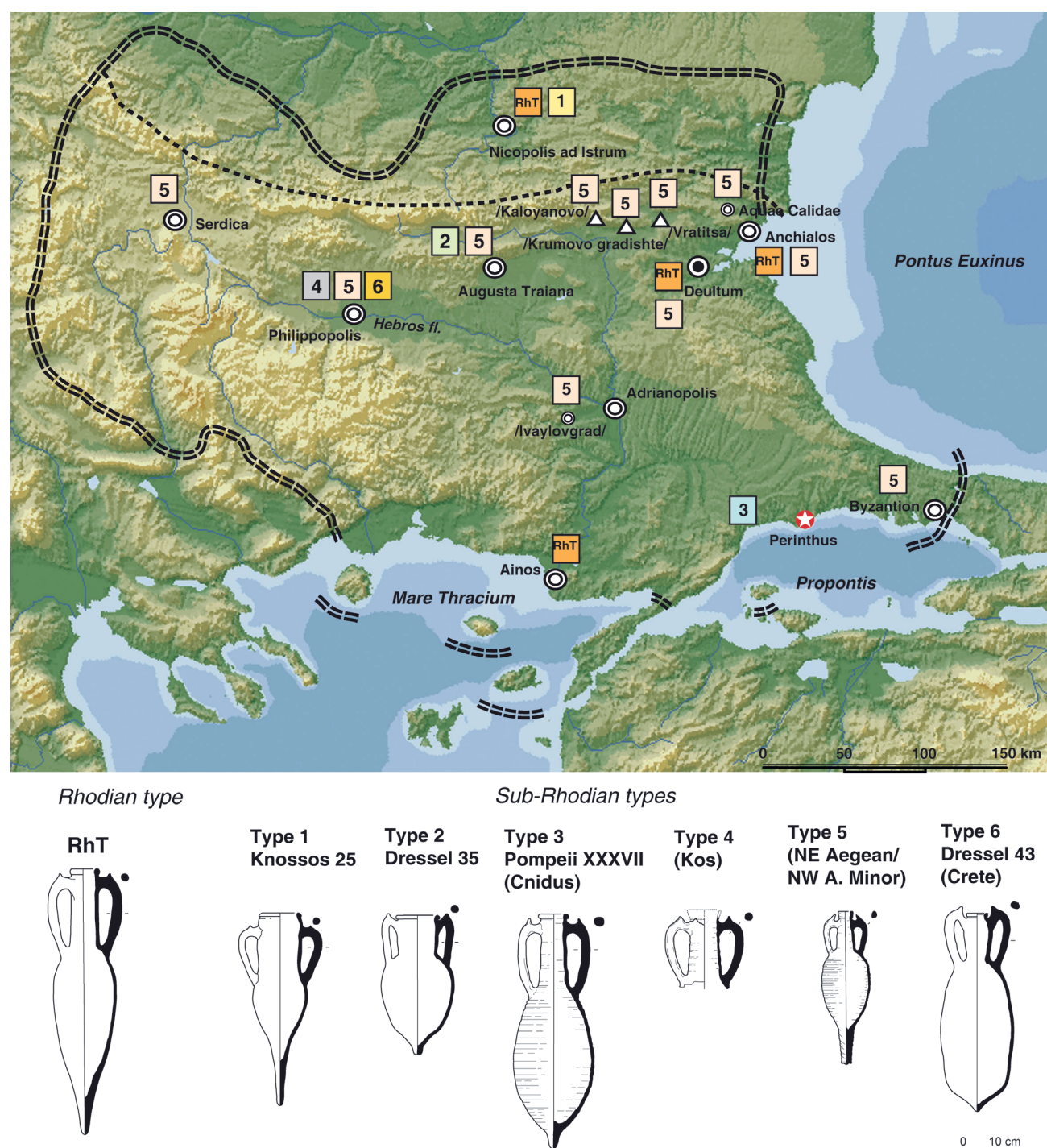


Fig. 1. Distribution map of Rhodian and Sub-Rhodian amphora types in the Roman province of Thrace (drawings of RhT and types 1, 2, 6 after Martin-Kilcher 1994: 347, Abb. 132; 3. Tekirdag; 4. Philippopolis; 5. Tumular necropolis near Krumovo gradishte, drawings by N. Borislavova).

the Mediterranean area and especially in the military sites in *Britannia* and along the Rhine and Danube frontier (Van den Berg 2012: 217, fig. 2). In Thrace, the Rhodian type was found at Nicopolis ad Istrum, *Anchialus*, Deultum and Ainos (fig. 1). The production of the type declined in the second quarter or in the middle of the 3rd century AD (Slane 2004: 366, fig.5, 368; Van den Berg 2012: 218; Bezeczky 2013: 38-39).

3. Distribution of the Sub-Rhodian types in the Roman province of Thrace

The common feature of all derivative or Sub-Rhodian types was the imitation of the most significant element of the Rhodian form – the horned handles. Only a few of them were found in Thrace and could be related to a certain region of origin.

3.1. Type 1. Knossos 25 (Hayes 1983) (Rhodian Peraea)

These amphorae have broad cylindrical neck with rolled rim, conical body tapering to a long solid toe. The handles are peaked with spikes (fig. 2, 1). The clay is hard, red 10R 5/6, granular, loaded with black volcanic particles (Hayes 1983: 151). The body is covered with pinkish white slip: 5YR 8/2. The type was found at Augst and dated to the first half of the 1st century AD or the 1st-2nd century AD (Martin-Kilcher 1994: 348, 675, Taf. 127: 2461-2463), at Knossos – dated to 120-150 AD (Hayes 1983: 151, 152, fig. 24: A66, 164). It occurs rarely in Thrace as only one example was found at Nicopolis ad Istrum in a context dated to the first half of the 2nd century (fig. 1, 1).

3.2. Type 2. Dressel 35 (Rhodian Peraea)

These amphorae have a broad cylindrical neck, rolled rim, peaked handles, short spherical body ending with a knob. The handles are raised above the rim. The clay is hard, red 10R 5/6, the surface is partly covered with thin whitish slip 5YR 8/1. Dressel 35 had a limited distribution. The type occurs in Rome, Pompeii, Golfe de Fos, Vindonissa, Athens, Ephesus (CIL, XV: Tab. II: 35; Ettlinger and Simonett 1952, 90: 585; Lang 1976: 70, Hc 7, Pl. 39; Bezeczky 2013: 76). In Thrace Dressel 35 was found only in Augusta Traiana in a context dated to the 2nd century AD (fig. 1, 2).

3.3. Type 3. Pompeii XXXVII (Cnidus)

This Sub-Rhodian type was found at Pompeii, and after the *titulus pictus* on the same amphora it was produced in the territory of Cnidus (CIL IV: 5535). These amphorae have a cylindrical neck, rolled rim, peaked handles, 'bag-shaped' body ending with a solid toe. The 'bag-shaped' body is a special feature for this variation of the Rhodian type – the maximum diameter is placed on the lower part of the amphorae. The same feature is presented by another type produced in Cnidus during the Roman period – Pompeii XXXVIII (Cnidian type). Traces from the production of that Sub-type were discovered in Hisarönü and Callipolis (Empereur and Tuna 1989: 284, 285: fig. 12, 289; Empereur and Picon 1986: 116). A fragmented example of that type was found in a Sanjak Burnu shipwreck (Cowin 1986: 48, 155, Pl. 8: 73T-2). Three other examples from the southeastern part of Thrace are displayed in the exposition of the Tekirdag Museum of Archaeology (fig. 1, 3). The neck, the body and the toe of these examples are ridged. The fabric is hard: 5YR 6/6 – 7/5 and the surface is brownish-red: 2.5YR 5/6 – 6/7.

3.4. Type 4 (Kos)

This type was defined on the basis of a fragmented amphora found at the *agora* of Philippopolis in context dated to the 2nd century AD (fig. 1, 4). Only the upper part is preserved and that restrained the definition of the morphological features

(fig. 2, 2). Type 4 has a truncated conical rim and a neck with shallow grooves. The fabric is light red 2.5YR 6/7 and can be related to the Koan fabric D after R. Sauer (Bezeczky 2013: 58-59). It can be suggested that this variation of the Rhodian type was produced in Kos or the territories related to the island (Kos/Halicarnassos).

3.5. Type 5 (Northeastern Aegean/ Northwestern Asia Minor)

This amphora type is small and elongated. The rim is square-shaped in cross-section. The neck is cylindrical and slightly bulbous, while the shoulders and the lower part of the body are conical. The toe is long, narrow with a ring and *umbo* in its centre. The handles are short, attached below the rim and at the upper part of the shoulders. The spurs at the top of the handles are sharp or slightly jugged, in one case – attached. The body is ridged and thin-walled (fig. 2, 3-4). The height of these vessels varies between 35 and 65 cm and the volume – between 1.8 and 7 liters (the largest volume was reached in the end of the 2nd till the middle of the 3rd century). The fabric is hard fired, reddish yellow 7.5YR 7/5 – 7/3 to light red 2.5YR 7/7. The colour of the slip is pinkish white 5YR 8/2 to very pale brown 10YR 8/2.

This is the most common imported wine amphora type in the Roman province of Thrace. It occurs in Serdica, Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana, Anchialos and its territory, Deultum and the territory of Adrianopolis, Byzantion, etc. (fig. 1, 5). The amphorae have been discovered in reliable contexts dated from the end of the 1st to the middle of the 3rd century AD. In the second half of the 3rd century the dimensions of the amphorae decreased, the body became slightly bag-shaped. In the first half of the 4th century AD the spurs at the top of the handles dropped out, the *umbo* in the center of the toe became wider. A. Opaït consider that during the 3rd century AD the handles were hornless. Amphorae discovered at Beroe – type Opaït VIII₂ / Scorpan IV – can be accepted as the final phase of the existence of the type (Opaït 2017: 590).

3.6. Type 6. Dressel 43 (Crete)

These amphorae are thin-walled, with cylindrical body, which expands slightly toward the base and ends with a rounded knob. The fabric is fine-textured and hard fired, the colour ranges from light red 2.5YR 6/6 to light brown to buff 7.5YR 6/4 – 7/4 and light grey 10YR 7/2. The earliest examples of Dressel 43 seem to be the finds from Vindonissa dated to the first half of the 1st century and from Colchester dated to the mid-1st century. The type was widely distributed till the second half of the 2nd century when its production was reduced. (Williams 2003, 26-29, 31). It was found at Corinth in a second quarter of the 3rd century context, in Leptis Magna – dated to the last quarter of the 3rd – the beginning of the 4th century AD, etc. (Slane 2004, 366-367; Bonifay, Capelli 2013, 82, 88, fig.9: 21). This type occurs rarely in Thrace as it was discovered so far only in Philippopolis in a context dated to the 3rd century AD (fig. 1, 6).

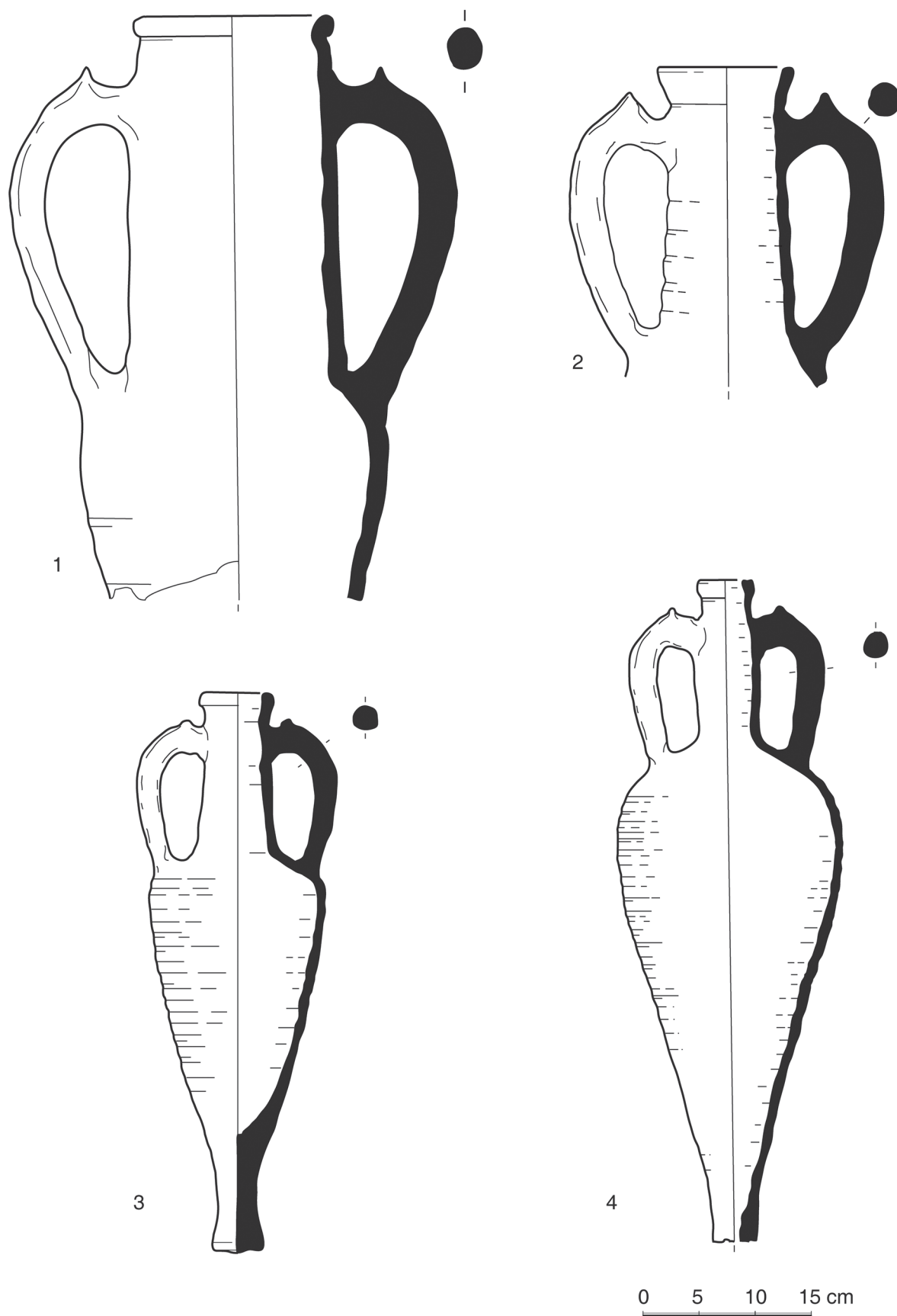


Fig. 2. Sub-Rhodian types: 1. Knossos 25 (Nicopolis ad Istrum); 2. Type 4 (Philippopolis); 3. Type 5 (Kaloyanovo, Yurukova mogila); 4. Type 5 (Serdica) (drawings by N. Borislavova).

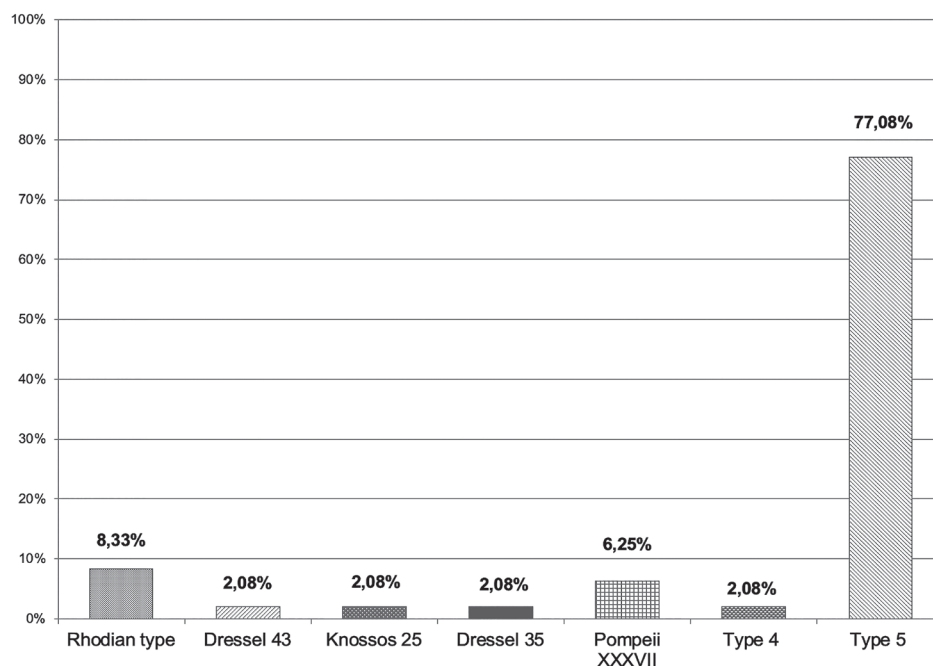


Fig. 3. Quantity (%) of Rhodian and Sub-Rhodian amphora types found in the Roman province of Thrace.

The distribution of the Sub-Rhodian types in Thrace shows that the most rarely occurring are the types, which were produced in the outermost regions (fig. 3). It is important to bear in mind that Knossos 25 and Dressel 35 types had a limited circulation on the markets as a whole. Dressel 43 is a wide distributed amphora type in the Italian peninsula and the forts and settlements along the Rhone-Rhine trade route (Van den Berg 2012: 220). In Thrace it occurs during the 3rd century when the production of the type declines. The episodic appearance of the type could be provided with the regular commodity supply from some of the significant redistributive centers in Western Asia Minor as Ephesus for example. This corresponds to the principle limited imports of Cretan products in Thrace.³ The other derivative forms had a different distribution pattern. Thrace had strong and constant cultural and economic relations with the cities in Western Asia Minor and the Aegean islands. The establishing and the rise of Thrace as a Roman province led to the developing of road and trade networks between the urban centres. The commodity exchange increased significantly during the reign of the Antonine and the Severan dynasty. The province was regularly supplied with olive oil produced in the Aegean islands and the territory of the Western Asia Minor cities (Ionia, Aeolia). The large amount of the Sub-Rhodian types produced in the same regions is expected. The wide distribution of the wine carried in amphora type 5 in Thrace, not only in urban centers but in rural sites, displays that the province was one of the most important markets for it.

³ An import of Cretan products traded in amphorae with the exception of Philippopolis is known so far only at *Anchialus*. Amphorae AC 3 type after Marangou-Lerat 1995 found in the city represent only 4.9 % of the total import (Borislavova forthcoming).

4. The content of the Rhodian type and its derivative forms

The study of a group of amphora types, which undoubtedly have common morphological features, raises questions concerning the content of these vessels and the possible connection between this content and the shape of the vessels. The Sub-Rhodian types imitated in different degree the Rhodian form and all of them had typical features, which could relate them to a certain region of origin or could be due to a difference in the content. The question, if the imitating of the form is related with the use of the same production technology of the wine, as it is known for Dressel 2-4 type, remains.

An amphora found in Pompeii displays important evidence that the content of the Rhodian type was *passum*. It has a *titulus pictus*: *pass(um) rhod(ium)/ P. Coeli. Gali*. One amphora found in the Dramont D shipwreck had remains of figs, probably conserved in *passum* or *sapa* (Martin-Kilcher 1994: 348-349, Abb. 133). According to the ancient sources high quality *passum* was produced on the island of Crete (Pliny XIV: 11. 81; Martial XIII: CVI). Some of the Cretan wine amphora types maintained traditional features and others as Dressel 43 (AC 4) appeared as an imitation of types popular in the Mediterranean. Despite the differences in the upper part of the body all of the Cretan wine amphora types kept the specific characteristic of the Cretan form – the cylindrical body and the rounded basal knob. That insured the recognizing of the amphorae as made in Crete (Marangou-Lerat 1995: 88, 158). As the Cretan variation of Dressel 2-4 type was used to carry a sweet wine produced with sea water and the Koan technology of wine production was kept, it could be suggested that the Cretan imitation of the Rhodian type was used in the *passum* trade. According to the *tituli picti* on some of the Dressel 43 examples from

Pompeii and Fos-sur-Mer the content of these vessels was a Cretan wine (*vinum Creticum*) and in one occasion – an amphora from London – sorb apples conserved in *sapa* (Williams 2003: 28, 30) or fruit wine. Knossos 25 and Dressel 35 types, probably produced in the Rhodian *Peraea*, have a wide rim, which makes these amphorae more suitable for carrying fruits conserved in *defrutum* or *sapa*. We can suggest that the other Sub-Rhodian types were also intended for *passum* trade but that remains unproved. Type 5 differentiates from the other derivative forms with its small dimensions and despite of that it was often identified as a Dressel 43 type (Bjelajac 1996: 41, Sl. XII - 49, 51; Opař, Paraschiv 2013: 323, 333, fig. 18) and recently – as an imitation of the Dressel 43 type (Opař 2017: 590). It could be argued if Type 5 imitates the Cretan form or not. Most of the variations of the type display different features of the rim and the handles – foreign to the characteristics of Dressel 43.

5. Conclusion

The aim of the imitation of the Rhodian type was not the selling of wine as Rhodian. Probably the symbolic peaked

handles in the derivative forms were a sign for the consumer that the content was mainly raisin wine or a variety of fruit wines produced in similar technology. The preservation of the regional features in any particular Sub-Rhodian type was significant not only for the customer who could recognize the origin of the wine but also for the manufacturers who worked under the municipal control and sold a local branded product.

The comparison between the Sub-Rhodian types that were found in Thrace shows that one of them predominates. It was probably produced in the northeastern Aegean and the coastal areas of Ionia and Aeolia and was prevalent all over the province – not only in towns, but also in rural areas. The wide distribution of that wine on the Thracian markets was a result of the proximity of its production areas and the traditional economic links between Thrace and those regions. An important factor for the intensifying of the interprovincial trade was the increased number of settlers from Asia Minor after the administrative reforms of Trajan (98-117) and Hadrian (117-138) and the urbanization of the province of Thrace. To a certain extent the ethno-cultural identity of the foreign population, which included veterans, members of the administration of the Thracian towns, craftsmen, traders, etc., also predetermined the direction of the economic relations.

Nadezhda Borislavova
Independent researcher
n.g.borislavova@gmail.com

Illustrated amphorae:

Abbreviations: Dr – diameter of the rim, Dm – diameter maximum, Sh – section of the handle, H – height, Hpr – preserved height, Hb – height of the base, Db – diameter of the base, fr – fragment.

Figure 2

1. Rim, neck, handles, body (fr): Hpr: 50 cm, Dr: 17 cm, Sh: 3 x 3.07 cm, Dm: 25.47 cm; fabric: red 10R 5/6, surface colour (slip): pinkish white 5YR 8/2; context: pit deposit dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD, Nicopolis ad Istrum, *agora* (1992).
2. Rim, neck, handles: Hpr: 28 cm; Dr: 12 cm; Sh: 2.93 x 2.9 cm; Dm (preserved): 17 cm; fabric: similar to Koan fabric D (Bezczky 2013, 58-59), colour: light red 2.5YR 6/7; surface colour (slip): pinkish white 2.5YR 8/2 – 5YR 8/2; context: 2nd century AD, Philippopolis, *agora* (1987).
3. Restored: H: 48 cm; Dr: 6.33 cm; Sh.: 2.32 x 2.16 cm; Dm: 15.13 cm; Hb: 10 cm; Db: 4.43 cm; D *umbo*: 1.3 cm; fabric: reddish yellow 5YR 6/6; surface colour: pinkish white 7.5YR 8/2; context: second quarter of the 2nd century AD, barrow cemetery near the village of Kaloyanovo, 2007; Sliven Regional Museum, inv # SI 3591A.
4. Rim, neck, handles, body (fr): Hpr: 56.8 cm; Dr: 5 cm; Sh: 2.3 x 2.2 cm; Dm: 20 cm; fabric: pink 5YR 7/4 – light red 10R 6/6; surface colour (slip): white 2.5Y 9.5/1; context: House A2, destruction deposit dated to 170 AD, Serdica, excavations at Metro station 8 (2010).

Bibliography

- Bezczky, T. 2013. *The Amphorae of Roman Ephesus* (Forschungen in Ephesus 15/1). Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Bjelajac, L. 1996. *Amfore gornjomezijskog Podunavlja*. Belgrade, Arheološki Institut.
- Bonifay, M. and Capelli, C. 2013. Les Thermes du Levant à Leptis Magna: quatre contextes ceramiques des III et IV siècles. *Antiquités Africaines* 49, 67-150.
- Borislavova, N. forthcoming. Transport Amphorae from the Black Sea area of the Roman province of Thrace. In *Propontis and the Surrounding Cultures I* (International Symposium of Propontis and the Surrounding Cultures, 15-19 october 2018).

- Cowin, M. 1986. *Artifacts Recovered off the Southwestern Turkish Coast by Institute of Nautical Archaeology Shipwreck Surveys in 1973 and 1980*. Unpublished MA thesis, Texas University.
- Desbat, A., Lequément, R. and Liou, B. 1987. Inscriptions peintes sur amphores: Lyon et Saint-Romain-en-Gal. *Archaeonautica* 7, 141-166.
- Dressel, H. 1899. Inscriptiones Urbis Romae Latinae. Instrumentum domesticum. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* XV, Pars II. Berlin.
- Empereur, J. Y. and Picon, M. 1986. A la recherche des fours d'amphores. In J.-Y. Empereur and Y. Garlan (eds.), *Recherches sur les amphores grecques* (Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique Suppl. 13): 599-608. Athènes, Ecole française d'Athènes.
- Empereur, J. Y. and Picon, M. 1989. Les régions de production d'amphores impériales en Méditerranée orientale. In *Amphores romaines et histoire économique. Dix ans de recherche. Actes du colloque de Sienne* (22-24 mai 1986) (Collection de l'École française de Rome 114): 223-248. Rome, École Française de Rome.
- Empereur, J. Y. and Tuna, N. 1989. Hiérotélès, potier rhodien de la Pérée. *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 113-1, 277-299.
- Ettlinger, E. and Simonett, C. 1952. *Römische Keramik aus dem Schutthügel von Vindonissa* (Veröffentlichungen der Gesellschaft pro Vindonissa III). Basel, Birkhäuser.
- Finkielsztejn, G. 2001. *Chronologie détaillée et révisée des éponymes amphoriques rhodiens, de 270 à 108 av. J.-C. environ* (British Archaeological Reports International Series 990). Oxford, Archaeopress.
- Hayes, J. W. 1983. The Villa Dionysos Excavations, Knossos: The Pottery. *The Annual of the British School of Athens* 78, 97-169.
- Lang, M. 1976. *Graffiti and Dipinti* (The Athenian Agora XXI). Princeton, New Jersey, The American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
- Marangou-Lerat, A. 1995. *Le vin et les amphores de Crète de l'époque classique à l'époque impériale* (Études Crétoises 30, École Française d'Athènes). Paris, E. De Boccard.
- Martin-Kilcher, S. 1994. *Die römischen Amphoren aus Augst und Kaiseraugst* (Forschungen in Augst 7/1-3), Augst, Römermuseum.
- Martial. Epigrams vol. II, books VIII-XIV, Walter C. and A. Ker (tr.), London: William Heinemann, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, MCMXX.
- Mau, A. 1909. Inscriptionum parietarium Pompeianarum, Inscriptiones parietariae et vasorum fictilium. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IV, Suppl. Pars II.
- Opaiț, A. 2017. On the local production and imports of wine in the Pontic and Lower Danube regions (1st century BC to 7th century AD). An overview. In D. Dixneuf (ed.), *LRCW 3. Late Roman coarse wares, cooking wares and amphorae in the Mediterranean archaeology and archaeometry*. Vol. 2 (Études Alexandrines 42): 579-612. Alexandrie, Centre d'Études Alexandrines.
- Opaiț, A. and Paraschiv, D. 2013. On the Wine, Olive Oil and Fish Supply of the Countryside in Roman Dobroudja (1st-3rd Centuries AD). In L. Buzoianu, P. Dupont, V. Lungu (eds.), *Patabs III. Production and Trade of Amphorae in the Black Sea* (Pontica Supplementum 2): 317-333. Constanța, Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie.
- Opaiț, A. and Tsaravopoulos, A. 2011. Amphorae of Dressel 24 Similis Type in the Central Aegean Area (Chios – Erythrai – Kyme). *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 106, 275-323.
- Pliny. Natural History vol. IV, libri XII-XVI, H. Rackham (tr.), LCL, 370.
- Slane, K. 2004. Amphoras – Used and Reused – at Corinth. In J. Eiring and J. Lund (eds.), *Transport Amphorae and Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Acts of the International Colloquium at the Danish Institute at Athens, September 26-29, 2002) (Monograph of the Danish Institute at Athens 5): 361-369. Athens, Danish Institute at Athens; Århus, Aarhus University Press.
- Van den Berg, J. 2012. Rare and exotic amphorae in North-West Europe: finds from the Roman fort on the Kops Plateau, Nijmegen. *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies* 15, 215-235.
- Vnukov, S. 2004. Pan-Roman Amphora Types Produced in the Black Sea Region. In J. Eiring and J. Lund (eds.), *Transport Amphorae and Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Acts of the International Colloquium at the Danish Institute at Athens, September 26-29, 2002) (Monograph of the Danish Institute at Athens 5): 407-415. Athens, Danish Institute at Athens; Århus, Aarhus University Press.
- Williams, D. 2003. Cretan wine in Roman Britain. *Journal of Roman Pottery Studies* 10, 26-31.