Naukratis: Greeks in Egypt

Alexandra Villing, Marianne Bergeron, Giorgos Bourogiannis, Alan Johnston, François Leclère, Aurélie Masson and Ross Thomas

With Daniel von Recklinghausen, Jeffrey Spencer, Valerie Smallwood, Virginia Webb and Susan Woodford

http://www.britishmuseum.org/naukratis

Greek transport amphorae

Alan Johnston
This chapter is a necessarily brief and perhaps uninspiring account of the transport amphorae of Greek (including Cypriot) and Phoenician manufacture found and preserved from the early fieldwork at Naukratis. It is ‘necessarily brief’ since the excavators kept only stamped (many) or inscribed (few) sherds. The former are the subject of separate chapter on Stamped amphora handles. The remainder are the focus of the present chapter, which covers all retained unstamped pieces in as much as their character as amphorae is concerned; their more epigraphic aspects are discussed as part of the chapter on Ceramic inscriptions (section 8.6.1). The bibliography at the end of the chapter includes a section on further reading regarding individual types.

The retained non-stamped material is largely of the Archaic period, with few assuredly later pieces, such as one Corinthian B jar, although it is not easy to date a small residue of others. While this evidence is far from representative of the archaeological record, more recent work has started to fill out the picture, as noted below.

Mention of amphorae (again, other than their stamps) in the early excavation reports is slight. Petrie 1886 illustrates some finds, though with little comment; pl. 16 includes drawings of two Chian amphorae, one 6th century BC, one of c. 480–450, one Samian (probably 1886,0401.1291, the only fully preserved jar known to survive from Naukratis; Fig. 1), one Lesbian and one possibly Phoenician torpedo jar.

Pl. 17 in Petrie 1886 includes later material: three torpedo jars, one Rhodian (plus a seemingly late Rhodian handle), one Mendean and two of uncertain provenance (Gantès 2007, 146 improbably takes one of them, pl. 17, 24, as later 5th century BC Lesbian). Gardner 1888 merely mentions

---

1 All images in the chapter unless otherwise indicated are © Trustees of the British Museum.
two torpedo jars, one in use as a burial urn and the other inscribed (1888,0601.369), as well as a stopper, stamped *spes in deo*, noted in the forthcoming chapter on Inscriptions Varia. Hogarth (1898–9, 34) simply notes ‘amphora handles’, ‘coarse amphorae’ (ibid. 41) and a reference to one of the two torpedo jars illustrated later in Hogarth *et al.* 1905 (ibid. 35), where two Greek-style amphorae of the Classical period, one North Greek (124, fig. 3), are also illustrated but only fleetingly commented on.  
  
Piekarzki (2001, 23, A12–14) adds three further Chian ‘bobbin’ fragments in Bonn and other such previously unpublished fragments are to be found in Leiden (nine) and Heidelberg (two).

In his 1884–5 Journal Petrie does have further remarks concerning finds of jars. On p. 75 he wrote: ‘I have got a complete handle of one of the very large jars this is 10 ins high & 6 ins across; some few have names on them cut in; they belong to the 5th cent BC I believe, or earlier & these handles are nearly always broken. The Greeks used them up for pestles & dozens of pieces of handles may be found ground down at both ends. The ware is very hard drabby white.’ These are almost certainly Cypriot basket-handled jars. On p. 89 he continued: ‘We have at last got a perfect amphora of the early type, painted white with a few orange lines on it for ornament. I imagine this belongs to about 500 B.C., judging by its colours & by the pottery generally found lying with it.’ This might be the Chian jar Petrie (1886, pl. 16,4) dated to c. 575–550 BC. Finally, on p. 95 he wrote: ‘One large neck of an amphora, 9 ins high has one handle perfect & part of the other, both stamped one, & the other a different name but only E legible; two different stamps on the same pot is strange, both balaustium type.’ This can be identified with British Museum, 2006,0331.31 (Fig. 2) with problems of reading the worn Rhodian eponym’s name. He also notes (p.161), ‘pieces of Phoenician Greek pottery, lined with pitch like the Roman amphorae’. These would be ‘torpedo’ jars, made largely in the Levant, but also in Phoenician Cyprus.

The work of Coulson and Leonard, and recently of the Naukratis project (Thomas and Villing forthcoming), has shown that uninscribed amphora fragments abound at the site. For the former there is a brief review in Gantès 2007. The following resumé takes this material into account, although without autopsy by the present author it is not easy to follow or accept all of the attributions made in the publications.

In the Archaic to early Classical period the types of jar cover the range found at other sites in Egypt; Chian and Samian are frequent and Klazomenian (Fig. 3) and Lesbian are tolerably well attested, although some are rare (Milesian, Corinthian B) or absent (Attic SOS, Corinthian A), a not dissimilar pattern to that at Tell Dafana. Milesian types may be present in the British Museum in a set of sherds with minor stamps and

---

2 I add here that the dipinto on the jar, ΣΦΩ, is not easily decoded, since no names are known starting thus and the only other words are of purely poetic use.

3 Petrie read *Philadou* or *Philidaou*, and I concur with *Philit*; the likelihood is that it is a stamp of Philiinos.

4 The material from the fieldwork by Leonard and Coulson is presently largely inaccessible, although it is hoped that the portion of the material that reached the US as a part of the finds division may be studied in the near future.

5 Klazomenian: British Museum, 2011,5003.501 and 544; Coulson 1996, 46, fig. 22, nos 337 and 1193 (*pace* Coulson), and fig. 23, 1537 (Gantès). Lesbian: Petrie 1886, pl. 16;; British Museum, 2011,5003.570.
As noted above, Cypriot basket-handled jars were probably found in some quantity by Petrie, as were torpedo jars of Levantine origin, despite the poverty of references in the publications. Both types were still arriving after the Archaic period, though our evidence is restricted. For the basket-handled type there is perhaps only Petrie 1886, pl. 17, 2, though for the ‘torpedo’ jar, whatever the precise origin, we have Petrie 1886, pl. 16, 3, Hogarth et al. 1905, 124, fig. 3 and Coulson 1996, 60, ‘type B handles’; several handle fragments were found in the 2014 season (Fig. 5).

Ironically, the one totally assured Phoenician inscription from the site, a *mem* in red paint, is on an amphora of disputed but certainly not Levantine origin (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G124; see chapter on Ceramic inscriptions, Fig. 5).

Material from other areas before the mid to late 4th century BC is also very thin, reflected as much in the rarity of stamps as in other fragments. Stamped jars include some 4th century Thasian, rare Mendean and possibly Samian (if they are not later) and the series with the ‘aphu’ ligature, which should be placed around the mid 5th century BC (for details see the chapter on Stamped amphorae). Un stamped material certainly includes some Chian and Lesbian examples; feet and rims point to some Samian and generically North Greek material, while many fragments remain without an assured home. Corinthian B appears fitfully, the rim and neck of British Museum, 1910,0222.250 (Fig. 6) of the later 5th century BC and just one contemporary or later toe (Coulson 1996, 58, 101).

For the Hellenistic period there are ample stamps from the main producers, Rhodes, Knidos, Kos, Thasos and Brindisi, as well as examples from secondary producers such as Chios, Paros, Kerkyra, Samos, Pamphylia, Ephesus and indeed Egypt. Un stamped material, apart from the four or fewer jars drawn by Petrie (1886, pl. 17) is currently limited to that noted in the publications of Coulson and Leonard, much of which is said to be of local production after Greek models. Among the large number of rims and toes presented by Coulson and Leonard, one may note a few Graeco-Ionic.

---

6 British Museum, 2011,5003.497 and 498 (handle shoulder fragments) are possibilities.
amphorae (Leonard 2001, 184–5, fig. 3.3.9–10; with a Dressel 1 jar, 3.3.1, a probable Brindisi amphora, 3.3.5 and perhaps a Lamboglia 2, 3.3.8) and one Cretan (Fig. 7; Coulson 1996, 109 and 59, fig. 29, type GH, no. 394).

Therefore, the contribution of unstamped material to the history of amphorae at Naukratis in the period is currently slight, but likely to bulk larger after future work on site and with the Coulson-Leonard assemblage.7

Further reading

The types of amphorae found at Naukratis, their dating and use, are presented succinctly above. Further background bibliography on these types is listed below. Where the entry is abbreviated, details can be found in the general Naukratis bibliography. Still of much value is the overview presented by Virginia Grace in her Athenian Agora picture book, Amphoras and the Ancient Wine Trade (Princeton 1961).


For the major production centres of the Hellenistic period, much that is published concerns stamps rather than the containers. However, the following publications devote some attention to the latter:

- Knidos: Grace and Savvatianou-Petropoulakou 1979; Jefremov 1995
- Kos: Yiannikouri, Stefanaki, and Georgopoulou 2011 with previous bibliography
- Rhodes: Finkielstean 2001
- Thasos: Bon and Bon 1957; Garlan 1999
- Brindisi area: Desy 1989; Palazzo 2013; Manacorda 2012


---

7 Two statistical points may be noted, at either end of the time period covered. In the 6th century BC the Chian amphora may seem to predominate, but the jars had some painted decoration and so unscribed fragments were retained. In the 3rd and 2nd century Rhodian stamped amphora handles appear similarly dominant, but it should be remembered that virtually all Rhodian jars bore two stamps, while elsewhere, in varying proportion, one was the rule.