

Introduction

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The potential of transport amphorae for elucidating ancient economic history is well nigh universally recognized. In the words of D.P.S. Peacock and D.F. Williams: “amphorae ... provide us not with an *index* of the transportation of goods, but with direct witness of the movement of certain foodstuffs which were of considerable economic importance, and which were an essential part of Roman culture. It is hard to conceive any archaeological material better suited to further our understanding of Roman trade”.¹ This applies equally to the Eastern Mediterranean before the ascent of the Roman Empire.

The study of transport amphorae developed into a scientific discipline in the nineteenth century.² Thus, in a lecture read in 1847, J.L. Stoddart stated “the ancient commerce of the Mediterranean is illustrated in many respects by the diotal manubria [i.e. amphora stamps], and by the knowledge now acquired of their origin”.³ It is no coincidence that he refers specifically to amphora stamps, because in those days, and for much of the twentieth century, the epigraphic aspect played a leading role in amphora research.

For a large part of the twentieth century, many excavators in the Eastern Mediterranean countries disregarded – and often even discarded – un-stamped amphora fragments (complete amphorae were, of course, kept but rarely published). This situation did not begin to change until J.A. Riley and J.-Y. Empereur demonstrated the vital importance of taking un-stamped amphorae into account,⁴ a realisation that had dawned earlier in other parts of the world, where amphora stamps occur more rarely.⁵ Riley’s approach at Benghazi changed the entire face of Roman amphora studies,⁶ and the Carthage volumes solidified the dominance of this method.⁷ Still, it was rarely followed through completely, and Mark Lawall justifiably characterized amphora studies of the 1990s as being “in need of archaeology”.⁸

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, amphora studies might equally be called a discipline in

need of history. True, transport amphorae played a not inconsiderable role in M. Rostovtzeff’s “*Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*”, but many historians who have dealt with the Eastern Mediterranean since then have largely ignored this class of evidence or stressed the many methodological uncertainties involved in their study. The picture is gradually changing,⁹ but the full potential of transport amphorae as a source for history – economic and otherwise – has hardly yet been fulfilled.

It would be a mistake, though, to conclude that amphora studies have reached an impasse; the case is quite the reverse, as witnessed by the increasing rate of scientific gatherings. The first, which was held in Rome in 1974, was devoted to the “*Méthodes classiques et méthodes formelles dans l’étude des amphores*”.¹⁰ It was followed in 1984 and 1986 by colloquia in Athens and Siena devoted to “*Recherches sur les amphores grecques*”,¹¹ and “*Amphores romaines et histoire économique: dix ans de recherche*”. The 1990s saw two amphora conferences with geographical themes: the colloquium in Istanbul 1994 on “*Production et commerce des amphores en Mer Noire*”,¹² and the conference at Seville in 1998 on Baetic amphorae.¹³

In recent years a growing number of such meetings have been devoted to the Hellenistic and Roman pottery of the Eastern Mediterranean: the workshop on “*Hellenistic and Roman Pottery in the*

¹ Peacock & Williams 1986, 2.

² Cf. Garland 2000, 11–20.

³ Stoddart 1850, 50; cf. also *idem* 1853.

⁴ Riley 1979; Empereur 1982a.

⁵ Peacock (ed.) 1977.

⁶ Riley 1979.

⁷ Hayes & Riley 1976; Riley 1976; Riley 1981b.

⁸ Lawall 2001b, 533.

⁹ In the case of Rhodes, cf. Gabrielsen 1997, 64–71; Rauh 1999; Wiemer 2002, 576–586.

¹⁰ *Méthodes classiques*.

¹¹ Garland & Empereur (eds.) 1986; *Amphores romaines* 1989.

¹² Garland (ed.) 1999.

¹³ *Ex Baetica Amphorae* 2000.

Eastern Mediterranean. Advances in Scientific Studies” at Niebórow in Poland in 1993,¹⁴ the colloquium on “*Les céramiques en Anatolie aux époques hellénistique et romaine: production et échanges*” in Istanbul 1996,¹⁵ a colloquium on “*Byzantine and Early Islamic Ceramics in Syria-Jordan*” at Amman in 1994,¹⁶ a Ph.D.-seminar for young scholars at Sandbjerg in February 1998 on “*Trade Relations in the Eastern Mediterranean from [the] Late Hellenistic Period to Late Antiquity: the Ceramic Evidence*”,¹⁷ the XXI International RCRF Conference at Ephesos and Pergamon in 1998,¹⁸ and the conference in Lyon in 2000 on “*Céramiques hellénistiques et romaines. Productions et diffusion en Méditerranée orientale (Chypre, Égypte et côte syro-palestinienne)*”.¹⁹ Also, one should not forget the conferences in Greece on Hellenistic pottery, which have been held since 1986,²⁰ and the Roman pottery workshops in Leuven, hosted by the ROCT Network, even if the latter have a wider scope.²¹ However, before the colloquium at the Danish Institute no scientific gathering had focused on the transport amphorae of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The purpose of the colloquium in Athens was to create a forum for an informal dialogue between the acknowledged experts in the field of amphora studies, the *amphorologues proprement dit*, and those scholars who are equally versed in a wide range of ceramic types, as well as newcomers to either of the two fields. By doing so, we hoped to break down barriers, which might in any event be more imaginary than real, between different scholarly and national traditions and also between specialists in various periods and/or geographical regions. In consideration of the inter-regional circulation of amphorae, it also seemed logical to include some contributions dealing with amphora finds outside the Eastern Mediterranean.

Our goal was twofold: on the one hand to describe the current state of the art, and on the other to attempt to define fruitful venues for future research, on the basis of the contributions in the form of papers and posters, and also during the discussions. To help us chart possible future directions of amphora studies, we invited Mark L. Lawall and Gérald Finkielstejn to contribute their perspectives to the concluding chapter, and we are most grateful

to them for having accepted to join forces with us in this unthankful task.

We want to thank the participants in the colloquium for having heeded our call to contribute papers or posters,²² for having taken part in the lively discussions, and for having complied with the deadline in sending us their manuscripts. Nicholas K. Rauh was enormously helpful throughout the planning process. Special thanks are also due to “the dynamic duo”: John W. Hayes and Paul Reynolds, who consented to serve as a permanent panel of respondents. The latter distributed a handy map of the distribution of regional amphora classes in the Levant, of which he has allowed us to publish an updated version (Fig. 1).²³

We are no less thankful to the *doyen* of amphora studies, Yvon Garlan, for having supported our efforts from the beginning and for presenting the inaugural paper: “*Comment peut-on être amphorologue?*” at the Ecole française d’Athènes. We are grateful to the director of the EFA, Dominique Mulliez, for kindly hosting the opening reception and supporting the participation of former members of the School, and to the director of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Stephen Tracy, for inviting all participants to a memorable garden party.

A special vote of thanks is due to Jørgen Mejer, former director of the Danish Institute at Athens, whose enthusiastic backing was instrumental in

¹⁴ Meyza & Młynarczyk (eds.) 1995.

¹⁵ Abadie-Reynal (ed.) 2003.

¹⁶ Villeneuve & Watson (eds.) 2001.

¹⁷ Briese & Vaag forthcoming.

¹⁸ *ReiCretActa* 36 2000.

¹⁹ Blondé *et al.* (eds.) 2002.

²⁰ *A'ΕλλΚερ; B'ΕλλΚερ; Γ'ΕλλΚερ; Δ'ΕλλΚερ; E'ΕλλΚερ.*

²¹ Poblome *et al.* (eds.) forthcoming; publications of the other workshops are forthcoming.

²² In addition to the contributions published in this volume, a number of papers and posters were presented at the colloquium, which have been – or will be – published elsewhere: Effie Athanassopoulos & Ian Whitbread, The 4th Century BCE Amphora Workshop at Tsoukalia, Alonissos: a Report on Recent Investigations; Victoria Georgopoulou, Vassilis Kiligoglou & Anno Hein, Archaeological and Chemical Characterization of Coan Amphorae from Kardamaina; Marek Palaczyk, Amphorenstempel aus Eretria, and Sabine Ladstätter, Amphorae in the Destruction Layers of Hanghaus 1 and 2/Ephesus.

²³ To be published in Reynolds forthcoming.

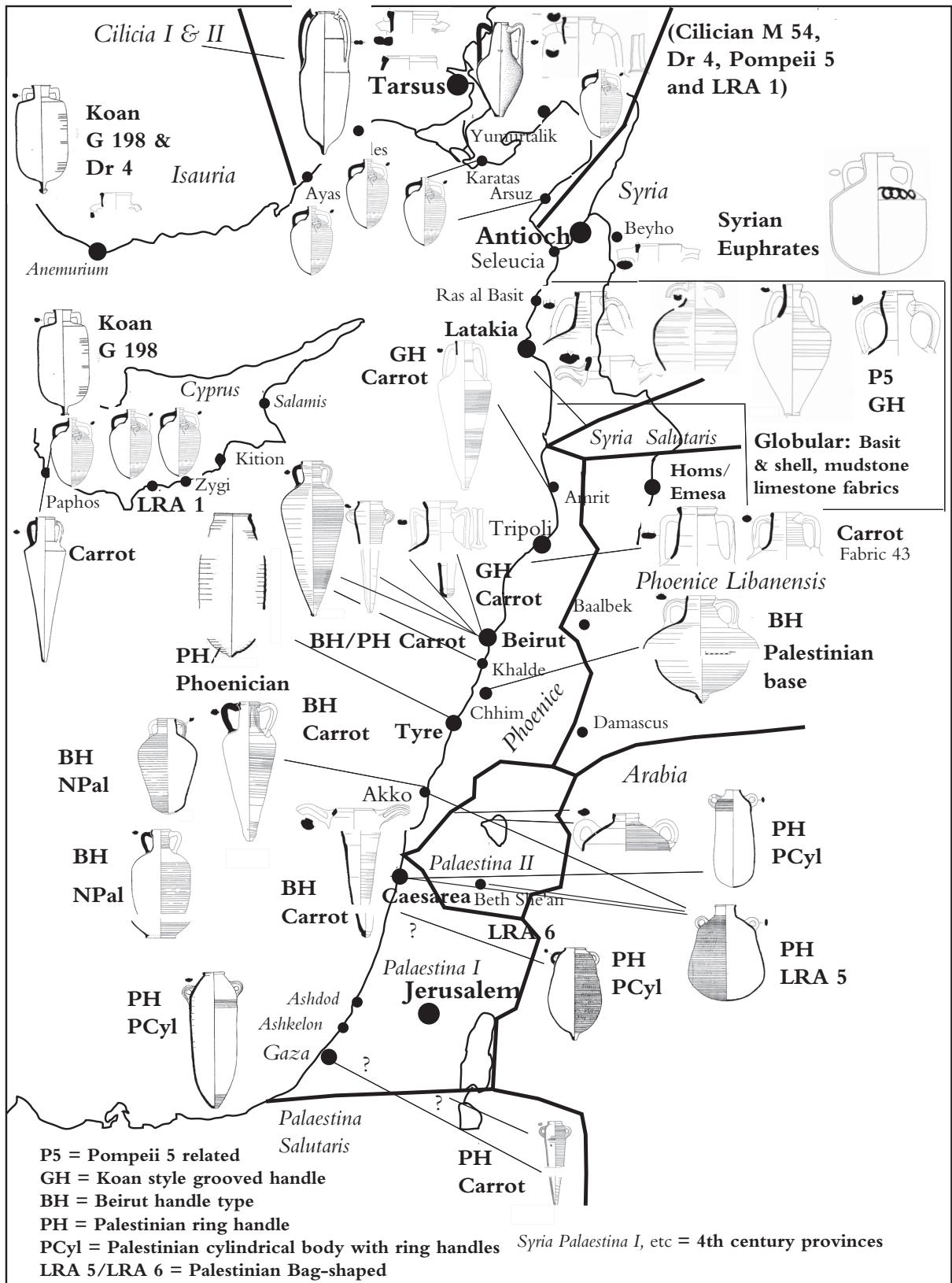


Fig. 1: The distribution of regional amphora classes in the Levant, Roman and Byzantine periods. The provincial boundaries according to the 4th century *Notitia Dignitatum* are also roughly indicated, cf. Reynolds forthcoming.

bringing the colloquium to fruition, and to the National Museum of Denmark for supporting our initiative in numerous ways from day one.

During the editing process Sergey Vnukov and Vladimir Stolba unstintingly helped us with the Cyrillic titles, and William van Andringa kindly proof-read the French articles. Erik Hallager, the present director of the Danish Institute at Athens, assisted with practicalities and advice based on his long publishing experience. He designed the cover of the volume, a composite photograph of the amphorae *in situ* at the Alonnesos wreck, which was put at our disposal by courtesy of the excava-

tor Elpida Hadjidaki. Unless otherwise indicated, all line drawings of complete amphorae in this volume are reproduced in scale 1:10; fragments and other kinds of vessels are rendered at 1:4, and stamps at 1:1.

Last but by no means least we extend our sincere thanks to the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, the Carlsberg Foundation, Generalkonsul Gösta Enbom's Foundation, H.P. Hjerl Hansen Mindefondet for Dansk Palæstinaforskning, Grosserer E. Schou's Fond, The National Museum of Denmark, Politiken Fonden and Dronning Margrethe og Prins Henriks Fond for financial support.