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FABRICS OF EAST AEGEAN AMPHORAE

Introductory Note

Our knowledge of the amphorae production in the Eastern Aegean is still rather limited though in recent decades several important studies of the topic have been published.¹ Most studies of Hellenistic amphorae concentrated on the topic of stamped amphora handles² excluding the discussion of amphorae without stamps and their typological and chronological development. Thus our overall picture of the amphorae production in the Eastern Aegean is incomplete and the amount of detail varies from period to region. On one hand, for many cities, including some of the more important ones, we have no clear idea of the general development of their amphora production. On the other hand, some of the most important amphora types cannot be attributed with desirable exactness to a certain production center or even region.

In the present version of **FACEM** (06.06. 2011), our available samples stem exclusively from the Western Mediterranean from Velia and are mostly restricted to the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E.³ They generally belong to the so-called class of “Samian amphorae” with a rounded, out-turned rim.⁴ As it is now clear that this amphorae type was produced over a long time span at several sites of the Ionian region, we decided to subsume the group under the general terminus “East Aegean amphorae”. This term recalls the name “East Greek amphorae”, given to this group of amphorae by P. Dupont in his handbook some years ago,⁵ but emphasizing the geographical and not the ethnic attribution.⁶ For a clear picture of the situation we evidently will have to wait until further studies have been conducted in this region.

Apart from the morphological type of the amphora, the identification of the production region depends on archaeometric analyses performed by Roman Sauer, who is particularly familiar with the geological situation in the area of Ephesus where he has analyzed various classes of pottery and also undertook several surveys in search for raw materials.

Macroscopically, the presence of mica is characteristic for most of these fabrics. Mica is, however, difficult to photograph. This problem should be kept in mind when comparing samples with the images given in Facem.

Fabric Description

EAST-AEG-A-1 The fabric is characterized by a fine grained matrix of reddish brown color. Clearly visible are some fine white carbonatic inclusions (often carbonate pseudomorphoses) and a modest quantity of quartz, while the consistent quantity of mica is poorly visible in the images.

It has been observed in amphorae of the so-called Samian type of the fifth century B.C.E. and attributed to the region of Samos or Ephesus by Roman Sauer.

¹ See in general for the Archaic period Whitbread 1995; Dupont 1998; for the Hellenistic period Empereur and Hesnard 1987. Further important contributions of recent date are Carlson 2003; Carlson and Lawall 2005/2006; Dupont 2010; Lawall 2002; Lawall 2004; Lungu 2010; Kerschner et al. 2008; Sezgin 2004.

² See Badoud and Marangou (forthcoming); for an overview on many classes and a discussion of the actual problems see e.g. Lawall 2007. For the new chronology of Rhodian amphorae see Finkielsztejn 2001.

³ See also the overview in Gassner 2005.

⁴ See Dupont 1998, 164–9.

⁵ Dupont 1998.

⁶ In Gassner 2003, 123–9 the *terminus* “Middle and South Ionian amphorae” was proposed, but proved to be of minor practicability as the definition of the geographical division of Ionia still varies.

EAST-AEG-A-2 The fabric is very similar to EAST-AEG-A-1, but the color of the matrix is rather reddish yellow and more coarsely tempered. Well visible are inclusions of white and grey quartz.

Roman Sauer suggested attributing this fabric to the area of Ephesus without excluding a possible origin from Samos. At Velia, the fabric EAST-AEG-A-2 has been observed exclusively in amphorae of the so-called Solokha 1 type, coming from contexts of the late fifth/early fourth centuries B.C.E.⁷

EAST-AEG-A-3 This fabric is similar to EAST-AEG-A-2, but the color of the matrix is rather yellowish red and tends to have a dark core dark or dark spots that are most probably due to the kind of firing. The temper, mostly white carbonate or quartz, is poorly sorted and the single particles are of different sizes.

The fabric has been observed in amphorae of the so-called Samian type⁸ found in contexts of the fifth century B.C.E. Sauer distinguished it from the previous fabrics by its slightly differing content of heavy minerals, but an origin in the region from Samos to Ephesus seems most probable.

EAST-AEG-A-4 The fabric displays a granular, reddish yellow matrix that is strongly tempered by medium sized white and dark quartz. Carbonatic inclusions and mica are well visible.

The fabric EAST-AEG-A-4 occurred in one single sample at Velia which had been attributed to the amphora production of fifth century B.C.E. Miletos according to morphological criteria. This hypothesis was confirmed by the archaeometric analysis of Roman Sauer, but has to be examined on a better quantitative basis.

EAST-AEG-A-5 The fabric consists of a granular reddish brown matrix with fine inclusions of mica. The carbonate inclusions connect this fabric with the previous ones, in particular to EAST-AEG-A-2, while the poorly sorted, rather large dark and dark red particles are most characteristic.

The fabric has been observed on a ring foot of the type described by J.-P. Morel⁹ found in a context of the fifth century B.C.E. on the acropolis of Velia. According to R. Sauer, its origin has to be sought in the vicinity of Ephesus.

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⁷ Gassner 2005, fig. 3.

⁸ Gassner 2005, fig. 2.

⁹ Morel 1974, 153, fig. VI Nr. 19.

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