

## THE DISCOVERY OF A GRECO-ITALIC AMPHORA FROM THE BLACK SEA REGION\*

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**Cuvinte-cheie:** *Amfore greco-italice, ștampile ceramice, cronologie, complexe.*

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**Rezumat:** *Acest articol prezintă o amforă unică pe litoralul Mării Negre, de fabricație greco-italică, provenită din ansamblul de morminte maeotice nr. 394 din necropola Prikubanskiy. Contextul cronologic al complexului, care conține, alături de o amfora greco-italică, una de Menda și o farfurie de pește cu firnis negru, este analizat aici prin prisma unei game largi de analogii. Acest ansamblu este databil în anii 350 a.Chr.*

**Abstract:** *This paper publishes a unique amphora on the Black Sea littoral; it is of a Greco-Italic manufacture and comes from the assemblage of the Maeotian burial No. 394 at the Prikubanskiy necropolis. The chronological context of the complex, which includes, along with the Greco-Italic amphora, a Mendean one and a black-glazed fish-plate, is here analysed against a wide background of analogies. This assemblage is datable to within the 350s BC.*

The Maeotian necropolis near the Khutor of Prikubanskiy in the Krasnoarmeysk District of Krasnodar Krai was investigated by the Krasnodar Expedition of the Kuban State University in 1998–2001 under the direction of Natalya Yu. Limberis, Ivan I. Marchenko and Vladimir V. Bochkovoy. The necropolis is a reference site of the Maeotian culture of the 4<sup>th</sup> – early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. Here, over 350 assemblages have been recovered with amphora containers, black-glazed pottery and other artefacts. Some of these complexes are of great importance due to the unique assemblage of ceramic ware, as well as weapons, personal ornaments, horse

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bridles, etc. In recent years, different groups of these artefacts were published<sup>1</sup>. One of these complexes is discussed below.

Rich burial **No. 394** was probably looted in antiquity. Among the preserved funerary inventory there were a few grey-clayed vessels, a bronze zoomorphic cheekpiece with a plate in the form of two wolf's (?) heads with open mouths, a black-glazed fishplate, a rim fragment of a black-glazed bowl, and two amphorae. This complex was published relatively recently<sup>2</sup>. However, new circumstances have arisen during the time that has passed since then.

The fact is that one of the amphorae – a large pithoid one, with a massive mushroom-shaped rim – was initially interpreted (it must be confessed, after my identification) as a product of an unknown centre of the 'Corinthian circle'.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in its basic morphological characteristics, it repeats the features of the Corinthian containers of type 'B', having however the clay quite untypical to the Corinthian ceramic containers: it is light-brown with large white inclusions and very fine mica. The vessel is 660 mm high with the body diameter of 380 mm (**Fig. 1, 1**).

Only lately I understood that its provenience can be defined more precisely. Actually, in the Western Mediterranean, these amphorae are known through numerous findings in urban strata and necropolis of Magna Graecia where they are traditionally attributed to the production of Greek colonies of this region. Usually they are called '*Greco-Italic*' amphorae. The first review of this ware appeared in an article by Elizabeth Lyding Will where, in fact, this term was first employed.<sup>4</sup>

The closest analogy of our amphora comes from a burial place from Cariati in Calabria, south Italy. Along with the amphora container, in the same tomb were found: a table amphora and a krater (both red-figure), a skyphos, a kantharos and a kylix, all black-glazed. Based on the chronology of the black-glazed vessels, the author of the excavations dated the complex to the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>5</sup> However this date seems clearly overestimated. Another morphologically similar amphora was retrieved from grave No. 1424 in the necropolis on Lipari Islands, and through an accompanying vase in the Gnathia style it was dated to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> In their summarizing study on the Hellenistic pottery, Jean-Yves Emperour and Antoinette Hesnard dated the Greco-Italic amphorae of this type generally to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> Later these forms were distinguished by Christian Vandermersch as type V of Greco-Italic containers used already within the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> – early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.<sup>8</sup> In the opinion of Kristian Göransson, based on the materials from

<sup>1</sup> KUZNETSOVA *et alii* 2021; LIMBERIS & MARCHENKO 2005; 2010; 2013; 2015a; 2015b; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b; 2018; 2019; MONAKHOV *et alii* 2018; LIMBERIS *et alii* 2020.

<sup>2</sup> LIMBERIS & MARCHENKO 2018, p. 101, 102, Fig. 7.

<sup>3</sup> LIMBERIS & MARCHENKO 2018, p. 102, Fig. 7-2.

<sup>4</sup> WILL 1982, p. 338 ff, pl. 85.

<sup>5</sup> GUZZO & LUPPINO 1980, p. 837, 881, fig. 32, no. 45. Black-glazed and red-figured pottery from the burial: fig. 20–26, 28–29.

<sup>6</sup> CAVALIER 1985, p. 52, 81, pl. XIIIa.

<sup>7</sup> EMPEREUR & HESNARD 1987, p. 64, fig. 22.

<sup>8</sup> VANDERMERSCH 1994, p. 77, 81 ff.

excavations in Cyrenaica, this type of amphorae started to be manufactured since the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century and was produced until the 260s.<sup>9</sup> Quite a series of similar amphorae from the Archaeological Museum of Adria were published by Alessandra Toniolo. Presumably they are datable to within the 350–340s BC.<sup>10</sup> Another review of new finds was presented relatively recently by Franca Cibecchini.<sup>11</sup> Gloria Olcese notes in her work that amphorae of type V evidently copy morphologically Corinthian containers of type ‘B’ while their chronology possibly comes out of the frame proposed by Ch. Vandermersch, perhaps, towards abatement.<sup>12</sup>

As it is demonstrated by the above references, the chronology of this group of ceramic containers is seriously arguable. Besides, it should be added that no reliable grounds for localization of this group of amphorae have been revealed so far; most frequently different presumable centres of South Italy and Sicily are mentioned.

The assemblage from burial No. 394 yields no basis for establishing the centre of manufacture of the vessel under consideration but allows us to define its chronological context. In the grave was found a *black-glazed fishplate*, most probably not of the Attic production, with a rather narrow rim impending at an obtuse angle. The saltcellar is fairly shallow with an indistinct edge. The pedestal is fairly massive, tapering toward the base, the sole is bevelled towards the outer edge. The height is 31 mm, the rim diameter is 245 mm (**Fig. 1, 3**). This type of ware is fairly conservative with the chronological markers hardly distinguishable. The closest in its profile example from the Athenian Agora is dated to about 350 BC.<sup>13</sup> A similar plate from the Elizavetovskoye settlement was dated to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>14</sup> It is on the basis of the latter date that the authors of the excavations attributed the fishplate from burial No. 394 to the second quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup>

It seems that the final solution concerning the chronology of this complex can be yielded by the second container from burial No. 394, i.e. the Mendean amphora of the ‘Melitopol’ variant II-C (**Fig. 1, 2**). Some time ago, such vessels were recorded in stratigraphically reliably referenced complexes of 370–350s BC, in particular in barrow No. 1 near the village of Olgino, kurgan No. 1 near the village of Kamenka Dneprovskaya, in barrow No. 16 near the village of Verkhny Rogachik, kurgan No. 14 near the village of Gyunovka, the shipwreck of the Balearic Islands, in the well on street ‘Prodolnaya’ in Chersonesos,<sup>16</sup> as well as at a series of other sites (**Fig. 2–3**).

<sup>9</sup> GÖRANSSON 2007, p. 115 ff.

<sup>10</sup> TONIOLO 2000, p. 176, fig.411.

<sup>11</sup> CIBECCHINI 2005/2006, p. 50 ff.

<sup>12</sup> OLCESE 2010, p. 43, 63, tav. 14–16, 19, fig. VII.9.

<sup>13</sup> SPARKES & TALCOTT 1970, p. 147–148, no. 1171.

<sup>14</sup> BRASHINSKIY 1980, p. 62, tabl. XXI -3.

<sup>15</sup> LIMBERIS & MARCHENKO 2010, p. 338, No. 45.

<sup>16</sup> MONAKHOV & ABROSIMOV 1993, p. 131, pl. 8; MONACHOV 1997, p. 35, fig. 5; MONAKHOV 1999, p. 211, 220, 303, 372, 379, 381, pl. 87, 92, 128, 163–168; MONAKHOV 2003, p. 92 ff., pl. 63, 64; MONAKHOV *et alii* 2017, p. 90–92; MONAKHOV *et alii* 2019, p. 145.

Since ceramic stamps are very rare on the Mendean amphorae themselves and, if present, are chronologically little informative, of primary importance are those assemblages where Mendean amphorae are reliably datable through other types of ceramic containers with magistrates' stamps, in particular Herakleian, Thasian and Sinopean examples.

Of interest in this connection is the funerary deposit 2 at kurgan No. 1 near the village of Kamenka Dneprovskaya, where a Mendean amphora of this variant (**Fig. 2, 1**) was accompanied by Herakleian amphorae with stamps of the magistrates *Ariston* and *Eupition* (*Eugeition?*),<sup>17</sup> usually attributed to the 370s BC. Equally informative are the complexes from barrows No. 14 near the village of Gyunovka and No. 16 near v. Verkhny Rogachik where similar Mendean amphorae (**Fig. 2, 2, 3**) were neighbouring Sinopean amphorae with stamps of the early astynomoi *Apollodoros I* and *Hestaios* with the emblem 'an eagle on a dolphin' of the late 360s – early 350s BC.<sup>18</sup> Of no less distinction is the assemblage from the Chersonesean well on the street 'Prodolnaya' where Herakleian and Sinopean amphorae with stamps of mostly 360s BC<sup>19</sup> are accompanying the Mendean ones (**Fig. 2, 4**).

The Prikubanskiy necropolis yields still a greater number of assemblages with Mendean amphorae of 370–360s BC. Here we will mention only those examples which are reliably synchronized with other containers, particularly stamped ones, and with other imports.<sup>20</sup> Thus, in burial No. 161, the Mendean amphora (**Fig. 2, 5**) was found together with a Thasian "biconical" one with a stamp of the magistrate *Megon* of the 370s BC. In burials No. 266 and No. 154, near similar Mendean amphorae, were found Heraklean examples with a stamp of the magistrate *Alketas* in one case and with a stamp of the magistrate *Deinomachos*, in the other, both are dated to the late 370s BC (**Fig. 2, 6; Fig. 3, 1**).

However, the morphologically closest Mendean amphorae were recovered from complexes of the 350s BC. Thus in kurgan No. 8 from the group of 'Cherednikovaya Mogila' with a similar Mendean amphora (**Fig. 3, 2**), were found

<sup>17</sup> As to the magistrate *Ariston*, everything is fairly clear and his chronological position in the list of Heraklean magistrates is reliably placed next to *Molossos* and *Aitheros* (MONAKHOV 1999, p. 304, 631; KATS 2007, p. 429). The situation with the magistrate *Eupition* is more complicated. His name in the second line of the stamp was reconstructed only hypothetically (MONAKHOV 1999, p. 304, pl. 128, 1). It is exactly for this reason that *Eupition* is absent in the lists of Heraklean magistrates published both by V.I. KATS and by N.F. FEDOSEEV (KATS 2007, p. 429; 2017, p. 199 ff.; FEDOSEEV 2016, p. 303, 304). However recently, exactly similar imprint was recorded among materials from Debelt (BALABANOV *et alii* 2016, p. 176, Cat. 211 E). Meanwhile, the authors of the monograph on the collection from Debelt are confident that the name of 'Eupition' is nothing else as an error of the carver and, actually, the name of Eugeition should be there read. Anyway, the chronological position of this magistrate corresponds to the 370s BC.

<sup>18</sup> MONAKHOV 1999, p. 379–381.

<sup>19</sup> MONAKHOV *et alii* 2017, p. 67.

<sup>20</sup> The burials of this cemetery mentioned below have never been completely published. I am grateful to the authors of the excavations of 1998–2001 Natalya Yu. Limberis, Ivan I. Marchenko and Vladimir V. Bochkovoy for the kind permission to use these materials. A joint publication of the ceramic assemblages from the necropolis is planned in 2021.

23 Heraklean amphorae with stamps of the magistrates *Amphitas* and *Bakchos*, as well as a Thasian biconical amphora with a stamp of the magistrate *Dealkos*,<sup>21</sup> all dated to the 350s. In turn, in burial No. 78 of the Prikubanskiy cemetery, an analogous Mendean amphora (**Fig. 3, 3**) is synchronized with a Thasian biconical amphora of the ‘advanced’ variant with a stamp of the magistrate *Μεσσ(-)* of the turn between the 360s and 350s BC.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, in burials Nos. 186 and 262 of the Prikubanskiy necropolis, there were Knidian amphorae and Attic red-figure skyphoi dated broadly to within the second quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>23</sup> In burials Nos. 156, 364, and 382 of the same cemetery, along with Mendean amphorae, there were Thasian unstamped containers of the advanced variant of the 360s–350s BC.

Thus, the analogies presented and contexts of a great number of assemblages suggest that burial No. 394 can be dated to approximately the 360s–350s BC. Hence, our Greco-Italic amphora is also datable to the same period. It seems that imported products extremely infrequently were brought in these amphorae to the Northern Black Sea region, at least in the great number of complexes of the 4<sup>th</sup> century now known, these vessels have not been encountered so far.

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AMA – Antichniy mir i arkheologiya [Ancient World and Archaeology]

DB – Drevnosti Bospora [Antiquities of Bosporus]

JAH – Journal of Ancient History (Moscow)

TGE – Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha [Transactions of the State Hermitage Museum]

Transactions IHMC – Transactions of the Institute for the History of Material Culture. St. Petersburg.

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<sup>21</sup> MONAKHOV 1999, p. 340 ff.; POLIN 2014, p. 466, fig. 399–402.

<sup>22</sup> All the dates for the stamps are proposed on the basis of corresponding schemes by Y. Garlan, V.I. Kats, Ch. Tzochev, and N.F. Fedoseyev. Cf.: GARLAN 1999; KATS 2007; TZOICHEV 2016; FEDOSEEV 2016.

<sup>23</sup> KUZNETSOVA *et alii* 2021, fig. 3, 4.

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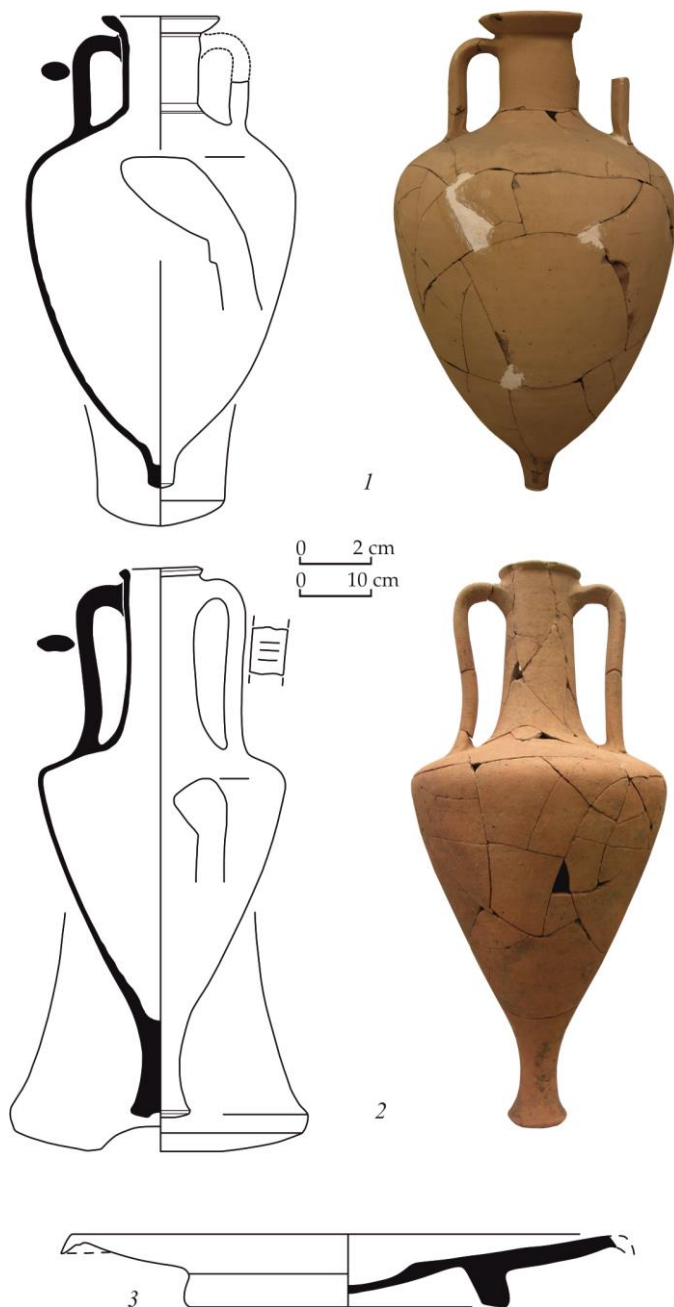
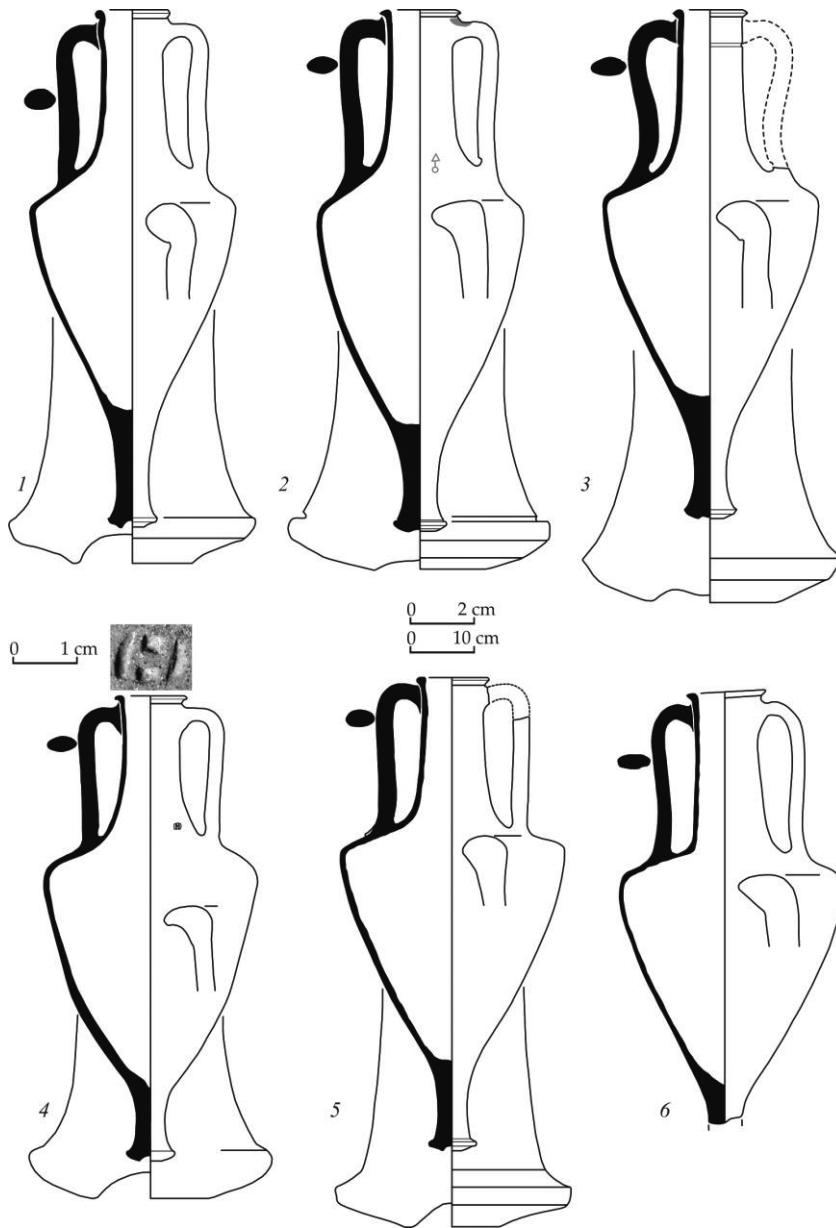
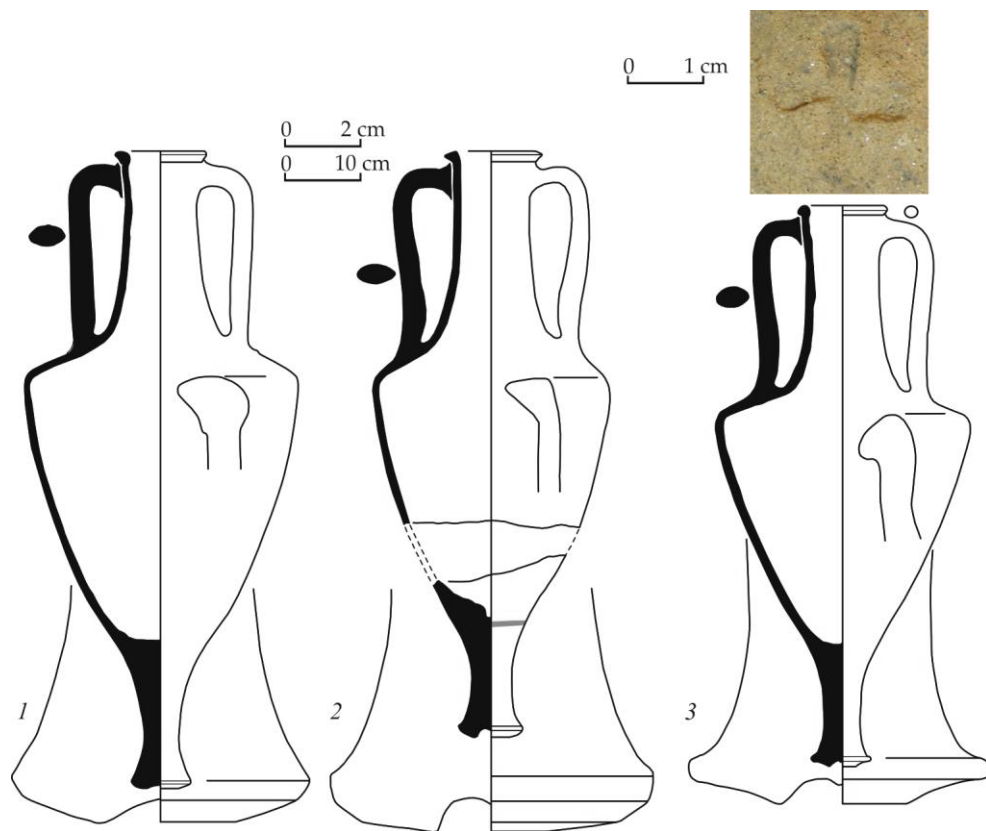


Fig. 1. Assemblage from burial No. 394 of the Prikubanskiy necropolis:  
1 – Greco-Italic amphora; 2 – Mendeian amphora; 3 – fishplate.



**Fig. 2. Mendeian amphorae from assemblages of the 370–360s BC:**  
 1 – from kurgan No. 1 near v. Kamenka Dneprovskaya;  
 2 – from kurgan No. 14 near v. Gyunovka;  
 3 – from kurgan No. 16 near v. V. Rogachik;  
 4 – from Chersonesean well in the Street ‘Prodolnaya’;  
 5, 6 – from burials No. 161 and No. 266 at the Prikubanskiy necropolis.



**Fig. 3. Mendeian amphorae:**

- 1** – from burial No. 154 at the Prikubanskiy necropolis of the 370–360s BC;
- 2** – from kurgan No. 8 of the ‘Cherednikovaya Mogila’ group of the 350s BC;
- 3** – from burial No. 78 at the Prikubanskiy necropolis of the 350s BC.