

New Rare Types of Sinopean Amphorae from the Roman Period

Sinope was one of the main amphora production centers in the Black Sea region during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The Sinopean ware of the Hellenistic period is well studied. In the last few decades, much attention has been paid to some types of Sinopean amphorae of the Roman period, and several workshops from that time have also been discovered. As a result, several types of Sinope containers from the period have been identified (types Sin I – V [S. Vnukov] and A-D Snp I-III [D. Kassab Tezgör]). Nevertheless, some new, rare Sinopean vessels have been found. Most of them are dated to between the 1st century BC and the early 3rd century AD. Some of these amphorae are represented by single complete or incomplete vessels or by fragments only.

Sinopean amphorae of Roman times belong to two production traditions. The first one is new for the center and may be connected with the Roman colony that appeared in Sinope in the 1st century BC. These vessels belong to pan-Roman amphorae classes, which are widespread throughout the Mediterranean basin. Containers of another tradition continue the development of the shape of local Hellenistic amphorae. The main problem with studying the Roman vessels is a gap between the early Roman amphora varieties and the vessels produced since the 3rd century AD in Demirci.

Rare pseudo-Rhodian containers dated to between the mid-1st century BC and the mid-1st century AD are among the earliest amphorae of the first tradition produced in Sinope. The complete vessels of that type are still unknown, but their rounded handles give a clear idea about the shape of such amphorae (Fig. 1, 1). The flat-bottomed vessels with a narrow neck and multiple rims of type Sin IV belong to another pan-Roman class (Fig. 1, 2, 3). Now we know of more than 20 complete amphorae of two chronological variants dating from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD.

The other rare amphorae varieties continue the Hellenistic traditions in shape development. Several unique vessels are dated from the late 1st century BC and the mid 1st century AD also. Two of them replicate in detail the form of the late Heracleian amphorae of variant S IIIa (Fig. 1, 4). Another, with a narrow neck, has no direct analogies in the region (Fig. 1, 5). The very rare vessels of type Sin V have a wide neck, grooved handles and a spiked toe (Fig. 1, 6). No complete vessel of that type is known yet.

Recent finds allow for the possibility of identifying other examples of the new amphorae, which might date the beginning of the original row of ware from Late Roman times, and partly fill the gap between the Early and Late Roman Sinopean containers. Only two complete vessels of this early variety found in the sea are known (Fig. 2, 1, 2) and they have not been concisely dated. Possibly, the further development of that variety led to the appearance of the new type (Sin VI) in the late 2nd to early 3rd century AD. This is characterized by a conical body, relatively narrow neck, high flat rim, loop-like handles that are oval or almost rhombic in appearance and a short conical toe (Fig. 2, 3-7). Fragments of such amphorae were found in the layers of the ancient Sebastopolis dated from the 3rd century AD, together with the big vessels of Group B described by D. Kassab Tezgör (Fig. 2, 8-10). She defined three varieties in that group, which looks reliable; they may be considered as separate container types. These vessels are the earliest ones, which could have been produced in Demirci. At least one of these varieties was apparently an oil container (Fig. 2, 10). The vessels of Group B also continue the development of Hellenistic traditions in shape and fabric and possibly have the same late Hellenistic prototype as the vessels of Sin VI type. Unfortunately, details of the chronological evolution of the amphora forms of this group are still uncertain.

So, the preliminary definition of the several new varieties of Roman Sinopean amphorae will draw attention of the scholars to these containers and will give the possibility to specify the typology and evolution of the vessels. It is remarkable also that the amphorae production of

Sinope in Roman period is characterized by diversity of manufactured types. Eventually it is caused by two different production traditions in the center and by different goods exported from Sinope in amphorae.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Rare Sinopean amphorae of 1st century BC – 1st century AD: 1 – pseudo-Rhodian; 2, 3 – type Sin IV, variants *a* and *b* (3rd century AD); 4, 5 – unique amphorae; 6 – type V.

Fig. 2. Rare Sinopean amphorae of 2nd-3rd centuries AD: 1-7 – type Sin VI (1, 2 – early variety?); 8-10 – group B Snp I-III.