

Trade Activities of Chios in North Africa in Antiquity; An Observation Based on the Transport Amphorae

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In recent years, when the science of archaeology came closer to the interdisciplinary field and started using its methods actively, have been revealed plenty of chances for studying amphorae, which on the one hand are interesting as one of the category of clay ware and on the other hand provide the information about the economic activities of the centre where they had been identified, and about the trade contacts of the centre to which they belong.

Amphorae had many primary and secondary use in Antiquity. Despite of the role of standard containers for shipping wine, olive oil, olives, salty fish and e.t.c., they had been used as burials, burial inventory, for repairing water and drainage pipes, storage vessels e.t.c. [Grace, 1961: 9-12; Grace, 1949: 175-189; Whitbread, 1995: 15-29].

Chios is located in the Aegean Sea; in the seven km distance from the Asia Minor coast, it is the fifth largest of the Greek islands. In Antiquity it was one of the twelve members of Ionian League. Chios, where the settlement existed without interruption from the Mycenaean period reached a great success in the eighth century BC. The island of Chios was located in the middle point of the rout, which led from the Thrace to Egypt and this fact provided its being in the center of trade activities throughout the year. Besides this, Chios was one of the stopping points for the ships leading from Al-Mina (Northern Syria) to Pithekoussai (Southern Italy); These factors altogether stipulated the active involvement of the island in trade activities and this had been reflected in a large production of Chian painted pottery and afterwards with a bulk of transport amphorae. [Boardman, 1967: 6; Sarikakis, 1986: 121; Cook, 1962].

The presented research is based on the reports of different archaeological expeditions.

To indicate the exact quantity of amphorae is not always possible, because in major cases these are represented with sherds, and to count to how many amphorae do they belong is almost impossible, so, only in such cases when: a) a complete amphora is discovered; b) diagnostic parts (neck, handles, feet) are discovered or c) stamp¹ is discovered we indicate the quantity. But also here, profiled fragments can drive us into confusion. For example, in case of discovered rims, handles and toes it would be incorrect to sum up their number as the whole quantity of amphorae. In this case we sum up only toes, as a single amphora can have only one toe and this really means that in case of discovering one toe we have one amphora. We will try to collect any exsible information to deliver statistics.

The production of Chian amphorae was in course from the second half of the seventh century - to the first century BC.

The Greek Conlonization was processed in different ways in different regions. From this point of view the situation detected in the cities located in North Africa is very special. Yet, from the very beginning of the assimilation of this land by Greeks Chians were among the first settlers who

established a strong Chian community, which consisted of traders and artisans. Geographically this area includes sites located in modern Egypt and Lybia.

The first and foremost site, where Chian activities are perfectly seen is Naucratis.

The town of Naucratis lay on the east bank of the Canopic branch of the Nile, some fifty miles from Alexandria. It is the only place where big vessels could enter at any distance. In the southern part of the city had been discovered the remains of a fort, which was built in the late seventh century BC and a Greek temple of Aphrodite with stepped altar which had been erected by joint efforts of different Greek city-states. Majority of dedications is represented with Chian vases together with other East Greek, Attic and Corinthian pottery dated to the seventh-sixth centuries B.C. Until this time there is no indication on some kind of Greek presence in Naucratis, however it is clear, that by the middle of the seventh century B.C. Greeks already knew Egyptian products. [Boardman, 1980: 117; Boardman, 1994: 137-147].

Our first evidence for Greeks in Egypt is Herodotus. He tells us about Samian merchant Kolaios which was on his way to Egypt when he was carried off course to the West. This astonishing journey took place in 638 B.C. So we have here the suggestion of at least casual trade visits by East Greeks about the middle of the seventh century.

The most important of the privileges which king Amasis accorded the Greeks after his reign is reported by Herodotus (I, 30; II, 16, 169) and concerns Naucratis: he gave them Naucratis as a commercial headquarters for any who wished to settle in the country. He also made grants of land upon which Greek traders, who did not want to live permanently in Egypt, might erect altars and sanctuaries. Of the latter the best known and most used – and also the largest is the Hellenion. It was built by the joint efforts of the Ionians of Chios, Teos, Phocaea and Clazomenae, of the Dorians of Rhodes, Cnidus, Halicarnassus and Phaselis and of the Aeolians of Mytilene. It is to these states that the sanctuary belongs and it is they who have the right of appointing officers in charge of the port (Naucratis was the only port in Egypt).

There can only have been one commodity of importance which the Greeks sought – corn; although papyrus and linen may also have been carried.

Payment for the corn seems to have been made in various ways. Olive oil was no doubt bartered – some Athenian and Samian storage jars can be identified. Wine was certainly carried in quantity by Chian amphorae of the sixth century B.C. The most valuable commodity which the Greeks brought to Egypt was silver. The country had no coined money of its own and the interest was in the precious metal as such.

Naucratis was unlike those cities which Greeks founded in Italy and Sicily. It was quite unlike anything the Greeks had experienced elsewhere. It was not a colony, nor a simple trading post like Al Mina. Naucratis attracted the get-rich-quick merchants of East Greece and their Aeginetan colleagues who ran the business with central Greece. It attracted poets, historians, artisans and in case of danger represented a shelter for East Greek merchants who could there ply their trade again. [Boardman, 1980: 117; Boardman, 1994: 137-147].

One of the main routes leading from Egypt to Greece followed Palestine, Phoenician and Asia Minor coasts. Egyptian items, which reached Greece were mainly carried by the Eastern merchants. The part of these items could have reached Greece via Near Eastern countries, but it is clear, that certain part of commodities came directly from Egypt. [Villing, Schlotzhauer, 2006].

The Naukratis amphora material exhibits a wide range of shapes, among which Chian, Rhodian, Coan and Knidian are most prevalent. Of these it is the Coan shapes that appear the most numerous, although no Coan stamps were found during the work at the site. The predominance of Coan shapes should not cause surprise, considering that in antiquity Coan wine was relatively inexpensive and bought in large quantities. Chian wine was perhaps the most famous of all Greek wines and this explains the series of Chian shapes which run from the fifth through the first Centuries B.C.

During the third to first centuries B.C. Rhodian shapes are quite numerous at Naukratis. This coincides with the overwhelming majority of Rhodian stamps (over 50%) found at Naukratis of a period of Rhodian expansion. Rhodian stamps and shapes begin to decline in the first century B.C., as do those of other cities. This probably reflects the effect of Roman intervention in the Aegean. The hybrid Graeco-Italic shapes begin in the third Century B.C. and thereupon merge with Roman forms in the first century B.C. and later. The large number and diversity of Amphora forms at Naukratis indicate that the city remained active as a trading center well after the foundation of Alexandria and was likely the Ptolemaic administrative center for the fertile Western Delta.

Areas, that are not well represented include Samos and Thasos. The Mendean and probably Attic shapes of the fifth century B.C. may reflect earlier Athenian interest in the Delta.

According to amphorae toes in sum had been identified fragments of at least 99 amphorae, among which: 22 (22,2%) – are Chian (2 – 5th c. BC, 1 – 4th c. BC, 12 – 3rd c. BC, 6 – 2nd c. BC, 1 – 1st c. BC); 14 (14,14%) – Coan (1 – 4th c. BC, 3 – 3rd c. BC, 5 – 2nd c. BC, 3 – 1st c. BC, 2 – 1st c. BC – 1st c. AD); 14 (14,14%) - Mendean (3 – beginning of the 5th c. BC, 6 – 5th c. BC, 5 – end of the 5th c – beginning of the 4th c. BC); 12 (12,12%) - Rhodian (3 – 4th-3rd cc. BC, 5 – 3rd c. BC, 2 – 2nd c. BC, 2 – 1st c. BC); 10 (10,1%) - Knidian (1 – 4th c. BC, 3 – 3rd c. BC, 2 – 2nd c. BC, 4 – 1st c. BC); 8 (8,08%) – Roman (4 – 2nd c. BC, 4 – 1st c. BC); 7 (7,07%) - Attic (end of the 5th c – beginning of the 4th c. BC); 6 (6,06%) – Samian (1 – end of the 6th c – beginning of the 5th c. BC, 3 – 5th c. BC, 2 – 4th c. BC); 3 (3,03%) – Nikandros group (2 – 3rd c. BC, 1 – 2nd c. BC); 1 (1,01%) – Corinthian A (beginning of the 5th c. BC); 1 (1,01%) – Corinthian B (beginning of the 4th c. BC); 1 (1,01%) – Graeco-Italic (3rd-2nd cc. BC);. [Coulson, 1996: 45-64].

Twenty-nine stamped amphora handles and one stamped amphora rim fragment were found during the 1978/9-1983 excavations and survey at Naukratis. These thirty stamps are only a small percentage of the total known to have been found at Naukratis since about 1200 were found by Petrie during his excavations of 1884. He did not publish these stamps and they have since been distributed to several institutions, most notably the British Museum where there are several hundred. Petrie gave 13 handles to the Ashmolean Museum.

In sum forty-three stamps (the Ashmolean Museum examples included) include examples from four Aegean amphora production centres – Rhodes, Knidus, Thasos and Chios – and range in date from the middle of the fourth to the first centuries B.C.

From 43 stamps 22 (51,1%) are Rhodian; 3 (6,97%) - Thasian (330-260 BC), 2 (4,65%) - Knidian, 1 (2,32%) - Chian, 1 (2,32%) - Roman (1st c. BC), 4 (9,3%) – belong to the 4th-3rd cc. BC and 10 (23,2%) – unattributed.

The large number of imported stamped amphora handles found in Egypt suggests a substantial trade link between Aegean and Egyptian shores in the Hellenistic period. The largest number of dateable stamps can be assigned to between 250 and 150 B.C. - a period of intense Rhodian exportation. [Rehard, 1996: 147-161].

Next site in Egypt, where import of Chian amphorae is clearly traced is *Tell Attrib*. It is located northeast of the modern town of Banha, north of Cairo. The material collected over the course of eleven field seasons consists of 265 items. Most of the stamps come from layers that are well dated by the coins as well as pottery in the assemblage.

From 265 stamps 129 (48,67%) are Rhodian (8 - 330-240 BC, 30 - 240-210 BC, 57 - 210-175 BC, 4 - 175-146 BC, 14 - 146-100 BC, 7 - 100-80 BC, 9 – date is unknown); 53 (20%) – Italic (49 – 2nd-1st cc. BC, 4 - 202-149 BC); 41 (15,47%) – Knidian (24 - 146-108 BC; 17 – 3rd-1st cc. BC); 8 (3,01%) - Egyptian (3rd-2nd cc. BC); 6 (2,26%) – Pamphilian and Spanish (1st c. BC); 5 (1,88%) - Coan (2nd-1st cc. BC); 1 (0,37%) – Chian (2nd c. BC). 20 – unattributed [SztetyŁŁo, 2000: 53-61].

The establishment of Alexandria does not seem to have had a detrimental effect upon the amount of trade at Naucratis. The city may have been transformed from an international trade center to an administrative center for the Western Delta. Since Naucratis was already a base for Hellenes, it would be natural for the city to adapt to this new role and to serve as a distribution point for internal trade. It is very doubtful that the Aegean amphorae were imported for the consumption of the indigenous population; they were surely to satisfy the Greek-speaking community. [Rehard, 1996: 147-161].

Besides Egypt, in Antiquity different commodities were imported with Chian amphorae also in Libya. One of the most important sites, where Chian import is evidenced in the territory of Libya is *Cyrenaica*. Greeks settled here as soon as they did in Egypt; but while the Greeks of Naucratis were merchants, the Greeks at Cyrene were farmers. Their prime attraction was the fertile land of the Cyrenaican plateau, its' appropriate climate and geographical position, which made it a logical extension for any Aegean Civilization. Crete is no farther from Cyrene (300 km) than it is from Athens. And it is also worth noting, that before Greeks came here the territory of Cyrenaica was already widely assimilated by merchants, which had close commercial relations with North Africa. [Boardman, 1980; Elrashedy, 2002: 121-125].

Greek colonists came from Thera. Soon after the middle of the seventh century the Theran party sailed for North Africa. As Herodotus tells us (Herodotus, IV, 151-153.) they were guided by a Cretan fisherman Korrobios to the island of Plateia – which may already have served for some

time as a trading point with the mainland tribes. This should have been the easiest and shortest open sea route from Aegean world to North Africa. Strabo (10.4.5) says, that it takes two days and nights to travel from Cyrene to Crete. Accordingly we can say, that Crete was the starting point of Greeks' journey to Egypt. After two years the Therans moved to a site on the mainland opposite Platea, to Aziris, which became the first Greek settlement on the coast of Cyrenaica. The community prospered and in the sixth century invited new colonists from the Peloponnese and from the Dorian islands. [Boardman, 1980].

In Archaic period Cyrenaica had a close contact with Naucratis, which is traced with the discoveries of Wild Goat style pottery in both sites. Pottery of this period is of North Ionian, Chian and South Ionian origin. Schaus indicates, that Chian merchants came first in Naucratis and afterwards they moved to Cyrene and that Fikellura style pottery, as well as faience occurred in Cyrene when they returned back. [Elrashedy, 2002: 121-125; Villing, Schlotzhauer, 2006].

Casa del Propileo is located between the Acropolis and Agora of Cyrene. It represents a large building complex with the size of 25X50 m and dates to the middle of the first century B.C. According to stratigraphy here had been traced layers of Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods. Archaic pottery was dated from the end of the seventh century - to the end of the sixth century B.C.

40% of the total pottery from the site belongs to Greek transport amphorae, which is represented with Chian, Samian, Attic SOS and Attic A la brossé production. [D'angelo, 2006].

Chian ceramic import also reached *Euesperides* in Antiquity. It is located close to modern city of Benghazi and is the westernmost of the Greek cities of Cyrenaica. The city was founded at the beginning of the sixth century B.C. and existed till the middle of the third century B.C. when it was abandoned in favour of the new city of Berenice nearby. On the close economic contacts of *Euesperides* with the Greek world indicate numerous transport amphorae, which had been discovered here as a result of the excavations processed in 1999-2006. Majority of amphorae is dated to the last centuries of occupation – 350-250 B.C. The 77% of amphorae are imported, among which 5% is Punic, 72% - different centres of Greece, among which 35% belongs to Corinthian B amphorae. 23% is represented with Cyrenaican amphorae, their date is unknown. North Aegean area is represented with Thasian and Mendean production. Among the Thasian fragments are also stamped ones according to which this group is dated to the fourth century B.C. South Aegean centres are represented with Chian, Samian, Coan, Knidian and Solokha I amphorae. Rhodian amphorae, which are common in the Mediterranean in the Hellenistic period, were not exported in any great quantity until later in the third century B.C. i.e. after the abandonment of *Euesperides*. Only two Rhodian amphorae have been identified here, which date to the last decade of the fourth, or the beginning of the third century B.C. Numerous Graeco-Italic amphorae attest to the trade with the Greek cities of Magna Graecia and Sicily. They are dated to the period from the fourth century to the 260 B.C. A few sherds of Massaliote amphorae were found in excavated contexts datable to 350-250 BC. [Gö rantson, 2006: 219-222].

Besides amphorae there are stamped amphorae handles recovered from the excavations at *Euesperides*.

Among the identified centres are: Thasos - 4 stamps (1 - 350-345 BC, 2 – beginning of the 4th c. BC, 1 - 365-360 BC); Rhodos - 1 (date is unknown). [Göransson, 2002: 137-145].

Next site, where Chian trade activity is well traced is *Berenice*. According to the archaeological excavations in Berenice had been revealed a large number of Hellenistic amphorae. 4% of the total amphorae assemblage is represented with Hellenistic amphorae of the Western Mediterranean. In sum had been identified fragments of at least 26 amphorae, among which: 9 (34,61%) – are Rhodian (end of the 4th c. BC); 5 (19,23%) – local (3rd-2nd cc. BC); 5 (19,23%) – Graeco-Italic (4th c. BC); 2 (7,69%) – Knidian (1st c. BC); 2 (7,69%) – Early Carthaginian (end of the 1st c. BC – beginning of the 1st c. AD), 1 (3,84%) – Corinthian A (4th c. BC); 1 (3,84%) - Brindisian (1st c. BC); 1 (3,84%) - Chian (1st c. BC). In Berenice had been traced the last variant of Chian amphorae, production of which continued till the first century B.C. [Riley, 1979: 112-144].

Soon after the foundation of Cyrene was founded *Tocra* (in 620 B.C.). Here had been discovered the sanctuary of Demeter and rich deposits, which are dated to the end of the seventh – beginning of the sixth centuries B.C. It is a quite large site, which was densely populated and very well defenced. Situation traced on the site corresponds well with the situation from other sites. The rise of Attic import is accompanied with the fall of Corinthian, Laconian replaces Chian. [Riley, 1979: 137-147; Gill, 2006: 1-23].

During the excavations of the layers of I and II deposits had been identified the fragments of at least 18 amphorae, among which: 9 (50%) are Chian; 4 (22,22%) - Corinthian; 3 (16,66%) – Samian; 2 (11,11%) - Lesbian; All of them are dated to the end of the seventh – beginning of the sixth centuries B.C. [Boardman, Hayes, 1966: 137-139; Boardman, Hayes, 1973: 61-64]. In addition, 69 Chian and 223 Laconian fragments had been published from the sanctuary, but there is no indication about to how much amphorae do these fragments belong. [Boardman, 1994: 137-147; Gill, 2006: 1-23].

One more site, where locally manufactured Chian amphorae were discovered is *Leptis Magna*. Ruins of Leptis Magna are located in 130 km east of Tripoli, in the territory of Modern Al Khum. Phoenicians founded the city at about 1100 B.C. Although, besides its quite early foundation date the city reached its prosperity only after its fall under Carthage – in the fourth century B.C.

Chian amphorae discovered here do not come directly from Chios; they had been manufactured with local clay, which serves as an indication, that Chian community produced its native production to supply the needs of local inhabitants (or of a Chian community which lived there). Among the excavated material from Leptis Magna there are seven Pseudo-Chian amphorae which are dated to the fifth-fourth centuries B.C. [De Miro, Polito, 1991: 279-280].

According to the presented information it is clear, that the import of Chian transport amphorae was numerous in different sites of North Africa and it attests on the trading activities of Chios from the seventh century B.C. According to the identified number of Chian amphorae we can indicate the intensity of their circulation from the second half of the seventh – to the first century B.C. In case of Rhodian, Coan and Knidian amphorae one amphora is indicated on two stamps,

due to the reason that these amphorae had two stamps on both handles; in the rest of the cases the number of amphorae is counted according to the profiled fragments. In most cases the exact number of discovered amphorae was not reported or numbers were given in percentages, which represents a problem in identifying the quantity. Also, there were such cases, when amphorae from the excavations were not published and also this matter makes it hard to determine statistics, still from the known quantity of amphorae the final results are represented on the table (Table. 1).

		Chian	Thasian	Le sbian	Sam ian	Rho dian	Knidi an	Coan	Men dean	Corinthi an
7th C. BC	I half									
	II half	9		2	3					4
6th C. BC	I half									
	II half				1					
5th C. BC	I half	2			3				3	1
	II half								6	
4th C. BC	I half	1	2		2		1	1	5	1
	II half		1			8				
3rd C. BC	I half	12	3			20	4	3		
	II half	1				15				
2nd C. BC	I half	6				28	11	5		
	II half	1				4		3		

1st C. BC	I half	1			11	18	3			
	II half	1					2			
sum		34	6	2	9	86	34	17	14	6

Table 1. *Predominant classes of Greek Transport Amphorae Imported in North Africa in the 7th-1st cc. BC.*

On the basis of represented information we can see, that Chios did not fall behind the imports of other centres, except Rhodian and this is due to its expansion in Hellenistic period. The occurrence of Chian amphorae fragments as well as stamped amphora handles in the excavations of the different sites indicates on the trade contacts of this Greek city-state with the cities located on the territory of North Africa in antiquity.

Chios in Antiquity represented one of the most stable and flourished centres, which produced its own production during quite a long time – from the second half of the seventh – to the first centuries B.C. During this period Chian merchants assimilated not only the regions nearby, but they also went as far as the North Africa.

Chian wine was very expensive and partly this is the reason why Chian amphorae were not transported in such large quantities as for example Coan or Knidian. In the Plutarchs anecdote Sochrates friend complains, that Chian wine costs 100 drachmae due to its extravagant taste (Plut. moralia, 470, F); the price is a bit exaggerated here, but despite the cost, it was the most desirable in antiquity [Grace, 1934: 198; Grace, 1979]. Rhodian, Knidian and Coan wine cost relatively less (Knidian – 20 Drachmae) and this explains the fact, that Rhodian outnumbers other amphorae in the given statistics. [Talcott, 1935: 494-497].

The economic explosion on the island of Chios continued until the 86 B.C., till its final destruction by Mithridates. Roman civil wars, different military occupations and presumably, the monetary system of Augustus, which reduced the emission of gold and silver has destroyed the trade activities of Chios. Accordingly, the general fall of economy into decay is the main reason why production of Chian amphorae stopped in this period. [Rostovtzeff, 1986: 245; Sarikakis, 1986: 124-125].

Greeks which settled in Near Eastern countries began cultivating the local vines. The vine trees had been sown in Egypt during this period, especially in the region of Delta, but Zenons papyri (260-259 B.C.) indicates that wine from Thasos, Knidus, Chios and Leukas was also imported.

Wine was produced in North African countries, but its quality was inferior. Only during the Roman Imperial time - first-fourth centuries A.D. the superior wine was produced in the coastline [Villing, Schlotzhauer, 2006: 4-11].

1 In the case of stamps we should draw the attention to the fact, that for example on Rhodian, Knidian, Thasian and Sinopean amphorae two stamps had been placed on both handles, so, conditionally, in case of discovery of two stamps we have the indication on one amphora.

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