Tamás Bezeczky

Italian Wine in the Eastern Mediterranean. Amphorae from Etruria, Latium, and Campania from the fourth century B.C. to the first century A.D.
The Case of the Ephesian Amphorae

Introduction

The Roman power in the Eastern Mediterranean gained momentum after the victory of Pydna (168 B.C.) and the Pergamon inheritance (133 B.C.). This started the large-scale immigration of Italian merchants in the Eastern Mediterranean. Ephesus was one of the obvious targets. The location of Ephesus at the mouth of the river Caystros was excellent from the point of view of sea trade. Ephesus was one of the richest cities of the Roman Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean. Strabo tells us that the city on the Cayster river was the biggest commercial centre of Asia on this side of Taurus.

From the Hellenistic period, the commercial market of the city was Tetragonos Agora. There was a rich terrace housing complex on a hill near the market. The topic now is the amphorae unearthed at this site. John Lund has collected the distribution of the amphorae – produced on the Thyrrenean coast – in the Eastern Mediterranean region. These amphorae were shipped to Ephesus during the late Republican and the early Imperial periods (fig. 1).

The amphorae

There were commercial links between the Greek settlements and the south Italian cities. Wine was at first imported in ‘Greco-Italic’ amphorae from Campania and Sicily to the Eastern Mediterranean from the third century B.C. These amphorae were used in shipments to Greece, West Turkey, Cyprus, Israel, Syria and Egypt. The ‘Greco-Italic’ amphorae were found in third and second century layers in Ephesus. The presence of these amphorae here – like elsewhere – is restricted to a few pieces.

There is no direct evidence of the arrival of Romans in Ephesus. The inscriptions mention them only at the beginning of the first century B.C. The earliest merchants came from Latium, Campania and southern
It seems certain the general massacre (88 B.C.) ordered by Mithridates VI had many victims in Ephesus. This, however, means at the same time that there must have been quite a few Italian merchants and businessmen in Ephesus.

There are more Italian amphorae among the objects belonging to the period from the end of the second century to the beginning of the first century B.C. These amphorae (Dressel 1A and 1C) had wines from Campania. They were followed by the wine amphorae (Lamboglia 2) of the Adriatic coast, as well as the Brindisi amphorae which contained olive oil. Italian amphorae are mixed with the amphorae from Rhodes, Chios, Knidos, Kos and the Aegean “locally produced” amphorae. In the Eastern Mediterranean Dressel 1A and Dressel 1C amphorae are found in Greece, West Turkey, Cyprus and Egypt. Their fabric points to different centres of production (from Etruria, Latium and Campania).

A new type of amphora (Dressel 1B) came into use in the second quarter of the first century B.C. The excavations in Greece, West Turkey, Syria, Israel, Egypt and Libya unearthed these amphorae. There are relatively few Dressel 1B amphorae in Ephesus.

The epigraphic material is scarce. We have only a few stamps and tituli picti. In addition to wine, the content of the Dressel 1C amphorae may have been fish sauce as well. A sizeable proportion of the amphorae came from Spain.

---

7 Appian, Mithr. 21, 81; Plutarch, Sulla 24, 7.
8 Bezeczy 2006, 290.
10 Lund 2000, 83.
11 In Dressel 1C stamp M.D(...) Bezeczy 2001, 11, no. 1; Dressel 1B stamp C A (...) Bezeczy 2004, 88, no.4; Dressel 1A titulus pictus ATT, A and T in ligature), Bezeczy 2004, 88, no.3; titulus pictus CE or CET, Bezeczy 2004, 90, no. 12.
12 Tetragonos Agora Bezeczy 2006, 295, no. 12; other amphorae, Boxnos. 92/041 (506), 96/029 (242), 96/068 (505), 93/069 (431), 90/127 (1174), 90/127 (1185), 93/027 (414) and 96/007 (1177).
Fig. 2 – Amphorae from Agora nos. 1-9, scale 1:4.
Fig. 3 – Amphorae from Agora, nos. 10 – 15, Terrace House 2, no. 16, Basilica Stoa, no. 17 and Well, no. 18, scale 1:4.
Fabric

Twenty-seven amphorae have been investigated from a petrological point of view by Roman Sauer. He distinguishes eleven different kinds of fabric (A–K). Ten of them may have come from the volcanic regions of southern Italy, one of them from Calabria. The same fabric can be discovered in different types of amphorae. Fabric A: Greco-Italic and Dressel 2-4, Fabric B: Dressel 1 and Dressel 2-4, Fabric C: Dressel 1C and Dressel 21-22 and Fabric E: Dressel 1A and Dressel 1C amphorae were produced in the same workshops.

Epigraphy

There are about fifty Italian Dressel 2-4 amphorae from the period between the middle of the first century BC to the middle of the first century AD. They came from Campania. Some of their stamps are known. The Eumachius family is well-known in Pompeii and the vicinity of Pompeii. The name of the family is written in various forms. There is also a Eumachius stamp in Izmir (Smyrna). The name on the other stamp, Marcus Livius Caustrius, may belong to a well-known gens in the Naples bay area (Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Sorrento). The stamps also have the name of a slave: Sur(us). The third stamp is LICCA, with the double C in ligature. The owner is well-known in Campania. These stamps are known in a number of places, but they co-occur together only on the ‘Grand Riboud D’ shipwreck near the French coast (fig. 4).

C. Curtius Postumus amphorae

According to the stamps, one of the producers of the Italian amphorae in Ephesus was C. Curtius Postumus. The Dressel 21-22 amphorae were excavated at the Tetragonos Agora. These amphorae were brought to Ephesus at the middle of the first century B.C. Caius Curtius Postumus did not change the trade mark stamp POST.CVRT even after he was adopted by his uncle and he changed his name to C. Rabirius Postumus. Curtius Postumus had intense commercial and political connections with Ephesus. His freedman Curtius Mithres had a house in Ephesus. Postumus probably came to Ephesus when the Egyptian king Ptolemaios Auletes who loaned enormous sums from him moved to the city. Later, he returned to the city as a proconsul. On the basis of the amphorae and the stamps, we have identified the types of amphorae which were produced in the workshops of Curtius Postumus. The typology shows that his Dressel 1B, Dressel 2-4, and Dressel 21-22 amphorae contained wine, fruit and probably fish products. The amphorae were shipped to Koblenz, Italy (Pompeii, Blanda Julia, Tarentum), Sicily, Egypt, Ephesus, and Jerusalem. The written sources mention that the family of Curtius Postumus had estates in both Apulia and Campania. The petrological analyses determine that the amphorae come from Campania. On the basis of the thin section and heavy mineral analyses, we can state that typical are the abundant temper grains of vol-

---

14 BEZECZKY 2007, 62; HESNARD et al. 1988, 50, footnote 51-3; PANella and FANO 1977, 157, fig. 15; TCHERNIA and ZEVI 1972, 40, footnote 3, Fig. 3; Blanc-Bijon et al. 1998, nos. 801–5; PARKER 1992, 202, no. 477.
17 BEZECZKY 2001, 11 and 13, no.2; BEZECZKY 2006, 299, no. 28.
19 CICERO Fam. 13.69,1; HATZFELD 1919, 102.
20 CICERO Fam. 1.1.1; CICERO Att. 15.15.2; CICERO Har. 28; Dio 29.16.3, 39.16.3, 39.55.1.
21 SIANI-DAVIES 2001, 57.
22 I am most grateful to Clementina Panella and Daniele Manacorda for their help.
Fig 4 – Latin stamps and *tituli picti* from Ephesus.
canic origin (partially zoned augite), volcanic rock fragments, sanidine, volcanic plagioclase together with carbonate grains and microfossils. The heavy mineral composition clearly points to more sediments provided predominantly by a volcanic hinterland. A provenance in the volcanic region of Campania (e.g. around Naples) seems to be likely but a more exact identification of the provenance cannot be given without more reference material (figs. 5-6). The comparison with raw material from the region around Capua showed that there are very similar raw materials available (e.g. alluvial deposits near the river Volturno hinterland of Capua). But it is possible that similar deposits occur also elsewhere in the region.

Fig. 5 – Photomicrographs of Italian amphora fabrics nos. 1-15, (fresh broken surface, x20 magnification).
Fig. 6 – Thin section and heavy mineral data of Italian amphorae nos. 1 – 15, (prepared by R. Sauer 2008).

Catalogue

1. Greco-Italic, Rim, neck fr., No: 89/028 (1245), Agora, Trench 89/2, light reddish brown (2.5YR 6/4), Fabric: A, D = 17 cm, V = 3.1 cm, HD = 2.5 cm, DN = 12.3 cm, H = 4.3 cm

2. Dressel 2-4, Rim, neck, handle fr., No: 88/013 (1234), Agora, Trench 88/2, red (2.5YR 5/6), Fabric: A, D = 13 cm, V = 1.6 cm, HD = 1.2 cm, H = 8 cm, S = 2.5 cm

3. Dressel 2-4, Rim, neck, handle fr., No: 96/020 (1371), Agora, Trench 96/1, gray (10YR 6/1), surface: light red (2.5YR 6/6), Fabric: B, D = 13.4 cm, V = 1.4 cm, HD = 0.8 cm, H = 5.8 cm, S = 2x4.8 cm

4. Dressel 1C, Rim, neck-, handle frgms., No: 89/017 (14), Agora, Trench 89/1, red (10R5/6), Fabric: C, D = 15 cm, V = 2.9 cm, HD = 7.3 cm, DN = 11 cm, H = 15 cm

5. Dressel 1C, Handle fr., No: 95/025 (508), Agora, Trench 95/2-III, red (10R 5/6), Fabric: C, H = 16 cm, S = 3.4x5.7 cm

6. Dressel 1A, Rim, neck, handles, No: 93/050 (12), Agora, Trench 93/2, light red (2.5YR 6/6), Fabric: D, D = 18.4 cm, V = 3 cm, HD = 5.4 cm, DN = 12 cm, HN = 29.9 cm, H = 42 cm, S = 3.5x4.4 cm
7. Dressel 1, Neck, fr., No: 91/022 (174), Agora, Trench 91/1, light red (2.5YR 6/6), Fabric: D, DN = 11.4 cm, H = 26.9 cm

8. Dressel 1A, Rim, neck fr., No: 96/051 (11), Agora, Trench 96/1, red (10R 5/6), Fabric: E, D = 21.5 cm, V = 3.1 cm, HD = 3.9 cm, H = 7.8 cm

9. Dressel 1C, Handle fr., No: 92/035 (185), Agora, Trench 87/4, Stamp: M.D(...), red (10R 5/6), Fabric: E, H = 7.5 cm, S = 2.7x4.7 cm

10. Dressel 1B, Rim, neck, handle frgms., No: 90/103 (999), Agora, Trench 90/1, Stamp: ..CAA or ..GAA, light red (2.5YR 6/6), Fabric: F, D = 18 cm, V = 2.9 cm, HD = 5.6 cm, H = 25.5 cm

11. Dressel 1C, Rim, neck, handle fr., No: 89/017 (1181), Agora, Trench 89/1, light brown (7.5YR 6/4), surface buff (10YR 7/4), Fabric: G, D = 15 cm, V = 1.6 cm, HD = 8 cm, DN = 11 cm, H = 18.1 cm

12. Dressel 21-22, Rim fr., No: 96/044 (15), Agora, Trench 96/1, Stamp: POST.CVRT, (S-T and V-R-T in ligature), Post(umii) Curt(ii), reddish yellow (5YR 6/6), surface: buff (10YR 7/4), Fabric: H, D = 18.5 cm, V = 1.8 cm, HD = 5.8 cm, DN = 15.3 cm, H = 7.4 cm

13. Dressel 2-4, Rim, neck fr., No: 98/114 (1628), Agora, Trench 98/1, reddish yellow (5YR 7/6), Fabric: I, D = 14.5 cm, V = 1.8 cm, HD = 2.1 cm, H = 7.5 cm

14. Dressel 1A, Rim, neck, handle fr., No: 90/127 (1184), Agora, Trench 90/3, titulus pictus with red ink: AT...T, A and T in ligature, light red (2.5YR 6/8), surface: buff (7.5YR 8/4), Fabric: J, D = 17 cm, V = 3 cm, HD = 4.2 cm, DN = 11.8 cm, H = 12.5 cm, S = 2.6x4.5 cm

15. Dressel 21-22, Rim fr., No: 89/022 (1111), Agora, Trench 89/2, titulus pictus with red ink: CE or CER, very pale brown (10YR 7/4), surface: buff (10YR 8/3), Fabric: K, D = 19 cm, V = 2 cm, HD = 4.3 cm, H = 9.3 cm

16. Dressel 2-4, Handle fr. No: 93/098, Terrace House 2, debris in the sewer, Stamp: L.EVMAC...; L. Eumach(i), light red (2.5YR 6/6), H = 5.5 cm, S = 4.5 x 2.3 cm

17. Dressel 2-4, Handle fr. No: 1029, State Agora, Basilica Stoa, Stamp: ...LIVI.CAVS... / SV... `[M.] Livi Caus[tri] / Su[ri]s`, red (10R 5/6), surface: pinkest white – pinkest gray (7.5YR 8/2 – 7/2), H = 5.1 cm, S = 5.1x2.6 cm

18. Dressel 2-4, Handle frgm., No: K523, State Agora, Well, Filling B1, Stamp: LICCA, C-C in ligature, red (10R 5/6), H = 19.8 cm, S = 5.4x2.7 cm,

Abbreviations

No. – number or inventory number
Colour – Munsell Colour
Fr. – fragment
D – diameter of the rim
V – thickness of the rim
HD – height of the rim
DN – minimum diameter of the neck
HN – height of the neck
H – height of the fragment
S – section of the handle

Bibliography


