

CILICIAN LR AMPHORA 1?

BY

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This is one of the amphora types most frequently found in the western and northern Black Sea and the Mediterranean especially beginning in the 5th century. The term LRA 1 has been coined by Riley for his Berenice and Carthage typologies¹. Besides Riley there were more tentative typologies made by Kuzmanov², Scorpan³, Egloff⁴, Keay⁵, Opaïț⁶, Peacock & Williams⁷ and Van Alfen⁸. The most recent typological essay is by Piéri⁹ who initially divides this type into three variants (LRA 1 A–C) (fig.1), while in his published dissertation reduced them only to two “grandes générations morphologiques”, LRA 1A and LRA 1B with a transitional variant¹⁰. Although he states that he struggles to create a more detailed typology his approach is quite general, and many variants are not included into it. He also omits to mention the precursors of this type, already indicated by other specialists¹¹ and his suggestion¹² that this type originates in Cretan amphoras¹³ has little support.

The discoveries made in Dobrudja, the Athenian Agora and the Crimea allow us to refine this typology identifying at least six subtypes each of it divided into many other variants¹⁴. The evolution of this amphora type is quite well established for the 5th through the 7th centuries AD. Starting with the 6th century the shape of this amphora became somehow a canonical form being made in many other areas with old tradition in wine making such as Cyprus, Kos and Rhodes. We will focus in this paper only on the beginning of this form.

¹ J. A. Riley, *The coarse pottery from Berenice. Excavations at Sidi Khrebish Benghazi (Berenice)*, in J. A. Lloyd (ed.), *Lybia Antiqua* Supp. V–2, 91–467, Tripoli; *idem* 1981, *The pottery from the cisterns 1977.1, 1977.2, 1977.3, in Excavations at Carthage conducted by the University of Michigan*. 6, 1979, p. 85–124.

² G. Kuzmanov, *Tipologia i kronologia na rannozantiyskite anfori (iv–v v.)*, in *Archeologia*, 1973, p. 14–21.

³ C. Scorpan, *Contribution à la connaissance de certains types céramiques romano-byzantins (IV–VII siècles), dans l'espace Istro-Pontique*, in *Dacia* XXI, 1977, p. 269–297.

⁴ M. Egloff, *La Poterie Copte*. Genève, 1977.

⁵ S. J. Keay, *Late Roman amphorae in the Western Mediterranean. A typology and economic study: the Catalan evidence. British Archaeological Reports International Series*. Oxford, 1984.

⁶ A. Opaïț, *Beobachtungen zur Entwicklung der zwei Amphoratypen*, in *Peuce* IX, 1984, p. 311–327.

⁷ D. P. S. Peacock, & D. F. Williams, *Amphorae and the Roman Economy. An Introductory Guide*. London, 1986.

⁸ P.G. Van Alfen, *New light on the 7th-c. Yassi Ada shipwreck: capacities and standard sizes of LRA1* in *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, 1996, p.189–213.

⁹ D. Piéri, *Les importations d'amphores orientales en Gaule méridionale durant l'antiquité tardive et le haut-moyen âge (IV^e–VII^e siècles après J.-C.). Typologie, chronologie et contenu*, in *Société Française d'Étude de la Céramique Antique en Gaule. Actes du congrès d'Istres*, SFECAG, 1998, p. 98–99; *idem*, *Le commerce du vin oriental à l'époque Byzantine (V^e–VII^e siècles). Le témoignage des amphores en Gaule*. Beyrouth, 2005, p. 69–85.

¹⁰ Piéri 2005, p. 70, fig. 26.

¹¹ P. Arthur, & E. D. Oren, *The North Sinai survey and the evidence of transport amphorae for Roman and Byzantine trading patterns*, in *JRA* 11, 1998, p. 193–212.

¹² Piéri 2005, fig.26.

¹³ H. S. Robinson, *The Athenian Agora. Pottery of the Roman perio*. Princeton, 1959, G197 & K112.

¹⁴ A. Opaïț, *Local and Imported Ceramics in the Roman Province of Scythia (4th–6th centuries AD)*, BAR Int. Series 1274. Oxford, 2004, p. 8–11.

THE PRECURSORS OF LRA 1

The origins of this very famous amphora type have been indicated either in Crete¹⁵ or eastern Cilicia¹⁶. In our opinion the latter is the closest to the real origins of this amphora type. However, Reynolds' suggestion that LRA 1 has roots in the type Pompeii 5 class has little support, as the morphology of this amphora has nothing to do with the shape of LRA 1, although the fabric of both types has many common points. A suitable forerunner of LRA 1, also mentioned *en passant* by Reynolds, is the Cilician imitation of Gallic amphora type 4¹⁷. This shape was previously briefly mentioned by Arthur and Oren¹⁸.

Our amphora study in the Athenian Agora (Stoa of Attalos), completed by some discoveries made in Dobrudja and the Crimea, allows us to have a complete picture of the development of this predecessor during the 3rd and the first half of the 4th century A.D. We have divided the forerunners of LRA 1 into three subtypes.

A.

The archetype seems to be a Cilician imitation of either Gauloise 4 type or of Dressel 30 (figs. 2 and 3). It is difficult to say which one was the source because this shape seems to enjoy a large popularity during the 3rd century A.D. Certainly, it is a new shape for Cilicia. The complete example discovered in the Athenian Agora is a little bit taller than Dr. 30 but has also shallow grooves on the central area of the body (fig.4a–c). The height is of 67.5 cm, the maximum diameter of 39 cm, the rim diameter of 10.8 cm and the base diameter is 6.2 cm. The rim was made by folding outwards and downwards the top of the rim with a small undercut. This technique will be used for many subtypes and variants through the next centuries, and it is an important characteristic of this type. The handles are arched with a wide central groove, the shoulders are wide and the body is plump, tapering towards the narrow, ring base. The fabric is typical Cilician with grain of quartz, pyroxene and foraminifera. This amphora comes from a cistern (C 14:2) which was filled between 240 A.D. and 275 A.D., therefore a dating around the middle of the 3rd century is quite feasible.

B.

The next subtype continues the same developing line of subtype A, having the same ovoid body but tapering more sharply to the lower part. The rim becomes flattened while the handles are not in band but almost rounded in cross section preserving a deep, sharp, longitudinal groove on the external part. This type of handle will become typical for the next generation of this type. The neck is narrow and starts to increase its height. The body still preserves a very shallow grooving on the middle (fig.5a–c).

The complete example has been discovered in a well of the Athenian Agora, and it was published by Robinson¹⁹. The dimensions of this amphora are slightly reduced as its height is 64 cm, the maximum diameter is of 34 cm, the rim diameter is of 8.2 cm, and the base diameter is of 2.8 cm. This deposit was dated initially “first half of the 3rd century”²⁰ but recently J. Hayes dates the end of the first period of use during the Herulian invasion.²¹ Therefore, we can confidently date this sub-type to between AD 260 and 280. A later date than that of the previous sub-type is suggested also by the narrow handles and base. This sub-type is a crucial link to the sub-type of the 4th century.

¹⁵ Piéri 2005, p.70, fig.26.

¹⁶ P. Reynolds, *Levantine amphorae from Cilicia to Gaza: a typology and analysis of regional production trends from the 1st to 7th centuries*, in Gurt I Esparraguera, J. Ma., Buxeda I Garrigós, J. & Cau Ontiveros, M. A. (eds.) *LRCWI. Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean*, BAR Int. Series 1340, Oxford, 2005, p. 563–612; *idem*, in S. Keay & D. F. Williams *Roman amphorae: a digital resource*, University of Southampton 2007, ; http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/archive/amphora_ahrb_2005/details.cfm?id=268&CFID=146774&CFTOKEN=83880127

¹⁷ Reynolds 2005, p. 565, fig.23.

¹⁸ Arthur and Oren *op.cit.*, 203, fig.6.1, 2.

¹⁹ Robinson *op. cit.*, p. 68, K111, pl. 15.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ I am grateful to John Hayes for providing with this information. As can be seen, both sub-types came from deposits with similar dating. However, using cross-dating and analyzing different morphologic details, it can be confidently said that amphora **P-11936** (subtype A) was at the extreme of its data-range or residual.

As we said above, quite a similar discovery comes from the Sinai Peninsula²² (fig.6). We cannot rule out that these two amphoras were manufactured at about the same time but in different workshops. The most striking difference is in the shape of the rim of the latter example which is slightly bent towards the interior and not vertical as in the former variant.

C.

The next subtype might be considered as an intermediary form as the dimensions and the shape of the vessel display visible changes. According to some differences, mostly in the form of the rim we divided this subtype into two variants.

C-1

Two amphoras discovered in the Athenian Agora allow us to understand the major changes which occur during the first half of the 4th century A.D. (figs.7a–b and 8a–b). The neck and the body become elongated, whilst the handles, although preserving the deep groove are not arched but fall vertically on the narrow shoulders. The base of the Athenian example is rounded, although we cannot rule out the existence of a conical spike which was detached when the amphora went out of use. Remarkable is the rim which continues to look like a band but its tip is slightly bent to the interior, continuing perhaps the tradition of the previous subtype discovered in the Sinai Peninsula²³. The two example discovered at Athens have different dimensions suggesting therefore that this subtype has been manufactured in different sizes. The largest example (P-11726) has a height of 64 cm, a maximum diameter of 29.6 cm and a rim diameter of 8.5 cm. It comes from the filling of a well (N 18:5) which ends around the middle of the 4th century, which indicates that this subtype was in vogue during the first half of the 4th century A.D. The second Athenian example (P-29339) has identical morphological characteristics but more reduced dimensions and the bottom is missing. It preserves a height of 47.2 cm, a maximum diameter of 19.2 cm and a rim diameter of 6.3 cm. It has perhaps half of the capacity of the former amphora.

C-2

The second variant, although it does not change much from C-1, has minor differences which determined us to treat it separately, being perhaps manufactured in a different workshop. The rim was also folded outwards and downwards creating a band, which is vertical and not bent towards the interior. The body differs from variant C 1 as it is shaped more conically, with a visible angle between shoulders and body, covered by shallow grooves. It ends in a conical, full spike. The complete example discovered in Dobrudja²⁴ has a height of 53.5 cm, a maximum diameter of 15.3 cm, and a rim diameter of 5.8 cm (fig. 9a–c).

A similar amphora has been discovered at Chersonesos (museum storeroom, inv. 26a/36573), and fragments of rim and handles come from the excavations made at Bezmyannaya. Although the Chersonesan example has the bottom missing, the morphology of the amphora is typical for variant C-2, with some minor differences such as a deeper, sharpened longitudinal groove of the handle (fig.10a–b). The fabric is typical for LRA 1 with well-sorted, abundant inclusions of pyroxene, and sparse small grains of quartz and reddish inclusions (iron oxides?). The color is reddish yellow (7.5 YR 6/6 to 7.5 YR 7/6).

In conclusion, we consider that during the first half of the 3rd century AD different pottery workshops of Cilicia tried to create a new amphora form. The emerging shape was under the influence of Dr.30/Gauloise 4 as other variants, more related to the early Roman Pompeii type 5, were abandoned after the middle of the 3rd century. Towards the end of the 3rd and the first half of the 4th century AD this new sub-type will lay the foundation for the well-known LRA 1.

²² Arthur and Oren *op.cit.* p. 203, fig.6. 2.

²³ *Ibidem.*

²⁴ A. Opaït 1980, p. 301, pl. VI.2; XIII.2.

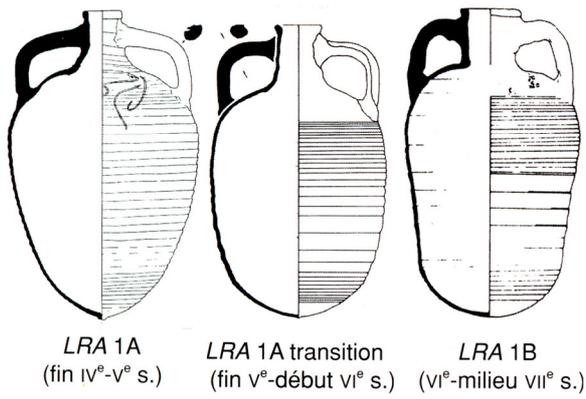


Fig. 1: apud Piéri 2005, fig.25.

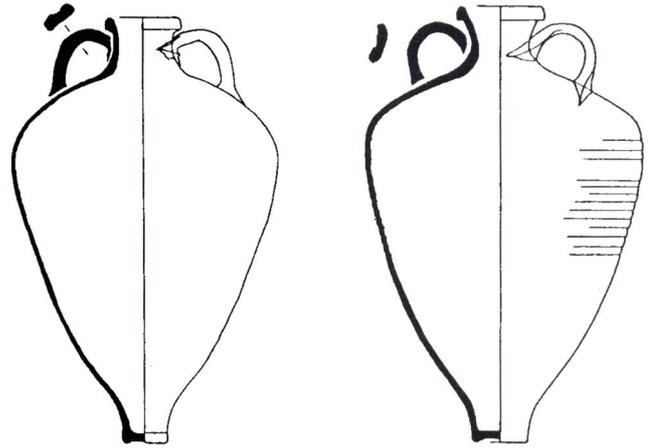


Fig. 2: Gauloise 4 – after Sciallano & Sibella 1994 – second ed. sc 1:10.
Fig. 3: Dressel 30 – after Sciallano & Sibella 1994 – second ed. sc 1:10.

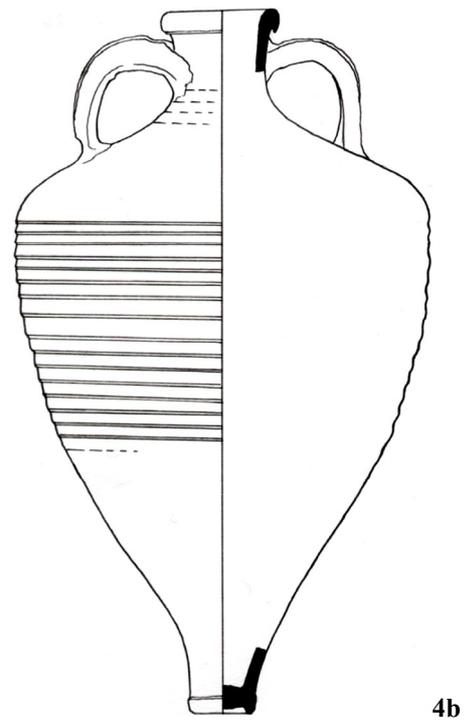
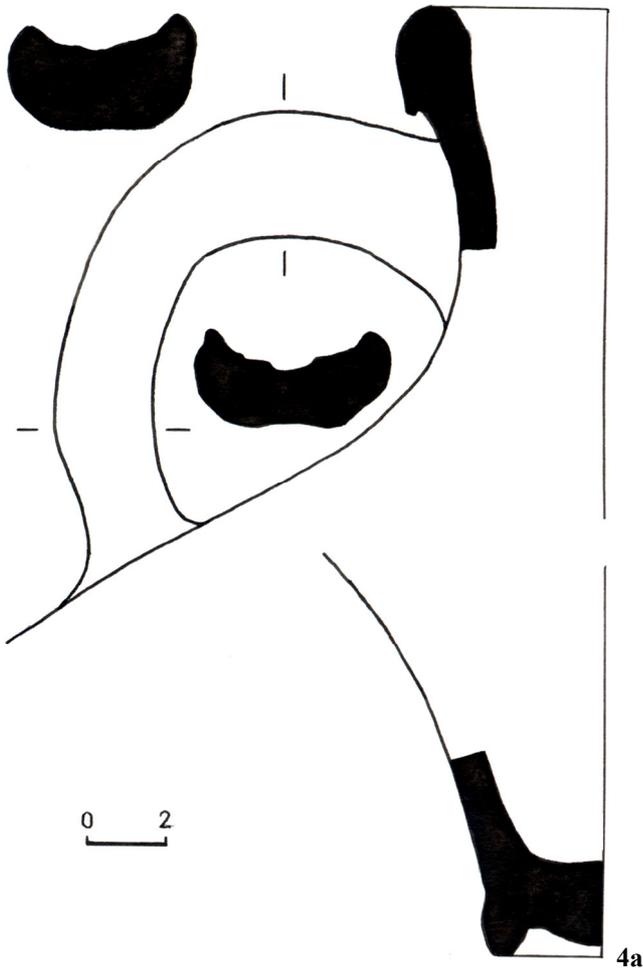


Fig. 4a&b: Athenian Agora, P-11936: 2a sc. 1:2; 2b sc 1:10, courtesy of the American School of Classical Archaeology at Athens (picture and drawings by the author).

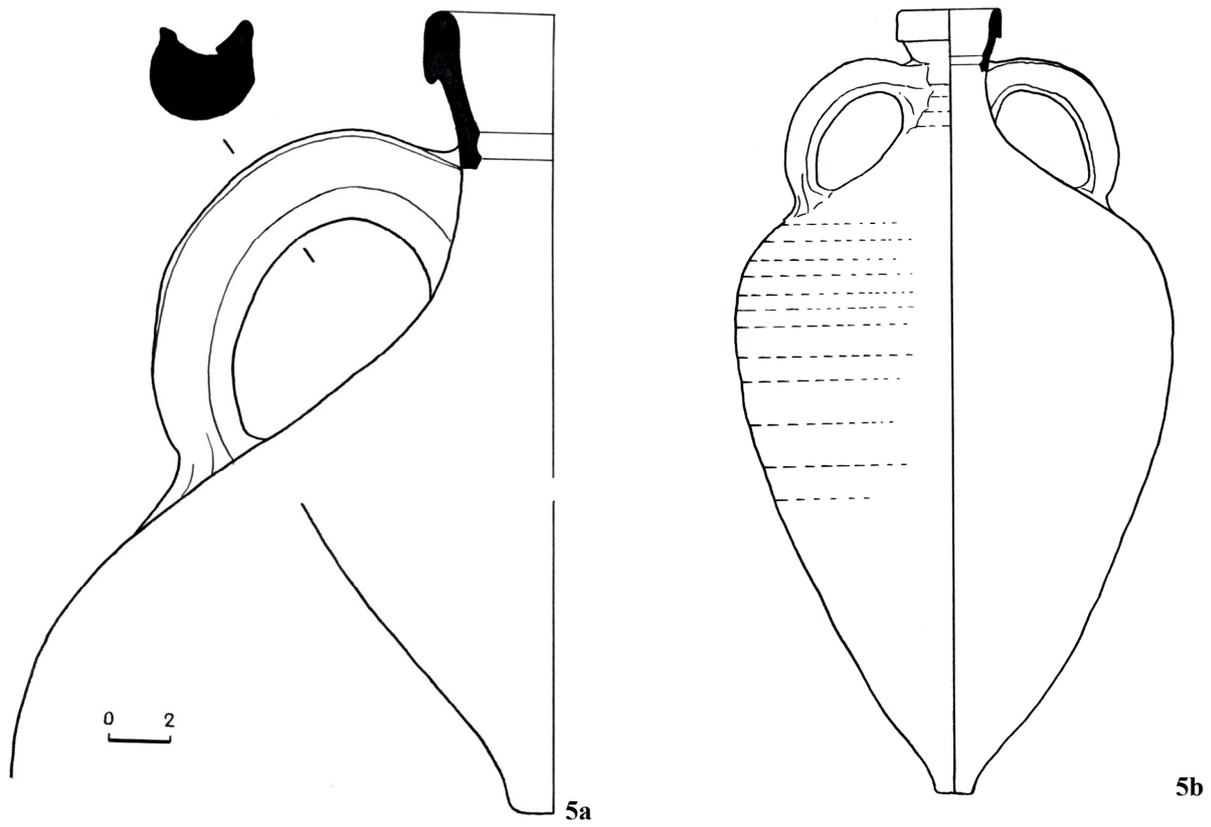


Fig. 5a&b: Athenian Agora, P-14078: 5a sc. 1:2; 5b sc. 1:10, courtesy of the American School of Classical Archaeology at Athens (picture and drawings by the author).

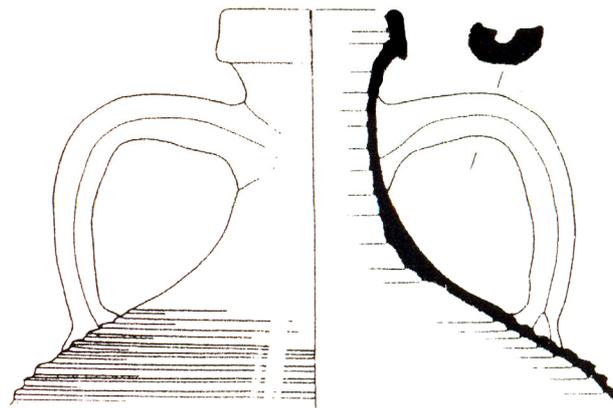


Fig. 6: apud Arthur and Oren 1998, 203, fig. 6. 2, sc. 1:5.

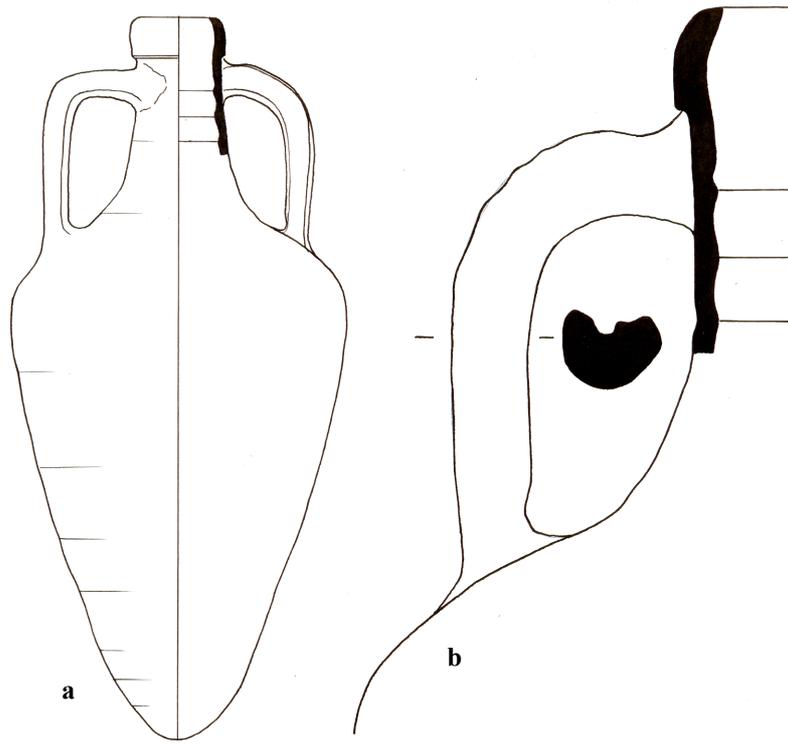


Fig. 7a & b Athenian Agora, P-11726: 7a sc. 1:5; 7b sc. 1:2, courtesy of the American School of Classical Archaeology at Athens (picture and drawings by the author).

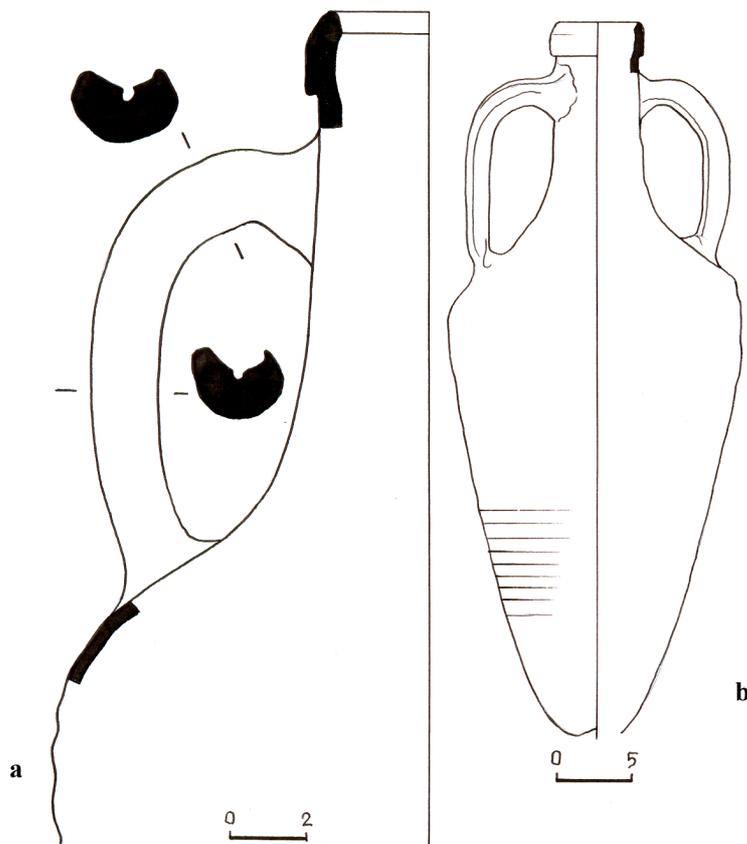


Fig. 8:a & b. Athenian Agora, P-29339: 8a sc. 1:5; 8b sc. 1:2, courtesy of the American School of Classical Archaeology at Athens (picture and drawings by the author).

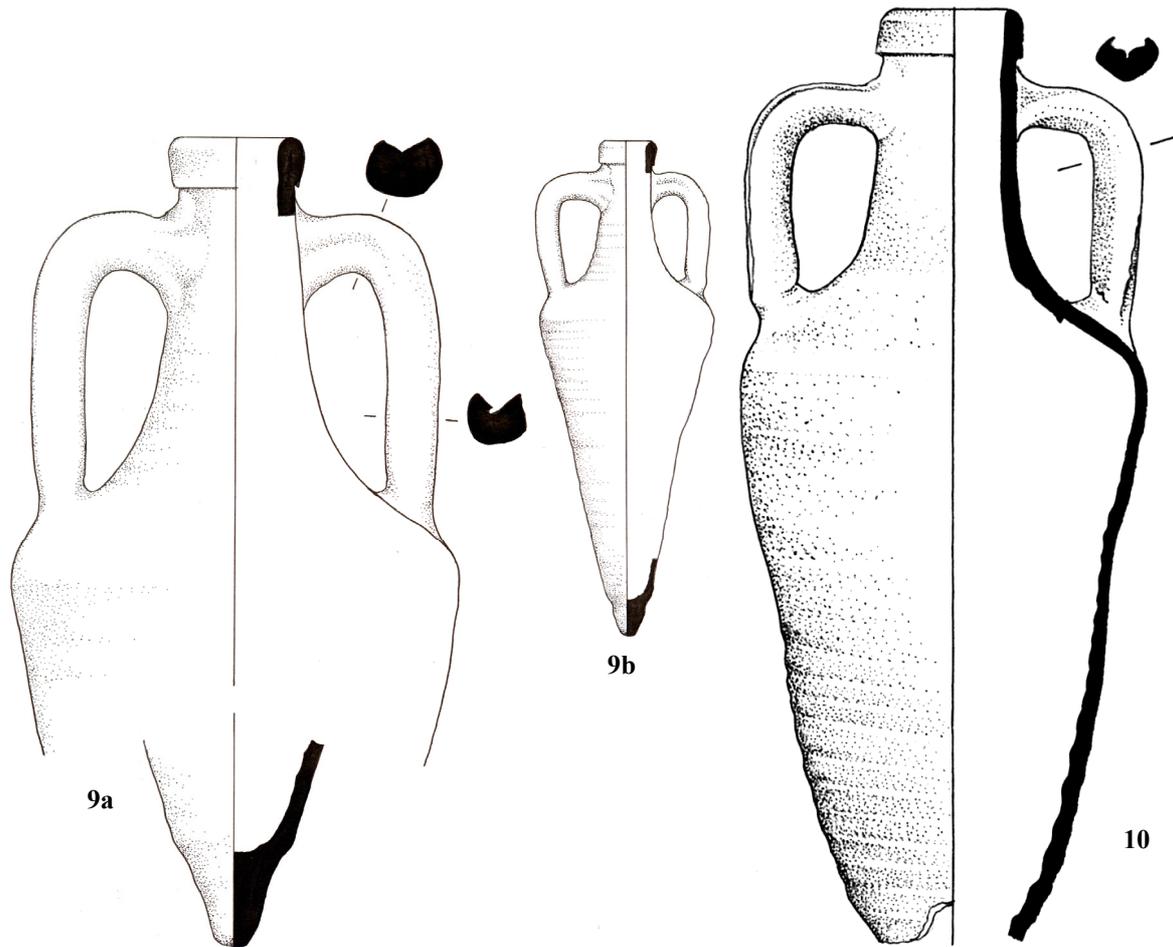


Fig.9: Plopu (Dobrudja), Opait 1980, pl. VI.2; XIII.2: 9a sc. 1:4; 9b sc 1:10 (picture and drawings by the author).
 Fig.10: Chersonesos, Cemetery Sovhoz No.10, urn XX-1, Inv. No. 26-36573 (sc. 1:5) (picture and drawings by the author).

