

Iconographic Evidence for the Handling and Use of Transport Amphorae in the Roman Period

BY JOHN LUND



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The purpose of this contribution is to review some of the iconographic evidence from the 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD for the handling of transport amphorae, with a view to examining how this kind of material can contribute to our understanding of the daily use of such vessels. The topic was chosen in consideration of Theodore Peña's inclusion of "Representational Evidence" among the sources for behavioural practices involving Roman pottery.¹

Carolyn Koehler's discussion of the "Handling of Greek Transport Amphorae" and other scholars' treatments of various aspects of the Roman iconographic evidence constituted the starting points for the present study,² which is intended as an overview of a vast topic that has not so far been comprehensively investigated. Images of isolated amphorae and of those handled by gods, deities and skeletons are beyond the scope of this paper, but Nilotic scenes populated by dwarfs and pygmies are included, even if they play out in a twilight zone between imagination and "reality".³

Peña's model of the ceramic life-cycle of pottery ("Manufacture", "Distribution", "Prime use", "Reuse", "Maintenance", "Recycling", "Discard" and "Reclamation") provides a convenient framework for the following review of the iconographic evidence.⁴

MANUFACTURE

A few images show Roman potters at work, but none is involved in the making of amphorae.⁵

DISTRIBUTION BY SEA

There is, however, good iconographic evidence for the sea-borne distribution of transport amphorae.⁶ Transport amphorae were normally stored below deck on large merchant vessels, but a mosaic dated to the 3rd-4th centuries AD from Tebessa in Algeria depicts a ship with thirteen stoppered amphorae packed in two rows on the deck.⁷ Further examples include a fragmentary relief in the

Villa Wolkonsky in Rome,⁸ a sarcophagus relief from Rome dated to the second half of the 3rd century AD,⁹ and a relief found near S. Maria in Capella in Rome.¹⁰

Images of smaller crafts and rowing boats carrying amphorae are also common. A wall painting from Pompeii shows two pygmies in a boat laden with amphorae.¹¹ A similar scene appears on two mosaics with Nilotic scenes: one dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD in the Terme di Nettuno at Ostia,¹² and another at Mérida in Spain, dated to the 3rd century AD.¹³ A relief on a sarcophagus from the Severan period depicts two amphorae in a small vessel towed by a rowing boat.¹⁴

A mosaic from Ostia shows the transfer of amphorae from a larger to a smaller ship, evidently intended to transport them to a secondary landing-place,¹⁵ and a 2nd century AD relief in Stockholm has a man pouring the contents of an amphora into some sort of container on a smaller vessel (Fig. 1).¹⁶

Having reached the end of the sea-journey, the amphorae were off-loaded, and a 3rd century AD relief from Ostia illustrates *tabularii* recording amphorae as they are carried off a ship.¹⁷ A similarly engaged person is seen on another relief from Ostia,¹⁸ and a fragmentary relief from Rome shows 13 amphorae stored next to a man sitting behind a desk with an inkstand. A small roof is indicative of an outdoor location, but it is hard to say without the missing part of the relief whether it depicts the recording of incoming amphorae at some storage facility in a harbour, or perhaps even at a stall selling amphorae.¹⁹

DISTRIBUTION BY LAND

An amphora filled with oil might weigh up to 100 kg, and one filled with wine up to half of this,²⁰ and the next stage involved transporting the amphorae onwards over land. One way of doing this over short distances was for two men to carry the amphora on a pole,²¹ as seen on a shop

1 Peña 2007, 18.

2 Cf. Koehler 1986, which is also based on other sources than iconography. For the Roman period, see Zimmer 1982a *passim*; Blázquez Martínez *et al.* 1991; Hornig 2005-2006; Friedman 2005-2006; Bounegru 2005-2006; Calament 2007 and the publications referred to below.

3 Cf. Dasen 1994; Meyboom & Versluys 2007, 171: "Nilotic scenes in the Roman world are more or less realistic pictures of Egypt at the time of the annual flooding of the Nile". Though historically



Fig. 1 Marble relief of unknown provenance showing two men transferring amphorae from a merchant vessel to a smaller craft. Photo courtesy The Museum of Mediterranean Antiquities, Stockholm.

- incorrect, the term pygmy is used below for both categories as is often done with Nilotic scenes, cf. Meyboom & Versluys 2007, 173-177.
- 4 Peña 2007, 6-16.
- 5 Two wall paintings from Pompeii: Zimmer 1982a, 42 and 199 no. 143 and Peña & McCallum 2009, 59-63; a motif on an African Red Slip Ware jug from the first half of the 3rd century AD: Mackensen 1993, 64-65 fig. 12.1; a tomb relief from the early 2nd century AD in the Virginia Museum, Richmond: Zimmer 1982a, 42 and 199-200 no. 144.
- 6 Blázquez Martínez *et al.* 1991. The identification of the Latin names of vessel types involved is beyond the scope of this paper, cf. e.g. Höckmann 1994 and Bounegrou 2005-2006.
- 7 Dunbabin 1978, 74, 126, 272 pl. 59; Blázquez Martínez *et al.* 1991, 326 fig. 5; Tchernia 1997, 127; Pékary 1999, 52-54 no. DZ-13; Friedman 2005-2006, 128 fig. 5; Bounegrou 2005-2006, 137 fig. 2.
- 8 Pékary 1999, 298-299 no. Rom-V 12.
- 9 Roma, Catacombe di Pretestato, Museo i.n. 925: Amedick 1991, 58 and 145 no. 143 pl. 47.3; Pékary 1999, 248-249 no. Rom-Ci 19; Friedman 2005-2006, 128 fig. 6.
- 10 Pékary 1999, 280-281 no. Rom-M 24; Another example is seen on a mosaic from the Maison des Muses at Althiburus in Tunisia dated to the second half of the 3rd century AD. Musée de Bardo i.n. A 168: Ennaifer 1976, 66 note 285 pls. 40-41; Dunbabin 1978, 127, 153 and 248 Althiburus no. 1 (a). A ship carrying amphorae is also seen on a mosaic in L'édifice des Asclepieia at Althiburus: Ennaifer 1976, 94-101 ship no. 24 pl. 94; Dunbabin 1978, 127, 136, 153 and 248 no. 1 (c) pl. 122; Pékary 1999, 362-363 no. TN-48 ship no. 24, and on a mosaic found at Bad Kreuznach in Germany dated at AD 234, Rabold 1995, 228 fig. 5; Pékary 1999, 16 Db-1. Cf. further a fragmentary relief from Ostia: Pékary 1999, 198-199 no. I-O 41b), and a mosaic from the Piazza delle Corporazioni at Ostia: Becatti 1961, 81-82 no. 127 pl. 182; Blázquez Martínez *et al.* 1991, 325 figs. 3-4; Pékary 1999, 190-191 no. I-O 16; Friedman 2005-2006, 131-132 fig. 16.
- 11 Napoli, il Gabinetto Segreto: Pékary 1999, 176-177 no. I-N 21; Bounegrou 2005-2006, 138 fig. 5.
- 12 Becatti 1961, 59-60 no. 74 pl. 118; Basch 1987, 111 fig. 206; Blázquez Martínez *et al.* 1991, 323-324 fig. 1; Pékary 1999, 200-201 no. I-O 48; Versluys 2002, 43-45.
- 13 Dasen 1994, 598 no. 52.a pl. 479; Höckmann 1994, 429-431 no. 11 fig. 12; Pékary 1999, 58-59 no. E-7b.
- 14 Karlsruhe, Landesmuseum: Amedick 1991, 15 note 38 pl. 5.3; Pékary 1999, 26-27 no. D-44. See further a lost wall painting with a Nilotic scene in the Casa di Sallustio, Pompeii (VI 2,4): Versluys 2002, 114-115.
- 15 Becatti 1961, 74 no. 106 pl. 181; Blázquez Martínez *et al.* 1991, 324 fig. 2; Höckmann 1994, 426-427 no. 2 fig. 3; Tchernia 1997, 131; Pékary 1999, 188-189 no. I-O 10; Boetto 2001, 126 fig. 7; Friedman 2005-2006, 131-132 fig. 17; Bounegrou 2005-2006, 137-138 fig. 3.
- 16 The Museum of Mediterranean Antiquities, i.n. MM 1975:1: Peterson & Winbladh 1976, 71; Pékary 1999, 338-339 no. S-2; Bounegrou 2005-2006, 138 fig. 4.
- 17 Roma, Museo Torlonia: Basch 1987, 463-465 fig. 1037; Tchernia 1997, 119; Pékary 1999, 290-291 no. Rom-M 55; Giulia Boetto in: Descœudres (ed.) 2001, 408 no. VII.2; Friedman 2005-2006, 132 fig. 18.
- 18 Roma, Museo Torlonia: Basch 1987, 463-465 fig. 1038; Pékary 1999, 290-291 no. Rom M-56; Boetto 2001, 403 no. IV.3; Friedman 2005-2006, 132 fig. 19.
- 19 Roma, Musei Vaticani, Galleria dei Candelabri III, 20 (138) (Porte Marancia): Zimmer 1982a, 219-220 no. 179.
- 20 Martin-Kilcher 1994, 525.
- 21 As had been done centuries earlier in Greece, cf. Koehler 1986, 58-60 fig. 10.



Fig. 2 Terracotta figurine showing a resting camel with amphorae, allegedly from Bosra. Photo courtesy The Museum of Ancient Art at Aarhus University.

sign in Pompeii (VII 4, 16) which obviously predates AD 79,²² and on a 2nd century AD wall painting from Augst in Switzerland, where a Dressel 20 amphora is involved.²³ However, most of the relevant images involve the use of pack animals.

According to Colin Adams, epigraphic evidence shows that camels were primarily used in Egypt for the long distance transportation of goods,²⁴ and quite a few terracotta figurines (not only from Egypt) represent camels carrying amphorae, such as a resting camel allegedly from Bosra in Syria (Fig. 2).²⁵ Egyptian terracotta figurines commonly depict a standing camel laden with amphorae (possibly of the so-called Biconical type) (Fig. 3),²⁶ occasionally substituted by a horse.²⁷ According to Egyptian customs documents the average load for camels carrying wine was 4 *keramia*,²⁸ by which is presumably not only meant a measure corresponding to either 9 or 12 litres but also the amphorae themselves.²⁹ We can only guess at the contents of the amphorae shown on the terracotta figurines; wine is a possibility, but it cannot be ruled out that they are supposed to carry water.

Donkeys and mules have nearly the same carrying capacity as camels, but they were apparently mainly used for transporting goods over shorter distances in Egypt.³⁰ Mules carrying amphorae appear on a Campana relief with a Nilotic scene from the 1st or early 2nd century AD³¹ and on a relief with yet another Nilotic scene from ancient Gorsium in Pannonia, dated to the 2nd century AD.³² Roman representations of amphorae transported on wagons are



Fig. 3 Terracotta figurine of a standing camel laden with amphorae, allegedly from Lower Egypt. Photo by John Lee, the National Museum of Denmark.

by contrast hard to come by, and the epigraphic evidence from Egypt suggests that “pack animals were always more common and widely used than wagons” there.³³

DISTRIBUTION III: STORAGE

Several images illustrate the storing of amphorae. On a relief from the 2nd century AD, we see a man carrying an amphora possibly of the Brindisi type to a storeroom with an overseer and six similar vessels stacked on top of each other.³⁴ One side of a sepulchral altar from Aquileia shows six similarly stacked amphorae, perhaps of type Dressel 6A.³⁵ Another side shows a standing man supporting an amphora on his shoulder – a motif reminiscent of a type of Egyptian terracotta figurine from the Late Hellenistic period (Fig. 4).³⁶ The amphora may be an Egyptian version of the Dressel 2-4 type.³⁷

THE SELLING OF AMPHORAE AND THEIR CONTENTS

There are relatively few Roman illustrations of the selling of amphorae or their contents.

A sepulchral altar in the Louvre, dated to the end of



Fig. 4 Terracotta figurine of a standing man carrying an amphora on his left shoulder, acquired in Egypt. Photo courtesy the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.

the 1st or the beginning of the 2nd century AD, shows a man with a purse in his right hand, who carries 4 amphorae (of two different types) on a pole.³⁸ He is arriving at (or departing from?) a storeroom with five amphorae lying about on the floor. The purse is suggestive of some commercial transaction.

A scene on an Okeanos mosaic from Bad Kreuznach dated to AD 234 seems to show the selling of amphorae in the open, in front of a *macellum*,³⁹ whereas a funerary relief in Augsburg dated about AD 200 takes us into a wine merchants' office,⁴⁰ in which South Gaulish amphorae – bound in straw – stand on a shelf above a row of wooden barrels. Another side of the same relief shows a person who dispenses a liquid to a customer in a *taberna* with shelves with wooden barrels and amphorae.⁴¹

A fragmentary terracotta relief from the Necropolis of Isola Sacra at Ostia dated to the period between Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius depicts a *taberna* with a row of transport amphorae standing on a shelf above a man at a counter, who pours a drink for a customer.⁴² The name LUCI[...]ONDUS N[...]O is written on a tabula ansata, from

which four jugs are hanging. Peña observed that three amphora types seem to be involved (Africana 1 Piccolo, Tripolitanian 2/3 and Dressel 20), which are all thought to have been containers of olive oil.⁴³ A counterpart relief – likewise from the Isola Sacra Necropolis – shows a *taberna* with a man standing behind a counter on which is written

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- 22 Zimmer 1982a, 222-223 no. 184; Koehler 1986, 58 note 44.
 23 Martin-Kilcher 1994, 520 fig. 247, 525 and illustration on cover; cf. also Egyptian terracotta figurines, Fischer 1994, 211-212 nos. 389-390 pl. 37.
 24 Adams 2007, 50-55.
 25 Århus, The Museum of Ancient Art at Aarhus University, i.n. 524 (allegedly from Bosra); see further Pisani Sartorio 1994, 31-32 fig. 20 (from Aphrodisias).
 26 The Danish National Museum, Collection of Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities i.n. 3128 acquired in 1886, allegedly from Lower Egypt. See also Calament 2007, 737 note 4 and the references there cited. For the amphora type, see Tomber & Williams 2000, 43 note 15.
 27 See for instance Fischer 1994, 414 no. 1107 pl. 117.
 28 Adams 2007, 80.
 29 Cf. the quotation of the 3rd century AD jurist Ulpian quoted by Peña 2007, 48-49.
 30 Adams 2007, 56-64; see further Vossen 1984.
 31 Roma, Museo Nazionale i.n. 58192: Klaus Parlasca in: Helbig Führer III⁴, 76-77 no. 2164 i); Versluys 2002, 88-89 fig. 40.
 32 Versluys 2002, 215 fig. 137.
 33 Adams 2007, 65.
 34 New York, The Metropolitan Museum, i.n. 25.78.63: Zimmer 1982a, 224 no. 187. For the Brindisi type, see Peacock & Williams 1986, 82-83 Class 1 and for this and the other types referred to below, see "Roman Amphorae: a digital resource": <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/resources.html?amphora2005>.
 35 Zimmer 1982a, 200-201 no. 145 identified as a pottery workshop. Stored amphorae are also seen on Egyptian terracottas, cf. Breccia 1930, 44 no. 167 pl. 25.9 and Calament 2007, 737 note 2 fig. 1. For the amphora type, see Peacock & Williams 1986, 98-101 Class 8.
 36 Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, i.n. Æ.I.N. 516: Fjeldhagen 1995, 143 no. 126.
 37 Cf. Tomber 2006b, 153-155 Type 28.
 38 Paris, Louvre, i.n. MA 2134: Zimmer 1982a, 223 no. 185.
 39 See *supra* note 10 and Raber 1995, 326-327 fig. 4.
 40 Röm. Mus. Augsburg, i.n. Lap. 376: Martin-Kilcher 1994, 539-540 fig. 255; Marlière 2002, 146-147 no. R47 fig. 175.
 41 Martin-Kilcher 1994, 539-540 fig. 256; Wamser *et al.* 2000, 360-361 no. 94.
 42 Museo Ostiense, i.n. 5859: Floriani Squarciapino 1956-1958 [1959], 193 pl. 5.2; Erika Simon in: Helbig Führer IV⁴, 14-15 no. 3004; Kampen 1981, 57-58 and 144 no. II 18 fig. 36; Zimmer 1982a, 217-218 no. 175. For the term *taberna*, see Langner 2002, 326.
 43 Peña 1999, 23. For the amphora types, see Peacock & Williams 1986, 153-154 Class 33, 169-170 Class 37, and 136-140 Class 25.



Fig. 5 A mosaic from Centocelle near Rome dated to the 1st century AD in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien. Photo by the author.

the name LUCIFER AQUATARI[US].⁴⁴ He faces towards a woman customer in front of a large pithos, and a wine amphora of South Gaulish type stands on a shelf. The name AQUATARI[US] is at times taken to imply the selling of water,⁴⁵ but Ostia was well supplied with water outlets and fountains,⁴⁶ and wine cannot be ruled out.⁴⁷

PRIME USE

The iconographic documentation of prime use mainly consists of representations of dining and wining, such as wall paintings from Pompeii⁴⁸ and the Villa Farnesina,⁴⁹ and a mosaic from Centocelle near Rome (Fig. 5)⁵⁰ – all dated to the 1st century AD. On two of these we see an attendant⁵¹ pouring wine from an amphora into a large bowl to be mixed with water.⁵² A *velum*, trees and other props show that the banquets take place in the open, and this is also the case with the picnic shown in the *tablinum* of the Casa dei Dioscuri in Pompeii, where an amphora rests against a tree.⁵³

Other paintings may show later stages of such outdoor parties. An amphora is placed in a stand close to the diners in a Nilotic scene in Pompeii,⁵⁴ and a painting from the Columbarium of the Villa Pamphili shows an orgiastic dance, in which a reveller lifts an amphora into the air.⁵⁵ A mosaic dated to the 3rd century AD from the



Fig. 6 Terracotta figurine of a woman holding a tambourine and standing next to an amphora on a small tripod, allegedly from Lower Egypt. Photo by John Lee, the National Museum of Denmark.

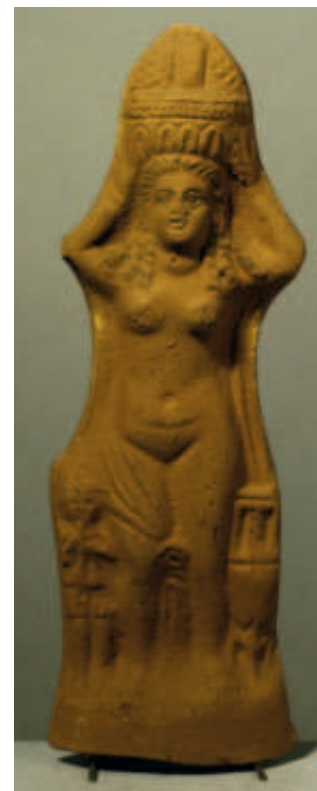


Fig. 7 Terracotta figurine of a woman flanked by an amphora in a tripod, acquired in Egypt. Photo courtesy the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.

Aventine Hill in Rome has a somewhat similar motif: dancers and musicians surround an amphora placed in a tripod stand in an outdoor setting,⁵⁶ and stucco reliefs in the so-called Basilica Sotterranea outside the Porta Maggiore in Rome show outdoor revellers with amphorae lying about.⁵⁷ A mosaic from Dougga dated from the mid 3rd century AD shows two attendants with amphorae pouring wine for two men.⁵⁸

Several types of Egyptian terracotta figurines represent persons with amphorae connected with the Isis cult,⁵⁹ for instance a woman holding a tambourine and standing next to an amphora (possibly of the Dressel 2-4) type fixed in a small tripod (Fig. 6).⁶⁰ Another type shows a woman next to an amphora carrying a basket on her head (Fig. 7),⁶¹ and still others represent priests and other cult personnel with

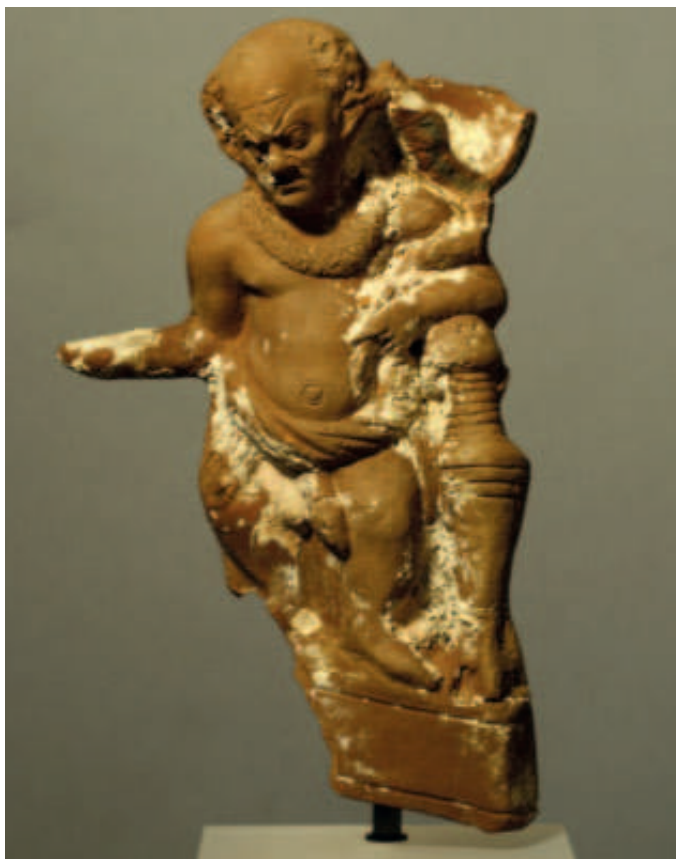


Fig. 8 Terracotta figurine of an elderly man whose left arm is resting on a transport amphora, acquired in Egypt. Photo courtesy the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.

one or more amphorae (Fig. 8).⁶² One is reminded of the Latin author Apuleius' (XI, 9-11) description of an Isiac procession in which an amphora was carried about.⁶³

A glass cup with a painted decoration from the third quarter of the 1st century AD depicts a scene set in a Nilotic landscape (Fig. 9).⁶⁴ A woman grasping a transport amphora

44 Floriani Squarciapino 1956-1958 [1959], 192-193 pl. 5.1; Zimmer 1982a, 218 no. 176. For the amphora type see Peacock & Williams 1986, 142-143 Class 27 and Martin-Kilcher 1994, fig. 136.7-9 and 360-364 Gauloise 4.

45 Museo Ostiense i.n. 5858; Floriani Squarciapino 1956-1958 [1959], 192; Erika Simon in: Helbig Führer IV⁴, 14-15 no. 3004; Kampen 1981, 57-58 and 143-144 no. II 17 fig. 35; Ellis 2005, 114.

46 Schmölder 2001.

47 Zimmer 1982a, 218: "Als sicher kann jedoch gelten, daß in dem gezeigten Laden nicht nur Wasser verkauft wurde"; Peña 1999, 23.

48 Wall painting from the Casa dei Casti Amanti (IX 12,6): Dunbabin 2003a, 53-56 fig. 26; Stehmeier 2006, 41-42 fig. 1.

49 Roma, Museo Nazionale, i.n. 1128, B5; Bragantini & de Vos 1982, 130 pl. 40; Beasom 2009, 41 fig. 7.

50 Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, AS Inv.-Nr. II 9; Clarke 1998, 97 fig. 30; Beasom 2009, 41 note 134 fig. 8.

51 Dunbabin 2003b.

52 A wine-pouring attendant is also shown on North African lamps from the 2nd century AD, see Deneauve 1969, 171 no. 743 (Carthage); Bussière 2000, 334 no. 2695 pl. 71 (from Tebessa). Both are signed by the lamp maker C MAR EVP.

53 Pompeii, Casa dei Dioscuri (VI 9,6/7): Versluys 2002, 120-121 fig. 65. Also a mosaic from the late 3rd century AD with Nilotic landscape in the Graeco-Roman Museum of Alexandria: Dasen 1994, 599 no. 53h) pl. 481; Daszewski 2005, 1145 note 8 fig. 4 (Tell Timai, ancient Thmuis).

54 Napoli, Museo Nazionale i.n. 113196, from Pompeii, Casa del Medico (VIII 5,24): Dasen 1994, 598 no. 46b) pl. 476; Versluys 2002, 138-140; Clarke 2007, 163-164 fig. 5; Meyboom & Versluys 2007, 178-182 fig. 2.

55 Roma, Museo Nazionale: Bernhard Andrae in: Helbig Führer III⁴, 464-465 no. 2490; Dasen 1994, 597 no. 43; Meyboom & Versluys 2007, 186-187 fig. 4.

56 Roma, Musei Vaticani, Atrio del torso, i.n. 902: Klaus Parlasca in: Helbig Führer I⁴, 210-211 no. 264.A; Versluys 2002, 458; Dunbabin 2004, 170; Savarese (ed.) 2007, 105; Meyboom & Versluys 2007, 192-193 fig. 10. For Greek amphora stands, see Koehler 1986, 61-62.

57 Mielsch 1975, 118-119 no. K 16 III; Dasen 1994, 599 no. 56 pl. 483; Versluys 2002, 61-63.

58 Tunis, Bardo Museum: see Dunbabin 1978, 123, 257 no. 5 pl. 114 and Blanchard-Lemée et al. 1996, 76-79 fig. 48; for two threshold mosaics with similar motifs from Oudna, see Dunbabin 1978, 123, 266 nos. 6c) and 4; for the latter see Ben Abdallah et al. 1998, 73-74 fig. 30.

59 The Collection of Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities, The National Museum of Denmark, i.n. 3533, acquired in 1890, allegedly from Lower Egypt. For other examples, see Dunand 1979, 35-36 and 96-98; Fischer 1994, 354-355 kat. 887 pl. 93; Fjeldhagen 1995, 122 no. 105; Calament 2007, 738-739 figs. 4-10.

60 The Collection of Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities, The National Museum of Denmark, i.n. 3533, acquired in 1890, allegedly from Lower Egypt.

61 Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, i.n. Æ.I.N. 379, Fjeldhagen 1995, 117-118 no. 99. For a discussion of this and related types, see Calament 2007, 739-740 figs. 11-13.

62 Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, i.n. Æ.I.N. 486, Fjeldhagen 1995, 114 no. 96. The amphora is readily identifiable as Egyptian, but it is not easy to pinpoint its exact type, see Tomber & Williams 2000, 43-45 fig. 2. For further terracotta figurines with the same motif, see Fischer 1994, 216 no. 402 pl. 39, and 212-213 nos. 392-393 pl. 30; Calament 2007, 741 figs. 16-17.

63 Griffiths 1975, 212-215; Calament 2007, 740-741.

64 Nenna 2008. I am grateful to Marie-Dominique Nenna for permission to reproduce her drawing.

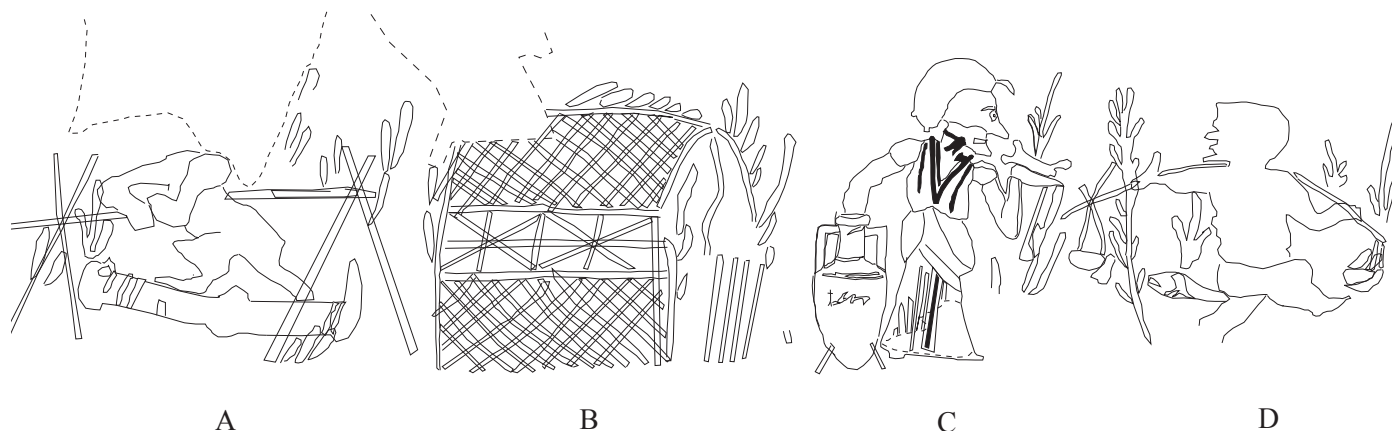


Fig. 9 A glass vessel with painted decoration, possibly originating in a workshop in Italy, showing a woman (C) with a transport amphora in a Nilotic landscape. She stands outside a hut (B) and seems to offer wine to the man on her right (D). In a private collection, provenance unknown. Drawing courtesy Marie-Dominique Nenna.

of the Dressel 2-4 type⁶⁵ stands in front of a hut. She looks towards a running man whom she seems to offer wine.⁶⁶ Perhaps the (lost) prototype for this burlesque enigmatic motif might have served as a source of inspiration for the North African lamp manufacturer Gaius Iunius Draco, who used a somewhat similar woman with an amphora as a discus motif (Fig. 10).⁶⁷ He and other North African lamp makers also produced rather similar lamps with a man holding on to the amphora (possibly of the Kapitän II type).⁶⁸

REUSE

A lost wall painting from a drink and food outlet at Pompeii shows two men filling amphorae from the contents of an enormous oxen skin, carried on a wagon drawn by two mules. The nature of the liquid is not evident, but Thomas Fröhlich may be right in observing that the scene might illustrate the delivery of wine to the establishment.⁶⁹ If so, then the scene represents amphora reuse. Another possibility is that it shows the primary filling of amphorae with wine brought from a winery.⁷⁰

Pictures of “reuse of amphorae as packing containers” may be impossible to detect in the iconographic record, but other instances of secondary use are attested. A tomb relief in Ostia from the late 1st century shows a workshop scene with two men holding a saw and a bisected amphora lying on a small podium between them. A complete amphora

is seen in the background.⁷¹ One is reminded of the fresco from the Tomb of Trebius Iustus on the Via Latina near Rome, which may show a man carrying mortar in an amphora cut in half.⁷²

Mention can also be made of a mosaic with a Nilotic scene found between the Farnesina Villa and Ponte Sisto, which i.a. depicts a pygmy who windsurfs on a floating amphora holding on to a provisory sail tied to its handles.⁷³ And a pygmy “holding a spear in his right hand and the top of an amphora as a shield in his left hand in front of a hippotamus” is shown on a curious 3rd century mosaic from Rome with a Nilotic scene.⁷⁴

DISCARD

An enigmatic scene on a wall-painting from the Caseggiato del Ercole at Ostia dated to the late 2nd or first third of the 3rd century AD depicts two men arguing over a broken amphora in front of a magistrate.⁷⁵ It may be logical to place this image at the end of the “Prime Use”, but it might alternatively be placed under Peña’s heading “Discard and Reclamation”.⁷⁶

CONCLUSIONS

A number of tentative conclusions can be reached on the basis of the reviewed evidence.

1) The relatively many representations of amphora



Fig. 10 A woman with a transport amphora on a terracotta lamp from Sidi Daoud or El Hauaria in North Africa, made by the lamp manufacturer Gaius Iunius Draco. Photo by John Lee, the National Museum of Denmark.

transport by sea as well as by land – as well as of their storage and selling – suggest that this category of vessel was regarded as a token of transport and trade in Antiquity, much as it is today. The images of amphorae in smaller vessels including rowing boats are good illustrations of the cabotage and redistribution, which was an important element in the maritime distribution of goods in the Roman period.⁷⁷

2) Roman representations of prime use seem invariably to show amphorae as wine containers, even if as is well known, amphorae could carry many other commodities in the ancient world, and other illustrations show types which were used for olive oil.

3) The images of prime use of amphorae consistently have an outdoor setting. This might be surprising to someone inclined to think of ancient banquets as indoor events,⁷⁸ but there is in fact ample other evidence to show that picnics and other kinds of feasts in the open were common phenomena in the Roman world.⁷⁹ This iconographic evidence may go some way towards explaining why surveys often result in the uncovering of numerous amphora fragments in the open landscape.⁸⁰

65 Nenna 2008, 18-19 figs. 4 and 6. For the amphora see Peacock & Williams 1986, 105-105 Class 10.

66 Nenna 2008, 23-27.

67 The Collection of Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities, The National Museum of Denmark, i.n. ABC 397: Lund in press b.

68 Peacock & Williams 1986, 193-195 Class 47. For these lamps see Lund in press b; Bonifay *et al.* 2004, 33 note 47 questions the identification, because the Kapitän II type is usually thought to have emerged in the late 2nd century AD, i.e. after the lamps in question. But evidence from Mons Claudianus suggests that the type was already circulating in the Antonine period, cf. Tomber 2006b, 165 Type 50; see further Hayes 1983, 98, 144 type 37 and 160 Table 13 and Outschar 1998, 20.

69 Caupona (VI 10,1 room b): Fröhlich 1991, 216-217 fig. 1 and 221 note 1255.

70 Thus Marlière 2002, 22-23 fig. 12.

71 Ostia, Museo Ostiense, i.n. 138: Zimmer 1982a, 140-141 no. 58; Paola Olivanti in Descœudres (ed.) 2001, 415 no. VIII.6; see Martin-Kilcher 1994, 379 fig. 153, where reference is made to a similarly bisected and re-used amphora from Augst of the type Keay 1B.

72 Peña 2007, 141-142 fig. 6.5.

73 Roma, Museo Nazionale, i.n. 125535: Klaus Parlasca in: Helbig Führer III⁴, 429 no. 2481; Dasen 1994, 598 no. 51 pl. 477; Pékary 1999, 286-287 no. Rom-M 44; Versluys 2002, 78-79 fig. 28; Hornig 2005-2006, 119 fig. 7. See also a mosaic in the Museo Nazionale, i.n. 124698 from Collemancio at Assisi, Klaus Parlasca in: Helbig Führer III⁴, 22-23 no. 2128; Dasen 1994, 598 no. 52b); Versluys 2002, 173-174.

74 Roma, Museo Nazionale i.n. 171: Klaus Parlasca in: Helbig Führer III⁴, 332-333 no. 2403; Dasen 1994, 599 no. 53b) pl. 481; Versluys 2002, 76-78. This practice is paralleled on a mosaic in the necropolis of Isola Sacra in Ostia, Dasen 1994, 598 no. 51a) pl. 478; Clarke 2003, 210-212 fig. 123; Hornig 2005-2006, 119 fig. 7.

75 Ostia, Antiquarium i.n. 10099a: Mielsch 2001, 119-120 fig. 145; Stella Falcone in: Descœudres (ed.) 2001, 425 no. XII.5; Peña 2007, 55-56 fig. 4.1.

76 Peña 2007, 12-16.

77 Nieto 1997.

78 For dining place settings, cf. Dunbabin 2003a, 36-71 and for some representations of indoor banquets, see Clarke 2003, 223-245 and Serena Vendito in: Aßkamp *et al.* (eds.), 244-245 nos. 6.1 and 4.

79 Dunbabin 2003a, 50-52 and *passim*; Stehmeier 2006.

80 See Lund 2007. A further explanation is offered by Peña 2007, 37.

4) Surprisingly many images are set in a Nilotic landscape and involve pygmies. It is difficult to account for the popularity of the latter other than by pointing to the fact that the vessels might have served as convenient scales indicating the restricted size of the pygmies. Moreover, liberal wine consumption seems to have fitted well with the imagined lifestyle of these people.⁸¹ Still, this is hardly the whole explanation, since amphorae are also shown on a considerable number of Egyptian terracotta figurines, which seem to relate to daily life.

In sum: the iconographical record confirms much that is already known – yet also contains certain surprises. Some images have details which tend to confirm that they are more or less accurate reflections of the real world. Representations of camels carrying amphorae are thus limited to Egypt and the Middle East, and pictures of wooden wine barrels seem restricted to the western part of the Roman Empire.⁸² Moreover, it is possible in several cases to recognize the general amphora type involved even if the specific variant usually eludes us, and Egyptian amphora types are regularly seen on Egyptian terracotta figurines, whereas those of a South Gaulish type are shown on images from Gaul.⁸³ Images of the Dressel 2-4 and of the Dressel 20 type occur where such amphorae actually circulated, and this may even be true for the Kapitän II type. This suggests that the craftsman (and presumably also the buyer) was familiar with the types in question,⁸⁴ but the whole issue is complicated by the fact that some of the pictures may represent reuse rather than prime use and even – particularly in the case of Egypt – the transport of empties to the winery.⁸⁵

Yet the images do not reveal the whole story. John Tamm, who compared images of silver vessels on Campanian wall paintings with the preserved silver ware from the Early Imperial period, reasonably concluded that: “The paintings, although providing a plausible representation of actual vessels, did not produce a ‘photographic’ record”.⁸⁶ There is no reason to believe that wine consumed indoors did not come from transport amphorae, but perhaps such vessels were not included in images of indoor dining because they seemed no match for the luxurious silver service employed there – or simply because the wine was normally transferred from the amphorae to large craters and mixing bowls before the party began.

81 Cf. Clarke 2007 and Meyboom & Versluys 2007, 205.

82 On wooden barrels see Martin-Kilcher 1994, 485-487 and the rich iconographic documentation in Marlière 2002, 124-157.

83 See Marlière 2002, 190-192.

84 See further López Monteagudo 2001-2002.

85 Kruit & Worp 2000, 86-87, citing PCair Zen IV 59741. I am grateful to Mark Lawall for drawing my attention to this possibility.

86 Tamm 2005, 73; see also Langner 2002, 355 and Dunbabin 2003a, 56.

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