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The late series of Tunisian cylindrical amphoras at Carthage

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Introduction

This paper is a review of the present state of knowledge of Tunisian cylindrical amphoras belonging to the late-Roman and Vandal series. I refer to two series of Tunisian cylindrical amphoras: the first, late-Roman, produced in Tunisia from about the mid-4th to the mid-5th c. A.D.; the second, of the Vandal era and perhaps later, produced from about the mid-5th to perhaps as late as the 7th c.¹ These amphoras are the chronological successors and no doubt the functional equivalents of the mid-Roman series of Tunisian cylindrical amphoras, the *africano piccolo* and *africano grande* classes.² The later Tunisian cylindrical amphoras have been defined as an area of research only within the last two decades,³ and only 10 years ago no typology⁴ of these late Tunisian forms existed.

Because there was no recognized typology, the presence of Tunisian amphoras in late-Roman, Vandal and Byzantine contexts was generally not reported or not recognized. After the mid-Roman period scholars had almost nothing to show in the five categories of evidence which are necessary to reconstruct a picture of trade in amphoras:

1. fabric definitions, with knowledge of correlations of inclusions to geological provenance, and evidence of production sites;
2. morphological definitions with awareness of their cultural connections;
3. evidence for chronology of individual types;
4. evidence for contents of individual types;
5. evidence for distribution of individual types.

1 The two late series were first defined by Panella, cf. C. Panella, "Le anfore africane della prima, media e tarda età imperiale," in *Actes du colloque sur la céramique antique de Carthage, 23-24 juin 1980* (CEDAC Dossier I, 1982) esp. 188-91; they are further defined and discussed by Keay, cf. S. J. Keay, *Late Roman amphorae in the Western Mediterranean, a typology and economic study: the Catalan evidence*, pts. i and ii (BAR S 196, Oxford 1984) esp. 414-28 (henceforth Keay, *LRA*).

2 Cf. F. Zevi and A. Tchernia, "Amphores de Byzacène au Bas-Empire," *AntAfr* 3 (1969) 173-214.

3 The subject of this paper is Tunisian cylindrical amphoras, but there are two important categories of 'African amphoras' which are not cylindrical. The first includes small flat-bottomed ovoid amphoras related to a class which is illustrated by Panella in "Anfore", *Ostia III* (StMisc 21, 1973) 632, nos. 43-46. These types appear as Class 40 in D. P. S. Peacock and D. F. Williams, *Amphorae and the Roman economy* (London 1986, 1991) 175-76.

The second belongs to a very broad class of conical amphoras such as Mauretanian Keay Type 1, Baetican Keay Types 19 and 23, and Tunisian Keay Type 21, which types are classified loosely by J.-P. Joncheray as 'les tronconiques'; cf. Joncheray, *Nouvelle classification des amphores: découvertes lors de fouilles sous-marines* (Cahiers d'Archéologie Subaquatique, 2nd ed. 1967) 40 and pl. X, nos. 104-7.

I say more about 'les tronconiques' in *Deep water archaeology* (JRA Suppl.13, 1994) 71-76.

4 I use the following terms repeatedly in this paper:

—'Typology', an extremely complicated concept because it is a shorthand expression for information on fabric, morphology and chronology.

—'Fabric', also a complicated and elastic concept: it is determined by the composition of the clay, the inclusions, the method of making up the vessel, the wall thickness, surface treatment, firing temperature and firing method. It implicitly refers to a particular provenance, which can range from a single kiln site to a broad but geologically distinctive area.

—'Morphology' refers to a deliberate production to fit standard component parts, proportions, size and decoration; it implicitly includes cultural and functional meaning.