

# AN ARCHAIC AMPHORA OF THASIAN TYPE

(PLATE 96)

WHILE it may be that the definite article should have been used in the title to this note, I am happy merely to present what appears to me to be *an* assured version of the Archaic Thasian amphora. Whether there are other varieties remains to be seen.<sup>1</sup>

In *BCH* 113, 1990, pp. 881 and 883, fig. 6, J.-Y. Empereur and A. Simossi present a small fragment from the lip of an amphora found in underwater excavations in the harbor of Thasos in May–June 1989, together with other material of the first half of the 5th century B.C.<sup>2</sup> The profile of this fragment and not least its typical clay suggest that it is from a jar very similar to Agora P 15347, which has been reassembled, save for the foot, from a number of fragments.<sup>3</sup>

P 15347 (Fig. 1, Pl. 96). From deposit F 19:4, *Agora XXI*, F 65, p. 34, pl. 13. Mostly restored from fragments. P.H. 0.50; diam. 0.41, of lip 0.119; handles 0.034 × 0.023 m. Bright gingery orange clay, both core and surface, with much mica, some of it of moderate size; few visible inclusions otherwise, save some large white particles. The body is full ovoid, with walls *ca.* 0.006 m. thick, and the neck is broad and short; although the foot is lost, the maximum diameter can be calculated as 0.05 m. At the lower join of the handles there are large and deep thumb marks. An owner's graffito is written vertically below one handle, and two other short graffiti appear on one side of the neck (see *Agora XXI*, *loc. cit.*).

The clay and type of lip are highly distinctive. The lip presents a simple vertical profile with a double fascia on the outside and much ridging from the wheel on the inside. In these respects P 15347 reflects the Thasos fragment noted above and other unpublished material from excavations on Thasos, located in the Thasos Museum. From this material the development of shape of lip can be seen, from the double fascia to a version in which the lower fascia is merely represented by an incised band on the neck, while the upper fascia loses much of its height; it can appear square, but a rounded version may well have been introduced during the 5th century. Clearly one must await publication of the relevant material in order to judge the pace of, and variations in, this development.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to all the Agora staff for their unflinching help in my perusal of Archaic and Classical jars from the excavations and especially to Professor T. Leslie Shear, Jr. for allowing me to publish this particular piece. Jean-Yves Empereur was most generous of both his time and knowledge during my visit to Thasos in June 1989.

<sup>2</sup> The sherd is there dated to the middle of the 5th century but not apparently on any stratigraphic grounds; the Chian amphora, *ibid.*, figs. 7 and 8, would seem to me to be late Archaic rather than the suggested 475–450 B.C.

<sup>3</sup> One might guess that the jar had a simple ring or button foot, probably of no great height; the former type is found on a piece from the Silen Gate area on Thasos.

<sup>4</sup> Y. Garlan (*Vin et amphores de Thasos*, Athens 1988, pp. 12–14) does not enter into details of the development of neck and lip at this early period.

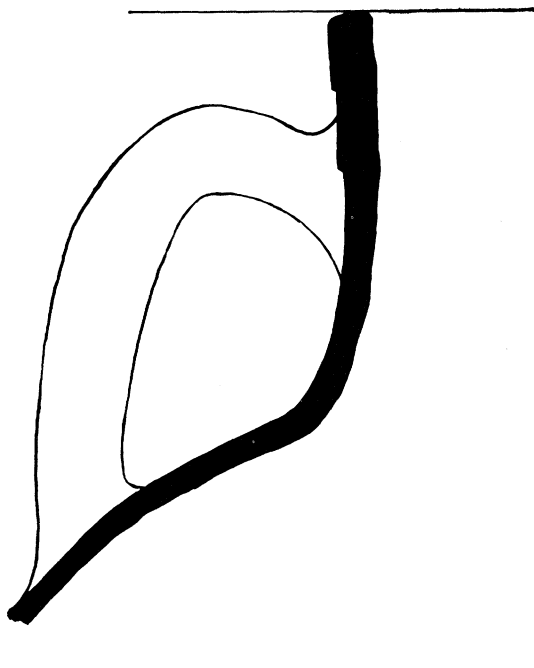


FIG. 1. Profile of an Archaic Thasian amphora, P 15347

The Agora amphora gives rise to some further thoughts. To my knowledge, no other amphora of this type has been published; whether I am right or not, it is clear that the type was not widely exported and that therefore Thasian jars did not form a significant part of Archaic cargoes, unless a related type of Thasian jar has entirely escaped our notice; it does not appear to play a role like that of Corinthian, Chian, Samian, Lesbian, Klazomenian, Milesian, Massaliot, and other well-attested jars. We may at least ask whether increase in the Thasian wine trade was a product of the deprivation of their overseas sources of mineral wealth in the 460's.

It is difficult to put any precise date on the Agora jar, as it seems to be a unicum. The deposit contains much decorated ware of the second quarter of the 5th century and a little that is earlier; it is dated *ca.* 490–450 in *Agora XXI*, p. 390. Of the amphora material, the most readily datable of a very mixed bunch are the Chian fragments, only one of which has painted decoration on the neck and is therefore likely to be earlier than 480.<sup>5</sup> The number of graffiti on P 15347 suggests that it had some history before being buried. The longest is clearly a non-Athenian owner's mark; the script could well be Boiotian, which points up the abbreviation BOI on the neck.<sup>6</sup> Did the jar come to Athens from Thasos via Boiotia? or was it owned by a Boiotian in Athens? Typologically, of course, no dating is as yet available,

<sup>5</sup> The character of the deposit is noted in *Agora XII*, p. 390 and *XXIII*, p. 331. As well as Chian it includes Corinthian B, Samian, probably Mendean, and an *à la brosse* amphora neck (P 26404) of a highly micaceous, non-Attic clay, which may also date well before 480.

<sup>6</sup> Although one should add that Boiotia is not the only possibility.

although from the full shape of the body and breadth of the neck, one would think in terms of a 6th-century date. One must look forward keenly to further evidence for the type.

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Athenian Agora P 15347