

DONALD M. BAILEY

GAZA JARS NOT BAGGY AMPHORAE

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 94 (1992) 295–296

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

GAZA JARS NOT BAGGY AMPHORAE

This note has some general remarks on the raw material of ostraka from Egypt and corrects a recently published misidentification of such sherds in Cambridge. Increasingly, with the publication of new archaeological material, the dating of amphorae and of the variant shapes within an amphora type is becoming more refined. This closer dating will, it is hoped, eventually help those who study the documents written upon the broken fragments.

Most Egyptian ostraka of the Roman period are fragments of Egyptian-made amphorae of two main types, a comparatively large form (D.P.S.Peacock and D.F.Williams, *Amphorae and the Roman Economy*, London, 1986, Class 53: dated too late) and a smaller form (*ibid.*, Class 52): there are many amphora classifications, but that of Peacock and Williams is convenient to use. Both these types, particularly the first, have local variations of shape throughout Egypt. The first type probably starts in the first century AD and certainly was still being made in the early fifth century but not much later; the second type was made from the later fourth century until at least the eighth century AD. The shapes of both types change over the centuries, but the sherds employed for documents are very seldom diagnostic enough to determine the particular shape involved: it is often not possible to decide even which of the two main Egyptian amphora types was used. And where the ostrakon is dated it is frustrating for the archaeologist not to be sure of the particular shape that furnished the fragments used, even though the date given can only be that of the text, and a sherd may perhaps be centuries older than the document written upon it.

Sherds from imported amphorae can be a better guide to chronology but even here jar types can remain current for centuries; but if the archaeologist is to help the ostracologist (and in turn be helped) we must get our identifications correct. Two ostraka in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Inv. GR P532 and P530, are described by D.W.J.Gill in *ZPE* 86, 1991, p.277 as being from Palestinian bag-shaped amphorae (Peacock and Williams, *op.cit.*, Class 46: not Class 45, as the writer of the note has it). But they are in fact from the so-called Gaza jar (*ibid.*, Class 49), a cylindrical amphora type probably but not certainly originating in the Gaza area, but one also copied in Egypt (J.-Y.Empereur and M.Picon, in J.-Y.Empereur and Y.Garlan, *Recherches sur les Amphores Grecques*, Paris, 1986, p.108). Palestinian baggy amphorae are indeed found in Egypt, as are local copies of them, but, if Hermopolis Magna is typical, are proportionally very much less common than are Gaza jars, possibly due to their likely primary use as water jars rather than transport amphorae for commodities (B.L.Johnson, *ibid.*, p.591). Their almost overall body striations render them considerably less useful as a writing medium than do the mainly plain surfaces of the Gaza jar. Contrary to the narrow dating given in Peacock and Williams and elsewhere, the Palestinian baggy amphora is an extremely long-lived evolving type, beginning in the

second century BC and still being made in the ninth century AD (ibid., p.589; A.J.Spencer and D.M.Bailey, *Ashmunein* (1984), London, 1985, p.37, P 12); the Gaza jar dates between the fourth and the sixth century AD (M.Sciallano and P.Sibella, *Amphores, comment les identifier?*, Aix-en-Provence, 1991, *Amphore Late Roman* 4), but are most common in the fifth and sixth centuries. It is interesting that the Cambridge ostraka, listing pistachios and dried fruit, indicate secondary use of the jars, as their pitched interiors show that they were intended to contain liquids, and their prime function was almost certainly the transport of wine. I must thank Dr Eleni Vassilika for a sight of these sherds.

London

Donald M.Bailey