

PHILIP MAYERSON

THE KNIDION JAR IN EGYPT: POPULAR, MADE IN EGYPT, AND OF UNKNOWN CAPACITY

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An investigation of jars bearing names from Aegean and Palestinian ports that have made their way into Egypt led quite naturally to the κνίδιον. Of all the vessels that fall into this category, the knidion is by far the most prominent, it being taken for granted at first sight that they came from Cnidus in Asia Minor. However, upon further investigation in the documents they were found to number in the thousands, and what was most surprising was the fact that the Egyptians adopted it as one of their own, supplanting in many respects the common κεράμιον as a container for wine.

A search of the Duke Data Bank of Greek Documentary Texts (CD Rom #7) for such well-known imports as the Chian, Koan, Samian, Thasian, Milesian, Rhodian, Gazan and Ascalonian, produced relatively small numbers: the Chian, Koan, Samian, Thasian and Milesian arriving mostly during the Ptolemaic period (e.g., *P. Cair.Zen* I 59015; *P. Teb.* III 1079), the Rhodian up to the III A.D, and the Gazan/Ascalonian in the late Roman. The knidion, on the other hand, make its appearance during the Ptolemaic period but in terms of numbers not to be compared with those that crop up in the Roman period to the time of the early Arab conquest, from A.D. IV to VIII. To give some perspective of the numbers involved, the following is a list of the documents recording a thousand and more of these jars.

<i>P. Apollo</i> I 10.7 (VIII)	2500	<i>P. Panop. Beatty</i> II 1.114 (IV)	3000
<i>P. CPR</i> V.(26).126 (P. Vindob. 69847)	1572	<i>P. Rain.Cent.</i> 160 (VI/VII)	3140
<i>P. Cair. Mas.</i> II 67168.62 (VI)	1500	<i>T. Varie</i> I 3.6 (VII)	6576
<i>P. Flor.</i> III 314.9 (V)	1224	<i>O. Leid.</i> I 288.1-2 (III/IV)	2323
<i>P. Laur.</i> I 18.6 (IV/V)	1600	<i>Stud.Pal.</i> X 254	3910
<i>P. Oxy.</i> LVIII 3960.18 (VII)	33,298	XX 85v.2.6 (IV)	5860

It becomes readily apparent that these numerous late κνίδια do not represent imports of the kind that can be seen in *P. Teb.* III 1079 and other documents of the Ptolemaic period. There can be no doubt that they were copies of a popular type of Cnidian wine jar—not their transport jar—that Egyptian potters made in their own workshops. The evidence for one such "plagiarizer" is found in *P. Flor.* III 314 cited above. Dated to 428 AD, the document is a receipt of a potter (κεραμοπλάκτης) of Hermopolis to a wineseller (οἴνοπράτη) stating that he has received the full payment for 1,224 "pitched new empty Cnidian jars" (κνίδια κοῦφα νέα [πεπιτσο]κοπουμένα), which he will deliver on such and such date.<sup>1</sup> A purchaser for this kind of Cnidian copy was another wineseller who contracted with a vintner for 450 knidia of wine (οἴνου κνίδια 450) for which he was to supply the jars. The wineseller undoubtedly went to an Egyptian potter who provided him with 450 copies of a popular type of Cnidian wine jar (see *P. Amst.* I 48 in n. 4 below).

These thousands of knidia are noted in the documents without any indication of their capacity. The editor of *P. Oxy.* 3960 ventures to suggest (p. 119), while acknowledging the probability that the capacity of the knidion was variable, "a possible capacity of eight sextarii...or roughly 4.5 l...at which rate the receipts were roughly 214,000 bottles in modern terms. He cites in support the note to *P. Oxy.* LI 3628.15 which surveys the various number of sextarii of wine that were put into jars, eight being the most popular.<sup>2</sup>

By and large, the documents provide only a scattering of notices of the specific capacity for jars of a certain type. *P. Oxy.* L 3595 (A.D. 243) is the best known. The type is given as the Oxyrhynchite tetra-choun with a capacity of 20 Maximian cotylae when filled to the rim" i.e. "up to the neck of the vessel" (line 37).<sup>3</sup> However, in keeping with mercurial nature of Egyptian measures, most jars were produced without any indication of their specific capacity. They were often called "empties" (κοῦφα), the potter being known as the κουφοκεραμεύς or κουφοκεραμουργός, the pottery as the κουφοκεραμουργίον (see *BASP* 34 [above, n. 1]). Others were produced according to known but unspecified measures, as indicated in *P. Oxy.* LVIII 3942, dated to AD 606, in which a potter (κουφοκεραμεύς) was paid to produce 1000 of new empty (jars) of the landowner's type (καινοκούφων γεουχικῶν).

If these generalizations apply to the knidion, there is little that we can say about its capacity, or about the capacity of other of its types, the μικρόν, ἡμί-, μέγαν, or the διπλοῦν. What little evidence we have is three citations in which the knidion is said to contain 3, 4, or 5 sextarii of wine.<sup>4</sup> What can

<sup>1</sup> PSI V 474, a receipt dated to AD VI, shows that copies were also being made of Samian jars. A certain Victor (potter?) received 6 solidi and was paid in full for the production of 1200 new empty jars of good quality (κοῦφων νέων καὶ καλῶν). He signs off with Βικτωρ στοιχεῖ μοι Κάμια 1200. *P. Oxy.* LVIII 3954.30, dated 611 AD, records "two hundred Samian (jars) of wine (οἴνου Κάμια διακόσια) of the present fourteenth indiction." Note also *P. Laur.* IV 185.16 (AD VII), αμους γ. On κοῦφα, see my article in *BASP* 34 (1997) 47-52. μ

<sup>2</sup> L. Casson, *TAPA* 70 (1939) 6-8 has demonstrated conclusively that the capacity of the knidion could not be established by the price of wine and that it did not contain a fixed number of sextarii. Those documents which speak of x-number σηκώματων of wine that are decanted into a jar do not relate to the capacity of the jar. In other words, a jar into which eight sextarii were poured may have had a capacity of ten or more sextarii. On σηκώματα see my article in *BASP* 35 (1998) 153-158. Note further that *P. Oxy.* 3628.15, 29, and 43 does not deal with knidia but with οἴνου διὰ ξ(ετ.) η and that 3630.38 and 3633.13 have οἴνου διὰ ξ(ετ.) ζ.

<sup>3</sup> See my article, "The Value of the Maximian Cotyla in *P. Oxy.* L 3595 and PSI XII 1252" (above).

<sup>4</sup> Casson, (above n. 2, p.7) states that the knidion held between 4, 5, and 8 sextarii. The figure 8 is based on a misinterpretation of the editor of *P. Oxy.* XVI 1896 in which a vintner agrees to provide 3000 οἴνου γεουχικά σηκώματα ὀκτάξεστα. These are not jars but 3000 measures of 8 estate sextarii. See my article on σηκώματα (above [n. 2] 155). Knidia containing

be said with some assurance is that the capacity of the Egyptian knidian winejar in no way compares with that of the knidian transport-jar of the Hellenistic period. V. Grace measured the capacity of two such transport-jars and found one to contain 29 liters; the other 33 liters. She has acutely observed that during the Hellenistic period various local standards existed simultaneously, and that in the same state, the standard jar was different at different periods.<sup>5</sup> Applied to Egypt her observation should go farther and carry even heavier weight.

New York University

Philip Mayerson

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3 sextarii are cited in *P. Amst.* I 48.14, a contract for the sale in advance of 450 knidian jars of unfermented wine (line 9, οἴνου ν[έου μο]ύχτου) in which each knidian jar was to receive a measure of 3 *sextarii*, the buyer providing the empty (knidian) jars (εὐάρετῳ μ[έ]τρῳ ἐκ ξετῶν τριῶν ἐκάστου κνιδίου σου παρέχοντος τὰ κοῦφα---). From the context of the contract, it is apparent that the capacity of each knidian jar was certainly more than 3 sextarii in order to allow for the fermentation of the must, a process in which the must effervesces and boils up. If space was not provided, the fermenting wine would overflow, pop the cork, or even break the jar (see my article quoted in n. 3).

<sup>5</sup> "Standard Pottery Containers of the Ancient Greek World," *Historia* / Suppl. 8 (1949) 186; 180. See also her article "The Middle Stoa Dated by Amphora Stamps," *Hesperia* 54 (1985) pl. 2 and 3 for illustrations of several knidian transport-jars. She also provides capacities for two Rhodian jars (p. 45) of 24,300 and 24,774 cc.