

## A KNIDIAN STAMPED AMPHORA HANDLE FROM THE RURAL SETTLEMENT AT EL-KHIRBA, SHOHAM

DONALD T. ARIEL

A Knidian stamped amphora handle (L1036, B2158; Fig. 1) was uncovered in Building B, Area B, at the site of Shoham, el-Khirba (see Sion, this volume). It is part of the pottery assemblage of Stratum III, dated between the third and first centuries BCE (see Rapuano, this volume: Fig. 1:17). No other stamped handles were found at the site.

### THE STAMP

This rectangular aniconic stamp is composed of two letters identifiable as a monogram: an *omicron* fitted below the legs of the *pi* above it. The stamp is oriented vertically on the handle (determined by the *pi*). The general appearance of the handle's ware, with a reddish-yellow surface and a reddish-brown core, suggests that it derived from an amphora produced in Knidos. The small size of the stamp (41 × 35 mm) further suggests that it belongs to a group of the Knidian Class termed 'early Knidian.'

Two other amphora stamps depict these two letters in the same monogram configuration. One comes from Naukratis in the western Nile Delta (Coulson, Wilkie and Rehard 1986:541, No. 18), although only illustrated by a line drawing and described by the authors as "Rhodian; late fourth century B.C. (?)".<sup>1</sup> Another stamp, from Samaria (Finkielsztein 1990:126\*), seems to be of the same type: it is micaceous and has a light orange-brown



Fig. 1. The stamp.

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<sup>1</sup> The classification of these stamps changed from Rhodian to Knidian in the past 20 years, as explained further on in the text. My thanks to G rald Finkielsztein for reading an earlier draft of this article.

color, and is similarly oriented. Only an unclear vertical element to its left may militate against this identification.

Although only these two parallels are known to me, there is a group of Knidian amphora stamps that are quite similar to the Shoham handle based on their diminutive sizes, orientation and the placement of the *pi* and *omicron*. However, the stamps of this group show a larger *pi* and a third letter above the *omicron*; and fits entirely within the *pi*.

Two such stamps, reading ΑΠΟ (Απο), were published by the author (Ariel 2001:156, No. 5 [from Ras Kalban] and No. 6 [from Ḥorbat Gallil]). They were classified as ‘Early Rhodian’ based on the designation employed by Virginia R. Grace for the three-letter group, observed by the author at the Amphora Project offices in Athens. Of the many published parallels found at that time, only one, published by Tuna et al. (1991:43), was defined as Knidian. Tuna et al. (1991) based their claim on their purported excavation of the workshop of this amphora type in Resadiye (see also Tuna et al. 1987:48, 50, Fig. 2). This Knidian origin was confirmed much later by elemental composition analysis conducted on two stamped ΑΠΟ handles (Mandrykina et al. 2021:693–694, 696; see Jöhrens 1998:98, No. 253 for earlier parallels).

The earlier work on stamps with three-letter monograms led to the current consensus that the third letter was an *alpha*. Most scholars thus read the monogram as ΑΠΟ. Finkielsztein (n.d.) explained that this was preferable to other proposed alternatives (ΠΑΟ or even ΠΑΘ), as monograms are often composed of letters comprising a personal name, and Απο was a prefix of many names.

It cannot yet be established that the two-letter stamped handle from Shoham is associated with the larger three-letter ΑΠΟ (Απο) group, despite the consideration that they are likely to be Knidian and my impression that they are of a similar early date (see below). Nevertheless, details of the findspots of specimens of the three-letter ΑΠΟ (Απο) monogram group known to the author in the Southern Levant and its environs (Cyprus and Egypt) are summarily given below.<sup>2</sup>

In the Southern Levant, three stamps of this type were found in surveys carried out in the western Galilee.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the two published by the author (see above), another stamp of this type, from Tel ‘Emeq, was published by Finkielsztein (n.d., Kn 1).<sup>4</sup>

In Cyprus, six stamps were found at Salamis (Calvet 1972:19–20, Nos. 18–23) and two at Kition (Calvet 1982:15, Nos. 9–10). In Egypt, one came from Naukratis (Coulson, Wilkie and Rehard 1986:542, No. 32, in addition to the two-letter ΠΟ stamp mentioned above).

<sup>2</sup> The reader is directed to Ariel 2001:156 for details on the broader distribution of the three-letter group.

<sup>3</sup> One similar stamp came from Ḥorbat Seraf (Ariel 2001:161, No. 39).

<sup>4</sup> Tel ‘Emeq also produced three Zenon “Group B” stamped handles from Knidos (Ariel 2001:160, No. 33; Finkielsztein n.d., Kn 2, 3). These stamps date from the end of the third–beginning of the second century BCE, a century later than the Knidian stamped handle from Shoham, el-Khirba. From nearby Ḥorbat ‘Amqa, two toes belonging to Knidian amphoras of different dates were published (Ariel, forthcoming: Nos. 6, 7).

Finkielsztejn (n.d.) commented on the distribution of Knidian amphora remains in the Southern Levant: “Knidian stamps of various types are relatively well represented in northern Israel.” To my knowledge, however, the same is not true in central Israel, making the Shoham stamped handle a notable find.

Finally, regarding the date of both the two- and three-letter stamp varieties, Kaan Şenol, in his unpublished M.A. thesis, proffered that they belong to the end of the fourth–beginning of the third century BCE (Şenol 1995:28, and see references therein). The Shoham handle’s origin in Stratum III, dated between the third and first centuries BCE, and mainly to the earlier centuries within this range, suggests that Şenol’s date for this stamped handle is consistent with its context. In the same year as Şenol’s thesis, Jefremow proposed a more refined date for the AΠO monogram group to c. 311–280 BCE (Jefremow 1995:62–63). Assuming that the two-letter ΠO stamp is a ‘variant’ of the more common group, then, with caution, its date roughly accords with all these proposals.

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