

Rhodian amphora stamps found in Mleiha (Sharjah, UAE): old and recent finds

To date Mleiha has yielded eighteen stamps belonging to Rhodian wine amphorae. Eleven of these can be dated to the second half of the third and the first half of the second centuries BC. Rhodian stamps are vital for the chronological framework of the PIR-A period at Mleiha. Most of them, if not all, belonged to funerary contexts but were unfortunately rarely found in undisturbed contexts. The stamp types of the eponym Ἀριστεύς and of the fabricants Ἀπολλώνιος and Φιλοστέφανος do not seem to occur very often.

Keywords: Mleiha, south-east Arabia, stamped Rhodian wine amphorae, PIR-A period, funerary context, third–second century BC, G. Finkielsztein’s ‘chronologie basse’

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Introduction

The inland site and village of Mleiha is located some 55 km to the east of the coastal city of Sharjah, approximately 20 km south of al-Dhaid and 45 km west of the Gulf of Oman. The archaeological site, lying in the plain at the western foothills of the Oman mountains, covers an area of several square kilometres. Known since the late 1960s, the first excavations took place in 1973 and were carried out by an Iraqi team. In 1986 a French team started work at Mleiha and continued for many years (Mouton 1999: 9–12). After a long interruption, excavations were resumed more recently. In the meantime, while protecting this vast area from looting and destruction — particularly from the installation of farms — a team of the Directorate of Antiquities of Sharjah Emirate also initiated long seasons of excavations with often large-scale excavations in

and around the site. This research is still ongoing. Finally in 2009 a Belgian team¹ also started excavating, with the specific aim of exploring the remains of the last centuries of the first millennium BC. So far three seasons have been completed.

Michel Mouton, in his now published doctoral dissertation (2008) and his publication of some of the results of the French team (1999), has established a chronological framework for south-east Arabia of the period between

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the third century BC and the third/fourth century AD. The objects of our concern are all to be dated in his 'Pré-islamique récent-A' period (PIR-A, i.e. his archaeological phase II at Mleiha) attributed to the third and the first half of the second century BC (Mouton 1999: 16–17, 20–21; 2009: 195). Until now Mleiha is the only site in the Oman peninsula where a settlement of this period has been attested. By the third century BC the former Iron Age settlements in the Oman peninsula built with mud-brick or stone houses had ceased to exist, although the latest levels at some of these villages sometimes contain material related to PIR-A at Mleiha. It has been suggested that the newcomers who settled at Mleiha were from outside the Oman peninsula and most likely of nomadic origin. The presence of numerous post holes and at the same time the absence of mud-brick houses indicate simple, flimsy dwellings built with light materials. So far, excavations have revealed mud-brick houses only from the PIR-B period (second half of the second–first century BC) onwards. Nevertheless, the funerary structures of the PIR-A period, mostly concentrated in the eastern and southern limits of the site, remain impressive. They are usually square platform- or tower-like constructions of plastered mud bricks often decorated with crenellated battlements. They have a subterranean rectangular dugout funerary chamber that originally must have contained a wealth of funerary objects such as imported pottery, glass, iron armaments and decorated bronze vessels, indicating the participation of the Mleiha population in trans-Arabian trade. Regret-

fully, all these graves were severely looted in the remote past. The first local coin issues (imitations of Athenian owls, imitations of coins of Alexander or of his successors) also belong to this period. The majority of the Rhodian wine amphora fragments, even if they were recovered as stray finds, seem to belong to funerary contexts.

Rhodian wine amphora stamps

At the present state of research, we are only taking into consideration the amphora stamps of the Greek island state of Rhodes, of which eighteen examples were recognised. Nevertheless, a reasonable amount of rim, toe, (unstamped) handle and wall fragments were also recovered and will be considered in future research. Unfortunately, none of these matched with the stamped handle fragments, which of course does not mean that some do not belong to them.

In Hellenistic times Rhodes was a respected economic and naval power in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region. The production and export of wine for more than 300 years must undoubtedly have been one of the pillars stimulating their economic growth. This is confirmed by the presence of tens of thousands of amphorae, mostly in fragments, on the most varied consumption sites, even in places as distant as Mleiha (Fig. 1). The pre-industrial character of wine and amphora production necessitated a strict organisation, which is reflected in the presence of stamps on both handles of the wine container. Rhodian stamps always need to be considered in pairs: one stamp



Fig. 1. Sites with Rhodian amphorae finds east of the Euphrates.

bears the name of the annually elected official preceded by the Greek preposition *epi*, meaning ‘under the term of’; the other mentions the name of the fabricant. With the exception of the early period of the practice of stamping, the stamps always bear the name of a month of the Rhodian calendar. A symbol (head of Helios, animal, attribute of a god, etc.) also regularly occurs, mostly in connection with the fabricant’s name. The official most probably coincides with the priest of the great protector of this thriving Greek island, the sun god Helios. The name of the ‘fabricant’ represents not the potter but rather the owner of the amphora workshop and perhaps even the vine grower. Neither the mention of the month nor the presence of the symbols have actually been fully elucidated. In fact, even if it has certainly something to do with the complexity and management of production activities, as well as with quality control and possibly taxation, the precise function of the stamps remains unclear.

The discovery of stamped amphorae on so many consumption sites reflects of course the complex and important network of direct and indirect Rhodian commerce, but perhaps the importance of Rhodian stamps lies even more in their chronological value. At any rate, it is clear that research on this type of object was up till now dominated by the refining of the chronology. Rhodian amphorae were systematically stamped for approximately 270 years. The practice of stamping started around *c.*304 BC and lasted until the sack of Rhodos by Cassius in 43 BC, or with the coming of Octavian around 30 BC. Thanks to the perseverance of several scholars, among them M.P. Nilsson

(1909), V.R. Grace (1934, 1950, 1963, 1966), J-Y. Empereur (1977) and G. Finkielsztein (2001), the eponyms were connected more and more with absolute chronology. Through complex research work consisting of the combination of eponym groups in sequences, their association with fabricants, the balance of relative and absolute chronology delivered by dated closed contexts, foundation dates, the date of destroyed sites such as Carthage, Corinth or Samaria, the precise year in which these officials held office has got and is gradually still getting closer. It is no longer disputed that Rhodian amphora stamps have become one of the most reliable dating tools for the chronological framework of a wide range of archaeological sites. This is definitely also the case for Mleiha, where the presence of these stamps presents a chronological backing for the chronology of the site covering at least *c.*70–80 years, from the third quarter of the third century BC to the middle of the second century BC, possibly even until the end of that century.

Catalogue of the Rhodian stamps discovered in Mleiha (Table 1)

Period II: c.234–199 BC

1. Upper part of handle; only flake preserved with almost complete rectangular stamp of eponym **Aristeus** (Fig. 2) in nominative. Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum, inv. exs. 192. Context: surface find by the Sharjah team. Unpublished. Date according to G. Finkielsztein’s ‘chronologie basse’: *c.*233–220 BC (Period IIa).

Table 1. The Rhodian stamps discovered in Mleiha and their external chronology.

Nr.	Period	Date	Eponym	Fabricant	Month	Symbol
	II					
1	IIa	<i>c.</i> 233–220	Ἀριστεύς			
2	IIa	<i>c.</i> 233–220	Εὐκλῆς II			Helios head
3	IIa	<i>c.</i> 233–220+		Κρέων		
	III					
4	IIIa	<i>c.</i> 195	Σώδαμος			
5	IIIb	<i>c.</i> 187–185+		Ἀντίγονος	Πάναμος	rose
6	IIIe	<i>c.</i> 167–165	Ἀρίστων II		Θεσμοφόριος	
7	IIIa–IIIe	<i>c.</i> 198–161+		Ἀπολλώνιος		rose
8	IIIa–IIIe	<i>c.</i> 198–161+		Ἀριστόγειτος		
9	IIIc–IIIe	<i>c.</i> 180/178–161+		Ίάσων I		piloi+stars
	III–IV					
10	IIIb–IVb	<i>c.</i> 188–150/147+		Ἀντίμαχος		kerykeion
11	IIIb–IVb	<i>c.</i> 188–152+		Αἴσωπος/Νύσιος		statue
	V–VI?					
12	Vc–VI	<i>c.</i> 118–88/86+		Φιλοστέφανος (?)		herm
	Unknown					
13]οκ () ?]οκ () ?	Πάναμος	
14]μος ?]μος ?	Πεδαγείτννος	
15–18			(illegible)	(illegible)		



Fig. 2.
Stamp no. 1, of the eponym Ἀριστεύς.

Ἀρισ
τεύς

The name of the eponym Ἀριστεύς in the nominative or the lack of the preposition ἐπί should not surprise within its early date, when the standardisation of the contents of the stamps was still being formalised (see Monsieur, Boucharlat & Haerinck 2011: 169–171 for a discussion and bibliography). A parallel is known from Lindos, whereas versions in the genitive with the preposition ἐπί also exist (Nilsson 1909: 380, no. 84–85; Finkielsztejn 2001: *passim* and pl. III, no. 49 for another type in the nominative, written on one line, from Alexandria; for another example in the nominative cf. a circular button stamp in association with the fabricant Ἱεροτέλης, from Tanais: Jöhrens 2001: 383, no. 22). It seems that under this eponym a month was introduced on the stamps for the first time. Ἀριστεύς is connected to the fabricants ἹΑξιός, Ἱεροτέλης and Ζήνων (Jöhrens 1999a: 12, no. 3; 14–16, no. 12; 21, no. 26; 43–44, no. 103). The type (name in nominative and broken on two lines) found at Mleiha does not seem to occur very often.



Fig. 3.
Stamp no. 2, of the eponym Εὐκλῆς.

- Upper part of handle; rectangular stamp of eponym **Eukles II** (Fig. 3), head of Helios on the left. Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum, inv. ML.93.3209. Context: necropolis, east sector, surface find, French excavations and surveys 1993. Publication: Calvet 1994: 20, no. 2 and pl. 9B. Date according to G. Finkielsztejn's 'chronologie basse': c.233–220 BC (Period IIa).

Ἐπί head of Helios
Εὐκλεῦς

The eponym Εὐκλῆς is known in association (or sometimes supposed in association on stylistic arguments) with the fabricants Δαμόνικος, Θεόδωρος, Ἱεροτέλης, Ποταμοκλῆς and Ζήνων I. Stamps of Εὐκλῆς II are attested in Lindos, Athens, Delos and Dor (Jöhrens 1999a: 24, no. 36, with previous bibliography). Among the different types are the circular ones with the central rose, the symbol of the city of Rhodos. The head of the sun god Helios on the rectangular type here is another typical device, being one of the main symbols of Rhodos.

- Upper part of handle on the bow, broken at the right where a small part of the stamp is missing; rectangular stamp of the fabricant **Kreon** (Fig. 4). Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum, inv. cx5.193. Context: surface find by the Sharjah team. Unpublished. Date according to G. Finkielsztejn's 'chronologie basse': c.233–220+ BC (Period IIa).

Κρέων
τος



Fig. 4.
Stamp no. 3, of the fabricant Κρέων.



Fig. 6.
Stamp no. 5, of the fabricant Ἀντίγονος. Interior of amphora of Ἀντίγονος; the repair holes point to secondary use.

Ἀντιγόνου
Πανάμου
rose

To date Ἀντίγονος is known in association with the eponyms Κρατίδας (c.187 BC), Ἰέρων I (c.186 BC) and Ἀρχοκράτης (c.185 BC). Stamps of the fabricant Ἀντίγονος are attested in Lindos, Athens, Samos, Istros, Murighiol, Tanais, Pergamon, Tell Keisan, Samaria, Jerusalem, Egypt and Syracuse (Jöhrens 1999a: 64–65, nos. 165–166, with previous bibliography). The four holes in the neck follow a (ancient) break, leaving little doubt that the amphora was mended, confirming a secondary use of the amphora. The quality and practicality of Rhodian amphorae invites their reuse for refilling with wine or as a water jar used at a well, or even for the transport of water over long distances (see also Finkielsztejn 2001: 31, no. 1

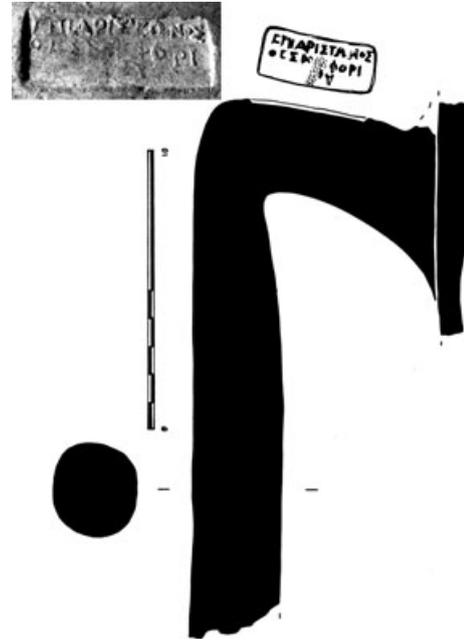


Fig. 7.
Stamp no. 6, of the eponym Ἀρίστων II.

and Mouton 2008: 225 who cite Herodotus III, 6 mentioning the reuse of Greek and Phoenician amphorae for water transport from Memphis to Syria, a passage that was first noticed by F. Cumont [1927: 51]). Another indication of reuse could be the presence of a South Arabian graffito on a Rhodian amphora, although it may be an owner's mark (Robin 1994: 83, pls. 43/4, 44). On the other hand, one should be cautious about this amphora (and amphorae in general) as a dating clue since it could have been reused for some time before it was deposited in the grave.

6. Handle almost completely preserved, small fragment of the neck; rectangular stamp of eponym **Ariston II** (Fig. 7) with the month *Thesmophorios*. Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum. Context: found in 1986 (surface find) at the time of the French excavations. Publication: Calvet 1990: 51, fig. 37/4; Potts 1990: fig. 17; Calvet 1994: 21; Mouton 2008: 48, fig 21/2. Date according to G. Finkielsztejn's 'chronologie basse': c.167–165+ BC (Period IIIe).

Ἐπὶ Ἀρίστωνος
Θεσμοφορί
ου

The fabricants Ἀντίμαχος, Δαμοκράτης, Δίος, Ἑρμῶν, Ἰπποκράτης and Μαρσύας are known in association with Ἀρίστων II. Stamps of the eponym Ἀρίστων II are attested

in Lindos, Athens, Pergamon, Byblos, Tell Halaf (Jöhrens 1999a: 55, nos. 139–140, with previous bibliography), Kition-Bamboula (Calvet 1982: 21, no. 35) and Tanais (Jöhrens 2001: 384, no. 29). The association of Ἀρίστων II with Ἀντίμαχος should be noted, since the stamp of this fabricant turned up as a surface find during the Belgian excavations in 2009 (see below, stamp no. 10). Both stamps could belong to the same amphora, even if it remains impossible to prove because of the unclear circumstances of the finds.

7. Upper part of handle, broken at the left and at the angle on the right; upper part of the shaft preserved. Only a small part of the circular stamp of the fabricant **Apollonios** (Fig. 8) remains: two letters to be read retrograde and a fragment of a fillet in relief belonging to the circular edging of the stamp. Almost nothing is left of the device of the rose. Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum. Context: surface find by the Sharjah team. Unpublished. Date according to the Pergamon Deposit and G. Finkielsztein's 'chronologie basse': c.198–161+ BC (Period III).

[Ἀπολλ]ων[ίου]
[rose]

There are strong arguments for identifying this poorly preserved stamp with the fabricant Ἀπολλώνιος. The uncial or lunar form of the *omega* is not so common in Rhodian stamps and seems typical for this fabricant, in the circular as well as the rectangular versions (Empereur

1977: 207, no. 15; Criscuolo 1982: 84, no. 82; Börker & Burow 1998: 44, nos. 404–405 = Schuchhardt 1895: 444, no. 866, two circular examples; Jöhrens 1999a: 66, no. 170; 1999b: 244, no. 7). The stamp must be read retrograde, but the *nu* is itself written backwards (Criscuolo 1982: 84, no. 82 for a rectangular example in the museum of the University of Milan: 'ny retrograda'). Beside the uncial or lunar form, some stamps also show the capital form of the *omega* (Börker & Burow 1998: 83, no. 66, on a rectangular stamp). The closest parallel we found for Mleiha is an example from Athens, not in retrograde, but with a remarkably well resembling lunate *omega* (Jöhrens 1999a: 66, no. 170). At present no connection with an eponym is available, the only chronological reference being the famous Pergamon Deposit (cf. below, stamp no. 8). Stamps of Ἀπολλώνιος were recovered in Lindos, Athens, Pergamon, Nea Paphos, Jerusalem, Samaria, Alexandria, Crocodilopolis, Carthago, Tanais, southern Italy, the Black Sea region, Callatis, Mirmekion and Nymphaion (Criscuolo 1982: 84, no. 82; Jöhrens 1999a: 66, no. 170; 1999b: 244, no. 7, all with bibliographical references).

8. Upper part of handle, broken at the left where half of the stamp is missing, rectangular stamp of the fabricant **Aristogeitos** (Fig. 9). Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum, inv. ML.93.3208. Context: necropolis, east sector, surface find, French excavations and surveys 1993. Publication: Calvet 1994: 20, no. 1 and pl. 10A. Date according to the Pergamon Deposit and G. Finkielsztein's 'chronologie basse': c.198–161+ BC (Period III).

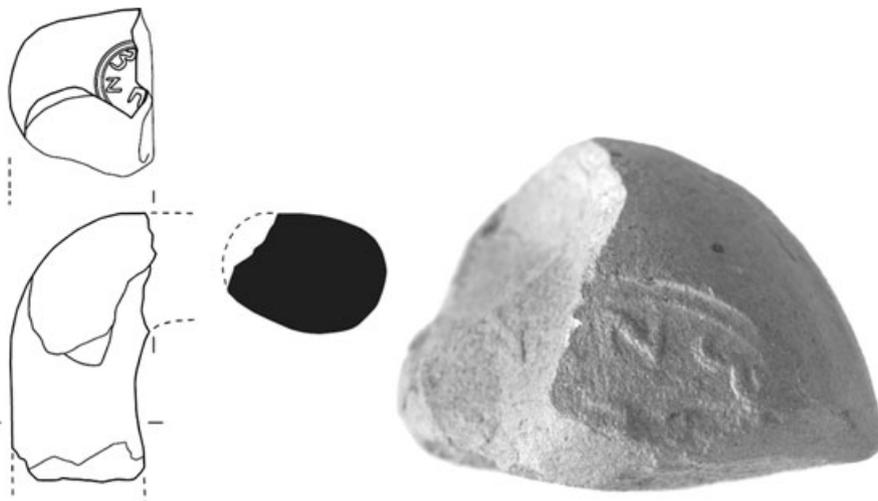


Fig. 8.
Stamp no. 7, of the fabricant Ἀπολλώνιος.



Fig. 9.
Stamp no. 8, of the fabricant Ἀριστόγειτος.

[Ἀρισ]τογείτου

Little is known about this fabricant. Stamps of Ἀριστόγειτος are attested in Lindos (Nilsson 1909: 382, no. 96), Pergamon, Olbia (Börker & Burow 1998: 45, no. 416, with previous bibliography) and Kition-Bamboula (Calvet 1982: 20, no. 31). The presence of this stamp in the famous Pergamon Deposit gives the most reliable chronology: in his revised dating sequence G. Finkielsztejn fixes Δορκυλίδας as the oldest eponym *c.*198 BC, and Ἀγέστρατος II as the most recent eponym *c.*161 BC. This last date matches quite well the closing date of the Pergamon Deposit *c.*165/155 BC as reassessed independently and convincingly by M. Lawall (2002).

9. Upper part and fragment of the shaft of a handle, rectangular stamp of the fabricant **Iason I** surrounded by four *piloi* combined with stars at the corners (Fig. 10). Depository: Museum of Al-Ain, inv. Nr. MA532. Context: necropolis, tomb in trench no. 3, found together with our nos. 5 & 16; Iraqi excavation. Publication: Madhloom 1974: 149–158, pl. 13B; Salles 1980: 79–80; Boucharlat & Mouton 1993: 239, fig. 10/4; Calvet 1994: 21; Potts 1990: fig. 17b; Mouton 2008: 48, fig. 21/3. Date according the Pergamon Deposit and G. Finkielsztejn's 'chronologie basse': *c.*180/178–175/173+ (Period IIIc–d).

<i>star</i>		<i>star</i>
<i>pilos</i>		<i>pilos</i>
	Ἰάσωνος	
<i>pilos</i>		<i>pilos</i>
<i>star</i>		<i>star</i>

The stamp is in a good state of preservation, especially the four very clear symbols of the *piloi* with stars (head-dresses of the Dioscuri, twin heroes invoked by warriors



Fig. 10.
Stamp no. 9, of the fabricant Ἰάσων I.

and mariners, and also figuring as a constellation). They are located in the corners of the stamp, the lower pair in an inverted position. These devices can be considered as typical for the workshop of Ἰάσων I. Besides the rectangular type there also exists a circular one with a rose. If its occurrence in the Pergamon Deposit (Fig. 11) gives a dating clue (Börker & Burow 1998: 47, nos. 457–458, *piloi* and stars; no. 459, circular type), this also prevents confusion with his namesake Ἰάσων II who was active in Period Va (*c.*137/136–134/133+), and most probably in Period Vb. They should probably be connected with the

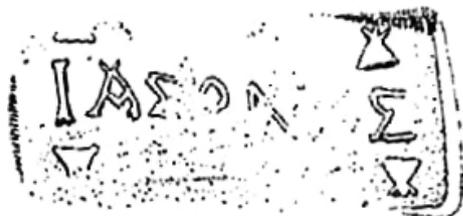


Fig. 11.
Stamp of the fabricant Ἰάσων I with *piloi* and stars of the Dioscuri, discovered in Pergamon (after Schuchhardt 1895: 462, no. 1038).

eponyms Ἀρχίδαμος (c.180/178, Jöhrens 2001: 420, nos. 205 and 465, no. 151, eponym and fabricant on the same circular stamp with rose from Tanais, or otherwise the father's name? cf. Finkielstejn 2001: 146, no. 1999) and Καλλικρατίδας II (c.175/173, Jöhrens 2001: 420, no. 205). The stamps of Ἰάσων I turned up in Lindos, Pergamon, Iasos, Nea Paphos, Ashdod, Dor, Crocodilopolis, Tanais and Centuripe (Jöhrens 2001: 420, no. 205; Börker & Burow 1998: 47, nos. 457–458, with bibliography).

Periods III/IV: c.198–161/160–146 BC

10. Upper part of a handle with a fragment of the rim, rectangular stamp of the fabricant **Antimachos** with above a *kerykeion* to the left (Fig. 12). Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum, inv. ML.09.P.P.3. Context: necropolis, stray find; Belgian excavations 2009. Unpublished. Date according to G. Finkielsztejn's 'chronologie basse': c.188–150/147 BC (Periods IIIb–IVb).

kerykeion
Ἀντίμαχου

Ἀντίμαχος is actually known in association with seven eponyms, the earliest being Πρατοφάνης (c.188 BC), the most recent Ἀλεξίμαχος (c.150/147 BC). Between them the following associations have been ascertained to date: Ἰέρων I (c.186 BC), Ἀθανόδοτος (c.170/168 BC), Ἀρίστων II (c.167/165) and Σωσικλῆς (c.159/58–154/153). Stamps of this fabricant are attested in Lindos, Villanova, Athens, Delos, Lesbos, Albania, Vadu Vacilor, Satu Nou, Tomis, Tanais, Pergamon, Iasos, Ktima, Nea Paphos, Tell Halaf, Samaria, Jerusalem, Egypt, Alexandria, Carthago, Syracuse, Messina or surroundings (Jöhrens 1999a: 65, nos. 167–168; Criscuolo 1982: 82–84, nos. 78–81, both with previous bibliography), Gindaros (Kramer 2004: 93, AS37–42), Beirut (Aubert 2004: 35) and Kinet Höyük (Monsieur & Poblome, forthcoming: fig. 10). This fabri-

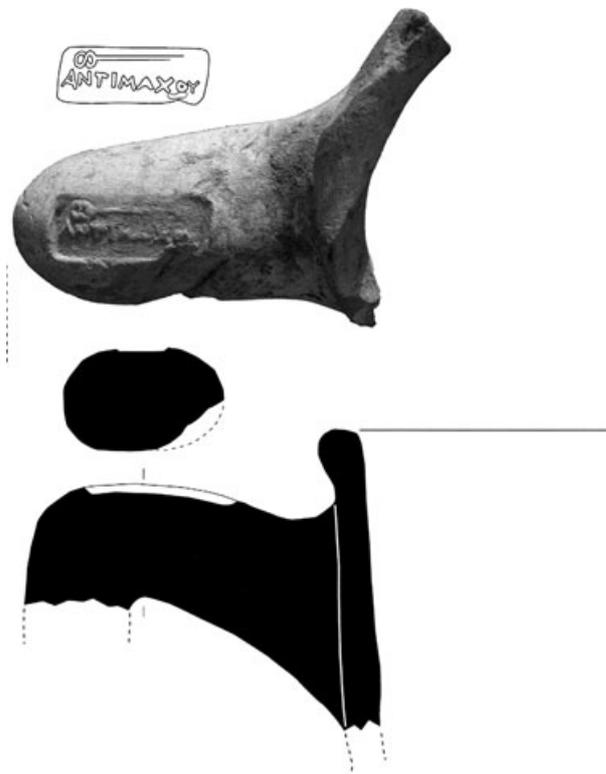


Fig. 12.
Stamp no. 10, of the fabricant Ἀντίμαχος.

cant is one of the most prolific manufacturers of Rhodian amphorae and this is reflected by his career of c.40 years. Even in the East the amphorae of Ἀντίμαχος seem well diffused, e.g. in Gindaros his stamp occurs six times (Kramer: 2004: 93, AS37–42). Most probably, all rectangular stamps of Ἀντίμαχος are accompanied by the same symbol, the *kerykeion* or staff of the god Hermes. It is placed both above the name and beneath it. Most of them are turned to the left as here in Mleiha. It seems that circular stamps of Ἀντίμαχος are rare (e.g. in Syracuse, Gentili 1958: 67, no. 120/13). One of the stamp types from Egypt in the University Collection of Milan (Criscuolo 1982: 82–84, no. 79) comes almost certainly from the same stamp mould as the example from Mleiha. For the association with the stamp of the eponym Ἀρίστων II which also exists at Mleiha, see above, no. 6.

11. Upper part of handle, only a poor fragment of the angle preserved, rectangular stamp of the fabricants **Aisopos** or **Nysios**, both working with the device of a statue of a woman (Fig. 13) which is only faintly preserved. Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum. Context: surface find by Sharjah team. Unpublished. Date according to G.

Finkielsztejn's 'chronologie basse': c.188–152+ BC (Periods IIIb–IVb).

[Αἴσωπος] or [Νύσιος]
draped statue

Despite the poor preservation of the head, the dress and the elbow of a draped statue are recognisable. The type of device representing a draped statue leaves no doubt in ascribing the stamp to the workshops of Αἴσωπος or Νύσιος, i.e. the representation of a draped statue with the feet cut off in contrast to the types with the full representation of the draped statue. The draped statue most probably represents a woman or a goddess. Some close parallels for Αἴσωπος are found in Pergamon (Fig. 14) (Schuchhardt 1895: 443, no. 855 = Börker & Burow 1998: 43, no. 389), for Nysios in Tarsos, Pergamon and Lindos (Grace 1950: no. 56; Börker & Burow 1998: 50, nos. 495–496, both statue devices also very worn; Nilsson 1909: 463, no. 334/19 and pl. II/2).

The fact that stamps of both fabricants occur in the Pergamon Deposit is already a chronological reference for c.198–161+ BC (Period III). An association of an eponym with Αἴσωπος does not seem to be known to date. Νύσιος

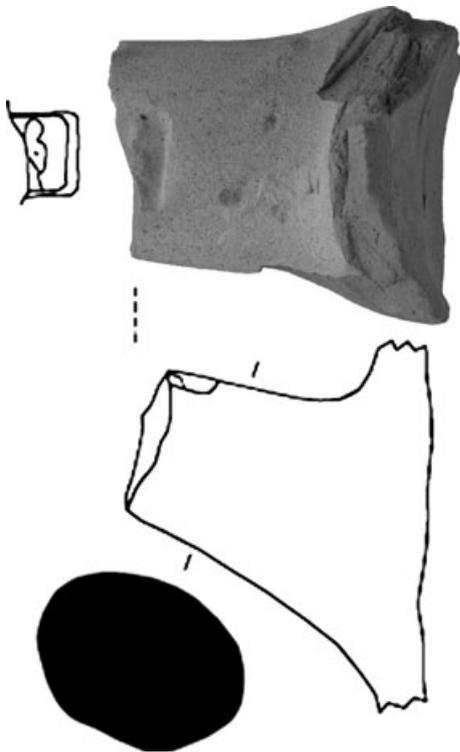


Fig. 13.
Stamp no. 11, of the fabricants Αἴσωπος or Νύσιος, female draped statue.



Fig. 14.
Stamp of the fabricant Αἴσωπος with female draped statue, discovered in Pergamon (after Schuchhardt 1895: 443, no. 855).

was at least a little later since he is known to be associated with the eponyms Ἡραγόρας (c.158–154, Period IVa) and Πανσανίας III (c.152, Period IVb) (Jöhrens 1999a: 73, no. 192; Börker & Burow 1998: 50, no. 495).

Periods V/VI: c.145–108/107–88/86 BC

12. Upper part of handle, rectangular stamp, perhaps of the fabricant **Philostephanos** with a herm as device (Fig. 15). Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum. Context: surface find by Sharjah team. Unpublished. Date according to G. Finkielsztejn's 'chronologie basse': c.118–88/86+ BC (Period Vc–VI).

herm
Φ[ίλο]σ
τ[ερά]νο(υ) ?

Herm in relief facing right. The reading is not completely satisfactory, as most letters are erased or very badly preserved: two letters on the first line, the first reads probably as a *phi*, the last is certainly a *sigma*; three letters on the second line, the first letter may be a *tau*, the *nu* at the end tends to be represented like a *chi* but should not be read that way and the following *omicron* leaves no doubt; finally there seems no room left for the *upsilon*. The name of a month on the second line does not look like an option, so there seems no other alternative left for a reconstruction than that of the name Φιλοστέφανος. Nevertheless this identification remains puzzling, not only because of the difficult reading of the preserved letters, but also because of the type of herm. Indeed, this type of herm is not typical for Φιλοστέφανος, which seems always designed in outline, not in full relief. On the contrary, the herms of the fabricants Κάλλων and Ῥόδων show them in relief, but despite the final *sigma* preserved on the first line of the Mleiha stamp, which could match the genitive case for both of them, there seems no further match possible for the remaining letters preserved. Κάλλων worked in Period

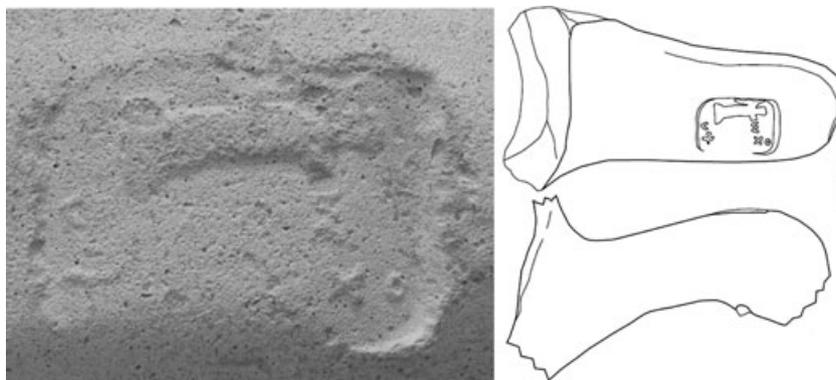


Fig. 15.
Stamp no. 12, of the fabricant Φιλοστέφανος (?) with herm.

Va (c.137/136–134/133+ BC, Börker & Burow 1998: 92, no. 234; Finkielsztein 2001: *passim*) and ‘Ρόδων II in Period Vb (c.125–121+ BC, associated with the eponyms Ἀρίστρατος and Τειμαγόρας, Barker 2004: 81, no. 13; Nicolaou & Empereur 1986: 523–524, no. 8). Φιλοστέφανος was active somewhat later, in Period Vc (c.118–108+ BC, associated with the eponyms Ἀριστόπολις, Ἀριστομβροτίδας, Αἰσχίνας, Ἀρχίβιος, Ἀγορᾶναξ, Grace & Savvatiānou-Petropoulakou 1970: 312–313, no. E33; Finkielsztein 2001: *ibid.*; cf. Ariel & Finkielsztein 1994: 222, no. SAH 97–99) and Period VI (c.107–88/86 BC; Finkielsztein 2001: *ibid.*; cf. Ariel & Finkielsztein 1994: *ibid.*, associated with the eponyms Ἀριστόνομος, Ἀντίπατρος and Χρυσάωρ, but their precise succession is unknown). Perhaps his workshop existed earlier, which could explain the older (?), relief type of herm. This may be confirmed in comparison with the fabricant ‘Ρόδων, whose devices of the herm are designed in relief as well as in outline (respectively, Barker 2004; Ariel & Finkielsztein 1994: 214, no. SAH 76). Even if the identification of Φιλοστέφανος does not work, the association with other fabricants will also lead us almost certainly to the second half of second century BC.⁴

Unknown periods

13. Upper part of handle, broken at the left where half of the stamp is missing; rectangular stamp with

two lines in a framework (Fig. 16). The name of the eponym or the fabricant remains undecipherable, the month of *Panamos* on the second line. The frame of the stamp has a fillet in relief that also divides the two lines. Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum. Context: surface find by the Sharjah team. Unpublished. Date: unknown.

]οκ()
[Πα]νάμο (υ)

The name of the eponym or the fabricant was not fully written, since it cannot end in *kappa*, and there is probably no space left on the second line to continue the name. Πάναμος is one of the most frequently occurring months on the stamps of Rhodian amphorae. The month is also not fully written, lacking the *upsilon* of the genitive. Compare with a stamp of the eponym Τιμασαγόρας (Period IIIb, c.184 BC) found in the famous Villanova Deposit in Rhodes: the missing *upsilon* of the genitive of the month Πάναμος is systematic in his stamps (Maiuri 1924: 259 and fig. 3, no. XXX, ‘in questo scarico in cui la grafia *Panamo* con l’*Y* omesso è costante’). Nevertheless, we do not see a further connection since the typical framework is not present in these stamps, even if it is true that the ‘apparente correzione dello *N* in *M*’ seems applicable to our stamp. On the other hand the framework type does not seem to occur regularly among Rhodian stamps, nor its variants, i.e. a division relief line between the two words. The typical frame with fillet in relief and the last two letters of the abbreviated name in fact still leave possibilities for decipherment through a parallel. Finally a comparison with an amphora of Tel Beth Yerah is worth mentioning: the eponym Πανσανίας I (Period IIa, c.233–220 BC) is associated with the stamp of the fabricant Θευδώρ(ου)/

⁴ It should be noted that we have not discussed all the possible candidate fabricants using the device of the herm. There can be no doubt that the older fabricant Ἀμύντας (Periods III and IV, see Jörhens 1999a: 63–64, no. 163) has to be ruled out, and probably also contemporaries of Φιλοστέφανος, such as the fabricants ‘Ερμαΐσκος and Μένανδρος (see Ariel & Finkielsztein 1994: 214, no. SAH 76).



Fig. 16.

Stamp no. 13, unknown period, with the month Πάναμος.

Ἀγριανίο(υ). The same sort of abbreviation is clear in this example and the name of the fabricant and the month are divided by a relief line (not a framework) (Ariel 1988: fig. 1; cf. Jöhrens 1999a: 44–45, no. 104).

14. Upper part of handle, broken diagonally, the upper part of the stamp is missing. One end of the amphora handle has been smoothed indicating a reuse of the fragment, possibly as a pestle. Rectangular stamp with two lines (Fig. 17). The name of the eponym or fabricant remains undecipherable, the month of *Pedageitnuos* on the second line. Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum. Context: surface find by the Sharjah team. Unpublished. Date: unknown.

]μου
Πεδαγειτ(νύου)

There is little chance that the name of the eponym or the fabricant, of which only the end in the genitive case survives, will ever be reconstructed. The name of Πεδαγειτνυος is rather rare among the Rhodian months mentioned on the amphora stamps. It remains unclear if the *nu* after the *tau* at the end has to be reconstructed. *Delta* is used as well as *tau* in the writing: Πεδαγειτνυος or Πεταγειτνυος. The abbreviated form as in the case of Mleiha is not uncommon: compare with examples from Tanais (fabricant Κρέοντος/Πεδαγειτ(νύου), Jöhrens 2001: 423, no. 219, Period IIa, c.233–220+ BC), Villanova (under the eponym, Ἐπι Ἱέρων(ος)/Πεδαγειτ(νύου), Period IIIa, c.186 BC, Maiuri 1924: 253, fig. 4/VI), Callatis, Athens, Pergamon (fabricant

Μαρσούα/Πεδαγειτν(ύου), Period III, c.198–161+ BC and even in later years in Period IV, Gramatopol & Poenaru Bordea 1970: 235, no. 766; Jöhrens 1999a: 71–72, no. 188; Schuchhardt 1895: 472, no. 1132 = Börker & Burow 1998: 49, no. 483).⁵

15. Bow fragment of handle, with rectangular stamp, half broken off, illegible (Fig. 18). Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum. Context: surface find by the Sharjah team. Unpublished. Date: unknown.
16. Handle with stamp considered as illegible? (Fig. 19). Depository: unknown; seemingly not at Al-Aīn Museum. Context: necropolis, tomb in trench no. 3, Iraqi excavations, found together with our nos. 5 & 9. Publication: Madhloom 1974: 149–158, pl. 13C; Calvet 1994: 21, ‘illegible in Madhloom’s photograph’; if ever found, however, it is likely to be readable. Date: unknown.
- 17–18. Two almost illegible handle fragments (Fig. 20). Depository: Sharjah Archaeology Museum. Context: survey. Publication: Mouton 2008: fig. 21/4–5.

The fragmentary state of these stamps does not allow a precise identification, though a couple of letters are visible on fragment no. 17 (genitive case of name or month?).

Discussion and concluding remarks

Of the eighteen stamps, eleven or twelve are completely deciphered, or almost: four stamps bear the names of Rhodian eponyms, six or seven stamps bear the names of

⁵ There is also the case of the same fabricant Μαρσούα/Πεδαγειτ(νύου), Schuchhardt 1895: 472, no. 1131 = Börker & Burow 1998: 49, no. 484.

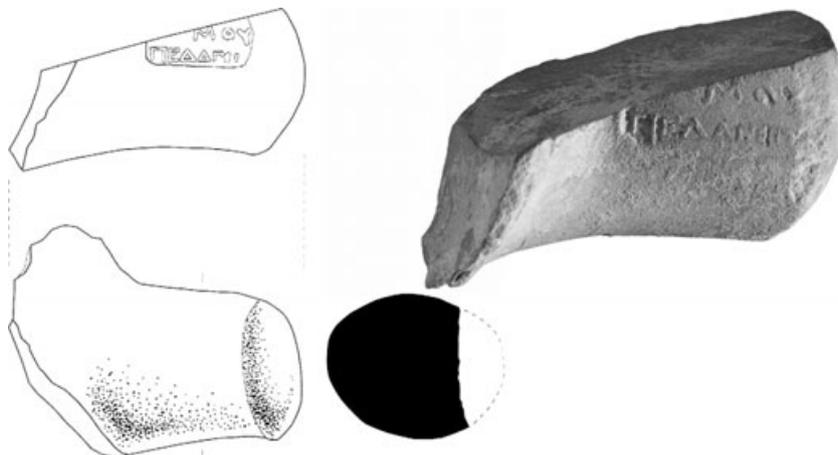


Fig. 17.
Stamp no. 14, unknown period, with the month Πεδαγείτνυος.



Fig. 18.
Stamp no. 15, unknown period, illegible.



Fig. 19.
Stamp no. 16, unknown period, illegible (?) (Madhloom 1974: pl. 13C).

fabricants, one more can be connected by its symbol of a female statue to the fabricants Νύσιος or Αἴσωπος. The six remaining stamps are poorly preserved (only two months

are readable) and in five instances are completely or almost illegible. Three months of the Rhodian calendar are represented by four different examples: Πεδαγείτνυος, Θεσμοφόριος, and Πάναμος twice. The rareness of the month Πεδαγείτνυος (or Πεταγείτνυος) is to be noted. No complete pair of eponym-fabricant stamps has survived, and no pair can be reconstructed, except perhaps for the association of the eponym Ἀρίστων II (stamp no. 6) and the fabricant Αντίμαχος (stamp no. 10). The stamp types of the eponym Ἀριστεύς and the fabricant Ἀπολλώνιος seem rather rare and the finds from Mleiha probably present in this way an interesting contribution to the catalogue of Rhodian stamps in general. This is also the case with the puzzling stamp we ascribed to the fabricant Φιλοστέφανος. Finally, we think that stamp no. 13 with its typical frame

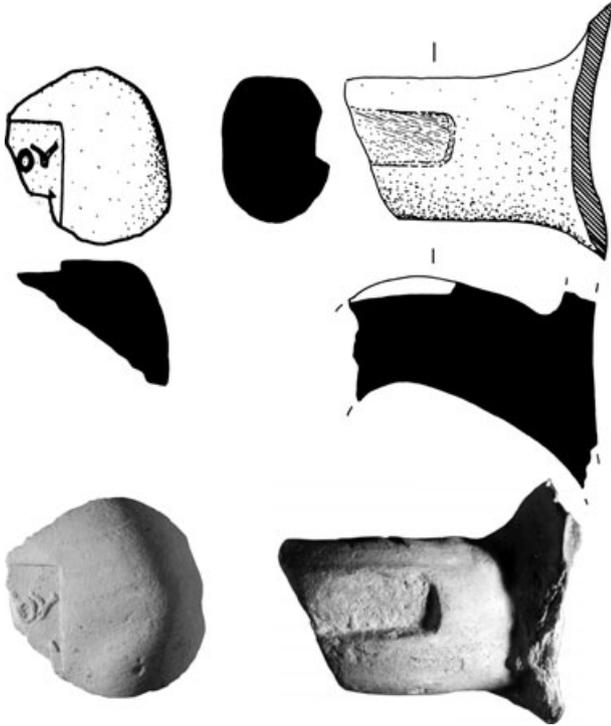


Fig. 20.
Stamps nos. 17–18, unknown period, illegible.

and stamp no. 16 could one day be deciphered, whereas stamp no. 15 as well as nos. 17–18 will remain illegible. The amphora of *Ἀντίφορος* (no. 5) deserves special attention where the holes in the neck can be considered as evidence of the reuse of the vessel, perhaps an indication that the container as well the wine were held in esteem.

As already noted, the Rhodian amphora stamps found at Mleiha represent an important contribution to the chronological framework of the site. The earliest amphora stamps of Rhodes found there, in fact three of them, date to *c.*230–220 BC. A surface find by the Belgian mission in 2009, however, i.e. a toe with a part of the lower wall preserved (inv. AI P.052) (Fig. 21), points to an earlier Rhodian amphora type and represents the oldest example discovered in Mleiha, dated *c.*270–250 BC (see Grace 1963: 322–328, figs 2 and 5; Monachov 2005: 71–75, figs 1–2). Moreover, a handle published by M. Mouton and identified as a local imitation, should be reconsidered, since the profile clearly points to another earlier Rhodian type to be dated in the same chronological range as the spike. In our opinion a local imitation of early Rhodian amphorae seems inconceivable and ‘l’anse portant un méplat à l’emplacement habituel de l’estampille’ looks rather like a real stamp that became eroded and illegible (Mouton 2008: 48, fig. 21/7).

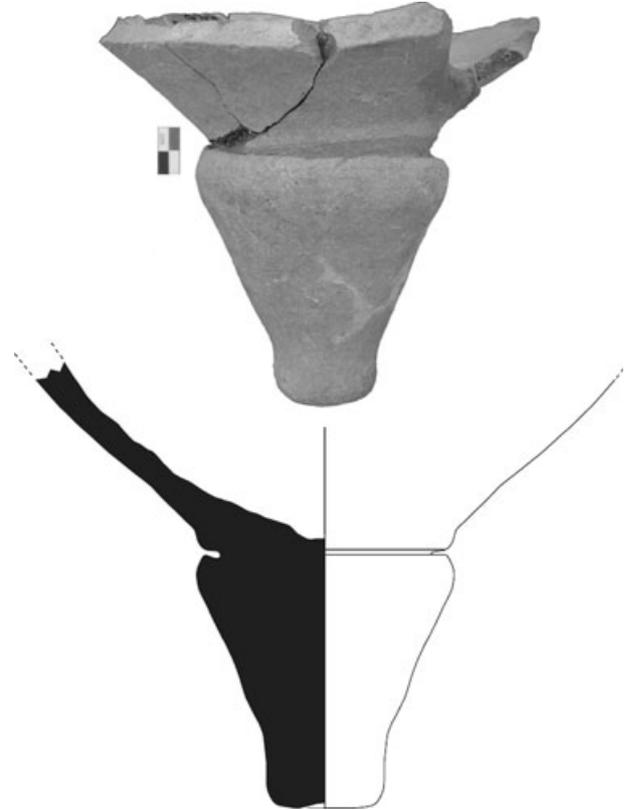


Fig. 21.
Spike of an early Rhodian amphora.

The bulk of Rhodian stamps discovered at Mleiha, however, have a chronological range of *c.*200–150 BC. If our identification is correct, one stamp dates from the end of the second century BC and spans a period of one generation or more. Concerning the fabricant stamps, they give less accurate dating clues than the annually appointed eponyms, since they cover the lifetime production of their workshop.⁶ Apart from the Rhodian amphorae and a small group of amphorae of unknown origin, which we will not discuss here,⁷ no other Hellenistic amphorae seem to occur at the site.

⁶ For the chronology of the fabricants the earliest and latest dates of a combination or a presumed combination with eponyms are shown; in establishing these dates the work of G. Jöhrens (1999a, 1999b) was particularly useful; the + sign in the table and the catalogue indicates that the dates may be extended or refined when new associations with eponyms are discovered.

⁷ Their general form points to a date in the late classical and early Hellenistic periods, i.e. the fourth and third centuries BC, but we were unable to find parallels: Mouton 2008: fig. 20/4; Boucharlat & Mouton 1993: fig. 10/5; Calvet 1990: fig. 37/2–3.

The interpretation concerning the archaeological contexts and the use of Rhodian amphorae in Mleiha and in the region (e.g. Failaka, Susa, Thaj, Tell Halaf, etc., see Grace 1966; Börker 1974; Hannestad 1983; Monsieur, Boucharlat & Haerinck 2011) is beyond the scope of this present study and will find its place in other studies. Their place in funerary contexts will be of special relevance when compared with finds of Rhodian amphorae in other contexts of this type, not only in these more remote

regions but also in the Mediterranean (e.g. Barker 2004; Finkielstejn 2001: 32, n. 1; Berthier 1943).

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