

A NEW DIE FOR THE AMPHORA STAMPS OF SMYRNA

Gonca CANKARDEŞ-ŞENOL - Ahmet Kaan ŞENOL*

Abstract

Smyrna is among the cities that produced wine in antiquity. Wine production in the city was known by ancient authors. To date, finds that may be related to this production, such as amphora workshops or deposits, have not been identified during excavations and research carried out in or around the city. Although not numerous, some amphora stamp finds recovered from various centers indicate that stamped amphorae were produced in Smyrna during the Hellenistic Period. Three amphora stamps bearing the ethnic of Smyrna are known from Pergamon, two from Istros and one from Olbia. These stamps, made in the same style as seen on Smyrna coins, bearing the ethnic above and the shrimp device below, are probably the production of the same workshop. All of the stamps in question were obtained from the same matrix. A stamp uncovered in 2023 during the Smyrna Theater excavations was impressed by a different matrix. Thus, it has been currently determined that ethnic bearing stamps have at least two different matrices. The fact that this stamp is in the same style as the stamps found in different centers reveals that they were all produced by the same workshop. Two anepigraphic stamps, bearing only a shrimp device and found in Olbia and Istros, are also suggested to be Smyrnaean production. It is not yet known whether the inscribed and ethnic-bearing stamps and the anepigraphic stamps belong to the same workshop. In addition, since the finds are only stamped handles, there is still insufficient data on the forms of Smyrnaean amphorae. Some researchers have noted their similarity to Rhodian amphorae. The clay characteristics of some amphora fragments of unknown origin, unearthed in the

*Prof. Dr. Gonca CANKARDEŞ-ŞENOL, Ege University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Archaeology, İzmir/Türkiye. E-mail: gonca.senol@ege.edu.tr. ORCID 0000-0001-8540-6648.
Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kaan ŞENOL, Ege University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Archaeology, İzmir/Türkiye. E-mail: ahmet.kaan.senol@ege.edu.tr. ORCID 0000-0002-8729-2848.

Smyrna excavations, are similar to the clay characteristics of the stamped handle found in the theater. Further clay analysis will help clarify this issue. The filling layer where the stamped handle was found does not provide sufficient evidence for dating. However, with the help of chronological data from the other sites, the stamped Smyrnaean amphorae are dated to the first half of the 2nd century BC.

Keywords: Smyrna, amphora, amphora stamp, ancient trade, Smyrna Theatre, Izmir

Smyrna is known among the centers producing wine in antiquity. Its wine production is known from the ancient writers¹. Until now no finds have been found related to this production such as amphora workshops or deposits during the excavations and research in or around the city. Some amphora stamp finds, although not numerous, from varied centers confirm that stamped amphorae were also produced in Smyrna in the Hellenistic Period.

The three stamps bearing the ethnic of Smyrna are known from Pergamon², two stamps from Istros³ and one stamp from Olbia⁴. These stamps seem to be from the same matrix and the stamps bear the retrograde inscription referring to the ethnic, Ζμυρναίων. Below the inscription is a shrimp device which was one of the devices used on the coins of Smyrna⁵. This type of stamps with five examples have been also noted by Grace in her archives⁶.

Two of the stamps from Pergamon (figs. 1-2, nos. 573-574) have been found in a context, known as Pergamon deposit, and dated to c. 198-c. 161 BC (Period III of the Rhodian and Knidian stamp chronology)⁷. This evidence

1 Homer mentions about Pramnios wine (in Iliad XI, 629-642 and Odyssey X, 230-240) known also from Pliny the Elder that it was produced in Smyrna (Nat. His. XIV.6). He gave more detailed information stating that the wine was grown in the vineyards were around the sacred temple of the Mother of Gods. Strabon considered Smyrnaean wine among the good wines used for pleasure and medicinal purposes (Geographika XIV.1.15).

2 Schuchhardt 1985, 492, no. 1274; Börker — Burow 1998, 62, no. 573-574, tab. 21 and 127, no. 657, tab. 38.

3 Lungu 2006, 354-355, figs. 36-37; Avram 2019, 335, nos. 66-67.

4 Levi 1964, 272, no. 337, pl. XXII.

5 See some Hellenistic and Roman Imperial coins in wildwinds.com/coins/greece/ionia/smyrna/Milne_31.jpg; wildwinds.com/coins/greece/ionia/smyrna/Milne_032.jpg ; wildwinds.com/coins/greece/ionia/smyrna/SNGCop_1312.jpg.

It is not known whether Smyrnaean shrimps were very reputed in antiquity or not. But, at least, in his book *Deipnosophistae*, Athenaeus makes a reference to Apicius, during the reign of Tiberius, who mentioned about the prawns of Smyrna. (*Deipnosophistae* I,7; Doğer, Kaya 2018, 20, note 15).

6 Panagou 2015, 208, fig. 9.1; Panagou 2019, 235-236, figs. 1-2 and 237 (the total number of Smyrnaean stamps are 7. The Smyrnaean stamps with the ethnic and the device are 5).

7 Finkielsztejn 2001, 196, table 22.1. See also the discussion about the date of the deposit in Lawall 2002.

permits to date the Smyrnaean stamps to this period, nearly the first half of the 2nd century BC. The third stamp from Pergamon which is partially preserved was found during the excavations of the city (fig. 3, no. 657). All these three stamps were impressed by the same die.

In Istros, two other Smyrnaean stamps (figs. 4-5) were unearthed in the sacred votive deposit of the east of the Temple of Aphrodite. A fragmentary krater⁸ bearing a graffito with the inscription Κλεω[...] Ζμυρν[αῖος] found together with the stamped handles has been explained that a certain Kleonymos (or Kleomenes) from Smyrna presented these offerings during a ceremony to the Temple of Aphrodite⁹.

It is suggested that the stamps from Pergamon and the stamps from Istros were from different dies¹⁰. In fact according to the condition of the clay or the way the dies were impressed on the handles might have caused some differences. It is also possible that some small modifications on the current die could have been made to make some parts clearer if some details on the die are not exact (net) after several usage. But the impressions indicate that no modification on the dies has been identified. The only difference is the appearance of the impressions on the handles. The stamps from Pergamon are not impressed as well as the stamps from Istros. In our opinion, as it will be explained below, all five dies are from the same die and the new stamp from Smyrna was impressed by a different die.

During the excavations in 2023 at the theatre of Smyrna an amphora handle bearing the ethnic of Smyrna has been attested (fig. 6a-c). This is the unique Smyrnaean stamp found in the city until now. The organisation of the stamp resembles the other five Smyrnaean stamps, the ethnic is above and a shrimp device is below. The size of the rectangular stamp is 2.5 x 1.4 cm. The micaceous and calcareous clay with microfossiles of the handle is reddish (2.5 YR 5/6 red) and it has a pinkish slip (5 YR 8/3 pink).

Although the lower part of the stamp where the device is placed is rubbed out, the shrimp is rather visible. The inscription (ethnic as ΖΜΥΡΝΑΙΩΝ) on the stamp is not written in retrograde. A retrograde zeta¹¹ instead of a sigma and an omega instead of an omicron are used as seen on the other dies but the shrimp is more curved and smaller (shorter) than the shrimp on the other stamps. The inscription extends along the long side of the stamp and there is no space at the beginning and at the end of the inscription. Contrary, there is space on the other five stamps. The length of the device is also the length of the inscription. The differences in inscription and the device confirm the utilisation of a new die. It is not possible to mention about another fabricant as the styles of the stamps are very close to each other but it is rather certain from the device that both dies (one die for 5 other stamps and one die for the stamp from the theatre of Smyr-

8 This find is considered as oriental sigillata of local Smyrnaean production datable to c. 150 BC. See Lungu 2006, 355.

9 Lungu 2006, 355.

10 Lungu 2006, 354.

11 For the utilisation of a zeta instead of a sigma on the coins dated to the 2nd century BC, see Lungu 2006, 354. Birzescu who published the graffito on a fragmentary krater found in Istros indicates that a zeta instead of a sigma is the later usage for the name of Smyrna and it is suggested to be close to the inscription on the coins of Smyrna after 190 BC. See Birzescu 2004; Lungu 2006, 355.

na) were engraved by the same person. And this permits to suggest that they all belong to the same (one) workshop in which stamped amphorae were produced, probably for a special purpose for a very short period.

Besides the stamps with the ethnic of the city, an anepigraphic stamp from Istros with a shrimp device has been attributed to Smyrna¹². Its attribution to Smyrna seems to be based on the characteristic device. The device is surrounded by a frame and the position of the tail of the shrimp is different from those seen with the ethnic (figs. 7-8). It is cited that the profile of the handle is close to Rhodian amphorae datable to the 2nd century BC.

Similar to the stamp found in Istros, another anepigraphic stamp from Olbia is considered as Smyrnaean¹³ (fig. 9). This stamped handle was found in a cistern and the other material found together with the handle is dated to c. 200-c. 140 BC. So, the first half of the 2nd century BC is suggested for this anepigraphic Smyrnaean stamp¹⁴ as this is the case for Smyrnaean stamps with ethnic.

The finds mentioned above present that until now four matrices are known of Smyrnaean stamps: two with the ethnic and two anepigraphic. The chronological evidence of both types indicates their production in the 2nd century BC and considering the Pergamon deposit finds, in the first half of the 2nd century BC.

As the forms of the Smyrnaean amphorae are not known yet and the stamped handles are very rarely attested in the centers, it is difficult to mention about the Smyrnaean exportation in the Hellenistic Period. The existence of amphora stamps in Pergamon and Istros, and the anepigraphic stamps from Istros and Olbia may be considered as related to individual transportation of amphorae rather than a commercial activity. This conclusion is based only on the stamped material as the amphora production in Smyrna has not yet proven with amphora workshops and deposits with residues. On the other hand, among the finds from the excavation, we have recently identified a group of amphora fragments that we have classified as local production because of their clay characteristics. The micaceous and little calcareous fabrics of these amphorae that are not attributed to any known production center resembles to the fabric of the amphora handle with the stamp. As long as the excavations continue and the excavations in the pre-Roman layers are carried out, it will be possible to unearth amphorae that we can associate with Smyrna.

12 Canarache 1957, 306, no. 798. Re-published in Castelli 2023, 576, no. 7.

13 Levi 1964, 272, no. 337, pl. XXII.

14 Castelli 2023, 576, no. 7. See also Lawall et al. 2014, 31-32.

Bibliography and Abbreviations

Ancient Sources

- Athenaeus Deipnosophistae (The Deipnosophists) I-VII, (trans. by C.B. Gulick), Londra, 1951- 1993.
- Homeros İlyada (transl. by A. Erhat – A. Kadir), Sander Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1975.
- Homeros Odysseus (transl. by A. Erhat – A. Kadir), Sander Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1978.
- Strabon Geographika, Antik Anadolu Coğrafyası, Kitap : XII, XIII, XIV (transl. by A. Pekman), İstanbul, 1987.
- Plinius Gaius Secundus Naturalis Historia-XXXVI, (X volume), (transl. by H. Rackam), Great Britain 1986, 1988 (The Loeb Classical Library).

Modern Sources

- Avram 2019 Avram, A., “Les timbres amphoriques du remplissage de la fosse sacrée du téménos d’Istros”, Analyse et Exploitation des timbres amphoriques grecs (ed. N. Badoud – A. Marangou), Collection archéologie & culture, Rennes, 323-337.
- Birzescu 2004 Birzescu, I., “The Ceramic Inscriptions from Istros”, The Naukratis Phenomenon Approach, Proceedings of the 28th International Colloquium. Papers of the British Museum.
- Börker – Burow 1998 Börker, Chr. – Burow, J., Die Hellenistischen Amphorenstempel aus Pergamon, Berlin, New York.
- Canarache 1957 Canarache, V., Importul amforelor stampilate la Istria, Bucarest.
- Castelli 2023 Castelli, T., “Quelques raretés amphoriques Istriennes”, Pontica LVI, Sup. X, 573-583.
- Doğer – Kaya 2018 Doğer, E. – Kaya, E., “Eski Çağda Smyrna ve Civarında Yeme İçme Kültürü”, İzmir’in Lezzet Öyküsü, Mutfak Kültürü 1, (eds. E. Akçiçek – N. Kadıoğlu-Çevik – M. Duranlı – P. Dönmez-Fedakar – S. Ötleş – A. Uhri), İzmir, 19-25.
- Finkielsztejn 2001 Finkielsztejn, G., Chronologie détaillée et révisée des éponymes amphoriques rhodiens, de 270 à 108 av. J.–C. environ, Premier bilan, BAR–IS 990, Oxford.
- Lawall 2002 Lawall, M. L., “Early Excavations at Pergamon and the Chronology of Rhodian Amphora Stamps”, Hesperia 71/3, 295-324.
- Lawall et al. 2014 Lawall, M.L. – Guldager Bilde, P. – Bjerg, L. – Handberg, S. – Højte, J. M., “The Lower City of Olbia Pontike Occupation and Abandonment in the 2nd Century BC », Pottery, Peoples and Places. Study and Interpretation of Late Hellenistic Pottery (eds. P. G. Bilde - M. L. Lawall), Aarhus, 29-46.
- Levi 1964 Levi, E. I., Ольбия, Теменос и Агора, Moscow, Russian.
- Lungu 2006 Lungu, V., “Smyrne et la mer Noire: Note archéologique”,

- Anatolia Antiqua 14, 351-361.
- Panagou 2015 Panagou, T., “9. Patterns of Amphora Stamp Distribution Tracking Down Export Tendencies”, *The Ancient Greek Economy Market Households and City States* (eds. E. M. Harris – D. Lewis - M. Woolmer), Cambridge, 207-229.
- Panagou 2019 Panagou, T., “Minor Groups of Amphora Stamps”, in *Analyse et Exploitation des timbres amphoriques grecs* (eds. N. Badoud – A. Marangou), *Collection archéologie & culture*, Rennes, 235-240.
- Schuchhardt 1895 Schuchhardt, K. S., “Amphorenstempeln”, *Altertümer von Pergamon VIII.2, Die Inschriften von Pergamon II*, nr. 766-1254, Berlin.

Öz

Yeni bir Smyrna Amphorası Mühür Kalıbı

Smyrna Antik Dönem'de şarap üretimi yapan kentler arasında yer almaktadır. Kentin şarap üretimi antik yazarlar tarafından bilinmektedir. Günümüze değin, amphora atölyesi veya depozitleri gibi bu üretimle ilişkili olabilecek buluntular kentin içerisinde veya çevresinde gerçekleştirilen kazı çalışmaları ve araştırmalarda tespit edilememiştir. Çok sayıda olmamakla birlikte çeşitli merkezlerden ele geçen bazı amphora mühür buluntuları, Smyrna'da Hellenistik Dönemde mühürlü amphora üretilmiş olduğunu göstermektedir. Pergamon'dan üç, Istros'dan iki ve Olbia'dan bir adet Smyrna etniğini taşıyan amphora mührü bilinmektedir. Aynı stilde yapılmış, üstte etnik ve altında, Smyrna sikkelerinde de görülen, karides sembolünü taşıyan bu mühürler olasılıkla aynı atölyenin üretimi olmalıdır. Söz konusu mühürlerin tamamı aynı kalıptan elde edilmişlerdir. Smyrna Tiyatrosu kazılarında 2023 yılında ele geçen bir mühür farklı bir kalıptan elde edilmiştir. Böylece etnik taşıyan mühürlerin şimdilik en az iki farklı kalıbı olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu mühürün de, farklı merkezlerde ele geçen mühürlerle aynı stilde olması, hepsinin aynı atölyenin üretimi olduklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Olbia ve Istros'dan ele geçen ve üzerlerinde sadece karides sembolü taşıyan 2 yazıtsız mühür de Smyrna üretimi olarak önerilmektedir. Yazıtlı ve etnik taşıyan mühürlerle yazıtsız mühürlerin aynı atölyeye ait olup olmadıkları henüz bilinmemektedir. Ayrıca buluntular sadece mühürlü kulp oldukları için Smyrna amphoralarının formları hakkında da henüz veriler yetersizdir. Rhodos amphoralarına benzer oldukları bazı araştırmacılar tarafından belirtilmiştir. Smyrna kazılarında ele geçen ve kökeni belirlenemeyen bazı amphora parçalarının kil özellikleri, Tiyatro buluntusu mühürlü kulpun kil özellikleri ile benzerlik göstermektedir. Yapılacak kil analizleri bu konunun açıklığa kavuşmasına yardımcı olacaktır. Tiyatro buluntusu mühürlü kulpun ele geçtiği dolgu tabakası tarihleme için yeterli kanıtlar sunmamaktadır. Ancak buluntu yerlerindeki kronolojik veriler yardımıyla mühürlü Smyrna amphora kulpları MÖ 2. yüzyılın ilk yarısına tarihlenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Smyrna, amphora, amphora mührü, antik ticaret, Smyrna tiyatrosu, İzmir



Fig. 1. Smyrnaean stamp from
Pergamon, No. 573
(Börker — Burow 1998, 62, no. 573, tab. 21)



Fig. 2. Smyrnaean stamp from
Pergamon, No. 574
(Börker — Burow 1998, 62, no. 574, tab. 21)



Fig. 3. Smyrnaean stamp from
Pergamon, No. 657
(Börker — Burow 1998, 127, no. 657, tab. 38)



Fig. 4. Smyrnaean stamp from Istros 1 (Lungu 2006, 354, fig. 36; Avram 2019, 335, no. 66)



Fig. 5. Smyrnaean stamp from
Istros 2 (Lungu 2006, 355, fig. 37; Avram 2019, 335, no. 67)



Fig. 6a. Smyrnaean stamp from the Smyrna theatre (SMTI 2023.52-SMYRNA. 5348-SM 117)

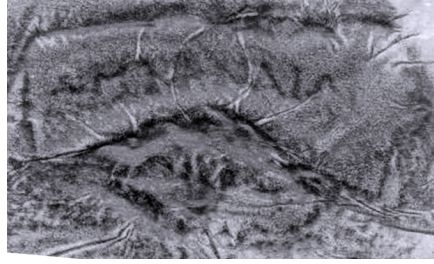


Fig. 6b. Smyrnaean stamp from the Smyrna theatre (SMTI 2023.52-SMYRNA. 5348-SM 117)

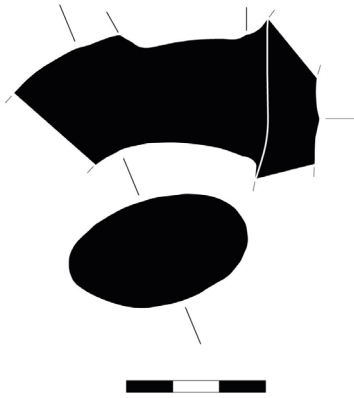


Fig. 6c. Smyrnaean stamp from the Smyrna theatre (SMTI 2023.52-SMYRNA. 5348-SM 117)

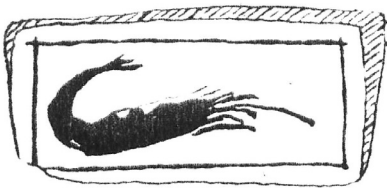


Fig. 7. Smyrnaean stamp from Istros (Canarache 1957, 306, no. 798)



Fig. 8. Smyrnaean stamp from Istros (Castelli 2023, 576, no. 7)



Fig. 9. Smyrnaean stamp from Olbia (Levi 1964, 272, no. 337)