

LESBOS WINE: ΟΙΝΟΣ ΑΥΘΙΓΕΝΗΣ OR REGIONAL VINTAGE SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE LESBIAN SPHERE?

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Abstract: Judging from chemical results obtained on some 68 samples of archaic Lesbian amphoras both from Lesbos itself (Mytilene, Methymna, Eressos et alii) and from overseas sites (viz. Abdera, Istros, Berezan, Nadlimanskoe and Olbia) and in comparing them with chemical pottery references of the Lyon Lab data bank for both Lesbos and Eastern Greece, it appears that less than ca. one third of them only – consisting of various grey ones only – were manufactured on the island, for most of them in the western part of it. The remaining part of ca. two thirds clearly originated from outside the island, mostly from the Troad / Hellespontus sphere, judging from comparisons with our available references for these areas. It is first of all the case for most the so-called Lesbian red jars, except one part of them from an unknown centre (distinct from Thasos as erroneously put forward by Clinkenbeard). Consequently, Lesbian wine-label would rather correspond to a single vine species or blend of various ones than to a strictly delimited vineyard.

Cuvinte-cheie: vin de Lesbos, amfore tip Lesbos, epoca arhaică, determinarea originilor

Rezumat: În urma comparării rezultatelor analizei fizico-chimice, realizate pe un număr de 68 de eşantioane de amfore tip Lesbos, provenind atât din insula Lesbos (Mitilene, Methymna, Eressos ș.a.), cât și din alte situri din afara acesteia (Abdera, Istros, Berezan, Nadlimanskoe, Olbia), cu datele de referință ale Laboratorului de Ceramologie din Lyon pentru Lesbos și Grecia de Est, se evidențiază o idee principală. Din totalitatea eşantioanelor de amfore analizate, cca o treime, în principal cele gri, par a fi produse pe insulă, mai ales în partea occidentală a acesteia, restul de două treimi părând a fi confecționate în exterior, cea mai mare parte în sfera Troada/Hellespont. Este cazul, mai ales, al tipului „fractional red” al lui B. Clinkenbeard, care s-a dovedit a fi un produs exterior insulelor Lesbos și Thasos. În consecință, vinul numit „de Lesbos” ar putea defini nu neapărat produsul unei anumite podgorii, ci ar corespunde, mai degrabă, unei regiuni mai extinse, conținând soiuri și cupaje diverse.

The complex lineage of transport amphoras of Lesbian types still raises today keen questions of origin, despite several previous scientific approaches¹.

The Lyon Lab data bank for Eastern Greece includes 231 samples from various parts of the island of Lesbos², among them 26 of various archaic transport amphoras of Lesbian types, viz. 18 from Mytilene and eight from Methymna. Our range of samples from the island also includes a set of undifferentiated fragments of “recent amphoras” (*sic* recorded !) collected in 1986 during a survey conducted by M. Picon (†), but without any mention of the places of sampling left in the lab archive; however, according to the pieces of information provided by the ephoreia, two main areas were concerned, which included some remains of kilns: one at the eastern part of the Gulf of Geras and the other in the northern bank of

the Gulf of Kalloni³. For comparative tests, a supplementary group of 42 samples of archaic jars of Lesbian types was analysed from several overseas sites, viz Abdera (14), Istros (20), Berezan (5), Nadlimanskoe (1) and Olbia (2).

The data processing began with the internal classification for Lesbos itself combining both clay samples, amphoras of Lesbian types and associated pottery finds. Among archaic amphoras only, four main representative clusters stood out from it, viz.:

- A first homogenous one associating a group of grey wares, all of them collected from various sites of western Lesbos (Methymna, Eressos, Antissa and Pyrrha), together with six fragments of Lesbian jars from Methymna, all of a variant with beige clay and dark grey core. Although most

¹ Jones 1986, p. 281–282, 740; Clinkenbeard 1982; 1986; Whitbread 1995, p. 154–165; Domingo, Johnston 2003, p. 31–32, 35–36, 42–43, 47: 2a, 48: 2b; Dupont 2011; 2019, p. 42, 46–49.

² In comparison with the situation of the 60's (see Hampe, Winter 1965, p. 147–151) or even late 70's (see Psaropoulou 1984, esp. p. 165–167, 178, 184, 199, 202, 206), some modern potters' workshops are still operating in the NE part of the island, at Mandamados town and beach (alias Haghios Stefanos), the latter being specialized in the manufacture of cooking-wares. For that reason, their products were

restricted to 10 samples only, which revealed a rather irrelevant chemical pattern.

³ These two locations might have been partly inspired by such modern contributions as Simandiris 1896, p. 31: “La vigne n'est actuellement cultivée qu'aux vallées de Calloni et Eressos et en partie sur les collines de Plomari”. However, except in the case of the triad Mytilene-Methymna-Eressos, already well attested in antiquity, the surroundings of both Kalloni and Geras gulfs seem to have been devoted to viticulture though mainly from modern times.