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## **Concerning to the Relationships between Eastern Black Sea Area and Outside World in the Roman and Early Byzantine Periods**

Relations between eastern Black Sea area and outside world in the 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD one of the problematic and discussed issue of historiography. The researchers believe that fortified "cities" of this region, unlike of Classical and Hellenistic era, became strategically important centres of the Roman and later, the Byzantine Empire (Inadze, 1968, 144; Lordkipanidze, 1989, 342). However, according to the new data, it appears that the southern Black Sea cities (Sinope, Amissos, Heraclea Pontica and Amastria) remain the importance as trade and craft centres. In this regard, special mention should be made of Sinope, the trade relations of which covered PontusEuxinos, Asia Minor and the eastern Mediterranean since the early Antique times. This role has not changed in the Black Sea area in Roman era as well. Economy, social structure and the state structure of Sinope are closely linked to the interests of the Roman state. This city was main centre of Roman army and navy standing in the East during the centuries. The troops based in Caucasus and northern Asia Minor were supplied from Sinope (Maksimova, 1956, 306-352; Hind, 1976, 6-12).

Trade products of Sinope which it distributed to and from the hinterland and other coast of Black Sea can be grouped in 4 main categories: 1. Live and salted fish; 2. Timber and its products; 3. The high price agricultural products such as olive oil and wine; 4. The high price mineral raw, such as metals and precious stones (Doonan, 1999, 41-45).

Sinope economy is greatly dependent on the mineral resources in the Archaic and Classical periods, while on agricultural production and the timber bit later. Fishery expanded in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Timber also is widely recognized in Sinope and the surrounding area. Sinopean great variety of trees (fir, maple, oak) was known as the best material for shipbuilding, which were better than the quality of the wood on the northern coast of the Black Sea. Strabo's *Geography* is clearly confirms the olive-growing area in Sinope: "across the country olives are growing, and the breed is slightly away from the beach." David M. Robinson said that Sinope, may have been one of the main supplier of olive oil to the Black Sea (1906, 265). Sinope has traditionally been linked to a range of minerals as well. Minium or *Sinopis* is considered to be one of the most famous in the ancient world. It is a natural red dye, which is used in painting, architecture and treatment. Sinopean steel was known in Antiquity as well, which was marked by a high degree. According to Strabo and Pliny silver, iron and jasper were extracted in Ünye (close to modern Ordu, ancient Cotyora, colony of Sinope), Amissos and river of Thermodont basin (Doonan, 1999, 44).

According to ancient sources, Sinope played a key role in the production and distribution of olive oil and wine in the entire Black Sea coast. This reality, naturally, determine the development of pottery production here. Recent archaeological excavations have shown that a powerful industrial centre was functioned in Sinope and its surroundings in the late Roman period. Particularly interesting in this regard is amphorae firing complex in Demirci, 15km away to the south of Sinop, which is operated by the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (Kassab-Tezgör, 2010a, 167-172; 2010b, 167-172). Accidentally discovered workshops in Alaplı close to modern Ereğli (ancient Heraclea Pontica) also is noteworthy. Waste material shows that there were already prepared amphorae with narrow and tall necks being one of the most widespread species in the Black Sea region since the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Arsenyeva, Kassab-Tezgör, Naumenko, 1997, 187-198). Workshops found in Sinop and Ereğli, as well as the very Sinopean items in the various regions of Black Sea: amphorae, jugs, loutheriai or other types of vessel will allow to conclude that Sinope and its environs was one of the major pottery center in the entire Black Sea region in Antiquity and afterwards. With the continuation of the production of local traditions

observed new forms as well, in particular, a kind of imitation of the Mediterranean amphorae forms.

Due to the lack of written sources, it is difficult to research agriculture and economic of eastern Black Sea area, or historical Colchis. Handicrafts decisive with regard to the archaeological data. According to Strabo's *Geography*, it appears that the main object of Colchian economy and therefore of export was timber: "each material required for ship building are there, many forests and rivers for transporting, many of cultivating flax, hemp, and pitch resin" (XI, 2,17). Strabo highlighted the Colchian flax, he thought that it was preparing flax oil too, which has edible, medicinal and lighting purposes. According to this author from Colchis should be taken gold as well: "someone said that winter torrents brought the gold and the barbarians collect it through shot kneading and hairy skins" (XI, 2,17).

As we can see, the Colchian economy is mainly based on the timber, wax and resin connected with shipbuilding industry, and flax oil and its derived products in agriculture. Strabo says nothing on the grain crops and viticulture. It seems that there has been a poorly developed agriculture and gardening. The situation has not changed in the later period. Procopius of Caesarea says: "Lazi always engaged in maritime trade with the Romans in Pontus. Even they had no salt, no wheat, no more goodness. They are only used to provide skins and slaves, and the purchase of necessary things" (*Wars* 2, 15). Interesting a second extract as well: "no wheat, nor wine vegetated in Lazica, all brought by boats from the shores of the Romans" (*Wars* 2, 28).

Most likely, along with natural wealth and raw materials handicraft products also were the subject of Colchian export (Lordkianidze, 1966, 88, 140). A wide range of local ceramics in the cultural levels of the late Antique and early Medieval periods indicates of abundance of local products. This is also confirmed by petrographic analysis, and what most important, typological and genetic connection of local production of the Hellenistic period with Colchian brown clay amphorae. During this time, according to the available data, four type of amphorae should to be produced in Colchis: the large concave body amphorae, which would have had a sharp rib; the relatively small size thin-walled amphorae; the so-called Tsebelda-type amphorae and concave body amphorae spread in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (Khalvashi, 2002, 10-21).

Concerning to local industry there is undoubtedly interesting kiln covered in the fort of the Apsarus. It functioned to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and mainly produced brown clay and amphorae with a ridge on the neck. Thin-walled, small amphorae also firing according to the material identified in the waste (Khalvashi, 2002, 16-19; 2010, 33). Fragments of amphorae with a ridge on the neck, slag and defective samples of amphorae were also discovered in the vicinity of Eschera (Voronov, 1972, 110). Local production particularly arose in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD due of political and economic success of western Georgian kingdom of Egrisi. Concave body amphorae widely distributed in the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD and recognized as western Georgian production. Several production centers: Rokhi (Baghdadi Municipality), Bichvinta and Vardtsikhe are identified.

The amphorae of this type greatly exceeds the number of other types of pottery in the cultural levels of early Byzantine period, including Apsarus (Inaishvili and Khalvashi, 2011, 265-266, Fig. 1). Here as well as in the other sites of the eastern Black Sea region wide variety of locally produced vessels are found: pots, pans, bowls, jugs, cans, scoops, pitchers, *dergis*, tiles, etc. Like the Hellenistic period, influence of imported pottery has been stressed. According to the obtained data, imitations of the Mediterranean and southern Black Sea forms were observed – not only forms but also clay structures too. For example, the fragments of brown clay amphorae with ridged handles were found in Apsarus containing mica inclusions in large number. Apparently, along the imported ceramic products, raw materials also imported. It should be noted that such vessels are often roughly produced.

This fact indicates that pottery production in the eastern Black Sea area was one of the leading sector in the the Roman and early Byzantine periods, but was or not this pottery the subject of export, still not be resolved. However, 40 ampornae with concave body dated to the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD exhibited in the museums of the southern Black Sea region speak a lot. Generally, recognized that this form has obvious connection with Colchian amphorae, but singled out the distinctive characters as well, so it's referred to as a "pseudo Colchian" amphorae (Kassab-Tezgör, 1999, 55; 2000, 127-141). It should be noted that not only in the southern, but also in the eastern Black Sea coast observed variations of the same type of amphorae, which is mainly reflected in the design of mouth.

Dominique Kassab-Tezgör indicates that foots of the amphorae, preserved in the museums of the southern Black Sea coast, do not have a relief pitch characterized of the Colchian amporae (1999, 55). We should note that this feature of Colchian craftsmen technology disappears by this time. Some forms of late Hellenistic and Roman period small thin-walled Cochian amphorae were made without rosettes. Bodies of similar amphorae found in the southern and eastern Black Sea coasts are often equally deformed. It is particularly important that on all samples of the southern Black Sea coast confirmed the use of special weapons. It leaves on the surface long vertical lines, irregular and sometimes overlap (Kassab-Tezgör, 1999, 55). Exactly the same strips had done on the bodies of amphorae discovered in Apsarus. We believe this should be a sign, denoting a workshop. According to shape, clay and abundance of discoveries, producing centers, most probably, have to be of Colchian origin.

Imported items found in Apsarus shows that Roman garrisons stationed here predominantly supplied from the eastern Mediterranean and western parts of the Roman Empire in the end of 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Distribution of items from these regions are reduced in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD and production of southern Black Sea coast pottery (amphorae, louteriai) dominates. Along with the eastern Mediterranean and local production, corrugated surface amphorae in large number made in Demirciare found in the cultural levels of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Generally, 9 types of Sinopean clay amphorae of Roman and Byzantine periods are determined. Southern Black Sea origin amphorae also were discovered in Sebastopolis, Pitsunda and Vardtsikhe in large number (Khalvashi, 2002, 37-41, 51-52; 2010, 33-34; Inaishvili and Khalvashi, 2011, 269-270, Fig. 7; 2012, 497-502).

Close relations between southern Pontus and Colchis also reflected by the fact of sharing of amporae forms, techniques and technological peculiarities. Morphology of Demirci amphorae dating to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD reveals the apparent closeness with Colchian ones (Garlan and Kassab-Tezgör, 1996, 327-331). Along to Sinope, two samples of such amphorae exhibited in the Giresun Museum. Same concave bodies observed on the large red clay amphorae, which tend to the Colchian amphorae dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and following period. Similarity observed on bottom forms as well. On the other hand, transmission of the southern Black Sea amphorae forms was traced in the

Colchian handicraft industry. One group of narrow neck amphorae found in Apsarus and Sebastopolis are imitations of the Heracleian tall neck amphorae. Same should be say concerning to corrugated shoulders amphorae discovered in Apsarus, Sebastopolis, Pitsunda and Inkita vicinity. This relationship reflects the numismatic material as well: coins minted in Sinope, Trapezus and Amisos were discovered in Apsarus and Pitsunda in large number (Dundua 1971, 146; 1975, 352; Varshalomidze 2009, 26; Inaishvili and Khalvashi, 2012, 494). Some researchers believe that Trapezus was major supplier to the eastern coast of the Black Sea (Golenko, 1964, 35-36).

The new findings confirm that Roman centres of the eastern Black Sea area had close political and economic relations with southern Black Sea coast in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. Unlike the previous era, relations between Colchis and Asia Minor framed in new shape: Apsarus, Tsikhisdziri, Sebastopolis, Pitsunda and other centres over the centuries were Roman and than Byzantine strategic points (Kakhidze, 2002, 129-134). Therefore, imported productions found there are mainly intended for supply of Roman and Byzantine garrisons. It seems close to truth Otar Lordkipanidze's view that relations between Colchis and the outside world mainly exhausted with the contacts of coastal centers, where Roman and Byzantine garrisons were stationed (1983, 133-142). For the detail understanding of nature of relations between local populations of Colchis and Asia Minor, it is necessary to study surroundings of these forts and other local settlements. Moreover, the signs of this relations are already apparent. We have in mind fragments of Sinopean ceramics discovered in the village of Kolotauri, Keda Municipality placed in the Adjaritskali Valley (Mamuladze and Khalvashi, 2002, 30) and burial or other type of artifacts recently found in lower stream of Chorokhi river basin, namely in Kapandibi, Makhoand Zanakidzeebi dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.

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***Abstract***

Ceramic production was one of the leading sector of the Colchian economic in the Roman and Byzantine periods. Some types were exported. This improved by discovering of concave body amphorae in the southern Black Sea area. In parallel, there are traced Sinopean and Heracleian amphorae in the territory of Colchis in much number. Nine types of Roman and Byzantine period Sinopean clay amphorae were identified just in Apsarus. Those also were discovered in Bichvinta, Nokalakevi and Vardtsikhe.

Recent finds also improve on the close contacts between eastern Black Sea and southern Black Sea which framed in new shape. The researchers believe that fortified "cities" of Colchis, unlike of Classical and Hellenistic era, became strategically important centres of the Roman and later, the Byzantine Empires. Therefore, imported productions are mainly intended for supply of Roman and Byzantine garrisons.