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# Reviews

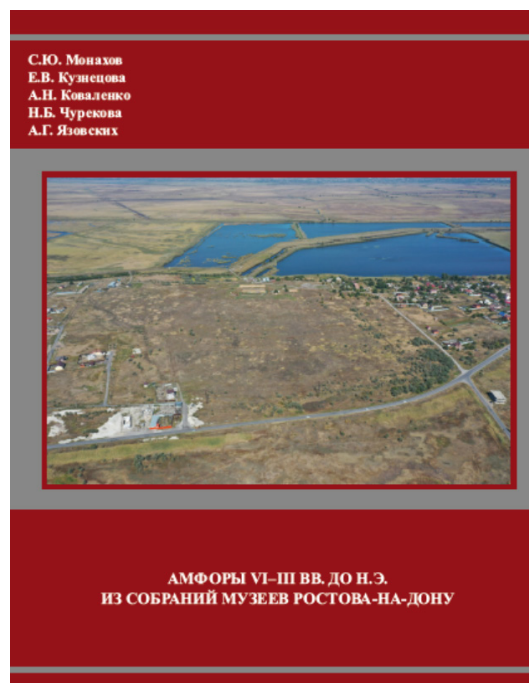
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**S. Yu. Monakhov, E. V. Kuznetsova, A. N. Kovalenko, N. B. Churekova, A. G. Yazovskikh, *Amphorae of the 6th–3rd Centuries BC from Museum Collections of Rostov-on-Don* [in Russian], Saratov: Amirit, 2025, 284 pages, 123 figs, 5 tables, and 199 catalogue illustrations integrated into the text. ISBN 978-5-00207-976-6.**

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The present volume occupies a distinct and strategically important position within a long-term publication programme developed over more than a decade and resulting in ten substantial catalogues of amphora collections preserved in Russian museums. Conceived from the outset as a cumulative scholarly enterprise rather than a series of isolated publications, the programme has progressively brought into academic circulation a vast and heterogeneous corpus of ceramic material from the Northern Black Sea region, presented within a unified methodological framework applied with notable consistency.

Launched in 2015–16 under the direction of Sergey Yu. Monakhov, the project initially took shape within the framework of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research initiative *Greek Amphorae of the 6th–2nd Centuries BC from Museum Collections of Crimea*. The first two volumes of the series, devoted respectively to the collections of the Eastern Crimean Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve (Kerch) and the National Preserve of Chersonesus Taurica, served as methodological pilot studies in which the fundamental principles of cataloguing were established: a standardised descriptive algorithm, consistent metric documentation, systematic graphic recording,

and typological attribution grounded in current scholarly classifications. At the same time, these early publications retained a partly experimental character, most notably in their limited treatment of associated ceramic material – such as black-gloss and painted wares – within amphora-bearing archaeological complexes. The early recognition of these limitations proved crucial for the subsequent methodological refinement of the project.

A major qualitative advance was achieved during the next stage of the series (volumes III–V), produced under the auspices of the project *Greek Amphorae (7th–2nd Centuries BC) from the Northern Shores of the Pontus: Creation of Museum Catalogues and an Electronic Database*. This phase saw a significant expansion in both scale and analytical ambition. The catalogues of the State Hermitage Museum (2019) and the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts (2020), followed by the substantial two-volume publication of the Krasnodar State Historical and Archaeological Museum-Reserve (2021–2022), brought into scholarly circulation some of the largest and most complex amphora collections in Russia. During this stage, the authors expanded their analyses by incorporating black-gloss and other imported ceramics into amphora complexes, thereby strengthening both contextual interpretation and chronological arguments. At the same time, all published material was integrated into the APE (Amphorae of the Pontic Region) database (<https://ape.sgu.ru>), hosted by Saratov State University, and structured according to the same principles as the printed catalogues.

The subsequent volumes (VI–IX) returned to Crimean museum collections processed earlier but unpublished for several years. The catalogues devoted to the Yalta Historical and Literary Museum (2023), the Evpatoria Museum of Local Lore, and the Kalos Limen Museum-Reserve (2024) are particularly significant in this respect. The latter publication introduced an important methodological innovation: for the first time in the series, collections from two different museums were combined within a single volume on the basis of their geographical proximity and shared archaeological background. The success of this experiment demonstrated the value of transcending institutional boundaries in favour of archaeologically meaningful analytical units. It should also be noted that another volume of the series appeared in 2025, devoted to the amphora collections of the Central Museum of Taurida and the Feodosia Museum of Antiquities.

This experience directly informs the conceptual design of the present book. As the tenth volume of the series, it may be regarded as a major synthesising milestone, bringing together methodological refinements developed over the course of a decade. At the same time, it marks a clear conceptual shift. By uniting the amphora collections of the Rostov Regional Museum of Local Lore and the Educational Museum of Archaeology of Southern Federal University – both closely linked to the Elizavetovskoe fortified settlement and its associated burial grounds – the authors adopt a publication strategy that reflects archaeological realities rather than administrative divisions. In doing so, the volume not only encapsulates a decade of cumulative methodological progress but also inaugurates a new phase of the project, moving from museum-based cataloguing toward regionally integrated historical interpretation, with

the Lower Don region emerging as a key zone of Greek–indigenous interaction in the Northern Pontic world.

The integration of the published material into the APE digital database ensures that the scholarly value of the volume extends well beyond the printed page. With around 1,800 amphorae now included, and the entire series accessible online through the Institute of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage website (<https://www.sgu.ru/struktura/archeology>), the database ensures long-term accessibility and facilitates both comparative and quantitative research across Pontic amphora collections.

## STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE VOLUME

The volume is devoted to the systematic publication of Greek transport amphorae preserved in the collections of two major institutions in Rostov-on-Don: the Rostov Regional Museum of Local Lore (RRMLL) and the Educational Museum of Archaeology of the Institute of History and International Relations of Southern Federal University (SFU). Although formally belonging to different museums, the overwhelming majority of the material derives from a single archaeological micro-region – the Lower Don – and above all from the Elizavetovskoe fortified settlement together with its associated kurgan cemetery and ground necropolis. This shared provenance provides a coherent archaeological and historical framework, allowing the authors to approach the material not merely as separate museum holdings but as interconnected assemblages reflecting long-term patterns of exchange and consumption.

The internal structure of the book follows the model developed throughout the series, combining clarity of presentation with a strong analytical component. After the list of abbreviations and conventions, the Introduction (pp. 11–18) outlines the aims of the publication, situates it within the broader research programme on Northern Pontic amphorae, and briefly presents the methodological principles applied in the catalogue.

Chapter 1, *History of Studying Monuments from the 5th to the 3rd Centuries BC in the North-Eastern Azov Region* (pp. 19–32), offers a detailed historiographical survey of archaeological research in the Lower Don area. Particular attention is paid to the history of excavations at Elizavetovskoe, from early twentieth-century investigations through Soviet-period fieldwork to recent campaigns. The authors critically reassess the interpretative value of earlier documentation, emphasising how changing excavation strategies and recording standards have shaped the composition and dating of amphora assemblages. By situating the amphora evidence within this broader research history, the chapter provides an essential contextual framework for the analyses that follow.

Chapter 2, *History of Formation of the Amphora Collections of the RRMLL and the SFU Educational Museum of Archaeology* (pp. 33–40), examines the complex processes through which amphora finds from the Lower Don entered museum collections. The chapter documents the dispersal of material between institutions, shifting policies of artefact deposition, and the decisive role of Elizavetovskoe as the principal source of amphorae for both museums. This discussion goes beyond purely antiquarian interest, enabling the authors

to identify gaps, overlaps, and biases within the collections and to explain why certain categories of material – such as amphorae from kurgan burials rather than settlement contexts – are better represented than others.

Chapter 3, *Amphora Complexes from Excavations of Monuments in the Lower Don Region* (pp. 41–112), constitutes the interpretative core of the volume. Here amphorae are analysed within their archaeological contexts, whether funerary complexes, habitation layers, or construction fills. Drawing on a careful re-examination of excavation reports, field diaries, and associated finds, the authors reassess the dating of several key complexes, including the well-known but long-debated kurgans of the “Five Brothers” group. This contextual approach underpins a series of chronological observations, particularly concerning the evolution and dating of Heracleian and Sinopean stamps and shifts in the relative prominence of production centres over time. In this respect, Chapter 3 forms a bridge between the historiographical overview of the opening chapters and the empirical detail of the catalogue.

The catalogue itself (pp. 113–235) constitutes the empirical core of the book, comprising detailed entries for 199 amphorae, of which 102 belong to the collection of the RRMLL and 97 to that of the SFU Educational Museum of Archaeology. The material is presented in two clearly separated sections, each organised by centres of production according to a consistent internal order. Within each production group – particularly in the extensive sections devoted to Heraclea Pontica and Sinope – stamped amphorae are presented first, arranged according to the chronological sequence of the stamps, followed by unstamped vessels. This structure considerably enhances both the usability of the catalogue and its analytical clarity.

Each catalogue entry follows a rigorously standardised descriptive format. For every vessel the authors provide a complete set of metric parameters (including height, neck height, maximum body diameter, and rim and mouth diameters), together with volume estimates obtained empirically or calculated from measured drawings. Where vessels are fragmentary, additional parameters ensure comparability. Every amphora is illustrated by both a scaled drawing and a photograph (generally at a scale of 1:10), supplemented by detailed rim and foot profiles (1:2). Stamps are reproduced photographically or by rubbing at a scale of 1:1, while *dipinti* and *graffiti* are presented at appropriate individual scales. The catalogue is further enhanced by typological and chronological charts illustrating the evolution of amphora forms for major production centres, especially Heraclea and Sinope.

The volume concludes with a summary and an extensive set of appendices, including a bibliography, indices of geographical and personal names, and a specialised index of Greek magistrates and fabricants. The bibliography is both extensive and up to date, incorporating classical reference works together with recent studies on amphora typology and stamp chronology. Together these features make the book not only a publication of museum collections but also a major reference work for the study of amphorae and ancient trade in the Northern Black Sea region.

## THE ROSTOV REGIONAL MUSEUM OF LOCAL LORE COLLECTION

The amphora collection of the Rostov Regional Museum of Local Lore (RRMLL) comprises 102 vessels, complete or fragmentary, and is overwhelmingly dominated by material from excavations at the Elizavetovskoe fortified settlement and its associated burial grounds. From both quantitative and chronological perspectives, the collection provides a highly representative cross-section of amphora imports into the Lower Don region between the late 7th/early 6th centuries BC and the 3rd century BC, allowing long-term trends as well as shorter fluctuations in supply to be traced with unusual clarity.

The largest component of the collection consists of amphorae from Heraclea Pontica (35 examples), representing more than one third of the assemblage. Most vessels belong to morphological types I-A and II and originate predominantly from securely dated settlement and funerary contexts at Elizavetovskoe. Particularly striking is the very high proportion of stamped examples: nearly 80% bear stamps on the necks. The corpus includes not only well-attested magistrate and fabricant stamps but also several rare or previously unknown impressions represented by single specimens. This abundance of stamped material confirms the dominant position of Heraclea within the regional market until the last third of the 4th century BC, when Heracleian transport amphorae appear to have been the principal containers for imported goods in the Lower Don.

The second largest group in the RRMLL collection consists of amphorae attributed to unidentified West Pontic centres (18 vessels). Many were formerly classified as Heracleian amphorae of type II-A, including examples belonging to the “Gorgias–Diokles” group. Building on arguments first advanced in earlier volumes of the series, the authors use the Rostov material to demonstrate that these vessels represent a distinct production tradition, plausibly originating from one or several centres along the Western Pontic coast. The Elizavetovskoe assemblage is particularly important in this respect, as it includes a substantial number of such amphorae, including stamped specimens occurring both as isolated finds and within well-defined archaeological complexes. Although the chronology of this group remains relatively broad – spanning the end of the 4th and the first third of the 3rd century BC – the concentration of material at a single site strongly supports their reassignment away from Heraclea.

Sinopean amphorae form the third largest group in the collection, with 16 examples representing several morphological variants. The earliest specimen, variant I-A, dates to the 390s–370s BC, while a cluster of fractional vessels of variant I-E comes from a single kurgan complex (“Five Brothers”, kurgan 8) and falls within the 360s–340s BC. The majority belong to variant II-C. Several bear stamps whose dating remains controversial, and the authors explicitly address discrepancies between the “low” and “high” chronological systems. As amphora production at Sinope did not begin before the 4th century BC, these vessels represent integral elements of Classical-period Black Sea trade networks.

Beyond these dominant groups, the RRMLL collection includes a broad spectrum of imports from both the Aegean and the Pontic worlds. Six Chian amphorae, all originating from the Elizavetovskoe kurgan cemetery, date from the second quarter of the 5th to the early 4th century BC, while six Peparethian vessels cluster in the first third of the 4th century. Five amphorae from Mende span the third quarter of the 5th to the early 4th century, including early globular forms and later variants with goblet-shaped feet. Knidian amphorae are represented by four vessels, among them the eponymous “Elizavetovskoe” variant, originally identified from kurgan 5 of the “Five Brothers” group and still a key reference point for Knidian typology.

The collection also includes four fragmentary amphorae from Chersonesus, one bearing a stamp of the astynomos Apollonidas I (325–315 BC), which provides a firm chronological anchor. Thasian amphorae are represented by three vessels, ranging from an early “Phanagorian” variant of the mid-5th century to later stamped examples of the “Nikoleris” series. Three amphorae are attributed to unidentified Mediterranean centres, one bearing the stamp Θέωνο[ς], while the products of Kos and Rhodes appear in two examples each. The Rhodian material includes a stamped neck with the name of the magistrate Ariston II (167–165 BC), representing an unusually late import in the Elizavetovskoe context.

Particularly noteworthy are several rare pieces. The earliest amphora in the collection is a vessel tentatively attributed to Teos or to an unidentified centre of the “Clazomenian circle”, dating to the end of the 7th or the beginning of the 6th century BC and recovered from a kurgan near Khapry railway station. This amphora occupies an important place in discussions of the earliest Greek contacts in the Lower Don region. Equally significant is a Samian amphora of the second quarter of the 5th century BC, a grey-clay Lesbian amphora of the mid-4th century, and single examples from Ikos, Erythrai, Corinth, and Colchis. The collection also includes a Punic fractional amphora of Ramon Torres type T-7.1.2.1, dated by context to the first quarter of the 3rd century BC. This rare find illustrates the far-reaching commercial connections reflected in the RRMLL assemblage.

Taken as a whole, the RRMLL collection stands out for the quality of its contextual documentation, the high proportion of stamped vessels, and the chronological breadth of the material. Its publication not only enlarges the corpus of known amphorae from the Lower Don but also contributes directly to ongoing debates concerning production centres, stamp chronologies, and the structure of trade networks in the Northern Pontic region.

### THE SFU EDUCATIONAL MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION

The collection comprises 97 vessels, complete or fragmentary, all originating from systematic excavations at the Elizavetovskoe complex, including the fortified settlement, the kurgan cemetery, and the ground necropolis. This homogeneous provenance gives the collection particular analytical value, as it reflects patterns of consumption and

deposition within a single major centre of the Lower Don region over several centuries, without the distortions often introduced by mixed or secondary museum acquisitions.

As in the RRMLL assemblage, amphorae from Heraclea Pontica form the dominant group, represented by 47 examples – almost half of the entire collection. The earliest vessel, of variant I-A-1, dates to the 380s–370s BC, while most belong to later variants of types I and II. Much of the material is fragmentary, yet the proportion of stamped vessels is remarkably high, reaching approximately 77% of the Heracleian assemblage. Several stamps are rare or previously unattested and, in some cases, lack close parallels in the published record. These features make the SFU collection particularly valuable for refining the internal chronology of Heracleian production and assessing the persistence of stamping practices into the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC.

The collection is also important for the study of amphorae from unidentified West Pontic production centres. Seven vessels are assigned to this group, six of which had previously been classified as Heracleian amphorae of type II-A. Another amphora, formerly attributed to the so-called “Yaferka” type, is now convincingly reinterpreted as a product of a West Pontic workshop, despite displaying morphological traits influenced by Knidian and Koan forms. Their presence in well-documented Elizavetovskoe contexts strengthens the argument that a distinct group of West Pontic producers was active in the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC, supplying the Lower Don market alongside Heraclea and Sinope. Although the reassignment of these amphorae is convincing on typological and contextual grounds, the hypothesis necessarily remains provisional. In the absence of archaeometric analyses or securely identified workshop sites, the precise localisation of these production centres remains open to further investigation.

Amphorae from unidentified Mediterranean centres are represented by six fragmentary vessels, nearly all recovered from settlement contexts. These finds suggest a broader range of contacts than is often assumed for the region and caution against overly restrictive reconstructions of trade routes based solely on the dominant Pontic producers.

The SFU collection also includes six amphorae from Mende, all belonging to type II with a goblet-shaped foot. The earliest dates to the late 5th or early 4th century BC, while the remainder cluster in the period 370–340 BC. Three vessels bear stamps, including examples with identical impressions on both handles and pairs of amphorae carrying the same engravers’ marks within a single construction complex. These well-documented contexts provide valuable chronological reference points for Mendian stamping practices.

Six amphorae from Ikos, represented by large fragments, belong to the second morphological group and date to the third quarter of the 4th century BC. Sinopean amphorae are represented by five examples. The earliest, variant I-A (dated to the 370s BC), closely resembles a specimen in the RRMLL collection, while the remaining vessels are fragmentary but securely identifiable.

The earliest material in the SFU collection consists of Chian amphorae. Two vessels of the “botros” variant – one from a kurgan excavated in 2021 and another from the

settlement – date to the last quarter of the 5th century BC. Two further Chian amphorae of the “cap-foot” variant belong to the last quarter of the 4th century, demonstrating the long-term presence of Chian products at Elizavetovskoe. Thasian amphorae are represented by three stamped vessels and one unstamped neck of a biconical variant, together dated to 360–330 BC, while two Peparthian amphorae of the “Solokha” variant fall within the first third of the 4th century.

Knidian production is represented by two stamped amphorae of particular interest. One bears the name of the fabricant ΠΑΘ(---) and dates to the third quarter of the 4th century BC, while the other carries a leaf-shaped stamp with the name Νόσσοϛ and a bunch-of-grapes emblem, dated to the first third of the 3rd century BC. The latter specimen is especially significant, as it preserves morphological features rarely observable in vessels bearing such stamps, allowing a direct association between stamp type and vessel form. Its close morphological correspondence with a stamped Knidian amphora in the RRMLL collection further supports this attribution.

Chersonesan amphorae are represented by one complete and two fragmentary transport vessels. In an exceptional and methodologically justified departure from the standard selection criteria, the authors also include a Chersonesan table amphora from a funerary context, where it was found together with two stamped West Pontic amphorae. This inclusion highlights the authors’ sensitivity to archaeological context and their willingness to adapt the catalogue framework when the interpretative value of an object warrants it.

Finally, the SFU collection contains two fragmentary Colchidian amphorae, a grey-clay Lesbian amphora of variant III-B closely paralleling an example in the RRMLL collection, and a single Erythraian amphora fragment of the last third of the 4th century BC bearing a large graffito “NIKI” on the neck. Together these materials complement the RRMLL assemblage and substantially expand the evidential basis for analysing amphora supply, stamping practices, and consumption patterns at Elizavetovskoe.

Overall, the SFU Educational Museum collection not only mirrors the RRMLL assemblage in its general composition but also significantly extends it, providing important evidence for the identification of West Pontic production, the reconstruction of stamped Knidian vessel morphologies, and the contextual analysis of amphora use within a major Lower Don settlement. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the overwhelming dominance of material from the Elizavetovskoe settlement and its associated necropoleis inevitably shapes the picture of amphora supply presented in the volume. While this concentration offers an unusually coherent dataset for a single regional centre, broader regional comparisons remain necessary to determine how representative these patterns were for the Lower Don region as a whole.

## METHODOLOGICAL AND INTERPRETATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

Beyond the publication of previously inaccessible museum material, the volume makes several important

methodological and interpretative contributions to the study of amphorae in the Northern Black Sea region.

First, it further consolidates the standardised catalogue format developed in earlier volumes of the series. The consistent presentation of metric parameters, typological descriptions, drawings, and photographic documentation allows the material to be easily integrated into broader comparative studies. Such methodological consistency is particularly valuable in amphora research, where the reliability of typological comparisons depends heavily on the precision and completeness of published documentation.

Second, the volume demonstrates the analytical advantages of publishing amphora material according to archaeological provenance rather than strictly institutional criteria. By combining the collections of the Rostov Regional Museum of Local Lore and the Educational Museum of Archaeology of Southern Federal University – both largely derived from excavations at Elizavetovskoe – the authors reconstruct a more coherent archaeological dataset than would be possible through separate institutional catalogues. This approach makes it possible to examine amphora imports within a unified settlement and funerary landscape and to identify patterns that might otherwise remain obscured.

Third, the catalogue significantly expands the available corpus of stamped amphorae from the Lower Don region. The high proportion of stamped vessels, particularly among Heracleian and Sinopean amphorae, provides valuable material for refining existing chronological schemes and for testing the relative chronology of magistrate and fabricant stamps. In several cases the Rostov material offers new combinations of stamps and vessel forms that may prove important for future revisions of amphora stamp chronologies.

The authors also contribute to the ongoing discussion concerning amphorae attributed to unidentified West Pontic production centres. Although the reassignment of these vessels away from Heracleia is argued convincingly on typological and contextual grounds, the study also illustrates the methodological limits of purely morphological analysis. Without archaeometric data or securely identified production sites, the precise localisation of these workshops remains uncertain. In this respect, the Rostov material provides a valuable empirical basis for future interdisciplinary research combining typological, petrographic, and chemical analyses.

Finally, the volume offers new insights into the structure of amphora supply in the Lower Don region during the Classical and early Hellenistic periods. The predominance of Heracleian amphorae until the late 4th century BC, followed by a more diversified spectrum of producers – including Sinope, Knidos, and several unidentified Pontic centres – reflects broader transformations in Black Sea trade networks. Although the dataset remains strongly centred on the Elizavetovskoe settlement, it nonetheless provides one of the most detailed published sequences currently available for this region.

## CONCLUSIONS

The publication of *Amphorae of the 6th–3rd Centuries BC from Museum Collections of Rostov-on-Don* represents

an important addition to the growing series of catalogues devoted to amphora collections in Russian museums. By bringing together the material preserved in the Rostov Regional Museum of Local Lore and the Educational Museum of Archaeology of Southern Federal University, the authors provide scholars with access to a substantial and previously underutilised corpus of amphorae from the Lower Don region.

One of the principal strengths of the volume lies in the quality and consistency of its documentation. The detailed catalogue entries, combined with clear drawings, photographs, and stamp reproductions, ensure that the material can be used reliably in future typological and chronological studies. At the same time, the integration of archaeological context into the analysis – particularly in the discussion of amphora complexes from Elizavetovskoe – greatly enhances the interpretative value of the catalogue.

The book is also notable for its methodological coherence. As the tenth volume of a long-running publication programme, it demonstrates the maturity of an approach that combines rigorous cataloguing with broader historical interpretation. The decision to organise the material according to its archaeological provenance rather than strictly by museum

ownership represents a particularly successful innovation, offering a more historically meaningful perspective on amphora supply and distribution.

Certain limitations are nevertheless inherent in the nature of the available material. Because the vast majority of the amphorae originate from the Elizavetovskoe settlement and its associated burial grounds, the patterns of import observed in the volume cannot automatically be generalised to the entire Lower Don region. Moreover, the identification of several groups of amphorae attributed to unidentified West Pontic centres remains provisional in the absence of archaeometric confirmation. These reservations, however, do not diminish the overall value of the work; rather, they highlight directions for future research.

In sum, this volume represents a major contribution to the documentation and study of Greek transport amphorae in the Northern Black Sea region. It not only enlarges the available corpus of published material but also provides a methodological model for the integrated publication of museum collections derived from a shared archaeological context. For specialists in amphorology and Pontic archaeology, this volume will undoubtedly remain an essential reference work.