
This very heavy volume of Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum treats Attic, and a few Atticizing, amphorae in Athens, National Museum from Sub-Mycenaean to Late Geometric periods. The author’s purpose is to follow the evolution of Attic Protogeometric and Geometric amphorae as near, as is possible.

The vases are classified according to the generally accepted typology of Attic amphorae, based on the position of the handles: neck handled, rim handled, shoulder handled, and belly handled amphorae. To these are added Atticizing Middle Geometric neck-handled amphorae as a sub-division, and also Atticizing belly handled amphorae as a main type. Each of these main types is presented with sub-divisions in a chronological order and also according to class, except shoulder handled amphorae. The author follows the stylistic evolution of shape and painted decoration. The chief purpose has been to identify styles, workshops and painters (9).  

Neck-handled amphorae is by far the largest main type with the following subdivisions: Attic Protogeometric; Attic Banded Ware; Attic Early Geometric; Attic Middle Geometric; Atticizing Middle Geometric; Attic Middle Geometric Amphoriskoi; Attic Transitional Middle Geometric/Late Geometric I amphorae, and Attic Late Geometric II amphorae. The two last mentioned subdivisions have four and three sub-groups, respectively, each according to styles and workshops.

Rim-handled amphorae include Early Rim Handled Amphorae (Sub-Mycenaean and Protogeometric); Geometric Rim Handled Amphoriskoi and Banded Ware Rim Handled Amphoriskoi.

Shoulder Handled Amphorae constitute the third main category.

Belly Handled Amphorae in the material include the following categories: Type III; Type II; Type I, Early (Sub-Mycenaean-Protogeometric); Type I, Geometric; Bi-metopal Circle amphorae; Type I, Late Geometric; Type I, Geometric Amphoriskoi

Atticizing Belly Handled Amphorae refer to the following types: Type II, Cycladic Protogeometric; Type I, Cycladic Protogeometric; Type I, Geometric: The Circle Style Belly Handled Amphorae (Contents 7–8).

For neck handled amphorae three different shape types are distinguished according to the neck profile: Type I has a high vertical neck, Type II a concave neck of moderate size and Type III a short cylindrical neck and globular body (13). Belly handled amphorae have three different shape types: Type I with a high, almost vertical neck and everted lip with flat rim, Type II with short concave neck and no lip, and Type III with short vertical neck (74).

Neck handled amphorae are described in the text with the headings primarily according to their place in the chronology and according to workshops and painters, of course with the shape types announced, but not as a criterion of classification (13–62).

Rim handled amphorae are in the text described in accordance with the Contents (63–66).

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Shoulder handled amphorae are presented in a chronological order, but without the indication of stages (Early Geometric II, Middle Geometric I and Middle Geometric II) as headings. (It is not clear why the Middle Geometric II amphora Inv. 21102 has got a place as an intrusion between Early Geometric II and Middle Geometric I vessels (67–73).)

Belly handled amphorae are documented to the reader in the headings due to their Types, and in the text with the addition of a notation of their place in the chronology, special decoration and also form (74–92). But the sub-divisions, Type III and Type II, have no descriptive headings. Type III belongs to Attic Transitional Late Helladic III C/Sub-Mycenaean and Type II to Middle Proto-geometric, Late Protogeometric, early, and Transitional Middle Protogeometric/ Late Protogeometric.

The author did not inform us whether there is a distinction between shape types (cf. neck handled amphorae) and Types III, II and etc. (cf. belly handled amphorae), the latter categories used as headings, the former as a notations in the text (for the definitions, 13 and 74).

Atticizing belly handled amphorae are treated as a main amphora type, also with the sub-division Types as headings plus a descriptive denomination (91–95), cf. belly handled amphorae.

My opinion is, that the in respect of all belly handled amphorae Types as headings should have been omitted in the Contents and instead noted in the text, in line with other main amphora types.

A final comment on this section: could it be possible to treat neck handled Atticizing Middle Geometric amphorae with the same status as those of the belly handled variants: Atticizing Middle Geometric II Peloponnesian (?) workshop and Atticizing Cycladic (Melian) transitional Middle Geometric II/Late Geometric I a (23–24)? This possibly at the end of the section referring to neck-handled amphorae in Contents and in the text presenting neck handled amphorae.

The five main types of amphorae are preceded by a general introduction concerning shape and decoration. After the description of each sub-division and subgroup follows a presentation of the separate vases, provenance if known with references, measures, state of preservation, clay structure. The shape is described and likewise the decoration, its system and details. The period, to which the vase belongs, is mentioned and an estimate absolute chronology following Coldstream 1968, 330. Shape and decoration are compared with other vases, with references, if possible noting well-dated contexts (cf. 17). The author uses this system throughout the book in an admirable faithfulness, which perhaps has been felt repetitive. This means that the author all the time knows the value of her descriptions.

Indices and concordances following the presentation of the vases are of course important for the specialists. I find them very clear and easy to read. The twelve text figures, drawings, are also valuable. The 53 drawings of vase profiles are admirably executed and, of course, necessary if you want to understand the often very slight differences or rather variations of the shape types. 110 plates are added – of an outstanding quality, as is also the thick glazed paper, which gives the full value of the photographic material.

The list of abbreviations is separated from the bibliographic references given in the presentation of the vases. This is a very intricate problem and I do not know, which is the obligation to CVA. But is it not possible to treat all references in the text in the same way as
In a bibliography – rather than abbreviations – only with the author’s name and year of the publication disregarding its character, which in a bibliography could be given the full titles? The bibliography would have been longer, but the references in the text easier to use and shorter.

In this section discussing special issues inter alia some particular questions as regards terminology will be discussed. The author mentions some workshops with denominations, which do not seem to be endemic in the current archaeological tradition.

The Traditional Workshops from LG I are contemporary with the Dipylon Master continuing the Middle Geometric decorative style (26–30, pls. 19–23). This term could possibly confuse J. N. Coldstream’s Workshops of the Classical Tradition and the Workshops outside the Classical Tradition mainly Late Geometric II a–b (Coldstream 1968, 53–82).

The Radical Workshops, evidently transitional from Middle Geometric II/ Late Geometric I a, introduces “a totally new style”, which is difficult to recognise from the only example in the material presented (30–31, pl. 24).

The term, The Little Known Workshops, as a sub-division of the New Workshops (45–49), has a different character, not emanating from factual features, but rather from a stage in the development of the scientific knowledge. If we archaeologists are brave and diligent, these workshops may change their name to Very Well-Known Workshops.

It is astonishing to read: “The Hirschfeld Painter is inadequately known” (36). Infact, this painter is well known and also well published, which you may see for example in Ahlberg 1971, 27 and 220 and the references given by the author (37).

The Hirschfeld Painter, whom J. N. Coldstream places far outside the Classical Tradition of the Dipylon Master (Coldstream 1968, 44), is by the author of this fascicle said to be entirely embedded in the Classical Tradition in his funerary iconography and figured style (36–38, pls. 30–32). The personality of this painter is really quite different from that of the Dipylon tradition, for example the figures’ heads and the very strange frontal view of their thighs and also the foreparts of the horses with their matchstick cannon-bones (Coldstream 1968, 43, e.g. krater Athens NM 990. Ahlberg 1971, pl. 54a). I find that J. N. Coldstream is very right.

Referring to the amphora Athens NM 18062 by the Hirschfeld Painter the author says, that breasts sometimes have been seen on the undressed mourners to the right, and that these figures therefore may be interpreted as females (38, pls. 30–32). The author writes furthermore: “but female figures in LG art are normally dressed in a long robe cf Ahlberg, 72 ff”). I have distinctly said that, “the long robe is the main characteristic of female figures from LG II on” (Ahlberg 1971, 74–75. Cf. also 72–73; but see Coldstream 1968, 39). The Hirschfeld Painter belongs to Late Geometric I b. I have also said that the long robe rendered on some vases of the Dipylon Workshop through several interacting criteria could be interpreted as the robe of professional mourners (Ahlberg 1971, 75, 116, Table 8, 128–132). This is also the case in later workshops, where the black silhouette dress of the professional mourners contrast with the cross-hatched dressed of other women (Ahlberg 1971, 118).

The reason why the reviewer interferes with the author’s description of the chariot frieze on the name vase by the LG II b Painter of Athens 894, is that I suggest a quite different iconographic interpretation, despite my use of photographic material only and despite the worn surface one side of the vase (43–44, pls. 42–45).

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There does not seem to be a procession of three two-horse teams with a helmeted but unarmed charioteer on each of them. I perceive only one two-horse team (pls. 42, 1; 45, 1), neither three four-horse teams manned by a helmeted but unarmed charioteer and one unarmed occupant on each of these alternating teams (44, pls. 42–43). Instead, on four of these five four-horse teams the warrior (called occupant) holds one spear in each hand in a vertical position, turned backwards or forwards. In one case the warrior keeps his spears in a resting oblique position, but turned forwards (pl. 42, 2 left).

This so-called procession is rather to be interpreted as an acrobatic game with spears, with a close parallel on the neck handled amphora Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe 1966. 89. (Ahlberg 1971, 28 no. 43, 195, fig. 43 a–d, evidently from the same workshop and probably the same painter).

Finally, the ekphora scene on the Dipylon Master’s belly handled amphora Athens NM 823 has got an excellent, but perhaps slightly hypothetical reconstruction imagining that the catafalque could have been attached to a normal chariot (85–88, text fig. XI; 87 pls. 102–105). But, is it also possible that the catafalque itself is drawn by the two horses and equipped with four wheels, not by two (Ahlberg 1971, 223).

This ekphora is certainly meant for a female funeral, which is clear from several interacting criteria, such as the vase type itself and the omission of any martial features (Ahlberg 1971, 220 no. 53; 222, fig. 53 a–b). Since the author of this fascicle insists in the interpretation of the undifferentiated figures as male (87), it is really important to promote the iconographic idea of the Dipylon Master and our comprehension of his approach to art and tradition.

The Dipylon Master had an enormously clear mind towards iconography involving the figure elements, figure types and figure schemes, their functions in a picture and their interpretation by the observer and purchaser, for whom most of the vases were made on order. Different co-working criteria have decided that the undifferentiated figures in the early Late Geometric workshops are female (Ahlberg 1971, 72–87, Tables 3 and 4, 225–228). One of the most important features is the two-hand mourning gesture, which with only one exception is female (Ahlberg 1971, 77–78; the exception, fragments Athens, National Museum 812, with other anomalies. Ahlberg 1971, 26 no. 18; 78; the mourning gesture in ekphora scenes, 227).

In this review my hesitations have been focussed on the methodological structure in the presentation of the material, where The Contents are the backbone. Some terminological features have been discussed. I have also interfered in the iconographic descriptions or analyses from the pictures themselves, and in the reading of the discussions previously published. These notations should not encumber the extremely valuable work Nota Kourou has undertaken and the result perceivable in this important volume of Corpus Vasorum. The author’s deep knowledge of early vase painting and her extremely good feeling for the decorative elements or patterns are manifested in this volume of CVA. We look forward to see more of her studies of the many unanswered and very difficult questions hidden in these interesting periods of early Greek art.

Bromma

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