

# Greek and Etruscan Vases: Shapes and Markets – An Introduction

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The eight essays published in this volume were first presented in the session “Greek and Etruscan Vases: Shapes and Markets” in the 18<sup>th</sup> AIAC Congress in Bonn and Köln (May 2018). Since the special focus of the Congress was the economy of the ancient world, an effort was made to address topics relating to the production, consumption and trade of painted pottery, but at the same time, important questions on the use, function and role of vases at a broader social or religious level have not been neglected.

Archaic and Classical Greek vases present the widest distribution any ancient artifact might claim to, from northern Europe to Sudan and from northwestern Africa to eastern Iran. Thus, for most classical scholars the association of painted pottery to economy is usually equated to overseas trade, while the home production and consumption are usually overlooked, even if we possess adequate epigraphic and archaeological evidence for two of the most important production centers, Athens and Corinth.<sup>1</sup> The present collection of studies makes an effort to go beyond this dichotomy, by focusing on the response of individual clients to both imports and local vases (D. Tonglet, on the composition of southern Etruscan funerary contexts; V. Baldoni, on funerary sets from Numana in Picenum), or by examining specific shapes traded in both the home market and overseas (Paleothodoros, on mugs; Van de Put, on column-kraters). Special emphasis is paid to the matching of imports and local wares (especially in the case of the kyathos in Etruria [Tonglet] and the krater and skyphos in Picenum [Baldoni]), as far as shapes with precise ritual functions in given contexts are concerned. It is interesting that while a shape may have the exact function and use, whether it is imported from Greece or manufactured locally (i.e. the column krater in Athens and South Italy [W. Van de Put]), other shapes are received in different ways, according to provenance or even to the technique employed for the decoration (f.e. Attic black-figured versus red-figured amphorae in Tarquinia [A. Rhodes-Schroder]). It is thus evident that shape alone cannot account for the marketing of vases, but that technique, iconography and artistic accomplishment are also important factors affecting the commercialization of decorated vases.

Studies on the distribution of Greek vases are classed by Vladimir Stissi in three categories:<sup>2</sup> studies concerning imports in a certain geographic area or site; studies mapping the distribution of a single shape, or of the production of a single producing center, workshop or painter; and studies focusing on the producer and his response to the marketing of his production. The essays in the present collection deal with the interrelation between particular shapes and the markets of Greek pottery, a topic going back to Gisela Richter’s pioneer study in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, focusing on the distribution of different shapes of Attic pottery in Athens proper, as compared to the situation in Etruria.<sup>3</sup> While falling under the second category described above, the

eight essays in this collection transcend the aforementioned classification, in the sense that they also address questions of workshop connections, “special commissions” in specific sites, correlation of local and imported vessels in funerary services, and above all, by putting special emphasis on the archaeological context of the finds. Thus, these essays speak as much about the producer and the economics of trade, as about the client and the social dimensions of the consumption of the shapes under study. In that respect, the present collection is in line with those recent studies laying particular emphasis to the context of painted pottery, not as a mere appendix to the biography of objects, but as an interpretative tool for understanding the role and function of vases in ancient societies.<sup>4</sup>

Winfred Van de Put (1. Markets and the Survival of Shapes: the Case of the Column-Krater) and Dimitris Paleothodoros (2. Attic Figured Mugs in the Market) focus on a single attic vase shape and its destiny abroad, but also in the home market, adopting a diachronic approach. Van de Put makes an attempt to locate the column krater inside the material culture of mainland Greeks, Greek colonists and indigenous inhabitants of Italy. From early on, Attic black-figured kraters were mainly exported, especially in Italy. Part of this success is the appropriation of the shape for secondary cremations in non-Greek communities in southern Italy and Sicily (see also B. Cavallaro, in that respect). This situation not only continues, but is rather reinforced after the transition from black-figure to red-figure in the decoration of the shape. It seems that from an economic point of view, the production of column kraters only continued after 500 BC, because of the Italian market. Another important transition point is the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, when the Attic version of the shape declines and shortly afterwards disappears altogether, while the demand from the part of indigenous populations of southern Italy is now met by the potters of Lucanian and Apulian workshops. Iconography also changes, since the Apulian column-krater is usually used for illustrations of rituals involving indigenous warriors and their wives.

Paleothodoros studies a less noted vase shape, the oinochoe of shape 8 or mug. For all its obscurity in recent scholarly literature, the shape enjoys a wide, if distinctly individual distribution pattern across the Mediterranean. Despite its humble status in art-historical studies and its meager appeal to collectors, the Attic figured mug is distinguished for being one of the few shapes whose provenance and find context is usually known to us. This rather extraordinary fact permits an in-depth consideration of both its distribution and use in specific contexts. The context is usually the tomb, although a noted number of mugs found their way to sanctuaries in Greece, southern Italy, Sicily and North Africa. At the same time, painted mugs appear in domestic and public contexts of secular use. It is interesting that similar functions are observed in the case of Athenian black-glazed mugs. The shape is quite popular in the home market and makes a noted presence in Sicily, southern Italy and Campania, as opposed to its modest presence further north. This peculiar distribution pattern is probably to be connected to the specific use initially ascribed to the shape as being a cup for the youth, one allowing for

a host of metaphors for excessive drinking using the ancient name of the shape, *κώθων* and various derivative words. In addition to the shape, however, the volume also plays a role in the distribution pattern, since Attic examples with oversized proportions are found mainly in Thracian tombs. Probably these examples were no longer seen as mugs, but functioned as alternatives to kraters.

Cécile Jubier Galinier (3. Shapes, Markets and Workshop Strategies between Specialization and Diversification. Case Study of the ‘Sappho-Diosphos-Haimon’ Workshop) in a paper as much devoted to the study of the commercial side of the products of a single workshop, as to important methodological and theoretical considerations, turns her attention to one of the largest workshops of late archaic Athens, where the Sappho and Diosphos painters and the Haimon Group worked in succession. Studying the distribution of different shapes produced in a single workshop may lead to results previously unsuspected about the exporting strategies of single workshops. In the case of the Sappho – Diosphos – Haimon workshop, the larger part of the production was always aimed at the local market, although the earlier ritual shapes (*loutrophoroi*-*hydriae* and funerary plaques) soon gave their place to the *lekythos*, a shape destined to become the main specialized product of the workshop. On the other hand, shapes destined to Italy (mastoid cups, small neck-amphorae and *kyathoi*) were never abandoned, despite the fact that overseas trade never represented a major concern for the potters and painters of the workshop, with the notable exception of Sicily for the *lekythoi*. Thus, a “holistic approach to the productions of a workshop permits to understand better the supply conditions of different shapes, and to highlight customers’ choices in different places and regions”.

The first three studies were concerned with the home as well as with overseas markets. Amalia Avramidou and Despoina Tsiafaki (4. Attic Kraters and *Pelikai* from Ancient Thrace) chose to emphasize the regional aspect of the diffusion of two of the most widespread shapes of late 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century Attic red-figure, namely the *pelike* and the bell-krater in the region of Thrace. This study is part of an ongoing research of much broader scope, namely the mapping of all Attic imports to the geographic area of Thrace, including the Greek colonies, the *emporía* and the sites occupied by indigenous populations. While kraters are present from an early period on in the area, especially in sanctuaries in coastal Greek cities, they tend to occupy a very important sector of imports during the period of the *floruit* of the red-figured technique. The situation is not reversed during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, when the infiltration of Greek pots in Thracian areas is deeper, since such finds reached several indigenous sites. This pattern reveals the role of Greek colonies and *emporía* for the penetration of imports further inland. Political reasons might account for the rise of imports during the second half of the fifth century, but we are dealing here with a long established market for Athenian vases. While the finds from funerary contexts are predominant, it is to be noted that the situation might simply reflect the archaeological record, since numerous finds from domestic and religious sites are mentioned, although sometimes not specified. *Pelikai*,

on the other hand, appear during the 5<sup>th</sup> century in elite Thracian burials, while on Greek or Hellenized sites like Samothrace, they are more often used as cinerary urns. Kraters are widely used and appear in larger numbers, while pelikai are choice imports, with specific ritual connotations.

The remaining four papers are concerned with finds from the Italian peninsula and Sicily. Barbara Cavallaro (5. Vasi attici a Vassallaggi: possibili “special commissions” in un centro sicano) presents a thorough investigation of Attic pottery found in male graves in the Sicilian center of Vassallaggi in inland central Sicily. In addition to Attic pots put in these tombs, the analysis encompasses all items belonging to the funerary contexts (arms, strigils, local vases). Kraters in particular, but also oinochoai, pelikai and lekythoi are among the recurrent Attic forms found. The careful analysis of the iconographic programs of the more prestigious items put in tombs in Vassallaggi allows Cavallaro to formulate the somewhat audacious hypothesis that the inhabitants had direct access to the Athenian craftsmen and were able to commission specific iconographic themes on the pots of their choice. While the suggestion is tempting, and while it is true that the iconography of the Attic vases arriving at Vassallaggi in important numbers, especially during the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, is consistent with the aristocratic ethos of this Hellenized community, there are no concrete proofs as for the existence of such a sophisticated procedure of acquisition of Attic vases in the site.

Aaron Rhodes-Schroder (6. Death Driving Deposition: Funerary Practice as a Motivator of Tarquinian Selection in the Attic Vase Trade) examines the evidence for Attic imports in the site of Tarquinia. Although conducted in a rather traditional manner, this study benefits from the use of an unusually richer statistical basis than every single one preceding it. Rhodes-Schroder focuses on shapes of painted vases, both imported and made in Etruria, found in tombs at Tarquinia. The study shows that shape preferences are notable in the record, with the amphora and the cup dominating imports, the former during the period of the flourishing of the black-figured technique, the latter down to the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Since this situation is not reflected in the overall production pattern in the Athenian Kerameikos, the author concludes that supply determines the choices, but demand is unable to influence the strategies of production in Athens. Thus, he concludes that the decline in imports in 475–450 BC has nothing to do with the “crisis” after the battle of Cumae in 474 BC but rather reflects a situation where Tarquinians were unwilling to acquire what the Athenian potters had to offer, in an indiscriminate way. It is held that the preeminence of the black-figured amphora is somehow connected to the much older tradition of placing the combusted rests of the corpse in a tronconical *olla*. For some reason, the clients did not attach the same symbolic value to the red-figured amphora, which is rarely found in Tarquinia. The point has been made repeatedly in the past,<sup>5</sup> but is made even more convincing here, thanks to the occurrence of quantitative data. An analysis of the finds from Civita and other areas of the city will be an excellent addition to the topic and might contribute in consolidating Rhodes-Schroder’s argumentation.

Delphine Tonglet (7. Etruscan Melting-Pot: Some Considerations about Etruscan Banquet Sets in Funerary Contexts) examines the cultural exchanges between Greece and Etruria from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, laying particular emphasis to the question of “mixed” banquet services (made up of local and imported vases) and the ritualized consumption of wine and food. From the point of view of methodology, Tonglet adopts the concept of “entangled pottery”, first used in the study of prehistory, in order to define the fluctuating roles of Greek pots before and after being exported overseas. The interaction between imported shapes and local ones is dynamic; this is better illustrated in the case of the kyathos, which, once adopted by Greek potters, was re-exported to Etruria and influenced the rendering of the traditional form. Tonglet’s study is a reminder that Greek and Etruscan contexts, even if implying the use of the same objects, need not assume the same symbolic or real functions for them.

In a similar vein Vincenzo Baldoni (8. Vase Shapes from Picenum Funerary Contexts: Imports and Local Production of Numana) examines the presence of Attic imports in the necropolis of the Davanzali area in Numana (Picenum). The evolution of Attic imports is interesting, since it presents two distinct facets, one in the fifth and one in the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, divided by a transitional period of general decline of imports, in the years following the Athenian defeat of 404 BC. A careful assessment of individual tombs or groups of tombs allows to better understand the function of Attic red-figured and black-glazed sympotic vessels within the context of Picenian funerary traditions. The Greek banquet is a major reference for the Picenians, inasmuch as the richer tombs (usually dating to the years around the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC) are furnished with banquet sets consisting of Attic pots and locally made open shapes for food consumption. In the course of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the necropolis is impoverished in terms of material wealth, as reflected in the small number of painted vases put in the tombs. However, the strong funerary symbolism of the banquet is retained, by the inclusion of a single pot, a krater for adult males and a skyphos for children. One of the merits of this study is that every single aspect of the tomb is taken under consideration (including the typology, the placement in the cemetery and the disposition, number and quality of the grave goods), so that different sets of data concur and support the conclusions. Following a tight chronological analysis, Baldoni is able to assert the rise of local and Alto-Adriatic pottery, first as a complement, and then as a substitute of the Athenian imports and to trace the evolution of the concept of the ritualized consumption of wine down to the last phase of the Picenian culture.

In selecting the contributors for the session “Greek and Etruscan Vases: Shapes and Markets”, and the two discussants, Prof. Alan Shapiro and Dr. Alexandra Villing, the present author took care to offer a representative panel in terms of age, gender and provenance. Equally divided between male and female, and representing as many as nine countries (The Netherlands, Greece, France, Italy, New Zealand, Belgium, the United States, Great Britain/Germany) and three continents, evenly distributed between very young, young and elder scholars, the group of scholars involved in this collection

of essays offers varied and diversified views on the question of the economic role of painted pottery in the Archaic and Classical periods. Another goal attempted, and to a large extent fulfilled, was to present fresh material, newly excavated or recently studied. Above all, our aim was to present original studies that may be considered valuable contributions in vase scholarship. I would like to thank the public that attended the session for their lively participation in the discussions following each presentation and in particular our two discussants, whose thoughtful suggestions and ideas are imprinted in each one of the individual papers printed here.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For both aspects, see Stissi 2002. For production see Esbach – Schmidt 2016. For the home market in Athens, see also Lynch 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Stissi 1999, 91–93; 2002, 326 f.

<sup>3</sup> Richter 1904–1905.

<sup>4</sup> Marconi 2004; Tsingarida 2009; Paleothodoros 2012; Carpenter et al. 2014; Carpenter et al. 2016.

<sup>5</sup> de La Genière 1987.

### References

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