A
c

LARGE Cypriote amphora (PLATES 2–5), formerly in the collection of Captain E. G. Spencer-Churchill, M.C., was acquired in 1965 for the Duke Classical Collection. Its monumental size and complexity of decoration make it a notable addition to a type of Cypriote pottery little represented in the published literature.

The height of the amphora is 86.5 cm.; the outer diameter at the lip is 41.3 cm. Apart from slight chipping at the foot, the vase is unbroken and intact. Two slight depressions appear on side B below the handle zone to right and left, probably resulting from an overcrowded kiln or to handling prior to firing. There is a buff slip on buff clay, and the bichrome decoration is applied in matt black which fires to brown, and dull red which varies to reddish-brown. The wide rim (see PLATE 5) slopes downward to the outer edge. Under the lip there is a slight concavity insufficient to form a distinct ridge below it. The neck is cylindrical with a slight upward flare. The body is ovoid, and tapers downward to a thick low foot. Two rising loop handles are set horizontally at the shoulder. The shape corresponds most closely to Gjerstad’s Bichrome IV Amphora Type 2a*, represented by a vase in the Stockholm Cyprus Collection, Acc. 699.

Except for the upper shoulder band, the decoration on sides A and B is identical, although side B has suffered some pitting and rubbing,
especially in the area of the neck band. The interior of the neck is
decorated at the top by two black bands; the horizontal surface of
the lip is divided by three groups of seven and two groups of six radial
lines. On the neck, the central band is horizontally framed by a
symmetrical arrangement of red bands outlined in black, parallel
lines and cables. The central panels on sides A and B consist of a con­
centric checkered lozenge flanked by four checkered and two partially
filled and dotted triangles; the panels are vertically framed by rows
of filled lozenges flanked by parallel lines and guilloches. The lozenges
and the eyes of the cables are red outlined in black. The central neck
band is interrupted over the handles at each side by a lotus panel
painted in black except for the six large petals, which are red outlined
in black.

The upper shoulder band on side A contains a central reticulated
triangle flanked by slanted parallel lines and a dogtooth pattern; to
the left appear four rows of horizontal alternating red and black
zigzags; to the right, five rows. At either end of the band are parallel
vertical strokes flanked by filled triangles. On side B there is a central
trapezoid consisting of four filled lozenges, slanted parallel lines, and
filled triangles; to each side there are double filled triangles flanked
by single rows of horizontal zigzags, and the band ends to left and
right as on side A, with triangles framing vertical strokes.

In the lotus band below, the closed buds are black; the open blos­soms (ten on side A, nine on side B) are red outlined in black; the
connecting semicircles are red. At the sides, each handle encloses a
red triple chevron. Beneath the lotus band, the zigzag is red, the
parallel lines and bands are black.

Certain insecurities in the handling of the cables on the neck suggest
both the creative ambitions and limitations of the painter. The lower
guilloche, running in a left to right direction, is smooth and un­
broken: the painter was proceeding securely right to left. He began
the upper cable to the left of the central panel on side B with the same
outline strokes, but on reaching the area above the handle reserved
for the lotus (PLATE 5), decided to crown the center of the panel with a
triangular device, and then reversed the direction of the cable; the
outline strokes from this point on are less sure. The option of similarly
emphasizing the second lotus panel is apparently rejected (cf. PLATE 4),
and when the painter returns to his point of departure, he is forced
into a strained attempt at joining the cable, which now goes in the
wrong direction (Plate 3). The failure to reverse the direction of the
cable over the second lotus metope at least produces the effect of a
studied asymmetry in the opposed directions of the cables on sides
A and B.

The painting represents the Eastern style of archaic Cypriote
decoration, and is again paralleled closely by Stockholm Acc. 699, except for the absence of the cable ornament found on the Duke
amphora and the use of a simple leaf design above the lotus frieze on
the shoulder. A somewhat shorter amphora in the British Museum likewise lacks the cable, but along with a similar neck metope, lotuses
above the handle and a shoulder frieze of lotuses, also includes lattice
triangles in the center of the band above the lotus frieze as on the
Duke example. Three slightly smaller vases of like shape in the
Metropolitan Museum also offer parallels in decoration: number 608
has a simpler treatment of the neck metope; number 696 virtually
duplicates the Duke amphora except that it lacks the guilloche; and in 699, the guilloche is replaced by rosettes, and the design above the
frieze of lotuses in the shoulder consists simply of a series of narrow
bands. The decoration of the Duke amphora appears stylistically later
than that of a Bichrome IV Amphora Type 2b* from Tomb 17 at Stylli, assigned by the excavators to Cypro-Archaic IA (700–650 B.C.),
which has a less elaborate version of the neck metope and shoulder
trapezoid but lacks both the guilloche and the lotus frieze. It is
probable that the Duke vase is an early contemporary of a well­
represented class of footless biconical Bichrome V amphoras from the
latter half of the 7th century and later, which in examples decorated
in the Eastern Style includes cables, rosettes and lotus friezes in
abundance. A date early in the second half of the 7th century therefore seems indicated, and the Duke amphora may be regarded as

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4 ibid. pp. 64f, and P. Dikaios, A Guide to the Cyprus Museum (Nicosia 1961) 60f.
5 Gjerstad, loc. cit. in n.3 above.
6 BM Inv. no.1925,12-31,3 = CVA Gt. Britain (Brit. Mus.) fasc. 2, BM II c c pl. 7,la-b;
62.6 cm. high, dated "Middle Iron Age" (i.e. 750–500 B.C.). The shape appears to be a
Bichrome IV type, but in the absence of a profile it is impossible to classify further.
7 See Myres, op. cit. (supra n.3). A drawing of no.699 also appears in G. Perrot/C. Chipiez,
Histoire de l'art dans l'antiquité III (Paris 1885) p.699, fig.507. Myres describes these vases as
Late Iron Age, and assigns to them a 7th century date.
8 SCE II, plates xxxv,1; cix,1; SCE IV.2., xxx,15; height 77.4 cm.
9 For example: Dikaios, op. cit. (supra n.4) 78 and pl. xiii,4; London, British Museum,
Cat. Vases I.2, C 840 and pl. viii = CVA Gt. Brit. fasc. 2, BM II c c pl. 7,2a-b; CVA Louvre II
C b pl.19, nos.1-3; D. M. Robinson/C. G. Harcum, Catalogue of the Greek Vases in the Royal
Ontario Museum of Archaeology (Toronto 1930) no.250 and pl. xxu (a).
Cypro-Archaic Ib (650–600 B.C.), a period characterized by a predominance of Bichrome IV ware generally.

Although neither provenience nor findspot is known, it is reasonable to assume that the vase is a product of a major workshop of eastern or southern Cyprus. Apart from the fact that this is perhaps the largest of such tomb-gifts, the decoration is unusual in its balance between geometric and orientalizing elements and between the decoration of the neck and that of the shoulder, a balance which tends to be lost in the Bichrome V amphorae in favor of the more and more elaborately decorated neck, or on the other hand, through a shift of emphasis to the shoulder by the use of a figured scene. In the Duke amphora, the decoration of both the neck, with its curvilinear guilloche contrasting with the angular central neck metope, and the shoulder, with the insistently repeated semicircular lotus stems opposing harsh zig-zags, lines, and triangles, is calculated to produce an inner tension in each which prevents dominance of one element over the other. Further, neither the neck nor the shoulder is allowed preeminence: the lotus motif is shared by both; the curvilinear elements of the shoulder balance the angular elements of the neck; and the central trapezoid of the upper shoulder band serves as an effective transition between the two: echoing the shape of the central concentric lozenges in the metope above and giving a central focus to the frieze below, it unifies neck and shoulder and imparts to the overall scheme a sense of rational organization. The vase as a whole recalls the better achievements in paratactic organization of Mainland geometric of the preceding century, to which it and its class are perhaps exotic but not unworthy successors.

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10 SCE IV.2 p.427; the eighth century date assigned to the amphora in op.cit. in n.1 is to be rejected. It should, of course, be kept in mind that the chronology of archaic Cyprus, as well as the typology of its wares, is still sub iudice, particularly in regard to the earlier phase. For criticism of Gjerstad’s views, see J. Birmingham, “The Chronology of some Early and Middle Iron Age Cypriote Sites,” AJA 67 (1963) 15–42 and the literature there cited on p.15 n.5.

11 SCE IV.2 pp.194f.

12 Cf. the examples in Nicosia, London, Toronto and Paris cited in n.9 above.

13 E.g. the Hubbard amphora, cited in n.2.
Cypriote Amphora at Duke University, side B
Cypriote Amphora at Duke University, left side