

An Archaic Cypriote Amphora at Duke University

Keith Stanley

A 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.¹ 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.² 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. 699.³

Except for the upper shoulder band, the decoration on sides A and B is identical, although side B has suffered some pitting and rubbing,

¹ Duke Classical Collection, Acquisition no.65.5. Cf. *Catalogue of Antiquities from the Northwick Park Collection . . . sold at Auction by Christie, Manson and Woods, Ltd.* (London 1965) p.65 no.287, and pl. 17.

² The phenomenon is not unusual in the larger archaic amphoras from Cyprus; cf. a similar depression on the Hubbard amphora in Nicosia, *ABSA* 37 (1936–37) pl. 7–8.

³ E. Gjerstad, *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition* (hereafter *SCE*) IV.2 (Stockholm 1948) fig. xxxv, 14. On the Stockholm vase Professor Gjerstad has very kindly supplied the following information by letter: “. . . its height is 0.73 m., it dates from Cypro-Archaic I, i.e. 700–600 B.C.; it was presented to the Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm by Mr Luke Pierides, Swedish Consul in Cyprus, and its provenience is unfortunately unknown, but to judge from its style, it comes from the eastern part of the island.” Compare also J. L. Myres, *Handbook of the Cesnola Collection of Antiquities from Cyprus* (New York 1914) nos. 608, 696 and 699.

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 concentric 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 unbroken: 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,⁴ and is again paralleled closely by Stockholm Acc. 699,⁵ 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 Museum⁶ 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:⁷ 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.),⁸ 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.⁹ A date early in the second half of the 7th century therefore seems indicated, and the Duke amphora may be regarded as

⁴ *ibid.* pp.64f, and P. Dikaios, *A Guide to the Cyprus Museum*³ (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. 7,1a–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. xxii (a).

Cypro-Archaic Ib (650–600 B.C.),¹⁰ a period characterized by a predominance of Bichrome IV ware generally.¹¹

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 amphoras in favor of the more and more elaborately decorated neck,¹² or on the other hand, through a shift of emphasis to the shoulder by the use of a figured scene.¹³ 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.

DUKE UNIVERSITY

October, 1968

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 A

PLATE 3 STANLEY



CYPRIOTE AMPHORA AT DUKE UNIVERSITY, SIDE B



CYPRIOTE AMPHORA AT DUKE UNIVERSITY, LEFT SIDE



CYPRIOTE AMPHORA AT DUKE UNIVERSITY, NECK OF RIGHT SIDE