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AN ALABASTRON PRODUCED BY THE WORKSHOP OF THE
CAERETAN HYDRIAE*

The first Caeretan hydria was found nearly 150 years ago¹. At present, 39 of these hydriae (including fragments) provided with figure scenes are known. The workshop produced also other shapes but so far none of these was decorated with figure scenes. Three amphorae of « Nicosthenic » shape were certainly produced by the workshop (*CH*, pl. 20), but they do not bear figured scenes. Besides, I suggested that banded alabastra were produced by the workshop (*CH*, 152).

Of course, it was highly surprizing that the two masters, the Eagle and the Busiris Painter, never painted figure scenes on other shapes than hydriae. However, in 1983 Dietrich von Bothmer published a remarkable black-figured alabastron in the Festschrift dedicated to his brother, Bernard von Bothmer². This publication may have escaped classical archaeologists; at any rate, the alabastron deserves to be widely known (*tavv.* I-III c).

Bothmer describes it in detail and points out that it must have been made in the workshop of the hydriae. This then is the first « vase » other than the well-known hydriae that was provided with a figure scene in the Caeretan workshop. It took nearly 150 years before such a vase was found! Besides, this is definite proof that banded alabastra were actually made in the studio.

* I wish to thank D. von Bothmer for his permission to study and publish photographs of the alabastron in the Metropolitan Museum, inv. no. 1981.11.7 (Mr. and Mrs. Martin Fried Gift), and inv. no. 22.138.83, an amphora by the Painter of Munich 833. *Tav.* I a-b are photos provided by the Metropolitan Museum.

Abbreviations:

BOTHMER = D. VON BOTHMER, *Echoes from Egypt*, in: *Artibus Aegypti, Studia in honorem Bernardi von Bothmer* (1983) 18-19, figs. 13-16.

CH = J. M. HEMELRIJK, *The Caeretan Hydriae* (1984).

¹ *CH*, 195.

² See abbreviations; said to be from Vulci. Inv. no. New York 1981.11.7; height 18.1 cm. The alabastron was restored and repainted: the picture of *tav.* I a was taken before the second arm of the first centaur was removed, compare *tav.* II a.

Just before the publication of *CH* the alabastron in New York was kindly brought to my notice by Bothmer (see *CH* Appendix 3, p. 201). It is an odd object that, I must confess, seemed a little suspect to me from the photographs; however, as every student of Greek vases knows, Bothmer's judgement is very valuable testimony, and when I was allowed to study it, in the spring of 1985, the alabastron seemed absolutely above suspicion to me. In this short discussion I may point out some of the most remarkable details.

On the bottom of the alabastron there is a rosette, the leaves of which were once painted alternately red, white and black (the colours are now lost); these rosettes are reminiscent of those on some early hydriae, such as *CH*, pl. 1b, d; 21c; p. 103; besides, there are traces of a preliminary drawing made with a ruler or template (see *CH*, 64; 88 etc.).

The two figure scenes are miniature imitations of the style of the *two* painters. In the upper frieze (*tav.* I-II *b*) Heracles is fighting three centaurs, very like the scene on the extraordinary hydria in the collection Hirschmann (*CH*, pl. 92-3), but here the figures are tiny and therefore they are allowed to stand upright. The style of the Busiris Painter is closely imitated and typical details are remarkably similar; note the remains of the skull of the lion skin which has fallen backwards from Heracles' head (scratched by the modern restorer who did not understand this detail, *tav.* II *a*; BOTHMER, fig. 13; *CH*, pl. 92b; 93a), the knot in the tail (*tav.* I *a*, II *a*; BOTHMER, figs. 13, 16; *CH*, pl. 29b) and the tree dropped by the third centaur who has been hit and flees in pain (*tav.* I *b*, II *b*; BOTHMER, figs. 15-6; *CH*, pl. 92c-d). The centaurs, however, are slightly different from those by the Busiris Painter (note the indication of the human buttock, *tav.* I; BOTHMER, figs. 13-5). The beard of Heracles has been re-incised a little too large in recent times (*tav.* II *a*; the alabastron was somewhat restored and has been cleaned, see n. 3). It is odd that the first centaur has no human genitals (*tav.* I *a*) and that some have human feet (*tav.* I *a*, II *a-b*; Caeretan centaurs always have hooves and double genitals, if visible; *CH*, 121). One trait seems unintelligible: Heracles (*tav.* II *a*) carries a branch in his left hand while his right hand is empty: it is quite clear that the position of his hands and arms was copied from a Heracles shooting an arrow (compare *CH*, pl. 82a; 92b). A mistake of this astonishing stupidity is only possible on a modern forgery or may be ascribed – *pace* the Etruscologists! – to an Etruscan imitator or pupil with little understanding of Greek myth. Since the alabastron is genuine, we are apparently witnessing an Etruscan pupil at work. An interesting detail is that the knees of the foremost centaur are like those on the earliest vase by the Eagle Painter (not by the Busiris Painter: *tav.* I *a*; *CH*, pl. 23 and fig. 54c).

Thus, there can be no doubt that this scene was painted by one of the Etruscan pupils – and not an ungifted one – who assisted the masters in the shop (*CH*, 91-3).

The lower frieze too is highly surprising (*tav.* I, II *c-d*, III *a-c*). In it we see

a row of dancing girls, one of the subjects which are unexpectedly absent from the hydriae, though very common on East Greek vases (CH, 162): a flute playing girl (tav. II c) walks in front of five girls who hold each other by the wrist. The style is a very close copy of the early work by the Eagle Painter (compare the girls' heads (tav. III a-b) with those of CH, pl. 29, 30, 37-40, 52-3, 57, 59-60, 67c). The girls wear long tunics with a kind of himation thrown over their breasts, arms and round their buttocks, in a manner that is, to my knowledge, unknown on Greek vases³. The skin of the girls was white (tav. II c-d) and their dresses red, white or black. So far the scene is not too far from what one would expect, but the ultimate surprize comes at the end of the row: the fifth girl carries a goose by the neck (tav. I a); the poor beast is struggling wildly, clawing away and fluttering with its wings in a truly pitiable manner (tav. III c). It was once white and black like the birds on the hydriae (CH, pl. 53e; 62a). Its presence in a row of dancing girls seems utterly impossible and, judging from a photograph, this detail seemed, at first sight, to point to a forgery rather than an ancient parody made by an Etruscan pupil who wanted to vary the pictures of his masters in an odd way⁴. However, as has been said above, the alabastron is genuine and the precision of the imitation of the style of the Eagle Painter is admirable, down to details like feet, ears etc. (compare CH, pl. 58-60). In fact the lower frieze might well be by the Eagle Painter himself but for the bad proportions, the oddities of the mantels and the poor displaced goose.

The date of alabastron should be about 525 B.C.

Here, then, we have for the first time two pictures painted by an Etruscan pupil of the two Caeretan masters, a pupil who had considerable talent, much more so than my Wind-Blown Ivy Painter and his colleagues (CH, 91-93). It is to be expected that some of these pupils (for there may have been more than only this Alabastron Painter) set up for themselves at some later stage of their lives. Is it possible to point out an Etruscan black-figure vase that is so related to the style of the Caeretan hydriae that it seems likely that the painter learned his trade in this workshop as a young man?⁵ I have suggested that this might

³ However, comparable strange lines descending from the breast downwards to the small of the back are seen on the dancing girls on the neck of a Chiot krater from Naucratis in the British Museum, see E. WALTER-KARYDI, *Samos VI* 1 (1973) no. 700, pl. 100; a good example of the East Greek row of dancing girls.

⁴ Birds are usually carried by their wings, as can be seen on countless Egyptian reliefs and paintings; sometimes they are also carried by the neck (e.g., in the mastaba of the Metropolitan Museum of New York). In Minoan art a goddess (?) may hold two big birds by the neck on seals, e.g., *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel I* (1964) no. 233, IX (1972) no. 154, compare VIII (1966) no. 134; also on the gold pendant from Aegina (H. G. BUCHHOLZ and V. KARAGEORGHIS, *Prehistoric Greece and Cyprus* [1973] no. 1305; but this is a male). On Greek pots it is only known from what has been called, perhaps erroneously, a Pygmy with cranes, see: *Funde aus der Antike, Sammlung P. Dierichs, Kassel* (1981) no. 9; p. 40.

⁵ I will return to this in a wider context in a paper that will appear in the *Bulletin Antieke Beschaving*.

be the case with the Lotus Painter of the La Tolfa group (*CH*, 190-191), but after a careful scrutiny of the amphora in Boston I no longer believe that the figure style owes so much to the masters of the hydriae that an apprenticeship in the studio seems likely.

A clearly recognizable mixture of the style of the Caeretan masters is, however, found on a vase by another painter, namely the one called after the Amphora Munich 833; the vase in question is New York 22 139 83⁶ decorated with a *symplegma* on A (*tav.* III *d*, IV *a*) and a robust running satyr on B (*tav.* IV *b-c*). The scheme of A (*tav.* III *d*) is often found on Attic vases but in other respects the scene is very like that of *CH*, pl. 39b (note the way in which the man cradles the woman's head in his hand). The head of the man (*tav.* IV *a*) is very close to some Caeretan heads (e.g. *CH*, pl. 90b; 93a). Also the high-spirited satyr on B (*tav.* IV *b-c*) is reminiscent of the satyrs of the hydriae (*CH*, pl. 2; 102). Of course, there is also much Attic influence, especially in the shape of the vase and its metopes. However, it seems reasonable to suggest that the painter of the New York amphora may perhaps have worked for a while as a youngster in the Caeretan workshop, where he may have been a contemporary of the Alabastron Painter⁷.

As for the latter, his style is closer to that of the Caeretan masters and more proficient. It seems unlikely that we will ever know more of him than this single *tour de force*, the alabastron, but we may be grateful, anyway, that we are permitted to make his acquaintance, so many years after the first discovery of a Caeretan hydria.

⁶ G. M. A. RICHTER, *BMM* Dec. 1925, 201 fig. 10; J. G. SZILÁGYI, *Bull. des Musées Hongrois des Beaux Arts* 37, 1971, 19 ff. and fig. 10; BEAZLEY, *EVP* 11; *Civiltà degli Etruschi*, 169-170, no. 6.42.4; I will return to this vase in the paper referred to in n. 5. Height 32.6 cm.

⁷ The New York amphora is to be dated not before 520 because of the date of the Caeretan parallels cited.



a



b