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GOLVOL, CHC AND OTHER ATTIC FRAGMENTS FROM A PORTUGUESE PRIVATE COLLECTION

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Abstract

The study of private Greek art collections has recently garnered growing attention in Portugal, giving rise to a number of publications that show the high interest these pieces attract from collectors. Following this trend, we present a new set of Greek ceramic fragments, which is part of a private collection. This small collection consists of fragments belonging to five Attic vases, corresponding to three black-figure pieces, of which one is exceptional in quality, and two black-glazed vases. In this article, we briefly frame these pieces, followed by a catalogue intended to describe their decorative motifs and, whenever possible, suggest an attribution for their form and painter. Among other aspects, the study of this small set has brought a new entry to the reduced range of pieces attributed to the Golvol Group and allowed the identification of another example of the expressive work of the CHC Group.

Keywords: greek vases; Golvol Group; CHC Group; black figure; black glaze.

Resumo

O estudo de coleções privadas subordinadas ao tema da arte grega tem vindo a ganhar força em território português, proliferando as publicações que dão conta do significativo interesse que este tipo de peças suscita junto de colecionadores. Seguindo esta tendência, apresentamos um novo conjunto de fragmentos cerâmicos de origem grega, parte integrante do acervo de um colecionador privado. Este pequeno acervo é constituído de fragmentos pertencentes a cinco vasos de produção ática, correspondendo a três exemplares de figuras negras, um dos quais de excecional qualidade, e dois exemplares de verniz negro. Neste artigo, apresentamos um breve enquadramento destas peças, seguido de um catálogo onde se pretende dar a conhecer os exemplares estudados, através de uma breve descrição dos motivos decorativos e, sempre que possível, sugerindo uma atribuição para a sua forma e pintor. O estudo deste pequeno conjunto permitiu, entre outros aspetos, acrescentar um novo exemplar ao reduzido leque de peças adjudicadas ao Grupo de pintores de Golvol e identificar mais um testemunho da expressiva obra do Grupo de pintores CHC.

Palavras-chave: vasos gregos; Grupo de pintores de Golvol; Grupo de pintores de CHC; figuras negras; verniz negro.

Introduction

The history of great museums, including the Portuguese, goes hand in hand with the history of collecting, having the former benefited, in their origin and development, from the contribution of countless and illustrious art and antiquity aficionados. The result of this alliance is the preservation and dissemination of important artistic and historical collections, including of Greek vases, objects of curiosity and distinction since the Renaissance. More than four centuries later, interest in these types of objects continues to endure.

The fragments we present here bear witness to the recognition of the timeless importance of Greek vases, an acknowledgement that stemmed from the very emergence of this particular type of ceramic production, and which echoes through time to the present day. This importance, intimately related to an understanding of these objects as an expression of both art and history, mirrors the technical and inventive capacity of potters and painters, as well as the provenance of these vases, attributed to different decorative tendencies and cultural influences felt at each stage of their production. By following the evolution of the times and trends, they are grouped into more or less well-known stylistic sequences, establishing chronologies for their manufacture and use. Alone, or assisted by other datable elements, they contribute to more accurate timeframes within archaeological contexts, providing insights into historical phenomena at intervals that rarely exceed the scale of a few decades.

The set described in this article bears witness to this phenomenon of changes in tastes and ways of making. Diverse in nature, they include black-figured and black-glazed examples, translating the use to different manufacturing techniques, which correspond to different moments (chronological and evolutionary) in the history of Greek pottery. Moreover, they reflect the preference of certain production centres for typologies of forms and decorative motifs that identify and characterise them. These features allow us, today, to track a vase back to its context of production. A bridge that starts, invariably and undoubtedly, with the stylistic analysis of the fragments. This analysis is presented below.

Attic Black-Figured Fragments

The collection under study consists of fragments belonging to three Attic vases, showing the application of the black-figure technique and style in ceramic productions. They correspond to different forms, namely a volute krater and a cup. The typology of the third fragment cannot be determined because of its small size, but we can tell it corresponds to an open form.

The fragment we have classified as krater preserves only the lower part of its neck, which would originally have been long and divided into two friezes, the upper one more prominent than the lower one. Easily recognisable due to its volute-shaped handles rising from shoulder to rim, the shape is quite distinctive given its relative rarity among Attic black-figure pottery¹. Excavations conducted in the Athenian Agora yielded the largest set of finds belonging to this form, which have been dated and bear witness to its several variations. We know from the archaeological data collected that the black-figured volute kraters achieved their peak production in 530 BC². However, specimens whose body is completely covered in black glaze date from later periods³. In both cases, the handles often bear decorations composed of ivy leaves, and the rim is, generally, painted black or filled with ornamental patterns. Finally, the neck of these kraters may display three possible decorative designs, two of which include figurative decorations at the base of the neck, which is the case of the fragment under study. In these two cases, the upper part could also exhibit figurative decorations or, alternatively, be filled with an ornamental pattern⁴.

³ With the exception of small, decorated friezes at the base of the handles, on the neck and at the joint between the bowl's wall and foot (Moore & Philippides 1986: 25).

¹ Moore & Philippides 1986: 25.

² Moore & Philippides 1986: 25.

⁴ A third variation includes its lower neck completely covered in black glaze and its upper part painted with figurative decorations (Moore & Philippides 1986: 46-47, no. 491-500).

The classification of the fragment as a volute krater is confirmed by its authorship as attributed to the Golvol Group, whose work is restricted exclusively to vases of this form⁵. Most vases attributed to this group date from 550-500 a.C.⁶, corresponding therefore to the peak production of the volute kraters.

Among the most frequent decorative motifs by this group are scenes of departing warriors, depicting several bearded male figures, dressed with *himation*, indiscriminately facing left and right⁷. The composition is usually completed by a seated figure, waving farewell, and a quadriga (chariot) and its charioteer. This fragment preserves only the latter element. Only the chariot box remains, as well as the hind part of the horses, which are hitched side by side. Its charioteer wears a long, sleeveless *chiton*, and holds the reins with both hands and a goad⁸. Overlapping the animals, a second human figure is depicted, possibly a warrior, who carries a circular shield in his hand.

Particularly noteworthy is the frequent use of white and red paint, employed to indicate and accentuate the vestments and elements of the armour, as well as the decorative patterns on the shield⁹. The motifs are laterally delimited by vestiges of a black frame, a decorative option present in other works of the Golvol Group¹⁰, but they are not exclusive to them¹¹.

With regard to this group of painters, there are, as we mentioned previously, very few identified examples of their work. There are the five volute kraters attributed to the Golvol Group by John Beazley¹², to which

⁵ With the exception of two pieces classified as "stemmed dishes", whose attribution is not consensual regarded their painter, also associated to the work of the CHC Group. The attribution is exclusively based on similarities found in the depiction of a sphinx, present on only one of these vessels (see CVA, Leiden, Rijksmuseum Van Oudheden 2: 24, figs. 29-30, pl. (165) 71.8.10, 71.7.9). It should be noted, however, that there are no similarities for the representation of an isolated sphinx among the works of the Golvol Group, and their apparently exclusive production of volute kraters, mentioned previously.

⁶ ABV: 194-195, 689.

⁷ The depiction as warriors is given by the weapons and body armour associated to these figures.

⁸ Among other similarities, the manner in which the bearded figures are represented is noteworthy (CVA, Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum 1: 49-50, pl. (1153) 43.1).

Cf. CVA, Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum 5: 54, 55, pl. (577) 268.1.

¹⁰ Cf. ABV: 195.5, 689; Paralipomena: 80; Carpenter, Mannack, & Mendonca 1989: 52; CVA, Wurzburg, Martin Von Wagner Museum 1: 47-48, fig. 26, pls. (1923-1925) 41.1-2, 42.1-3, 43.1-2.

¹¹ They can be found in works of the Leagros Group, used in the same way (cf. ABV: pl. 235).

¹² See ABV: 194-195, 689; Paralipomena: 79-80; Hitzl 1982: 123-125, 129, cat. no. 37, 45-48, 51-52, 140.

we can add the pieces held at the Allard Pierson Museum of Amsterdam¹³, and a fragment at the Royal Ontario Museum of Toronto, classified by Hayes¹⁴. Three other vessels deserve particular mention, among them a fragment classified by D. Von Bothmer, mentioned previously regarding its iconographic similarities with the fragment we are analysing here¹⁵, and two other vessels that are decorated in the manner of the Golvol Group, although the attribution is not consensual¹⁶.

The second fragment under analysis also illustrates the black-figure technique and style. In terms of form, it is classified as a skyphos wine cup. Used for drinking, it has a deep body and two handles, attached to the middle of the body and rising to the rim. The short foot, simple in profile, provides stability and practicality to this vessel¹⁷.

Although the piece preserves only part of the bowl, in five fragments that cannot be matched, the outer surface shows segments of the decorated frieze that would constitute Side A and Side B of this cup. The figures, painted in black on a reserved background, are highlighted with small details painted in white and red. The use of the incision technique is also frequent to accent anatomical details of the bodies, as well as decorative patterns in the draping of the vestments.

The motifs depict two different scenes. The first, on Side A, portrays the procession of the gods, of which only the lower part of five, separate human figures remain from the original decoration and, in the centre, horses positioned side by side. On Side B, the motifs relate to the Dionysian theme, with the depiction of a Maenad in motion. Smaller in terms of preserved area, this side of the cup raises greater doubts regarding the other motifs that would complement the decorated frieze.

¹³ Classified by Borgers and Brijder (see CVA, Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum 5: 53-59, figs. 31-35, 36, pls. (564; 576-578) 267; 267.8 - 267.9; 268.1 - 268.5; 269.1).

¹⁴ See CVA, Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum: 22-23, pl. (28) 28.1-3; Hitzl 1982:

^{419,} cat. no. 37, 45-48, 51-52, 140.

¹⁵ See CVA, Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum 1: 49-50, pl. (1153) 43.1.

¹⁶ See CVA, Gottingen, Archaologisches Institut der Universitat 3: 92, pl. (4354) 55.8; CVA, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 2: 6-7, pls. (896-897) 62.1-2, 63.1-4.

¹⁷ Although the production of this form began in the middle of the 6th century B.C., it became highly popular at the beginning of the following century. The vessel's profile changed over the course of time, also registering variations according to the different manufacturing centres (Moore & Philippides 1986: 59-61).

The stylistic features in these fragments find their best likeness in the works of the CHC Group, such as the similarities found in the decoration techniques used, as well as in the painted patterns and preference for certain forms, such as the skyphoi. This large and extensive Group achieved its peak of production in about 500 B.C.¹⁸, which means that they often included in their works depictions of a "war chariot wheeling around or a courting scene, CHariot-<u>C</u>ourting"¹⁹. It should be noted that the repetition of these motifs, applied to similar forms, justifies the identification of the Group, although it is possible to detect the presence of different hands²⁰.

More than a hundred skyphoi cups are attributed to this group, an overwhelming majority of which were identified in the excavations of the Athenian Agora²¹. In fact, the skyphoi attributed to the CHC Group, together with their contemporaries associated to the work of the Haimon Painter, monopolise the sets of cups of this kind found in the excavations conducted at the Agora.

These skyphoi generally belong to the Heron Class²², whose decoration is attributed to several groups of different painters, among whom the aforementioned CHC. The pieces belonging to this class are characterised by their large size when compared to those produced by the Haimon Group, and by their simple, unelaborate style. The decoration, of a figurative type as mentioned previously, is located high on the piece, leaving a large lower area unfilled. This area is partially covered in black glaze, with the exception of a small frieze in the transition from the bowl wall to the foot, where thick filiform motifs are represented. The frieze, displaying figurative decoration, is delimited below by a band in reserve and above by a black line, located immediately below the rim. The latter element, in turn, may be completely covered in glaze or, alternatively, decorated with a vegetal or filiform motif²³.

The large number of specimens associated to this group of painters may offer some pointers to reconstitute Side B of this piece. Among the most

¹⁸ The Group was active at the end of the 6th century B.C. and the first decades of the following century (Lynch 2011: 113).

¹⁹ ABV: 617-623; Paralipomena: 306-308; Boardman 1974: 151.

²⁰ As Beazley noted (ABV: 617), even though the identification of the painters in this group has not yet been fully achieved.

²¹ Some authors have suggested that these painters' workshops may have been located in the Agora itself, or in its surroundings (Moore & Philippides 1986: 3).

²² See ABV: 617.

²³ Moore & Philippides 1986: p. 61.

frequently used motifs are the maenad compositions associated with satyrs²⁴, which may be the case of this fragment. This composition would perhaps be framed by two sphinxes, positioned at the edges of the frieze, facing the handles²⁵.

Black-Glazed Fragments

The collection in analysis is also constituted by fragments belonging to two Attic black-glazed vases. They correspond to typologies of distinct forms, one skyphos cup and the other a complete saltcellar.

Only the lower part of the first piece has been preserved, formed by the foot, the base, and the lower part of its body. It is a skyphos cup, a term that covers a wide variety of forms. It has a deep bowl and two side handles, which start from an area slightly above the middle of the bowl wall, rising to the rim, or slightly above it²⁶. The reduced thickness of the fragment's wall places it within the "light-wall" variety, whose manufacture began in about 440-430 B.C.²⁷. Its inner surface bears a stamped and incised pattern, common in this type of cup, exhibiting a composition of ovule bands delimiting palmettes joined by stems. The decoration is very similar to that of the skyphoi collected in the excavations of the Athenian Agora, dating from 420 to 410 B.C.²⁸. Although the fragment under analysis lacks its upper part, the vessels of this period are characterised by the introduction of a double curvature of the wall, achieved by slightly tapering the rim. The foot shows a range of morphologies and sizes, whose resting surface may be flat or tapered, the latter resulting from the junction of the two (inner and outer) faces of the foot, which is the case of the fragment we are analysing.

The second black-glazed piece has an incurving rim, a concave bowl wall and a short foot, in all aspects similar to vessel no. 944, identified in the excava-

²⁴ E.g.: CVA, New Zealand Collections 1: 25, pl. (32) 32.7-8; CVA, Laon, Musee Municipal: 20, pl. (897) 25.1.3.

²⁵ E.g.: CVA, Glasgow Collections: 15, pl. (878) 19.1-4. There are other examples by the same Group of painters in which the sphinxes are facing the figures (cf. CVA, Taranto, Museo Nazionale 4: 15, pl. (3185) 18.1-2).

²⁶ CVA, Taranto, Museo Nazionale 4: 109, no. 562-623, pls. 25-27, 54-55, figs. 6, 20, 22. Initially, the wall of these vessels would have only one type of curve, resembling the «stemless dishes», with which they also share the decorative patterns present on the inner surface of the base.

²⁷ CVA, Taranto, Museo Nazionale 4.

²⁸ CVA, Taranto, Museo Nazionale 4: no. 586, 587. Cf. Corbett 1949: 90, 38, 148.

tions conducted at the Athenian Agora²⁹. It is a saltcellar, small in size, with a shallow body, crude manufacture and a form similar to "small bowls"³⁰. This fragment corresponds to the "footed" variety, with a wide ring-base, typical of later productions of this form³¹. Also dating from a late period is the resting surface totally glazed in black, complemented by a groove³². These characteristics on the fragment under study mean it can safely be dated from the late 4th century B.C.

Final considerations

Formed by a small number of pieces, the collection studied bears witness to the range of technical, aesthetic and formal options that characterise Hellenic art. By including pieces produced within a timespan of about two centuries, it reflects different ways of making, different tastes and preferences with respect to the shape and ornamentation of the vessels.

Although only represented by three fragments, the black-figure vessels that form part of this small set illustrate the challenges that are posed to the stylistic analysis of this type of ceramic production. The widely-produced skyphoi by the CHC Group contrasts with the rarity of the volute krater. This illustrates, furthermore, the difficulties in identifying and characterising the different painters who would be part of the group to which they are attributed. We are thus required to return to John Beazley and to the moment when these pieces, of unquestionable aesthetic value, also acquired historical importance, with the establishment of bridges between the vases and the potters and painters who produced them.

The themes represented, the "procession of the gods", the "departure of warriors" and the Dionysian theme, although common given the frequency with which they appear in these productions, are extraordinary in the technical quality of their stroke and attention to detail, testifying to the effort put into their production.

From the large, technically complex pieces, exemplified by the volute krater, to the small, modest vases covered entirely in black glaze, illustrated by the saltcellar, this small set provides a privileged view of the diversity and complexity of the ceramic productions of Ancient Greece.

²⁹ Sparkes & Talcott 1970: 109-110, no. 587.

³⁰ Sparkes & Talcott 1970: 109-110, no. 587.

³¹ In contrast with disk-shaped feet, typical of older productions (Sparkes & Talcott 1970: 137).

³² Sparkes & Talcott 1970: 137, no. 939-950, pls. 33-34, 59, figs. 9, 20, 22.

CATALOGUE

No. 1. Attic Black Figured Volute Krater

Attributed to: Golvol Group About: 525-475 B.C. Previous Collections: Unknown provenance³³.

Shape and Ornament: Fragment of the lower part of the neck, which would originally have been divided into two friezes, the upper one more prominent than the lower one. Interior glazed. Lower section of the neck offset and reserved, with figured decoration between two glaze lines. The motifs are laterally delimited by vestiges of a black frame. Glaze well preserved on the exterior and inside of the neck.

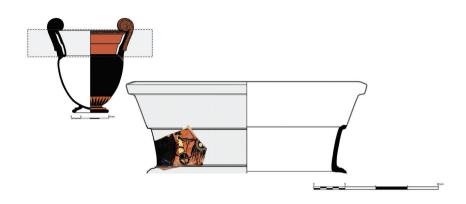
Subject: Departure of warriors. Quadriga to right. Only the chariot box remains, as well as the hind part of the horses, which are hitched side by side. The bearded charioteer wears a long white sleeveless chiton and holds the reins and a goad in both hands. Overlapping the animals, a second human figure is depicted, possibly a warrior, who carries a round shield in his hand.

Dimensions and Condition: Diameter of neck: 28,9-30,9 cm; maximum height preserved: 7,3 cm. Surface and colours well preserved.

Accessory colors: Used to indicate and accentuate the vestments and elements of the armour, as well as the decorative patterns on the shield. Red: dots on the shield and on the warrior's leg armor. White: on the shield and on the chiton worn by the bearded figure.

Cf. (The most representative examples): ABV: 194-195, 689; Paralipomena: 79-80; Bothmer 1985: 66-71, no. 57. (For subject and style): CVA, Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum 1: 49-50, pl. (1153) 43.1; CVA, Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum 5: 54-56, fig. 31-33, pls. (577) 268.1-3.

³³ The fragment was in the possession of a private collector of the south of France.



No. 2. Attic Black Figured Skyphos Cup

Attributed to: CHC group, Heron Class About: 525-475 B.C. Previous Collections: Unknown provenance³⁴.

Shape and Ornament: Five non-joining fragments of the wall. Deep body and part of one handle preserved, attached to the middle of the body. The outer surface shows segments of the decorated frieze, that would constitute Side A and Side B of this cup. With figured decoration between two glaze lines. Interior glazed.

Subject: (Side A) The procession of the Gods. Two human figures dressed in *himation* precede a set of horses. Only the lower part of the figures remains from the original decoration. In the center, horses are positioned side by side and display an ornate harness with tiny red-colored dots. Overlapping the animals, a third human figure is depicted, of which only the feet and the lower part of their draping remains. In front of the horses, a figure dressed in short himation and winged footwear. To the right, next to the handle, was represented a male figure, in position of seated, wearing a long himation. With the exception of this figure, which faces left, facing the procession, the other figures are turned to the right. The scene is filled with vegetable branches, composed of hederas and bunches of grapes, which suggest an open space, outdoors. The anatomical

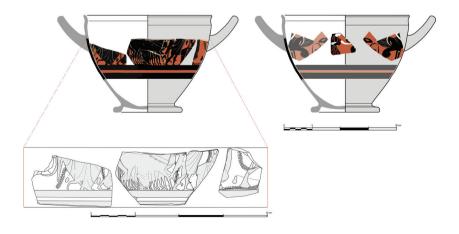
³⁴ The fragment was in the possession of a private collector of the south of France.

details of human and animal figures, as well as the folds in the draperies are enhanced by fine incisions. (Side B) Dionysian theme. Depiction of a maenad in motion. Sphinx facing right, facing the handle of the cup. It is common, in cups of the same group of painters, the reproduction of the sphinx on both opposite sides of the wall. The sphinx preserves only part of its body. The wing is decorated with white spots and incisions that define the feathers. In a central position of the frieze, a female figure (maenad) is facing right. The figure wears a long *chiton*, tight at the waist and, on the arms, a short robe.

Dimensions and Condition: Diameter of wall: 21,9 cm; maximum height preserved: 7,2 cm. Surface and colors well preserved.

Accessory colors: The figures, painted in black on a reserved background, are highlighted with small details painted in white and red. Red: in small dots, decorating the robes and animal figures. White: exclusively used on Side B, applied on female flesh and on small spots on the sphinx.

Cf.: Side B (Maenads and Sphinx). Sales catalogue: Pottery from Athens 1972: no. 32.; CVA, Agrigento, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 1: 16-17, pl. (2716) 32.1-2. Side A (quadriga): CVA, Moscow, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts 1: 46, pl. (49) 49.5; ABV: 618.28, 617.5, 617.4; Olmos 1993: 101-102, no. 33 (A, B, AH); CVA, Reading, University 1: 18, pl. (537) 10.13.





No. 3. Attic Black Figure Vase

Previous Collections: Unknown provenance. Belonged to Lord Dayton, Baron of Corran³⁵.

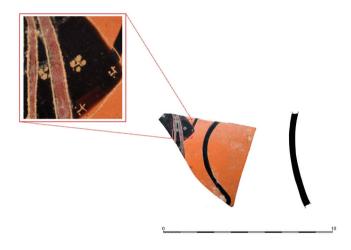
Shape and Ornament: The typology of the third fragment cannot be determined because of its small size, but we can tell it corresponds to an open form. Fragment of wall. The inner surface is completely covered with black glaze. The outer surface shows a decorative motif painted in black on a reserved background. Despite the small size of the fragment, part of the draping of a human figure is preserved, possibly corresponding to the shoulder region of the figure. The garments are ornamented with small floral motifs. To the right, a broad band, undulating, painted in black, corresponding to an indeterminate motive.

³⁵ Dr. John Dayton, Baron of Corran and Patron of Ballymote Heritage Group. PhD in Archeology and Engineering, he was part of the Institute of Archeology (University College of London), with a considerable collection of Greek vases. He has published several works in the area of archeology and has directed numerous archaeological expeditions in Africa and Europe.

The attention to detail present in the ornamentation of the robes, as well as the quality of the glaze, indicate that this is a piece with great technical quality.

Dimensions and Condition: Maximum height preserved: 4,47 cm. Surface and colours well preserved.

Accessory colors: Use of red on two ribbons that fall on the drafting of the figure represented.



No. 4. Black-Glazed Skyphos Cup

About: 440-410 B.C.

Previous Collections: Unknown provenance. Belonged, in 1920, to the collection of a college of Arts of London.

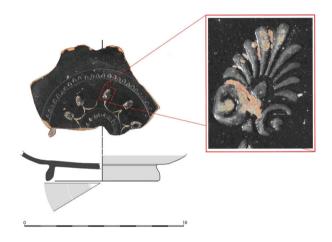
Shape and Ornament:

Only the lower part of the first piece has been preserved, formed by the foot, the base, and the lower part of its body. Its inner surface bears a stamped and incised pattern, common in this type of cup, exhibiting a composition of ovule bands delimiting palmettes joined by stems. The inner and outer surface of the wall, as well as the foot and the resting surface are completely covered in black glaze.

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The outer surface of the base displays a decoration composed of reserved and black circles, presented alternately. The foot is tall and has a simple, oval profile.

Dimensions and Condition: Diameter of foot: 7,1 cm; height of foot: 0,95 cm; maximum height preserved: 1,8 cm. Surface and motifs well preserved.



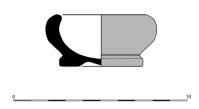
No. 5. Black Glazed Saltcellar

About: Late 4th century B.C. Previous Collections: Unknown provenance.

Shape and Ornament:

Incurving rim, concave wall and a short foot, with a wide ring-base. Completely cover with black glaze, including the resting surface, complemented by a groove. The outer face of the bottom is drawn in the central area.

Dimensions and Condition: Diameter of foot: 4,8 cm; diameter of rim: 5,1 cm; height: 3 cm. Glaze very deteriorated, slightly misfired, turned brownish in some areas. With small incrustations.



Abbreviations

- ABV Beazley, J. (1956), Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- **Paralipomena -** Beazley, J. (1971), *Paralipomena. Additions to Attic Black-Figure Vase Painters and to Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- CVA Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum. Paris: Union Académique Internationale (1923-).

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