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N. Kourou & G. Bourgiannis,
2019: *Ρυθμοί της Κυπριακής
Κεραμικής: Σύντομη Επισκόπηση με
βάση τη Συλλογή του Αρχαιολογικού
Μουσείου του Τμήματος Ιστορίας και
Αρχαιολογίας του Εθνικού και
Καποδιστριακού Πανεπιστημίου
Αθηνών* [Styles of Cypriot Pottery: A
Brief Survey on the Basis of the Collection
in the Archaeological Museum,
Department of History and Archaeology,
National Kapodistrian University of
Athens]. Nicosia: The University of
Cyprus Press, 173pp.

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The material and visual culture of Cyprus in Greece is represented by two important public collections in Athens, the Thanos Zintilis Collection at the Museum of Cycladic Art, and the collection of Cypriot Antiquities at the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.¹ Both are quantitatively and qualitatively hefty and are wonderfully exhibited in displays that seek to convey to laymen and experts

¹ Lubsen-Admiraal 2004; Karageorghis 2003.

alike the complexity, interconnections and cultural vigour of Cyprus over several millennia.² The handy compendium by Nota Kourou and Giorgos Bourogiannis publishes an equally important, but not as easily accessible to a wider public, collection of Cypriote ceramics at the Archaeological Museum of the University of Athens. This is a didactic collection for students of history, art and archaeology in this institution whose curriculum has regularly included subjects on the art and archaeology of Cyprus since the 1980s.

As the prefatory essays clearly explain, this unusual collection owes its formation to gifting gestures by the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus under the directorship of Drs Vassos Karageorghis in 1966 and 1972, Demos Christou in 1994 and Marina Solomidou-Ieronymidou in 2017 (Kitromelides collection of 17 vases, discussed below). These unusual circumstances account for the amply representative character of the fine ceramics in this collection. Every item, that is, represents an archaeologically and art historically important component of the typology and major styles of Cypriote pottery. This is why Kourou and Bourogiannis, foremost experts in Greek and Cypriot pottery, have conceived of the formal publication of this collection as a handy manual of Cypriote pottery for a period stretching from Chalcolithic, represented only by shards, to Roman, represented by black glazed, red slip and terra sigillata wares (shards and entire pots). The presentation of these ceramics is elegant, soundly structured and excellently illustrated (only colour photographs). Participants in archaeological excavations who usually toil registering pottery with heavy and not-easy-to-use compendia like the always indispensable volumes by the Swedish Cyprus Expedition or Hayes' *Handbook of Mediterranean Roman Pottery*, will appreciate this well-researched and easy-to-use book.

The organisation of the 136 entries follows the development of Cypriote pottery over time. The collection comprises mostly entire pots representing a good but definitely not exhaustive sample of the main trends in shapes and styles for each period. Only two items are imports from Greece (p. 83, no. 57: a Mycenaean stirrup jar; p. 141, no. 111: a shard from the neck of a Late Geometric Euboian amphora) whereas one item is a terracotta figurine of a horse probably from the Salamis area (p. 125, no. 96: Bichrome ware). In each section, introductory essays provide overviews of technical and morphological characteristics of each category but also of chronological and typological problems deriving from the generalising character or rigidity of the SCE classificatory scheme (see especially pp. 85-87). The entries have been structured according to the established chronological/typological/ stylistic classifications (Early to Late Bronze Age, Iron Age divided into Cypro-Geometric, Cypro-Achaic, Cypro-Classical and Hellenistic, and the quantitatively underrepresented Roman wares) first introduced by the ground-

² On NM's Cypriote collection: Papalexandrou 2010, 552.

breaking volumes of Swedish Cyprus Expedition and refined by subsequent scholarly work. Each entry contains pragmatic information about the materiality of the artefact, with special emphasis on preservation and surface decoration, whereas the analysis of fabric is relegated to the overview essays preceding each group. The description of colour slips and clay fabrics follows the now standard Munsell chart. This information is followed by a brief but concise delineation of major morphological characteristics of shape and decoration, attribution to the SCE classificatory scheme, extensive bibliography and commentary on any of the above. Occasionally the commentary discusses function, as for example in entry no. 100 (p. 129), a black-on-red Marion jug with a terracotta figurine on the shoulder holding a jug/spout of the vessel, for which a ritual function is proposed because the slow flow of the liquid content was suitable for the performance of libations (p. 130). Likewise, the commentary on the sole bull-shaped rhyton in the collection (no. 45, p. 71, Base ring II ware), stresses that ‘the great majority of Cypriot samples derive from burial and settlement contexts and not from sanctuaries, which indicates that the bull-shaped vessels of Base Ring ware were tokens of prosperity and not dedicatory in nature’ (p. 72).

Unfortunately, all artefacts published in this volume lack their precise provenience in Cyprus. The great majority belong to groups from tombs illegally excavated and then confiscated by Cypriot authorities who have not always been able to trace their provenience back to their original depositional context. In his prefatory essay for this volume, collector Paschalis Kitromilides, provides a valuable overview of the formation of his collection of 17 vases, the last group to enter the didactic collection of the University of Athens in 2017 (pp. 19-20). He reports that his personal collection also included vases brought to his attention by his aunt, archaeologist Dr Aggeliki Pierides, who ‘...whenever vases from confiscations were put up for sale by the Cypriot Museum, she discerned something remarkable and notified me to purchase it. This process was in accordance with the then archaeological legislation, according to which multiple replicas of vases could be offered for sale since the Cypriot Museum was not interested in holding them [in its collections]’ (p. 20). Anna Lekka has addressed in detail the legal framework, now defunct, that made possible the institutionalised practices that resulted in the legal formation and occasional exportation of private collections of antiquities from Cyprus.³ A similar provenance may be deduced for the fine Bichrome I neck amphora no. 69, which P. Mauromatis, a Cypriot doctor from Famagusta, donated to the School of Medicine of the University of Athens on 20 October 1970 (pp. 99-100). At a later point, it was passed on to the Archaeological Museum of the Department of History and Archaeology (p. 21). These provenance stories speak

³ Lekka 2016, 56-58.

volumes about the social history of collecting of Cypriot pottery in the period following the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960.

The Cypriote archaeological artefacts published in the volume by Kourou and Bourogiannis will always enjoy the status of ‘permanent loans’ by the Republic of Cyprus. Their publication is a valuable contribution to the scholarly study of Cypriote pottery and it will surely stimulate even closer engagement with the artefacts and the ceramic categories they stand for. The volume is also a token of the sophistication and depth this important sub-field of Cypriote Archaeology has attained in the last century.

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