

## The “Dipylon” vases and their graves: the end of exclusivity in Early Iron age Athens



### ABSTRACT

Choosing the “Dipylon vases» as a point of departure, the present article explores the funerary practices in Athens and Attica during the middle of the eighth century and the Late Geometric I period. Rather than the funerary iconography of these vases, the context is set at the heart of the discussion. The interest is placed on the burials marked in this special way and, more importantly, on the identity of their occupants who deserved this type of memorization, accomplished through these clay *mnemata*.

**Keywords:** Athens; Dipylon vases; Early Iron Age; Burials; Necropoleis; Iconography

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## Os vasos do “Dipylon” e seus túmulos: o fim da exclusividade da Idade do Ferro Inicial em Atenas

### RESUMO

Escolhendo como ponto de partida os “vasos do Dipylon”, o presente artigo explora as práticas funerárias em Atenas e Ática durante meados do século VIII e o período Geométrico Recente I. O contexto mais do que a iconografia funerária destes vasos está no centro da discussão, com o interesse colocado nos enterramentos marcados desta forma especial e, mais importante, na identidade dos seus ocupantes que mereciam este tipo de memorização, realizada por meio desses *mnemata* de barro.

**Palavras-chave:** Atenas; Vasos do Dipylon; Idade do Ferro Inicial; Sepultamentos; Necrópoles; Iconografia

## Los vasos “Dipylon” y sus tumbas: el fin de la exclusividad de la Edad del Hierro Temprana Atenas

### RESUMEN

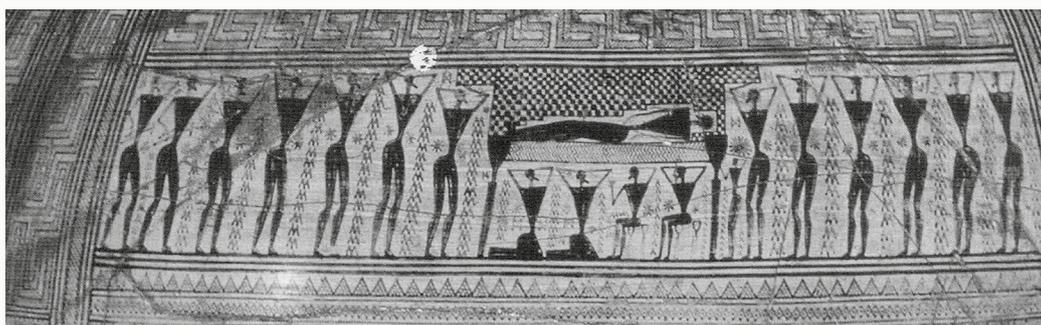
Eligiendo como punto de partida los “vasos del Dipylon”, el presente artículo explora las prácticas funerarias en Atenas y Ática durante la mitad del siglo VIII y el período Geométrico I tardío. El contexto más que la iconografía funeraria de estos vasos está en el centro de la discusión, con el interés puesto en los entierros marcados de esta manera especial y, más importante, en la identidad de sus ocupantes que merecieron este tipo de memorización, llevada a cabo a través de estos *mnemata* de arcilla.

**Palabras clave:** Atenas; Vasijas Dipylon; Primera Edad del Hierro; Entierros; Necrópolis; Iconografía



**M**uch ink has been spilled over the rise of figural iconography in Athens slightly before the middle of the eighth century BC (see esp. Ahlberg-Cornell, 1971; Boardman, 1966; Boardman, 1983; Snodgrass, 1980; Snodgrass, 1998; Coldstream, 1991; Shapiro, 1991; Hurwit, 1993; Hurwit, 2011; Stansbury-O’Donnell, 2006; Langdon, 2008). Generic, individual, historic, mythical, narrative or not (for an overview of the proposed interpretations: Dipla, 2009-2011, p. 15-22), the multi-figured representations decorating the Late Geometric Athenian clay grave markers have put an end to the long-lasting iconological silence, which followed the demise of the Mycenaean culture. Moving away from the content and meaning of these scenes, the present paper would like to restrain itself on the decorated markers, whose archaeological context is known. The focus is directed to the funerary use of the vases and the after-death treatment of the deceased, discussed in association with the images of prothesis and ekphora and their implications for contemporary social behaviours and realities, as well as kinship ties.

The Athenian Late Geometric I multi-figured scenes of the period around the middle of the eighth century, characterized by a certain degree of narrative complexity, were not born *ex nihilo*. Their roots can be traced back to the first attempts of the painters to tell a story on ninth-century funerary vases (Rombos, 1988, p. 64-65 [Protogeometric horses]; Carter, 1972, p. 28, 31-33 [Middle Geometric animals], p. 36 [Middle Geometric mourner], p. 28-29, p. 34-35 [Middle Geometric men with horse/naval battle]. The scenes of the late second quarter of the eighth century were directly related to the after-death treatment of the deceased: the ceremonial laying out of the corpse surrounded by mourners – the prothesis –, and, in three instances, the ekphora, the transfer of the body with a chariot to the necropolis and the related procession (Figures 1-2).<sup>1</sup> Ahlberg (1971) studied in detail 49 scenes of prothesis more or less equally divided to the Late Geometric I (760-750 BC) and II periods (750-700 BC), further enriched by a few more cases by Rombos (1988, p. 77-91, esp. p. 78, 80).



**Figure 1.** A prothesis scene

**Reference:** Athens, National Museum 804. After Coulié, 2013, p. 66, fig. 35

<sup>1</sup> Athens, National Archaeological Museum 803, Coldstream, 1968, p. 30, no 2 (belly-handled amphora by the Dipylon Painter), Athens, National Archaeological Museum 990, Davison, 1961, p. 36-37, fig. 25 (krater by the Hirschfeld Painter), Kerameikos, Vierneisel 1963, p. 29-30, pl. 29a-b; Coldstream, 1968, p. 41, no. 2 (krater of the Hirschfeld Workshop), Bonn, Coldstream, 1968, p. 42, no. 2d (krater of the Hirschfeld Workshop). For the ekphora scenes: Ahlberg, 1971, p. 220-221.



**Figure 2.** An ekphora scene.

**Reference:** Athens, National Museum 990. After Coulié, 2013, p. 67, fig. 37

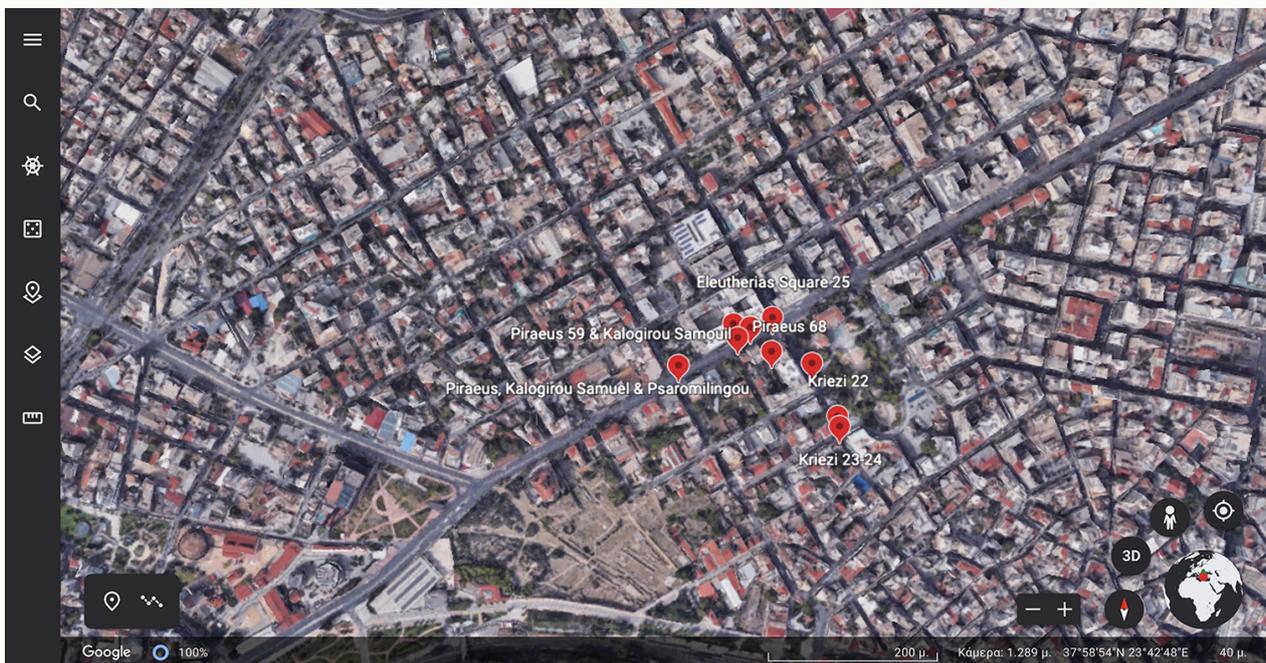
These scenes decorate mostly large, pedestalled kraters and fewer amphorae,<sup>2</sup> shapes whose number dropped in the third quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These vessels were crafted by a small number of potters and painters (Coulié, 2013, p. 69-70; Coulié, 2014; Coulié, 2015; Vlachou, 2015), whose individualities were fused into the 'style' of each workshop, since more than one hands could be recognised as working on particular vessels (Whitley, 2015, p. 110). The so-called Dipylon workshop, composed of the Dipylon Painter and his associates has been assigned the earliest and most impressive creations, placed to the Late Geometric Ia period (760-750 BC) (Coldstream, 1968, p. 29-41; Rombos, 1988, p. 418-420, nos. 46-48; Coulié, 2010; Coulié, 2013, p. 63-81; Coulié, 2014; Coulié, 2015). The creations by the Hirschfeld Painter and his workshop followed chronologically (Kunze, 1953-1954; Villard, 1957; Davison, 1961, p. 36-40, 141-142; Coldstream, 1968, p. 41-44; Rombos, 1988, p. 418-412, no. 46-68; Vlachou, 2015).

The style of these vessels, the artistic personalities of their creators, their iconography, as well as their social and gender implications might have been well treated, but it is their precise context that remains unclear in most of the cases. The so-called 'Dipylon vases', named after the funerary plot, discovered in the late nineteenth century close to the Dipylon Gate of the Classical fortification wall, are not an exception.

<sup>2</sup> Thirteen figure-decorated kraters and three monumental amphorae have been dated to ca. 760-750 BC.

## The ‘Dipylon Vases’ from known contexts

Falsely linked with the Kerameikos at first and later with a site near the Kerameikos, the ‘Dipylon cemetery’ should no longer be considered as an independent funerary space, but as a part of a large necropolis, extending over an area of ca. 8.500 m<sup>2</sup>, defined by Peiraios and Dipylon Streets, as well as Eleutherias Square close to the Eriai Gate, only 300 m northeast of the Kerameikos (Figure 3) (for the clarification of the topography of this cemetery, see most recently: Dimitriadou, 2019, p. 125). The various names used for designating this cemetery – ‘of/by the Eriai Gate’, ‘of Kriezī Street’, ‘of Peiraios Street’, and ‘of Eleftheria Square’ – simply apply to its different parts, which gradually came to light from the late nineteenth century until the late 1990’s.



**Figure 3.** Map of Athens with the different parts of the extended necropolis close to the Eriai Gate marked

**Reference:** Google Earth Website. Map data ©2021 (<https://google-earth-pro.gosur.com/en/?ll=37.979203284239205,23.721694682494444&z=16&t=satellite>).

The necropolis of the Eriai Gate was in use from the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC and the Late Helladic IIIc until the Classical period. The earliest burials include both inhumations in cist graves and secondary cremations (Ruppenstein, 2007, p. 244-245; Dimitriadou, 2019, p. 25-26). A number of secondary cremations are mentioned as Protogeometric (10<sup>th</sup> century), chronologically preceding the several Middle Geometric and even more numerous Late Geometric burials, spanning the eighth century with a particular concentration noted in its second half. The graves were not only furnished with clay vases, but with more precious objects too, like gold bands, as well as imports made of ivory and faience (Dimitriadou, 2019, p. 358-369).

The notorious Dipylon vase-markers, dispersed today in a number of European museums (Galanakis, 2011, p. 190, n. 42),<sup>3</sup> were discovered at the so-called ‘Sapountzakis plot’ (Kavadias and Lagia, 2009), identified today as the west half of the plot bordered by Peiraios, Kalogirou Samouil, and Psaromilingou Streets in 1871-1872, during the five-month excavation, conducted by the art dealer Ioannis Palaiologos. The information on this excavation is limited and only secondary (esp. Rayet and Collignon, 1888; Hirschfeld, 1872; Watson, 1872. For the discussion of the excavation and the sources: Galanakis, 2011, p. 175-179, 182. See also Coulié, 2013, p. 61-63). This part of the cemetery revealed more than 231 graves dating from the Middle/Late Geometric periods to the fourth century BC.

The archaeologists Olivier Rayet and Gustav Hirschfeld, who must have participated or were at least present in Palaiologos’ excavation,<sup>4</sup> describe the types of burials found in the necropolis (Rayet and Collignon, 1888; Hirschfeld, 1872). According to Hirschfeld (1872, p. 135), the excavations revealed three or four layers of graves corresponding to different periods. Rayet discussed of large, variously oriented, pit graves, containing both inhumed and cremated deceased, furnished with weapons – ‘killed’ swords, spear heads and a knife. Gold bands with linear, animal or figure decoration are mentioned as sewn on the dead’s garments or worn on their head. The grave offerings included small vases too. For Rayet, the pile of clay sherds detected above each of these pits, originated from the intentional destruction of large vessels, once marking the graves. With the use of a blunt tool, like a stone axe, the vessels had been struck on their interior (Rayet and Collignon, 1888, p. 23-24).

The account of the vases’ deliberate breaking has not been confirmed by the slightly later publication of Brückner and Pernice (1893) of the excavations conducted by Valerios Stais in 1891-1892 under the auspices of the Athens Archaeological Society. Eight rectangular trenches – 8 to 12 m long – were opened in the plot, which had not been fully excavated. 19 graves ‘aus der Dipylonzeit’ were explored. They were all inhumations, except for an adult secondary cremation and two enchytrismoi, one of a child and one of an adult.<sup>5</sup>

This publication allowed the association of some ‘Dipylon vases’ with specific graves. The fragments of the largest amphora of this group (Athens, National Museum 803) were found over the fill of Grave I, a pit, 3.10 m long and 1 m. wide, which contained an adult inhumation. The dead had a gold diadem around the head and some vases by the feet (Brückner and Pernice, 1893, p. 91, 101-104). The belly-handled amphora is decorated with an ekphora scene: the dead transferred to the necropolis has been recognised as a woman (for the detailed treatment of the amphora, see esp. Kourou, 2002, p. 85-88, pls. 102-105, fig. 53; Moore, 2007).

Brückner and Pernice associated the name piece of the Dipylon Master (Athens, National Museum 804) either with Grave II or Grave IV, although without certainty. The grave, disturbed by a later cremation, contained an adult inhumation. The fragments of the belly-

<sup>3</sup> The largest part of this assemblage is at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens and the Museum of Louvre in Paris (CVA Paris, Louvre XIII & XVIII).

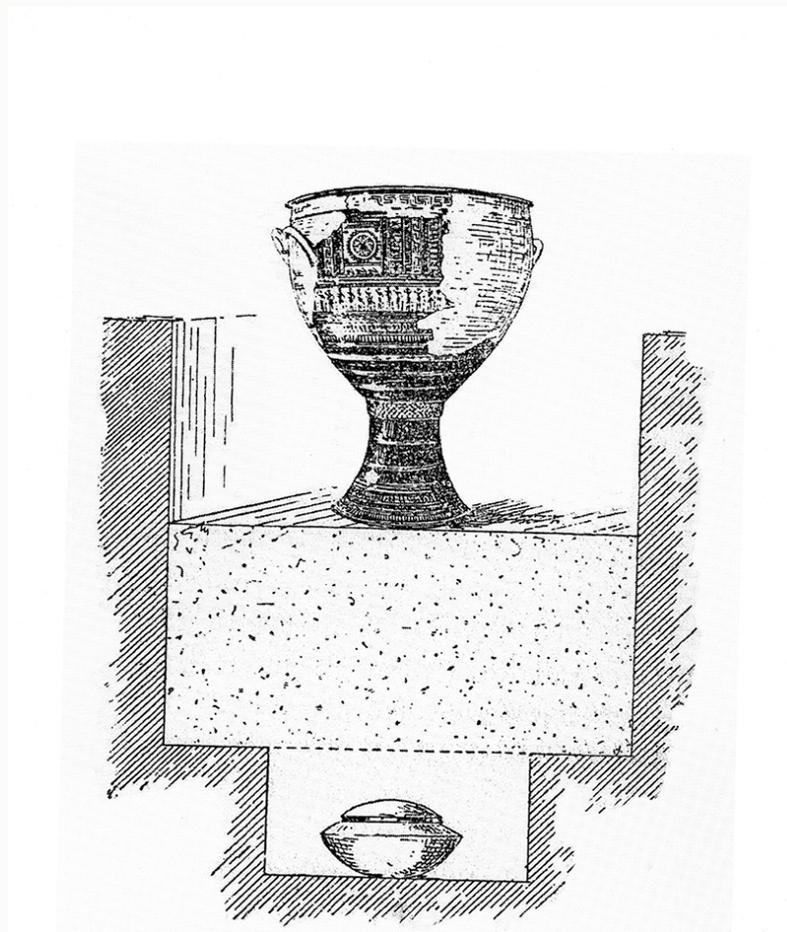
<sup>4</sup> For Gustav Hirschfeld mentioned as the co-excavator of Palaiologos: Cook, 1972, p. 299; Boehlau et al., 1996, p. 92, n. 3. It is possible that they both assisted Palaiologos at the excavation (Coulié, 2010, p. 22) or they were at least present (Schilardi, 1968, p. 39).

<sup>5</sup> The urn burials of children might have been more: Brückner and Pernice, 1893, p. 78.



handled amphora were found 1.20 m over the grave's bottom (Brückner and Pernice, 1893, p. 94, 104). Better preserved than the specimen marking Grave I, this amphora depicts the prothesis of another woman.

The large, pedestalled krater (Athens, National Museum 806) is the only vessel found *in situ* in this burial ground (Figure 4). It marked Grave III, which contained a secondary cremation.<sup>6</sup> The krater stood upright at a height of 0.95 m. The sketch of the grave's section, published by Brückner and Pernice (Figure 5), reflects their reconstruction of the original placement of the krater rather than the actual condition of its discovery (Brückner and Pernice 1893, p. 92, 96, fig. 4). The grave is shown as a deep trench, the centre of which has been dug deeper, creating a narrow rectangular pit, which housed the bronze urn with the remains of the deceased, mentioned as belonging to a youth or a girl. The trench was filled with soil up to a certain height with half of the standing krater shown protected by its sides. According to the publication (Brückner and Pernice 1893, p. 91-106), two limestone *stelai* were removed from the burial trench above the krater, while an ash layer sealed this burial assemblage.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 4.** The krater marking Grave III, found in situ

**Reference:** Athens, National Museum 806. After Coulié, 2013, p. 63, fig. 31

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the krater's chronology, see Bohlen, 2017, p. 74.

<sup>7</sup> For the re-evaluation of the conditions of the burial's discovery: Bohlen, 2017, p. 84-88.



**Figure 5.** The krater marking Grave III, found in situ

**Reference:** Sketch of the grave’s section (Brückner and Pernice, 1893, p. 92, 96, fig. 4)

The published section suggests that the type of the grave largely followed that of the trench-and-hole, finding its closest parallels in the Kerameikos. The clay urn is here replaced by a bronze cauldron set at the centre of a better-defined rectangular pit and not inside a hole. Comparably to the ‘Dipylon’ krater, its Middle Geometric predecessors from the Kerameikos were occasionally placed deeper into the burial trench so that they were at least partly protected by the trench against natural threats or human activity (Bohen, 2017, p. 123-124, fig. 39). The krater had a prothesis scene in its handle zone. This part of the vessel was missing when the grave has been excavated by Stais in 1891, but it was discovered during the Palaiologos excavations somewhere in the plot, before ending up in the Louvre (Louvre AC 3272a-d. Kaufmann-Samaras, 1973, p. 235-240, pl. 128). Except for the krater, the burial was furnished with a number of intact vases, including a large amphora, an oenochoe, a skyphos and two high-rimmed bowls (Athens National Museum inv. 721-725).

Grave IV, a pit, 2m long and 1m wide, contained an adult inhumation, marked by a large amphora, whose fragments were detected ca. 1m above the grave's bottom where the head of the deceased. The iron blade of a sword was found lying by the body's left side at the level of the armpit. The grave was furnished with a number of clay vases, including a tankard and an 'aryballos-shaped oil vessel', standing on a small support and decorated with a checkerboard (Brückner and Pernice, 1893, p. 94, 106-107). There is a confusion regarding the grave marker. Brückner and Pernice describe an amphora reconstructed to a height of 1.20m with birds appearing below its arched handles, which corresponds to the belly-handled amphora, now in the National Museum of Athens (Athens, National Museum 805, Kourou, 2002, p. 84-85, pls. 100-101). But they note that this vessel might have marked Grave II (Brückner and Pernice, 1893, p. 107). Moore (2007, p. 21) preferred to assign Athens 804 to Grave II, due to its proximity with Grave I, which was marked by Athens 803, suggesting that the women buried in these graves might have been somehow connected to each other. Though not an unpalatable scenario, the context of the amphora should remain in question.

The rest of the 'Dipylon graves' in the Sapountzakis' plot might not have been marked by monumental vases, but markers of this type were reported from the excavation along Peiraios Street in front of the Hadjikostas Orphanage, a few meters north and slightly east of the Sapountzakis plot (Threpsiadis, 1961-1962, p. 23; Schilardi, 1968, p. 42). A largely pedestalled krater, decorated with a prothesis scene (Threpsiadis, 1961-1962, pls. 22-23) – the only mentioned and illustrated – has been attributed to the close associates of the Dipylon Master by Coldstream (1968, p. 31, no. 19). A lidded pitcher is also mentioned as coming from these graves (Threpsiadis, 1961-1962, pl. 24).

A large belly-handled amphora together with a roughly rectangular stone stele seems to have marked Grave LXII excavated along Kriezi Street, where part of the same extended cemetery has been uncovered. No information is provided for the grave, situated by the northern limit of the excavated plot (Alexandri, 1967, p. 95, pl. 89; Vlachou, 2015, esp. p. 58, 66-67; Vlachou, 2017, p. 193). The amphora decorated with a prothesis scene has been initially assigned to the Hirschfeld Painter by Ahlberg (Ahlberg, 1971, 311, fig. 3) and most recently to the Painter of Kerameikos 268, working in the workshop of the Hirschfeld Painter (Vlachou, 2015, p. 61-65). Finally, fragments of large amphorae and kraters used as markers were reported from the part of the necropolis excavated at 25 Eleutherias Square, where 10 Late Geometric graves, most possibly inhumations, have come to light (Karagiorga-Stathakopoulou 1979, p. 24, 26).

The burials in the 'Sapountzakis plot' of the second half of the eighth century, all inhumations of both males and females, as inferred by their *kterismata*, remained unmarked. All adults buried at the northern (Peiraios 57), as well as along the eastern part of the necropolis (25 Eleutherias Square) at that time were inhumed. On the other hand, a number of secondary cremations were located at 23-24 Kriezi Street, dating both to the Middle and the Late Geometric periods. Some of the cremains have been placed in bronze urns. Despite the apparent prevalence of cremations, inhumations might not have been absent since most of the burials were found disturbed. The co-existence of both cremation and inhumation seems to have been also the case in Sapountzakis' plot, according to Rayet's account.



Despite the tradition of marking graves with large kraters since the Early Geometric period in the Kerameikos (Bohen, 2017), the figure-decorated clay products of the Dipylon and the Hirschfeld workshops are absent here. The only exception – the foot of a monumental, pedestalled krater of the Hirschfeld workshop, decorated with an ekphora scene (Coldstream, 1968, p. 41, no. 2; Vlachou, 2015, p. 68, no. 15 [Painter C]) – was found lying to its side by two inhumations excavated along the Sacred Way (hS 290-291: Vierneisel, 1963, p. 29-30, pl. 29a-b). The bodies were placed in particularly long pits exceeding 3 and 4m in length respectively, furnished with numerous vases. They both had a gold band bearing figure decoration around the wrist or the upper arm.<sup>8</sup> Although it has been suggested that the krater might have marked both graves (Vlachou, 2017, p. 194-195), the excavator related it to one of them.

Surprisingly, the next larger concentration of ‘Dipylon vases’ from Athens comes from the top of the Acropolis. 1000 Geometric sherds – 75 of which published – were recovered from the trenches opened in the late nineteenth century between the south side of the Parthenon and the so-called Kimonian wall (Graef and Langlotz, 1925, p. 23; Gauss and Ruppenstein, 1998, p. 30-40; Papadopoulos, 2003, p. 297-300; Scholl, 2006, p. 42-46. See also Doronzio, 2018, p. 12-16 with all the relevant references). Some of them date around the middle of the eighth century (Late Geometric I period) with eight bearing funerary iconography (Graef and Langlotz, 1925, p. 24). Except for a single krater, the rest of the fragments belong to amphorae (Doronzio, 2018, p. 13-14, n. 33). They have been assigned to at least four contemporary graves (Gauss and Ruppenstein, 1998, p. 30; Scholl, 2006, p. 28; Doronzio, 2018, p. 13). The original context and use of these vases have largely puzzled research and different solutions have been offered (for an overview with the relevant references: Dimitriadou, 2017, p. 33-36; Doronzio, 2018, p. 14). The lack of a detailed publication of the finds does not facilitate a concrete reconstruction of the activities taking place on the Acropolis during the Early Iron Age. In any case, the condition and concentration of the Late Geometric sherds point to an intentional rather than a secondary deposition, and although objects with funerary character may be found in sanctuaries (Doronzio, 2018, p. 14-15), it does not seem implausible that the Acropolis was still inhabited when the cult was firstly established. The evidence from Attica (Academy, Oropos), where burials were found in close proximity to habitation quarters, does not contradict that from the Acropolis. Moreover, the co-existence of domestic and cultic structures is a well attested phenomenon in the Aegean during the Early Iron Age (see e.g., Delphi; for some recent relevant discoveries: Alexandridou, 2019).

If, indeed used as a funerary space, then the use of this particular class of vases as grave markers point to some important individuals. According to Bohlen (2017, p. 89-90), they belonged to the Neleids, who withdrew to the Acropolis after the dominance of the Medontids in the Athenian political stage by the middle of the eighth century BC. Van den Eijnde ascribed them to the ‘most prominent Athenians’, the leaders of the kinship groups, which ruled Athens after the abolition of a basileus-centered type of government in the eighth century (van den Eijnde, 2010, p. 353-353. See also: van den Eijnde, 2019, p. 110-112).

<sup>8</sup> The illustrated clay vases, including a small neck-handled amphora, four high-rimmed skyphoi, one of which lidded and three lidded high-rimmed bowls are linked with one of the graves, according to the caption (Vierneisel, 1963, pl. 29b).



The fragments of a belly-handled amphora with a prothesis scene, assigned to the Dipylon Master, was included among the finds from a pit cut in the rock at the south edge of the levelled top of Kolonos Agoraios (Brann, 1962, p. 30, 59, no. 1 (=245), pl. 1.1). Interpreted as the *'disiecta membra* of a grave amphora' (Brann, 1962, p. 12), their presence in this pit suggests that a grave in its close vicinity had this vessel on top of it. Late Geometric burials were located not only on the east side and the central square, but also in the southwestern part of the Agora, as well as southwest of the Tholos and further to the southwest and on the west slope of the Areiopagos (see overall Dimitriadou, 2019, p. 88-90).

Only a few large, figure decorated vases by the hands of the Dipylon and Hirschfeld painters and their colleagues found their way outside Athens. A Late Geometric I fragmentary krater with a chariot frieze was found next to one of the graves of the extended necropolis of Merenda (Lazaridis, 1968, p. 31; Xagorari-Gleissner, 2005). Its context is not discussed, but there are examples of similar monumental vases used as markers in this necropolis, spanning the second half of the eighth century (Xagorari-Gleissner, 2005, p. 31-32). The data are more illuminating in the case of a krater found on top of a grave at the cemetery of Ag. Panteleimon at Anavyssos. The conical foot of a standed krater was found on top of the enclosure around Grave I. Two rubble stones might have acted as markers too. The krater stood below the level of the stones. Remains of pyres under the krater and over the southwestern part of the grave, contained clay sherds. The cist grave with two of its side formed of stones, was longer than 2 m. It contained a bronze lebes, inside which a gold band, iron sheets and bones, as well as 13 vases, the majority of which pyxides and lids (Themelis, 1973-1974, pl. 81α-ε). A neck-handled amphora by the so-called Painter A working in the Hirschfeld Workshop is said to have been found in Marathon with no other information provided (Davison 1961, p. 38-39, fig. 28; Coldstream, 1968, p. 42, no. 6; Kourou, 2002, p. 36-37, pls. 30-32; Vlachou 2015, p. 68). Clay markers continue to be used in the necropoleis of Attica until the latter part of the eighth century with examples – mostly isolated – known from a number of necropoleis (Marathon, Merenda, Koropi, Thorikos, Trachones), which in most cases they cannot be linked with a particular burial (Coldstream, 2011; Vlachou, 2016, p. 194, n.18).

## “Dipylon” and eighth-century Athenian society

How do these clay markers fit in the Athenian mortuary practices of the eighth century? The funerary data from that time, defined in relative chronological terms as the transition from Middle Geometric II to Late Geometric I, largely follow the ninth-century traditions, though a number of changes can be noted.

The social complexities of ninth-century Athens, as revealed from the available funerary data, have been extensively treated by James Whitley (1991, p. 116-162; 1996; 2015). The small number of the adult burials, their distinctive type and rich furnishing, combined with the almost complete absence of children, point to some form of burial exclusivity operating in Attica at the time (Morris, 1987, p. 58-62; Whitley, 1991, p. 116-117). Adults were accompanied by specific funerary packages, including among others imported objects; women attracted more attention



than men in terms of the value of the grave offerings (Whitley, 1996, p. 221-222). Instead of adopting a social model of an aristocratic supremacy in ninth-century Attica (e.g., Kalaitzoglou, 2010), Whitley reconstructed three different types of personhoods: the male warriors, the rich adult females and finally children, though almost invisible. On the basis of the wealth of their burials, women stand on top with their after-death treatment borrowing elements from that of males and children (Whitley, 2015, p. 112-113, figs. 3-4).

The funerary visibility continues to be low during the first half of the eighth century. Child inhumations in graves persisted, but the first enchytrismois appeared. Secondary cremation was not abandoned, but the trench-and-hole grave type was replaced by simple rectangular trenches, with bronze cauldrons mostly used for the collection of the cremains. At the same time, the number of the inhumed adults was rising. Distinctly rich adult burials continued to exist: their wealth was reflected either on the quantity rather than the type of their *kterismata* or on the marker (Whitley, 1991, p. 160-161).

Although the tradition of the krater-markers was fading out in the Kerameikos, where it dominated in the ninth century, it was the deceased of the Eriai Gate necropolis and those possibly buried on the Acropolis, whose social personae were articulated through impressive markers. The ‘Dipylon vases’ have been largely accepted as gendered objects: kraters are considered as marking male burials, and the newly introduced monumental belly-handled amphora those of women (Boardman, 1988; Bohlen, 1997; Coldstream, 1991; Coldstream, 2011; Vlachou, 2011; 2015, p. 49-53, 65-66): an assumption which has not been anthropologically tested. The closer examination of the data from ‘Dipylon’ reveals some discrepancies in the widely accepted marker/gender scheme. Particularly, Tomb IV marked by an amphora contained a sword. Instead of considering it as an object rarely associated with female burials in Athens during that period, its presence should be better question the identification of the gender of the deceased. Questions are also raised in the case of the inhumation in the Kerameikos marked by an ekphora krater with the deceased furnished with a gold band, object found mostly in female graves at the time (Vizyinou, 2010, p. 315. See also Strömberg, 1993, p. 47, 75).<sup>9</sup> There are more funerary examples revealing the complexity of Early Iron Age realities (see e.g., Vlachou, 2017, p. 193), which should be sought outside the notion of gender as an ‘eternal binary’ (Whitley, 2015, p. 113). Despite any inconsistencies, these clay figure-decorated *mnemata* were destined for both male and female deceased at the necropolis of the Eriai Gate by the middle of the eighth century, and not exclusively for men, as in the ninth century Kerameikos.

The polarity argued for the ninth century does not seem to have survived in the eighth century. Children are less visible in the first half of the century with the data from the necropolis of the Eriai Gate being limited to adults. Women are comparably treated with men and their graves are no longer so distinctly wealthy. The scheme of the destruction of bodies and objects through fire recedes and the Athenians of the first half of the eighth century receive the same after death treatment independently from their gender and age.

<sup>9</sup> A gold band was found in the Middle Geometric I grave hs 109 in the Kerameikos together with weapons. Nevertheless, the grave was marked by an amphora. Schörb-Vierneisel, 1966, p. 4, 7-8; Coldstream, 1977, p. 37.



The use of clay markers of certain requisites in terms of size and decoration in combination with particular grave offerings underline the individuality of some deceased, who – beyond any polarities – they must have been of special significance and their memory had to be consolidated. Such funerary treats cannot have been simply destined for all elite members. The ‘Dipylon’ deceased should be seen as the descendants of the ‘rich females’ and the ‘male warriors’ of the ninth century, who were differently commemorated by the middle of the eighth century. The specially marked graves reflect the still insisting restricted funerary visibility with the focus placed on both adult males and females with a possible extra emphasis on men, if judging from the large number of kraters – even though without context – and the dominance of depictions of male prothesis on vases.

This particular importance of the ‘Dipylon’ deceased can be further inferred from the figures surrounding their corpse in the prothesis scenes decorating their grave markers. The high presence of women, playing a key role in the ritual lamentation, but more importantly that of children, clearly discerned from their body characteristics, attributes, and emotional conduct, illustrate well the impact of their loss on a circle of persons, most possibly the close members of their kin rather than the wider community. The strongly ‘gendered’ and ‘aged’ multi-figured scenes on the Dipylon vases seem to underline the essence of the kin relations of the deceased (Langdon, 2015, p. 220). This is better indicated by the particular relationship implied between specific children and the deceased, as in the case of the child of the female deceased on the name piece of the Dipylon Painter (Hurwit, 2011, p. 15). It is interesting that although subadults, aging from infants to adolescents, are present on 90% of the Late Geometric I grave markers (Langdon, 2015, p. 222), the archaeological visibility of children remains very low at the time with burials of subadults remaining rare in Athens and Attica.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the ‘strong statement of familial attachment’ carried by these markers (Langdon, 2015, p. 226), it is difficult to see the burials of this extended necropolis as parts of smaller plots/burial grounds, defined by the application of a particular funerary custom. The presence of adult cremations at some parts of the necropolis, as for example along Kriez Street, does not necessarily reflect the existence of different burial groups more or less conservative (Dimitriadou, 2019, p. 125-126). Alternatively, the adoption of the cremation could have been dictated by a number of factors, particularly the age or the status of the deceased (Alexandridou, 2016).<sup>11</sup>

The competition between the elite kin groups rooted back to the ninth century survived well in the first decades of the eighth. At that time, some groups adopted new forms of exclusivity (Whitley, 1991, p. 162-163). The necropoleis of the Eriai Gate and the Kerameikos lived parallel lives since the Submycenaean period and the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC. But, slightly before the middle of the eighth century, one at least burial group of the former cemetery developed further the funerary traditions already set in the Kerameikos: a brand-new burial reality has been created, in which images and their ‘artists’ played a major role. It would be ideal to know how the evidence from the Acropolis fits in this scheme. If indeed funerary, then the fragmentary vases with the prothesis scenes from the hill denote another burial group in Athens sharing the same pattern

<sup>10</sup> For the role of children in burial rites, see also Oakley, 2003, p. 163–173; Garland, 2020, p. 211.

<sup>11</sup> For the use of cremation in Late Geometric Attica: Alexandridou, 2020.



of mnemonic treatment of their deceased. Exclusivity in the necropolis of the Eriai Gate was not only expressed through the application of inhumation for adults and the use of the figure-decorated monumental markers, but also through the choice of burying specific clay forms of large dimensions together with some deceased. This is the case of the giant pitchers, a creation of the Dipylon workshop, found in three graves of the Dipylon plot, whose occupants must have been young females, followed by more objects of value (Vlachou, 2016; Vlachou, 2017, p. 197-198).

Moreover, weapons were still deposited in graves of the Eriai Gate necropolis, while absent from the contemporary burials in the Kerameikos and other Athenian and Attic necropoleis. Except for Grave IV provided with a sword, the adult inhumation in Grave V was furnished not only with a sword, but also with two spears and a dirk (Brückner and Pernice, 1893, p. 107-111). These burials with weapons were the latest in Athens (D’Onofrio, 2011, p. 659). Comparably to weapons, the gold bands, scarce both in the Kerameikos and other Athenian necropoleis by the middle of the eighth century, are still attested at this cemetery. Outside Athens, gold bands were found in ninth- and not eighth-century graves of the necropolis of Agios Panteleimon at Anavyssos.

Whether the deviation observed in the funerary behaviour of the burial group of the Eriai Gate necropolis (and of the Acropolis?) is indeed indicative of a crack in the solidity of the Athenian elite, as argued by Whitley (1991, p. 162-163) cannot be confirmed, but it is an interesting scenario. Why such a deviation might have occurred at that particular period remains an open question. In any case, it seems that the burial group of the ‘Dipylon’ paved the way for the burial developments attested in Athens after the middle of the eighth century. By the third quarter of the century, although the rite of cremation was never abandoned, inhumation has been almost exclusively adopted for the adult deceased of the groups buried in the northern part of Athens, and the large organized necropoleis of the Attic countryside (Alexandridou, 2016). The high degree of variability in the burial customs even in the same burial plot seems to have been depended on the age of the deceased (Alexandridou, 2016, p. 349-350; Alexandridou, 2020). Unlike the ninth and the first half of the eighth century, individuals of all ages and both genders were visible in the Attic necropoleis during the last decades of the eighth century, a phenomenon which should be linked with the various strategies of mortuary display, adopted by the burial groups rather than with the birth of the Athenian polis (Morris, 1987).

I have argued elsewhere that the mortuary evidence reflects the impact of the horizontal divisions on the applied burial rites, namely the emphasis placed on all members of the oikos, and the importance of its identity and cohesion. The crucial role of the young individuals and especially of young females in the reproduction and continuity of the kin as generation links seems to have been highly evaluated, as indicated by their after-death treatment (Alexandridou, 2016, p. 353-355). The same type of formal funerary ‘inclusiveness’ is attested in Attica after the Kleisthenic reforms, when household members were equally important for the preservation of the Athenian polis (Whitley, 2001, p. 187). Equally each deceased formally represented at the eighth-century burial grounds must have been thought crucial for the maintenance and

further development of his/her kin. It is interesting that the reappearance of small children in the burial groups and the large number of enchytrismoi, an unparalleled phenomenon in the earlier phases of the Early Iron Age, is combined with their rather weak presence in the contemporary prothesis scenes.

Turning to figure iconography, the last decades of the eighth century saw an important enrichment of the iconographic repertory with numerous new themes (Rombos, 1988). Ekphora might have disappeared, but prothesis persisted. The few remaining kraters, decorated with a prothesis, are all products of provincial workshops, appearing the necropoleis of the Attic countryside. At the same time, such scenes decorate the neck or the belly of normal-sized neck-handled amphorae, as well as other shapes, including oenochoai and pitchers. Unlike the Late Geometric I monumental markers, the figure-decorated vases of the late eighth century were kept far from public sight, functioning either as *kterismata* in both male and female adult burials with no gender connotations or as consumables, burnt in the offering pyres, attached to particular graves. This is the case of a small amphora bearing a prothesis on its neck was found in the pyre linked to a male inhumation from the family burial ground under the later Tholos in the Athenian Agora. The vase was burnt together with other vessels and figurines. According to the excavator, it contained the water for extinguishing the pyre (Young, 1939, p. 55-57, figs. 37-38). One more amphora was found broken in a pyre over Grave 51 in the Kerameikos, which contained a child enchytrismos and an adult inhumation, most probably of a female, as indicated by the presence of a pitcher (Kübler, 1954, p. 209, 245-247). The funerary scenes were now destined to be viewed for a short period of time just before the internment, in contrast to their oversized predecessors. This choice seems to mirror some new mentality, according to which iconography has been detached from the sphere of social display, while acquiring a more personal character directly attached to the deceased and his immediate circle. The importance placed on kin, which has been assumed on an iconographic base in the middle of the 8th century, it has become an archaeological reality in the last decades of the century as indicated by the burial inclusivity.

Except for being impressive due to their size and decoration, the ‘Dipylon vases’ play a key role in the discussion of the funerary realities in Athens in the decades around the middle of the eighth century. They form the most characteristic but also the latest effort for exclusivity expressed by a few burial groups and reserved for particular members, who must have been of special importance for their kin. By the last decades of the eighth century, the new trends set by the ‘Dipylon’ group/s have been modified and largely adopted for the deceased of the various necropoleis both in Athens and Attica. The exclusivity expressed through these clay *mnemata*, died in Athens after the middle of the eighth century and some decades later in the Attic countryside too.



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