

Hydra vases in spot of recent discoveries in Alexandria

When Alexander the great invade the East, The center of civilization moved from Greece to the Eastern kingdoms, which became brilliant in several arts, and became under spot during the last three centuries BC. Pottery was the most important product in those Eastern kingdoms. Alexandria was brilliant in producing kind of pottery called "Hadra vases", which was named after the area where they were found in great amount, Hadra cemetery, east of Alexandria. These vases were used to preserve the ashes of the dead, and dated to the period between 259 BC to 212 BC., since the period of Ptolemy II to the middle period of Ptolemy IX, known as Philopator. They used to write the name of the dead on the vase.

The Decoration:

These vases were classified according to the decoration which cover the neck, the shoulders and the hands into two groups:

- The first group: represented in quick paintings.
- The second group: represented in figures with red, blue, yellow and white colour.

The Figures:

The most important figures which were drawn on these vases were animals, plants, different tools and some scenes of the Greek mythology.

The sites:

Great amounts of the vases were found in the big Hellenistic Cemeteries, eastern of Alexandria, especially in Elshatby, Hadra, and Ibrahimia, and also in big cemetery in the western part of the ancient city, which Strabo mentioned in the first century BC., named Necropolis this kind was found in Athens and the areas under the Ptolemaic kingdom, as Cyprus, Rodos and Crete.

Examples of this type of vases:

- 1) A vase discovered in Ibrahimia area in Alexandria in 1908, (fig. 1) with muddy coloured ground with paintings in red colour. The scene on the vase is a winged horse (Pegasus) in the middle between two columns. The style, which the vase painted with:

The figures were painted in red colour, and then the details came by using very thin lines. The figure of winged horse illustrate the return of dead soul to the gods, which show the eternity of the dead.

- 2) Another example in white ground mixed by muddy colour, decorated with chessboard decoration (fig. 2) This type spreaded since the establishing of Alexandria, but during the next centuries it became in big amounts. it was decorated with simple motives like plants, geometric figures and chessboard decoration. This vase characterized by ink writing after burning the vase, this writing gave us information about the name of the dead person, the date of his death, his job and his place of birth.⁽¹⁾

(1) I. Boardman, "Athenian black figure vases", London, 1974.

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- 3) Another vase from Greece, National museum, Athens, terracota, no. MN2570 (fig. 3). This vase contains ashes of a man from Astypalea, dated to 243 BC.⁽¹⁾ **Enklaar** classified it to the first group of his classification, painted by waved lines and plant decoration, there is amemorial inscription on it,⁽²⁾ but B.F. Cook classified it to the fourth group of his classification.
- 4) Another example from Ibrahimia, Alexandria (fig.4–5) This vase belonged to the shape "L" of Enklaar`s classification.⁽³⁾ The vase with flat rim and cylindrical neck well- separated from the body, separated base, one vertical handle, two horizontal handles.⁽⁴⁾ The neck decorated with floral motives, vertical compass circle surrounded by a cloud of dots. The shoulder decorated with a branch of pine tree. The frame shaped in a grid from up and down. The separating part is carved lines. The frame in the front shaped in a plant branch, a circle with vertical connection surrounded by a cloud of dots.

The frame from the other side shaped in snails, and the base coloured in black.⁽⁵⁾ This vase show special characteristics of plant group dated to 250 - 240 BC.⁽⁶⁾ The writing on the shoulder give us the name of the dead person, who called "Aristodimos".⁽⁷⁾
- 5) This example from the Graeco_Roman museum in Alexandria, no. 21938 (fig. 6-7), discovered in 1925 in Hadra cemetery, dated to the second half of the third century BC. Short and flat shape, round body. The decoration of the shoulder represent two dolphins diving in contra directions from the side of a palm tree.⁽⁸⁾
- 6) Another example from the Graeco-Roman Museum, Found in 1925 in Hadra area (fig. 8-9-10) decorated with plant decorations on the neck and the body. we can see a Greek inscription in white colour on the black area lined the beginning of the middle part.⁽⁹⁾

Hadra vase recently discovered in Sporting, El Geish Road, Alexandria.

The recent Hydra vase which discovered as a result of the archaeological digging work at the site of sporting. The vase was found in one of the two niches behind tomb no. 1, this niche was carved in the rock and covered with a block of lime stone with

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- (1) R. Pagnestecher , "Dated sepulchral vases from Alexandria", AJA 13, 1909, p. 407, p. 411, pl. XII.
 - (2) A, Enklaar, "Chronologie et peintres des Hydries d'Hadra" BAB 60, 1985, p. 134, and Enklaar 1986, p. 58.
 - (3) Enklaar 1985, p. 117; id, 'Les Hydries d'Hadra II: Formes et Ateliers", BAB 61, 1986, p. 51.
 - (4) According to the indications which A., Enklaar presented, and concerned his classification , it`s from shape L4.
 - (5) Enklaar 1985 p. 116, fig. 4.
 - (6) L. Guerrini , Vasi di Hadra: Tentativo di sistemazione cronologica di una classe ceramica, Stud Misc 8, D22 , pl. XVII
 - (7) E. Breccia, Le Musee Greco-romain (1925-1931) 1932, p. 26, pl.XIII, 50, B. Brown, Ptolemaic Paintings and Mosaics and the Alexandrian Style, Cambridge MA, 1957, p. 62, n. 45, pl. 36.
 - (8) Enklaar 1985, p. 144 – 145; 1986 fig. 7.
 - (9) BSAA, 25, 1930, pl. XXIII, E 002.

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some white mortar. there's Greek inscription by red ink on it. This block was removed and the hole was opened on 22nd dec. 2011, and the vase was found (fig11) The niche is rectangular in shape, length; 44cm., width; 30cm., depth; 35 cm.(fig. 12).

The vase Dimensions:

Height: 42cm.

Body diameter: 27 cm.

The rim diameter: 14 cm.

The base diameter: 12.5 cm.

The vase in general in a very good condition, with some coloured decorations of figures, and ornamental decorations. There's some Greek writing in black at the upper part of the body. The vase has three handles, two connected to the body in horizontal position, and the third is a big hand in vertical position connected to the neck from the upper part, and to the body from the lower part. There's a cover over the opening in plaster with ashes remains. inside the vase there're some ashes and burnt bones. (fig. 13).

The decoration:

The neck decorated with plant shapes, the shape of three leaves in rows, one behind the other, and surrounding the neck from all directions (fig 14) At the end of the neck, we can see black strap round the neck at the beginning of the body. At the beginning of the upper part of the body, we can see decoration in a shape of continuous braid surrounding the whole body. Under this decoration directly, we see another stripe representing a line around the whole vase body, and under it directly, we find the horizontal handles, under the handles, there isn't any decoration, just a white slab without decoration (fig. 15).

Above this strap, there's a Greek inscription, representing the name of the owner of the vase, whose ashes are inside the vase (fig. 16).

Surrounding each horizontal handle from each side, decoration between the upper strap of the body, and the lower strap of the body representing geometrical shape, consists of crossing lines making grid like pattern (fig. 17)

Under the vertical handle, there's some floral decoration, taking the shape of big leaves reminded us the shape of wine leaves commonly used during this period, but here in a bad condition.

The main scene, that is on the body of the vase under the inscription, representing four girls, each one of them holding the other with one hand. We can notice that each girl looking in the direction of the girl beside her, but both girls at the sides of the scene holding a stick in a vertical position to limit the scene from each side (fig.18) We can see two straps surrounding the body, and we can see above the base and the end of the body, two small straps surrounding this part.

Conclusion

Through a comparison between the recent vase in Sporting with the other examples, which we mentioned in these papers, we conclude that:

- They are all similar in general shape.

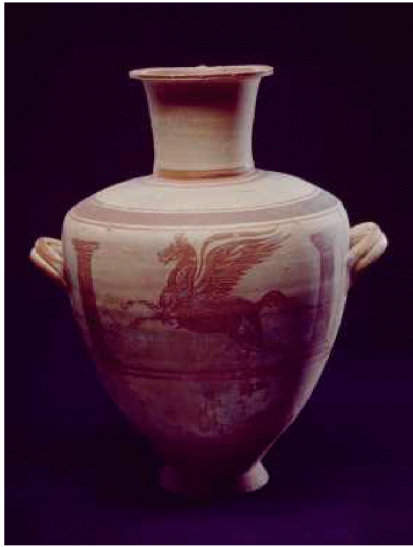
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- The decoration of the three leaves on the neck appears clearly in our recent one of Sporting, and some of the others.
- Dividing the panels through a strap at the end of the neck with its connection with the body.
- The main scene in the middle of the body surrounded by two straps from up and down.
- The use of chess floor in decoration.
- The shape of handles, one vertical, two horizontal.
- The inscription, that carry the name of the owner of the vase.

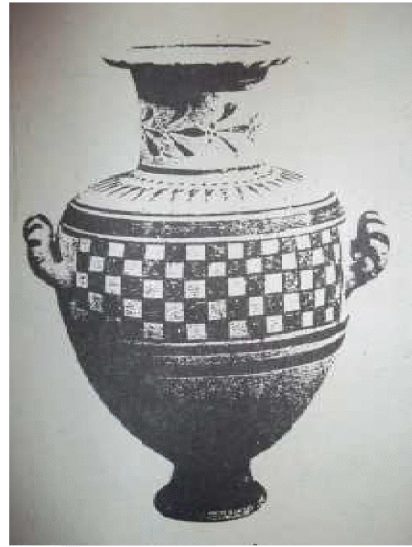
From all this, we can say that the recent vase at Sporting is so similar to the one of Ibrahimia (fig.4-5) in most points So we can date this example to the third century BC., exactly between 250 – 240 BC.

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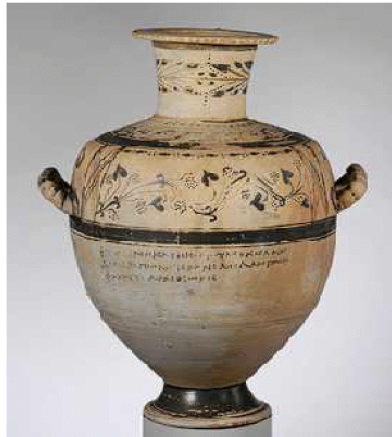
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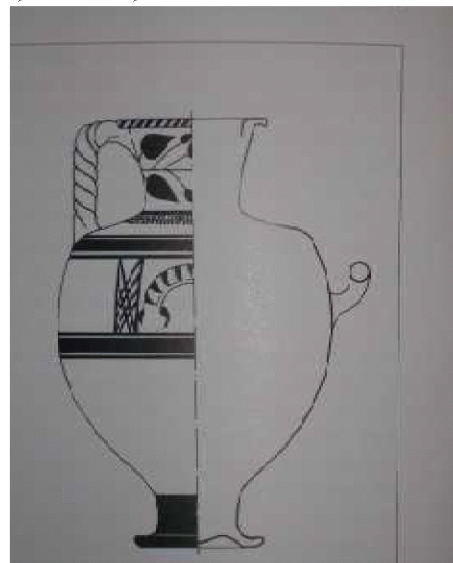
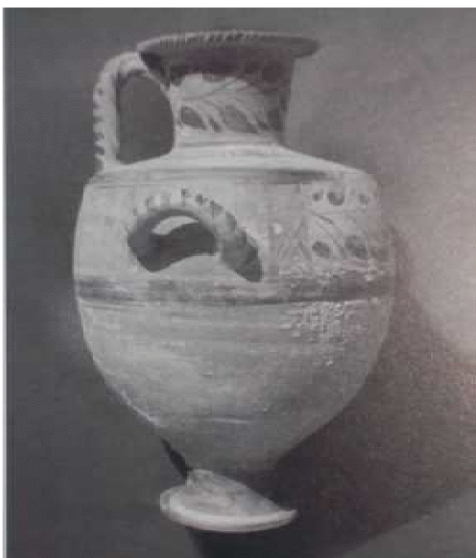
1 - Hydra vase, Ibrahimia, Alexandria. 1908.



2-Hydra vase, chess decoration

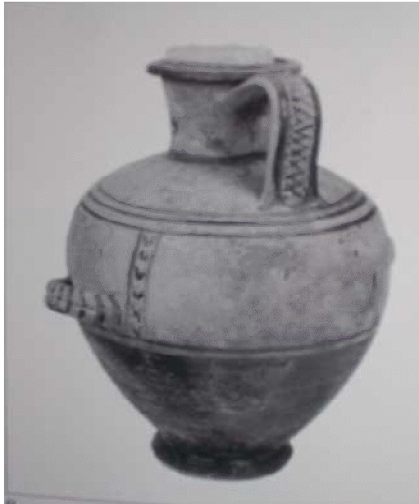


3 - Hydra vase, National museum , Athens , MN 2570



4 – 5 Hydra vase, Ibrahimia, Alexandria

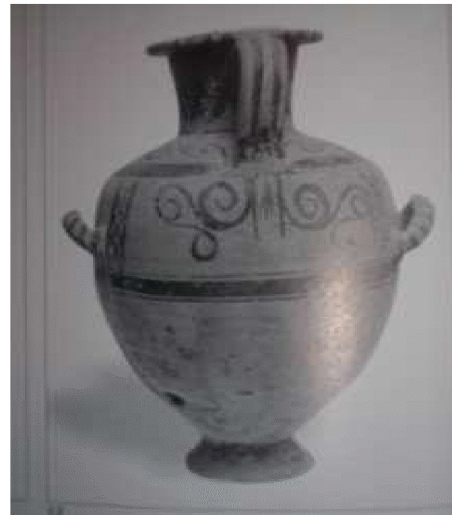
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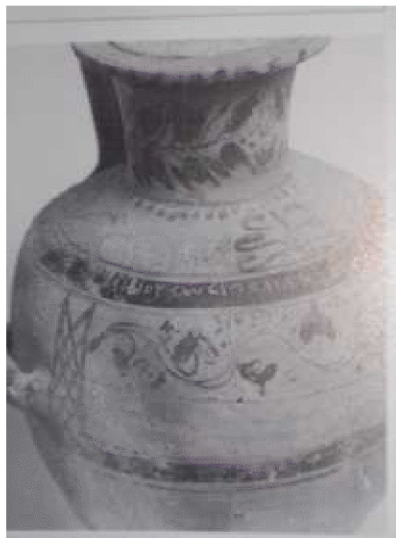
6 – 7 Hydra vase, Graeco-Roman museum no. 21938



(8)



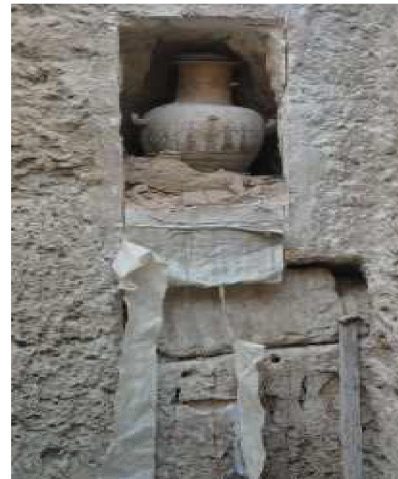
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(10)

(8 – 9 – 10) Hydra vase, Graeco-Roman museum, No. 21968

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11-Hydra vase at Sporting 12- The niche of the vase of Sporting



13-Sporting Hydra vase 14-Sporting vase (neck decoration)



15- Sporting vase, white slab under the handle.

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16 - Sporting vase, the inscription



17 - Sporting vase, chess decoration



18 - Sporting vase, the main scene