

Classical Athenian Ritual Vases from the Diniacopoulos Collection

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One of the most interesting aspects of the vases from the Diniacopoulos collection is the relatively large proportion that are types specifically made for use in Athenian ritual. In this paper, I will discuss seven of them, several of which are either unique or a rare example of a particular shape, subject, or a subject on a shape.

The earliest is a black-figure “bail-oinochoe”, an extremely rare shape; only seven are known, and their contexts and subjects indicate that they are Athenian funerary vases. Other vessels include a white-ground lekythos, a red-figure amphora of Panathenaic shape, and a red-figure hydria. The last vase is unique in that it is the only Athenian vase known which clearly combines the prothesis (wake) and later visit to the tomb into one continuous scene. In general, funerary subject matter on hydriai is quite rare. Three others are red-figure wedding vases. Two are lebes gamikoi (wedding bowls), one of which has a rare scene of the groom leading the bride to the thalamos (bridal chamber). The third vessel is a loutrophoros and one of only ca. 20 known showing the prothesis.

Although the archaeological proveniences of these vases are unknown, the nature of this remarkable assemblage of vessels used primarily in Athenian rituals indicates that they, and probably other vases in the collection, were found in an Attic cemetery, a fact supported by the Attic funerary sculpture also found in this collection. Thus, these vases not only have interesting new stories to tell as individual pieces, but also an important one as an assemblage as a whole.

