

ANTIQUITIES FROM CYPRUS

CASE V.

East
Room

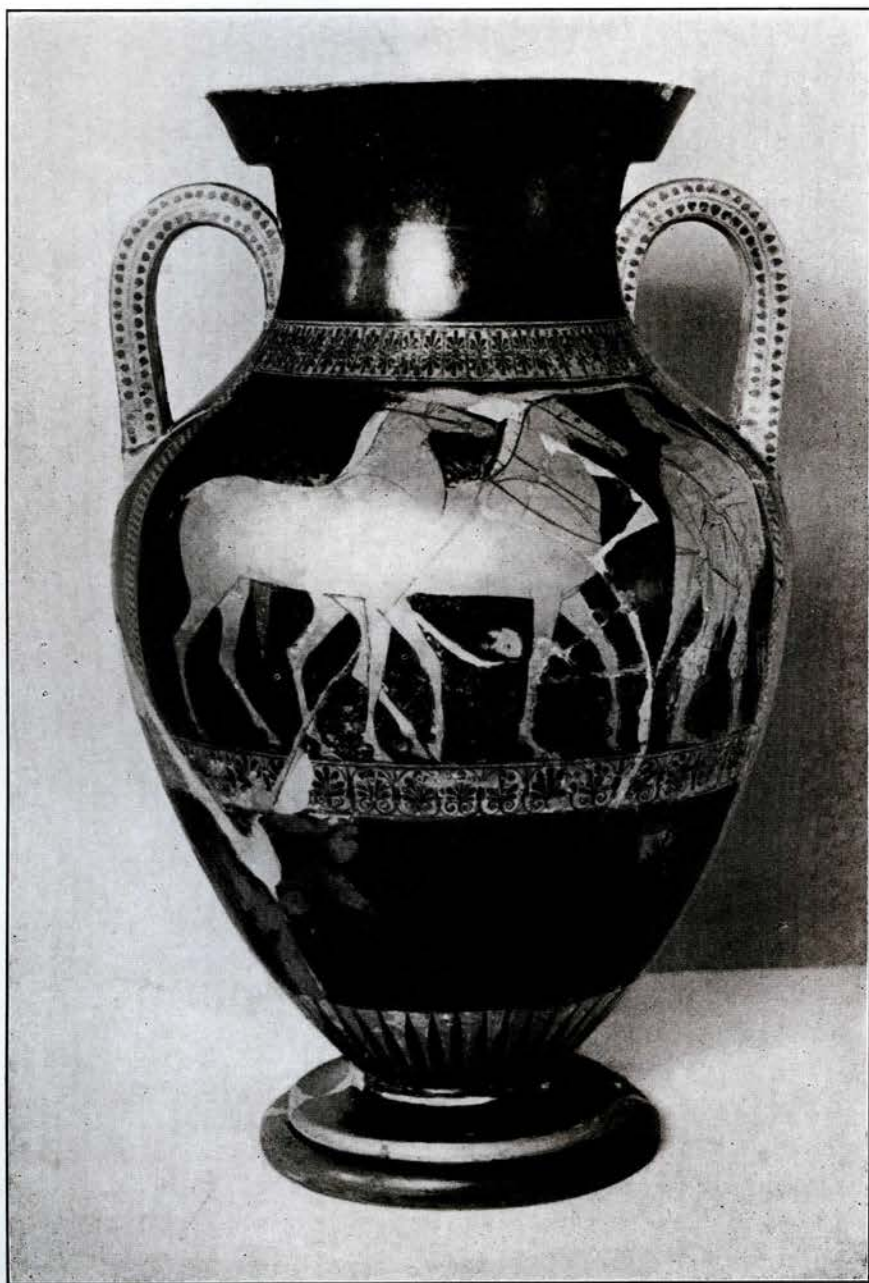
Case V is devoted to Cypriote vases and crude sculptures. The culture of Cyprus is distinct from that of Crete and Greece, and peculiar to itself. The Cypriotes seem to have been quite devoid of artistic feeling; they could not even copy well. Their pottery is at best crude, and frequently it is asymmetrical; the decoration is applied in defiance of architectonics—note especially the vertical circles (No. 30) and the upright arrow (No. 38).

There is a definite chronology after which the art of the island of Cyprus follows. First, there are two great ages of native endeavor, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Each is divided into three periods—Early, Middle and Late. The three periods of the Bronze Age approximate the Early, Middle and Late Minoan periods in Crete. In the Late Bronze Age, Ægean influence manifests itself in Cyprus. It is due, doubtless, to Cretan colonists, or perhaps Cretan refugees, who taught the Cypriotes the use of the wheel and impressed upon them the Mycenaean style of pottery. The three periods of the Iron Age are:

The Transitional period	1200–1000 B. C.
The Geometric Period	1000–750 B. C.
The Graeco-Phoenician Period	750–500 B. C.

After this, Cypriote art feebly imitates successively the Hellenic, until the time of Alexander the Great, the Hellenistic, and the Roman. Native Cypriote pottery is confined to the Bronze and Early Iron Ages. In the Early Bronze Age, it is generally not decorated (No. 1) although some is incised (No. 4). In the Middle Bronze Age, it is decorated with black or brown umber on cream clay (No. 17). In the Late Bronze Age, the clay is covered with a white slip on which is painted linear decoration to imitate the stitching of leather vessels (No. 22), or again, base ring ware is made (No. 24). This is a fabric which takes its name from the fact that the vessel rests on a base formed by a clay ring.

More Cypriote objects are in case VII—spindle whorls, bits of bronze and silver from implements in daily use and from ornaments, some crude figurines of birds, animals and women. The latter



A RED-FIGURED AMPHORA SIGNED BY THE POTTER MENON
VI CENTURY B.C.

are particularly interesting as showing the crudest efforts to model the human figure, probably here intended to represent the Earth Goddess, the power of fertility in whose honor the shrine (No. 55) was made. This shrine is very like a shrine in the Babylonian Section, and is the result of influence from Mesopotamia— influence spread westward through the Phoenicians.

After considering the crude pottery of the Cypriotes, one cannot be surprised at finding that their sculpture is likewise crude. The heads (case V, Nos. 31–33) and the group of the squirrel with its young (*ib.* No. 40) are not altogether fair samples of Cypriote plastic art, but in the Babylonian Section there is a cast of a Cypriote relief which shows Herakles capturing the cattle of Geryon (9484), and which gives a good idea of the limitations of the ability of these people.