

## A Man and His Hydria: Rethinking the Role of the Water Jar in the Masculine Sphere

Feminine roles have long been identified with the shape of the Greek hydria, largely stemming from the numerous depictions of ladies with their water jars convening at the fountain on vases. The domestic usage of the water jar is artistically well attested, whether the scenes are interpreted as everyday life or something more ideal or moralizing. Given the close association between women and the hydria, it is hardly surprising when a tomb containing one houses a female burial, when a play refers to a gathering at the fountain with water jars in hand, or an inscription documents a gift of such a vessel to a woman.

However, even a cursory scan of the evidence that serves today as a record of the varied ways that hydriai were used challenges this narrow perspective and demonstrates that the shape played important roles in the masculine sphere alongside the more traditional athletic and sympotic vessel types associated with men's activities, such as tripods and kraters.

Archaeological excavation reveals tombs with clearly masculine finds along with hydriai, sometimes with distinctly male iconography, suggesting that these vessels may have been chosen specifically for these burials. Numerous artistic representations show men interacting with the shape in various ways, including athletic and political contexts. Literature and inscriptions place hydriai in male situations ranging from voting to military strategy to economic transactions. The materials used for these vessels include common terracotta as well as expensive metals and hard stones, attesting to the relevancy of the shape at varying socioeconomic levels. Both mortal men and mythological male figures are identified with the type, demonstrating that the masculine association was deeply ingrained into the culture.

This paper takes an interdisciplinary approach to recovering the position of the hydria in the lives (and deaths) of Greek men. Evidence from the surviving vessels, including materials,

iconography, and inscriptions, will be considered, in addition to archaeological contexts and references to the shape in art, literature, and epigraphy. Ultimately, I suggest that the utility and familiarity of the shape gave it an esteemed role amongst male users, paralleling the importance of the type with the female audience. Such an investigation forces us to question our assumptions in nearly exclusively associating particular objects with a single gender. Understanding the important and diverse roles of the Greek hydria in the masculine sphere affords us a lens through which we can consider the full range of functions for the shape, specifically, and articulate the active role material culture played in the assignation of gender roles, more broadly.