



Summary :

Clazomenian sarcophagi are earthen boxlike coffins with written decorations in the top part of the frame. They continue the iconographical tradition of the late Wild Goat style, while at the same time they copy the Attic black-figure style. They date from between 550 and 450 BC and are mainly spread into Northern Ionia, Rhodes and the region of Macedonia and Thrace. Lots of them have been made by local or Clazomenian travelling artists.

Date

550 - 450 BC

Geographical Location

Clazomenae

1. Chronology

Clazomenian sarcophagi are the last flicker of painting in Eastern Greece. They date from the mid-6th century to about 450 BC, or shortly later, a period when iconographical tradition in Eastern Greece was almost dead. Chronology is based on stylistic comparisons mainly with Attic pottery, since most sarcophagi came from unofficial excavations or did not contain items that could be dated more precisely. Their use was considered a de jure offer to the deceased.¹ The few examples dating from the end of the century should have been made out of the nostalgia the customers felt rather than a large-scale survival of the style.

2. Shapes – Morphology

More than 200 examples are known. They are earthen boxlike sarcophagi crowned by a rectangular or trapezoid frame. The shape and the dimensions of the sarcophagi vary depending on the period and the number of decorative surfaces. Two types are generally identified; the first is the ordinary, including the vast majority of sarcophagi and decorated only on the flat rim of the box, while the second is more carefully made, with the decoration covering the sides of the box or even the pediment-like lid. The first type comes in four different shapes elaborately decorated and generally evolving from simple to more complicated types.² The interior edge of the leg was flat in all shapes so that the sarcophagi could stand upright. The sarcophagus was usually covered with one or more flat stone slabs.

In the earliest examples of the ordinary type, the so-called Monastirakia type (named after the namesake cemetery of [Clazomenae](#)), the sarcophagus is a simple rectangular 1.90-1.95 m long, about 0.50-0.60 m wide at the top and 0.30-0.45 m tall, while the width of the rim does not exceed 8-9 cm in diameter. There is also a series of children's sarcophagi up to 0.60 m long³. This shape (shape 1) very often includes earthen unadorned sarcophagi. The only difference from the rare shape 2 is the rectangular slabs added on the internal corners of the latter, which did not seem to play some important structural role⁴. Shape 3 is also rectangular but the head and the leg of the rim of the sarcophagus are decorated with many-faced representations and become wider, while dimensions are generally increased. Finally, in shape 4, which is the latest of all and starts in the last quarter of the 6th century BC, the top view of the sarcophagus becomes trapezoid. The sarcophagi whose head decoration is in the pseudo-black-figure style are 2.10-2.20 m long and 0.40-0.50 m tall, while the head was up to about 0.85-1.05 m wide and the leg 0.65-0.85 m. The rest of the shapes were smaller: 1.90-1 m, 0.95 X 0.60-0.70 m / 0.55-0.60 m. The upper horizontal side of the rim in 'black-figure' sarcophagi is projecting a lot from the sides of the box, which become narrower to the bottom, thus having the usual dimensions of the human body (up to 1.95 m long).

3. Techniques of Decoration



Clay is a reddish and impure material, feeling like the brick, with admixtures of mica and small stones, while the paint is very dark brown. The crust usually contains purer clay, although there are still admixtures. Because it is difficult to fire such big one-piece items, some sarcophagi have a rusty red colour here and there. The points to be decorated are covered in advance with a very thick off-white or yellowish coat. When the box is unadorned, it may be covered with pure red dilute clay instead of paint.

Painters widely used added white and violet colours, which are now faded in most cases. Incisions are not used, while anatomical details and folds are rendered with thin white lines. It is strongly reminiscent of the black-figure style, with dark figures on a light background, although in some cases, we encounter attempts of copying the red-figured technique by using the opposite decorative method (light figures on a dark background) are rarely found⁵. Animals and decorative motifs are rendered in silhouette, while busts are mainly rendered in the outline technique.

4. Synthesis and Iconography

The only decoration the sarcophagi of the Monastirakia type had on the rim was a wavy line in dark brown colour; the line was either simple (group I), combined with an Ionic cyma (group II) or a meander (group III) or other decorations (such as a meander with rosettes).

The decorative strategy in common sarcophagi is simple: the main decorative zone is the head of the sarcophagus, especially in late examples, where it became very wide. It usually depicts pictorial representations in the black-figure style, generally framed by wide bands with successive zones of continuous helix, palmettes, meander and, rarely, Ionic cyma. The motifs⁶ are chosen from the life of aristocrats: symposia, scenes of battle, departure of warrior, processions of chariots and scenes of hunting with chariots and horsemen in close order. In the most successful examples the motifs overlap to a great extent, while in most cases they are symmetrically arranged. Mythological motifs are very rare. There are winged adolescents or female deities as Mistress of the Beasts (Potnia Theron). The most popular mythological scene appearing twice is the ambush Achilles set up on Troilus, while the similar scene of Polyxena's sacrifice, as well as the comic battle of cranes can be seen. There are also erotic scenes depicting meetings of young men or adolescents holding cocks among cocks and scenes with athletes and chariot races.

Representations of meetings and conflicts between animals in the Wild Goat style appear rarely on the head, although they regularly appear on the legs of the sarcophagi. The influence from the style in violent scenes depicting prides of lions and panthers attacking a bull, a wild boar or a chamois is obvious. The extremely simple syntheses of lions or panthers surrounding sphinxes or palmettes, sphinxes surrounding a bird or a floral ornament and facing animals divided by a palm, either on the head or on the legs of the sarcophagus, are more often. They are rarely replaced by floral ornaments (palmettes, guilloches, zigzags, imbricate ornaments, lines of lotus flowers and buds, continuous meander and meandrous squares).

The long sides of the upper surface of the frame and the edges are decorated with floral or geometrical adornments. Metopes usually decorated with plain motifs (busts and heads of warriors, bearded men, adolescents or women, often rendered in the outline technique, centaurs brandishing branches, satyrs dancing, griffins, sphinxes, sirens, lions and, mainly, wild goats) appear at the ends of the long sides. More complex representations are rarer and can be seen on sarcophagi of the Albertinum group (hoplites attacking, hero fighting a reptilian monster). Finally, there are decorative zones with floral or geometrical adornments. The rectangular slabs in the internal corners are decorated with rosettes or palmette patterns and, more rarely, with meander, meandrous cross, nets, successive semicircles as well as with successive helixes and palmettes, while images of animals fighting, sphinxes or young men running may also be seen.

Continuous iconographical decoration on all four sides of the rim can be found only in the group of the highly attended sarcophagi, which are very elaborately decorated even at points left unadorned in other groups (frame edges, box and pediment-like lid, even in the interior of the lid – a place normally unseen)⁷.

As regards style, because the painters of the sarcophagi are eclectic, it differentiates from the other styles of Eastern Greece. Animal representations come indirectly from the late Wild Goat style of Northern Ionia, where the heads of the animals are reserved. It is



possible that this particular iconographical tradition outlived pottery and continued to appear in textile works or in works of other crafts that disappeared⁸. As for the pseudo-black-figure style used parallel, although at first there was some affinity with the [Clazomenian style](#), it was later strongly influenced from the Attic black-figure and red-figure pottery, whose iconography was also copied⁹. On the whole, the style is rarely elaborate and the accumulation of decorative zones of moderate quality in combination with stereotypic, nerveless and repetitive iconographical syntheses becomes boring.

The most prominent artistic figure is the Painter of Borelli, who is considered the main creator who developed the style from the primitive Monastirakia type. Other painters worth mentioning are the Painter of Hanover and the Painter of Dennis. In the first third of the 5th century the group of Albertinum is the most productive and remarkable group, while the Painter of Hokinson, whose works are rarely found in Clazomenae, is of particular interest.

5. Spread

Nothing is known about the place where about the three fourths of the sarcophagi were found. Most of the rest were found after excavations in the cemeteries of Clazomenae, while excavations still in progress in the city will bring new findings to light¹⁰. There are quite large numbers of sarcophagi in other Northern Ionian centres as well, such as Old [Smyrna](#) and Pitane¹¹. In [Ephesus](#), [Teos](#), and [Erythrae](#) as well as in the southern part of Asia Minor and the Dodecanese sarcophagi can only occasionally be found. They are sporadically found in cemeteries of [Rhodes](#)¹². Several examples of Clazomenian sarcophagi have been recently found in Chalkidikí, Macedonia and Thrace¹³.

The average weight of a Clazomenian sarcophagus was about 450 kilograms and the transport of such sizeable and fragile items must not have been easy. Thus, it is considered that their wide use was a matter of the manufacturers' travels rather than a matter of trade. It seems that some painters trained in Clazomenae travelled a lot and left several examples of their work in cities as far as Macedonia, Thrace and the Chalkidikí Peninsula, while local craftsmen manufactured imitations of the Clazomenian sarcophagi.¹⁴ In laboratory analyses of 27 sarcophagi from Greek museums, coming from positions in Northern Greece and Asia Minor, three groups of clay were mainly identified, corresponding to Akanthos, Abdera and Clazomenae.¹⁵

1. Cook, R.M., *Ελληνική Αγγειογραφία* (Athens 1994), p. 174.

2. See Cook, R.M., *Clazomenian Sarcophagi* (Mainz 1981), pp. 134-139.

3. Cook, R.M., *Clazomenian Sarcophagi* (Mainz 1981), pp. 2-8, table 1.

4. For example, the sarcophagus of the Archaeological Museum in Athens, no. 13939: Cook, R.M., Dupont, P., *East Greek Pottery* (London 1998), p. 122, pic. 17.1 a.

5. Cook, R.M., *Clazomenian Sarcophagi* (Mainz 1981), p. 132.

6. See generally Kirchner, E., 'Zum Bildprogramm klazomenischer Sarkophage', *JDI* 102 (1987), pp. 119-161.

7. Cook, R.M., *Clazomenian Sarcophagi* (Mainz 1981), tables 39-46.

8. Cook, R.M., *Ελληνική Αγγειογραφία* (Athens 1994), p. 175. Cook, R.M., Dupont, P., *East Greek Pottery* (London 1998), p. 123.

9. Friis Johansen, K., 'Attic Motives on Clazomenian Sarcophagi' *From the Collections of the NY Glyptothek Carlsberg III* (Copenhagen 1942).



10. A large number of the 50 sarcophagi excavated by Oikonomos in 1919-1922 were left behind after the Asia Minor Catastrophe and were lost. Οικονόμος (Oikonomos), Γ.Π., 'Ανασκαφαί εν Κλαζομεναίς', *ΠΑΕ* 1921, pp. 63-74. Cook, J.M., 'The Topography of Clazomenae', *AE* 1953-1954, pp. 149-157.
11. Cook, R.M., 'Old Smyrna: the Clazomenian Sarcophagi', *BSA* 69 (1974), pp. 55-60. Of the same writer, 'Painted Sarcophagi from Pitane', *Anadolu* 10 (1966), pp. 179-192.
12. Jacopi, G, 'Scavi nella necropoli di Jaliso 1924-1928', *Clara Rhodos* 3 (1929), p. 260, pic. 257, tomb CCLII. Laurenzi, L., 'Necropoli ialisie', *Clara Rhodos* 8 (1936), pic. 20-21 and 31-35. Cook, R.M., 'A Terracotta Sarcophagus in the Fitzwilliam Museum', *JHS* 56 (1936), pp. 58-63, 238, tab. 1-4.
13. Koukouli-Chrysanthaki., 'Sarcophages d' Abdère', *BCH* 70 (1967), p. 356. Γιούρη, Ε., 'Κλαζομενιακή λάρνακα από την Άκανθο', *Μνήμη Λαζαρίδη (Recherches franco-helléniques I, Thessaloniki 1990)*, pp. 151-165. Καλτσάς, Ν., 'Κλαζομενιακές Σαρκοφάγοι από το Νεκροταφείο της Ακάνθου', *ΑΔ* 51-52, Α, Μελέτες (1995-1996), pp. 35-47, pic. 19-24. *ΑΑΑ* 1976, 187, pic. 3. *ΑΔ* 1972 Β, 527. Τριαντάφυλλος, Δ., 'Σαρκοφάγος κλαζομενιακού τύπου από τα Άβδηρα της Θράκης', *Πρακτικά 2^ο Διεθνούς Συμποσίου Θρακικών Σπουδών, Αρχαία Θράκη*, Komotene, 1997, pp. 741-774.
14. The sarcophagi from Antissa in Lesbos, Acanthos in Chalcidice, Galepsos in Thrace and Sardis in Lydia are considered as copies.
15. Ανδρεοπούλου-Μάγκου, Ε., 'Χημική Ανάλυση πήλινων σαρκοφάγων με τη ατομική απορρόφηση', *ΑΔ* 51-52, Α, Μελέτες (1995-1996), pp. 47-50.

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Webliography :

	Klazomenian Pottery and Sarcophagi http://www2.ocn.ne.jp/~greekart/vase/h_clazom_e.html
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Glossary :

	black figure technique Decorative technique of vase painting. It involves painting figures in black silhouette on the pale clay, while the anatomic details are given in incised lines.
	guilloche, the An ornament formed of interlaced bands.



mica

Clay inclusions usually derived from eroded minerals and stones (mostly marble and schist).



rosette, the

An ornament with a generally circular combination of parts resembling a flower or plant.



Silhouette technique

Technique of vase painting. It involves black-painted figures without incised lines.