The Museum has been fortunate in acquiring at a recent sale at Sotheby's a beautifully preserved example of a rare class of Greek vases which has not hitherto been represented in its collection. The vase, an archaic black-figured amphora, belongs to the so-called Polyphemos Group, which is an offshoot of Chalcidian vase painting.

Groups of animals are painted on the neck and body of the vase. On one side (ill. p. 132) two lions have seized a bull; the animal has been brought down on its forelegs by the full weight of the two ferocious beasts and can neither shake them off nor fight back. On the other side (ill. p. 133) two similar lions are attacking a boar; their teeth are dug into the rump and neck of their prey and, while the latter does not yet show any signs of defeat, the outcome of the uneven battle cannot be in doubt. Even the smaller pictures on the neck of the amphora suggest a fight. On either side we see two cocks facing each other in a manner which may strike us as heraldic but which, to the ancients, could have conveyed the setting of a cockfight. Here, as in the main scene, lotus buds of exaggerated size appear as filling ornament.

The motif of fighting animals is one of the earliest in all art and may have come to Greece from the East.Representations which are similar to those on the new vase appear on several Greek works of art in the Museum's collection. For the boar attacked by two lions the visitor will turn to the bottom frieze of the big Clazomenian sarcophagus in the Second Greek Room, while the bull succumbing to the lions will remind many of the marble pedimental group in the Greek Sculpture Hall, which was discussed fully by Miss Richter in the Bulletin for November, 1945. For the fighting cocks many handsome parallels will be found among the Attic and Corinthian vases in the Second and Third Greek Rooms.

The new amphora has been placed on exhibition in the Second Greek Room in the case with the Museum's few examples of Chalcidian vase painting, as it is more at home here than anywhere else in the collection. The class of vases to which it belongs—called the Polyphemos Group after an amphora in the British Museum with the blinding of Polyphemos—owes much, in shape and decoration, to the stylistic and technical achievements of Chalcidian potters and painters; nevertheless, the group stands somewhat apart from the common Chalcidian or, for that matter, any other Greek ware. Until the Museum's recent purchase, only a few fragments and twenty-four complete vases of this group were known. Of these only two had reached collections in this country: one of them, an amphora by the same painter as ours and decorated on one side with a near replica of our bull fight (ill. p. 135), is in San Simeon, in California; the other, an oinochoe, is in the University Museum in Philadelphia.

When and where was our amphora made? For the date we can rely to some extent on the chronology of Attic vases, and a comparison with them, with due allowance for a provincial lag in time, suggests the third quarter of the sixth century B.C. The place of manufacture of our new amphora, however, cannot be found so easily. Its provenance is not known, nor do the few recorded provenances of the other vases of this group help us much. Its style, it has been observed, is most strikingly dependent on the Atticizing phase of Chalcidian vase painting. One would therefore search for a place not far from the workshops of these Chalcidian artists. But we do not even know for certain that Chalcidian vases were made in Chalcis on Euboea: they are called Chalcidian chiefly because some.
Amphora of the Polyphemos Group. Third quarter of the sixth century B.C. Rogers Fund, 1946
Reverse of the amphora illustrated opposite
of them bear inscriptions written in the Euboean alphabet. So far, not one Chalcidian vase, not even a single fragment, has been found in Greece (and Euboea in particular), and much is to be said for the ingenious surmise that the so-called Chalcidian ware was painted in the West, probably in Etruria, by Chalcidian settlers. If, then, Chalcidian vases proper were made in Etruria for an Italic market, one could assume that vases such as ours, which betray a Chalcidian influence, were the work of an artist who perhaps started out in the studios of some Chalcidian painters, accepted several elements of their stylistic conventions, rejected or transformed others, and emerged in the end with a style of his own, which, if not entirely original, is at least quite individual.

Our amphora furnishes a good illustration of such a style. The cocks, in their semi-heraldic setting, recall scores of Chalcidian prototypes, but our artist has not only succumbed to Etruscan taste by putting them on the neck, he has also totally abandoned the Chalcidian conventions of their anatomical markings. The angular wing bar looks as if it had been borrowed from an Attic cock, while the wing bow, so pronounced in both Chalcidian and Attic representations, has been omitted entirely. Again, the pictures on the body of the vase are not essentially alien to the Chalcidian repertory, but to find a similarly symmetrical arrangement of the lions and the bull one has to turn to Attica. There the compositional scheme found its most monumental expression in the pedimental groups on the Acropolis, which in turn may have inspired a good many Attic vase paintings (see ill. above).

The painter of our vase, to whom most of the vases in the Polyphemos Group can be attributed, was fond of animals and monsters and liked to display them. On the necks of his amphorae he put cocks, boars, lions, or sirens. For the main pictures on the bodies of his vases he occasionally drew on the rich store of Greek mythology: Odysseus and Polyphemos, Herakles fighting the Amazons, the centaurs, or the Nemean lion. At other times he portrayed groups of horsemen, satyrs and nymphs, dancers, and warriors setting out for battle or engaged in combat. He is seen at his best, though, when he lets animals and monsters predominate, either bound in the forceful splendor of a heraldic group or set free to roam and fight.
The accession number of the amphora is 46.11.5. Its height is 14 7/16 in. (35.7 cm.); its diameter is 9 1/2 in. (24.2 cm.). In two places the surface shows signs of having been in contact with two other vases during the firing. One of these spots can be seen on the hind leg of the boar (see ill. p. 133); the other occurs near the lion's off leg, where some particles of the surface of another vase have adhered. The glaze has been applied rather thinly and somewhat sketchily. It has fired a greenish black except for those areas where the black glaze has been protected by the application of accessory colors. Where that added color has partially come off, for example, in the wing bars of the cocks or on the bellies of the lions, the glaze has remained jet black. On the underside of the foot is an incised trade-mark, the graffito ∂.

The amphora is listed in the Sotheby Sale Catalogue for May 14, 1946, no. 103. For the Polyphemos Group see A. Rumpf, Chalkidische Vasen, pp. 160-169. For a discussion of the place of manufacture of Chalcidian vases see H. R. W. Smith, The Origin of Chalcidian Ware (University of California Publications in Classical Archaeology, vol. 1, no. 3), 1932. The San Simeon amphora is published and listed by Rumpf, op. cit., p. 161, no. 9, and pl. 210; it is republished here with the permission of its owner, Mr. William Randolph Hearst. The photograph was kindly taken and supplied by Professor H. R. W. Smith. For Attic examples of the graffito see R. Hackl, Merkantile Inschriften auf attischen Vasen (Münchener archäologische Studien dem Andenken Adolf Furtwänglers gewidmet), p. 30, nos. 194, 195.

Amphora in the Hearst collection, San Simeon, by the painter of the Museum’s new amphora