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The fragments of an oinochoe ¹ illustrated here preserve for us the earliest known representation in any medium of the dress and the masks worn by actors in Attic tragedy.² The style of the vase suggests a date in the neighborhood of 470: ³ a time, that is, when both Aischylos and Sophokles ⁴ were active in the theatre. Thus, even though our fragments may not shed much new light on the “dark history of the

¹ Inv. No. P 11810. Three fragments, mended from five. Height: *a*, 0.073 m.; *b*, 0.046 m.; *c*, 0.065 m. From a round-bodied oinochoe, Beazley Shape III; fairly thin fabric, excellent glaze; relief contour except for the mask; sketch lines on the boy's body. The use of added color is described below, p. 269. For the lower border, a running spiral, with small loops between the spirals. Inside, dull black to brown glaze wash. The fragments were found just outside the Agora Excavations, near the bottom of a modern sewer trench along the south side of the Theseion Square, some 200 m. to the south of the temple, at a depth of about 3 m. below the street level.

² For the fifth century, certainly, relevant comparative material has been limited to three pieces: the relief from the Peiraeus, now in the National Museum, Athens (N.M. 1500; Svoronos, *Athener Nationalmuseum*, pl. 82), which shows three actors, two of them carrying masks, approaching a reclining Dionysos; the Pronomos vase in Naples (Furtwängler-Reichhold, pls. 143-145), with its elaborate preparations for a satyr-play; and the pelike in Boston, by the Phiale painter (*Att. V.*, p. 383, 29; Furtwängler-Reichhold, III, p. 135), where two members of a chorus are seen dressing. Of these three, the first two belong to the years around 400, or shortly after, the third to the thirties of the fifth century. To the later group may now be added the fragments in Curtius' possession, published by Bulle (*Corolla Curtius*, pls. 54-57, pp. 157-160). The scene has much in common with the Pronomos vase, and probably commemorates the victory of a tragedy; four identical women's masks remain, each with short hair flying: Bulle suggests a chorus of waiting maidens. He also republishes (*ibid.*, pl. 57) the fragmentary pelike in Barcelona, where the scene more probably reflects the victory of a lyric chorus. A female figure, perhaps Tragoedia, holds up a woman's mask with unbound locks streaming to the nape. We should perhaps also consider a relief in Munich (Arndt, *La Glyptothèque Ny-Carlsberg*, p. 135, fig. 72), an Attic original of the fourth century, which shows a standing woman carrying a mask.

The most recent discussion of the problems involved is in M. Bieber's *History of the Greek and Roman Theatre*, with full references to her earlier *Denkmäler zum Theaterwesen im Altertum*, and to the other literature. On masks, see especially her “Herkunft des tragischen Kostums,” *Jahrbuch*, XXXII, 1917, pp. 61 ff., and the article “Maske” in Pauly-Wissowa, R.E., XIV, pp. 2070 ff.

³ Beazley in a letter of May 25, 1939, kindly confirms the suggested dating, and points out that the style is perhaps nearer to Hermonax than to that of some other painters of the period. Such an association might explain the use of the rare border pattern, the running spiral, which brings an echo of the Berlin painter (cf. *J.H.S.*, XXXI, 1911, p. 279, 15, and Beazley, *Berliner Maler*, pls. 1-2). We might compare with our standing attendant the slender Erotes of Hermonax's Munich stamnos (*Att. V.*, p. 299, 3; *Arch. Zeit.*, 1878, pl. 12 = Hoppin, *Handbook*, II, p. 23, and *Att. V.*, p. 300, 4; Hoppin, *Handbook*, II, p. 21). The mask of our vase has a fuller, rounder face than have the women of these scenes, but the style is much the same, and in particular the drawing of the nose is closely paralleled on the new piece. For a different scheme compare the dying Niobid on the Louvre krater (*Att. V.*, p. 338, 9; Webster, *Niobidenmaler*, pl. 5).

⁴ We may recall that Aischylos won his first victory at the Dionysia of 484, though the earliest extant play of which the date is known is the *Persians*, of 472. He was defeated by Sophokles in 468, but of Sophokles' plays the earliest which has survived is the *Antigone* of 441 (or 442).

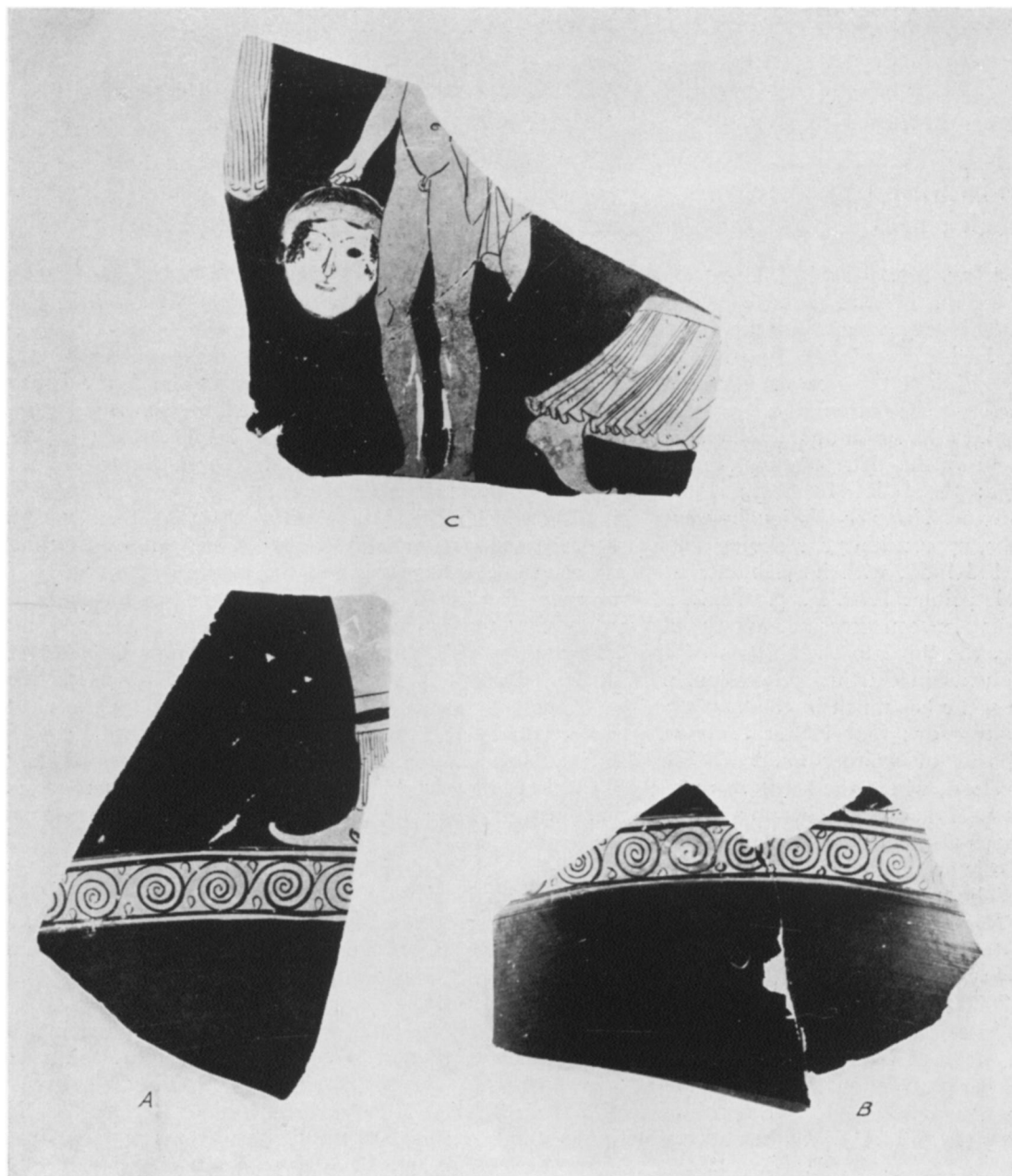


Fig. 1. Fragments of an Oinochoe: Inv. No. P 11810 (Actual Size)

classical mask,"⁵ they merit close attention as a unique document from the great days of the Attic theatre.

Parts of at least four figures remain; the lettering of the fragments (Fig. 1) indicates so far as can be determined their probable order from left to right around the pot. On fragment *a* is a standing figure wearing chiton, himation, and shoes; on *b* is part of a laced shoe; above, on *c* is an end of drapery, scarf or folded cloak, hanging, we may suppose, from an extended or upraised arm possibly belonging to the figure whose shoe appears on *b*. Then comes a nude boy, standing facing; a bit of drapery falls at his side and he holds a large mask in his right hand. At the right is a second figure in woman's dress, walking away.

There is nothing particularly remarkable about the figures. The boy, rather smaller in scale than the others, is perhaps an attendant.⁶ The laced cothurn suggests those often worn by travellers of some importance, such as Hermes or Boreas; it



Fig. 2. Detail of Figure 1
(Enlarged to Three Times Actual Size)

would serve well for herald or messenger. The clothes and soft shoes might have come from the wardrobe of any Athenian lady. Were it not for the boy's burden, we should have small reason to identify his companions as actors making ready for a tragic performance. The mask (Fig. 2) is, however, painted with great care. On the area reserved for it the mouth and eyes were first laid on in black; the white for the flesh was added, and nose, eyebrows, and lips were drawn over in black. The hair, cropped short to the ears, is rendered by brush strokes; the ends of the locks are clearly distinguishable. Tied low about the brows is a broad thick purple fillet; a few short ends, now faded, which project from it over the black ground at the wearer's right, indicate the strings which fastened the band in place. On either side of the face hang two strings, also faded; they are the ends of the cords which, passing through three openings in the top of the head, provide a means of carrying the mask, and also of tying it securely to the wearer's

head.⁷ The thick added color used for the eyeballs has disappeared from one eye; on

⁵ Bulle, *loc. cit.*

⁶ Compare the "tragoedum et puerum" of the painting by Aristides the Theban (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXV, 99). Mr. Beazley, to whom I owe this reference, suggests that that picture no doubt represented an actor with a boy attendant, a *παῖς* like the groups of athlete and *παῖς* on the calyx-krater by Euphronios in Berlin (*Att. V.*, p. 61) or of warrior and *παῖς* on the Brygos cup in the Vatican (*Att. V.*, p. 177, 17), rather than an actor teaching a boy his part (Jex-Blake and Sellers, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, p. 135, note 10).

⁷ The same arrangement as on the Pronomos vase.

the other it is damaged, but something of the paint, now a matt brown, remains, with a trace of the indication of the iris.

The mask is that of a young woman whose hair is cut short in mourning. Pollux⁸ has described her for us, the ninth in his catalogue of the types of women's masks used in Attic tragedy: ἡ δὲ κούριμος παρθένος ἀντὶ ὄγκου ἔχει τριχῶν κατεψηγμένων διάκρισιν, καὶ βραχέα ἐν κύκλῳ περικέκαρται, ὕψωχος δὲ τὴν χροιάν. The cropped-haired maiden without an onkos,⁹ her hair parted and cut off right round, her face pale, looks out at us in the image of Pollux's words. She is grief-stricken, perhaps, but she is calm and serene; we may contrast her tousle-haired sister, who comes next in the catalogue: ἡ δὲ ἑτέρα κούριμος παρθένος τὰλλα ὁμοία πλὴν τῆς διακρίσεως καὶ τῶν κύκλῳ βοστρύχων, ὡς ἐκ πολλοῦ δυστυχοῦσα.

In archaic and early classical vase-painting variations not only of age but also of character and of emotion are often intensified if not created by simple variations in hair-dressing.¹⁰ Even in studying the masks of the New Comedy, Robert¹¹ found that the most important item for the identification of various character types was the hair, its arrangement and its color. We may therefore take Pollux at his word when he says that the second cropped-haired maiden was in all respects like the first, save for her flying hair. In other words, we should not expect to find her misfortunes reflected in her features, which might be as tranquil as those of the mask on our vase. Nothing else, indeed, would suit the artistic conventions of the time, for, as Miss Bieber has pointed out, in a passage which might have been written with the

⁸ *Onomasticon*, IV, 140. For a descriptive analysis of Pollux's catalogue, which probably goes back to a Hellenistic original, cf. Bieber in Pauly-Wissowa, *R.E.*, XIV, s. v. Maske, pp. 2077 ff.

⁹ This construction, which our maiden's youth has spared her, is described as an imitation of archaic hairdressing (Bieber, *History*, p. 36). For female characters with long flowing locks it was sometimes a sort of peaked frame over which the hair was combed; this effect is well seen on the mask at the left on the inscribed relief from Constantinople (Bieber, *Theaterwesen*, pl. 46, and pp. 82 f., 184). Much evidence exists for the use of the onkos in Hellenistic and later times, from terracottas and mosaics as well as from reliefs; see for instance Bieber, *Theaterwesen*, pls. 61, 62, and 65, and pp. 114-116. It is as well, however, to remember that for an earlier time the monuments give very slight hint of anything of the sort. The male mask on the relief from the Peiraeus does indeed wear a pointed beard of an archaizing sort, and perhaps his hair was dressed in the archaic mode, but there is no evidence of any construction, or of anything which in Aischylos's day would have been an innovation. The author of the anonymous *Life of Aischylos* ascribed to him the invention of the onkos, along with that of the high-soled boot, but the reliability of the *Life* has often been questioned: at very least its writer seems to wish to credit the poet with every theatrical innovation ever heard of. In the period which concerns us, however, some devices for heightening the actor's figure may well have been used; note the "Phrygian" caps worn by Hesione on the Pronomos vase, and by several of the characters on the Andromeda krater in Berlin (Bethe, *Jahrbuch*, IX, 1896, pl. 2, and Bieber, *History*, figs. 61, 64, pp. 51-54).

¹⁰ The classic illustration is the Kleophrades painter's Iliupersis (*Att. V.*, p. 74, 50; Beazley, *Kleophrades-Maler*, pl. 27), where a majority of the characters could be assigned to Pollux's categories.

¹¹ C. Robert, "Die Masken der Neueren Attischen Komoedie," 25 *Hall. Winckelmanns-programm*, p. 3.

new fragment in mind,¹² the mask-maker's art follows that of the sculptor. It is hazardous to seek sculptural parallels for our mask, which after all reaches us only at second hand, but some comparisons with the sculptures from Olympia must be ventured. Beside the heads of the Lapith maidens from the west pediment,¹³ or the head of Athena from the metope of the Stymphalian birds,¹⁴ the mask seems passionless and immobile, but the proportions of the features, the faint smile that survives distress, and even the gentle curves of the hair across the brows, all express a similar tradition. Exactly contemporary with our vase and providing perhaps an even better parallel is the Delphi charioteer;¹⁵ the slender oval of the face is thickened for the woman's mask, but otherwise the approach is the same, and here the preservation of the eyes may perhaps help us to understand the mask-maker's procedure.¹⁶

It is of some interest to examine the broad fillet or taenia worn straight around the head, which forms so striking a feature of our mask, and one for which Pollux gives us no help. It is a plain band, wrapped twice round and tied at one side with string ends. So far as we know this sort of taenia did not form a usual part of women's dress under ordinary circumstances. In vase-painting, the women who wear it seem for the most part to be maenads,¹⁷ and this usage corresponds well with its general associations as a symbol of consecration.¹⁸ It is even more familiar from representations on the one hand of victory, on the other of mourning. The latter connection is perhaps sufficient to explain its presence on the head of a tragic heroine already marked as sorrowing by her short hair. Since, however, it is worn by maenads, it is possible that its use on a mask has some formal connection with the worship of Dionysos as celebrated in the theatre.¹⁹ In any case we are entitled to

¹² *R.E.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 2074: "Man kann also annehmen, dass in der archaischen Zeit bei Aischylos als einzige Seelenregung ein leises Lächeln als Ausdruck der Lebendigkeit vorkam, und dass in der frühklassischen Zeit bis gegen Mitte des 5 Jhdt. geringe Versuche gemacht wurden, Schmerz oder Leidenschaft --- zu geben ---. Für die klassische Zeit des 5 Jhdts., also für Sophokles und Euripides, müssen wir ungetrübte Ruhe und ideale Schönheit voraussetzen."

¹³ Treu, *Olympia*, III, pl. 24, and pls. 30-31; details in Hege-Rodenwaldt, *Olympia*, pls. 60-61.

¹⁴ Treu, *op. cit.*, pls. 36-7; detail giving front view, Hege-Rodenwaldt, pl. 70.

¹⁵ Homolle, *Fouilles de Delphes*, IV, pls. 49-50; details in Richter, *Sculpture and Sculptors*, fig. 162, and Homolle, *op. cit.*, pls. 51-53.

¹⁶ It is an odd commentary on our vase-painter's interest in his subject that, whereas on an actual mask the iris or at least the pupil of the eye must have been left open (cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *R.E.*, XIV, p. 2073), here the artist has apparently painted all in, as if to give as much as possible the effect of a mask actually on the wearer's head. For the gently parted lips compare the Boston pelike; mask mouths from the end of the century (p. 267, note 2, above) incline much more to gape.

¹⁷ See for instance the Achilles painter's maenad, one of the pair in the famous group on the amphora in the Cabinet de Médailles (*Att. V.*, p. 371, 2; Furtwängler-Reichhold, pl. 77).

¹⁸ Dow, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XLI, 1930, p. 68.

¹⁹ It is worth noting that on three of the bronze Dancers from Herculaneum (Brunn-Bruckmann, *Denkmäler*, no. 295), whose originals belonged to about the time of our vase, we again find the straight plain fillet, worn low.

believe that this fillet, bound around the brows, was part of the regular equipment of the younger heroines of tragedy at least until the end of the fifth century, for exactly such a fillet, so worn, appears on the second of the two masks on the relief from the Peiraeus;²⁰ the character represented there seems to have been a cropped-haired maiden very like our own.

Suidas²¹ ascribes the invention of linen masks to Thespis, to Choirilos some improvements in their manufacture, to Phrynichos the use of distinguishing colors for men's and women's masks, but he reserves for Aischylos the distinction of having been the first to devise carefully painted, impressive and life-like creations. Our mask provides no information as to the material of its original, but there is no reason to doubt that it was of linen, stuccoed over, and painted.²² Our fragment proves how carefully made and painted were the masks of Aischylos's time, and we may well imagine that the poet supervised in person the creation of masks for his productions. We have tried, however, to relieve him of the invention of the onkos (p. 270, note 9, above), and we may at least limit his responsibility in the matter of the high-soled boot.²³ We must further note that, so far as our small fragments enable us to judge, the elaborate theatrical costume familiar from vases of the ornate style²⁴ was at all events not the rule in the earlier day. One at least of the plays of Aischylos's time was presented in modern dress.

When we come to consider which, if any, of the extant plays might have provided the occasion for the painting of our oinochoe, we are on melancholy and

²⁰ P. 267, note 2 above. Dr. Bieber (*Theaterwesen*, pp. 104-105) has defended the belief, controversial because of the extremely worn state of the marble, that this is a woman's mask, and thinks that the hair was parted, a further similarity with our piece.

²¹ Cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *R.E.*, XIV, pp. 2072-2073.

²² Pauly-Wissowa, *R.E.*, XIV, p. 2073. K. G. Kachler, in *Die Antike*, XV, 1939, pp. 89-93, describes and illustrates the process of making masks, according to the ancient specifications, for a modern performance of the *Acharnians*. A clay model was made, and a mould taken from it; into the mould was pressed a sheet of linen, soaked in plaster. When the plaster had hardened, the mould was taken off, the mask was sewed to a cap which fitted the wearer's head, a wig was added, and the face was painted. The method produced masks at once practical and extremely effective. Ancient authority and practical considerations unite to dispose (Bieber, *Jahrbuch*, XXXII, 1917, pp. 71 ff.) of the idea that the large terracotta masks offered as votives were ever worn on the stage. We might further note that the terracotta masks are never anything but false fronts, whereas masks intended for use (compare the Boston pelike and the Pronomos vase) are always represented as providing a complete covering for the head.

²³ Cf. Kendall Smith, "Use of the High-Soled Shoe or Buskin in the Greek Tragedy of the Fifth and Fourth Century B.C.," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XVI, 1905, pp. 123 ff. Séchan's argument (*Études sur la Tragédie grecque*, pp. 553-4) that vase-painters in their representations of scenes from the theatre suppressed masks, high-soled boots, and the like for artistic reasons may apply to the prettifications of tragedy seen on South Italian vases, but it cannot apply to any of the Attic fifth-century documents in the case. Here the concern is not with a dramatic moment but rather precisely with the paraphernalia of the theatre, and the decorative effects which it, as such, provides.

²⁴ Compare the Pronomos and the Curtius kraters.

uncertain ground.²⁵ The date of our vase, in the neighborhood of 470, limits the possibilities to three, namely the *Suppliants*, the *Persians*, and the *Seven Against Thebes*. With the first two there can be no association: our heroine is not a dark-skinned daughter of Danaus, nor is she the aged Persian queen. With the *Seven* a connection is just possible; the mask is the sort which the ancients considered suitable for such a character as Antigone, and our fragments would provide for Ismene and the herald as well. But the date of the play's production (467) might well be considered late for the style of the pot, and certainty of any sort is impossible. We are left to address to the boy on our vase the question which the passer-by, in the epigram of Dioscurides,²⁶ asked of the statue which stood guard over the tomb of Sophokles:

ἡ δ' ἐνὶ χερσὶ
κούριμος, ἐκ ποίης ἥδε διδασκαλίας;

and the answer which we receive will be much the same as his:

Εἴτε σοι Ἀντιγόνην εἰπεῖν φίλον, οὐκ ἂν ἀμάρτοις,
εἴτε καὶ Ἥλέκτραν· ἀμφότεραι γὰρ ἄκρον.

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²⁵ Cf. *A.J.A.*, XXXVI, 1932, pp. 401 ff., and Webster, *Niobidenmaler*, p. 18, notes 32 and 33.

²⁶ *Anth. Graeca*, VII, 37, 7-10; cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *R.E.*, XIV, p. 2075.