

THE NORTH SLOPE KRATER, NEW FRAGMENTS

(PLATES 50–51)

THE calyx-krater of Exekias, first published in 1937,¹ was discovered at the bottom of a well in the American School excavations on the North Slope of the Acropolis in Athens. The circumstances of discovery indicate that someone had carried down the shattered krater from the Acropolis for the express purpose of throwing it into the well, which was then abandoned as a source of water, like several other wells on the North Slope. Had the fragments been thrown over the Acropolis wall together with other debris, it is unlikely that so many could have found their way together into the same well.² Some of the fragments, however, were lost on the way down; about a third of the vase is still missing. After the well had been excavated and the possibility of finding more pieces seemed remote, the vase was restored and placed on exhibit in the temporary Agora Museum.^{2a} The following season, however, brought to light two more fragments which were recognized as belonging to the calyx-krater. They were put inside the vase to be added at some future time and have now been inserted. The new fragments, which join the restored part of the vase, as shown in Plates 50 and 51, a, add new interest to the krater as a whole and enable us to appreciate the composition in two vital areas more fully than before. The scenes in the main zones of decoration, it will be recalled, are: A, the introduction of Herakles into Olympos; and B, the combat over the body of Patroklos.

The larger of the new pieces,³ from the center of the warrior scene (Pl. 50, a), preserves much of the two overlapping shields of the protagonists. On the right is the shield of Hektor with a triskele in black on white ground. An incised line, drawn by compass, sets off the rim. The white color is well preserved, in contrast to the white on the fragments found in the well, which had largely disappeared from being immersed in the water (cf. breastplate of Diomedes on left flank, Pl. 50, a). Hektor's opponent, who was probably Ajax, holds his shield so as to be seen from the rear; his two arms appear in front of it. In his left hand he grasps the handle of the shield, and with his right, which is not preserved, he wielded the spear. His arms and

¹ *Hesperia*, VI, 1937, pp. 469-486.

² Some of the other vases and bronzes found in the well may have been carried down at the same time, *Hesperia*, VII, 1938, pp. 188 ff. This is probably true of the poros head of Herakles from the archaic temple, *Hesperia*, VIII, 1939, pp. 91 ff. Other wells, containing much pottery, mostly isolated pieces, from the Acropolis were found in the same area. See Carl Roebuck, *Hesperia*, IX, 1940, pp. 141 ff.

^{2a} It is now exhibited in the ceramic hall in the reconstructed Stoa of Attalos.

³ When discovered it was shattered into many small fragments all found together. This had certainly happened after the piece had been lost on the way down from the Acropolis.

details of the shield are rendered with incised lines, the palmettes of the *ὀχάνη* in the center are painted white, the outer edge of the rim and the handle at the lower edge are in purple. The spiral design on his breastplate appears at the edge of the fragment beneath his right arm. At the upper edge of the shield is preserved the tip of his beard.

Exekias has varied the stance of the three Greek warriors. Diomedes, who is at the rear, holds his spear at waist height in position for an under-thrust. The man in front of him has thrown his arm back, raising the spear to the height of his head, in readiness to hurl or thrust at his opponent. The protagonist holds his right arm forward with bent elbow; he has already thrust his weapon at Hektor, whose spear-point is visible behind the shield of the Greek protagonist.⁴ These variations are paralleled by corresponding differences in the position of the shields. Hektor holds his in full face view toward the spectators and its rear turned toward his opponent's shield. A position such as this in actual combat would expose the fighter so as to give him no protection from his shield. It is inconceivable that a warrior would ever hold his shield in such a way that its inside would face the inside of his enemy's shield, as is the case in the picture. Diomedes' shield is held in much the same position as that of the protagonist, but somewhat further back so that the rim appears behind him. For the sake of contrast his breastplate was painted white. The shield of the middle warrior, also seen from the rear, is held so far forward that it nearly disappears behind the body and shield of the protagonist. Thus his whole body is shown in black against the red background of the vase. No parts of either spears or shields of the second and third Trojans on the right flank of the scene are preserved, but it is likely that the positions varied in somewhat the same way. The variations are an important feature of the composition; they break up the rigid symmetry of the picture and help to soften the parallelism within each group.

The second of the new fragments (Pls. 50, b and 51, a) almost completes the figure of one of the running satyrs that fill the space between the attachments of the handles in the lower zone. He is running toward the right, but his head is turned in the opposite direction. His head-band, beard, tail, and phallos are painted purple. The lively action of this figure is unrelated to the peaceful scene above, where a nymph is seated beneath a spreading vine. The contrast, whether intentional or not, is in harmony with the rest of the decoration. These isolated figures of nymphs and satyrs—rarely so unaware of each other's presence—and the grape-laden vines take the place of more usual forms of decoration round the handles. They are suitably chosen as indications of the purpose of the vase as a mixing bowl for wine.

Since my first article on the North Slope krater was published, some important

⁴ The position of the spear indicated by the middle warrior is the one usually depicted in combat scenes. For the less common position of the protagonist cf. the bearded hoplite who has just thrust his spear into the mounted Amazon on a cup in Bologna, Emanuel Löwy, *Polygnot*, fig. 8b; Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen*, III, 504.

literature has appeared dealing with the art of Exekias and with the relation of the krater to the rest of his works.⁵ All have accepted the attribution to Exekias and the chronological order I proposed, placing the krater near the end of Exekias' career. Nikolaos M. Verdelis has recently published a new calyx-krater (Pl. 51, b-d),⁶ discovered in a tomb near Pharsalos in 1951, which is very closely related to the North Slope krater. The choice of motives on one side of the main zone and the subordinate elements of decoration are so similar on the two vases that it is hardly to be doubted that one was made in conscious, though far from exact, imitation of the other. Verdelis mentions and rejects the possibility that the Pharsalos vase could be the earlier of the two. His conclusion is certainly correct. The profile and proportions of the two vases show conclusively that the North Slope krater represents an earlier stage in the evolution of the shape. It is the earliest known example of the calyx-krater.

In his recent publication, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*, Professor Beazley lists the Pharsalos krater under the heading 'Manner of Exekias' and leaves the question open whether it was painted by Exekias himself or by a companion imitating the style and designs of his master. Viewed from the side depicting the battle scene the two vases are very much alike (cf. Pl. 50, a and 51, b). But there are some fundamental differences both in design and execution. These become apparent from the following list showing the principal similarities and differences between the two kraters.

SIMILARITIES

1. Shape (calyx-krater)
2. Rim decoration
3. Vine pattern above handles
4. Subject matter on B; position of Patroklos' body
5. Animal scenes on A and B

⁵ Ernest Buschor, *Griechische Vasen*, 1940, pp. 114 ff.; Bernhard Neutsch, 'Exekias, ein Meister der griechischen Vasenmalerei,' *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, XV, 1949/50, pp. 43-72; J. D. Beazley, *The Development of Attic Black-Figure*, 1951, pp. 63-74; *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*, 1956, pp. 133-149.

⁶ Nikolaos M. Verdelis, *Καλικοειδής κρατήρ τῆς τέχνης τοῦ Ἐχνηκίου*, 'Αρχ. Ἐφ., 1952 (published 1955), pp. 96-116. I am indebted to Mr. Verdelis for permission to republish the photographs on Plate 51, b-d, which I received from the files of the Archaeological Society in Athens through the kindness of Miss Artemisia Giannoulatou; and to Miss Alison Frantz for taking the photographs for Plates 50 and 51, a.

DIFFERENCES

*North Slope krater**Pharsalos krater*

Shape

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Proportion of height to diameter at top, 0.846: 1 | Proportion of height to diameter at top, 0.943: 1 |
|--|---|

Main Zone A

- | | |
|--|--|
| 2. Herakles' introduction into Olympos | Chariot scene with driver and two grooms |
|--|--|

Handles

- | | |
|--|--|
| 3. Handles flanked by horn-like knobs | Handles terminating in plastic volutes |
| 4. Tongue pattern at base of handles | No tongue pattern |
| 5. Seated figure beneath the vine | No figure beneath the vine |
| 6. Naturalistic rendering of vine leaves | Schematic rendering of vine leaves |
| 7. Running satyrs beneath the handles | No design beneath the handles |

Animal scenes

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 8. Lions' manes rendered by incised S-pattern | Lions' manes rendered by purple color |
|---|---------------------------------------|

Bottom Zone

- | | |
|----------|-------------|
| 9. Plain | Ray pattern |
|----------|-------------|

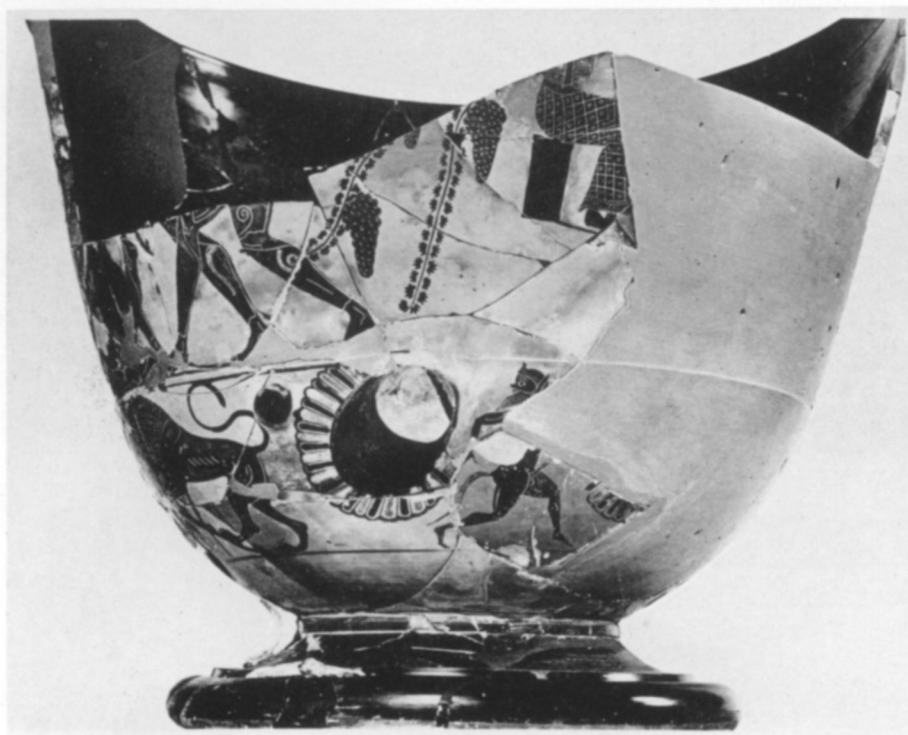
There are many other differences in the style and drawing of anatomical details and in the use of accessory colors, incisions, etc. Verdelis pointed out that on the vase published by him the individual grapes in some of the clusters are indicated by incised lines, in others there are no incisions (Pl. 51, d). The omissions are doubtless to be explained as an oversight. On the North Slope krater, where the grapes are also separated by incised lines, the rendering is quite different. Likewise the rim pattern on the Pharsalos krater is accentuated by incised lines, whereas the North Slope krater, using the same design, omits the incisions. More important, however, are the differences in the stance, armor, and garments of the warriors, because it is the composition of the warrior scene that, more than any other part of the decoration, makes the two vases look alike. The general similarity is obvious; in detail all the figures except the body of Patroklos are very different. One striking dissimilarity is shown by the new fragment from the center of the scene. The two shields of the protagonists are turned so that their rear, concave sides face each other. On the Pharsalos krater all the combatants present the outside, convex side of their shields

toward their opponents (Pl. 51, b, c). There the shield of the Greek protagonist overlaps that of Hektor, as seen in the picture, and the other four warriors all hold their shields in proper defensive position so as to be seen almost in profile. Similarly, as we have already observed, the master of the North Slope krater varied the position of the spears in order to avoid too rigid symmetry. On the Pharsalos vase all six warriors hold their right arms in almost identical pose (Pl. 51, b). This results in a harsh symmetry which is equally apparent in the chariot scene on the other side. The master of the North Slope krater has departed from a realistic rendering of the battle scene in order to obtain a better picture; the painter of the Pharsalos vase has sacrificed the principles of composition for accuracy in depicting the combat.

The differences that emerge from a close scrutiny of the scenes might be interpreted as evidence that the two kraters were painted by different masters; doubtless they could also be invoked as proof of the opposite view. Among the vases attributed to Exekias there are considerable stylistic differences, which cannot all be explained on the basis of a gradual development and ripening of his art. His influence can be traced on a large number of vases, which probably did not all come from the same workshop. Some of his followers came very close to the master's own style.

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a. and b. The North Slope Krater showing New Fragments

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a. North Slope Krater showing New Fragment with Satyr



c. Pharsalos Krater, Protagonists in Warrior Scene



b. Pharsalos Krater, Warrior Scene



d. Pharsalos Krater, Handle Ornament

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