

## A PRIZE ARYBALLOS

(PLATES 63 AND 64)

THE most interesting single find from the excavation of 1954 on Temple Hill in Corinth was the fine aryballos of Middle Corinthian date with a representation of a dancing chorus (see above, pp. 151-152). Its significance is readily apparent: in it are combined neat and very careful workmanship, a fresh and lively scene, which is one of the earliest representations of a dancing chorus, and one of the longest archaic Corinthian inscriptions, other than a list of names, yet discovered on a vase (Pls. 63, 64). The subject of the scene and the inscription imply that this was not an ordinary product of the potter's workshop, but a special order, made as a prize, or in commemoration of a victory in a dancing contest, and dedicated by the chorus leader, Pyrvias (Pyrrhias). It is a vase worthy of a place in the early archaic temple in spite of its small size,<sup>1</sup> for every element of its decoration shows great care and the scene, with its youthful chorus and leader, is no comast dance, but a serious and proper performance, gracefully and simply executed.

The vase is complete except for a piece of the front part of the lip, conveniently broken in antiquity to reveal the scene better to its modern viewers. It shows no signs of actual use, but is worn slightly on the sides and back of the handle by abrasion from the rough filling in which it lay. The clay is a typical Corinthian buff, the surface smooth and polished. The figure scene painted around the body is developed from left to right: at the left is the auletes, playing a double flute, unbearded, but evidently a young adult. In contrast to the nude members of the chorus he is formally dressed in a chiton and himation. The outline and folds of the chiton are in black while the rest is reserved in the buff color of the clay and the himation is purplish red. His flesh and hair, like that of the members of the chorus, are black with incised details. Facing the auletes is the leader of the chorus at the height of his leap, legs drawn up and arms flung back of the head. He is followed by the chorus members, six in all, arranged in three pairs. They are evidently waiting their cue to participate; it must be close, for their arms are stiffly extended to the front and slightly raised in readiness. The leader of the chorus and its members with their unbearded faces, short hair and figures smaller than the auletes are youths rather than adults. It is interesting to note the differences in the head profiles of the nearer figures, from the short, rather upturned nose of the leader to the hooked, fleshy nose of the last in line. The shorter

<sup>1</sup> Diam. 0.052 m.; H. to top of lip 0.045 m.; H. to top of handle 0.053 m.; W. of handle 0.028 m.

The photographs of the aryballos were taken by Mr. J. L. Caskey; the watercolor is the work of Mr. Piet de Jong.

noses and the less distinct features of the farther figures are determined by the lack of an incised outline, but one wonders if there is not some attempt at portraiture in the figures of the foreground. The simple, effective scene may well represent the start of the dance—the leader has made his first leap, a perfect one; the members of the chorus are poised in alert readiness for their turn.

The decoration on the remainder of the vase is equally effective in the use of contrasting black and reserved areas with simple designs. At the top of the lip, radiating out from the mouth is a rosette of twenty petals, reserved against a background of black; around the mouth is a reserved line. The edge of the lip and side of the handle are decorated with a series of eight-petalled rosettes (or eight-spoked wheels?) enclosed by a reserved line. Down the center of the top of the handle is a black zigzag, framed by black lines. On the back of the handle is a finely drawn female head in outline technique; her hair-fillet is reserved. On the bottom of the vase is another eight-petalled rosette, reserved on a black ground and enclosed by two concentric circles, the outer of which serves as a ground line for the figures of the main scene. All the rosettes are drawn with geometric precision, but there are no signs of the use of a compass. Together with the main scene this use of reserved patterns gives the vase its distinction, for neither such a technique nor the combination of patterns is common. The vase belongs to Payne's shape A,<sup>2</sup> but its appearance is very different from the other examples of this class. Its simple episodic scene which does not spread out over the surface as much as usual and the clean, delicate decoration differentiate it from the other pieces, fine and individual as they are. Thus, it is worthwhile to examine the elements of the decoration in some detail.

The female head in outline technique on the back of the handle is found on a number of vases of this shape.<sup>3</sup> Most of them are to be dated in the Middle Corinthian period, although a few must be put earlier. The closest parallels for the head on the new aryballos are those on two vases in the British Museum<sup>4</sup> which are dated 590-580 B.C. As Payne has pointed out, there is a considerable advance in the rendering of the head in the Middle Corinthian period and ours shows the characteristics of the later examples. It is perhaps a little later in date than the British Museum examples, but has the same liveliness as the latter of them.<sup>5</sup>

On the other aryballoi of shape A a tongue pattern is normal on the mouth. Other designs do occur, however, and on one group, with floral patterns on the body of the vase, reserved rosettes are usually found.<sup>6</sup> Various patterns such as cross hatching

<sup>2</sup> Payne, *Necrocorinthia*, pp. 287, 303 f.; Hopper, *B.S.A.*, XLIV, 1949, p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> Payne, *loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303, nos. 803 and 805, pl. 31, 5-6, 7-8, figs. 35 A, B, 139.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 805, pl. 31, 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287, no. 485 A; *C.V.A.*, Oxford II, pl. 2, nos. 2 and 7 (Hopper, p. 205) does not have a head on the handle; on another aryballos of a different shape, *C.V.A.*, Louvre VIII, pl. 25, nos. 27-28, reserved petals, ten in number, are found.

and checkerboard decorate the sides of the lip and handle. Whirls are normally used on the bottom of these vases. But, on none of these vases are the other patterns which we find on the new aryballos. The eight-petalled rosette or wheel is occasionally used on the back of an aryballos under the handle.<sup>7</sup> Yet, since it is on the light background of the vase, the effect is quite different. The eight-petalled rosette on the bottom of the vase may be paralleled, too, in an aryballos of Payne's Lion group.<sup>8</sup> This group is related to some pieces of shape A and is also made up of vases of generally fine quality.

The drawing of the figure scene resembles that of the vases of the Timonidas group.<sup>9</sup> The artist has reached approximately the same stage of development in his depictions of figures in profile, while the flute player is quite similar to the figure of Priam on the bottle by Timonidas in Athens.<sup>10</sup> The letter forms of the inscription also show an affinity. Thus, a date toward the end of the Middle Corinthian period, *ca.* 580-575 B.C., seems suitable for the new aryballos.

The inscription identifies the scene as a dancing chorus and indicates that the vase is either the prize awarded the leader of the chorus or a commemorative piece made to record his victory. It is fired on the vase in black glaze, presumably at the same time as the decoration. Fortunately, the inscription is complete and very neatly and clearly lettered in the typical early archaic Corinthian letter forms without any irregularities. Various letters, of course, are reverted as the writer twined his words around the figures. It reads, as may be seen on Plate 64, as follows: πολυτερπος πυρφιας προχορευομενος αντοδεφοιολπα which should probably be resolved into πολυτερπός Πυρφίας προχορευόμενος αὐτῷ (αὐτῷ) δέ φοι ὄλπα: "Polyterpos. Pyrvias (Pyrrhias) leading the chorus; and to him, himself, an olpe."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the decoration and inscription were made to order after the result of the contest was known and presumably dedicated by the leader of the chorus, Pyrrhias, in the early archaic temple near which it was found—to be discarded with the other debris when the temple burned.

The inscription is apparently to be read in two parts since the first word, πολυτερπός, which starts behind the auletes' shoulders, is curved to the left away from his ankles rather than crossing them to link his figure with the others, all tied together by the remaining letters of the inscription. Polyterpos, then, is best taken as applying to the auletes himself to whose music it should certainly be appropriate.<sup>12</sup> It is, however, probably an adjective of such appropriate general reference rather than a proper name,

<sup>7</sup> *C.V.A.*, Oxford II, pl. 2, nos. 2 and 7.

<sup>8</sup> Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 289, no. 543 = *C.V.A.*, Louvre VIII, pl. 18, nos. 26-28, 30 (Hopper, p. 205). There is, however, only one concentric circle in black enclosing the design. A similar reserved rosette with ten petals is used in the interior of a kothon (*Délos*, X, pl. XXXVII, no. 524 a).

<sup>9</sup> Payne, *op. cit.*, pp. 102 ff.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314, no. 1072, pl. 34, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Thanks are due to Professor T. B. L. Webster, of the University of London, for suggestions in the interpretation of the inscription.

<sup>12</sup> It is used of ὕμνοι in *Anth. Pal.*, IX, 504.

since the word does not seem to be used as a name. Its usual adjectival form is, of course, *πολυτερπής* (Doric, *-as*), but the termination *-os* may be explained as written for *-as*. Such is the case in the proper names on the Late Corinthian I krater in the Spencer-Churchill collection.<sup>13</sup> It is possible, of course, that *πολυτερπός* was used adjectively to refer to Pyrvias, but its position and obvious appropriateness to the auletes make that unlikely. The auletes, then, may not be named, but merely described as the "much delighting" (musician).

The leaping boy before the chorus is evidently identified by the name *Πυρρίας* (Pyrvias) written in front of him, and his function described by the participle *προχορευόμενος*—Pyrvias, leading the chorus. The name is common and finds its parallels in this form in an archaic inscription from Mycenae and on an unpublished archaic Corinthian vase found at Perachora.<sup>14</sup> This occurrence of *προχορευόμενος* seems to be its earliest; it is particularly appropriate, to judge from its usage by Euripides,<sup>15</sup> for this chorus is provided with an auletes. Euripides uses it of leading a "fluteless" (i. e. melancholy) *komos*. This group is hardly a *komos*, but it is at least a chorus dancing to the auletes' tune.

Its members remain anonymous, for the inscription evidently continues to refer to Pyrvias, *αὐτῷ (αὐτῷ) δέ φοι ὀλπα*, "and to him, himself, an olpe." The enclitic, *φοι*, offers no difficulty since the form with a *digamma* appears on an inscription from Delphi<sup>16</sup> and its use as an enclitic with *αὐτός* in a reflexive sense is normal in Homer. The absence of the *iota* after *αὐτῷ*, however, is an irregularity or a slip on the part of the writer. Normally the Corinthian vase inscriptions are scrupulous about adding such terminal *ι* sounds. They are frequently used in the nominative cases of names even when they are dropped in the same names elsewhere.<sup>17</sup>

The second part of the inscription, Pyrvias to olpe, forms a hexameter line with a slight irregularity in the fourth foot. Such a verse, of course, is particularly appropriate for the dedication of a prize vase.

If this interpretation is correct, it remains to explain how an olpe may be what is obviously, or conventionally, a round aryballos. Apparently the name aryballos, or aryballis, to indicate a pot of the draw-purse shape (a round aryballos) was the Doric equivalent of the Attic lekythos. The latter term is epigraphically attested for the round aryballos shape, which probably indicates that the conventional usage is cor-

<sup>13</sup> Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 167, no. 60; cf. also *I.G.*, IV, 331 (*πυρρίας*).

<sup>14</sup> Pape, *Griechische Eigennamen*, s.v. *Πυρρίας*, *Πύρρος*; Buck, *Greek Dialects*, pp. 47 ff., Sec. 54 e; for the inscription from Mycenae see *I.G.*, IV, 492, line 5; *Πυρρίας* (cf. note 13) is used as the name of a horse (*I.G.*, IV, 337). Our thanks are due to the late Mr. T. J. Dunbabin for pointing out the occurrence of the name on the vase from Perachora.

<sup>15</sup> *Phoenissae*, 791.

<sup>16</sup> *S.G.D.I.*, 2561, D 14.

<sup>17</sup> Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 165, no. 33; cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 276 (*Σθεννώ*).

rect.<sup>18</sup> The Corinthian, or rather Protocorinthian, lekythos, was an ovoid aryballos as an inscribed example attests.<sup>19</sup> It seems probable, however, that in addition to lekythos and aryballos as names for oil jugs of the ovoid and round type, the Corinthians may also have used olpe.

The conventional application of the word olpe to a tall wine-pitcher is a limitation of its ancient usage. It is justified on the literary evidence, but is too limited and perhaps derived from a regional usage. The earliest occurrence is in Sappho (quoted in Athenaeus, *Deip.* 425D) where *olpis* is a pitcher (or ladle?) for dipping wine from a krater. Ion of Chios (*op. cit.* 495B) evidently used olpe of the same type of vessel and we are told by Athenaeus that the term was used in Thessaly for a pitcher. These references at least partially justify the conventional usage, but it is striking that all belong to the Aeolian region.

In Dorian, and perhaps more narrowly Corinthian, usage of the Hellenistic period the word was used for an oil flask and is connected, like aryballos, with lekythos. Kleitarchos (*op. cit.*, 495C) stated that Corinthians, Byzantines and Cypriotes used olpe for lekythos; Hesychius and Suidas define it as a lekythos and Theocritus (II, 156) speaks of a Doric olpe which is defined by the scholiast: "olpe is generally a leather lekythos for — — — oil, but perhaps here he means the bronze lekythos because he says Doric instead of Corinthian; for Corinthian bronzes were renowned." Other Hellenistic sources also used olpe for leather and metal (perhaps metal fitted) oil flasks.<sup>20</sup> Many of these notices refer to the oil flasks of Cynic philosophers and they scarcely permit us to identify a round aryballos of the sixth century as an olpe. Yet, the word is used for an oil flask, is explained by the lexicographers as a lekythos and is connected, as a product of its bronze industry, with Corinth. There seems no great objection to accepting this occurrence in our inscription as epigraphical evidence for the use of olpe to designate a round aryballos. Presumably two words, aryballos and olpe, might be used in Doric to indicate such a vase shape.

As a prize vase the aryballos finds a parallel in the well known Attic jug from a Dipylon grave. This, too, seems to have been the prize in a dancing contest and was valued enough by the winner to be buried with him.<sup>21</sup> It is scarcely possible, however, to tell whether our "aryballos" is the actual prize made after the result of the contest was known or if it is the victor's token of gratitude for the "olpe" which he and his chorus had won.

The designation of Pyrvias as the leader of a chorus and the scene itself leave no

<sup>18</sup> Beazley, *B.S.A.*, XXIX, 1927-28, pp. 187-88, 193-94; Richter and Milne, *Shapes and Names of Athenian Vases*, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> *Mon. Ant.*, XXII, 1913, pl. 51, 1, col. 308.

<sup>20</sup> Theocritus, XVIII, 45 (*ὄλπις*); Nicander, *Ther.* 97; *Anth. Pal.* VI, 298; VII, 68; Athenaeus 451 C; cf. also *Anth. Pal.* VI, 261 and Nicander, *Ther.* 80 (a jug?).

<sup>21</sup> *Ath. Mitt.*, XVIII, 1893, p. 225, pl. X.

doubt that the representation is of a formal chorus of boys who were competing in a dancing contest as part of a festival. The obvious propriety of the group contrasts strongly with the frequent scenes of padded dancers and revelers on contemporary Corinthian and Attic pottery. It is a fitting representation of the type of dancing which Plato<sup>22</sup> would admit into his ideal Greek state: *τὴν δ' ἐν εὐπραγίᾳ τε οὐσης ψυχῆς σώφρονος ἐν ἡδοναῖς τε ἐμμέτροις*, while rejecting the orgiastic and comast dances as unfit for its citizens. Such "proper" dancing, of course, played an equally important part in the education of boys and girls, but representations of it are rare compared to the comast scenes and masked and padded revelers. It scarcely seems possible to identify precisely the festival of which this dancing contest was a part or to name the dance; we do not know what its further evolutions may have been. The leap, however, may be a form of the well known *βίβασις* in which it was necessary to leap and touch the buttocks with the feet. The leaping might be a contest between individuals in which the greatest number of jumps determined the winner (Pollux, IV, 102) or it might be used in indecent dances (perhaps a parody of the proper "step") by the padded dancers and women,<sup>23</sup> but it was apparently also used in propriety by boys and girls in dancing contests in Dorian Laconia.<sup>24</sup> The leap depicted on the aryballos seems closer to the *βίβασις* than to the other various leaping "steps" described by Athenaeus and Pollux.

The scene makes an interesting foil to another dancing chorus on a Boeotian vase recently published by Bielefeld.<sup>25</sup> This vase, dated to *ca.* 560 B.C., is decorated with a representation of a satyr-chorus dancing to a flute player's music. Bielefeld plausibly suggests that it is a chorus of masked youths rather than a fanciful group of satyrs. The auletes faces a single capering satyr-figure who is probably the leader of the chorus; he is small in proportion to the auletes and to the members of his chorus, like Pырvias on the Corinthian aryballos. The chorus are six in number, but are depicted in an evolution of the dance in antithetic pairs (or perhaps merely to fit a scheme of composition?). In any case there is a chorus of six dancers and their leader, dancing to an auletes' tune as on the aryballos. The two vases give two types of youthful choral dancing—a serious gymnastic type and a revel; both are of great importance as early examples of dancing choruses.

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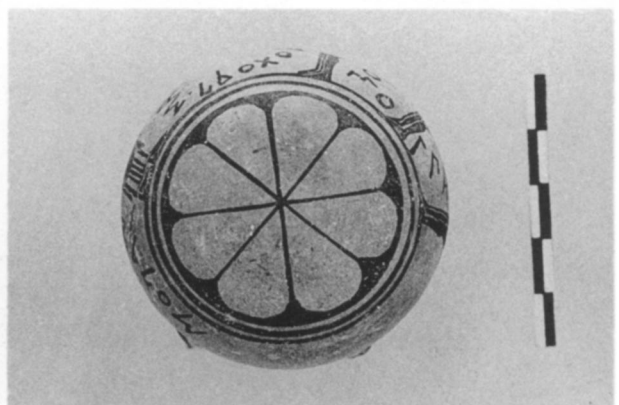
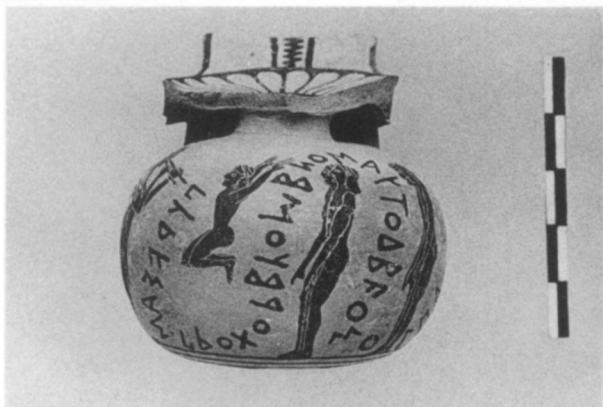
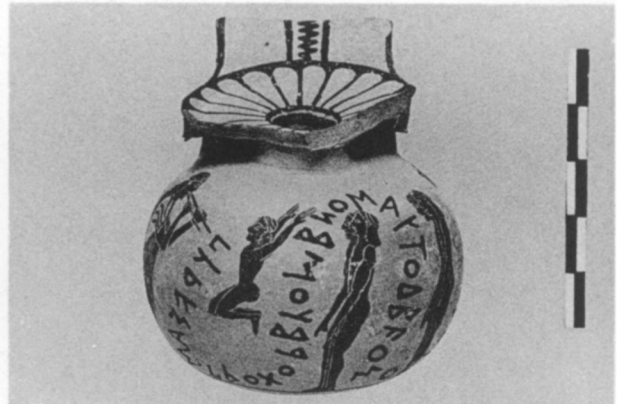
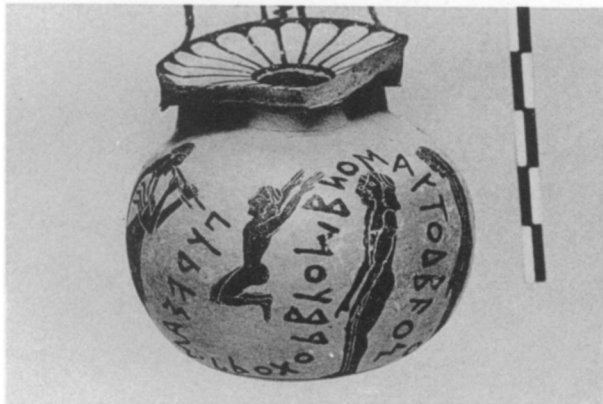
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<sup>22</sup> *Laws*, VII, 814 e, 816 d, e.

<sup>23</sup> Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 121; Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 82.

<sup>24</sup> Pollux, IV, 102: *ἥς καὶ τὰ ἀθλα προυρίθετο οὐ τοῖς παισὶ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῖς κόραις.*

<sup>25</sup> E. Bielefeld, "Ein boiotischer Tanzchor des 6 Jh. v. Chr.," *Festschrift für Friedrich Zucker*, Berlin, 1954, pp. 27-35, pls. V-VI. We owe this reference to Professor Homer A. Thompson of the Institute for Advanced Study.



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