

LOCAL IMITATION OF CORINTHIAN VASES OF THE LATER SEVENTH CENTURY B.C. FOUND IN CORFU

(PLATE 100)

THE vase fragments illustrated on Plate 100 were found in the summer of 1963 during excavation work on the estate of Mrs. Rena Evelpidhis on the island of Corfu, on the site of the ancient town of Corcyra. Excavations there have been in progress since 1961, financed by Mrs. Evelpidhis, who has also taken an active part in the investigations, with results of considerable importance for the knowledge of the topography of ancient Corcyra and of its urban development: houses of the archaic, classical and Hellenistic periods were uncovered at an ancient cross-roads and, in the deepest layers, some disturbed graves or pyres of the earliest period of Corcyra following the Corinthian colonization, i. e. of the very end of the 8th and of the 7th century B.C.¹

The fragments published here (Evelpidhis inventory no. 39) were found in a disturbed archaic context,² but the vase to which they belonged seems to have originally been laid in a woman's grave, perhaps as its most important offering. I have thought them worthy of a separate publication because, though presenting superficially the characteristics of an ordinary vase of the so-called transitional period of Corinthian vase painting, they betray, on closer inspection, considerable peculiarities.

¹ The excavations of 1962 are discussed in *Δελτ.*, XVIII, 1963, *Χρονικά*, pp. 180-186, pls. 210-216.

I am indebted to the Director of the American School, Henry S. Robinson, who has invited me to prepare this study as a significant supplement to publications of Corinthian pottery found in the excavations by the School at Corinth.

² The layer consisted of light colored earth which originally contained pyres or graves of various forms, but was disturbed when, in the 6th century B.C., the earliest house builders proceeded to a systematic levelling of the ground in order to adapt it to their purposes. The earth was then stirred up and probably looted and subsequently levelled. In some cases, however, as in ours, the dispersal of the grave offerings was not serious. Round about our fragments small vases and objects were found, most of which were intact. These, I think, have a strong claim to have belonged to the same original grave complex (a woman's grave), although a margin of doubt is of course necessary. These are: 1) the small alabastron, EY 37 (H. 0.08 m.) with a griffin-bird, wings open; 2) the upper part of an aryballos of Corinthian type, EY 44; 3) two loomweights; 4) a bobbin, EY 417. Nos. 1 and 2 are early Corinthian, confirming the date which is proposed for the pyxis at the end of this article. No. 3 loomweights are of an early type according to Miss Claire Papapavlou, who is studying the small objects of Mrs. Evelpidhis' excavations; they might very well still belong to the 7th century B.C. The bobbin EY 417 is also early.

DESCRIPTION OF THE FRAGMENTS

Three pieces of the body of the vase (frags. a-c) and one of the cover (d).

Found on the 18th of June, 1963, room IV, layer 3.

Fragment a: H. 0.12 m., W. 0.15 m., Th. 0.05 m.

Fragment b: H. 0.07 m., W. (ends of handle) 0.185 m.

Fragment c: 0.054 x 0.038 m.

Fragment d: H. 0.118 m., W. 0.145 m.

The clay is pale pink; it contains very small grits and presents some small holes, but on the whole it is fairly consistent. The inner surface has been well polished, the outer surface is covered with a slip made of a very fine quality of the same clay. The interior of the body is painted brown (brush strokes are visible); the interior of the cover is plain. The painted figures are executed in brown or brown-black; the unevenness of the application of the paint on the figures produces an illusionistic effect. Details and most of the outlines are incised.

Fragment a. Part of wall, including a handle of omega shape, made up of two sherds. On the rim (handle zone), vertical lines (six are preserved). On the body, from left to right: forepart of lion walking to right, grazing goat to right, tail and foot of an animal (perhaps an ox), to right; numerous field ornaments: dot rosettes, chi's, sigmas, and eight-rayed star. Below, a solid band, beneath which the ends of three thin rays.

Fragment b. Omega-shaped handle and part of the wall under it. The whole made up of ten sherds. Under the handle the body of a goat walking to right. Field ornaments: chi's and sigmas.

Fragment c. One sherd from just under the lip. A line and under it the rump of a goat (?) walking to right. A sigma in the field.

Fragment d. Part of the cover made up of two sherds. Thin rays radiating from the (lost) center. The remainder in two bands. In the inner band: deer grazing to right; in front of it the major part of a bird, under which a scorpion. In the outer band, which is separated from the other by two thin lines, from left to right: head and neck of a swan to right; lion walking to right, under which a small scorpion; dog running to right (only hind part is preserved). Field ornaments on both bands: dot rosettes and sigmas. A swastika on the outer band.

The vase is of a shape that has found no universally accepted name. Various scholars have applied different names to it, most of which stress its likeness to a drinking vessel. Robertson, Dunbabin, Kraiker and Hazel Palmer called it a "kotyle-pyxis,"³ Benton a "cup-pyxis,"⁴ whereas Payne originally gave it the name "kotyle with inset rim," which he later changed to "covered kylix."⁵

All these scholars have recognized, however, that the vase was used as a box, not as a drinking vessel. This is what led Hopper to adopt for the smaller pieces at least the plain name "pyxis"⁶ by which Weinberg had already denoted the earlier pieces⁷ (he, like Payne, called the later pieces "kotylai with inset rim"⁸). The un-

³ M. Robertson, *B.S.A.*, XLIII, 1948, pp. 27-28; T. J. Dunbabin, *Perachora*, II, Oxford, 1962, pp. 99-102; W. Kraiker, *Aigina, Die Vasen des 10. bis 7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Berlin, 1951, nos. 425-428, 502-504; H. Palmer, *Corinth*, XIII, *The North Cemetery*, Princeton, 1964, pp. 116-117.

⁴ S. Benton, *B.S.A.*, XLVIII, 1953, pp. 299-300.

⁵ H. Payne, *Necrocorinthia*, Oxford, 1931, pp. 295-296 (hereafter all numbers preceded by NC refer to the catalogue of Payne's work); *Perachora*, II, pp. 99-102. For the covers of such pyxides: *Perachora*, II, pp. 122-124; Robertson, *B.S.A.*, XLIII, 1948, pp. 30-31, pl. 7, 92-97 (PC).

⁶ R. J. Hopper, *B.S.A.*, XLIV, 1949, pp. 224-225.

⁷ S. S. Weinberg, *Corinth*, VII, i, *The Geometric and Orientalizing Pottery*, Cambridge, Mass., 1943, nos. 120, 153, p. 52.

⁸ *Ibid.*, nos. 189-190.

certainty extends to the history of the shape. Two distinct phases are known, one of the later Geometric period, and another of the late 7th and early 6th centuries, during which the type reached its acme, but the link between them is not clear. Hopper thinks that Attic vases of similar shape may have influenced the later examples.⁹ So the shape appeared in the third quarter of the 8th century B.C. and went out of use early in the 6th century.¹⁰

Now to details: The dot rosettes of our vase are characteristic of the TR period, although they also occur sporadically on EC,¹¹ MC,¹² and even LC vases.¹³ Combined with the sigmas, they remind us of the austere bands on similar pyxides or other vases of the EC period.¹⁴ The lions recall those of the TR period, but the narrow incised mane on their necks forebodes the "Corinthian" lion,¹⁵ while the incised ribs appear in the TR period.¹⁶ So there is no doubt that our fragments belong to the period of the acme of our vase shape and that they fall still within the 7th century.

It is precisely when examining the lions that we are struck by the aforementioned peculiarities. Their bodies are extremely awkward for this period, their legs comparatively very short, and no convincing impression of walk is conveyed either by the vivid movement of the forelegs of lion fragment a or by the apparently lithe movement of the hind legs and the up-turned tail of lion fragment d. Besides, the drawing of their heads is utterly peculiar, almost childish; one will be surprised for example at the inability of the painter to give the eye its right position in the head (and consequently to achieve a persuasive expression) or at the double line under the eye, which, though similar to a particular treatment on other Corinthian works of the PC period,¹⁷

⁹ *B.S.A.*, XLIV, 1949, p. 223. Payne had already noted the similarity to the Burgon lebes (*Necrocorinthia*, p. 296, note 1).

¹⁰ Late Geometric: H. Payne, *Perachora*, I, Oxford, 1940, pl. 122, 9. Third quarter of the 8th century B.C.: S. S. Weinberg, *Hesperia*, XVII, 1948, pl. LXXV, C 9; J. K. Anderson, *B.S.A.*, LIII-LIV, 1958-1959, p. 139, no. 10, from Old Smyrna (also *Perachora*, II, p. 100, note 1, where the vase is cited as "Smyrna 8"). Late pieces (later than 600 B.C.): *Corinth*, XIII, pp. 116-117, nos. 57-q (pl. 23), 59-11 (pl. 24 and fig. 12); NC 974, 974-A (MC); *C.V.A.*, France, Musée Rodin, pl. 5, 1-5 (also MC). There is also a perplexing similarity of the later pieces to certain LC II lekanides (*Necrocorinthia*, p. 336, figs. 186-187; *Corinth*, VII, i, p. 39 under no. 120).

¹¹ E.g., *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 17, 7 and 12.

¹² *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 31, 7, p. 157; *Perachora*, II, pl. 103, 2499.

¹³ *C.V.A.*, Germany, Mannheim, pl. 8, 1, p. 21.

¹⁴ E.g.: *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 22, 5; *Corinth*, VII, i, pl. 27, 190 (cover). On kotylai: *Perachora*, II, pl. 92, 2305, pl. 96, 2430, etc. On kothons: *Corinth*, VII, i, pl. 37, 297. The sigmas are regular or reversed, simple or multiplied into vertical zigzags. Similar bands occur also on earlier vases, as *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 3, 3 (MPC).

¹⁵ See the PC (LPC) example *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 8, 7 and the TR or EC examples *Aigina*, nos. 490 and 491, pl. 36.

¹⁶ E.g., *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 11, 4, pl. 12.

¹⁷ E.g., *Perachora*, II, pl. 1, 88 (by the Head-in-Air painter); K. F. Johansen, *Les Vases Sicyoniens*, Paris, 1923, pl. XXXVII, 3 (by the same painter); C. Waldstein, *The Argive Heraeum*, II, Boston, 1905, pl. LIX, 33; *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 9, 1 (where the double line isolates

is far less convincing here. It is evident therefore that our painter has been unsuccessfully trying to imitate certain Corinthian prototypes. On the other hand the tongues of the lions protrude between a double row of elementary teeth, as in Protoattic,¹⁸ Aeginetan,¹⁹ Boeotian,²⁰ and Cycladic works,²¹ rather than follow the lower jaw, as in the Corinthian ones.²² It may be that by this treatment the painter of our pyxis wanted to imitate works of one of the above centers, but I think it more probable that he was just a primitive-minded person who found this conventional treatment more easy to execute and perhaps more convincingly "savage" than the more naturalistic one of its Corinthian prototypes. Finally, the incised details of the lions are unsteady, suggesting a lack of experience on the part of the painter. A consideration of the other animals provokes similar criticism. For example, the stag is equally awkward and inorganic (in spite of a certain similarity to Kraiker, *Aigina*, pl. 28, 349: hind leg opposite); the goat is heavy and somewhat primitive, its tail down-turned as if it were the tail of a stag, not up-turned as it should be, and its longish head is rather that of a stag (see also the ear, the absence of a beard);²³ the dog is remarkably stiff and its hind leg does not show the characteristic nick which dogs and felines present in nature and which Corinthian works do reproduce. All this

the mouth), etc. See also *B.S.A.*, XLVIII, 1953, p. 312, fig. 17, kotyle 695 (Aetos painter, MPC I-II).

¹⁸ K. Kübler, *Altattische Malerei*, Tübingen, 1950, passim.

¹⁹ Kraiker, *Aigina*, pl. 37, 484.

²⁰ R. Hampe, *Frühe griechische Sagenbilder in Böotien*, Athens, 1936, pl. 17, V. 1, pl. 19, V. 39, etc.

²¹ P. E. Arias, *A History of Greek Vase Painting*, London, 1962, pl. V.

²² Early, primitive Corinthian lions already show this "canon," as on a plate from Aetos, Ithaca, dated by Robertson ca. 700 B.C. (*B.S.A.*, XLIII, 1948, pl. 42, 563), however not yet on the EPC lekythos *Argive Heraeum*, II, p. 147, fig. 88 (for its date, J. L. Benson, *Die Geschichte der Korinthischen Vasen*, Basel, 1953, p. 127, no. 963). On another plate from Aetos dated by Miss Benton to the second quarter of the 7th century (*B.S.A.*, XLVIII, 1953, p. 335, no. 1067, fig. 32) the lion's mouth is unlike the Corinthian "canon" but is also unlike the Protoattic and other types cited above.

²³ The horn of the goat is of a type that is not usual on genuine Corinthian vases (for a typical Corinthian goat see *Necrocorinthia*, p. 70, note 6, pl. 14) but is standard on Rhodian vases (W. Schiering, *Werkstätten orientalisierender Keramik auf Rhodos*, Berlin, 1957, p. 43). The usual type of Corinthian goat is a "Hausziege" with recurved horns, the Rhodian goat is a "Steinbock." The running dog is of course very common on PC (even TR) vases (cf. recently G. Vallet and F. Villard, *B.C.H.*, LXXXII, 1958, p. 18); the incised line along the hind leg is equally long on the TR example *Aigina*, 409; previously it had been shorter, as *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 9 (LPC). The scorpion appears on the Amphiaraios krater dated ca. 560 B.C., on bronze shield strips from the Acropolis (E. Kunze, *Kretische Bronzereliefs*, Stuttgart, 1931, pp. 199-200, note 91, Beil. 5c) and elsewhere (*Perachora*, II, p. 412, A 24). The bird is reminiscent of those on the Caeretan hydriai Louvre E 698 and E 701 (E. Pottier, *Vases antiques du Louvre*, Paris, 1897-1901, pl. 52; Morin-Jean, *Le dessin des animaux en Grèce d'après les vases peints*, Paris, 1911, p. 99, figs. 111-112), but is drier, less naturalistic (I am indebted to Mrs. Evi Touloupa for valuable help on this point).

makes clear that the painter has not drawn animals after nature and did not have any routine practice in such matters. He drew them in the undecided and confused manner of an apprentice who takes over art motives without possessing a real understanding of them.

It would be an error, however, to say that his work is a second-rate product. In contrast to its figure style the vase displays good qualities in other respects, such as a finely worked clay, a carefully drawn field decoration and also a neat conception of the whole. We must see the potter's work also in this favorable aspect, in order to obtain a fair idea of the whole. Now, in my opinion, there is an explanation which can satisfactorily account for these discrepancies, and which I have already hinted at: namely, that our painter was a local, a Corcyraean artist, who was imitating Corinthian works as a pupil of Corinthian masters or working freely to reproduce imported Corinthian ware.

The hypothesis of a local provenance of the vase is strengthened by a number of additional observations, first the ornaments. In Corinth when sigmas of our type appear in the field, they are either isolated or form pairs,²⁴ but they are never, to my knowledge, arranged with the dot rosettes as on our fragments. Of course our arrangement is, as I have stated in the beginning, strongly reminiscent of decoration on TR and EC pyxides and other vases, but there is a fundamental difference: here the ornaments are not arranged in distinct bands and with a rhythmical alternation of their elements;²⁵ instead they appear as a field decoration and are laid out in such a way as to suggest that their painter has adopted the ornaments of such bands and has scattered them over his field in longer or shorter, uneven pieces. The ornaments themselves are carefully executed and give a pleasing impression, but the attitude of the painter is shown to be unstructural.

A final proof of the local provenance of our vase is offered by the clay. Although presenting some superficial resemblance to Corinthian, it is definitely not Corinthian, as Professor Amyx, who saw the fragments, very kindly informed me. I can add from my experience of Corcyraean clays that it is just a finer quality of one of the usual clay species, its dusty surface texture being a typical feature of the Corcyraean vases; and the slip which has been used here is never met on genuine Corinthian vases.

All these observations seem to provide convincing evidence that our painter was a Corcyraean. He is seen to have no great abilities in figured decoration; his animals not only lack the vigor and elasticity of many genuine Corinthian animals, but also are without sound organic sense. It is, perhaps, dangerous to generalize from a single vase document of Corcyraean art, but I venture to suggest that the non-structural

²⁴ E.g. Johansen, *Vases Sicyoniens*, pl. XXVIII, 1-3 (all MPC; no. 3 = *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 3, 2); Kraiker, *Aigina*, pl. 28, 356 (LPC), pl. 32, 423 (TR).

²⁵ This alternation of ornamental elements manifests the constant Greek need for "thesis" and "antithesis" within the steadily "moving" flow of the band decoration as a whole.

bodies of the animals imply more than mere technical inadequacy and that they might represent a local tendency toward inadequate reproduction of living beings (at least at this period); we cannot, however, exclude the possibility that the vase represents the painter in his early (or in his late?) career. On the other hand we have seen that he possesses ornamental abilities (though not in a strict structural sense) and shows qualities in other respects as well, which mean that his vase is not at all to be considered a second-rate work; on the contrary the artist meant it to be a "showpiece," which it undoubtedly is. To sum up: his vase is a typical "peripheral" work, comparable to Corinthianizing vases of Etruria,²⁶ and, like a number of them, presenting serious weaknesses joined to good decorative qualities.

Our vase is not an isolated specimen of ceramic activity on the island. Several vases or sherds, which the Museum of Corfu contained from older times, were considered by Rodenwaldt and Papademetriou to be of local provenance, not Corinthian imports;²⁷ besides, a large number of the vase fragments or sherds which were brought to light during the excavations of the last ten years in Palaiopolis, in the Mon Repos garden, in Mrs. Evelpidhis' estate and elsewhere are also undoubtedly of local origin.²⁸ Of these the majority consists of specimens bearing simple decoration, mostly of the usual subgeometric type, but there are also finer pieces with figured decoration among them (a publication of them is in preparation). All this production is a proof that the Corcyraean ceramic workshops were far more active than was previously suspected, and that they competed strenuously with the Corinthian workshops to supply the local market.²⁹ This evidence may serve to throw new light on the industrial importance of Corinth's oldest daughter colony and its steady will to get rid of the somewhat importunate embrace of her metropolis.

²⁶ Literature: *Necrocorinthia*, pp. 206-209 (fundamental); J. D. Beazley, *Etruscan Vase-painting*, Oxford, 1947, pp. 1, 11; G. Colonna, *Arch. Class.*, XIII, 1961, pp. 9-24. I consider the dots which appear between the hour-glass ornaments on an Etruscan olpe in Boston (*Necrocorinthia*, fig. 93) as the result of the disintegration of the dot rosette system which decorates the vase elsewhere; the painter's mental process must have been similar to that of our painter when he was decorating his pyxis. And the dot rosettes themselves on the Boston olpe are less compact than on genuine Corinthian works.

²⁷ G. Rodenwaldt, *Korkyra*, II, Berlin, 1939, p. 172. Payne (*Necrocorinthia*, p. 186) was unable to decide whether the vases he saw in the Corfu Museum were imported or local. Dunbabin reports (*Perachora*, II, p. 2 note 7) that in the opinion of Mme. Callipolitis at least one oinochoe in the Museum was a local imitation of the Protocorinthian. The olpai of the TR style from the Menekrates tomb now in the British Museum "are thought to be of local make" (L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece*, Oxford, 1961, p. 232).

²⁸ Callipolitis' conjectures from his excavations in Palaiopolis: *Πρακτικά*, 1958, p. 117; *Κερκυραϊκά Χρονικά*, VIII, 1960, pp. 34 ff., especially p. 43.

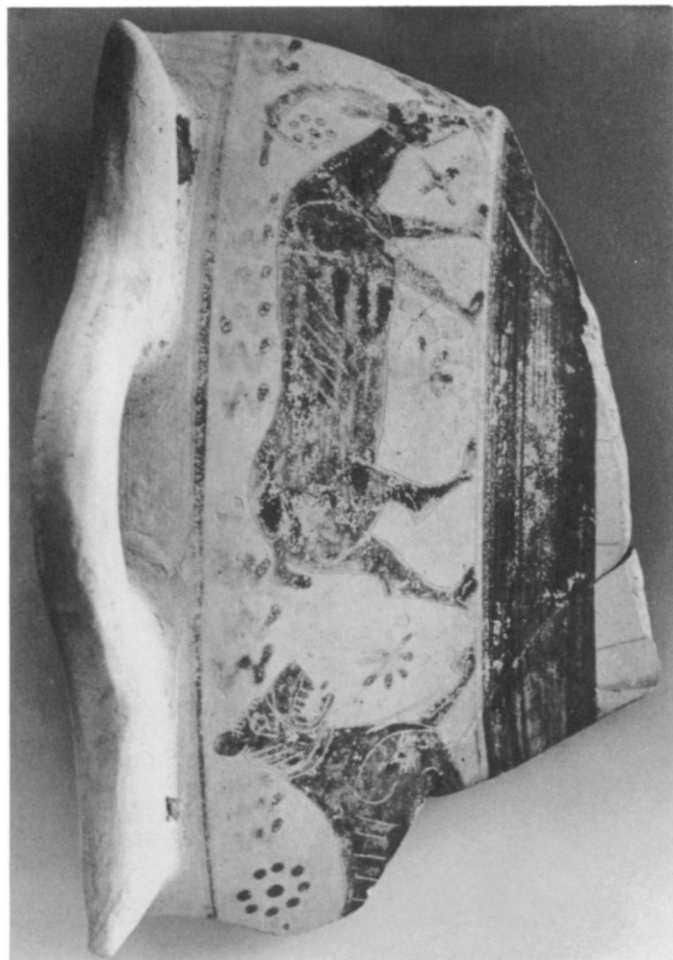
²⁹ One instance of a vessel of the characteristic Corcyraean clay occurring outside of Corfu is a large stand in Ithaca, Vathy Museum, from Aetos (*B.S.A.*, XLIII, 1948, pp. 44-49, no. 225, pl. 15, figs. 32-33). Its clay was, strangely enough, considered by Robertson (*ibid.*, p. 47) to be "unmistakeably Corinthian." This is surely an erroneous attribution; it is Miss Benton who drew my attention to the peculiar qualities of the clay of this vessel.

Now a final word about the closer relative date of our vase. I would be inclined to date it rather to the EC than to the TR period, in spite of the style of the animals and the field ornaments. This is not only because the ornamental band of dot rosettes and sigmas which has influenced the field decoration of our vase appears mostly on vases of the EC period, but mainly because in provincial works a gap of some years is necessarily to be assumed between them and their prototypes.³⁰ For the absolute date of our vase I would propose a date somewhere in the last two decades of the 7th century B.C.

GEORGE DONTAS

ATHENS

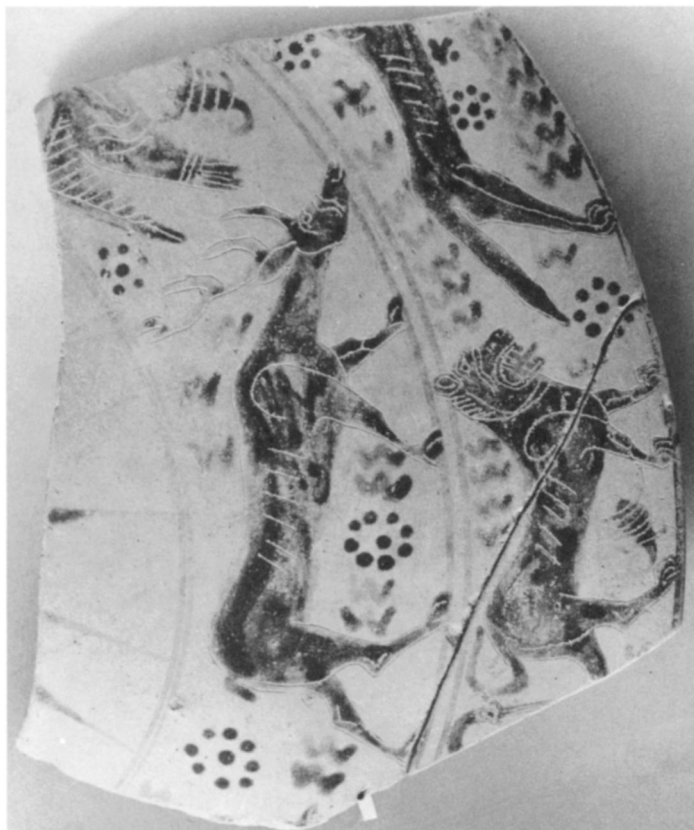
³⁰ This is also assumed by Miss Jeffery (*v. supra*) for the olpai from the Menekrates tomb: "[they] might . . . be as much as a generation later than their counterparts in Corinth."



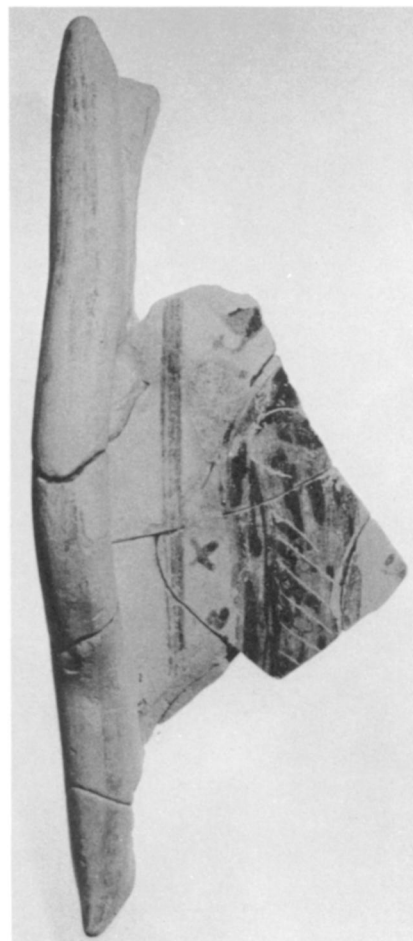
Fragment a (3:5)



Fragment c (3:4)



Fragment d (2:3)



Fragment b (3:5)

GEORGE DONTAS: LOCAL IMITATION OF CORINTHIAN VASES OF THE LATER SEVENTH
CENTURY B.C. FOUND IN CORFU