HUMAN FIGURES AND NARRATIVE IN LATER PROTOCORINTHIAN VASE PAINTING

(PLATES 37–41)

MUCH ATTENTION was given to the progression of styles in the Protocorinthian period by Knud Friis Johansen and Humfry Payne, whose work has recently been summarized by D. A. Amyx.[1] But while the large outlines now accepted emerged from their pioneer work, a refinement of relative chronology could not be attempted without a rigorous aesthetic evaluation of workshops on the basis of a philosophy of periodicity. That was offered in my *Earlier Corinthian Workshops*.[2] With a secure relative chronology in place, it became possible to turn to a study of the development of narrative representations. My principal conclusion is that all Protocorinthian narrative is specifically epic or mythological in content and at the beginning was structured on the simile principle, a concept that I will explain shortly. A kind of fragmentation of this principle occurs in Middle Protocorinthian IB, and the system apparently gives way altogether to a more direct kind of representation of the same content in Middle Protocorinthian II, although there is one glorious metamorphosis of it in the Late Protocorinthian Chigi olpe (see p. 173 below).

In a previous article,[3] I presented a discussion of the relation of Corinthian Late Geometric representations of human figures to those of Attic pottery of the same period and provided a check list of all known examples of the former from or in Corinth. The article listed Early Protocorinthian examples and introduced an analysis of the aryballos British Museum 1969, 12-15.1, by the Evelyn Painter.[4] The frieze of this vase is divided into two scenes by a large floral ornament under the handle and a similar one directly opposite on the front. One scene has a rider who can be identified as a *metabatis* (a horseman provided with two mounts side by side), followed by a hoplite. The other scene shows a ferocious lion (or hound) menacing a deer looking back nervously. My explanation of this assemblage is that the military figures are advancing formidably on a foe, while the animals illustrate a happening in the world of nature of the sort frequently referred to by Homer to suggest the ferocity of an attack and the corresponding danger to the combatants. The floral ornaments, in effect, function as would the word "like" in a literary context. This idea I call the simile principle, thereby referring to friezes which illustrate a Homeric simile in connection with a human situation that can be interpreted as an epic happening. This method is securely based on a representation by the Ajax Painter which is universally interpreted as the suicide of Ajax. Moreover, the recognition of certain riders as *metabatai* proved to be a key factor in the interpretation of several of the works of the same painter. Use of symmetry, repetition,

[1] Amyx 1988, pp. 364–395 and chapter on chronology.
[2] Benson 1989.
[3] Benson 1995.
[4] Benson 1989, p. 26.

FIG. 1. Oxford Ashmolean Museum G 146: MPC IA aryballos. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xxii: 1.

and particular positioning of the figures in the composition are among factors suggesting that identifiable scenes from the epic tradition (or from myths) are being portrayed.

There are no works of other painters exactly contemporary with the Middle Protocorinthian IA Ajax Painter which have such compositions. His presently isolated position is probably owing to the vagaries of excavation, for the ideas he proposed can be seen to be still influential in the Middle Protocorinthian IB period, albeit in somewhat disorderly fashion. In this sense I analyzed several aryballoi from the Nola Complex[5] and connected them with appropriate quotations from the *Iliad.*

MIDDLE PROTOCORINTHIAN IA (690–675 B.C.)

The governing principle of narration, most brilliantly exemplified by the Ajax Painter, is the presentation of epic (for the most part Homeric) themes in the form of similes. This is the case right into the Middle Protocorinthian IB stage. There are, however, a few representations of the (earlier) Middle Protocorinthian IA stage that do *not* illustrate that principle but instead proceed in a quite different way, namely, by showing a figure or figures in such a manner as to preclude any narrative interpretation, even though, if identifications are feasible, stories connected with the figure(s) may be known.

A prime example of this more static relationship to myth or fable is given by a well-known aryballos in Oxford (Fig. 1). At the center of the frieze, exactly opposite the handle, are two figures: one is a tall, lance-wielding, long-skirted, and helmeted(?) person with a round shield. The right arm is being grasped by a shorter figure in the *orans* position. To the right is yet another long-skirted figure of medium height, wearing a polos and holding aloft in the right hand what appears to be a pomegranate. This central group of three stationary, frontal figures is flanked by riders, who, however, are not antithetically placed, since both move to the right, as do also two walking sphinxes. The movement of the equestrians, or more likely the potentiality of swift movement, is emphasized by a bird in flight in front of the horse to the left of the main scene. Opposite that scene, under the handle, are the sphinxes. The absence of narrative intention, in fact the absence of any tension at all, in

[5] Benson 1989, p. 50.

this scene is deducible from the fact that the horsemen do not converge on the central group focally; moreover, they are simply horsemen, without any characteristics of *metabatai*, for they grasp their mounts at the neck with *both* hands. The sphinxes, being opposite the human shapes, may have been chosen as attributes of one of these figures. For, as I established in the case of the Ajax Painter, motifs under the handle do have a connection to the opposite figure(s) at the front of the frieze. It may be recalled here that the helmet on the statue of Athena by Pheidias is dominated by a sphinx figure.

For all these reasons I find the interpretation by Friis Johansen of the central figure as Athena and of the polos wearer as Aphrodite in a purely hieratic situation a more likely and satisfactory explanation than the alternative suggestion of Helen and the Dioskouroi.[6] In view of the identifications I have been able to make (Benson 1995) of various Middle Protocorinthian riders as *metabatai*, fitting into a specific story in a military function, I regard the identification of any two horsemen (of any kind) as the Dioskouroi as too facile, since that has immediate consequences for the identification of the associated figures. All that we can safely postulate in this scene is that two horsemen (who, of course, may well belong to the realm of myth) are parading past figures of deities.

In any case, another representation, that on a krateriskos from Samos, provides a more or less contemporary parallel: the frieze has a very similar central figure (Pl. 37:a) interpreted by Hans Walter[7] as probably Athena. Moreover, this figure is also associated with a sphinx, although it is rather small (but perhaps appropriately so in relation to a great goddess) and seems to be pawing her. Such a strange detail reminds us how little we really know about life in a remote age. The goddess, holding spear and shield and turned to the right in the old-fashioned frontal-breast position, appears under one handle of the vessel, while under the opposite handle a panther attacks a kneeling man between a grazing deer and a walking quadruped, perhaps intended to be a bull. But again the animals do not focalize the attack but appear to be merely passing by. Athena herself is isolated from all other figures by conspicuous filling ornaments (dot rosette and cross over petals), while the panther attack is not dramatically set off. It is plain that in the artist's mind the space under the handles called for accentuation; yet the figures thus placed do not interact in any discernible narrative situation. Nor do the figures between the goddess and the deer (opposite the bull: a centaur with branch and a griffin-protome cauldron) yield any discernible story. Walter also came to the conclusion that no story is involved, although he duly points out our small knowledge of the period. I take it that both the Oxford and Samos friezes are a little earlier than the work of the Ajax Painter and the Toulouse Workshop. The fact that the two pieces bring together, at least, the elements of dramatic narrative without actually providing it surely demonstrates the tendency in the Potters' Quarter at that time to try new ideas. The Toulouse Workshop[8] proceeded to monumentalize those elements (in isolation), while the Ajax Painter, following up the Evelyn Painter's prototype, turned those same elements into genuine narration.

[6] Friis Johansen 1923, pp. 121–123. Schefold (1966, p. 41) interprets the horsemen as Dioskouroi and the tiny figure touching the goddess as Helen.

[7] Walter 1959, pp. 58–59.

[8] Benson 1989, pp. 41–43.

MIDDLE PROTOCORINTHIAN IB (675–660 B.C.)

Various fragments[9] datable to the Middle Protocorinthian IA period show figures but are too incomplete to allow interpretation; they need not detain us from considering the situation in the following period. It has already been shown that some of the artists assigned to the Nola-Falkenhausen Workshop[10] continued, although in a less consequential way, the lead of the Ajax Painter.[11] Other artists in that workshop, however, chose one or the other of two differing directions. Some were satisfied with animal friezes (inclusive of sphinxes) alone, as in British Museum WT 199 (Nola 5), Warsaw NM 199247 (Falkenhausen 2), Bochum S 1064 (Falkenhausen 4), and Lacco Ameno 167820 (Falkenhausen 5). Others continued to show interest in human figures but did not organize them in such a way that one can recognize any specific concern with similes. An aryballos in Winterthur (Falkenhausen 1, Pl. 37:b) presents a rider confronting (and attacking?) a panther in a frieze with confronted rampant lions and then a tree between a bull and a lion. One cannot see a simile here nor in New York, M.M.A. 18.91 (Falkenhausen 3), with dueling hoplites (Pl. 37:c), bird, confronted sphinxes, and two confronted women (Pl. 37:d). Some narrative intent is possible but not demonstrable (this piece may already be Middle Protocorinthian II). An aryballos in Malibu (Nola 4) is an ambivalent case: a lion attacking one boar of a confronted pair is between two pairs of dueling hoplites.

There are other indications that the excitement of planning a specific epic scene embellished with epic similes had by this time begun to fade, perhaps owing to the intellectual effort involved. Thus, an aryballos in Naples[12] (Pl. 37:e, f), unassigned but probably still Middle Protocorinthian IB, shows the attack of a lion on a hero, quite literally echoing the central composition of a vase in Berlin by the Ajax Painter,[13] except that the orientation is reversed: the scene is appropriately under the handle, yet it is flanked on the left by heraldic goats and on the right by a walking sphinx facing a walking goat. Between the sphinxes and directly opposite the handle is a warrior carrying a spear horizontally. While the principal scene is surely in the mold of a heroic narrative simile, the remainder of the frieze seems rather wooden even by the most dynamic interpretation: the warrior on the front, shown standing striding with spear in hand, may be characterized by the scene on the back as having the courage of a hero who subdues a lion. Yet the presence of sphinxes with the warrior on the front raises a question. Is this (for us unidentifiable) warrior already dead or perhaps at least marked for death in combat? I am open to other interpretations of the figures on this aryballos.

Overlapping the ebbing of the poetic-dramatic stream represented by the Ajax Painter is quite another approach, much more mundane and direct, to the problem of representing heroic battles. A kind of transitional stage can be seen on the well-known but still unassigned aryballos from Lechaion[14] (Pl. 37:g–i). The really radical simplification of the narrative

[9] For example, Payne 1933, pl. 11:6; *Corinth* XV, iii, nos. 250, 253, and perhaps 266.

[10] Benson 1989, pp. 50–51.

[11] See Benson 1995, p. 355.

[12] Museo Nazionale (Santangelo): unpublished.

[13] Benson 1989, no. 2, p. 43.

[14] For my present views on the placement of this aryballos, which was first published by Eugene Vanderpool in "Newsletter from Greece," *AJA* 59, 1955, p. 225, pl. 68:10, see Benson 1989, p. 50.

method is reflected in the shoulder motif: a series of parallel horizontal zigzags that sweep away the customary floral ornamentation, with the figure of a naked ephebe on the handle (Pl. 37:h) instead of the conventional abstract design. Directly under the youth is a long-limbed man moving right pursuing a smaller figure, apparently a boy. Since none of the figures in this area of the composition are armed, we may speculate that an erotic chase is being depicted (Ganymede?). Yet the crossed legs of the civilian pursuer and a warrior moving left, who is pursuing and menacing a warrior (with a large Boiotian shield) looking back, certainly imply a connection of the two groups. Counterbalancing and stabilizing this pursuit, on the opposite side of the vase, is a confrontation of warriors (Pl. 37:g): on the left a man dressed as a barbarian(?), with a large round shield; on the right a warrior with a Boiotian shield decorated with white dots, as was that of his colleague in the opposite group.

One could read these interconnections as pursuit of a hoplite by a man with helmet, vest, and long spear (but how is the shield in this scene being supported in the air?) compared to (like) pursuit of a boy by a bearded man (a god?). In this case the first part of that equation should be playful rather than deadly serious. Also, the sparring figures on the other side would be indulging in some sort of make-believe, as in comedy (satyr play),[15] and this could provide an explanation for the bizarre costume and extensible arm of the figure I have called a barbarian. Note that a spear(?) not held but apparently leaning against his shield touches a similar spear or pole of his opponent to form a kind of triangle with something at its top. There are anomalous features here which make it hard to categorize this representation, but the presence of a simile seems to me to be beyond doubt.

Nevertheless, serious representations were not neglected. The earliest manifestation of the new method may be the so-called Death of Achilles scene on an aryballos from Perachora[16] (Pl. 38:a). The similarities in equipment of the warriors with those on the Lechaion vase may first be noted: type of shields and Corinthian helmets. As the scene has been fully described and plausibly identified by Dunbabin, it is unnecessary to repeat that here. What is important is that the Perachora artist broke entirely with the simile technique and advanced to the depiction of an epic scene which is almost certainly identifiable out of the action itself. In the context of my studies so far, the laboring by Dunbabin to define it as heroic provides a welcome proleptic endorsement of my results (see p. 175 below). Nevertheless, this vase has to be dated later than Dunbabin thought, that is, in succession to, rather than parallel with, the Ajax Painter. In fact, it is probably on the very border of Middle Protocorinthian II, when virtually all interest in the simile technique died out. Moreover, its placement of figures already has some elements of hoplite battle scenes.

There is another potentially important example of figural representation which is unfortunately in a poor state of preservation. I refer to the kyathos fragments from Vathy called by Martin Robertson "one of the best Protocorinthian vases existing."[17] His description of the main scene is somewhat more specific in some details than I could make out in the drawing I made of it (Pl. 38:b). For the record I state here what I could see:

[15] There may be a similar feature in the work of the Ajax Painter: Benson 1995, p. 351.

[16] *Perachora* II, no. 27 (drawing, pl. 57). Schefold (1966, p. 46, fig. 14 and p. 188, with further literature) does not hesitate to identify the scene as Paris slaying Achilles.

[17] Heurtley and Robertson 1948, p. 22. See Benson 1989, no. 1, p. 46 for further literature (note especially Seeberg 1971, p. 13 and no. 9).

At the right-hand side are two seated figures facing left. The beard, curls, and corpulent body of the better-preserved figure suggest an old man. Above him a bird streaks in the direction he is facing, toward an indistinguishable object above the other figure. Considerably beyond these figures is a large unidentifiable object with a tip like a fold hanging down (Robertson saw this as the back of another seated figure, and there certainly is, as he observed, space for something or someone else between this and the other seated figures). To the left is a large predatory bird swooping down on a crouching(?) rabbit, a tableau observed attentively by a standing doe.

On the other side of the kyathos are two felines, one standing and the other, a lion, attacking a bull. The latter motif taken with the bird-rabbit motif of the first side provides ample material for a simile describing the ferocity of attacking duelists. Yet where are they? Is the duel implied by the seated figures as participants in the telling of an epic story? Or are these motifs portents, as Robertson suggested? Obviously no secure conclusions are possible, but if either of these suggestions is on the right track, then we have before us a new degree of narrative sophistication in the Middle Protocorinthian IB period in that the components of the Homeric simile can be used in an evocative as well as in a direct way. This in itself would constitute proof that the idea of visual Homeric similes (the simile principle) was so well known that a talented artist could play with the idea.

Just as in the previous period, so also in the Middle Protocorinthian IB phase, we encounter some fragments[18] that have figures but still do not facilitate a decision as to whether narrative is involved. In one instance at least, inscriptions suggest that a direct kind of narrative was employed: the so-called Telestrophos pyxis[19] (Pl. 38:c). Unfortunately, the subject is too obscure for certain identification. Payne's dating of this was (suitably) indecisive, but if we depend on his rather bold reconstruction of the fragments,[20] the horses and above all the striding man go somewhat beyond similar figures in the Ajax Painter's most advanced work. I prefer therefore a date in Middle Protocorinthian IB.

One more important example of figural work remains to be discussed: an unusual kotyle in the Richmond (Virginia) Museum[21] (Pl. 38:f–i). Comparison with a late work of the Ajax Painter (Pl. 38:d) shows that the Virginia centaur (Pl. 38:i) has been elongated and refined; moreover, the archer pursuing the centaur has a somewhat trailing right leg like the hunters of the Nola Group[22] and the unarmed pursuer on the Lechaion aryballos (Pl. 37:h). The zigzags of the rim pattern (Pl. 38:f, h) pulsate like those on the shoulder of the Lechaion aryballos (Pl. 37:g, i) in stark contrast to the convoluted floral ornament ("whirligig") in the frieze (Pl. 38:g, h) that makes the curvilinear ornaments of the Hound Painter (Pl. 38:e) pale

[18] Here I should also like to mention *Perachora* II, nos. 397, 398, fragments of kotylai of uncertain date but most likely to be on the border of MPC IB–MPC II. These show women interacting with sphinxes. Dunbabin's suggestion that the scenes are more likely to have funerary than narrative significance seems appropriate. Such themes would by this interpretation follow in the wake of the earlier, severely consistent presentation of sphinx funerary iconography on such a vase as the magnificent MPC IA krater in the Patras Museum (N. Bozana-Kourou 1980, pp. 303–312).

[19] Cf. Amyx 1988, p. 30. Obviously the date in Benson 1953 (p. 69) is too early.

[20] Payne 1931, p. 98, fig. 30.

[21] Inv. no. 80.27. See Siegel 1981 for full documentation.

[22] Benson 1989, nos. 1 and 3, p. 50.

by comparison. Some ornaments under the frieze are rather bizarre. The Virginia artist has also partially eschewed black figure in favor of outline technique. In fact, everything about the decoration is attention getting (*Effekthascherei*).[23]

Under one handle (Pl. 38:i) is shown the pursuit of a supplicating centaur by an archer in short-sleeved, tightly fitting blouse and trunks; the human part of the centaur is totally naked with a long penis. Under the opposite handle (Pl. 38:g), however, is nothing more dramatic than a ram with reserved horn facing a similar ram, which occupies the main space of the reverse (Pl. 38:h); the two animals flank the above-mentioned floral whirligig. Opposite the ram facing left, on the obverse is shown a boar hunt (Pl. 38:f). The front legs of the beast have already collapsed, and his spear-bearing tormentor seems to be kneeling and touching the mane of the animal. Behind him an archer kneels while stringing an arrow, possibly to give the boar the *coup de grace.* Perhaps the painter, like some Attic colleagues, is celebrating the myth of Herakles and Nessos but associating it with a simile more suitable for Homeric scenes (boar slaying). The two rams and the floral ornament obviously serve to divide the two scenes with youths on one side of the cup; on the other side a subtle sense of division between the scenes is also maintained, despite their juxtaposition, by the opposing orientation of activity within them (Pl. 38:f). Nevertheless, the relatively large space taken up by the floral and rams suggests that the artist was looking for something to fill up a frieze that was too long for the stories he wished to present. The similar case of dilution of dramatic effect by heraldic goats on the Naples aryballos (p. 166 above) may be cited. Even though rams may suggest more tension than goats, that effect is nullified by the curious floral between them. In fact, this simply adds to the testimony found elsewhere that we have to do at this stage with the loosening of the simile technique as a narrative device.

Middle Protocorinthian II (660–650 B.C.) and Late Protocorinthian (650–640? B.C.)

Although the stylistic differences between these two periods are generally clear, in the context of narrative development it is more convenient to discuss them together, since the work of at least one of the leading practitioners, the Chigi Painter, spans the two periods and should be seen as a whole.

The Middle Protocorinthian II period is marked by a decisive, if not necessarily abrupt, change in the intentions of Corinthian vase painters. Although they did continue to produce scenes that can be called epic battle scenes, I cannot cite a single instance of the use of the simile technique, and only once, in the later work of the Chigi Painter, is there a recognizable, if quite subtle, reference to it. For the present, of course, this is an *argumentum ex silentio*, but the evidence is numerous and varied enough, in any case, to speak of a trend towards the direct method of presentation of battle scenes adumbrated in the foregoing period. Moreover, there was the introduction, particularly in the work of one master artist, the Chigi Painter, of a method of showing battle between hoplite phalanxes.[24] Yet there are clear enough

[23] This vase illustrates to perfection the sense of my original schema for the periodization of Protocorinthian painting: MPC IB is roughly the third and final stage of an obsession with curvilinearity that began in EPC and proceeded through MPC IA to elaborate refinement in MPC IB. The preciosity of the floral ornament in stark contrast with the geometric rim pattern signals a stylistic *cul de sac* calling for a total rethinking of style direction. That came in MPC II (see a detailed discussion of this problem in Benson 1989, pp. 35–41).

[24] Salmon (1977, pp. 85–92) reviews the evidence given in pottery representations.

indications that he did not separate such depictions from the epic milieu, which means that he was reinterpreting epic battles in terms of a new military strategy, or one at least hitherto disregarded by artists. Finally, there are direct representations of purely mythological (as opposed to epic) themes, particularly the Bellerophon motif (I leave out of account here, for the present, scenes with only animals and symbolic figures: griffins and sphinxes).

The principal impression from all this is one already familiar from previous studies but now confirmed by the new points of view I have been working out, *viz.*, that between the years of about 660 and 640 B.C. (by traditional chronological dead reckoning), there seems to have occurred a change in public consciousness, insofar as this is inferable from artistic products, which *could* have been associated with the inception of the Kypselid dynasty. In other words, Corinthian artistic culture was not interrupted but was gradually modified by several distinguished artists, who, on the one hand, demonstrated impulses towards a more solidified, structurally plausible form in vase shapes and figures[25] and, on the other hand, did this in terms of motifs not incompatible with the assumption of a political and perhaps social order being firmed up by a vigorous new dynasty. This is not a question of "proving" something from the artistic record but of noting a reasonable parallel between that record and historical records, such as they are. What is perhaps more important to note is the degree of chronological precision in this parallel, if one works consciously with a logical theory of periodization for Protocorinthian pottery.

The pictorial evidence can now be reviewed in the way suggested in the opening paragraph of this section. First, in dealing with a continuation of basic narrative themes, one must ask what scene has enough unusual nuances, in combination with stylistic advances, to count as new wine in old bottles. A case in point is the aryballos Syracuse Museum 12538[26] (Pl. 39:a, b), which I dated Middle Protocorinthian (my present Middle Protocorinthian II) in 1953.[27] I still believe that this is correct, despite earlier dating by Dunbabin and Robertson in their lists. The sphinxes and the shoulder ornaments have a compactness that goes beyond the Middle Protocorinthian I stage. In both these respects a comparison with similar features on an aryballos in Brindisi[28] supports this observation. But even more advanced is the consolidation of the theme. Under the handle is the principal subject (as often): a duel of spear-bearing warriors (Pl. 39:b). Opposite, on the obverse, is a single warrior with two spears isolated between crouching sphinxes. May he not be one of the participants in the duel, and in fact the loser, as might be indicated by the sphinxes? Moreover, a naked youth approaches the sphinxes from the left (the unfavorable side in Greek thought): a departed warrior as a shade?[29] As for the fact that the shield device of the warrior in question is

[25] Benson 1953, pp. 68–70; Benson 1989, pp. 39–40.

[26] Dunbabin and Robertson 1953, p. 176 (Aetos 4); Benson 1989, p. 51.

[27] Benson 1953, no. 1315, p. 135.

[28] Museo Provinciale Francesco Ribezzo, inv. no. 1609; the literature on this vase is given in Benson 1989, p. 50: Nola Complex, no. 2. I discussed and illustrated this representation in Benson 1995, pp. 358–359.

[29] Of this scene Dunbabin (*Perachora* II, p. 77) wrote: "The warrior between the sphinxes on *VS* pl. 26, 5 has probably no connection with them." One may ask, why not? while pointing out Dunbabin's own interpretation of sphinxes as having funerary significance (see note 18 above). Although internally consistent, my suggestions are necessarily speculative; but a certain support may be elicited from a remark by Colin MacLeod quoted by E. D. Francis (1990, p. 24): "It is less unfaithful to the object to make subjective comments than to abstain from

different from that of either of the dueling warriors, it can be recalled that shield devices were a relatively new motif at this time, so that we cannot know whether a specific symbolism attaches to abstract as opposed to animal motifs.

It would, in fact, be very useful, in the context of Homeric visual imagery, to trace the history of decoration on shields in Corinthian narrative scenes from earliest times on. Although I cannot undertake this here, I will offer a few remarks on some Protocorinthian examples. A very early, if not perhaps the earliest, example known is the shield of the "hoplite" on the Evelyn Painter's aryballos.[30] This vase also has the earliest known instance of the use of the simile principle. The decoration of the shield is basically crossed lines at right angles, the interstices being filled with stacked triangles. Does this reflect the beginning of decoration on actual shields? The next known representation is the shield of "Athena" on the Samos krateriskos (Pl. 37:a). It shows a static, symmetrical, birdlike figure (or two figures) with a surround of triangles pointing outward, thus both a transition from abstract to figural motifs and also more plausible as a personal device. Yet abstract motifs do turn up occasionally later. For about a generation following this there is a gap, until at the end of the Middle Protocorinthian IB period a painter in the Nola Complex (Pl. 37:c) drew a device with what appears to be an animal protome (but the poor preservation of the paint makes identification difficult).

At any rate, this serves as the beginning of a seemingly sudden and enormous interest in shield devices in the Middle Protocorinthian II period, yet another detail which seems to justify the demarcation I make of this period. What artists show at this time is a single animal head, placed so as to face the opponent in a duel or file. The most popular motif is a flying bird (see Pls. 39:b, e, g and 41:e), which provides a direct confirmation of the symbolic military value of birds postulated in my paper on the Ajax Painter. Even water birds are so used. While these also might be swift in actual flight, they may have some other or additional symbolic value. Even a rabbit occurs on an aryballos of the Chigi Painter[31] (Pl. 39:g) and can surely only suggest swiftness. The dynamic corollary to birds is given by the boukranion and the gorgoneion which absorb or freeze an opponent's momentum (Pl. 39:c). And there are even a few abstract motifs such as hatching and triangles on shields of the Chigi olpe (here perhaps an archaism?). The whirligig (Pl. 39:a) is normally more associated with mature Corinthian vases. Rather surprising is the rarity of the lion protome (one instance in Pl. 39:g), even though lion protomai occur on Middle Protocorinthian II vases and the lion occurred as a visual simile (Pl. 37:e).

There are at least two scenes that dispense with virtually all reminiscences even of symbolism and present a series of dueling warriors; also, like Syracuse Museum 12538 (Pl. 39:b), they show no significant echo of the main scene in the subordinate animal frieze. The first is an aryballos from Gela in the Syracuse Museum[32] (Pl. 39:c), rightly separated from the Chigi Painter by Amyx and by myself (by implication). On this vase the only

comment altogether." In short, I prefer to assume that the artist was using certain techniques that we can to some extent track (such as polar positioning of figures) to send an intelligible message to his contemporaries rather than stringing motifs together in a mindless way.

[30] See p. 163 above and Benson 1995, p. 380.

[31] Benson 1989, no. 2, p. 57.

[32] Amyx 1988, no. 4, p. 38.

agreement between the animals of the lower frieze and the figure groups of the main frieze is that both are four in number. The frieze consists of four separate dueling groups, all of which, however, are united into one unified composition by the crossing legs of adjacent (outer) warriors. The two inner groups have overlapping shields and a fallen warrior under the left pair, while the two outer groups have touching shields and a fallen warrior under the right pair. Thus, a careful symmetry is observed and an impression is established that seems to have more in common with warrior duels on Early and Middle Corinthian vases than with the earlier Protocorinthian vases we have been considering. This is yet another consideration in sharply demarcating the boundary between Middle Protocorinthian IB and Middle Protocorinthian II, as I am doing.

Another aryballos of this type in Paris[33] (Pl. 39:d), also unconvincingly assigned to the Chigi Painter, has merely a hound-and-hare chase, with a swan looking on, in the subordinate frieze. The composition is similar to that of the Syracuse vase from Gela but more complex. There is one apparently main group of four warriors, beginning under the handle and stretching toward the right. Two outer warriors, one standing spear carrier and a kneeling archer, face each other and flank an inner pair of spear fighters, whose shields touch. To the right of this assemblage is a dueling pair with touching shields and to the left another pair of warriors whose access to each other is somewhat impeded by a figure collapsed on its knees with head touching the ground. There are sparse filling ornaments around the figures and one symbolical touch: an eagle or hawk in the flying position between the right and the central groups. Yet this one symbol suffices to assure us that we still have to do with a heroic battle.

There is still a third aryballos with a scene similar to the ones described above: it is also in Paris[34] (Pl. 39:e, f) and now assigned to the Group of the Berlin Centauromachy. Just under the handle, to the right, a man moving left looks back as he flees from an opponent; their shields touch. Just to the left of the handle a pair of warriors with touching shields duel. The space opposite the handle is completely occupied by a fallen hero who widely separates another pair of duelers. Flanking these are two warriors engaged in extricating the corpse of the fallen man; this forces them to bend. The subordinate frieze has the by now conventional hound-and-hare chase. Just as in the Syracuse vase of this type, filling ornaments have been dispensed with.

The canopic form of the Paris vase argues for a funerary-heroic intention on the part of its decorator. This interpretation is underscored by the similar protome-aryballos in Taranto[35] (Pl. 40:a), which is decorated with a race of mounted ephebes together with the two umpires, the tripod-cauldron prize, and a sphinx. An even more elegant version of a similar theme (chariot races) appears on an aryballos in Syracuse[36] (Pl. 40:b), which Amyx has correctly separated from genuine attributions to the Head-in-Air Painter. This theme was taken up by the Chigi Painter as a frieze subsidiary to a battle frieze on a protome vase

[33] Amyx 1988, no. 3, p. 37; Benson 1989, no. 3, p. 52.
[34] Benson 1989, no. 2, p. 52.
[35] Benson 1989, no. 1a, p. 58.
[36] Amyx 1988, p. 44, D 5; Benson 1989, no. 1, p. 54 (Race Group).

in Berlin[37] (Pl. 40:c). The funerary-mythic associations here are so dense that we do not need inscriptions (which came later) to assure us that Corinthian painters lived completely immersed in the conceptions of the Homeric Age.

The second large feature of the Middle Protocorinthian II period (p. 169 above) is a major change made by the Chigi Painter from the principles of composition worked out by the painters just discussed: a way to represent the hoplite phalanx rather than duels or very small groups of fighters. As the stages involved in this have been fully described and discussed by John Salmon (see note 24 above), I shall omit a repetition of that here; my concern is not to what extent the Chigi Painter may have been interested in military tactics of his day but to what use he put their depiction. In this respect, if we notice his use of subsidiary friezes (see Pl. 40:c), there is no reason to suppose that he was breaking with the tradition of showing epic battles. He merely chose to present another conception of how they might have taken place. This is, above all, the case in his name piece[38] (Pl. 40:d). The battle scene (of hoplites) has been ousted from its former pride of place for, being in the handle zone, it is interrupted and curtailed by the handle itself, is subject to greater distortion from the curvature of the sides of the vase, and does not distinguish itself by being any taller than the lower frieze. By these standards the belly frieze can be regarded as the principal, or at least an equally important, frieze, and it is unified by offering a medley of themes, as it were, associated with the Trojan war. Thus, beginning under the right handle (Pl. 40:e), a key position always as we have seen, and spaced toward the right are figures labeled as representing the Judgment of Paris, the original motivation of the whole epic.

Spaced toward the left of the handle is a lion hunt in elaborate form; although not specifically connected to anything in its own frieze, it is possible that it applies to the hoplite phalanx shown just above it. Those warriors, being on the right, should be the victorious Greeks, especially since it is they whose blazons are depicted. To the left of this possible simile is a double sphinx, which could indicate the deadly effect of the battle on the brave souls of both sides who would be hurled to Hades. Beyond this is a groom leading the horses of a charioteer, followed by a company of mounted ephebes, depicted in the most traditional manner as *metabatai*. This is both a return to the epic convention of an earlier generation of artists and a means of contrasting a presumably still contemporary aristocratic military mode with the new hoplite mode.

Thus, as a kind of reprise of the Trojan drama narrative tradition in a subtle composition with endless connotations of Greekness for its contemporary viewers, the Chigi Painter created a masterpiece *sui generis* which could hardly have been excelled later on even by himself.

Besides the *metabatai* of the Chigi vase, there are several other instances of mounted ephebes (without any reference to their being *metabatai*) in the final period of Protocorinthian style, e.g., on a conical-oinochoe fragment from Perachora[39] (Pl. 41:a) which shows a rider followed by a flying bird and preceded by a cock and a sphinx. Again, there is the possibility

[37] Benson 1989, no. 2, p. 57. Notice also the racing on another protome vase by this painter: *ibid.*, no. 1 (Payne 1933, pl. 22:1).

[38] Benson 1989, no. 3, p. 57.

[39] *Perachora* II, no. 227; Dunbabin paid much attention to the cock. His dating is less plausible than that of Payne. The fragment must be at least on the border from MPC II to LPC (see *Corinth* XV, iii, no. 285, note 1).

that all this could be a reference to a heroic youth (the cock), who went to his death (the sphinx). Riders in procession occur on fragments from the Potters' Quarter,[40] and galloping riders(?) occur in a frieze with two men wrestling on an aryballos from the Kerameikos[41] (Pl. 41:b); this latter frieze is likely to be a reference to heroic funeral games in view of its findspot.

The rider motif leads over inevitably to the other major theme characteristic of the climactic phase of Protocorinthian painting, *viz.*, the depiction of mythic scenes, particularly that of Bellerophon attacking the Chimaira. In two very well known instances[42] (Pl. 41:c, d) that hero is shown astride his winged steed, brandishing a spear at the on-coming monster. The idea of the myth had already been experimented with in a general way on a Middle Protocorinthian IB vase in Boston[43] (Pl. 41:e), but whether or not this earlier version harbors a cryptic reference, there can be no doubt about the absolutely specific versions of the Middle Protocorinthian II period: in the circumstances it would be difficult to doubt that they at least reflect an exploitation of the myth by the Kypselids. It is also a satisfying culmination of the fascination with *Fabelwesen*, particularly sphinxes, manifested by the preceding generation of artists. Another example of culmination is the elaborate depiction of the myth of Herakles battling centaurs[44] (Pl. 41:f). Since there are many centaurs being killed or routed but no indication of when, where, or why this is taking place, we are free to take the depiction as a parallel to the Bellerophon story: a Doric hero routing his oafish enemies. If this interpretation is valid, it caps the previous use of centaurs in recognizable myths[45] or as isolated figures in an animal frieze.[46]

The depiction of an archer and an armed centaur is attested also for the Late Protocorinthian period in the Leiden Group;[47] this has been interpreted as the Pholos story. In the same group (no. 1) one finds two archers in combination with a large bird. The modest artistry of these works suggests that the direction of painters in the Potters' Quarter was changing from the high, probably politically sophisticated, level of the Middle Protocorinthian II flowering and turning to the routine use of certain popular motifs, flavored with purely conventional filling ornaments that were almost, if not quite, mandatory. Looking back we can see that the seeds of this attitude were being set as early as the later part of Middle Protocorinthian IB; but it was retarded, as it were, by the brilliant coterie of Middle Protocorinthian II artists who remained, on the whole, remarkably independent toward filling ornaments, either ignoring

[40] *Corinth* XV, iii, no. 285.

[41] Kübler 1934, col. 205, abb. 3; *Kerameikos* VI, i, p. 132, no. 78 and p. 152. One rider and part of the horse of what must have been a second rider are preserved. In Benson 1953 (no. 1069, p. 129), I classified this fragment as MPK (Middle Protocorinthian II), but the animal frieze looks later to me now.

[42] Respectively, Benson 1989, p. 55, Aigina Bellerophon Painter no. 1, and p. 59, Boston Chimaera Painter no. 3.

[43] I once accepted Robertson's placement of this piece, but see now Benson 1989, p. 46, under Ithaka Kyathos Group.

[44] Benson 1989, p. 51, Group of the Berlin Centauromachy no. 1.

[45] For example, in the work of the Ajax Painter; see Benson 1995, pp. 351–353.

[46] Payne 1933, pl. 16:3 and the kotyle in the Virginia Museum (note 21 above). Another notable example is the splendid but very fragmentary oinochoe in Athens from Taurus (a district of Athens): *Archaeology* 26, 1973, pp. 56–57 (in color); ΑρχΕφ 1975, pp. 122–149. Plate 45 is also in color.

[47] Benson 1989, no. 3, p. 67 (and pl. 23:5).

them altogether or using them with a certain flair (Pl. 41:d). The first period in which conformity in their use becomes the order of the day then follows.

Conclusions

Since I have presented a number of new ideas in the two articles dealing with Protocorinthian narrative (here and in Benson 1995), I feel it appropriate to make a personal comment. These articles are my swan song to four decades of researching ceramic representations from the Bronze Age to the Archaic period of Greece. I have always tried to work in the manner of the sciences whereby researchers describe and observe minutely in search of an underlying principle that can cause seemingly disparate or random materials to reveal a pattern (or patterns) behind which an intelligible form of development stands (for example, the botanical classification of Carl Linnaeus). My results obviously cannot be so compelling as those in the sciences sometimes are, but the method is accepted in a general way in ancient art, for example in the sorting out of artists' work on unsigned pieces of pottery. That I have done, of course, but here I am referring to investigating the intellectual structure of the early (protohistorical) periods of art mentioned above. Some scholars would dispute results obtained in this context on the grounds that the representations being investigated are merely naive expressions of simple, if not actually childlike, artisans reflecting their everyday experiences. I have no quarrel with that view. In the interpretation of cultural/spiritual matters, there is no "right" view but only a diversity of approaches, opinions, and, above all, convictions.

In that light I will formulate the principal results of these two studies. At the end of the first one I summarized the premises on which it was grounded as a basis for continued research. The first premise was that "the compositional programs of Protocorinthian figural vase painters are not desultory but have intellectual content"; the second was that "knowledge of the contents and poetic techniques of the Homeric and Hesiodic epics . . . (and possibly others) . . . was so all-pervasive . . . that their contents shaped the mentality and methods of visual artists to a degree not hitherto suspected"; and finally that "at least one very gifted Protocorinthian artist, the Ajax Painter, had the ability and impulse to transpose the latent dramatic stuff of the epic(s) into a kind of proto-tragic form."

The third of these premises has been found to have only the most limited application after the Ajax Painter himself, but in a quite different way the Chigi Painter has been shown to echo his achievements with equal genius. The first two premises have, I believe, proved in this second article to be a trustworthy guide through the complexities of the gradual "deconstruction" of the simile principle in the Middle Protocorinthian IB period and the introduction of the simple juxtaposition of epic paraphernalia, with representations of multiple duels and even of hoplite phalanxes, in the Middle Protocorinthian II period.

On this basis I feel justified in proposing that the subjects and purposes of narrative in early Corinth were no less directed to, and drawn from, the prevailing mythology by which Greek society lived than was the case with the Christian narratives of the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages. And, just as there, some contemporary customs, dress, military practices, etc., were reflected back into the narrative presentation. Unfortunately, the written documentation that is often available for the Christian representations is either nonexistent or minimal, even in later phases of Greek art, and so we cannot know why or how particular myths

or episodes of epic were chosen for representation. As regards the Middle Protocorinthian II period I have nevertheless tried to make some reasonable guesses (p. 175 above).

In an earlier study[48] of the content of narration in Attic Geometric art, I proposed an "ambiguity principle", namely, that the visual evidence was not sufficiently clear-cut to allow a decision as to whether the content of the scenes is mythological or, to put it bluntly, "daily life". But on the basis of conceptual considerations I had no doubt that the former simply absorbed the latter. The "ambiguity principle" can be left *in situ* for Geometric times, but the clear-cut visual evidence from Corinth, if my interpretations of it are valid, tends to isolate the "daily life" hypothesis as an impossibility.

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

Pl. 37:a. Samos Museum: MPC IA krateriskos. *AA* [*JdI* 74], 1959, Beilage 114:1.
Pl. 37:b. Winterthur priv. coll.: MPC IB aryballos. H. Bloesch, *Antike Kunst in Winterthur*, Winterthur 1962, pl. 3.
Pl. 37:c, d. New York, M.M.A. 18.91: MPC IB aryballos. Gift of Edward Robinson 1918. *BMMA* 8, 1919, fig. 3.
Pl. 37:e, f. Naples Museum (Santangelo): MPC IB aryballos, uninventoried. Photograph Benson.
Pl. 37:g–i. Corinth Museum CP 2096, from Lechaion: MPC IB aryballos. Photographs Agnes Stillwell.
Pl. 38:a. Athens N.M., from Perachora. MPC IB aryballos. *Perachora* II, no. 27, pl. 57.
Pl. 38:b. Ithaka Museum: MPC IB kyathos fragments. Drawing Benson.
Pl. 38:c. Aigina Museum: MPC IB pyxis fragments. Kraiker, *Aigina*, no. 267, pl. C.
Pl. 38:d. Boston, M.F.A.: MPC IA aryballos. Payne 1933, pl. 11:1 (detail).
Pl. 38:e. London, B. M. 60.4-4.18: MPC IB kotyle. Payne 1933, pl. 14 (detail).
Pl. 38:f–i. Richmond, Virginia, Museum of Fine Arts 80.27: MPC IB kotyle. Photographs Museum.
Pl. 39:a. Syracuse Museum 12538: MPC II aryballos. Payne 1931, pl. 1:5.
Pl. 39:b. Syracuse Museum 12538: MPC II aryballos. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xxvi:5.
Pl. 39:c. Syracuse Museum from Gela: MPC II aryballos. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xxxiv:2.
Pl. 39:d. Paris, Louvre CA 1831: MPC II aryballos. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xxx:lf.
Pl. 39:e, f. Paris, Louvre CA 931: MPC II aryballos. Payne 1933, pl. 22:3, 4.
Pl. 39:g. Berlin, Pergamon Museum VI.3773: MPC II aryballos. *JdI* 21, 1906, pl. 2.
Pl. 40:a. Taranto Museum 4757: MPC II aryballos. *ASA* 21/22, 1959/1960, p. 23, fig. 12:a.
Pl. 40:b. Syracuse Museum from Athenaion: MPC II aryballos. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xxxv:1.
Pl. 40:c. Berlin, Pergamon Museum VI.3773: MPC II aryballos. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xxxii:1c.
Pl. 40:d. Rome, Villa Giulia Museum 22697: LCP olpe. Photograph Museum.
Pl. 40:e. Rome, Villa Giulia Museum 22697: LPC olpe. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xl:1c.
Pl. 41:a. Athens, N.M.: MPC II conical-oinochoe fragment. Payne 1931, pl. 24: 2.
Pl. 41:b. Athens, Kerameikos Museum, inv. no. 78: MPC II kotyle fragment. *Kerameikos* VI, i, pl. 67.
Pl. 41:c. Aigina Museum: MPC II kotyle fragment. Kraiker, *Aigina*, pl. 18.
Pl. 41:d. Boston, M.F.A. 95.10: MPC II aryballos. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xxx:2b.
Pl. 41:e. Boston, M.F.A. 95.11: MPC IB aryballos. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xxvii:1b.
Pl. 41:f. Berlin, Pergamon Museum 2686: MPC II aryballos. Friis Johansen 1923, pl. xxx:1b.

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[48] Benson 1988, p. 71.

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a. Samos Museum: krateriskos

b. Winterthur, private collection

c, d. New York, M.M.A. 18.91

d.

e, f. Naples Museum (Santangelo)

f.

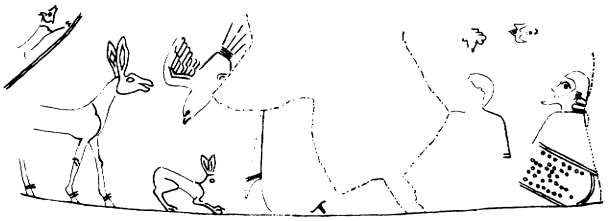
g.–i. Corinth Museum, from Lechaion

h.

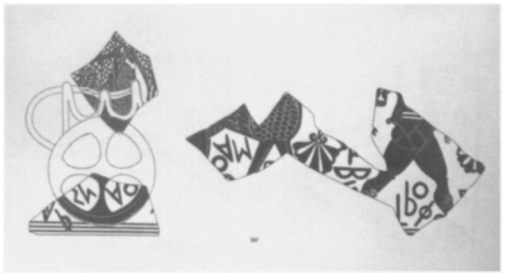
i.

PLATE 38

a. Athens, N.M.: aryballos from Perachora



b. Ithaka Museum: kyathos



c. Aigina Museum: pyxis

d. Boston, M.F.A.: aryballos

e. London, B.M. 60.4-4.18: kotyle

f.–i. Richmond, Virginia, Museum of Fine Arts 80.27

g.

h.

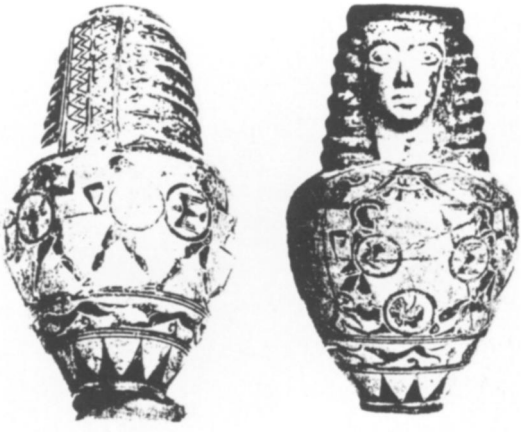
i.

a, b. Syracuse Museum 12538

b.

c. Syracuse Museum: aryballos from Gela

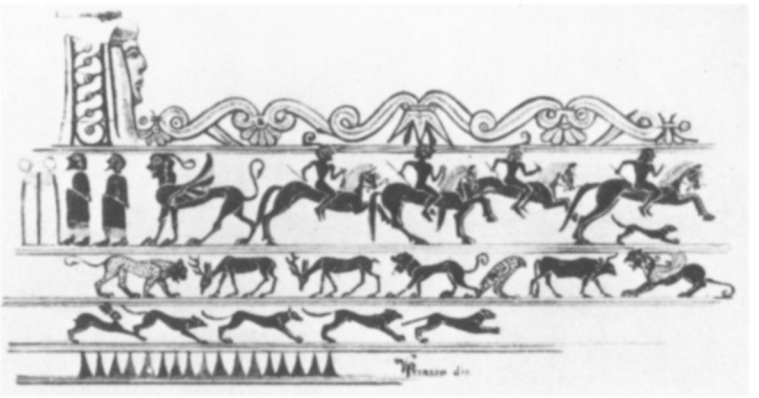
d. Paris, Louvre CA 1831: aryballos



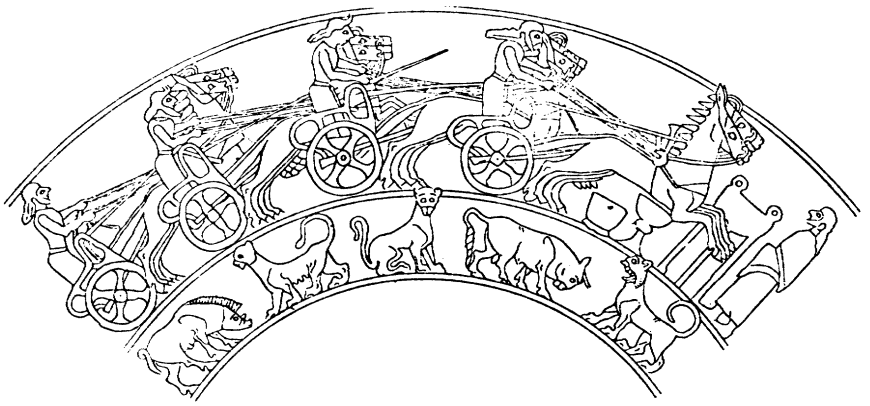
e, f. Paris, Louvre CA 931

g. Berlin, Pergamon Museum VI.3773: aryballos

PLATE 40



a. Taranto Museum 4757: aryballos



b. Syracuse Museum: aryballos from Athenaion

c. Berlin, Pergamon Museum VI.3773: aryballos

d. Rome, Villa Giulia Museum 22697

e. Rome, Villa Giulia Museum 22697: olpe

a. Athens, N.M.: conical oinochoe

b. Athens, Kerameikos Museum

c. Aigina Museum: kotyle

d. Boston, M.F.A. 95.10: aryballos

e. Boston, M.F.A. 95.11: aryballos

f. Berlin, Pergamon Museum 2686: aryballos