

APHRODITE ON A LADDER

(PLATES 17–19)

IN JULY OF 1981, in Byzantine levels above and west of what was soon to be identified as the Stoa Poikile, the excavators of the Athenian Agora found two joining fragments of a Classical votive relief (Pl. 17:a).¹ The relief is framed by simple moldings: taenia and ovolo at top and a plain band at the right side. In the pictorial field is preserved the head of a young woman carved in low relief. She gazes down to the left at a vessel raised in her right hand. Her head is covered by a short veil. Above and behind the veil are two rungs and the vertical supports of a ladder whose upper end disappears behind the frame. Although fragmentary and weathered, the relief provides a precious document for the study of Classical relief sculpture, and its unusual iconography gives a valuable clue to the identity of one of the deities worshiped in the area.

Most of the figure's profile is broken away, but the carefully carved lines of the lips and eye show that the sculptor took pains to give her delicate features. Her hair, where it appears below the veil, is mostly worn away. Along the side of her face appear waves of hair with a scalloped contour. No trace of her ear is preserved. It was either very small or hidden beneath her hair. Folds of the veil cross her head in bifurcating linear patterns of rounded ridges. Below her hair two folds fall down along her neck, while others, from the hidden right side of her head, blow out behind in sweeping curves. The edge of the cloth is preserved along the outer support of the ladder, but wear on this part of the relief surface has erased most traces of its linear pattern. Traces of thumb and fingers show that she grasped the vessel in her right hand firmly around the base. The vessel itself has a rather broad stem

¹ T. L. Shear, Jr., "The Athenian Agora: Excavations of 1980–1982," *Hesperia* 53, 1984, p. 38. Inv. no. S 3344. P.H. 0.22 m., p.W. 0.23 m., Th. 0.055 m. Lower left fragment found July 7, 1981 in 9th-century levels near a Byzantine wall west of the Stoa Poikile (J 3). Upper fragment found July 23, 1981 in 6th-century levels in fill above the western steps of the Stoa (J 3). The joining pieces preserve the upper right corner of the relief. Broken on left diagonally above and along side. Lower fragment broken diagonally below; upper fragment broken horizontally below. Back rough picked. Top and right sides smooth. Fine-grained white marble with many calcite crystals.

I thank Professor T. Leslie Shear, Jr., Director of the Agora Excavations, for permission to study and publish the relief. Professor Homer A. Thompson kindly granted permission to reproduce the two previously unpublished reliefs S 1491 and S 1944. Discussions with Professor Evelyn B. Harrison were especially helpful; I thank her for her time and interest.

Works frequently cited will be abbreviated as follows:

- Atallah = W. Atallah, *Adonis dans la littérature et l'art grecs*, Paris 1966
Furtwängler = A. Furtwängler, "Neue Denkmäler antiker Kunst. 4. Aphrodite Pandemos als Lichtgöttin," *SBMunich* 2, 1899
Hauser = F. Hauser, "Aristophanes und Vasenbilder," *ÖJh* 12, 1909, pp. 90–99
Knigge = U. Knigge, «'Ο ἀστὴρ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης», *AthMitt* 97, 1982, pp. 153–170
Metzger = H. Metzger, *Les représentations dans la céramique attique du IV^e siècle*, Paris 1951
Nicole = G. Nicole, *Meidias et le style fleuri dans la céramique attique*, Geneva 1908
Schefold = K. Schefold, *Untersuchungen zu den kertscher Vasen*, Berlin and Leipzig 1932
Weill = N. Weill, "Adôniazousai," *BCH* 90, 1966, pp. 664–674

and flaring foot; the wide bowl has a small handle attached at the rim. The shape most closely resembles late 5th-century thuribles or incense burners.²

From what remains, a late 5th-century date seems best for this piece. The simple molding along the top finds good parallels among works of that period, before architectural frames became popular for votive reliefs.³ The narrow fillet at the right side may have merged with the taenia which projects farther than the ovolo. This is an unusual feature that does not easily find parallels. It seems early and experimental.⁴

As for the small amount of drapery preserved on our figure, one can compare the cloak of the charioteer on the Elgin relief in the British Museum.⁵ Not only does one find the same round-edged folds that swing in sweeping patterns, but the hollows between the folds have irregular depths and widths. This drapery style finds its best parallels among figures from the Erechtheion frieze and the later stages of the Nike Parapet.⁶ The edges of the cloth do not have the crisp, brittle forms found on the veil of one of the Nymphs from the Xenokrateia relief or on Hegeso's veil on the famous stele in Athens.⁷ Both these monuments are usually dated around 400 B.C. Nor have the folds on the Agora relief the symmetrical curving patterns made clear by wide and regular intervening spaces as on the Dexileos monument and the public monument to the Corinthian war dead, both dated *ca.* 394 B.C.⁸ The face of the figure on the Agora relief finds its closest comparison in the figure of a young girl on a grave stele from the Kerameikos.⁹ The eyes are similarly placed and formed, the lips

² On the thurible see Sparkes and Talcott, *Athenian Agora*, XII, *Black and Plain Pottery*, Princeton 1970, pp. 182–183, nos. 1359–1363. According to Sparkes and Talcott, the “low variety” of the thurible belongs “in the main to the late fifth century.” They state that “generally the bowl has two small vertical handles” which were “provided with rings hanging free.” The bit of a handle on the relief is badly worn. In general the thurible on the relief resembles the vase paintings cited by Sparkes and Talcott in note 10, p. 182. On the Agora relief the lip of the thurible is straight and carefully smoothed. Painted flames may have indicated the glowing incense within.

³ The most recent discussion of framing of votive reliefs is in G. Neumann, *Probleme des griechischen Weihreliefs*, Tübingen 1979, pp. 48–51.

⁴ For the different types of frames used on late 5th-century reliefs see G. Waywell, “A Four-Horse Chariot Relief,” *BSA* 62, 1967, p. 22 and note 34.

In addition to the frame, one other feature of the Agora relief is relevant as a dating criterion. The background of the pictorial field is smooth with hardly any traces of tool marks. It is not, however, level but gently undulates, rising especially at the right edge behind the ladder. This detail, in addition to the quality of carving, assures us that we are dealing with a Classical, not classicizing piece.

⁵ British Museum 814: Waywell, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–26, pls. 1–3. Neumann, *op. cit.* (footnote 3 above), pp. 49, 65, pl. 27:b. E. G. Pemberton, “Dedications by Alkibiades and Thrasybulos,” *BSA* 76, 1981, pp. 310–313.

⁶ Erechtheion frieze: compare the mantle blown out on Acropolis 2825 (P. N. Boulter, *AntP* X, 1970, pls. 1, 2) and the drapery blowing back on Acropolis 1291 (*ibid.*, pl. 29:b and fig. 12). Nike Parapet: compare the folds over the wing of Acropolis 995 (R. Carpenter, *The Sculpture of the Nike Parapet*, Cambridge, Mass. 1929, pl. 15).

⁷ Xenokrateia relief: Athens N.M. 2756, I. N. Svoronos, *Das Athener Nationalmuseum*, Athens 1908–1937, pl. 181. Neumann, *op. cit.* (footnote 3 above), p. 49 and note 50 with previous bibliography. Hegeso stele: Athens N.M. 3624, H. Diepolder, *Die attischen Grabreliefs*, Berlin 1931, pl. 20; Lullies and Hirmer, *Griechische Plastik*, Munich 1979, pl. 182.

⁸ Dexileos Stele: Conze, *Die attischen Grabreliefs*, Berlin 1903–1922, no. 1158, pl. 248; Lullies and Hirmer, *op. cit.*, pl. 188. Public monument: Conze, *op. cit.*, no. 1157, pl. 24 and no. 1529, pl. 317. Brückner, *AthMitt* 35, 1910, pls. 11, 12.

⁹ B. Schlörb-Vierneisel, “Drei neue grabreliefs aus der heiligen Strasse,” *AthMitt* 83, 1968, pp. 89–101,

identically carved, and the chins short and small. The veil that covers the girl's head on the stele is carved with patterns so similar to those on the Agora relief that one could believe both were works by the same artist. Schlörb-Vierneisel dates the grave relief shortly before 410 on stylistic as well as ceramic evidence.¹⁰

E. G. Pemberton has compared motifs of the Elgin relief to works dated around 410 B.C.¹¹ The halo of folds around the charioteer's head recalls similar motifs used by the Meidias Painter.¹² There is something Meidian about the Agora relief, too, not only in the veil which finds good parallels among works by that painter, but in the general spirit of the relief.¹³ Even in its sadly mutilated state one can feel in our lady something of the quiet, ephemeral beauty that was one of the themes of the Meidias Painter's work.

The identity of the figure on the Agora relief is made certain by a series of vase paintings from the first half of the 4th century and a relief, now lost, once in the Museo Kircheriano (Pl. 19:c).¹⁴ All these depict Aphrodite on a ladder. Closest to the figure on the Agora relief are the Aphrodites on a hydria in the British Museum (Pl. 19:b) and on an aryballos in Berlin.¹⁵ That it is the goddess herself on the vases is confirmed by the Erotes who flutter beside her. At the foot of the ladder, on both examples, stands a woman holding up a thurible into which Aphrodite sprinkles incense.

The short veil is also indicative of Aphrodite. The goddess wears such a veil on a kylix painted by Makron in Berlin.¹⁶ Short veils often have bridal significance, and it is not far-fetched to imagine such a meaning lay behind the depiction of the goddess on the Agora relief.¹⁷ Perhaps it is a votive dedicated by a girl who had recently been married.¹⁸

pls. 33, 34. D. Ohly, "Kerameikos-Grabung, Tätigkeitsbericht, 1956-1961," *AA (JdI 80)*, 1965, p. 359, figs. 42, 43. *Δελτ* 17, 1961/62, *Χρονικά* [1963], pl. 18.

¹⁰ Schlörb-Vierneisel, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98.

¹¹ Pemberton, *op. cit.* (footnote 5 above), pp. 311-312.

¹² Compare Polydeukes' mantle on the hydria in the British Museum (E 224: *ARV*², p. 1313, no. 5; *Paralipomena*, p. 477) or that worn by Aphrodite on the hydria in Florence (inv. no. 81947: *ARV*², p. 1312, no. 2; *Paralipomena*, p. 477).

¹³ Compare the fluttering veil on the Nymph Leura on the Florence hydria (footnote 12 above), as well as the folds of the himation that blow back from Hippodameia's face on a neck-amphora in the manner of the Dinos Painter (Arezzo inv. no. 1460: *ARV*² p. 1157, no. 25; *Paralipomena*, p. 458).

¹⁴ Vases: Metzger, pp. 92-99, nos. 41-46. Relief: C. Watzinger, "Adonisfest," *Antike Plastik, Festschrift Amelung*, Berlin and Leipzig 1928, pp. 261-266; Atallah, pp. 193-195; *LIMC* I, i, Zurich and Munich 1981, p. 227, no. 50, *s.v.* Adonis (B. Servais-Soyez).

¹⁵ British Museum E 241: *ARV*², p. 1482, no. 1 (reproduced on Plate 19 courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum); Schefold, no. 181, pl. 19:2; Metzger, p. 93, no. 43, pl. 7:5; *LIMC* I, i, p. 228, no. 48b, pl. 170.

Berlin 3248: *ARV*², p. 1482, no. 5; Schefold, no. 290, ill. 32, pl. 19:1; Metzger, p. 93, no. 44, pl. 7:3; *LIMC* I, i, p. 227, no. 48.

¹⁶ F 2291: *ARV*², p. 459, no. 4; *Paralipomena*, p. 377; *CVA*, Berlin 2 [Germany 21], 84 [1013]:1 and 85 [1014]:4.

¹⁷ Good examples of wedding scenes where the bride wears the short, shoulder-length veil are a pelike by the Syleus Painter (Louvre G 226: *ARV*², p. 250, no. 15; *CVA*, Louvre 6 [France 6], 44 [273]:4-7, 9) and a pyxis by the Wedding Painter (Louvre L 55; *ARV*², p. 924, no. 33; *Paralipomena*, p. 431; Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen*, Munich 1923, pl. 230, fig. 580). Alkestis, certainly represented as a bride on the Eretria Painter's epinetron in Athens, wears a short, fringed veil (Athens N.M. 1629: *ARV*², p. 1250, no. 34; *Paralipomena*, p. 469; E. Simon and M. and A. Hirmer, *Die griechischen Vasen*, Munich 1976, pl. 216). Compare also the veil worn by Thetis on the Peleus Painter's name vase in Ferrara (inv. no. 2893: *ARV*², p.

The meaning of Aphrodite on a ladder involves a controversy more than a century old. In 1844 and 1846 Otto Jahn and Jean de Witte exchanged *lettres* in the *Annales*. Among other topics, they debated the significance of an early 4th-century lekythos in Karlsruhe.¹⁹ On that vase a woman wrapped only in her himation stands on the first rung of a ladder. From Eros she receives a broken amphora, turned upside down and bristling with small flecks. A similar broken amphora sits on the ground between them. To the right of Eros is a vase on a stand. Similar flecks and round objects appear above its lip. To either side of the central scene stand women with their hands raised in surprise. F. Creuzer had identified the scene as Aphrodite gathering apples.²⁰ According to his interpretation, her dress was disarrayed because she had been frightened from sleep by the news of the wounding of Adonis. The act of gathering apples thus related to the preparation for the Adonis festival. Jahn took opposition to Creuzer's interpretation and in the "*lettre à M. de Witte*" explained the scene as only "*une sorte d'idylle gracieuse, dans laquelle il ne faut chercher aucune allusion mythologique.*"²¹ In response, De Witte affirmed Creuzer's interpretation and identified the broken vases as the ostraka in which the gardens of Adonis were planted.²² Later, Furtwängler and Nicole sided with Jahn in their denial of any connection between the scene on the lekythos and the Adonis cult, but they did give a name to the goddess on the ladder: Aphrodite in the act of gathering incense.²³

In 1909, F. Hauser took up the Adonis cause again.²⁴ He confirmed that the vase offered by Eros to Aphrodite was indeed broken (Furtwängler had denied it) and suggested that the ladder's significance was to be found in the cult itself. We know from Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* that the ritual mourning for Adonis was practiced by women on the roofs of their houses.²⁵ A scholiast to this passage tells us that the ephemeral gardens of Adonis were carried up to the roofs. The practice is confirmed by the definition in the *Suda Lexicon* of the gardens as *μετέωροι κήποι*.²⁶ The ladder on the Karlsruhe lekythos was interpreted by Hauser as a reference to the act of carrying the budding ostraka to the roof. He went on to assemble a series of vases from the late 5th through the mid-4th centuries, all with women

1038, no. 1; *Paralipomena*, p. 443; Simon *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pls. 194, 195).

¹⁸ Veiling the head is not necessarily either Aphrodisian or bridal, but it can be as the examples cited above in footnotes 16 and 17 show. The short veil, however, may be exclusively bridal. In relief sculpture of the general period of the Agora relief we can compare Hegeso on the well-known stele in Athens (see footnote 7 above), one of the Nymphs on the Xenokrateia relief (see footnote 7 above), and Timarista on the grave stele in Rhodes (E. Pfuhl and H. Möbius, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs I*, Mainz 1977, pp. 22–23, no. 46, pl. 12). On all these examples the figure in question wears a short, shoulder-length veil. It is possible to interpret each in an Aphrodite/bridal context. The problem is an interesting one but too complex to investigate fully here.

¹⁹ O. Jahn, "Sur les représentations d'Adonis, lettre à M. J. de Witte," *AnnInst*, 1845, pp. 347–386. J. de Witte, "Sur les représentations d'Adonis, lettre à M. O. Jahn," *AnnInst*, 1845, pp. 387–418.

Lekythos Karlsruhe B 399: Metzger, p. 92, no. 41, pl. 7:2; *CVA*, Karlsruhe 1 [Germany 7], 27 [35]:1–4; Scheffold, p. 140, no. 4; *LIMC* I, i, p. 227, no. 47, pl. 169.

²⁰ F. Creuzer, *Auswahl unedirter griechischer Thongefässe*, Heidelberg 1839, p. 66.

²¹ Jahn, *op. cit.* (footnote 19 above), p. 385.

²² De Witte, *op. cit.* (footnote 19 above), pp. 413–414.

²³ FR II, Munich 1909, pp. 98–99. Nicole, pp. 149–150.

²⁴ Hauser.

²⁵ *Lysistrata*, 388–396.

²⁶ *Suda*, s.v. Ἀδώνειοι καρποί.

assembled around a ladder, which to him signified the activities of the cult of Adonis. Brückner had interpreted such a scene on a lebes gamikos in Athens as a representation of the Epaulia or Anakalypteria, the day after a wedding when the bride received her friends (Pl. 19:c).²⁷ Hauser reproached Brückner's analysis for ignoring the ladder. It was then necessary for Hauser to postulate a *hieros gamos* as part of the Adonis celebration, a wedding that would precede the mourning ritual.²⁸ Theokritos described a similar mythological celebration in his fifteenth idyll.

Metzger rejected the possibility of any depiction of the Adonis cult on the vases of the 5th century.²⁹ Among the 4th-century examples he saw two groups: (1) Karlsruhe and New York lekythoi, which depicted the scene of ascending to the roof with the Adonis gardens, and (2) later 4th-century vases with a more general depiction of the burning of incense. Metzger thought the second group represented a later stage in the Adonis ritual. A. Neppi Modona and W. Atallah more or less shared Metzger's scepticisms and interpretations.³⁰

Most recently, N. Weill published a fragment from Argos now in the Athens National Museum.³¹ This fragment, identified by Beazley as belonging to the Methyse Painter, shows a girl descending a ladder and is the earliest of such depictions. Weill went on to reinstate the 5th-century examples that Metzger had rejected as irrelevant to the Adonis cult.³² She therefore reconstructed a series of Adonis scenes running from the mid-5th to mid-4th century. By her own admission it is the ladder which constitutes the link among these depictions.³³

Ladders are utilitarian pieces of furniture, used to get from one place to another higher or to descend to a lower level. They appear in Greek art as a means of access to a beached ship.³⁴ Ladders are part of the siege scene on the reliefs from Trysa and probably were

²⁷ Athens N.M. 1454: *ARV*², p. 1178, no. 1; *Paralipomena*, p. 460; E. Brückner, "Athenische Hochzeitsgeschenke," *AthMitt* 32, 1907, pp. 96–97, pl. 5:2. On the celebration on the day after the wedding, see L. Deubner, "ΕΠΑΥΛΙΑ," *JdI* 15, 1900, pp. 144–154. On the ancient sources that sometimes refer to the same ceremony as the *ἀνακαλυπτῆρια*, see Deubner, *op. cit.*, pp. 146–151 and *Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft*, 4th ed., II, i, E. Gercke and E. Norclen, edd., Leipzig and Berlin 1932, p. 61 (E. Pernice).

²⁸ Hauser, p. 94. Although no ladder appears in it, Hauser also wished to identify the scene on the epinetron by the Eretria Painter as a depiction of the Adonis cult (see footnote 17 above). This interpretation met with some favor. It was repeated in Pfuhl, *op. cit.* (footnote 17 above), p. 570, by A. Neppi Modona, "ΑΔΩΝΙΑ e ΑΔΩΝΙΔΟΣ ΚΗΠΟΙ nelle raffigurazioni vascolari attiche," *RendPontAcc* 27, 1951–1954, pp. 183–184, and by Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechische Religion* I, 2nd ed., 1955, p. 728. B. Schweitzer (*Mythische Hochzeiten*, Heidelberg 1961, pp. 27–28) seems to have given the final blow to Hauser's theory. It has been rejected by all scholars studying the Adonis cult since then.

²⁹ Metzger, pp. 95–96.

³⁰ Neppi Modona, *op. cit.* (footnote 28 above), pp. 177–187. Atallah, pp. 188–193.

³¹ N.M. 19522: Weill. Cf. *Paralipomena*, p. 400.

³² In her collection of Adonis scenes for the LIMC, B. Servais-Soyez includes the Argos fragment and a fragment in the Louvre (see below, p. 64 and footnote 41) but omits the Athens lebes gamikos. She mentions a fragmentary hydria by the Meidias Painter in the Athens National Museum (N.M. 1179: *ARV*², p. 1312, no. 3; *Paralipomena*, p. 477) as a comparison to the Karlsruhe lekythos but does not define the relationship (LIMC I, i, p. 277, nos. 45–47). For the correct reconstruction of the Athens hydria see Nicole, pp. 132–143, pls. 4, 8:4. The drawing reproduced by Atallah, fig. 50, and by Weill, fig. 5, is incorrect.

³³ Weill, p. 671.

³⁴ E.g. a volute-krater in Ruvo, the name vase of the Talos Painter (no. 1501: *ARV*², p. 1338, no. 1; *Paralipomena*, p. 481) and the Ficoroni Cista: Pfuhl, *op. cit.* (footnote 17 above), fig. 628.

depicted on the shield of Athena Parthenos.³⁵ It is likely that they played a part in some of the influential monumental wall paintings.³⁶ The simplest meaning of the ladder is as a means of ascent or descent. Given this definition, let us look back at the 5th-century vases accepted by Hauser and Weill as depictions of the hieros gamos of the Adonis cult.

The most complete representation of the hieros gamos is on the lebes gamikos in the Athens National Museum (Pl. 19:a).³⁷ The main scene shows a woman seated on the lap of Aphrodite. The goddess is identified by Eros who flutters over her shoulders, proffering two wreaths, one to Aphrodite, one to the perplexed-looking girl on her lap. The goddess places a crown on the girl's head. To the right are attendant women and the lower supports and rungs of a ladder which another girl ascends. Further right, under the handle, is preserved a woman seated on a klismos. Only her lower half is preserved. She is attended by a figure who stands behind a lebes gamikos. The lid of this vessel is being lifted, probably by the attendant. A winged figure, Nike, flies toward these two women and holds a box and a fillet. On the other side of the main scene, six women come forward bearing various gifts.

The original interpretation of this scene as an Epaulia is the best.³⁸ The bride, unveiled for the first time, is honored by Aphrodite and Eros. After the wedding night she is worthy of the crown. The lebes gamikos whose lid is removed is one symbol of her new state. Perhaps it is the groom's mother who sits before this vessel and accepts the bride into her household.³⁹ Nike approaches the open vessel as a final blessing. Behind Aphrodite the bride's friends come forward with their gifts.

What about the ladder? The thalamos, or bridal chamber, was located in the women's quarters on the second floor in more affluent homes.⁴⁰ The presence of the ladder with its attendants, like the uncovered lebes gamikos, recalls the events of the previous night, when the then maiden ascended the ladder and her state in life was forever changed. At least this explanation accounts for the ladder in the broader context rather than imposing a cultic significance for which there is no other reference.

Two other late 5th-century scenes can be read in the same way. On a fragment in the Louvre the bride has already received her crown.⁴¹ Eros hovers before the left shoulder of an adjacent figure. This woman must be Aphrodite. She sits on a diphros and rests her left arm

³⁵ Trysa reliefs: W. A. P. Childs, *The City Reliefs of Lycia*, Princeton 1978, pl. 5:1. Parthenos shield: E. B. Harrison, "Motifs of the City-Seige on the Shield of Athena Parthenos," *AJA* 85, 1981, pp. 298–299.

³⁶ In the Knidian Lesche at Delphi Polygnotos painted Echoiax coming down the gangplank (*ἀποβάθρα*). The vase paintings suggest that this was a ladder rather than a modern gangplank (Pausanias, x.25.2).

³⁷ See p. 63 and footnote 27 above.

³⁸ Brückner, *loc. cit.* (footnote 27 above); Pernice, *loc. cit.* (footnote 27 above).

³⁹ So Brückner, *op. cit.* (footnote 27 above), p. 97. Beazley identified the woman seated before the lebes gamikos as a second representation of the bride. The identification of the figure as the mother-in-law is plausible given her important role in the bridal ceremony. She definitely met the bridal procession at the door of her house, and she may have led the bride up to the thalamos. See scholiast to Euripides' *Phoinissai*, 344; W. Erdmann, *Die Ehe im alten Griechenland*, Munich 1934, p. 258.

⁴⁰ For the women's quarters above connected by a ladder to the men's quarters below see Lysias, I, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*, 9.

⁴¹ Louvre CA 1679 by the Painter of Athens 1454: *ARV*², p. 1179, no. 3; Nicole, pp. 144–149, pls. 8:2 and 9; Hauser, pp. 93–94, fig. 55; L. Deubner, *Attische Feste*, Berlin 1932, p. 221, pl. 25:2; Metzger, p. 95; Weill, pp. 668–670; *LIMC* I, i, p. 227, no. 46, pl. 169.

in the bride's lap. The bride sits on a klismos, indicative of her new at-home status. An attendant behind holds a chest and a box, gifts for the Epaulia. A crowned attendant ascends the ladder while looking back to the bride. She holds a dish of grapes.⁴² Another Eros hovers behind the attendant, his eyes fixed on the room above. A third attendant, also looking up, steadies the ladder.

What is the significance of the plate with three bunches of grapes? One of the principal and most important events of the marriage ceremony was the bride's eating in her new home.⁴³ Whether the meal took place before the bride and groom consummated their relationship or later in the thalamos, we do not know. The dish of grapes on the Louvre fragment probably refers to this significant event.⁴⁴ Temporally the food was eaten the night before, not on the day of the Epaulia. There seems to be a kind of synchronism of events depicted here, where the ladder and fruit can be taken as references to the wedding night.

The descending girl on the fragment from Argos is probably appearing for the first time after the wedding night.⁴⁵ Her rich chiton with an overfall so long that it is looped up over her belt is appropriate for a bride.⁴⁶ The himation is carefully rendered in stacked folds behind her neck, which suggests that she has only just unveiled herself. Indeed her hand lifting the himation seems to be engaged in the process of uncovering. The box behind her is one of the post-wedding presents. The plate of fruit indicates the economic significance of her change of residence as well as the sensuous aspect of the previous night's events.⁴⁷

⁴² The plate of grapes has played an inordinately large role in determining the date of the Adonis festival. Deubner connected the grapes to a passage in Theokritos which suggests that fruit of all kinds was offered to the dying god (Deubner, *op. cit.*). These fruits suggested to Deubner a date in the early autumn. In his review of Deubner's book Nock defended a springtime celebration (*Gnomon* 10, 1934, pp. 289–295). He was sceptical about the meaning of the Louvre fragment: "Apart from the formal analogy of the ladder and the presence of the winged Eros, no one would think of associating this vase with the Adonia: the connection is very dubious, and if it exists we may regard the detail as imaginative; such representations of cult acts were never photographic" (*ibid.*, p. 291). Weill (pp. 675–698) takes great pains to reinstate the grapes as part of the Adonis cult, but argues for a midsummer date for the festival. It would take us too far afield to go into this problem thoroughly. As for the Louvre fragment, see below.

⁴³ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 279 F (*Rom. Quaest.*, 65); *Moralia*, 138 D (*Gam. Parang.*, 1); *Solon*, 20. These passages refer to Solon's decree that the bride eat a quince in her husband's home. Is it a quince that lies in the basket before the bride on the Argos fragment (footnote 31 above)? On a loutrophoros by Polygnotos in Toronto the bride is led home by the groom whose mother greets the couple, indicating that the procession has already reached the groom's house. The bride is unveiled and carries a fruit in her right hand (Toronto C 935: *ARV*², p. 1031, no. 51; D. M. Robinson and C. G. Harcum, *A Catalogue of the Greek Vases in the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology* II, Toronto 1930, no. 635, pl. CVII).

⁴⁴ Although there is no specific mention of grapes as part of the wedding-night ceremony, this fruit did have erotic significance and would be appropriate for the occasion. See a red-figured kylix by the Euaion Painter in Richmond (Virginia) on which grapes are exchanged as a love gift by a man and a woman (inv. no. 62-1-4, *ARV*², p. 895, no. 101; *Paralipomena*, p. 419; *Ancient Art in the Virginia Museum*, Richmond, Va. 1973, no. 112, p. 96).

⁴⁵ Weill.

⁴⁶ See the bride from the west pediment at Olympia (B. Ashmole and N. Yalouris, *Olympia*, London 1967, pls. 98, 101, 105). She wears a long, rich chiton and a mantle. Also the bride on the loutrophoros in Toronto (footnote 43 above) wears a chiton with a deep kolpos looped over an elaborate belt.

⁴⁷ See footnote 43 above. Whether the fruit in the dish is a quince or an apple, it certainly must have suggested the world of Aphrodite. See B. O. Foster, "Notes on the Symbolism of the Apple in Classical Antiquity," *HSCP* 10, 1899, pp. 39–55.

This description and interpretation of the fragmentary wedding vases is necessary to dissociate them from the Adonis scenes. On these examples the ladder is not a reference to a cult practice but rather a physical part of the wedding ceremony. Any Athenian bride looking at these vases would have immediately understood the implication.

More and more evidence is accumulating that the ladder could also have a symbolic meaning. Ursula Knigge has recently interpreted the ladders on a 4th-century silver disk in the Kerameikos, a votive relief from Sparta, and gold pendants from Thessaly and Delos as an “allegory for the rising and setting stars.”⁴⁸ Pindar refers to the ladder by which Themis ascended from the Ocean to Olympos and in another context to the *θοῶν κλίμακα οὐρανόν ἐς αἰπύην*.⁴⁹ The image of the heavenly ladder is vouched for in Egyptian texts and seems close to Near Eastern sensibility.⁵⁰

When Aphrodite descends such a ladder it is a clear reference to her aspect as Ourania. This is most strikingly illustrated by the votive relief once in the Museo Kircheriano, but now lost (Pl. 19:c). In 1928 C. Watzinger published a photograph of the relief and described the representation.⁵¹ Aphrodite with her head veiled descends a ladder that runs from the upper left corner of the relief. She holds in her left hand a vessel, much like the thurible of the Agora relief. Eros clings to her side and holds in his hand what Watzinger described as a great sea shell. Beside the deities, in the upper right corner of the relief, stands a mother-goat nursing her kid. The sickle-shaped moon is above them.⁵² Below the ladder, in the

⁴⁸ Knigge, pp. 159–160. Silver medallion: Knigge, pl. 31. Votive relief from Sparta: Furtwängler, pp. 598–599; *EA*, no. 1314; Knigge, pl. 33:1. Gold pendants from Thessaly and Delos: Stella G. Miller, *Two Groups of Thessalian Gold*, *University of California Publications, Classical Studies* 18, Berkeley 1979, pls. 22, 23.

⁴⁹ Pindar, frag. 30; frag. 162.

⁵⁰ F. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion*, New York 1912, reprinted 1960, p. 101; A. B. Cook, *Zeus II*, Cambridge 1925, pp. 121–140. Cook quotes extensively from E. A. Wallis Budge who cites tomb texts “inscribed upon the walls of the corridors and chambers of the pyramids of Unas, Pepi, and other early kings.” Osiris himself made use of the ladder between heaven and earth. The ladder’s guardians were Horus and either Rā or Set. Twice is the heavenly ladder mentioned in the Theban Book of the Dead. For us the most famous heavenly ladder is the Biblical one in Jacob’s dream. Babylonian ziggurats must have served a similar function as an access to the god. At least Herodotos’ interpretation of the one in Babylon implies that he thought so (I.181ff.).

⁵¹ Watzinger, *op. cit.* (footnote 14 above), p. 266, dated the relief to the early 4th century B.C. and suggested a South Italian origin. Of course it is difficult to judge from Watzinger’s photograph alone, but stylistically the folds of drapery and the poses of the figures compare better to late Hellenistic classicizing monuments than to 4th-century votive reliefs. Compare for example one of the dancing figures from the north frieze of the temple of Hekate at Lagina (A. Schober, *Der Fries des Hekateions von Lagina*, Baden bei Wien 1933, pl. 11). Likewise the number and density of symbolic objects filling the pictorial field is something one would expect in the Hellenistic period, rather than in the Classical.

⁵² Is there astral symbolism in the she-goat suckling her kid? Watzinger explained the group as a votive dedication to Aphrodite Ourania and suggested the image of the nourishing goddess as a goat derived from the Cypriot Aphrodite. The story that Amaltheia, the goat who nourished the infant Zeus in the Cretan cave, was turned into a star, the *οὐρανία αἴξ*, is handled down by Musaios (*Eratosthenis catasterismorum reliquiae*, 100.13, C. Robert, ed.). O. Rossbach, *Griechische Antiken des Archäologischen Museums in Breslau*, Breslau 1891, 33f., note 1, first suggested the identification of the *οὐρανία αἴξ* with the goat who carries Aphrodite through the sky. See also Furtwängler, pp. 599–600 and Knigge, p. 154 and note 3. The *οὐρανία αἴξ* and the *ἔριφοι*, her two kids, were known as stars that forecast storms at sea and were therefore of particular interest to sailors (Aratus, *Phainomena*, 157). For a further significance of the nourishing she-goat see below, footnote 63.

lower left corner, the relief is mostly broken away. The head and right wing of a second Eros appear, and behind him is a curved object that Watzinger said was the headrest of a *kline*.⁵³ The moon in the upper right corner and the “kline” in the lower left show that the ladder on this relief bridges the area between heaven and earth.

Such astral and terrestrial symbolism is missing on the two vase paintings that most closely resemble the Agora relief. On these examples we do seem to see some ceremony of a cult performed. On the hydria in the British Museum, Aphrodite sprinkles incense into a thurible held up by a woman standing at the foot of the ladder (Pl. 19:b).⁵⁴ An aulos player behind provides music for three mantle dancers and a krotalist dancer. Eros flutters between the two at the right. A small Pan rushes into the scene at the upper left.⁵⁵ The scene on the lekythos in Berlin shows Aphrodite and the woman with the thurible in attitudes identical to those on the British Museum hydria.⁵⁶ Eros flies above the thurible and a large thymiaterrion. To the right of the ladder a woman seated on a diphros plays the aulos. Behind her is a swan, sometimes an attribute of Aphrodite Ourania.⁵⁷ Above stands a woman who strikes a large tympanum. Behind her are a mantle dancer, in pose and drapery identical to the dancer at left on the British Museum hydria, and, above and behind her, a krotalist dancer.

⁵³ Although the photograph is unclear, I doubt Watzinger’s *kline*. To me what the curved object resembles most of all is the prow of a ship, like the one depicted on the grave stele of Antipatros in Athens, N.M. 1488, Conze, *op. cit.* (footnote 8 above), no. 1175, pl. 258. The sea shell in the left hand of the Eros above adds to the imagery and could indicate that Aphrodite Ourania on the Kircheriano relief is depicted in her aspect of Euploia, the bringer of victory at sea. On the other hand, I know of no parallels for such an interpretation, and indeed my ship’s prow is unusually small even in comparison to the goddess’ height. If the object is the headrest or fulcrum to a *kline* (Watzinger thought he could detect a bolster), Eros’ shell might have sexual connotations. We shall probably never know the exact meaning of the Kircheriano relief.

⁵⁴ See footnote 15 above. Neppi Modona calls the vase held by the woman at the foot of the ladder a *phiale*, but the clearly depicted handles indicate the vessel is a thurible. Neppi Modona, *op. cit.* (footnote 28 above), p. 182.

⁵⁵ Pan’s presence on the hydria has been explained as a reference to the ritual’s rural setting: Metzger, pp. 98–99. Walter (*Pans Wiederkehr*, Munich 1980, pp. 78–79) sees no particular significance in Pan’s appearance here other than that, in the 4th-century, he turns up more and more frequently in scenes of everyday life, especially those that depict women’s activities. A bronze mirror cover, once in the Gréau Collection, now lost, depicts the goat-legged god carrying a goddess on his back in the *ephedrismos* scheme (W. Züchner, *Griechische Klappspiegel*, *JdI-EH* 14, Berlin 1942, p. 10, no. KS 8). A great star is behind the goddess’ head, and Eros or Phosphoros bearing a torch precedes the group. The scene was interpreted as Pan’s love for Selene, until Furtwängler pointed out the inappropriateness of the *ephedrismos* scheme for a “Liebesverhältnis” (p. 603). The image reminds one of the startled Pans who surround Aphrodite at her birth on some vase paintings (C. Bérard, *Anodoi, Essai sur l’imagérie des passages chthoniens*, Neuchâtel 1974, pp. 153–160; see, e.g., a *pelike* in Rhodes: *ibid.*, pl. 18, fig. 63). The eschatological implications of the *ephedrismos* scheme may be significant: see C. Picard, *Manuel d’archéologie grecque, La sculpture* II, Paris 1939, p. 716; Metzger, pp. 200–202. Without a ladder it is impossible to get to heaven on foot. Divine or mortal beings make celestial journeys on the back of some animal (Cumont, *op. cit.* [footnote 50 above], pp. 101–106). On the mirror cover Pan, the terrestrial being par excellence, may have indicated the “rising” from the earth of the heavenly Aphrodite. The goat-legged god does seem to have both feet on the ground, as Züchner pointed out. On the mirror cover, as on the Kircheriano relief, the celestial and terrestrial worlds are brought into broad contrast.

⁵⁶ See footnote 15 above.

⁵⁷ That the bird is a swan and not a goose seems certain because of its long, curving neck. For Aphrodite and the swan see Knigge, p. 161. Aphrodite riding a swan is epigraphically identified as Ourania on a votive stele in the Hermitage (inv. no. 1876.102: E. Simon, *Die Geburt der Aphrodite*, Berlin 1959, ill. 19).

On the other side, behind the woman with a thurible are a figure who seems to hold a necklace and another, seated beside a spindly, fruit-bearing tree. Another small Eros plays at her feet. On the vases that show Eros descending the ladder, some of these same figures appear along with variations.⁵⁸

We are in the presence of a women's cult. The activities include music, dancing, and the burning of incense. Metzger's suggestion that this ritual represents the celebration after the mourning for Adonis seems to have been generally accepted.⁵⁹ Again it is the ladder that has made this interpretation seem plausible. If we read the ladder as an attribute of Aphrodite Ourania, rather than as the access to the roof for the mourning of Adonis, then nothing else in the image suggests the Adonia.⁶⁰ Our sources tell us Ourania was worshipped by hetairai and by married women as well.⁶¹ These vases must represent some activity of that cult, perhaps the dancing and burning of incense used to evoke the deity's presence.

Knigge has presented a series of representations of Aphrodite from the late 5th and 4th centuries and suggested that the iconographic distinction between Aphrodite Ourania and Aphrodite Pandemos divides along lines where the former is the goddess of the morning star and rides a swan, while the latter governs the evening star and crosses the heavens on the back of a goat.⁶² If we look back to the Kircheriano relief we see that female goats were associated iconographically with Ourania, as the sources would have us believe.⁶³ It is hard

⁵⁸ 1. Lekythos, Hermitage 928: Metzger, p. 93, no. 45, pl. 7:4; Schefold, no. 292, fig. 43, pl. 18:1, 2, dated 360–350 B.C.

2. Lekythos, British Museum E 721: Metzger, p. 94, no. 46; Schefold, no. 298; Nicole, pl. 8:1; Atallah, p. 187, fig. 47.

3. Athens, Acropolis Museum, no. 1960-NAK 222: Brouskari, *The Acropolis Museum*, Athens 1974, p. 119, figs. 230, 231.

⁵⁹ Metzger, pp. 96–99; Atallah, p. 191; Brouskari, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁶⁰ Hauser and others assumed the burning of incense played a part in the Adonis ritual since the god's mythological mother was Smyrna or Myrrha, a girl metamorphosed into the incense tree (Hauser, p. 97; Ovid, *met.* x.435–518; Hyginus, *fab.* 58; Apollodoros, III.14.4). Although there is no specific literary reference to the burning of incense in the Adonis cult, the possibility can not be ruled out and is indeed likely. On the other hand incense as an offering to Aphrodite can be easily verified (H. von Fritze, *Die Rauchopfer bei den Griechen*, Berlin 1894, pp. 29–30). On a mid-4th-century hydria in the Metropolitan Museum, Aphrodite sprinkles incense into a thurible placed on top of an altar (M.M.A. 26.60.75: Schefold, no. 191, pl. 11:1). On one side of the Ludovisi throne a veiled bride sprinkles incense into a thymiaterion. E. Simon has argued that the main scene on the throne represents the birth of Aphrodite Ourania (*op. cit.* [footnote 57 above]).

⁶¹ For Aphrodite Ourania worshiped by hetairai and married women see Simon, *op. cit.* (footnote 57 above), pp. 24–26. Also F. Muthmann, *Mutter und Quelle*, Mainz 1975, pp. 189–191.

⁶² Knigge, pp. 164–165.

⁶³ Plutarch (*Theseus*, 18) tells the story that before sailing for Crete, Theseus, on the command of the Delphic Apollo, was sacrificing the *αἶγαν θήλειαν οὔσαν* to Aphrodite, when the animal was miraculously changed into a billy goat, hence the goddess' epithet Epitragia. Since Pausanias tells us that Theseus' father Aigeus introduced the cult of Aphrodite Ourania to Athens (I.14.7) and not until later did his son found the cult of Pandemos (I.22.3), it is logical to assume that the original sacrifice referred to by Plutarch was dedicated to Ourania.

Watzinger, (*op. cit.* [footnote 14 above], pp. 246–266) interpreted the depictions of the she-goats suckling their young as images of nourishment and fertility. Amaltheia, the *οὐρανία αἶξ*, was such a nourisher. For her relationship to other Earth Mother figures see Muthmann, *op. cit.* (footnote 61 above), p. 130. Amaltheia's appearance with Aphrodite Ourania underscores the relationship noted by others between Aphrodite Ourania and the Mother of the Gods (S. Lattimore, *AJA* 84, 1980, p. 220; E. B. Harrison, "A Classical Maiden from

to accept Knigge's idea that a goddess riding on a she-goat, the *ὄρπανία αἴξ*, through the starry sky would represent anyone but Aphrodite Ourania.⁶⁴

Plato's distinction between the two Aphrodites is obviously used by the philosopher to illustrate a sophistic rhetorical device, although Knigge would have us believe that it was an older tradition, influential enough to make its way into the iconography of 4th-century vase painters and metal workers.⁶⁵ This seems unlikely. Ourania is the original form of the goddess.⁶⁶ The fact that Pandemos can ride a billy goat suggests that she is an aspect of Ourania, rather than that she is a separate deity.

Four fragmentary votive reliefs from the Athenian Agora support this contention. The most complete, S 1158, shows the goddess seated sidesaddle on the back of a goat (Pl. 18:a).⁶⁷ She wears a chiton belted just below the breasts. The himation is wrapped around

the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia*, Suppl. XX, *Studies in Athenian Architecture, Sculpture and Topography*, Princeton 1982, pp. 50–51, and note 56).

The *ὄρπανία αἴξ* and her kids appear in the pediment of an altar painted on a kylix by Makron (Athens, Akr. 325: *ARV*², p. 460, no. 20; *Paralipomena*, p. 377; S. Karusu, "Zur Makron-Schale von der Akropolis," *AthMitt* 98, 1983, pp. 57–64, pl. 21:2). The scene as a whole depicts Zeus' delivery of the infant Dionysos' to the Nymphs of Mt. Nysa. The painting on the altar underscores the Nymphs' role as divine nursemaids.

⁶⁴ Knigge's attempt to differentiate iconographically between Pandemos and Ourania seems to me to be based on two false premises, originally proposed by Furtwängler. The first is Usener's interpretation, accepted by Furtwängler, of the name Pandemos as meaning originally "all shining"; she was therefore a sky goddess (Furtwängler, p. 593). W. Burkert (*Griechische Religion*, Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz 1977, p. 242) has recently defended the political significance of the name Pandemos and supported it with Near Eastern parallels. See also E. Simon, *Die Götter der Griechen*, Munich 1969, pp. 251–253.

The second false premise is Furtwängler's idea that Pausanias was mistaken in his description of the *ῥάγος* that Skopas' Elean statue of Aphrodite Pandemos rides (Furtwängler, p. 601). Furtwängler suggested that the drapery around the feet of the statue concealed the animal's genitals and that Pausanias, who knew the story of the miraculous sex change, simply assumed that the goat was male when in reality it was female. Why Aphrodite Pandemos was associated with male goats is a complicated issue, but it does seem to be the one concrete distinction that would have been of iconographic value.

⁶⁵ Plato, *Symposium*, 180 D–181; Knigge, pp. 164–166.

⁶⁶ Herodotos, 1.105; Pausanias, 1.14.7. It is assumed that Pausanias took his information from Herodotos. The cult originally belonged in the Syro-Phoenician world of Astarte, from where it spread to Cyprus and Kythera. Scholars assume that the cult made its way northward to Corinth, Thebes, and Athens. This theory is derived from the late author Alkiphron (3.24). See W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* VI, Berlin and Leipzig 1924–1937, pp. 98–102, *s.v.* Urania (M. Mayer); H. Herter, "Die Ursprünge des Aphroditekultes," *Éléments orientaux dans la religion grecque ancienne, Colloque de Strasbourg*, 1958, 1960, pp. 61–76. The Theban (Xenophon, *Hell.* v.4.4), Corinthian (Pausanias, 11.5.1) and Spartan (Pausanias, 11.15.10) Aphrodites were armed like the old image on Kythera (Pausanias, 11.23.1). Of all these Aphrodites derived from the Near East, only the patroness of Corinth shared Astarte's predilection for temple prostitution. Perhaps in Athens Pandemos took over this same aspect of the Near Eastern goddess (Harpokration, *s.v.* Pandemos, repeated by Athenaios, 131.569d). She certainly served the tutelary deity of the synoikismos (Pausanias 1.22.3), and it has been suggested that she served the same purpose at Corinth (see C. K. Williams, II, "Corinth and the Cult of Aphrodite," [Amyx *Festschrift*, in press]). For Aphrodite in the Gardens and her association with Ourania see Pausanias, 1.19.2, also E. Langlotz, *Aphrodite in den Gärten*, Heidelberg 1954, pp. 28–30. In her Cypriot manifestations Aphrodite Ourania was worshiped in gardens at Paphos and Tamasos; at Amathous she was honored as *κάρπωσις*. Lucian (*dialogi meretricii*, 7.1) says that Aphrodite *ἐν κήποις* was called Ourania.

⁶⁷ Found May 16, 1939 in modern fill (F 18). P.H. 0.165 m., p.W. 0.085 m., Th. 0.03 m. Back rough picked. Fine-grained white marble with many calcite crystals; blue-gray streak running diagonally through the middle of the stone. E. Mitropoulou, *Aphrodite auf der Ziege*, Athens 1973, pp. 11–12, no. 4.

her waist and she raises the part in back over her head. The large goat seems to be walking. Its legs are straight and the feet rest on the ground line. A bit of its curling tail appears at the left side of the relief. Below, two small kids, simply sketched onto the relief surface, scamper along in rampant positions. These kids suggest that the goat is female.⁶⁸ The relief surface is worn, and most details of carving have disappeared. Together with stylistic considerations, the treatment of the back of the relief makes it likely that the date is very late in the 4th century or early in the 3rd.

A 4th-century date is more secure for S 1797 (Pl. 17:b).⁶⁹ On this fragment the back legs of the she-goat (her udder is realistically rendered) fly through the air. Aphrodite, wearing chiton and himation, sits sidesaddle. Only her lap and legs remain. Below the bent legs of the goat two kids gallop towards a well-made altar with a prominent base molding.

Two other fragments belong to the Hellenistic period. S 1491 is a small delicate relief (Pl. 18:b).⁷⁰ Aphrodite is nude from the waist up. Her mantle blows out behind her like a halo. The motif reminds one of Selene's cloak, but is equally appropriate to Aphrodite Ourania and symbolizes the arc of heaven.⁷¹ The level background of this relief, the smooth back, and the soft forms in the carving suggest a late Hellenistic date.

S 1944 preserves the rear end of the goat whose short tail is raised (Pl. 18:c).⁷² The folds between the goddess' legs and traces of her himation, pulled up on the left side, are clear.

⁶⁸ Furtwängler (p. 599) also takes kids to be indicative of the goat's sex.

⁶⁹ Findspot unknown. P.H. 0.16 m., p.W. 0.18 m., Th. 0.045 m. Back and bottom surfaces rough picked, otherwise broken all around. Part of tenon preserved below. Fine-grained white marble (Mitropoulou, *op. cit.* [footnote 67 above], pp. 8–9, fig. 2, inv. no. given incorrectly as 1957; Knigge, p. 155, note 13, inv. no. given incorrectly as 1944).

⁷⁰ Found May 3, 1951 in sandy fill above the east end of the Middle Stoa (O 13). P.H. 0.07 m., p.W. 0.085 m., Th. 0.024 m. Upper right corner of thin rounded plaque. Smooth front and back surfaces and curving top edge preserved. A small hole probably for suspension preserved slightly to the left of Aphrodite's head gives the correct placement of the fragment. Fine-grained white marble.

⁷¹ On a pyxis in London Selene rides on a horse under the arch of heaven (British Museum 1920.12-21: *JHS* 41, 1921, p. 144, pl. 6.) This depiction is not far from that of Selene's cloak blown up in an arc behind her on a fragment of a bell-krater in Leningrad (St. 1798: *ARV*², p. 1337, no. 2; *Paralipomena*, p. 481; ca. 390 B.C.). The origin of Aphrodite Ourania's billowing himation goes back to a similar source. On a bell-krater in Valette by the Painter of Louvre G 508 (*ARV*², p. 1436, no. 7; Cambitoglou, *JHS* 75, 1955, p. 7; Bérard, *op. cit.* [footnote 55 above], pp. 135–136, pl. 16, fig. 55) an unnamed goddess appears in an abstract opening, rising from the ground. The ovoid shape within which the goddess emerges is clearly distinguished from the rocky ground which surrounds it, both by the regular contours of its outline and the added white which decorates the form. The goddess who comes out from the empty space between the rocks (whether it should be understood as a crevice in the earth or a watery element, as, e.g., on the Ludovisi throne) can not be Selene, who appears from the edge of the earth. Most probably the sparkling arch conveys the same idea as the arc of heaven on the London pyxis, and we have on the Valette krater the birth of Aphrodite Ourania. The origin of both Selene's and Aphrodite's cloaks can be understood as references to the sky above. The curved upper border of the relief in Sparta (see footnote 48 above) must have a similar meaning. The hole at the top of S 1491 suggests that it was meant to be suspended, and the relief may have been completely circular, like the Kerameikos disk. Round votive reliefs are rare, but see a dedication to Aphrodite Ourania in the Louvre (M. Collignon, "Aphrodite Pandemos," *MonPiot* I, 1894, p. 148, fig. 2; Mitropoulou, *op. cit.* (footnote 67 above), no. 5, p. 13). A thurible appears in the pictorial field behind the goddess on the Louvre relief.

⁷² Exact findspot unknown. P.H. 0.08 m., p.W. 0.14 m., Th. 0.045 m. From the uncatalogued marbles found in 1933 (G/J 10/13). Left side smooth, otherwise broken all around. Back finished in horizontal strokes of a small flat chisel. Fine-grained white marble.

Again it is the treatment of the border that rises in a slow curve from the pictorial field and the symmetrical, horizontal, flat-chisel marks on the back surface that suggest a post-Classical date.

In all four cases Aphrodite rides sidesaddle on a goat. In two cases these are verifiably she-goats. It is clear on S 1797 that the goddess crosses the sky, above her altar. An Aphrodite who rides through the air, mounted on a she-goat whose kids gambol below, can be none other than Ourania. The most important cult of Aphrodite in the Agora was that of Ourania.⁷³ Although the finding places of these reliefs can offer no strong confirmation as to their original location, it is most likely that they belonged to her sanctuary in the northwest corner of the Athenian Agora.⁷⁴ According to our stylistic dates, this depiction of Aphrodite on a goat was popular in Athens from the mid-4th century at least until the late Hellenistic period.

To return to the controversial Karlsruhe lekythos,⁷⁵ it is impossible to deny its connection with what we know of the Adonis cult. The vases within which small flames or sprouting plants appear are certainly broken. This image matches so closely the description of the scholiast that it seems perverse to deny the connection. On the other hand, I have tried to show that the ladder is a symbol related less to the physical activities of the Adonis cult than to the meaning of Aphrodite Ourania. It is clear from the sources that Aphrodite Ourania was the consort of Adonis.⁷⁶ This fact makes it possible to read the Karlsruhe lekythos in the following way: Aphrodite Ourania, having descended her heavenly ladder, accepts the Adonis gardens from Eros. The devotees of the cult stand by in surprise and ecstasy at the deity's epiphany. The Karlsruhe lekythos does not therefore depict a moment of the mystery but rather a visionary encounter with the goddess herself, who acknowledges her participation in and approval of the rites of Adonis.

Something of the same kind may be happening on a New York lekythos.⁷⁷ Aphrodite again ascending her ladder receives a vessel with a wide, flaring mouth from Eros. Is the nude male seated beneath the ladder Adonis himself? Richter interpreted the procession at left on the same vase as a separate ceremony.⁷⁸ A group of four, a young girl, two maidens, and a youth, approach a seated woman who raises her himation over her right shoulder and gazes down to a thurible filled with fruit or perhaps grains of incense. Possibly this scene represents the procession in the Adonia, attested by inscriptions.⁷⁹

One final thought on the Agora relief: the scene of Aphrodite Ourania descending the

⁷³ Pausanias, 1.14.5; R. E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora*, III, *Literary and Epigraphical Testimonia*, Princeton 1957, p. 49, no. 106.

⁷⁴ Shear, *op. cit.* (footnote 1 above), p. 38.

⁷⁵ Above, p. 62 and footnotes 25 and 26.

⁷⁶ This relationship is clear above all from the fact that Adonis was bound to the oriental cult of Aphrodite Ourania on Cyprus. See *RE* I, i, pp. 385–395, *s.v.* Adonis (F. Dümmler); Nock, *op. cit.* (footnote 42 above), pp. 291–292.

⁷⁷ M.M.A. 22.139.26: Richter and Hall, *Red-figured Athenian Vases in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New Haven 1936, pp. 219–220, no. 173, pl. 168, *ca.* 350 B.C.; Metzger, no. 42, pl. 7:1.

⁷⁸ Richter and Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

⁷⁹ *IG* II², 1261 and *IG* II², 1290. See Deubner, *op. cit.* (footnote 41 above), p. 222; B. D. Meritt, "Greek Inscriptions," *Hesperia* 4, 1935, pp. 572–576.

heavenly ladder is inappropriate to sculpture in the round. The scene was used only twice on votive reliefs but appeared repeatedly on vase paintings. It is more than likely that the prototype was a monumental wall painting. If we date our relief around 410 B.C., then the prototype should precede it. It is interesting that the large impressive altar found in the 1981 excavations and most probably related to Aphrodite Ourania shows signs of reworking in the third quarter of the 5th century.⁸⁰ If this could imply a general refurbishing of the goddess' sanctuary, maybe it was at that time that a monumental wall painting was created showing our Aphrodite descending her heavenly ladder.

CHARLES M. EDWARDS

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS

⁸⁰ Shear, *op. cit.* (footnote 1 above), pp. 31–32.



a. Votive relief for Aphrodite, Agora S 3344



b. Votive relief for Aphrodite, Agora S 1797

CHARLES M. EDWARDS: APHRODITE ON A LADDER



b. Votive relief for Aphrodite, Agora S 1491



c. Votive relief for Aphrodite, Agora S 1944



a. Votive relief for Aphrodite, Agora S 1158



a. Lebes gamikos, N.M. 1454 (Brückner, *AthMitt* 32, 1907, pl. 5:2)



b. Hydria, British Museum E 241 (CVA, British Museum 6 [G.B. 8], pl. 97 [372])



c. Votive relief, once Museo Kircheriano (Watzinger in *Antike Plastik*, Berlin 1928, p. 261, fig. 1)

CHARLES M. EDWARDS: APHRODITE ON A LADDER