NOTES/KORT BYDRAES

TWO OINOCHOAI

In the middle of the year the Rhodes Museum moved into incomparably superior premises. At the same time it greatly expanded in size owing to a generous loan of antiquities (mostly aegyptiacae) from the Albany Museum. However, the classical collection of single items or sets, which are owned by Rhodes University, has with the last two acquisitions reached the half-century mark. Both vases are oinochoai, that is “wine-jugs” or more accurately “wine-pourers”, and both are decorated in the black-figure style. But there the similarity ends, for each differs in size, form of decoration and provenience. Each is truly representative of its type, and while the Attic vase is by far the better in glaze, paint and artistic execution, the Corinthian possesses a pleasing harmonious design and is moreover extremely well preserved.

49. Corinthian Black-Figure Squat Oinochoe. Height 11 cm., Diameter (at base) 10.8 cm. Second half of the sixth century B.C.

The vase stands on a flat base with a wide ovoid body which contracts into a narrow ridged neck terminating in a trefoil lip. The colour is typically pale yellowish, as the fine whitish Corinthian clay is low in iron oxide and therefore fires a much lighter hue than the reddish product from Attica and elsewhere in Greece. The neck, lip and handle are painted in dark brown occasionally heightened with purple.

The decoration, in black-figure technique, covers the entire body of the vase. Lines radiating outwards from the neck lead to a frieze between two sets of one broad and four narrow bands consisting of a goose, leopards and sirens, whose wings, faces and other details are marked out by incision. The interstices between the creatures are filled with dots and incised blobs giving the impression of a crowded continuous zone no part of which the painter wished to leave undecorated.

The figures within the frieze are characteristic of the Late Ripe Animal style, that is the period about the middle and later sixth century. Artistic interest was shifting to human figures at a time when Attic ware was beginning to capture the Corinthian markets. However, while our example falls somewhere near the end of an important period in Greek vase painting, its relatively fine detail and pleasing composition still manage to suggest considerable vitality. The figures have degenerated somewhat from the best examples of the period, but sirens and goose at least show that the old Animal style had not yet become extinct.

1. Also enhanced by a few privately owned pieces which are on display by courtesy of Mr. W. D. Snowball.
2. Cf. the Protocorinthian cup No. 47.
4. For a very similar example see Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum Copenhagen, II, pl. 88/4 and 5.
49. Corinthian Black-Figure Squat Oinochoe.
50. Attic Black-Figure Oinochoe.
50. Attic Black-Figure Oinochoe. Height 19 cm. Diameter (across lip 9.5 cm).
   About 500 B.C.

The shape is standard for "wine-jugs" of the period, *i.e.* a reasonably broad base, less flaring or ovoid body than the earlier examples, narrow neck and wide trefoil mouth. The vase is excellently preserved and its glaze has kept its deep black lustre, except for two small areas on the base and across two of the figures where it was applied thin enough to reabsorb small quantities of oxygen during the last, reoxidising, stage of the firing.

The decoration, also in black-figure style, is contained within a panel which is bordered by a tongue pattern at the top and network patterns along the sides. The scene itself is common for the period consisting of the central figure of a Maenad and three Satyrs. There is much movement: the two flanking Satyrs, with finely incised facial and body features, as well as clearly marked beards and hair are side on, and look back at the Maenad while engaged in a lively dance. The third Satyr leans forward, his arms bent upwards at the elbows and covering his face. The Maenad is dressed in a chiton with incisions for folds and border. One arm down the other flung up and loosely holding some object in the hand, she twists her head and torso violently to the left, fully absorbed in the wild gyrations of the dance. Her face, which lacks detail, legs and feet, in strong contrast to the rest of the scene, are painted in white with highlights touched with purple.

As is common in vases of the Late Attic Black-Figure style, a period which covers the years from about 530 to 450 B.C.,

the composition is closely grouped with leaves and branches filling the empty spaces. Technically the execution perhaps lacks finesse, betraying some elements of carelessness. The central Satyr, for example, appears to be cavorting in front of the Maenad; but his left leg extends behind her, with the foot just visible below the hem of her dress, rendering his stance physically impossible. The face of the Maenad is indistinct and almost theriomorphic in its features, nor does the artist make it plain what she is brandishing in her left hand. The faded red line across the two central figures also suggests, as remarked above, that the glaze was unevenly applied in places.

However, the scene has undoubted dramatic impact, the attitude of the limbs and even the body movements conveying the excitement of the moment. Compare this with the staid and simple scenes of contemporary red-figure painting. At this time, at the turn of the sixth and fifth centuries, the old black-figure style could still compete successfully with the new which had not yet come into exclusive favour with the best artists like the Andocides and Psiax painters. The Rhodes Museum is fortunate indeed to count this fine example of a brilliant period among its growing collection.

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5. Cook, *op. cit.* 89.
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