TWO KYLIKES IN THE RHODES COLLECTION

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Since the last report in 1972, two very fine cups have come into the possession of the Rhodes University Museum of Classical Antiquities. Both vases are well preserved and share an exceptionally fine finish, although they differ in date and provenance. In recent years it has become more difficult to acquire new and worthwhile pieces, partly because most countries now tend to guard jealously the export of objets d'art, particularly of antiquities, and because such items have grown remarkably in commercial value. Therefore it is a pleasure to record that the Rhodes University Council has found it possible to increase our grant in order to ensure that the museum can expand, however slowly.

47. Protocorinthian Cup (Subgeometric). Diam. (with handles) 14,2 cm, height 4 cm. First half of 7th century BC.

The cup is stemless but stands on a low slightly flaring base; its bowl is wide and shallow with offset rim, a feature which was representative of the period. The shape is neat, graceful with thin clay of a fine texture.

The decoration, which is in dark brown on a pale buff background, consists of solid triangles, or rays, about the base and fine narrow bands above. These are interrupted by a frieze on the shoulder composed of sets of vertical strokes and wavy lines. The inside of the cup is in monochrome dark brown.

Colour of clay and paint, like the shape, are typical of Middle Protocorinthian ware of the first quarter of the seventh century BC² when through the inventive skill of her vase painters Corinth for a time outshone all other Greek cities with her products. Therefore examples of this type have turned up at almost all Greek sites at home and abroad. Our cup was found in Italy where it had been taken by a migrant perhaps or passing trader. Later in the same century Corinthian craftsmen developed styles (animal and floral) of much vigour having learnt some of their designs from oriental models which caught the fashion at the time.

Artistic merit apart, Early and Middle Procorinthian vases constitute historically important evidence of the natural evolution of Geometric into new styles at the end of the eighth century, which means continuity in art from the Dark to the Archaic Age in Greece. The ‘rigid symmetry’ of Geometric art

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2. *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* (Oxford II) Pl. 1, 27 & 29; (Louvre XIII) pl. 37, 7–8; (Heidelberg III) Pl. 126, 7. Cf. R. M. Cook, *Greek Painted Pottery* (1960) Fig. 4B.
gradually made way to freer composition, while purely ornamental motives, like the ubiquitous cross-hatched triangles, became integral parts of the attractive decorative designs, as witness the rays – filled with dark brown paint – around the base of our cup. Protocorinthian also formed an important link with the subsequent black-figure style at the other end of the scale. ³

48. Ionian Little Master Cup. Diam. 12.3 cm (16.8 with handles), height 8.4 cm. Second quarter of 6th century BC.

The shape is that of a stemmed kylix decorated on the inside and outside of the lip in reserve (common technique in East Greek tradition). Inside, the bottom of the bowl is adorned with four concentric circles also in reserve, which means that these areas have been deliberately left in the unpainted clay to contrast with the rich black glaze of the rest of the vase. This technique is best known from the red-figure style and can be extremely effective with the deep reddish-orange colour of the clay. The colour is quite similar to that of Attic vases and indeed the lustrous glaze of the newly acquired cup rivals that of our pelike (No. 42).

However, the Ionian Little Masters (‘Kleinmeisterschalen’) were inspired by Attic black-figure forms and styles of the first half of the sixth century BC. The name aptly describes the extremely neat, occasionally fussy, miniature figures and designs on such vases. In the Attic repertory these cups belong to a wide category to which numerous distinguished artists contributed and which can be subdivided into several related styles and shapes, notably Lip and Band Cups as well as their derivatives, and perhaps also Siana Cups. ⁴

The Ionian Little Master Cups are less common. The few that have survived were made about the middle of the sixth century BC probably first on the island of Samos, although fragments have also turned up in Naucratis, Apollonia Pontica and a few other sites. The graceful shape, exquisite quality of the clay and painting technique the Ionian artists owed to the best of Attic black-figure, but the composition of the decoration was their own.

The figures on the Ionian cups were also occasionally borrowed from East Greek tradition; designs comprise palmettes, leaves, chains of blossoms or buds. The decoration is usually done with carefree abandon betraying a certain lack of discipline but is remarkable for the consummate skill of execution and for the painter’s ability to use the available space. At times the laws of perspec-

³. See K. F. Johansen, Les Vases Sicyoniens (1923), especially p. 20 and Pl. 19,2; H. G. G. Payne, Protokorinthische Vasenmalerei (1933); Cook, op. cit. 43ff.; 59f.; 310 (there is now a second edition of this book); Greek Art (1972) 36; R. S. Folsom, Handbook of Greek Pottery (1967) 62f.
tive are disregarded and then the effect of the loose but brilliantly imaginative composition is not unlike that of some Minoan painting. The high point of this type can be seen in the famous Vineyard ('Vogelsteller') cup in the Louvre.\(^5\)

Our vase has no figures, only fine bands and circles;\(^6\) but in a way it evokes more clearly than the figured examples the Ionian spirit of the age through the harmonious effect achieved by form and decoration which recalls the workmanship of the contemporary column bases of Hera's temple in Samos and the carved marble drapes of Geneleos and his successors.\(^7\)

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