

EIGHT

The Transformation of Athenian Theatre Culture around 400 BC

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The Pronomos Vase was produced towards the end of the fifth century, the period when Athenian theatre culture was undergoing a profound transformation.¹ A number of contemporary—or at least ancient—literary references provide some information about the nature of theatre productions of that time. First, the fact that none of the poets who followed the three tragedians Aischylos, Sophokles, and Euripides produced a tragedy that the ancients considered worth copying enough for it to survive. Secondly, Aristophanes, who in his *Frogs* of 405, has Dionysos announce that he finds it difficult to name a poet of standing: the best are dead, and those still living bad—an allusion to the fact that both Sophokles and Euripides had passed away a short time previously.² Thirdly, the decision taken in 386 to include plays by the three great tragic poets in addition to the new pieces performed on the occasion of the Great Dionysia.³ This amounted to an official differentiation between contemporary works and those from the Golden Age of the past.

All this would seem to attest to a general decline of the theatre in Athens during the fourth century, yet there is also evidence which points in the opposite direction. The theatre ‘machinery’—as one might call the joint effort of hundreds of people to produce a splendid festival every year—continued and indeed probably became even more elaborate. The changes in structural organization and cultural attitudes in the Athenian theatre world can best be characterized by the following three terms:

Professionalization: This is best attested to by the emergence of professional actors and musicians, some of whom even gained an ‘international’ reputation.⁴ Aristotle’s well-known statement that the success of a play depended—at least in his day—more on the ability of the actors than on the quality of the poet’s text

¹ On drama productions in Athens during the 4th cent. BC, see Seidensticker (1995); Easterling (1997c). ² Aristophanes, *Frogs* 71–2. ³ On the revival of old plays, see *DEA*² 99–100.

⁴ Cf. Ghiron-Bistagne (1976), esp. ch. III; Moraw (2002); Csapo (2004*b*). On the so-called New Music and the fame of some of its protagonists, see West (1992), 356–72; Csapo (2004*a*).

also seems to confirm a marked shift in audience expectations. Yet there were also fourth-century tragedians producing plays of considerable intellectual substance, an example being Astydamos, who was honoured with a votive statue in the Theatre of Dionysos.⁵

Popularization: The construction of monumental theatres from the middle of the fourth century on indicates that the theatre culture in Athens and abroad was by no means in a general crisis. The Theatre of Dionysos that was used by Aischylos and Euripides was not only much smaller than the lavish building completed by Lykurgos around 330, with less than half the latter's capacity, but must also have been far humbler in appearance.⁶

Representation: Theatre productions were increasingly used to augment the public prestige of participants. Support for this is found predominantly in epigraphical and archaeological remains, chiefly but by no means exclusively in the monuments for the victorious choregoi in the dithyramb contests.

This last aspect of Athenian theatre culture—representation—brings us back to the Pronomos Vase and to the question of how it fits into this historical situation. To answer this, I will first examine other representations of satyr drama, then discuss two particular motifs of the painting and, finally, take a closer look at a different class of monument which also celebrates successful productions in the Theatre of Dionysos at Athens.

I

A conceptual feature of the principal image on the Pronomos Vase continues to make interpretation difficult: although it shows the many actors and other people involved in the theatre production, there is almost no action. We have Pronomos (21) playing the auloi with a satyr (20) dancing on his left; but otherwise the actors are simply conversing or just sitting around. Indeed, the general inactivity makes it even difficult to define the exact situation the vase painter wished to represent. However, it is exactly this ambiguity that provides the key to understanding the imagery, because, as I have argued elsewhere, it was never the Pronomos Painter's intention to depict one specific moment, either before or after the play.⁷ The fact that the most important surviving Greek theatre vase seems deliberately to avoid making any obvious reference to an actual theatrical

⁵ Goette (1999).

⁶ For the development of monumental theatre buildings and the historical context of this process, see Junker (2004). For surveys of extant theatre buildings of the 5th and 4th cent., see Bieber (1961), 54–73; Froning (2002a); Ciancio Rossetto and Pisani Sartorio (1994).

⁷ Junker (2003), with previous literature on the combination of documentary and symbolic elements in the main picture of the vase. For disagreement on this issue see Introduction, p. 00.

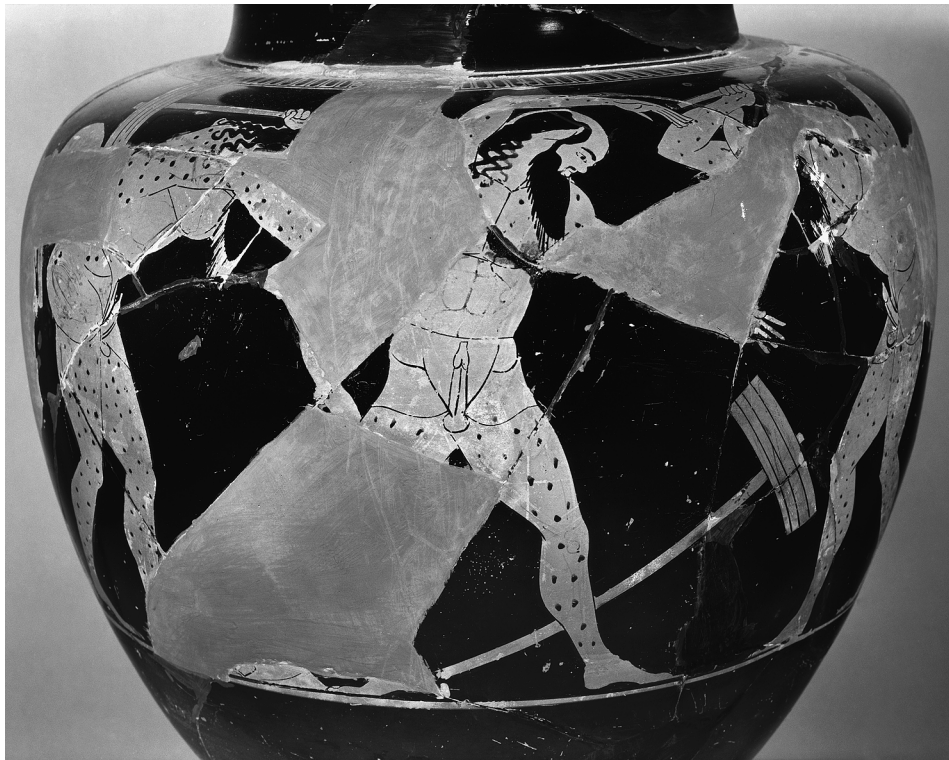


FIG. 8.1. Early fifth-century vase with satyrs in 'phallic shorts'

performance suggests that here the artist was addressing more general aspects of theatrical life. For this it is necessary to look at the history of this particular type of imagery.

The earliest images of satyr plays appear in Attic vase-painting around 500 BC, by which time the satyr play must have been integrated into the official programme of the Great Dionysia.⁸ An early fifth-century stamnos in Paris shows a chorus of satyrs wearing 'shorts' with an attached phallus as their typical costume and wielding hammers while a goddess rises out of the ground (Fig. 8.1).⁹ What is of interest here is not the content of the scene, which can be roughly established with the help of related depictions, but rather the fact that the satyrs are actively performing a scene, apparently from a particular play. Among the relatively few

⁸ On depictions of satyr plays see Brommer (1959); Simon (1981); Simon (1982a); Green (1991), 44–9; Green (1994), 38–46; Krumeich (1999a); Froning (2002b), 82–9. Also Seidensticker, Griffith in this volume.

⁹ Paris, Musée du Louvre C 10754; a fragment of the hydria showing the head of the emerging goddess is in the J.-P. Getty Museum in Malibu (inv. 82 AE 41.18); another fragment with the lower part of the auletes was identified in the collection of the Université Laval, Quebec, Canada: Pickard-Cambridge (1964), fig. 39; Simon (1989), 197–203 pls. 34,1–4; 35,1–2; Krumeich *et al.* (1999), pl. 1b–c.



FIG. 8.2. Satyrs in 'respectable' costume, attending to Sphinx

comparable images is the Hydria in the Fujita collection, which belongs to the years around 470–460 (Fig. 8.2).¹⁰ The chorus of satyrs is shown listening attentively to the riddle of the Sphinx, and although they are not wearing their usual theatrical attire, there can be little doubt that the scene shows a particular moment from a specific drama.

A type of intermediate group is formed by depictions showing satyrs who are not actually on a real stage even though they wear proper costumes and move authentically. Among the small number of extant examples is a hydria in Boston, from about 470/460, showing satyrs carrying richly decorated parts of a piece of furniture, probably a throne; the meaning of this remains unknown (Fig. 8.3).¹¹ While the auletes on the far right, dressed in the typical long, colourful *chiton*, might also have stood in the orchestra, this is certainly not

¹⁰ Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum (on loan from Mr Takuhiko Fujita). Simon (1981); Green (1994), 42, fig. 2.15; Krumeich *et al.* (1999), 191–6, pl. 22b. A sherd, found in Athens (Fetiché Tzami 1955 NAK 850) attests to the existence of a sort of replica of the Fujita Hydria, see M. Tiverios (2000), 477–85, figs. 1–2.

¹¹ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 03.788 (Francis Bartlett Donation). *ARV*² 571, 75 (Leningrad Painter); Brommer (1959), 12–15, fig. 6; Pickard-Cambridge (1964), fig. 40; Green (1994), 43, fig. 2.17; Krumeich *et al.* (1999), pl. 4a–b; Wilson (2000), 257, fig. 29.



FIG. 8.3. Satyrs carrying furniture, accompanied by aulos-player

the case with the figure behind him. Instead of a costume, this man wears a mantle, and it is tempting to identify him as the choregos of the play. But he could just as well be an ordinary citizen and therefore represent the audience. A similar combination of figures can be seen on a dinos in Athens (Fig. 12.2), from the last years of the fifth century, though here the auletes is flanked on the left by a citizen leaning on his stick, and on the right by a fully-dressed satyr executing a typical dance movement of stretching out one leg and one arm.¹² It is difficult to determine if the vase-painting is to be understood as a

¹² Athens, National Museum 13027. *ARV*² 1180, 2 (Painter of the Athens Dinos); Bieber (1911), 269–77, pls. 13,1–2; 14,4–5; Brommer (1959), 11–12, fig. 2; Pickard-Cambridge (1964), fig. 45; Krumeich *et al.* (1999), pl. 6b; Junker (2002), 521–2, no. 402 with illus.

coherent representation of a rehearsal (or some similar situation) or whether it simply shows a row of actors.

The third and last category of images of satyr dramas is the one to which the Pronomos Vase belongs. An almost complete lack of dramatic action is typical of this group, and sometimes the actors and chorus members are holding masks in their hands as if to show that they are no longer ‘on stage’. The fragments of a bell-krater by the same painter, today in Bonn (Fig. 14.2), demonstrate that the boundaries between the different types of scenes were again fluid.¹³ Here the musician is surrounded by three satyrs who as members of the cast are completely removed from the actual events on stage. There are several depictions of this kind; and by far the most important example is, of course, the monumental Pronomos Vase.

On the basis of the visual evidence it is thus possible to establish a clear development in the depictions of satyr dramas: the earliest examples show scenes from the plays, the later ones lack any specific relationship to events on the stage. This accords with what seems to be a general trend on Attic vases for all theatre subjects, and certainly applies to the few images which can be securely related to tragedy.¹⁴ What this development means for the impact of the imagery on vase-paintings can be determined when one uses the large sequence of more or less immobile figures on the Pronomos Vase to draw up a catalogue of positive and negative aspects of the pictorial concept. The rejection of dramatic fiction as the one factor that identifies a theatrical performance is certainly a remarkable omission. That the satyr players have removed their masks effectively destroys any possibility of entering the illusionary world of the theatre. However, the fact that the vase-painting contains not even a vague allusion to the act of performing, but includes, moreover, figures who do not belong on the ‘stage’, namely the author Demetrios (19) as well as Dionysos (5) and his companions, makes it clear that the painter has intentionally shifted the emphasis from the *performance* of a play to the theatre festival as an *institution*. The focus is no longer on individual aspects of what took place in the orchestra, but rather on the overall event in which so many people, directly or indirectly, were involved. Taking into account minor iconographic elements such as the wreaths worn by the chorusmen and the two tripods, one could even imagine that it is not even so much about the theatre itself as about the prestige to be gained from participating in such a festive event.

¹³ Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum, Inv. 1216.183–185. 354–357. Brommer (1959), 12, fig. 3; Pickard-Cambridge (1964), fig. 46; Green (1994), 44–5, fig. 2.20; Krumeich *et al.* (1999), pl. 6a; Geominy (2002), 481, no. 338a–c; Geominy (2003), 74, pl. 24 (colour).

¹⁴ On depictions of tragedies see Green (1991), 16–17; Froning (2002b), 71–6; Krumeich (forthcoming).

II

Because Pronomos is a historically documented figure, there has been much speculation about exactly which play could be depicted on his Vase.¹⁵ But such a ‘realistic approach’—as one might call it—cannot help, in my opinion, explain the particular quality of his work: the painter has clearly distanced himself from any attempt to capture the nature of the actual theatrical experience, and indeed he could have simply made use of names to avoid any misunderstanding. The fact that Herakles (9) is the only *dramatis persona* named—a completely unnecessary identification since he is easily recognized by his club—certainly seems to argue in favour of the Pronomos Painter being more interested in recording theatrical life in general rather than preserving the memory of a single performance.

The composition of the image provides concrete help in understanding what is meant by this. Even if the twenty-one figures on Side A initially seem to fit into two neat rows, with only a little interaction here and there, there are a number of interesting connections. Without going through the entire list of who’s who,¹⁶ it suffices to focus on a few select figures which I consider to be particularly pertinent to the issue under discussion, contributing to our understanding of the internal structure of the depiction:¹⁷

1. Demetrios, (19), seated in the bottom row, is identified as a poet by the scrolls in his hand and beside his left leg. Unusually, he does not sit on a chair but rather on a table that stands on two legs on one side and one on the other. The significance of this becomes apparent when one realizes—as Heide Froning cleverly did—that the table is actually part of a set that belongs to the *kline* (couch) and footstool used by Dionysos (5) in the upper row.¹⁸ Although the poet and the god belong to different spheres, they are nevertheless joined by what one might call a ‘working relationship’, for the author of theatrical pieces was, according to the ancients, a beneficiary of divine inspiration. Indeed, his somewhat absent-minded appearance may also allude to this state.

2. This close relationship is further emphasized by the figure (20) next to the poet. The only one to wear a mask and move like a dancer, he is clearly also the only ‘authentic’ choreut. His pose is, however, somewhat artificial since his gaze

¹⁵ On the auletes Pronomos see West (1992), 366–7; Harmon (2001).

¹⁶ On the meaning of the names on the Pronomos Vase see Junker (2003) as well as the contribution by Robin Osborne in this volume. On names of satyr choreuts in preserved texts and on satyr names related to dramas on Attic vases see Sutton (1985); Kossatz-Deissmann (1991); Heinemann (2000), 334–6.

¹⁷ For a complete description and excellent analysis of the main picture of the Pronomos Vase see especially Buschor (1932), 132–50 pls. 143–5 and Froning (1971), 5–15. Also Mannack and others in this volume.

¹⁸ Froning (1971), 6. 13–4. On Demetrios see Hall in this volume.

is directed towards Demetrios (19) while his outstretched arm points up to Dionysos (5). He thus serves compositionally to unite god and mortal, a function that is further enhanced by the idea that the vine next to Dionysos appears to grow out of the choreut's head.

3. Another figure that appears to mediate between the human and the divine sphere is the female figure (8). Equally enigmatic, her long, heavily patterned garment and the mask in her hand connect her with the realm of the actors whereas her position on Dionysos's *kline* (couch) and the attention she receives from Himeros (7, Desire) make it likely that she is a member of the divine party.¹⁹

4. Finally, the two actors, Herakles (9) and his pendant on the left (4) turn to face the two members of the chorus (10 and 3), as if in conversation. As with so many other details, this combination of division between the protagonists and the satyr players on the one hand and implied interaction on the other reflects the situation during actual performances.

The Pronomos Vase is a very ambitious work, and for this reason we should assume that every single iconographic element has a specific meaning. To my mind, this methodological principle means that, taken as a whole, the compositional connections discussed above form a system that is intended to convey a specific relationship. Two aspects are of particular interest because they help us understand that in addition to its artistic value, the Pronomos Vase must also be seen an important historical document.

First: The complex image is structured so as to create a contrast between two closely related figures, or groups: on the one level Dionysos (5) as the source of divine inspiration, on the other those inspired by the god, in particular the poet Demetrios (19), but also the various actors in performance.

Second: As we have seen, it was a conventional feature in late fifth-century vase-painting to show satyr players resting and not wearing their masks. The Pronomos Painter, however, went to even greater lengths to emphasize this aspect by showing such a large number of figures, eight of whom are identified by name. Irrespective of the precise meaning of the individual names, there can be no doubt that the identification of the chorus members as Athenian citizens was just as important as showing their role in the actual performance. They appear as representatives of the polis, the civic body that was responsible for organizing the theatre festival.²⁰ One may perhaps even go so far as to see in the

¹⁹ See further Hall this volume.

²⁰ This is not the place to discuss the complex question of the political dimension of the Athenian theatre; for the theory that the dramatic performances served as a sort of political education for the participants of the *ekklesia* see e.g. Meier (1993) and Goldhill (2000). But see also Rhodes's rejection of this point of view, Rhodes (2003).

two symmetrically arranged and seated figures at either end of the top row (I and II) a pictorial allusion to the audience. In any case, the analysis of the composition clearly shows that the depiction contains an unmistakable message: it is not the theatrical experience as such that is the focus of interest but rather the self-representation and self-celebration of the polis and that, when one considers the way in which he is integrated into the scene, even incorporates Dionysos.

III

The main reason why it is so difficult to interpret the depiction on the Pronomos Vase is the painter's use of a pictorial language that is foreign to our modern modes of representation and perception. While there are numerous realistic details, especially in the rendering of the costumes, there are also many aspects that have nothing to do with reality, such as the presence of Dionysos. Applying linguistic terms, one could distinguish between the use of a vocabulary that is for the most part realistic and a syntax that is mostly symbolic. It is therefore not an issue of deciding whether a realistic or symbolic reading of the image is the most suitable method of interpretation, but how the combination of these two modes is used to convey a specific meaning.

The presence of an entire group of satyr players has always been taken as a plausible reason to connect the depiction with a specific and particularly successful play. This assumption is, however, all the more problematic as satyr plays were, as is well known, never presented with nor awarded prizes in their own right, but were always performed in conjunction with a trilogy of tragedies. This has raised questions about the status of the two protagonists (4 and 9): are they in fact actors from a tragedy rather than participants in the more 'humble' genre of satyr play?²¹ This in turn leads to a more general question: why did the painter of the Pronomos Vase place so much emphasis on the satyr play in the first place? This is all the more relevant as the popularity of the satyr play, especially in relation to the other two dramatic genres, was apparently in marked decline by the time the Pronomos Vase was produced.²²

It is notable that the depiction of a chorus of satyrs occurs quite frequently on theatre vases, and certainly in greater numbers than on those vessels connected with tragedy and comedy. The examples mentioned above demonstrate that the satyrs can be shown in various ways: sometimes they wear 'body stockings' that identify them as disguised Athenian citizens, sometimes they appear as 'ordinary' satyrs acting out their roles in the respective plays. It is often only through the specific context of the imagery, as for example on the Fujita Hydria (Fig. 8.2),

²¹ This much-cited idea goes back to Buschor (1932), 133–4.

²² Cf. Seidensticker (1999), 19.

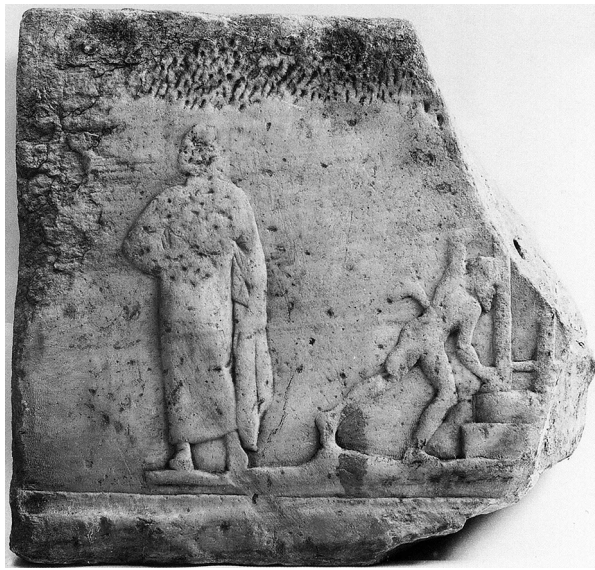


FIG. 8.4. Fragment of relief, probably choregic, with satyr and tripod

that it is possible to establish that the scene depicted relates to a theatrical performance. Equally, we can recognize that the masked dancing figure (20) between Pronomos and the poet is not a ‘real’ satyr because he wears fur ‘shorts’.

This pictorial convention of depicting satyrs on vases allows for the assumption that their presence on other media related to the theatre is intended as a visual reminder of the presence of satyrs on the actual stage. A fragment of a relief (Fig. 8.4) from the middle of the fourth century BC from the sanctuary of Dionysos in Athens shows a man in a long *himation* standing next to a satyr who seems to be setting up a large tripod.²³ The relief was probably part of a choregic monument; the tripod in any case is the prize for a dithyramb. Given then that the context is undisputedly theatrical, and since there seems to be no mythical narrative, the only logical conclusion is to associate the scene with satyr *players*.

The reasons for the popularity of satyr players in the visual arts are all the more evident when one looks at depictions related to tragedies. An interesting example is the well-known pelike in Boston of about 440 BC (Fig. 8.5), which shows two young men dressing up as female members of the cast of a tragedy.²⁴ The transformation from male to female is clearly discernible in the figure on the right: he pulls on a pair of boots and has a band around his head, undoubtedly to ensure

²³ Athens, National Museum, Inv. 1490: Svoronos (1937), 621, no. 262; Wilson (2000), 207, fig. 8; Viernseil and Scholl (2002), 27, fig. 15.

²⁴ Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.883: *ARV*² 1017, 46 (Phiale Painter); Pickard-Cambridge (1964), fig. 34; Oakley (1990), 73–4, no. 46 pl. 26a; Himmelmann (1994), 142, fig. 78.

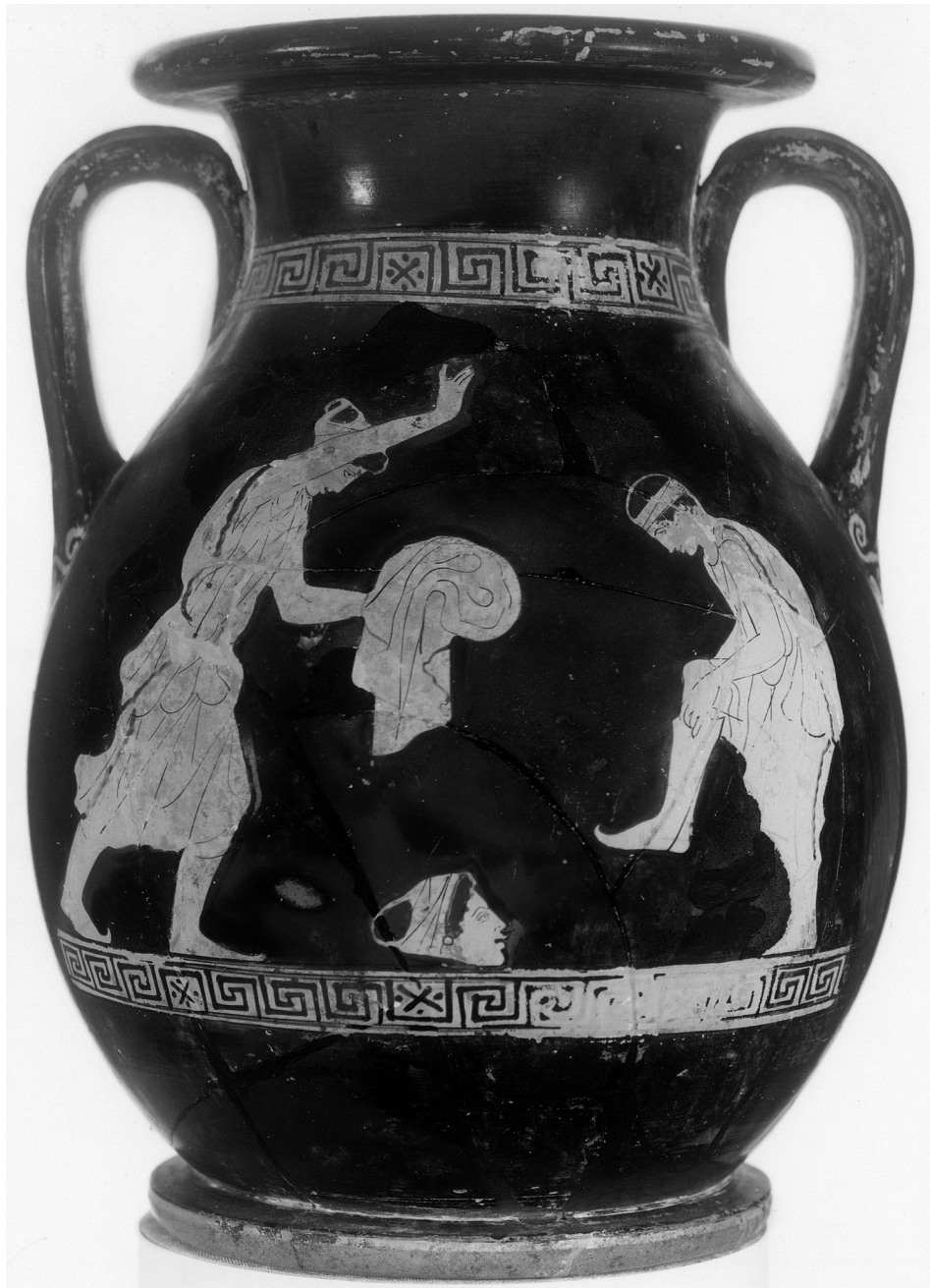


FIG. 8.5. Two performers getting dressed in female costume

his mask, still on the ground before him, stays in place during the performance. The man on the left, however, is already fully dressed, with the result that he has neutralized, so to speak, his role as a—male—actor and can no longer be distinguished from a ‘normal’ woman. The difficulty of visually conveying the very nature of the theatrical performance in tragedies can again be seen on the fragment of a splendid volute-krater by a painter close to the Pronomos Painter (Fig. 7.14).²⁵ The members of the chorus demonstrably present their masks so that the viewers can identify them as part of the cast of a tragedy.

From this brief overview it is, I believe, possible to draw a clear conclusion: the characteristic appearance of the satyr players allows them to assume the role of universal representatives for the theatre as a whole, something which is impossible for participants in tragedies or comedies, or indeed in the dithyrambos. In a variation on the title of an article by François Lissarrague, one could say: ‘Why satyr *players* are good to represent’.²⁶ We cannot, therefore, assume that the painter of the Pronomos Vase was primarily interested in portraying the satyr play as one of the genres of Athenian drama. What the image instead addresses are those aspects of the theatrical world that belong outside the realm of the actual performance: the splendour of the festival with the thousands of spectators from Athens and beyond, as well as the recognition that was the reward of both participants and organizers.

IV

My fourth and final point concerns the theatrical culture of Athens, which was basically made up of two aspects: the preparation and presentation of performances of visual and acoustic magnificence, and the different ways in which the achievements of successful participants could be acknowledged. All winners were celebrated ephemerally, though little is known about the exact form this recognition took. We do know, however, that the Great Dionysia concluded with a great celebration during which victorious participants were acclaimed in front of a large audience.²⁷ Only the triumphant choregoi of the dithyramb contests received permanent recognition. It was in any case possible for triumphant choregoi or poets to achieve a degree of fame among their fellow citizens that lasted long after the event was finished.

It is very difficult to determine how theatre-related ephemeral rewards and permanent monuments coexisted in classical Athens. There are two reasons for

²⁵ Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum H 4781. *ARV*² 1338; Bulle (1937), 151–60, pls. 54–6; Pickard-Cambridge (1964), fig. 50a–c; Froning (1971), 11–12, pl. 1,1; Froning (2002b), 75–6, fig. 90 (colour).

²⁶ Cf. Lissarrague (1990). ²⁷ Cf. Wilson (2000), 102–3.

this. First, it was necessary to find the right balance between two opposing principles: the ideology of the collective as the ruling body of the polis and the desire of individuals to increase their personal glory. This phenomenon—and its accompanying problems—was not unprecedented, as is shown by the example of the concurrent existence of grave rituals and monuments in Athens during the Archaic and Classical periods.²⁸ Secondly, the material evidence is so diverse that any interpretation of the data is difficult. Though an extensive study of the monuments in question and a careful historical analysis of the changing attitudes of their patrons still needs to be undertaken—despite the publication of a number of substantial contributions to this field in recent years—it is nevertheless evident that there is a marked divide between the fifth century as the pinnacle of the theatre as a literary and intellectual institution, and the fourth century as the zenith of the construction of monuments. Interestingly, the Pronomos Vase dates to the transitional phase between these two periods.

Generally speaking, there were two groups of monuments, corresponding to the two different categories of patrons: on the one hand, the so-called choregic monuments erected by the choregoi of the dithyrambic contests at the Great Dionysia and also during the Thargelia held in honour of Apollo; on the other, a variety of monuments—painted tablets (*pinakes*), votive and grave reliefs—commissioned by other persons, such as the successful choregoi of dramatic contests as well as poets and actors. Because of the distinctively collective character of the dithyrambic contests (for both men and youths), the victorious choregoi of these choral competitions between the ten Attic phylai received a huge bronze tripod, paid for from public funds, which could—or perhaps had to—be placed on public display.²⁹ The prize was in itself a monument that had official status and public visibility; the way that it simultaneously ‘rewarded’ the successful choregoi for their financial input was an added recognition. Since no such material reward awaited successful participants of the second group, those who wished to have a commemorative monument recalling their achievements had to erect it on their own initiative.

The innumerable choregic monuments that adorned the city of Athens during the fourth century, especially along the *Tripodes*, the ‘Street of the Tripods’ must

²⁸ No less than three sumptuary laws regulating the maximum expenses for burial activities are known to have been passed in Athens. Each of these laws also redefined the relationship between ephemeral activities and permanent objects relating to the burial and public commemoration of individuals; see Garland (1989); Engels (1998).

²⁹ Cf. Wilson (2000), 102–3 for the scant evidence on the celebratory feast which publicly honoured the victorious choregoi; 206–7 on the question whether there was a legal—or indeed moral—obligation to display the tripod to the public. I do not agree with Wilson when he calls the tripod a ‘fairly plain object’ (207), compared e.g. to the Panathenaic prize amphoras. The cost alone of the metal necessary to create a tripod of three metres or more must have been considerable, in addition to which a skilled artisan would have had to be paid to execute such a complex work.

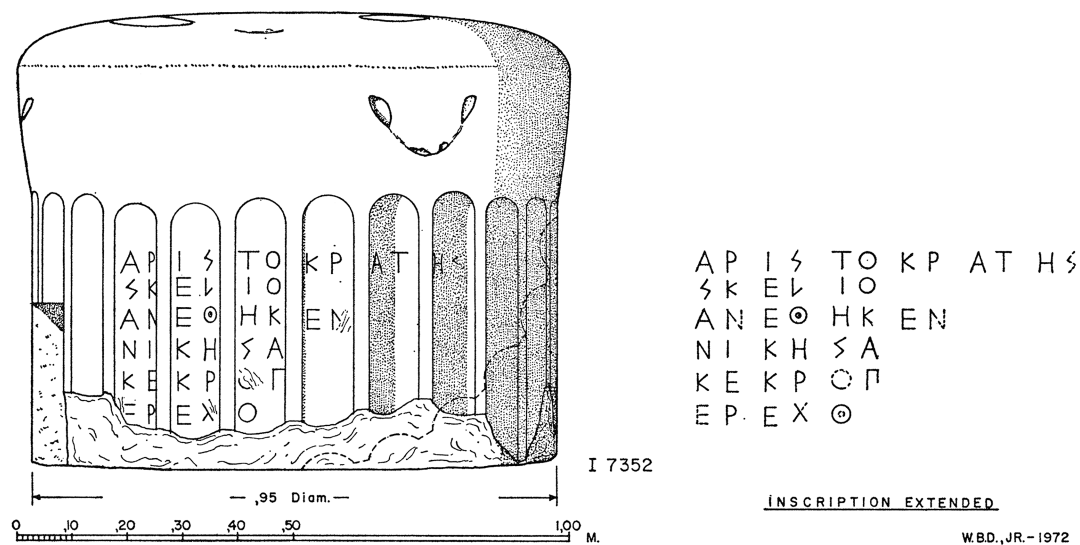


FIG. 8.6. Base of choregic monument for dithyramb, c.430

have been quite a sight.³⁰ While the tripod continued to be the official prize for the winner over a long period of time, the way in which it was presented changed considerably. Up to the late fifth century, some sort of unofficial standard seems to have governed their size and display, comparable, for example, with Attic grave monuments, which did not exceed a certain size. The choregos placed the tripod on a simple base, in most cases probably a stepped tier with an inscription identifying the donor and the reason for the dedication.³¹ Another possibility was to place the metal tripod on a base in the form of a column drum, as was done for example by Aristokrates, a victorious choregos at the Thargelia of around 430 BC (Fig. 8.6).³² The tripod on the right of the main image of the Pronomos Vase combines the two types of supports.

The privilege of publicly displaying a tripod was, however, used by some citizens to erect temple-like structures, which had the effect of reducing the official

³⁰ On the Street of the Tripods and the choregic monuments see Paus. 1.20.1; Riemann (1956a); Matthaiou (1994), 183–8; Chorémi-Spetsieri (1994); Schnurr (1995), 146–50; Vierendeel and Scholl (2002); Wilson (2000), 209–35, 304; Goette (2007). Agelidis (2009) offers a full survey of the relevant archaeological evidence. I am grateful to the author for making her manuscript accessible to me. For a tentative identification of architectural fragments as belonging to choregic monuments of the 4th cent. see Goette (1989) and (2004).

³¹ Cf. Reisch (1890), 87–9; Vierendeel and Scholl (2002), 21–2 (with further bibliography).

³² Athens, Agora Museum I 7352. IG i² 772 = IG i³ 964. Shear (1973), 173–5, fig. 7; Amandry (1977), 182, fig. 8; Wilson (2000), 304.



FIG. 8.7. Dithyrambic victory-monument of Lysikrates, 335/4

prize to an ornamental feature, despite its height of at least three metres for the award in the men's contest. Lysikrates was particularly successful in his attempt to immortalize his name: the architectural gem he had erected after his victory in 335/4 remains to this day a tourist attraction in Athens (Fig. 8.7).³³ Two other large monuments, dedicated by Thrasylllos and Nikias, in memory of their

³³ On the monument of Lysikrates see Riemann (1956*b*); Pickard-Cambridge (1964), fig. 30a–b; Bauer (1977); Ehrhardt (1993); Amandry (1997), 463–70; Wilson (2000), 219–26. For a new model of the monument in scale 1:10 see Alemdar (2000); and for a colour illustration of this see Scholl (2002), 551, no. 411.

respective victories in 320/19, are also relatively well preserved.³⁴ In recent years the number of architectural structures which can be connected with choregic commemorations has increased considerably, though unfortunately in most cases their poor state of preservation makes it difficult if not impossible to establish an exact dating.

Unfortunately, the dearth of published excavation material makes it hard to establish with any precision exactly when and how this change from simple dedication to ostentatious proclamation of a donor's status and affluence took place. But most considerations, in particular the relatively dense series of epigraphic sources, argue in favour of the years around 400 BC as the time when such dedications acquired this new flamboyancy.³⁵ In other words, at the very same time as the Pronomos Painter added the three tripods to the main image of his vase, the epinician practice underwent a fundamental change. It seems that modest displays and objects no longer satisfied the demands of some members of Athens' elite society for adequate self-representation.

The monuments belonging to the second category confirm the observations made above. From the early fifth century, it was common for dramatic choregoi to dedicate painted tablets as a record of their success, though none of these *pinakes* has survived.³⁶ Later it became fashionable to have more elaborate monuments decorated with figural reliefs, which were erected as votive gifts or sepulchral monuments.³⁷ Although the number of securely identifiable examples is relatively small, there can be no doubt that here too the transition from relatively simple to more substantial theatre monuments took place around 400 BC. One of the earliest extant examples is the well-known, late fifth-century votive relief from Peiraeus (Fig. 7.8).³⁸ It shows Dionysos lying on a *kline* (couch) on which a female figure also sits, probably *Paidia*, the personification of theatrical performance—the iconographical similarities with the main picture of the Pronomos Vase are quite obvious. Of the three men with masks, one turns to face the god and can thus be most probably identified with the donor of the relief, either a famous actor or a playwright. The earliest example of the small group of grave reliefs for poets or actors—a stele discovered on the island of

³⁴ *Thrasylllos*: Welter (1938); Townsend (1985); Amandry (1997), 459–63; Wilson (2000), 231–4, figs. 17–20; *Nikias*: Dinsmoor (1910); Wilson (2000), 226–31, figs. 15–16.

³⁵ Among the monuments erected by the 5th-cent. Athenian politician Nikias and still visible in the time of Plutarch (Plut. *Nicias* 3.3), was 'a *neos* with choregic tripods on top of it, situated in the sanctuary of Dionysos'. On possible archaeological remains of a large 5th-cent. choregic monument see Matthaiou (1994), 188 n. 29.

³⁶ On dedicatory *pinakes* see Reisch (1890), 126–42; Wilson (2000), 242–3; and Csapo in this volume.

³⁷ On reliefs and other objects commissioned by Athenian poets, actors, and dramatic choregoi see Scholl (1995) and (2000); Wilson (2000), 236–44; Scholl (2002); Vierendeel and Scholl (2002), 28–32.

³⁸ Athens, National Museum 1500. Pickard-Cambridge (1964), fig. 51; Slater (1985), 333–40, pl. 1; Scholl (1995), 222, fig. 8; Froning (2002b), 76–7, fig. 95.



FIG. 8.8. Grave-relief of poet or actor with mask, from Salamis, c.400

Salamis showing a young man holding the tragic mask of a female figure as if engaged in a dialogue with her (Fig. 8.8)—also dates from the same period as the Pronomos Vase.³⁹ It is interesting to note that whereas theatre-related votive and grave reliefs were produced throughout the entire fourth century, the desire for theatre vases like that created by the Pronomos Painter went out of fashion, despite their elaborate decoration. The reason for this is not that vase-painting in general went into decline but rather that decorated vases were no longer considered the right currency in the struggle for social prestige.

The Pronomos Vase undoubtedly marks the high point of the production of Greek ‘theatre vases’. It is perhaps not hyperbolic to maintain that this splendid showpiece can, at the same time, be seen as testimony to and a symptom of a great change or—depending on one’s point of view—even a crisis in Athenian theatre culture. With regard to its actual imagery, three aspects are particularly noteworthy. First, in not reproducing a scene from the play, the emphasis is transferred from the impact of the actual theatrical performance to the theatre as an institution. Second, the disposition of the protagonists emphasizes two sources of authority, with Dionysos as the inspiring patron of the theatre, and

³⁹ Peiraeus, Museum. Slater (1985), 340–3; Scholl (1995), 230–1, fig. 14.

the citizens of the *polis* as the promoters of the performances. Third, the emphasis on the satyr play is explained principally by the visual and semantic effectiveness of the satyrs. While it certainly cannot be said that the Pronomos Vase ‘has nothing to do with drama’, it has, I believe, quite a lot to do with a general development in classical Athens, one that changed dramatic performances into a platform upon which social distinction and advancement could be acquired. My brief survey of the relevant monuments, choregic and otherwise, is intended to give an idea of the strong dynamics of this process. In retrospect, the festive gathering on the Pronomos Vase represents both the farewell gathering for the theatre as a forum where *polis*-citizens engaged in intellectual exchange, and a welcome party for the theatre as a means of individual self-praise and promotion in the public arena of the city of Athens.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The editors are grateful to Fiona Healy for translating this chapter.