

ARCHAIC PLASTIC VASES FROM ISTHMIA

(PLATES 53–60)

FEWER THAN TWENTY complete and fragmentary Archaic plastic vases were found in the excavations conducted by the University of Chicago at Isthmia between 1952 and 1967.¹ They are all of recognizably Corinthian fabric and represent only a tiny percentage of the mass of Corinthian pottery found in the excavations in the Sanctuary of Poseidon.

Plastic vases in the forms of common animals, mythical creatures, and human figures were produced at Corinth beginning in the Protocorinthian period and continuing into the Middle Corinthian period of the 6th century B.C. They were exported far and wide and appear wherever Corinthian pottery is found. Their small mouths and the elegant shapes of the most carefully made examples have led to the assumption that they were exported as much for their contents as for themselves. As a class they are relatively rare; perhaps no more than four hundred or so are known at the present time. Figure vases are found in all sorts of contexts. The greater number show up in graves, especially when they have been imported from far away, but some are also found in domestic contexts. A few, as at Isthmia, are found in sanctuaries, where they are assumed to be dedications, although the use of their contents in cult practice is a possibility.²

¹ The traditional term “plastic vase”, derived from the word *πλαστός*, “formed or molded”, is not a happy one, not only because it is perhaps inappropriate for handmade or wheeled vases but also because it is liable to confusion with the modern material “plastic”. I have attempted, apparently without much success, to popularize the term “figure vase” for these little vases. This term was in fact used as early as 1930 by Winifred Lamb in *CVA*, Cambridge 1 [Great Britain 6]. The one thing all these little vases have in common is that they are in the form of a “figure” of some kind or another.

I must express my thanks to Elizabeth Gebhard, present Director of the University of Chicago Excavations at Isthmia, for her enthusiasm for this study and for encouraging me to publish these vases in *Hesperia*. The initial research was partially funded by a grant from the Research Council of the University of Missouri-Columbia, and the article was written while in Athens as Elizabeth Whitehead Visiting Professor for 1989–1990. New photographs of most of the objects were made by I. Ioannidou and L. Barzioti; Pls. 54:c–e and 55:a, d, e are by Frank Nesbit. Context information was provided by the Isthmia Excavations, and appreciation goes to Fritz Hemans for providing last-minute help. In the Catalogue, fabric is described with reference to the Munsell Soil Color Chart (Baltimore 1975). “NB” in the Catalogue abbreviates “Excavation Notebook”.

Works frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

- Amyx = D. A. Amyx, *Corinthian Vase Painters of the Archaic Period I–III*, Berkeley 1988
Broneer = O. Broneer, “Excavations at Isthmia, Fourth Campaign, 1957–1958,” *Hesperia* 28, 1959, pp. 298–343
Ducat = J. Ducat, “Les vases plastiques corinthiens,” *BCH* 87, 1963, pp. 431–458
Perachora I = H. Payne et al., *Perachora. The Sanctuaries of Hera Akraia and Limenia I*, Oxford 1940
Perachora II = *Perachora. The Sanctuaries of Hera Akraia and Limenia II*, T. J. Dunbabin, ed., Oxford 1962
Phillips = K. Phillips, Jr., “Notes from Berlin on a Bronze Owl,” *OpRom* 17, 1989, pp. 97–122

² Corinthian figure vases have not yet been studied from the point of view of context or function, although these aspects will be considered in a future publication by the undersigned. As at Isthmia, Corinthian figure vases are always a very small percentage of the finds from sanctuaries. The recent publication of the Greek pottery from the Demeter and Kore sanctuary at Corinth revealed only five complete Corinthian figure vases

The plastic vases from Isthmia were found throughout the sanctuary, and many of them came from the lower levels of the Large Circular Pit, located at the southwest corner of the excavation area (1–3, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16).³ Since later material came from even the lowest levels of the pit, the context here can not be used to date the plastic vases and fragments from these levels. In fact, none of the vases came from closed 6th-century deposits, as is made clear by the context information provided in the Catalogue (pp. 235–238 below).

Of the 18 figure vases and fragments, the greater number (13) are fragments of common Corinthian animal vases, particularly hares and rams. Where heads or characteristic body parts are preserved, there is no problem identifying what animal is represented (1–3, 9, hares; 4–8, rams). A number of fragments mended into parts of bodies (10–13), but such is the nature of the mass-produced Corinthian plastic vases of this type that it is difficult to tell what animal is intended: different creatures could be created simply by adding different heads to standardized bodies. These 13 fragments of the Corinthian period are presented in the Catalogue below. Five additional vases and pieces of vases (14–18) are of special interest as representing new types or versions of types within the Corinthian repertoire. Their basic information is given in the Catalogue (pp. 237–238), but detailed description and discussion appear in the text below.

A single fragment of a squatting male figure was found in the Large Circular Pit (14; Pl. 56).⁴ The corpulent figure is portrayed seated with his legs drawn up. His head is unfortunately broken away, and there is a hole broken in his chest below the right hand. The hand is modeled with the fingers indicated and appears to grasp something, now broken away, that extends down from his head, probably a beard. The hand is clearly holding something that extends slightly below the fist and is painted black. Reddish glaze can be seen at the break above the hand on the right side (Pl. 56:c). The left arm terminates in a finished, oval end; there is no hand indicated, nor was it broken away. The corpulent body shows many traces of hand modeling, and there is no evidence that the figure was wheelmade, although being relatively intact, it is difficult to be certain. The plastically rendered arms and legs were apparently outlined in glaze paint, some of which still survives. Only a small section of the hair is preserved on the figure's right side, still covered

and two fragments: E. G. Pemberton, *Corinth*, XVIII, i, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore: The Greek Pottery*, Princeton 1989, p. 178.

³ For the Large Circular Pit (Trench H) see Broneer, pp. 301–303; *idem*, “Excavations at Isthmia 1951–1961,” *Hesperia* 31, 1962, pp. 1–2; *idem*, *Isthmia*, II, *Topography and Architecture*, Princeton 1973, pp. 22–24, 135–136. As Broneer describes the pit, it was filled when the temenos was landscaped after the construction of the Classical Temple of Poseidon. Study of the contents is not complete, but the admixture of later material makes it appear that the pit was not filled before the beginning of the 4th century B.C. Most of the contents are votives from within and around the Archaic Temple of Poseidon that burned ca. 470 B.C., and many bear marks of burning. Since there is only one fire known at this time in the sanctuary, the burning marks indicate that the objects must have been originally close to, if not within, the temple. The information given for the Lots in the Catalogue indicates the date of the latest pottery found with each figure vase or fragment. For a trench plan of the excavations of 1952–1967, see M. Sturgeon, *Isthmia*, IV, *Sculpture I: 1952–1967*, Princeton 1987, plan III = E. Gebhard and F. Hemans, “University of Chicago Excavations at Isthmia, 1989: I,” *Hesperia* 61, 1992, p. 11, fig. 3.

⁴ Broneer, no. 10, pp. 335–336, pl. 71:a, b. The vase is illustrated in A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy*, 2nd ed., T. B. L. Webster, rev., Oxford 1962, pl. X:b. The caption says “with drinking horn in hand.” The figure is most probably grasping his beard, as suggested by Broneer.

with black glaze filled red in some places. This preserved section indicates that the figure must have had solid wiglike hair that ended well above the shoulder. The head was apparently pierced transversely at this point, for the lower portion of the horizontal hole is preserved. There was also a vertical filling hole in the head. A third hole is pierced through the under surface (Pl. 56:e).

The figure is liberally decorated in black glaze, shading to brown. A dot field covers the upper body and probably represents a hairy chest, for the nipples are indicated by dotted circles. The field extends upwards only to the arm on the right side and only slightly above the nipple on the left. Below, two male figures are painted in profile, facing the outline of an erect phallos, now broken away. The ithyphallic left-hand figure appears to touch the phallos with his left hand as does the right-hand figure, who may not be ithyphallic. He appears to hold a clublike object in his left hand, probably a phallos or a dildo.⁵

Dot rosettes decorate each knee of the figure, and four large circular designs are painted on his back, which is divided in two by an uneven, vertical stripe of black glaze (Pl. 56:d). The two upper designs, as those on the knees, appear to be dot rosettes with their dots fused together, a form that does not seem to be canonical, at least in the development of the dot rosette as a filling ornament in Corinthian vase painting, as outlined by Amyx. Perhaps they should be called "fused pinwheel rosettes". Their form suggests an early date, but an exact parallel is difficult to find.⁶ The two lower designs are based on the wheel, the one on the right having six spokes. The one on the left has only four spokes, with dotted circles between them.

The Isthmia figure **14** has been linked to the familiar group of squatting male figures conventionally called "komasts", but it shows several peculiar features not present in the core group.⁷ The members of this group are invariably males, represented as sitting with their knees drawn up to the body. They usually wear boots and exhibit a dot field over the front of the body and sometimes extending to the sides. It often shows borders, giving the impression of a garment, although sometimes it is considered to be simply a representation of a hairy body. These vases were generally made in half-molds with hands, feet, phallos, and heads added separately, although a few early(?) examples are reported to have been wheelmade, and there are handmade examples.⁸ The hand modeling of the arms and legs on

⁵ The figure is too small and indistinct to be able to tell with certainty what is illustrated.

⁶ Amyx (II, p. 372) gives the development of this filling ornament as first, the pinwheel rosette, followed by the dot-cluster rosettes, fused dot-cluster rosettes, dot in circle, and finally the solid, incised rosette. Sloppiness might be to blame for the strange form on **14**, which appears to be oddly paralleled in a local Sicilian imitation of a Transitional Corinthian olpe: Amyx III, pl. 130.

⁷ Broneer, pp. 335–336. For the typical Corinthian komast vase, see Ducat, figs. 7, 11, 15–17 and the discussion by Amyx (II, pp. 530–532).

⁸ R. A. Higgins (*Catalogue of the Terracottas in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, British Museum* II, London 1959, p. 39) lists three "earlier . . . apparently wheel-made" examples. One of these is the plastic vase from Isthmia, one is from the Louvre, and one is in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. The Oxford example (G 1291) is a fragment of the lower half of the figure and clearly shows wheel marks. I am indebted to Michael Vickers for allowing me to examine this piece. As indicated above, it is possible that the Isthmia figure is handmade.

Perhaps to be added to this wheelmade group on the basis of its bulbous body is the komast once in the Musée de l'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva: J. Chamay and J.-L. Maier, *Céramiques corinthiennes*, Geneva 1984, pp. 140–141; *Antiquities* (Sotheby, London, July 13, 1987), no. 189.

14 and their outlining with glaze paint are paralleled in the handmade, sacklike, squatting-man vase in Munich, considered Corinthian by Maximova, Payne, and Buschor and dated to the third quarter of the 7th century by Lullies (Pl. 57:a).⁹

Although the pose of the Isthmia figure is similar to that of the core group of Corinthian komasts, the position of the arms is unique. Corinthian komast vases either have both hands together at chest level or have one there and the other lower. Never does one hand grasp a beard, as ours appears to do. The lack of a left hand is an unusual feature but is paralleled in an Early Corinthian komast from Corinth that also has a handleless left arm (Pl. 57:b).¹⁰ It is a pity that the head of the Isthmia vase is missing; the short wig is unusual, as is the transverse string hole. The short hair in a solid mass would seem to be an early feature, present in several Protocorinthian figure vases in the form of squatting men.¹¹ The head was pierced vertically for filling, as would be expected, but the secondary hole in the base is unexpected and difficult to explain.¹² The dot-field decoration is appropriate for the komast figures, as mentioned above; here it appears to represent a hairy chest.

As has been indicated, various details suggest a relatively early date for this vase, perhaps as early as the Early Corinthian period in the late 7th century, and it may be an early example of the komast type before the form had been fully developed.

The head of what may be another, but cruder, komast plastic vase is shown in Plate 57:c, d (15). A simple hole through the top of the head served for filling, and a single, horizontally placed lug is placed behind the head. The neck of the pot was pinched in to form a nose and two eyes, each rendered by a black dot surrounded by two circles of black glaze. Black paint is also preserved on the head and down the sides of the neck, overlapping the edge of the garment(?), where it perhaps represents hair. Traces of black are also preserved below the eyes on either side of the nose, and faint traces of paint suggest that originally a beard was indicated. The figure appears to wear a garment which is dotted and, across its chest, seems to have a decorated border, or perhaps there is a necklace consisting of a line of short, upright rectangles between parallel lines. A curved border on the left side of the fragment at the front, close to the break, indicates further decoration.

These handmade figures are difficult to date, and no parallels suggest themselves, other than general ones to "bird-face" figurines with pinched faces. The curving vase body and the

⁹ Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen 6636: M. I. Maximova, *Les vases plastiques dans l'antiquité*, trans. Carsow, Paris 1927, no. 168, p. 143, pl. 45; H. Payne, *Necrocorinthia*, Oxford 1931, p. 173; E. Buschor, "Satyrtänze und frühes Drama," *SBMünchen* 1943, 5, p. 10; *CVA*, Munich 3 [Germany 9], p. 46, pl. 148 [430]:7-9. This figure's back also has a vertical center stripe. I would like to thank Dr. Berthold Kaeser of the Staatliche Antikensammlungen in Munich for information concerning this vase and for permission to publish the photograph of it.

¹⁰ C-62-624: D. A. Amyx and P. Lawrence, *Corinth, VII, ii, Archaic Corinthian Pottery and the Anaploga Well*, Princeton 1975, no. AN 343, p. 165, pl. 84. Appreciation goes to the Corinth Excavations for permission to publish the photograph of this fragment.

¹¹ K. Wallenstein, *Korinthische Plastik des 7. und 6. Jahrhunderts vor Christus*, Bonn 1971, nos. 1A 1-3, p. 95, pls. 1, 2.

¹² Broneer (p. 336) refers to "the trick use of holes for manipulating the contents," but it is hard to see just how this would work, particularly if these vases contained perfumes or perfumed oils as is generally thought. Presumably the vase was fired with its pierced head on, and so a firing hole in this position would not have been needed. Protocorinthian figure vases often had filling holes in anatomically correct places on such figures as birds, but to my knowledge Corinthian komast vases had only a single hole, located in the head.

neck decoration bring to mind the late Early Corinthian komast from Corinth (Pl. 57:b), but there the head is molded.¹³ Vertically pierced, crude handmade heads occasionally turn up, and they may not have all belonged to crude versions of the komast vases.¹⁴

A complete vase in the form of a standing duck was also recovered from the Large Circular Pit (16; Pl. 58).¹⁵ The bird is depicted standing with its head pointing downwards so that the bill rests on its chest and is attached there. Its long neck loops upwards, the resulting hole probably serving for a string so that the vase could be suspended, as are most Corinthian plastic vases. A simple hole in the top of the head served for filling (Pl. 58:b). Its feet are two long strips of clay. Although it is difficult to be certain, the body was probably made in two half-molds with the feet and neck added. The vase was decorated with both incision and paint. Incision was used extensively: for the eyes (a simple circle within a circle), the markings on the bill, the outline of the wings, the single row of flight feathers, and the overlapping oval scale pattern on the back. Little trace of color remains on the head; the chest was apparently simply painted black, and traces of black glaze can still be seen. Relatively large amounts of red are preserved on the shoulder panels (wing coverts), and the incised flight feathers alternated red and black, according to the preserved traces. The black, incised scale pattern on the back was brightened by white dots, apparently placed one in each scale, but the condition of the surface of the back makes it difficult to be certain of their distribution.

Ducks are relatively scarce among the plastic vases of Corinth, but there are numerous examples from East Greece.¹⁶ There is a well-known duck from Corinth in Berlin, generally considered Protocorinthian, whose head is in a similar position but without the neck loop and with the filling hole under the tail.¹⁷ There are fragments of two duck vases from Perachora. One preserves the head, upper neck, and a non-joining fragment of the body and is decorated with a dot field and purple-painted feathers.¹⁸ The beak is attached to the lower neck, which is shorter and not looped. The orifice of the vessel is in the head, and a hole, presumably for suspension, is pierced through the bill just where it joins the head. A fragment of a second vase is only a head, but enough is preserved to show that it was in the same pose, bill flat on the neck, as the other Corinthian examples.¹⁹ Perhaps the downward-pointing head attached to the body can be cited as one of the characteristics of Corinthian plastic vases in the shape of ducks. The orifice is again in the head, and this time a hole is pierced through the head where the eyes should be, again presumably for suspension. A

¹³ Amyx and Lawrence, *loc. cit.* (note 10 above).

¹⁴ For instance, Corinth KP 2302 from the Potters' Quarter is a handmade head, apparently from a figure vase of unknown shape: A. N. Stillwell and J. L. Benson, *Corinth*, XV, iii, *The Potters' Quarter: The Pottery*, Princeton 1984, no. 1429, p. 257, pl. 59.

¹⁵ Broneer, no. 5, p. 334, pl. 70:e.

¹⁶ For East Greek waterfowl see J. Ducat, *Les vases plastiques rhodiens archaïques en terre cuite (BEFAR 209)*, Paris 1966, pp. 91–94. For ducks in Robertson's Group of East Greek figure vases see W. Biers, "The Dozing Duck: A Rare Plastic Vase," *Muse* 18, 1984, pp. 26–34. Ducks are also popular in Etruria and other western areas (see note 17 below).

¹⁷ Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung V.I. 3676. For new photos and relevant bibliography, see Phillips, p. 106, note 40, p. 118, fig. 25:a, b.

¹⁸ *Perachora* I, no. 202, p. 236, pl. 105, dated by Jenkins to the late 7th or early 6th century and by Ducat, "less convincingly" (Amyx II, p. 518), not before the mid-6th century.

¹⁹ *Perachora* I, no. 203, p. 236, pl. 106, dated as "VIC" by Jenkins.

body fragment that appears to belong to another duck vase was found at Corinth in 1954.²⁰ Preserved is the beginning of the curve of the neck and a portion of the shoulder panels, which are decorated in a black-glazed incised scale pattern with red dots apparently randomly sprinkled in the scales. The scale pattern at the shoulders recalls a similar decoration on Protocorinthian owls and on the back of 16.²¹ Although stylistic dating of the Isthmian duck is hazardous at best, it is probably best placed in the Corinthian period, perhaps in the early 6th century.²²

A single, very worn fragment of a female-headed animal vase was found in 1966 (17; Pl. 59). Only the upper part of the creature is preserved, consisting of a moldmade head on a wheelmade body. The head is pierced vertically with a simple hole in the typical Corinthian method for filling plastic vases. From underneath it can be seen that the hole was simply punched through from above with a dowel-like instrument. Two suspension holes were also bored on either side of the neck. The hair is treated as a solid mass, scalloped in shallow waves over the forehead and falling straight down to where it is offset from the body of the creature. Two rectangular slabs of clay were added on both side of the face, adding to the wiglike quality of the hair. This is an unusual feature for Corinthian plastic vases but is known in terracottas in which, occasionally, side hair is not striated but simply treated as a solid, rectangular mass.²³

The vase was once highly decorated, but only traces of the painted decoration are now visible; in many cases only “ghosts” of the black glaze are preserved, and these are so faint that it is difficult to be certain of the details. Patches of black are to be seen on the hair, and traces of white can be made out on the right side of the face. An interesting detail is that the hair was shown to end in a wavy border; traces of this border can still be seen on the body of the animal, just below the offset hair. It is best preserved on the left side of the creature (Pl. 59:a). Similarly, each of the rectangular locks on either side of the face was visually continued onto the body of the animal by a painted extension, only vaguely visible in the photographs (cf. Pl. 59:a). Three rectangular projections extend down below each slab, as if to represent the tied and decorated bottom of the wig. Visible below the chin and between the suspension lines are the faint remains of three lines indicating that perhaps a necklace was originally represented. The body of the creature was covered with a dot field, both over the chest below the presumed necklace and above and behind the wings.

The wings of the creature curved upwards on its back and are for the most part preserved only in faint traces, with the exception of relatively large amounts of purple on the shoulder panels. The flight feathers consist of two rows of oval feathers, the second, larger

²⁰ C-54-11: M. C. Roebuck, “Excavations at Corinth: 1954,” *Hesperia* 24, 1955, p. 152, pl. 60:10 (dated Middle Corinthian, “early part of the sixth century,” p. 152).

²¹ For Protocorinthian owls see Phillips, figs. 16, 17, 19.

²² Amyx (II, p. 518, note 318) considered the vase “apparently” Protocorinthian and said it closely resembled Protocorinthian owl vases. This is presumably based on the general body shape and the incision, but the filling hole placed in the head and the long added feet might better place it in the Corinthian period.

²³ See the figurines *Perachora* I, no. 38, pl. 91 (dated to the end of the 7th century); A. N. Stillwell, *Corinth*, XV, ii, *The Potters' Quarter: The Terracottas*, Princeton 1952, no. VIII.6, p. 63, pl. 10 (dated “somewhere near the end of the third quarter of the 7th century or the beginning of the last quarter”); *ibid.*, no. VIII.12, p. 66, pl. 11 (dated last quarter of the 7th century).

row curving up over the back almost to the neck. On the right side the full extent of the wing is preserved. It is completed before the break, which has a very slight upward curve (just visible in Plate 59:c), and this perhaps gives a hint as to the identification of the creature portrayed.

The animal could be either a siren or a sphinx, for a female head on a winged body is appropriate for either creature in the repertoire of Corinthian plastic vases. The typical Corinthian siren vase, however, has a more rounded, globular bird body, with the female head generally set higher.²⁴ **17** seems to have a longer body, more appropriate to a recumbent, four-legged animal such as a sphinx. Sphinxes are not numerous among Corinthian figure vases, but where they exist, they share one peculiarity with another four-footed animal, the lion: a tail. The tail in vases representing both creatures is rendered plastically and is shown elegantly curved up over the flank and draped over the back. The raised lip at the break on **17** could be the remains of such an appendage; the fact that the wings are very short and terminate before the break indicates that something was once there.

The Isthmia sphinx vase does not find a close parallel among the other known examples of sphinxes from Corinth. Ducat divided the 11 examples he knew into three groups, only one of which has painted wings ("Groupe du Visage Attentif"), but this group is completely different from **17**, with stylized, vertical feathers and more elongated bodies. A shorter, more compact body is found on the only example of a sphinx in Ducat's "Groupe de Mégara Hyblaea".²⁵ Here, however, the creature is wingless and faces to her left, rather than frontally. She was, on the other hand, highly finished with an elaborate necklace.

Other Corinthian sphinx vases with horizontally painted wings did apparently exist, to judge from a fragment of one found in Corinth in 1902 but now missing. The small illustration published seems to indicate that a portion of the shoulder panel was preserved on the right side of fragments and that she also wore a necklace.²⁶

Chronologically, plastic vases in the form of sphinxes belong to the Corinthian period; no Protocorinthian examples have yet been recognized, although the creature is well represented in the painting of the period. The date has to be determined on style, and both earlier and later features are present.²⁷ The unstriated, vertical hair mass appears in figurines of the late 7th century, as has been mentioned, but it is unclear how chronologically significant this may be. In Corinthian painting, wings are usually depicted with a single row of flight feathers, springing from a solid painted shoulder, but double and even triple rows may be an early feature, certainly to be seen on Protocorinthian plastic vases.²⁸ A few examples of two rows of wing feathers similar to **17**, however, are known in Early Corinthian.²⁹ The overall

²⁴ Ducat, p. 451, figs. 22, 23.

²⁵ For these two groups, see Ducat, pp. 439–440, 447–450. For the sphinx in the Groupe de Mégara Hyblaea, Syracuse 11343, see Ducat, p. 448, fig. 14. Ducat's third group, Groupe Stathatos, comprises side-facing sphinxes with cylindrical, relatively coarsely modeled bodies, very different from **17**; see Ducat, p. 445.

²⁶ D. M. Robinson, "Ointment-Vases from Corinth," *AJA* 10, 1906, p. 425, fig. 4. This article published five Corinthian plastic vases which are no longer in Corinth. See the discussion of Phillips, p. 104, note 27.

²⁷ This fragment came from a mixed context with a lower date in the 5th century, Isthmia Lot 2284.

²⁸ Illustrations of Protocorinthian avian vases can be found in F. Johansen, "Der er Uglen," *MedKøb* 32, 1975, pp. 99–118, esp. figs. 1–5, 7, 9–11, and more recently in Phillips, figs. 14–17, 19, 25, 31.

²⁹ S. S. Weinberg, *Corinth*, VII, i, *The Geometric and Orientalizing Pottery*, Cambridge, Mass. 1943, no. 251, p. 65, pl. 34; *Perachora* II, no. 1525, p. 143, pl. 59.

shape of the face and the scalloped hair also seem to fit better into the early 6th century, perhaps the first quarter.³⁰

A problem piece is illustrated in Plate 59:d (18). A single fragment of the lower portion of a bird body preserves the stubby tail and a portion of the curving side wall of the right side of the bird. A groove along the right side delineates the resting surface. The underside of the vessel was pierced for a filling hole, which was bordered on the body side by an enclosed-tongue design executed in now faded black glaze. The small, flat tail was also pierced, presumably for suspension. The hole appears distinctly off center, but the left side of the tail has been broken away. The body of the creature as well as the tail was covered with a dot field.

The fragment was found in the same trench on the same day and is virtually identical in fabric and faded decoration to 17. Both the excavator and others have considered it a non-joining fragment of the sphinx vase. The filling hole in the underside makes this unlikely, however, for figure vases generally require only one filling hole, and the sphinx (17) was filled through the head. It is best to disassociate the two fragments, and a very close parallel, in fact, exists to 18 in a complete vase now in Vienna (Pl. 60:a–c).³¹

The Vienna vase has a typically Corinthian avian form but is topped by a solid, crude head. The head is turned at an angle to the body (Pl. 60:b) and is roughly worked; clay dots indicate eyes, and a relatively large beak has been broken away. The bird is covered with a dot field, with a row of enclosed-tongue design around the neck and around the filling hole, which is located under the tail (Pl. 60:c), as on the Isthmia fragment. The tail of the Vienna bird also has a pierced hole in it, but the vase lacks the horizontal groove, apparently having a more rounded body. The tongue design, identical on both fragments, is an early feature, as is the placement of the filling hole under the tail, a characteristic of Protocorinthian bird vases.³²

A third example of this shape is in New York (Pl. 60:d, e).³³ The decoration is virtually identical except that the design around the filling hole consists of enclosed dots rather than enclosed tongues.

The New York and Vienna birds and the Isthmia fragment (18) can be seen as constituting a new group of Corinthian plastic vases in which Corinthian bird shapes retain Protocorinthian characteristics. Presumably, then, they should be dated early in the Early Corinthian period.

The small collection of vases from Isthmia has thus added new versions of Corinthian types, as well as a completely new example, to the body of Corinthian plastic vases. The

³⁰ Compare *Corinth* XV, ii (note 23 above), no. XII.1, p. 98, pl. 17 and *Perachora* I, no. 224, p. 108, pl. 108 (= Wallenstein [note 11 above], no. IVA1, p. 112, pl. 7:1, "Middle Corinthian").

³¹ Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, IV 3567. I must thank Dr. Bernhard-Walcher of the Kunsthistorisches Museum for providing the photographs of this vase and permission to publish them. The vase is reported to have been acquired in Greece in the 19th century.

³² For the tongue design on early Protocorinthian vases, see K. Friis Johansen, *Les vases sicyoniens*, Paris/Copenhagen 1925, no. 5, pl. 5. For the location of filling holes in Protocorinthian bird vases, see Payne (note 9 above), p. 174.

³³ M.M.A. 41.162.22: *CVA*, Fogg Museum and Gallatin Collections [USA 8], Gallatin Collections, pp. 83–84, pl. 34 [381]:1; G. M. A. Richter, *Handbook of the Greek Collection*, Cambridge, Mass. 1953, p. 36, pl. 24:c. I would like to thank Joan Mertens for providing the photographs and permission to publish them and for her support and encouragement.

plastic vase, by its very nature, invited new creations, as has been clearly shown by this group from the excavations at Isthmia.

CATALOGUE

1. Head of a hare Pl. 53:a
 IP 2061A: Large Circular Pit, Trench H, at depth of 15.50–15.80 m.; NB 20, 1958, pp. 303, 307; Lot 2342, first half 5th century B.C.
 P.L. 0.049, p.H. 0.035 m.
 White fabric, 5YR 8/1.
 Single fragment preserving head and ears. Ears treated as a single pointed mass behind tubular head. Suspension hole behind head; filling hole in top of head. Black glaze paint for markings of eyes, head, and ears.
 The hares, 1–3, and the following rams belong to Ducat's group of "Animaux Grossièrement Modelés"; see Ducat, pp. 455–457. For a complete hare of this type, see p. 457, fig. 28.
2. Head of a hare Pl. 53:b
 IP 2061B: Large Circular Pit, Trench H, at depth of 15.50–15.80 m.; NB 20, 1958, pp. 303, 307; Lot 2342, first half 5th century B.C.
 IP 2440: Large Circular Pit, Trench H, at depth of 15.65–18.05 m.; NB 20, 1959, p. 324.
 P.L. 0.055, p.H. 0.035 m.
 White fabric, 5YR 8/1.
 Two joining fragments forming head and part of left shoulder of hare of same type as 1. Ears broken away at end. Horizontal suspension hole below ears; filling hole on top of head. Markings in red brown for eyes, muzzle, and ear outlines. Lower body dotted.
3. Head of a hare Pl. 53:c
 IP 1842: Large Circular Pit, Trench H, at depth of 14.75 m.; NB 15, 1958, p. 131; Lot 1418, first half 5th century B.C.
 P.L. 0.055, p.H. 0.022 m.
 Pinkish white fabric, 5YR 8/2.
 Single fragment preserving head and ears. Horizontal suspension hole in ear behind head; filling hole on top of head. Ears attached to body, curve up at ends. Painted decoration mostly worn away; traces of double black stripe outlining ears can still be seen. This head, with ears attached to the body, is a variant of 1 and 2. For another variant with the ears attached but curving down at the ends, see Ducat, p. 457, fig. 26.
4. Head of a ram Pl. 54:a
 IM 1132: Archaic Temple debris outside Earlier Stadium II embankment, Trench R-28; NB 12, 1956, p. 103; Lot 1141, early 5th century B.C., with numerous Archaic horse figurines.³⁴
 P.L. 0.035, p.H. 0.034 m.
 Very pale brown fabric, 10YR 8/4.
 Single fragment preserving head of standard ram type. Horns, which would have been rendered by coiled strips of clay, broken away. Sloping holes through now missing horns served as suspension holes; filling hole in top of head. Painted decoration in reddish glaze paint: eye, details of head; dot field over body.
 For the common type of Corinthian ram vase, see Ducat, p. 457, fig. 27.
5. Head of a ram Pl. 54:b
 IM 1189: Archaic Temple debris within Earlier Stadium II embankment, Trench R-30; NB 12, 1956, p. 119; Lot 421, early 5th century B.C. See 4 above.
 P.L. 0.025, p.H. 0.023 m.
 Light-gray fabric, 10YR 7/1.
 Single fragment of head of standard ram, preserved from filling hole forward. Small portion of back below head also preserved.
6. Head of a ram Pl. 54:c
 IP 2012: North Temenos, Trench NTDW, within terrace fill south of the second Roman temenos

³⁴ 4, 5, and 13 were probably votives in the Archaic Temple that were disposed of in the eastern temenos terrace after the fire of ca. 470 B.C. 13 comes from a deposit of ash and burnt animal bones that lies over the Archaic terrace, east of the long altar. 5 comes from a hard-packed surface over the ash deposit and 4 from a disturbance made in that surface during Roman times.

wall; NB 15, 1958, p. 179; Lot 1248, mostly Archaic but extending to early 2nd century after Christ.

P.H. 0.016, p.W. 0.031 m.

White fabric, 10YR 8/2.

Single fragment of the head of a ram like 5, broken at both ends. Neither head nor neck preserved; right horn and one half of left horn preserved. Traces of black glaze paint on horns; dots between horns.

7. Head of a ram Pl. 54:d

IM 1262: North Temenos, Trench IV, within early terrace fill south of the second Roman temenos wall; NB 10, 1956, p. 196, Archaic to early 5th century B.C.

P.H. 0.03, p.W. 0.035 m.

White fabric, 10YR 8/2.

Single fragment preserving neck of larger ram than the three preceding examples. Only one half of right horn preserved, and only one half of suspension hole still shows. No traces of painted decoration.

8. Head of a ram Pl. 54:e

IP 3180: Large Circular Pit, Trench H; NB 31, 1960, p. 613; Lot 1469, first half 5th century B.C.

P.L. 0.047, p.H. 0.03 m.

White fabric, 10YR 8/2.

Single crude fragment preserving portion of neck and head with large, cylindrical muzzle. Small part of right horn preserved. Filling hole in head. No traces of painted details, but coarse, red-brown glaze paint preserved on neck.

9. Body fragment of a hare vase Pl. 55:a

IP 2061C: Large Circular Pit, Trench H, at depth of 15.30–15.70 m.; NB 20, 1958, p. 311; Lot 1421, first half 5th century B.C.

P.L. 0.03, p.H. 0.033 m.

White fabric, 5YR 8/1.

Single fragment of wheelmade haunch of vase in form of hare. Preserved: tail and one foot in form of added strips of clay. Traces of red paint on foot; faded dot field overall.

10. Body of a resting quadruped Pl. 55:b

IP 329: Temple of Poseidon, Archaic Temple debris,³⁵ Trench C-8; NB 4, 1954, p. 85.

P.L. 0.069, p.W. 0.035 m.

Reddish yellow fabric, 5YR 7/6.

Six joining fragments making up lower portion of wheelmade, resting animal. Feet rendered in applied, oval strips of clay. Traces of burning on right side. Body decorated with red-purple dot field; feet are covered with same color. Red zigzag line on belly between legs.

Without the upper portion, it is uncertain whether this plastic vase was in the form of a standard hare, a ram, or even a sphinx. All three often have zigzag lines on the belly, and the proportions and shape would be appropriate for a large hare or ram.

11. Body fragment Pl. 55:c

IP 2053: Large Circular Pit, Trench H, at depth of 15.20–15.40 m.; NB 20, 1958, pp. 267, 287; Lot 1429, first half 5th century B.C.

P.L. 0.037, p.H. 0.03 m.

White fabric, 10YR 8/2, shading to very pale brown on surface, 10YR 8/3.

Two joining fragments of handmade body with two conical buttons of clay for feet. Broken away all around, leaving only part of lower portion of figure. Surface worn. Where preserved, decoration in faded glaze paint showing overall net pattern on the sides, rectangular panels before and behind feet on under surface, and double line of dots within rectangular panel between feet.

Without the upper portion of this vase, not to mention the front and rear portions, it is difficult to understand what creature is represented. The netlike

³⁵ During the robbing of the remains of the Classical Temple to provide blocks for the construction of the Late Antique trans-Isthmian wall, a trench was dug through a portion of the Archaic Temple destruction deposits underlying the floor of the later temple. The excavated fill was dumped into the foundation trench for the columns *in antis* of the Classical pronaos. As a result of new excavation and study of the remains of the Archaic Temple, this area has been defined as the location of the pronaos for the early Archaic Temple. This deposit and the undisturbed deposits immediately to the west of it contained over 130 Archaic silver coins and a large number of small votives. 12 comes from a similar deposit to the west.

decoration is similar to the so-called "flame fleece" common on lions to indicate the mane and often used in less canonical forms on rams and panthers. For flame fleece, see W. R. Biers, "Ancient Figure Vases in the Elvehjem Collection," *Bulletin of the Elvehjem Museum of Art* (University of Wisconsin-Madison), 1987/1988 [1989], pp. 15–16. These creatures, however, are usually shown in the resting quadruped form as 10. The overall shape might work for a bird, which has a rounded body, or for one of the combination creatures that use a bird shape, such as a siren or a lion bird (Ducat, p. 451, figs. 22–25). The treatment of the feet is unusual for these creatures and the decoration is not appropriate, at least in comparison to those that have so far been recognized.

12. Body fragment Pl. 55:d

IP 349: Temple of Poseidon, Archaic Temple debris,³⁶ Trench C-6; NB 4, 1954, pp. 91, 93; Lot 260, early 5th century B.C.

P.L. 0.032, p.H. 0.032, D. 0.04 m.

Light brownish gray fabric, 10YR 6/2.

Two joining fragments forming rounded rear end of wheelmade animal. Two feet preserved as added rectangular clay slabs. Discolored by burning; only traces of decoration preserved: dot field over body; behind feet, design in form of thick circle (diam. 0.014–0.015 m.) within which is a circular area formed by ca. 15 black dots (anus?).

The oval shape of the fragment would be appropriate for a number of animals, especially hares and rams, but the small feet are once again unusual.

13. Body fragment Pl. 55:e

IP 3053: outside Earlier Stadium II embankment, Trench R-28, sacrificial ash deposit over Archaic terrace; NB 12, 1956, p. 113. See 4 above.

P.L. 0.037, p.H. 0.039, p.W. 0.023 m.

White fabric, 10YR 8/2.

Single, cylindrical wheelmade fragment preserving right rear side and one rectangular added foot. Dot field on body in relatively ordered rows, at rear in no particular order. Foot black; wavy lines preserved

next to foot apparently ran length of figure between feet.

The cylindrical shape reminds one of some hares (Ducat, p. 457, fig. 26), but not enough is preserved to make a positive identification.

14. Male figure Pl. 56

IP 1708: Large Circular Pit, Trench H, at depth of 12.25 m.; NB 15, 1958, p. 101; Lot 1461, first half 5th century B.C.

P.H. 0.055, W. 0.047 m.

Very pale brown fabric, 10YR 8/3.

For description and bibliography, see pp. 228–230 above.

15. Head from a plastic vase Pl. 57:c, d

IP 3421: North Temenos, east extension of second North Temenos trench, within fill south of second Roman temenos wall; NB 6, 1954, p. 93; Lots 15, 70, 90, and 196, to middle of 1st century after Christ.

P.H. 0.04, p.W. 0.032 m.

White fabric, shading to pale yellow on surface, 5Y 8/3–10YR 8/1.

For description, see pp. 230–231 above.

16. Duck Pl. 58

IP 1841: Large Circular Pit, Trench H, at depth of 15.00–15.30 m.; NB 20, 1958, pp. 259, 263; Lot 1415, first half 5th century B.C.

L. 0.071, H. 0.057 m.

White fabric, 10YR 8/2.

For description and bibliography, see pp. 231–232 above.

17. Fragment of a sphinx vase Pl. 59:a–c

IP 3915: North Temenos, Trench NW-W1, amidst building blocks and debris from Archaic Temple; NB 50, 1966, p. 34; Lot 2284, Archaic and early 5th century B.C. See 18.

P.H. 0.06, p.L. 0.06 m.

White fabric, 10YR 8/2.

For description and bibliography, see pp. 232–234 above.

³⁶ See note 35 above.

18. Fragment of bird vase Pl. 59:d P.L. 0.045, p.W. 0.023, p.H. 0.03 m.
IP 3916: North Temenos, Trench NW-W1, White fabric, 10YR 8/2.
amidst building blocks and debris from Archaic For description and discussion, see p. 234 above.
Temple; NB 50, 1966, p. 34; Lot 2284, Archaic
and early 5th century B.C.³⁷

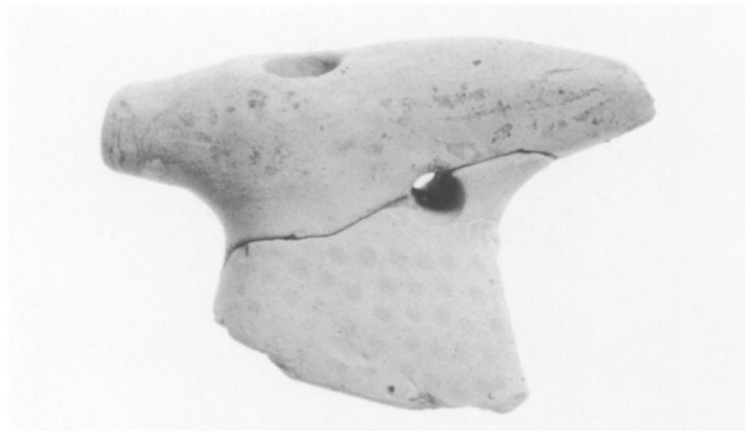
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³⁷ The dumping of destruction debris from the Archaic Temple into the northwest gully did not occur until the third quarter of the 5th century B.C., presumably after the Classical Temple was completed.



a. Head of a hare IP 2061A



b. Head of a hare IP 2440, IP 2061B



c. Head of a hare IP 1842

PLATE 54



a. Head of a ram IM 1132



b. Head of a ram IM 1189



c. Head of a ram IP 2012



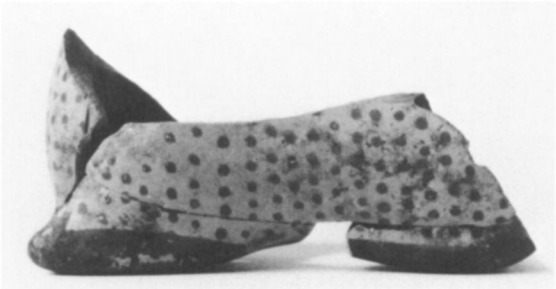
d. Head of a ram IM 1262



e. Head of a ram IP 3180



a. Body of resting hare IP 2061C



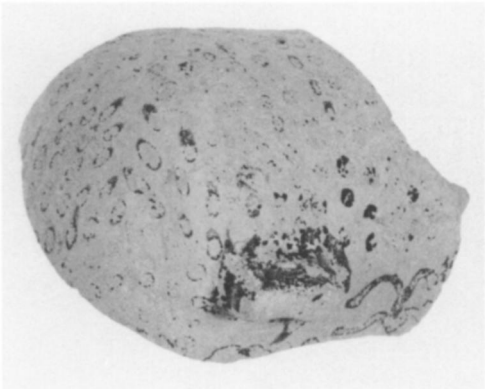
b. Resting quadruped IP 329



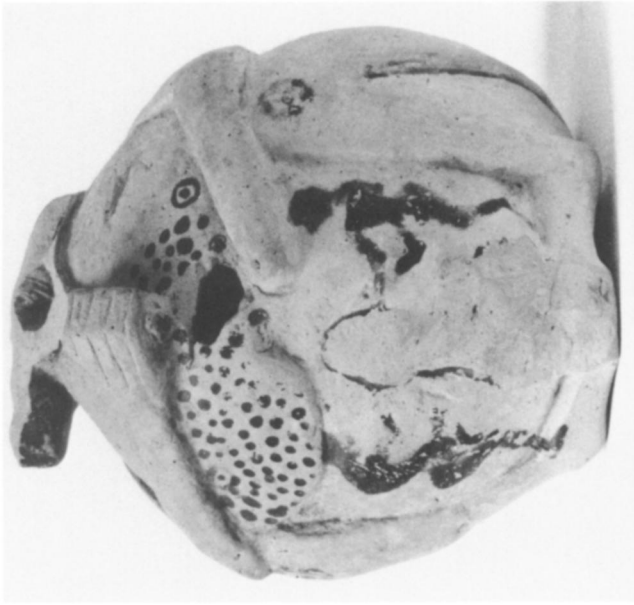
c. Body fragment IP 2053



d. Body fragment IP 349



e. Body fragment IP 3053



a. Squatting komast IP 1708, front view



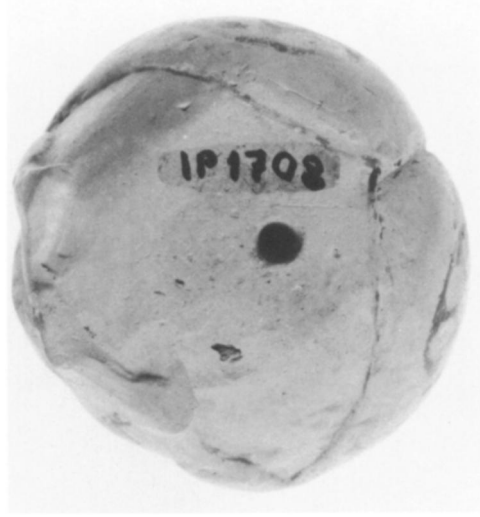
b. Left side



c. Right side view



d. Back view



e. Underside



a. Squatting man, Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen 6636. Reproduced by permission



b. Fragmentary komast in Corinth C-62-624. Reproduced by permission



c. Crude head IP 3421, front view



d. IP 3421, back view



a. Duck vase IP 1841, side view



b. Front view



c. Back view



a. Sphinx vase IP 3915, left side view



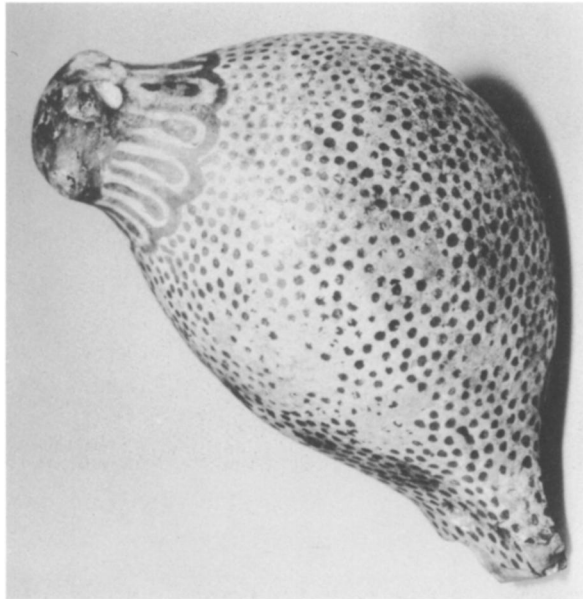
b. IP 3915, front view



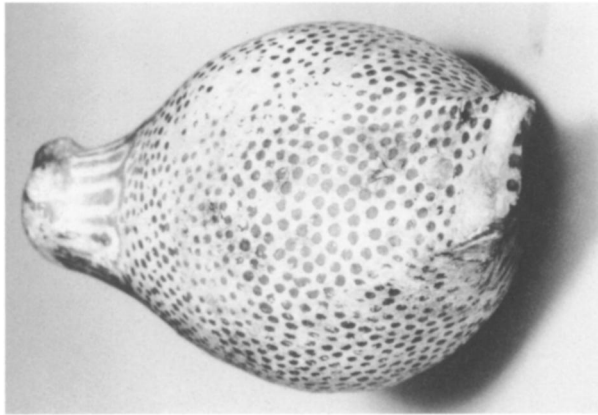
c. IP 3915, right side view



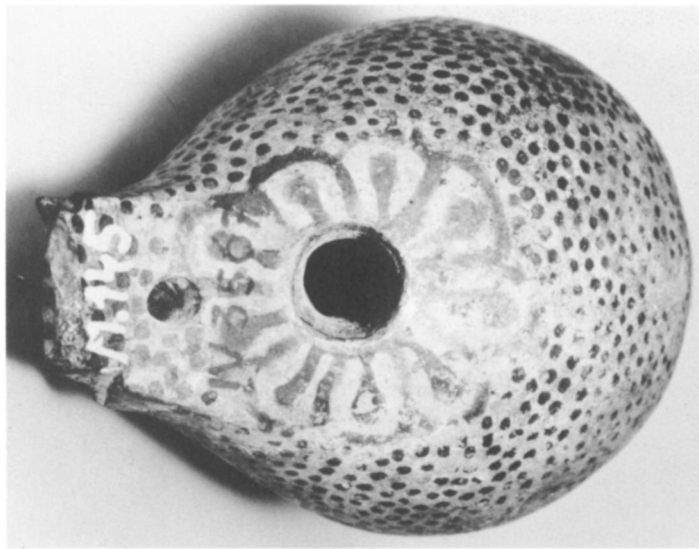
d. Body fragment IP 3916



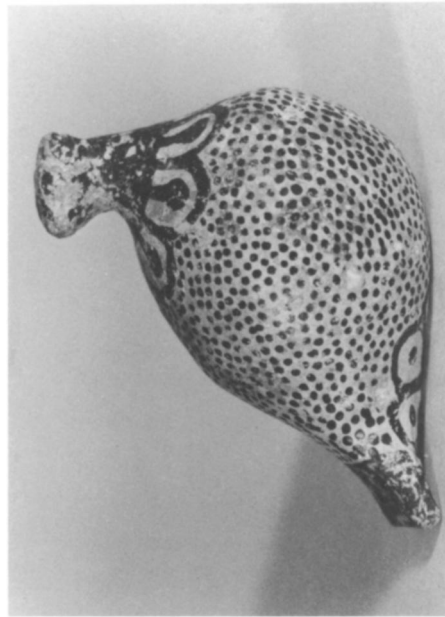
a. Bird vase, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum IV 3567, side view. Reproduced by permission



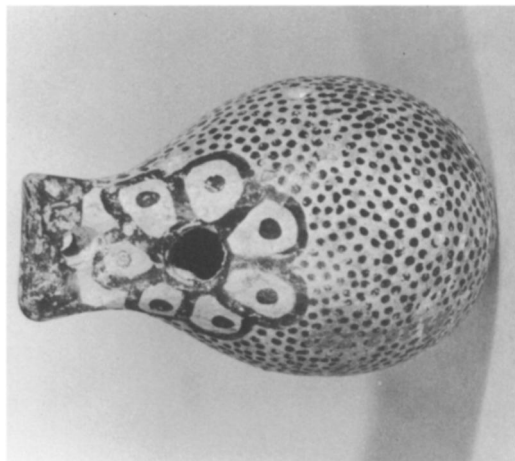
b. IV 3567, back view



c. IV 3567, underside showing filling hole



d. Bird vase, New York, M.M.A. 41.162.22. Reproduced by permission



e. M.M.A. 41.162.22, underside