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Excavations in the Roman Forum

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THE EARLIEST DEPICTION OF AN ARMED ACROBATIC DANCE: THE LAMBROS OINOCHOE: *Mary R. McGittigan*, University of Pennsylvania

The so-called Lambros oinochoe (Louvre CA 2509), an Attic vase dated ca. 750–725 B.C., bears a single decorative frieze consisting of 16 figures, all helmeted, most bearing arms and some equipped with Dipylon shields. Previous efforts to explain the scene all commence with the assumption that the action takes place on a field of battle and that the figures are divisible into two groups of opposing warriors. Some scholars (G. Ahlberg, *Fighting on Land and Sea in Greek Geometric Art* [Stockholm 1971] and K. Fittschen, *Untersuchungen zum Beginn der Sagedarstellungen bei der Griechen* [Berlin 1969]) have interpreted the frieze as a depiction of post-battle violence involving the disarming, maltreatment, and murder of the captured enemy. One author (K. Friis-Johansen, *Aias und Hektor: ein vorhomerisches Heldenlied?* [Copenhagen 1961]), while retaining the notion of a battlefield setting, has suggested that the figures are participants in a peaceful interlude. He proposed that the frieze illustrates three successive events recounted by Homer in the *Iliad* (7.273–335), with a pre-Homeric epic serving as the inspiration for both the vase painting and the poem.

A comparison of this frieze with a large number of Geometric depictions of fighting and battlefields demonstrates that it differs significantly from those images in its composition, in the poses and gestures of the figures, and in the disposition of armor and weapons. Instead of combatants, the figures should be interpreted as a line of armed men performing a dance that includes acrobatic movements. The horizontal and “collapsing” figures represent not dead and wounded warriors but dancers who execute leaps, somersaults, and handsprings like those depicted on Attic, Boeotian, and Argive vases of the Late Geometric period and on an Etruscan amphora dated ca. 675–650 B.C. The frieze on the Lambros oinochoe also recalls the particular passage from Homer’s description of the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.593–605) where the dancers, including young men wearing golden daggers, are led in their steps by a pair of acrobats who revolve around them.

SESSION II D: COLLOQUIUM: ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT THE AMERICAN ACADEMY IN ROME

EXCAVATIONS IN THE ROMAN FORUM: *Russell T. Scott*, Bryn Mawr College

In the *Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* by Ernest Nash one reads the following under “Atrium Vestae”: “The residence of the Vestal Virgins, with its large court surrounded by columns and decorated with three water basins, was built after the Neronian fire of 64 A.D. and restored and enlarged under Domitian, Trajan, and Septimius Severus. Remains of the pre-Neronian structure were brought to light under the northwestern part of the imperial Atrium Vestae. Their orientation, parallel to the Regia and Domus Publica, differed from that of the imperial building.”

Nash’s description of 1961 is substantially based on the work by Esther Van Deman entitled *The Atrium Vestae*, published in 1909 and still regarded as the essential work on the subject. Not surprisingly, the excavations in progress by the American Academy in the *area sacra* of Vesta have yielded results that make it necessary to call into question Van Deman’s work as well as providing new evidence on the dynamics of the growth and organization of the cults of Vesta in the Republican and Imperial periods. The major phases of development that can be demonstrated thus far occur in the Archaic period, the second and first centuries B.C., and the early second century A.C.

ROMAN FISHTANKS OF THE LATE REPUBLIC AND EARLY EMPIRE IN ITALY: ASPECTS OF THEIR DESIGN AND FUNCTION: *James Higginbotham*, University of Michigan

The raising of fish was both a popular pastime and a profitable enterprise in the Roman world. Roman fishtanks, variously called *piscinae*, *vivaria*, or *stagna*, are found scattered throughout the Mediterranean in a variety of contexts and exhibit a high degree of architectural variation. The ancient literary record contains several accounts that highlight the sensational and extravagant character of fishtanks attached to the villas of wealthy Romans. During the first century B.C. the possession of a fishtank became an example of conspicuous consumption and carried with it an image of elevated social status. The popularity of the private fishtank continued into the early Empire, dying out by the end of the second century A.C.

While the affluent *piscinarii* enjoyed raising fish for their own consumption and amusement, the ancient treatises on fishfarming attest that commercially profitable pisciculture was widespread. The agricultural manuals of Varro (first century B.C.) and Columella (first century A.C.) treat pisciculture as a specialized form of farming but offer slightly different accounts of the functional and technical aspects of the fishtank. An examination of the archaeological remains in Italy serves to confirm and amplify the developments suggested in these literary sources. The great seaside fishtanks belonging to the *villae maritimae* of the late Republic gradually give way to much smaller tanks often supplied by fresh water. In addition, the contexts in which fishtanks are found tend to multiply. Urban villas and even sanctuaries become sites where a fishtank is an acceptable component. The demise of the fishtank as a prominent feature of the villa has important implications for the change in social status among the Roman aristocracy during the early Empire.

TACITUS, MARK MORFORD, AND THE TRUTH: THE DOMUS AUREA REVISITED: *Larry F. Ball*, American Academy in Rome

The contemporary literary tradition concerning Nero’s Domus Aurea is at once substantial and consistent, but also problematic, as pointed out by Mark Morford in “The Distortion of the Domus Aurea Tradition,” *Eranos* 1968, 159–