

dedicatory statue of the *stratagos* in question was signed by Epicharmos of Soloi, whose earliest known signatures cannot be dated before the middle of the second century BC.¹⁴ Although the dates of artists' signatures may in some cases be relative ones, it is hardly likely that Epicharmos the elder was working half a century before his earliest datable signature, that is, near the time of the first Cretan War. The fact that Epicharmos' *floruit* was in the second half of the second century BC seems to be a decisive reason for dating *Syll.*³ 673 to the second Cretan War in 155–3 BC; if this is correct, there is no evidence that Nisyros was Rhodian before c. 200 BC, when the unnamed Nisyrian *stratagos* in his earlier career served under Rhodian nauarchs known to have been active from 200–190 BC.¹⁵

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The Portland Vase again

In Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis* the chorus at lines 1036–97 compares the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (1036–79) with the fate of Iphigeneia, brought to Aulis by the deceitful promise of marriage to Achilles in order to be sacrificed to Artemis (1080–97).¹ Of the two scenes on the Portland vase (FIG. 1), one has been persuasively identified as the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, with figures A, B, C and D representing respectively Peleus, Eros, Thetis and Poseidon or Zeus.² The interpretation of the second scene, however, has proved more difficult. Here J. G. F. Hind has recently stressed the importance of the lowered wedding torch held by the central reclining female figure F. He suggests Dido for this figure with Aeneas as figure E and Venus or Juno as figure G, so that the whole vase

¹⁴ G. E. Bean, *JHS* lxxiii (1953) 31; K. F. Kinch and Chr. Blinkenberg, *Fouilles de Lindos*, Pt 2: *Les Inscriptions* (Berlin/Copenhagen 1941) i 54, no. 74.

¹⁵ This is the conclusion reached by Fraser and Bean, *Rhod. Per.* (n. 6) 151; for the dates of the nauarchs in question, see 148 and n. 6. Neither Holleaux (n. 12) nor, more recently, W. E. Thompson, *TAPA* cii (1971) 615–20, saw the force of the argument about the date of Epicharmos. On the other hand, Nisyros cannot have been Rhodian much before 200 BC, because Philip V wrote to the island as an independent community (*Syll.*³ 573, = *IG* xii (3) 91) shortly before that date; see *Rhod. Per.* 151–2.

becomes 'an early imperial essay in adapting Hellenic legend to relate to Rome's past, and specially to Rome's Augustan present'.³ An alternative identification of figures E, F and G with Achilles,⁴ Iphigeneia and Artemis would give a simpler thematic unity to the vase's decoration and restore its character as a private object.

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¹ See further Lucr. i 84–100 for a developed contrast between the expected wedding and the actual sacrifice.

² J. G. F. Hind, *JHS* xcix (1979) 21–2, with B. Ashmole, *JHS* lxxxvii (1967) 5–7.

³ Hind (n. 2) 22–5.

⁴ See further Ashmole (n. 2) 9–11.

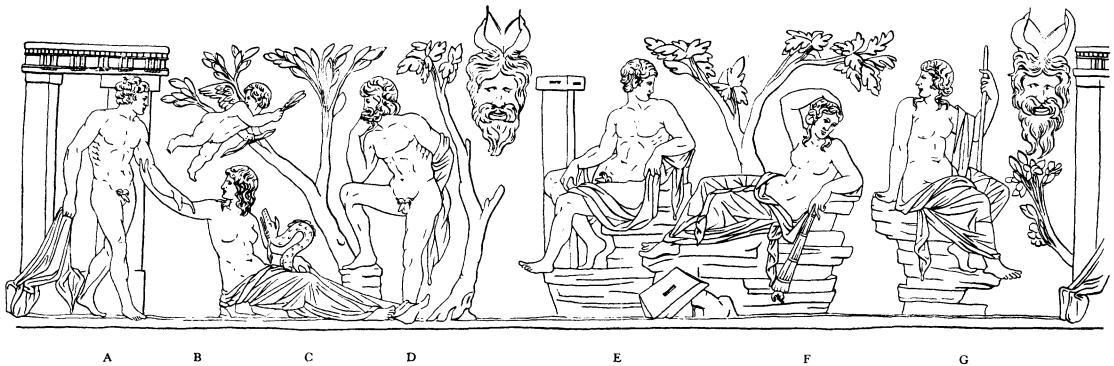


FIG. 1. The Portland Vase (Courtesy, the Trustees of the British Museum).