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# CELEBRATING POETIC VICTORY: REPRESENTATIONS OF EPINIKIA IN CLASSICAL ATHENS

**Abstract**: Although we are fairly well informed about the general organization and important events of the dramatic competitions in Athens, there remain significant gaps in our knowledge on many points of detail. In no place is this more true than with regard to the epinikian celebration honouring members of the victorious performance, about which scarcely any unambiguous testimony has come down to us. This study aims to provide new insights into the problem by demonstrating a connection between the iconography preserved in several sculpted reliefs of the Roman period commonly referred to as Dionysos' visit to Ikarios and the representation of a celebration for poetic victory in Plato's *Symposium*. Central to the combined testimony of these sources is the ideal of Dionysos' epiphany to the poet in order to acknowledge and honour his victory in person. So identified as an element of victory celebration, related articulations of this imagined moment can then be detected in several additional representations on vases and in Aristophanic comedy, in both of which other independent elements likewise suggest the activation of an epinikian syntax. Practical matters about the celebration still elude us; what we gain, however, is a clearer sense of the religious ideals that were conveyed through these celebrations in connection with the worship of Dionysos, which formed a nucleus for the dramatic festivals.

LESS than a hundred lines from the end of *Acharnians*, the chorus comes forward to face the spectators and share with them a complaint that has rankled in their hearts for some time (1150-73). They hope that Zeus himself will wreak destruction on one Antimachos for having sent them, 'the much enduring chorus' (1154), home without a feast when he acted as *khoregos* at a Lenaian festival. This along with several further misfortunes are prescribed for Antimachos in the strophe and antistrophe of the chorus' song, and though certain details about the reference cannot be explained with any degree of certainty,[1] one thing seems quite clear. In the event of victory, a competing chorus expected their months of training and exceptional performance at the festival itself to conclude with an epinikia feast offered by their *khoregos*. In *Acharnians* the chorus' indignation at having been deprived of this pleasure suggests that this celebration was a regular feature in the sequence of events that made up a dramatic production; but since it seems to have fallen outside the official festival agenda, surviving evidence for its organization and broader significance is, not surprisingly, quite slim. A sense for the situation can be gained by considering that in Peter Wilson's highly detailed discussion of the institution of the *khoregia* in Athens, the examination of the epinikia makes only a slight contribution and much of that is necessarily speculative in nature.[2] The effort to understand this event as fully as possible is easily justified since the *agones* remained at the heart of dramatic performance in Athens for centuries, and the exuberance with which Greeks celebrated victory in other areas of competition would suggest that celebration for poetic victories was a highly important moment in a winning troupe's overall experience of the Dionysian festivals. To the sources for fifth-century epinikian practice, which in the current state consist mainly of comic allusions like the *Acharnians* passage just cited, I would like to make a considerable addition by suggesting that an idealized representation of this event has been preserved for us in several sculpted reliefs dating to the Roman period. Although they have long been thought to be connected with poetic victory, their late date has been an obstacle to fully appreciating their relevance to the way this event was conceived during the Classical period. Important evidence, however, from the epinikia feast recalled in Plato's *Symposium* has been overlooked in the discussion of these representations. This evidence shows that the particular conception of poetic victory attested by the iconography of the sculpted depictions was already in place by the early fourth century.[3] Moreover, the very nature of Plato's adaptation of

[1] Above all, doubt exists over the relationship between the chorus of Acharnian men and this earlier chorus. Dover (1987) 303 suggests that they speak as the generic chorus of comedy.

[2] Wilson (2000) 102-3.

[3] Dover (1965) dates the dialogue to the period 384-379.

this scene in his dialogue along with related evidence from other literary and visual sources from the fifth century offer additional reasons for viewing the particular conception of poetic victory celebration offered in these reliefs as a product of this earlier period.

## I

The scene in question is presented on a number of sculpted reliefs, the earliest of which were not executed before the early first century BC. The entire group is assumed to depend on earlier models, and the question of just how far back these models go is the central problem of this study. Although some omissions and additions are evident in specific examples, the scene is presented with relative consistency and can be described generally as follows, using an example in the Louvre (PLATE 1).[4] On the left-hand side, a man reclines on a couch with a table spread before him as though he is in the middle of dining. He is resting against cushions, while at the lower end of the couch a female companion lies comfortably on her stomach alongside his legs, her right elbow pressed against the couch so that she can support her chin with her hand.[5] A sumptuous feast seems to be intended, to judge not only from the ornate quality of the table and well-cushioned couch, but also from the woven hangings that are fastened to the walls behind the diners and complete the atmosphere of conspicuous luxury in which the scene is set.[6] At the present moment, however, their attention is focused not on their meal but on the group of figures entering the scene from the right in a long file. The reclining figures have turned their heads toward the new arrivals and the man on the couch raises his opened right hand in a gesture of welcome or, as others believe, of surprise. At the head of the new group is Dionysos himself, towering above everyone else in the scene and occupying a place at the centre of the composition. With his chin resting on his chest and his torso swaying backward slightly, the god is obviously intoxicated. For this reason Dionysos requires the assistance of a small satyr who props him up from beneath his left elbow and forearm as he ambles into the banquet setting. A further illustration of Dionysos' compromised state is the *thiasos* of satyrs and maenads who follow him as participants in the revel. Immediately behind the god is a satyr carrying Dionysos' thyrsus and apparently dancing to music provided by the Silenus figure who follows him and plays upon a double-aulos. Next comes a satyr carrying over his shoulder a wineskin, which we can safely assume is far from full by this stage. Bringing up the rear of the *thiasos* is the joined pair of a fourth satyr and a maenad; overcome by too much wine and revelry, she is slumped against her companion and is all but carried by him. The moment represented is highly significant: it is precisely the moment when the divinely and mythologically based celebrations on the right are on the verge of joining the human celebrations already taking place on the left. Of this outcome there can be little doubt, since the open couch partially visible behind Dionysos is obviously intended to receive the god;[7] in fact, one last miniature satyr bends down before the god and is busy unbinding his sandal so that he can recline with his host.

On the assumption, therefore, that a scene of *theoxenia* is represented, the image on the reliefs was explained long ago by the myth of Dionysos' visit to the home of Ikarios and his accompanying gift of wine. Although the influence of that identification persists in the name customarily given to these pieces, the explanation itself has been rejected and alternative identifications of

[4] Discussion of the full catalogue of these reliefs and related examples can be found in Hauser (1889) 189-95 and Pochmarski (1990) 98-108.

[5] Dräger (1994) 97 identifies her as the *domina* of a Roman household, which may be possible for the Roman audience, but in some ways this interpretation seems unlikely given her youthful appearance and her erotically suggestive position. In most examples she wears an armband on her exposed biceps, which is a detail found on sculptures of Aphrodite; see Kelperi (1997).

[6] The culinary delicacies offered at epinikia feasts are alluded to by Aristophanes at *Ach.* 885-7 and *Nub.* 338-9.

[7] For the practice of setting a couch for the god in ritual banquets, see Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 75.

the human figures sought.[8] Among these, the most favoured is that the man on the couch is a dramatic poet or actor and that the relief itself was inspired by the Dionysian festivals.[9] This identification rests not simply on the appropriateness of the overall theme of Dionysian celebration to a monument of this sort, but on the appearance, in several examples, of dramatic masks stashed beneath the couch on which the man is reclining.[10] A more specific connection of the reliefs with the celebration of a poetic victory can be made based on several other details. Most important of all, in his lowered left hand and plainly visible to anyone viewing the monument, Dionysos carries a coiled *tainia*.[11] These long tasselled ribbons are among the most familiar symbols of victory and appear frequently on vases that show Nike figures binding them on the heads of victors in various competitive endeavours, whether athletic or in one of the categories of *mousikê*. Especially striking are instances where this gesture is carried out at the very moment when a champion is awarded his prize.[12] Aristophanes demonstrates that this gesture applied equally to dramatic victory when the chorus of initiates in *Frogs* prays that they themselves may gain a victory and have their heads bound with *tainiai*: νικήσαντα ταινιοῦσθαι.[13]

This detail is probably enough to make it virtually certain that a victory is the defining ambience for the encounter represented on the reliefs; we would naturally assume that a victory celebration also formed the actual circumstances for which the surviving reliefs were originally created. Even so, a few other features are worthy of attention since they also appear to be co-ordinated with this theme. The reclining poet wears a conspicuous garland on his head. This might, of course, have been suggested to the artist simply by a general interest in depicting a festive atmosphere, although it is perhaps noteworthy in this case that his female companion does not wear one. Considering that his identity is connected with the theatre and that a victory forms the likely background, a reasonable alternative is to understand this as the garland awarded to a poet at the moment his victory was proclaimed in the theatre.[14] Finally, on the extreme left-hand side of the scene and adjacent to the theatrical masks stand two monuments, one in front of the other. Of these, the closer one is composed of a squat tripodic cauldron set on top of a Doric column. The alignment of this monument with the herm rising beyond it indicates that the cauldron is not part of the sympotic paraphernalia, but instead is helping to create the public and, perhaps more importantly, symbolic space in which the event takes place. To all appearances it is a votive monument, and it is likely that in this detail the reliefs follow a pattern established already in fifth-century iconography related to dramatic victory. In earlier epinikian depictions, the celebrations are located in Dionysos' sanctuary through the inclusion of different votive monuments,[15] among them the tripods that were set up in and about Dionysos' sanctuary by victors in the dithyrambic

[8] See Pochmarski (1990) 97 for review and bibliography.

[9] See especially Hauser (1889) 197-8, Reisch (1890) 32-3, Bieber (1961) 154; *cf.* Green and Handley (1995) 73. I shall refer to him as a poet in part for the sake of simplicity, but also because evidence to be discussed further along will focus on the poet.

[10] Although masks have a wide range of Dionysian associations, the fact that these masks are stored under the reclining man, and not prominently displayed, rather suggests they are his property and thus serve to create his identity. In one example, folded costumes lie under the masks (BM 2190). One thinks of the Aristophanic Euripides (*Ach.* 432-4), who has stored away the costumes of his protagonists. Dräger (1994) 97 n.496 and Ridgway (2002) 238 believe the masks were added specifically for the Roman copies and were not part of the original composition, a hazardous assumption since the reliefs depend on an earlier tradition from which no original specimens survive. Handley (1973) sees a related detail on a Hellenistic relief that has Classical antecedents.

[11] The significance of this detail was emphasized by Hauser (1889) 196.

[12] E.g. Athens NM 1183 (*LIMC*, *s.v.* Nike, 351).

[13] *Ran.* 392-3; *cf.* Eubulus *fr.* 2.3.

[14] Called simply 'the ivy wreath of a poet' by Bieber (1961) 154. A moving description of this award is found in the poetic dedicatory inscription preserved in *Anth. Pal.* 13.28, lines 3-4. The victorious performers on the Pronomos Vase (see below) also wear garlands.

[15] *Cf.* Metzger (1965) 101. The victory scene on the vase referred to in n.12 shows that a variety of vessels were awarded or at least were used to portray awards of prizes and dedications. For a surviving choregic victory monument in the shape of a herm, see Wilson (2000) 30-1.

competition. As probably the most familiar and extravagant commemorations for a Dionysian victory, these tripods also help to bring the agonistic dimension of these representations into sharper focus.[16] The tripodic votive monument of the 'Ikarios' reliefs is admittedly less ornate than those that appear in earlier representations; still, its presence may be explained by identifying it as a vestige of the earlier iconographical technique of deploying victory monuments to establish an epinikian context. We seem, at least, to be guided to this interpretation of the various monuments of the Ikarios scenes by the example of the relief from the British Museum (no. 2190). Whereas a separate monument, standing just behind Dionysos and comprising a pillar topped by a dedicatory pinax, is left blank in other examples, in the British Museum example the agonistic figure of a charioteer has been carved onto the face of the pinax, as if to clarify the agonistic significance of this and, I suggest, the other monuments in the scene.[17]

A number of features, some more positively than others, thus appear to concentrate on a single dominant theme. It seems most appropriate, therefore, to suppose that the god of the theatre has arrived at a victory celebration, fully prepared to validate the poet's achievement by personally binding ribbons of victory on the man who had best honoured him at his festival. Attention to these features suggests a fairly unified conception informing the reliefs' entire iconography. And the essential meaning of the representation as it has been explained here would be quite appropriate to the context of dramatic competitions at any point during the long period in which they were celebrated, including the Classical period. This final possibility, however, runs contrary to the most influential interpretations for the genesis of the reliefs' iconography, which consistently posit an immediate model for the surviving Roman examples that goes back no farther than the Hellenistic period. Thus, one approach is to view the rather complex scene offered in the reliefs as a synthesis of originally distinct iconographic themes – a funerary banquet, a scene of *theoxenia*, and a Dionysian *thiasos* – which were brought together for the first time not long before the date of the surviving reliefs, when such an eclectic approach to sculptural composition can be observed elsewhere.[18] Although it is likely that motifs borrowed from various iconographical contexts were recombined in the creation of this scene, we shall soon see that any such process must have taken place long before this theory assumes.[19] It is to be noted, in any event, that the various scenes have been fully integrated within an epinikian frame.[20] In better keeping with the indications of compositional unity based on the single theme of poetic victory, but still

[16] See especially Bulle (1937) 158; for the association of tripods with the Dionysian contests generally, see Wilson (2000) 200-1. Froning (1971) 13-15 rejects the possibility that a tripod awarded for dithyramb could create a meaningful association for a victory in another poetic category. If, however, the tripods reflect only Dionysos' sanctuary (as Froning prefers for non-dithyrambic scenes), they still do so in a way that evokes the way he was honoured by contests (thus the appearance of Dionysos flanked by Nike figures on a tripod monument base: Athens NM 1461; see Vierneisel and Scholl (2002) 26-7). That aspect of his cult on the south slope of the Acropolis applies to all categories of performance; poets, actors and chorus-members who appear among these tripods on commemorative vases are identified as participants in this form of devotion. The central contention of Froning is jeopardized by the analogous use of tripods to amplify agonistic themes in scenes of athletic competition for categories not awarded this prize (e.g. Munich 1471 (J. 476), *ABV* 137, 60). The issue is discussed further in Section III below.

[17] A similar monument also appears farther in the background of the scene, but is left blank as on the reliefs in the Louvre (MR 719 = Ma 1606) and Naples (NM 6713 = *LIMC*, *s.v.* Dionysos, 858). Victory monuments of this form are attested for the fifth century in literary sources: Arist. *Pol.* 1341a35-7 and Plut. *Them.* 5.4; *cf.* Reisch (1890) 117-18.

[18] For this general explanation, see Havelock (1970) 203, von Hesberg (1980) 272-5, and Ridgway (2002) 238-9. The appearance of the *thiasos* group on a sculpted krater from the early first century BC (discussed in detail by Ridgway (2002) 228-9) shows that this segment was already connected with Dionysos' arrival at a banquet because a small satyr unbinds the god's sandal, even though this is an element unrelated to what is otherwise presented on the krater (*cf.* von Hesberg (1980) 273, Pochmarski (1990) 101).

[19] At least, as it applies to the entire composition of the iconography presented on our reliefs. The extent to which particular styles are linked to specific iconographic units is beyond the scope of this study.

[20] Pochmarski (1990) 103 citing Hundsalz.

committed to a late formulation of the full iconography, is the influential interpretation of C. Picard.[21] He argues that the antecedents for the 'Ikarios' representations can be found in two related Attic reliefs from approximately the early fourth and early third centuries BC respectively.[22] The former shows Dionysos reclining on a banquet-couch together with a female consort who wears a maenad's *nebris*, while three actors carrying dramatic masks approach them.[23] The second of Picard's examples reverses these roles by having a poet (?) and his consort on the couch. With this exchange of roles Picard's second example establishes a pattern for the later reliefs; it has not yet included the full *thiasos*, but instead shows only a drunken Dionysos propped up by the one satyr and carrying his own thyrsus as he comes into the company of the feasting couple. These connections would strengthen the likelihood that a dramatic milieu forms the relevant cultural background for the iconography preserved in the later reliefs. Even so, where Picard, in the absence of any earlier evidence indicating the full-blown iconographic scheme of the 'Ikarios' reliefs, falls back on an evolutionary model for a composition that was only completely developed in the Hellenistic period, we may question that explanation through a careful examination of the literary representation of an epinikia celebration found in Plato's *Symposium*.

## II

The general relevance of the *Symposium* to this discussion is without question. The dramatic setting for this dialogue is the immediate aftermath of the dramatic contests at the Lenaia of 416 when the tragic poet Agathon attained his first victory.[24] The actual epinikia feast took place the day before (173a5-7), and most of the members of their present gathering are still feeling the effects of their revelry on that occasion (176a5-9). Their tenacious hangover is the reason that on this night they decide to pass the time with philosophical discussion instead of consuming large quantities of wine (176e4-10), each of the guests offering a eulogy of the neglected god Eros. But although the official epinikia feast took place before,[25] the banquet of the *Symposium* is clearly portrayed as a continuation of those celebrations in honour of Agathon, since his achievement and the honour he gained from his poetic victory continue to make him the centre of attention. So too, the continued celebration among this more select company provides an opportunity for two highly important individuals, Socrates and later Alcibiades, to offer their personal congratulations to the victorious poet since they had been absent from the official gathering the day before.[26]

In order to grasp the full connection of the *Symposium* with our reliefs it is necessary first to have a better sense for the dialogue's overall engagement with the Dionysian festivals. Of special importance here are the observations of David Sider,[27] who noticed that in addition to making the post-festival celebrations the dramatic setting for the dialogue, Plato has carefully structured his dialogue to make it actually incorporate the schedule of events and duties at the City

[21] Picard (1934).

[22] Athens NM 1500 (*LIMC*, *s.v.* Paidia, 13) and Louvre Ma 741 (*LIMC*, *s.v.* Dionysos, 855).

[23] The identification of Dionysos is disputed in part because the inscription of his name on the bottom edge appears to be a later addition; *cf.* Slater (1985) 335-7, who is overconfident in rejecting victory commemoration as the monument's original purpose (339).

[24] Athenaios 217a: ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ ἄρχοντος Εὐφήμου στεφανοῦται Ληναίοις. Von Blanckenhagen (1992) esp. 53 argues that the historical setting is more important for the *Symposium* than most other Platonic dialogues.

[25] Wilson (2000) 348 n.249 does not distinguish between the official epinikia ceremony, whose host is not identified, and the carry-over of this celebration to the gathering hosted by Agathon.

[26] 174a6-9, where note particularly Socrates' treatment of the gathering as a special occasion that calls for him both to bathe and put on his rarely worn slippers (174a3-4).

[27] Sider (1980).

Dionysia. The *Symposium*, in other words, becomes a miniature Dionysia.[28] Many finer points are discussed by Sider, but the association of specific characters with elements of the festival is perhaps the most striking. Thus the physician Eryximachos implies the festival in honour of Asklepios that coincided with the start of the City Dionysia,[29] while Aristophanes, Agathon and Socrates, who is memorably portrayed within the dialogue as a satyr-figure by Alcibiades (215a6-b4), represent the major genres of comedy, tragedy and satyr-play.[30] As Sider also saw, Plato's planning of the dialogue on the pattern of the festival has one further implication. The various performers seem to be engaged in a kind of agonistic display wherein each succeeding eulogist attempts to outperform all previous contributors.[31]

It is within this agonistic frame borrowed from the festival atmosphere that, with the conclusion of Aristophanes' speech, Eryximachos comments that the excellence of the comic poet's performance might have left the final eulogists in a desperate position (ἂν ἐφοβούμην μὴ ἀπορήσωσι, 193e6), had it not been that these two men were in fact well acquainted with erotic matters. With this remark attention now focuses exclusively on Agathon and Socrates, and the competitive undercurrents of the gathering swell to the surface. In his response to Eryximachos' confidence over their abilities, Socrates points out that the physician has already 'competed well' with his speech (καλῶς γὰρ αὐτὸς ἠγώνισαι, 194a1), whereas he himself must soon follow what is bound to be a highly admirable performance by the tragic poet.[32] In reply, Agathon states (194a5-7) that Socrates is merely trying to make him lose confidence (θορυβηθῶ) by creating an expectation in their 'theatre' (τὸ θέατρον) that the tragic poet will produce something truly spectacular.[33] We seem to be carried back to the occasion when Agathon had competed and earned such distinction before the gathered audience of the festival.[34] Matters thus turn out somewhat ironically for Agathon, when at his own victory celebration he must recontest the honours he won so soon before, now with Socrates taking up the role of his primary rival.

The emphasis at this stage of the dialogue on festival competition in the confrontation between Socrates and Agathon was set in place from the very outset. When Socrates first joined the banquet, he mused playfully over the possibility that by reclining beside Agathon his own meagre wisdom might increase through proximity to the tragic poet, whose tremendous wisdom had been amply demonstrated in the theatre with thirty thousand Greeks as witnesses.[35] Socrates' typically self-deprecating comparison of their separate claims to *sophia* elicits Agathon's reassurance that in a short time the two of them will contest the issue, with Dionysos as their judge: ὀλίγον ὕστερον διαδικασόμεθα ἐγώ τε καὶ σὺ περὶ τῆς σοφίας, δικαστῆι χρώμενοι τῶι Διονύσωι (175e8-9). Hence, while Agathon's *sophia* is undoubtedly honoured by their repeated epinikia celebration, there is a definite sense in which the status of his knowledge is being tested against that of Socrates. The later moment of intensified competition between them, introduced with Eryximachos' comment, refers back to this initial exchange and so reveals the unifying effect that festival agonism supplies in Plato's design for the dialogue. As a result, it is not

[28] A related interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*, based on the model of competition between rhapsodes at the Panathenaia, is offered by Nagy (2002) 53-69.

[29] Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 65.

[30] Their contributions are, of course, to make up for the fact that poets have failed to sing the praises of Eros (177a5-9). Though the case is less easily made, Sider (1980) 51-5 argues further that Phaedrus represents dithyramb, thus giving the full complement of genres performed at the City Dionysia. The relationship between Alcibiades' portrayal of Socrates and satyr-myth and satyr-play is explored in detail by Usher (2002).

[31] Sider (1980) 42, building on observations made especially by Bacon (1959) 423-7.

[32] Socrates will expand on these sentiments after Agathon's speech (198b1-199b5).

[33] Note that a rationale for the implied competition between distinct genres (not directly relevant to the Dionysian contests) is provided in the final scene, where Socrates explains to Aristophanes and Agathon that a single poet should be able to cross over between genres.

[34] It is also at this point (194a8-b5) that Socrates refers to Agathon's appearance at the *Proagon* before the festival competition.

[35] Here Sider (1980) 45 takes the emphasis on panhellenism as a sign that Plato is recasting the Lenaian festival as City Dionysia.

surprising that Agathon's specific remark about Dionysos' role of judging between them, while initially somewhat difficult to comprehend, turns out to be prophetic for the later course of events – namely, with the arrival of Alcibiades. For, as others have remarked, Alcibiades makes his appearance rather as an epiphany of Dionysos.[36] And with his arrival we may now return to the main thread of our argument since it is in Alcibiades' Dionysian entry at an epinikia celebration, which is itself mirroring a Dionysian contest, that I think we find a fairly exact reflection of the iconography for an idealized victory celebration preserved in the sculpted reliefs.

No sooner does Socrates complete the final entry in the contest of encomiums for Eros than a great commotion caused by a band of revellers breaks in upon the solitude of Agathon and his guests. Above the din of pounding at the door, the sound of a flute-player is heard (καὶ αὐλητρίδος φωνὴν ἀκούειν, 212c7-8). Agathon sends a servant to investigate, at which point the voice of Alcibiades can be distinguished: he is drunk, shouting loudly, and demanding to know where Agathon is and to be led to him (καὶ οὐ πολὺ ὕστερον Ἀλκιβιάδου τὴν φωνὴν ἀκούειν ἐν τῇι αὐλῇι σφόδρα μεθύοντος καὶ μέγα βοῶντος, ἐρωτῶντος ὅπου Ἀγάθων καὶ κελεύοντος ἄγειν παρ' Ἀγάθωνα, 212d3-5). Following these portents of a komos' arrival (πολὺν ψόφον παρασχεῖν ὡς κωμαστῶν, 212c7), Alcibiades at last appears at the door, a virtual epiphany of Dionysos in human form. Under the influence of his libations, he staggers and so requires the support of the flute-girl and several others, who literally prop him up from below (ἄγειν οὖν αὐτὸν παρὰ σφᾶς τήν τε αὐλητρίδα ὑπολαβοῦσαν καὶ ἄλλους τινὰς τῶν ἀκολούθων, 212d5-7).[37] He stands at the door, crowned with a garland of ivy and violets, but worn conspicuously over these are a great many *tainiai* (καὶ ταινίας ἔχοντα ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς πάνυ πολλάς, 212e2). After greeting them all, he requests permission to join their company and become their fellow reveller (συμπότην, 212e4, *cf.* 213a2). And as he goes on to explain, he has come for one purpose at the very least – to bind the *tainiai* on Agathon's head in acknowledgement of his poetic victory, since he was not able to attend the formal victory celebration the day before:

> καὶ εἰπεῖν· Ἄνδρες, χαίρετε· μεθύοντα ἄνδρα πάνυ σφόδρα δέξεσθε συμπότην, ἢ ἀπίωμεν ἀναδήσαντες μόνον Ἀγάθωνα, ἐφ' ὃιπερ ἤλθομεν; ἐγὼ γάρ τοι, φάναι, χθὲς μὲν οὐχ οἷός τ' ἐγενόμην ἀφικέσθαι, νῦν δὲ ἥκω ἐπὶ τῆι κεφαλῆι ἔχων τὰς ταινίας, ἵνα ἀπὸ τῆς ἐμῆς κεφαλῆς τὴν τοῦ σοφωτάτου καὶ καλλίστου κεφαλήν, ἀνειπὼν οὑτωσί, ἀναδήσω. (*Symposium*, 212e2-8)

Alcibiades' stated purpose of binding *tainiai* around the head of Agathon out of respect for his recent victory and in order to make up for his absence on the previous day thus forges a direct link between his appearance now and actions performed at the epinikia. Of course all welcome Alcibiades to join them, and after he goes ahead and binds the tragic poet's head with the *tainiai* (213a5-6), Agathon makes room for him on his own couch. At this point, he calls for slaves to unbind Alcibiades' sandals so he can recline with them (εἰπεῖν οὖν τὸν Ἀγάθωνα Ὑπολύετε, παῖδες, Ἀλκιβιάδην, ἵνα ἐκ τρίτων κατακέηται, 213b4-5). Plato has clearly taken some care to create a highly vivid and charming scene. In addition, the formality of Alcibiades' request and the grandiloquence of his praise for Agathon draw attention to the whole scene, but especially the culminating gesture, all of which makes it clear that we have reached a critical moment in the

[36] In addition to points made in the following dicussion, Silenus, with whom Alcibiades compares Socrates, was tutor to the infant Dionysos, much as Socrates takes on a mentoring role for Alcibiades in this dialogue. *Cf.* the related interpretations by Sider (1980) 55, Anderson (1993) 13-15, Mitchell (1993) 175-7, Nussbaum (2001) 194-5, Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2004) 164.

[37] This detail of Alcibiades' entry is reintroduced at the point when he actually advances to bind Agathon's head with *tainiai*: καὶ τὸν ἰέναι ἀγόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ περιαιρούμενον ἅμα τὰς ταινίας ὡς ἀναδήσοντα (213a4-5). Note further that while Alcibiades' companions remain anonymous, their portrayal as 'attendants' (τῶν ἀκολούθων, 212d7; *cf.* 213a5) casts them in the subservient position appropriate to a *thiasos*' service to Dionysos.

night's events.[38] Most importantly for our purposes, Alcibiades' Dionysian arrival at the epinikia of a poet contains all the salient features that come together to create the related scene found on the reliefs. But Plato is not finished with his use of this representation for his dialogue.

The features discussed to this point all pertain to honours bestowed on Agathon for his poetic victory at the Lenaia. In his role as Dionysos Alcibiades has a further contribution to make, since the modified frame of Dionysian festival competition that structures the *Symposium* requires its own judgement and celebrations. Agathon's earlier statement on the decision between his *sophia* and that of Socrates created an expectation that Dionysos would resolve any lingering tension on this score. That role is not fulfilled when the Dionysian Alcibiades acknowledges Agathon's poetic victory at the recent festival, but immediately thereafter. When he first entered the hall and bound Agathon's head with *tainiai*, Alcibiades had not noticed Socrates sitting on the couch as well. Upon seeing him, however, Alcibiades is quick to reconsider what he has just done. He explains that while Agathon was victorious in the theatre the other day, Socrates defeats all men in discourse on all occasions (αὐτὸν δὲ νικῶντα ἐν λόγοις πάντας ἀνθρώπους, οὐ μόνον πρώην ὥσπερ σύ, ἀλλ᾽ ἀεί, 213e3-4). In the same breath, therefore, he requests that Agathon give back some of the *tainiai* so that he can bind them on Socrates' head (νῦν δέ μοι, Ἀγάθων, φάναι, μετάδος τῶν ταινιῶν, ἵνα ἀναδήσω καὶ τὴν τούτου ταυτηνὶ τὴν θαυμαστὴν κεφαλήν, 213d8-e2). This he promptly does and afterwards takes his place on the couch once again.

Learning from the reliefs, we can understand that with his initial appearance Alcibiades activates, for Agathon's benefit, an idealized conception of the god's favouring treatment of victorious poets in the course of their celebrations. The effect of this gesture is to situate the dialogue more fully in its imagined historical moment at the Lenaia of 416. But as with the other features of Dionysian festival celebration that can be observed in the *Symposium*, the god's epinikian epiphany is quickly enfolded within the fiction of the gathering in order to create a further level of meaning for the dialogue itself. By now replicating – for Socrates' benefit – Dionysos' idealized show of favour, Alcibiades ceremoniously designates the philosopher the champion of their immediate discussion, which is viewed as a Dionysian contest.[39] The revision of judgement entailed in this duplication has a significant impact on our understanding of the dialogue. For while the *Symposium* begins with Agathon and his recent theatrical achievement on vivid display, the progression of events during this particular celebration ultimately establishes Socrates as the figure who looms over the dialogue's entire inquiry into knowledge of Eros. With this outcome, it becomes clear that Socrates' conception of knowledge humbles all others.[40]

By the late stages of the dialogue, therefore, the epinikia seems more a victory celebration made on Socrates' behalf. It is only fitting in this case that Alcibiades' concluding speech turns out to be a eulogy of Socrates (214d9-e3).[41] And it is all the more fitting that, once this speech confirming Alcibiades' judgement is brought to an end, a second band of revellers forces its way in upon them (ἐξαίφνης δὲ κωμαστὰς ἥκειν παμπόλλους ἐπὶ τὰς θύρας, 223b2-3). The renewed mood of intense celebration, now thoroughly discordant (θορύβου μεστὰ πάντα, 223b5) and accompanied by the unrestrained pouring of wine (οὐκέτι ἐν κόσμωι οὐδενὶ ἀναγκάζεσθαι πίνειν πάμπολυν οἶνον, 223b5-6), seems a highly appropriate culmination to the Dionysian themes that underpin this dialogue. Alcibiades' appearance proved instrumental in steering their victory

[38] The overall effect is enhanced by Hermann's emendation of ἐὰν εἴπω to ἀνειπών at 212e8; for, as Dover (1980) 160 explains in support of this conjecture, 'ἀνειπεῖν denotes proclamation (including proclamation of victory) by a herald' (e.g. Pind. *Pyth.* 1.32, 10.9; Pl. *Rep.* 580b5-c1).

[39] Related interpretations are offered by Bacon (1959) 424, Sider (1980) 43, Usher (2002) 224, Hunter (2004) 33.

[40] Thus, in the final scene (223d2-5) the two poets concede to Socrates that it should be within a single person's ability to compose in multiple genres. *Cf.* Rowe (1998) 214-15.

[41] Appropriate to Alcibiades' Dionysian character is his carefully worked out comparison of Socrates to Silenus figurines and Marsyas in this speech (215a6-b4).

celebration toward a more Bacchic form of revelry,[42] but the suddenness of his epiphanic arrival is matched by his complete absence from the concluding description of the gathering. He no sooner completes his speech than he dissolves within the confused revelry that now takes place.

The points of comparison between the sculpted reliefs and Plato's literary representation of Dionysos' epiphany at a poetic victory celebration are striking and hard to ignore. Even if individual details permit alternative explanations, the close correspondence of an entire constellation of features in relation to a single defining context makes it likely that the images presented in these distinct artistic media are linked. In comparison with other possibilities,[43] the most likely is surely that Alcibiades' Dionysian appearance owes its details to a conception of poetic victory celebration that was already current. Aside from demonstrating economy, this explanation gains support from the fact that Plato has been manipulating elements of Dionysian festival throughout the dialogue; hence Dionysos' epiphany at the epinikia represents just one additional feature that his readers are to interpret through their familiarity with the ideals of Athenian theatre production. Indeed, the duplication of Dionysos' epiphanic bestowal of honours, first for Agathon then for Socrates, draws attention to Plato's broader strategy of adapting recognizable elements of the Dionysian festivals. In short, the 'Ikarios' reliefs bear late witness to an ideal already in place long before.

## III

The explanation offered above for the relationship of the *Symposium* and the reliefs is also attractive because C. Sourvinou-Inwood has recently provided strong arguments in favour of viewing Dionysos' reception at a formal banquet – *xenismos* – as the cultic nucleus of the City Dionysia.[44] Feasting the god at the heart of the *polis* is the central interest, and the poetic performances formalize the entertainment provided for him. Based on this reconstruction of the festival, it may be that the poet's epinikia reasserted a defining aspect of the entire event using ideas and images prescribed by its broader religious context. Sourvinou-Inwood points out the important role that iconography played in communicating religious notions about the City Dionysia. It is a likely enough assumption that any idealization of Dionysos' participation in epinikian celebrations was likewise 'worked out' and elaborated upon within a genre of monuments and representations connected with the theatre. A robust industry in the manufacture of art pieces, in both stone and ceramic, made specifically for the commemoration of poetic victories won at the Dionysian and other festivals, is beyond dispute for the fifth century.[45] The reliefs under consideration here are naturally cognate with this material. Enough early evidence survives to show that the scene preserved on the later reliefs is consistent with patterns of epinikian iconography belonging to the Classical period.[46] Moreover, the religious considerations foregrounded by Sourvinou-Inwood's reconstruction fit well within the understanding of Dionysian epinikia that emerges from the visual record.

[42] Alcibiades dubs himself ἄρχων τῆς πόσεως (213e9-10) to ensure that the banqueters now drink sufficiently, and simultaneously calls for an immense drinking vessel (213e10-214a1).

[43] For instance, either that the representation by Plato generated an iconographic pattern which was later put into actual practice in memorials to victorious poets, or that his own representation was based on the specific way Agathon chose to represent his victory.

[44] First formulated in Sourvinou-Inwood (1994), but now argued more fully in Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 67-140.

[45] Reisch (1890) 116-18, Webster (1972) 90-7, Wilson (2000) 198-262, Vierneisel and Scholl (2002) 20-42.

[46] Thus Picard's second Attic relief (Louvre Ma 741), with Dionysos and satyr approaching the banqueters' couch, might be a quotation of a pre-existing depiction rather than an intermediate stage of the iconography's development. The funerary purpose of this relief rather suggests adaptation from a different repertoire. Hauser (1889) 148-9 thought fifth-century vase paintings of Hephaistos' return to Olympos formed an important comparandum for the scene on the reliefs.

Of a number of vases whose illustrations can safely be connected with dramatic victory, the best known is probably the Pronomos Vase. This vase depicts a troupe of performers from a satyr-play, including both the poet and the aulos-player, not during their performance but at a point when they are only partially costumed, very likely after their appearance on stage. Several of the actors and chorus-members hold their masks in their hands and thereby reveal their actual faces. Far from simply trying to communicate the performative dimension of dramatic impersonation or to distil a more abstract notion of alterity, the artist's true intent was to historicize a production and present the actual Athenians who participated in its performance, a goal he has accomplished by inscribing the names of all the chorus-members, poet and aulos-player beside each of them.[47] If the artist's objective was to commemorate a specific production, he will have been motivated by the agonistic success of these performers.[48] This interpretation is supported by the inclusion of victory tripods, which (as discussed already) effectively situate the performance of these men within the agonistic programme of the festival, and by their symbolic familiarity help to convey the performers' achievement to anyone viewing the vase. The fact that these tripods are decked with *tainiai*, which emphasize their association with victory and perhaps even proclaim them as freshly dedicated monuments, tends to support this conclusion, as do the garland crowns that most of the performers wear on their exposed heads.[49] In short, the same three symbols of victory – *tainiai*, dedication monuments and garland crowns – that we observed in the 'Ikarios' reliefs reappear on this vase.

A further element of comparison with the reliefs is available in the Pronomos Vase's central interest in showing Dionysos' direct contact with the performers. The god appears in the middle of the upper zone where he provides a focal point for the composition. Although surrounded by performers, he is portrayed not as a member of the audience but as a banqueter resting on a couch and embracing a female figure, generally identified as Ariadne. The Pronomos Vase thus indicates that the long popular image of Dionysos as symposiast was already being appropriated for depictions connected specifically with dramatic victory. Given the vase's purpose, it is tempting to understand Dionysos' appearance here on the banquet-couch as somehow reflecting the pleasures of celebration that the various members of the production would themselves have enjoyed at their epinikia. Whether they are imagined to be joining the god in this feast is hard to determine; however, a detail observed by Froning might guide us to that very conclusion. On the Pronomos Vase the poet Demetrios sits upon a low table of the sort we would expect to be placed before Dionysos in order to complete the scene of his entertainment, as it is typically presented within the wider repertoire of vase images that present the god as symposiast.[50] Through this arrangement, in other words, the artist of the vase allows the viewer to situate the victorious poet in a position of special honour at the banquet of his patron deity.

If the Pronomos Vase acknowledges, albeit somewhat differently, an ideal of epinikia celebration that can be related to the one found in the later reliefs, other early evidence seems to offer striking details also found in these reliefs. A red-figure volute krater from the same period as the Pronomos Vase, for instance, shows Dionysos reclining on a couch while Himeros bends down at his feet to remove his sandals.[51] More striking are fifth-century representations of a drunken

[47] For the possible implications of social class in their names, see Wilson (2000) 129-30.

[48] E.g. Bulle (1934) 27-29, Froning (1971) 13, Webster (1972) 46-7, Green (1982) 238, and Taplin (1997) 73. In its effort to record the names of those involved in a performance, the vase's function was coordinate with personal votive monuments for victory like the one referred to by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1341a35-7); nonetheless the vase is remarkable for the fullness of its record of participants.

[49] The winged figure identified by the inscription as Himeros holds out a garland to the female figure presented as the third actor, sitting at the foot of Dionysos' couch. On her identification as actor, I follow Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 187; this and alternative identifications are discussed by Hedreen (1992) 108.

[50] Froning (1971) 13-14, who further observes that the poet's gaze is directed upward in the direction of Dionysos.

[51] Sichtermann (1966) 20-21, cat. no. 10 (*LIMC*, *s.v.* Dionysos, 372).

Dionysos, supported by a satyr and accompanied in some instances by maenads and miniature satyrs.[52] The scene is found on several *choes* pitchers, in which the artist has apparently made the god's experience of the Choes festival coincide with that of his worshippers, whose own heavy consumption of wine was at the heart of this celebration.[53] Aside from being current in fifth-century depictions of Dionysos, this same configuration can be placed squarely within the sphere of theatrical performance thanks to an Attic vase found in Samothrace, which likewise dates to the late fifth century.[54] The vase is broken and the surviving fragments were included in the backfill used for the later construction of a stoa that directly adjoins a theatre. That the vase was a dedication related to a theatrical exploit is suggested by its representation of dramatic masks arranged near several columns either belonging to a sanctuary structure or set up as separate votive monuments.[55] In addition, a female figure dressed in a transparent white chiton holds a theatrical mask in her lowered right hand, and there may have been another figure in a similar pose.[56] This last detail in particular implies that the scene is not just set in Dionysos' sanctuary but has to do more directly with aspects of dramatic performance. It is difficult not to connect the appearance of dramatic figures holding masks on one side of the vase and dramatic masks already hung up as dedications in Dionysos' sanctuary on the other. As a way of expressing its own commemorative purpose, the vase presents what was a common activity associated with the celebration of victory.[57]

Among the few wholly preserved figures from the vase is Dionysos. He is teetering over backwards as he walks, his head tilting to one side, and a youthful satyr supports him below his arm in order to steady his steps. The similarity to the reliefs may extend further, if J.R. Green has correctly explained the relation of several other fragments to this scene.[58] One of these fragments shows portions of two figures. Of these, the one on the left is a paunchy male figure carrying a torch, who – to judge from the position of his legs and shoulders – marches across the vase. He is probably a satyr included within Dionysos' *thiasos*, and in that case Green may be right in further viewing the figure whose shoulder and flowing garments are visible on the right of this fragment as a pipe-player.[59] To return to more positive evidence, directly ahead of Dionysos is the foot-end of a banquet-couch.[60] Only enough of the couch remains to show that someone is already occupying a place on its near end. Green offers Ariadne as an immediate possibility for this figure's identification, but it may well be someone entirely different.[61] We now have a scene approaching the fully expanded scene of our reliefs. And just as important, we have this scene on a vase that is connected with the commemoration of dramatic performance. The latter connection is in fact emphasized in this very portion of the vase, since the female figure holding a dramatic mask in her lowered hand stands between Dionysos and the couch, while the

[52] *Cf.* Reisch (1890) 30-1.

[53] *LIMC*, *s.v.* Dionysos, 382, 383; *cf.* 321. See especially *Ran.* 211-19 for the drunken revels of the Choes.

[54] Samothrace 65.1041 (*LIMC*, *s.v.* Dionysos, 834). *Cf.* McCredie (1968) 204 and pl. 59c, and Froning (1971) 12-13 and Table 1.2.

[55] The alternatives are discussed by Froning (1971) 13 and Green (1982) 239-40.

[56] On the possibility of another figure holding a mask, see Green (1982) 141, arguing on the basis of traces, which he thought were the hair of a mask, that appear beside the surviving legs of a male figure. Green (p. 238) tentatively identifies the female figure with a mask as a maenad, but no specific details support this interpretation and it is perhaps easier to view her as a performer presented as female, as in the fragments of a Würzburg vase and probably the Pronomos Vase as well; *cf.* Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 187.

[57] *Cf.* Green (1982) 238; and see Green (1994) 45-6 and Wilson (2000) 238-41 for the general practice of offering masks as dedications. For the possibility that the vase itself was originally a dedication, see McCredie's remarks (1968) 204.

[58] For the following discussion, see Green (1982) 238-41.

[59] Green's comment (1982, 239) that the pipe-player is likely to be human may be important in light of what is said below about humans and mythological figures joined together.

[60] This detail is perfectly visible in the plate in *LIMC*, but not in McCredie (1968).

[61] A fragment assumed to be from the other side of the vase shows Dionysos on his banquet-couch together with a female figure, just below the columns and suspended theatrical masks.

other figure, who may also be holding a mask, is positioned beside what look like cushions or other textiles that could be appropriate to the banquet setting.[62] The fragmentary nature of this vase obviously prevents us from reaching full certainty, but there is a real possibility that a drunken Dionysos arrives with his mythological *thiasos* to join several human performers as they gather to celebrate a dramatic victory and welcome the god to a place on a couch that awaits him.

A Paestan krater from the fourth century can be understood to acknowledge the iconography preserved in the later reliefs, beneath its own treatment of the theme of epinikian celebration.[63] On one side three garlanded banqueters recline and play *kottabos* beneath an arbour decked with ivy garlands, from which three dramatic masks hang. Each of the masks is roughly in line with one of the banqueters, while the possibility of a theatrical context, even a victory celebration, is implied further by the figure of Papposilenos sleeping on the ground: the cuffs at his wrists and ankles reveal his satyr-costume.[64] These 'actors', if such they are, are balanced on the reverse side of the krater by Dionysos seated and surrounded by satyrs and maenads, who appear to be busy arranging the god's attire very much as if he is being prepared for an occasion. The idea of interaction between the two sides is the more compelling because a small and apparently genuine satyr appears at one end of the actors' couch, suggesting perhaps the imminent arrival of the god's *thiasos*.[65] Indeed, a related Paestan krater recasts this very scene with Dionysos in the place of the three 'actors'.[66] Add to this the fact that the middle 'actor', whose head is turned in the direction of the small satyr, raises his right hand in a gesture identical to that of the poet on the 'Ikarios' reliefs. Given the supply of themes that Athenian drama provided for South Italian vase-painters,[67] it is possible that this vase has adapted, through a process of abbreviation, the scene we have been tracing.

A striking feature, shared by the vases and the 'Ikarios' reliefs, is the way they emphasize the god's close affiliation with poets and performers. By doing so they fully situate Attic theatre in its religious context, at a time when the essential connection between dramatic performance and Dionysian worship is often hard to appreciate on the basis of the plays alone.[68] How this dimension of the iconography might relate specifically to the underlying interest of commemorating poetic victory is sufficiently explained by another passage in the *Symposium*. For although the dialogue creates the impression of a jubilant and raucous celebration based both on Socrates' stated preference for avoiding the chaotic gathering (174a6-7) and the heavy drinking that likewise took place (176a6-8),[69] the only direct explanation of formal events associated with the epinikia characterizes them in explicitly religious terms: τῇι ὑστεραίαι ἢ ἧι τὰ ἐπινίκια ἔθυεν αὐτός τε καὶ οἱ χορευταί (173a6-7). Because this description is intended to establish the historical setting for the dialogue, we may safely conclude that it reflects what was customarily performed on this occasion and amounted to its defining purpose. Moreover, since on Plato's account this event required, at the very least, the co-ordinated participation of the poet and his chorus, some degree of formal preparation and organization can be assumed.

[62] This arrangement should be compared with the fourth-century relief adduced by Picard (Athens NM 1500), which presents three actors standing beside Dionysos' couch, two of them holding masks in their lowered hands.

[63] Vatican Ad 1 (17370); see Webster (1971) IV, 8b and Hurschmann (1985) 144-6 and pl. 20. I thank the anonymous reader for *JHS* for bringing this vase to my attention.

[64] An epinikian scene has been supposed by many; see Hurschmann (1985) 145 n.564, though Hurschmann argues against this interpretation. There are certain points of comparison with the fragmentary Attic vase discussed by Green (1982) 237-8.

[65] *Cf.* Hurschmann (1985) 145, who remarks further that the censer carried by this satyr features only in banquet scenes where Dionysos is present.

[66] J.B. Speed Art Museum 90.7. The two vases are discussed by Green (1994) 97-9.

[67] See Taplin (1993) esp. 12-20.

[68] For a general treatment of this problem, see Easterling (1997). Henrichs (1993) 19-22 treats the close association of god and worshippers as especially important for Dionysos' cult.

[69] Debauchery dominates the victory celebration for a chariot race at [Dem.] 59.33.

The event was an opportunity for the exclusive community of victors to make formal sacrifices of thanks to the god.[70] By implication it was not simply a celebration of victory *per se*, but celebrated that achievement because it simultaneously betokened Dionysos' preference and favour. For this interpretation we may consider the prayer for victory offered by the chorus in their parodos at *Frogs* 389-93. They hope their performance – containing many humorous and many serious points – will provide enough playful mockery to be deemed *worthy of the god's festival* and earn them a victory:

> . . . καὶ
> τῆς σῆς ἑορτῆς ἀξίως
> παίσαντα καὶ σκώψαντα νι-
> κήσαντα ταινιοῦσθαι. (*Ran.* 390-3)

They direct their prayer to Demeter (*Ran.* 385), but they speak in a way that extends beyond their dramatic identity of initiates in the Eleusinian Mysteries to reach Dionysos of the festival where they presently perform.[71] On the one hand, Dionysos is bound together with Demeter in this song through his association with Iakkhos.[72] As for the substance of their prayer, the combination of seriousness and mockery might apply to the Eleusinian cult, but it certainly applies to Aristophanes' conception of comedy.[73] But the competitive nature of the chorus' performance, which is the point especially emphasized by the initiates at this moment, has nothing to do with Eleusis and everything to do with the dramatic festivals in Dionysos' theatre. By linking their hopes for victory with the proper celebration of the god's *heortê*, the chorus thus acknowledges the religious nature of its performance and implies that its success as an offering lies ultimately with Dionysos.[74] It is due to this conception of the *agon* that victory inscriptions simultaneously characterize the monuments they appear on as both commemorations of agonistic success and dedications of thanks to Dionysos [75]

Religious sacrifices and various other rites took place, of course, both before and during the days of the actual festival.[76] But a distinction can be made between the observance of those duties, carried out on behalf of and before the entire community, and the more exclusive celebration of the epinikia that cast the poet and other members of the production in the role of religious performers who now had the opportunity to communicate with the god directly. The epinikia, in other words, were an important religious experience in the sense that they recapitulated the ideal of *theoxenia* that Sourvinou-Inwood has emphasized for the communal celebration of the City Dionysia, but did so, now at the close of the festival, with an emphasis on the victorious troupe's realization of that ideal. The objective of epinikian iconography was then to capture this experience by presenting an idealized image of a *charis*-relationship in which a god acknowledged that he had been properly honoured by his human worshippers. In short, there may be no need to follow Froning in treating as irreconcilable the use of victory tripods and other dedicatory monuments found on vases and the 'Ikarios' reliefs either to set out epinikian motives or to promote a sense of religious experience. For those participating in the dramatic *agones* the two were, in all likelihood, closely intertwined.

[70] *Cf.* Wilson (2000) 102, who also suggests (348 n.243) that some significance may be attached to the emphasis on *choreutai*, while actors are left out. In that case, it may be relevant that the epinikian Pronomos Vase identifies the actors by their stage characters.

[71] *Cf.* Dover (1993) 58.

[72] See esp. *Ran.* 340-53, 398-413.

[73] Compare, for instance, Aristophanes' similar comments on the merits of his comedy at *Eccl.* 1155-6.

[74] For choruses as offerings to gods, see Wilson (2000) 11-12 and Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 73.

[75] E.g. *IG* II$^2$ 3094: [Ἄ]ρχιππος Ἀρχεδέ[κτου] ν]ικήσας ἀνέθηκε [τῶι] Διονύσωι and 3096: Τιμοσθένης Μειξωνίδου, Μειξωνίδης Τιμοσθένους, Κλεόστρατος Τιμοσθένους χορηγοῦντες νικήσαντες ἀνέθεσαν τῶι Διονύσωι τἄγαλμα καὶ τὸμ [βῶμον].

[76] Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 59-62.

These ideas are reflected in different ways within the body of evidence considered up to this point. The Pronomos Vase, for example, with its matched representations of actual satyrs on one side and humans portraying satyrs on the other, seems to urge the viewer to identify one gathering with the other, such that the entire group of poet, aulos-player, actors and chorus somehow merges with the mythological followers of Dionysos through the success of their production.[77] To emphasize this effect, the rearmost satyr on the mythological half of the vase looks back at the other half and extends in the direction of his human counterparts a cup overflowing with wine, inviting them, it would seem, to join the revelry of Dionysos' *thiasos*.[78] In the *Symposium*, Socrates likewise reaches the status of satyr in the wake of the victory awarded to him by the Dionysian Alcibiades; in addition, he proves to be the most Dionysian of the contestants through his ability to carry on the revelry far longer than anyone else, finally (223c2-d10; *cf.* 214a1-5) overcoming even the comic poet and tragic poet who had previously been identified as the most capable of consuming wine on account of the close association with Dionysos that is a necessary component of their profession (176a8-c3). Lastly, the representation of epinikian celebration in both the *Symposium* and the 'Ikarios' reliefs emphasizes the same ideal of joining Dionysos' *thiasos*, but does so more positively by having the god and his *thiasos* actually join poets as they celebrate their victory. The result is much the same, namely direct communion of humans with their divine patron in reward for an agonistic achievement.[79]

## IV

When we consider the function and chief clientele for these objects, it is probably safe to infer that these depictions of victory-celebration promulgated ideals that performers and poets would have been especially familiar with and even cherished. There is a certain likelihood, therefore, that in their own treatment of victory-celebration the poets will have focused on details found also in the artistic monuments created to honour their achievements. I suggest that the iconography's core interest in an imagined union of poet and god within a sympotic context that comes on the heels of agonistic success is a feature that connects the various representations discussed so far with what fifth-century literary evidence we have for poetic epinikia. Here we may return to Aristophanes. For although his references to epinikia almost always take the form of oblique allusions that do not put us in a position to attempt a detailed reconstruction of this event, on certain points his remarks become more meaningful when taken in combination with evidence considered to this point, and may help confirm some of the conclusions we have reached.

At *Frogs* 297 the actor playing Dionysos is frightened by the bogey-monster Empousa, who is imagined to be approaching him on stage. His fear forces him out of his dramatic role for a moment. Turning to face the audience he addresses the priest of Dionysos, seated at the front of the theatre, and begs to be rescued so that he may join him later as fellow-reveller:

ἱερεῦ, διαφύλαξόν μ', ἵν' ᾖ σοι συμπότης.

[77] This interpretation is hinted at by Taplin (1997) 73. Easterling (1997) 44 writes that satyr-play 'represents the performers ultimately getting nearest to their "true" cultic role of Dionysos-worshippers'; *cf.* Sourvinou-Inwood (2003) 83-4.

[78] Metzger's (1965, pl. XXXIV) presentation shows that the two sides interact directly and may have been conceived as a continuous narrative, i.e. *thiasos* merging with theatrical gathering.

[79] Somewhat differently, a fourth-century choregic relief for dithyramb (Athens NM 1490; see Vierneisel and Scholl (2002) 27-8) is able to show the vital connection between a poetic victory and contact with Dionysos' *thiasos* in a more abbreviated manner. Here a single satyr sets up the victory tripod on a stone base to create the commemorative monument for the winning tribe.

Several commentators infer that the actor's remark alludes, in a theatrically disruptive way, to epinikia celebrations, where it is assumed the priest of Dionysos made an appearance as an honoured guest.[80] In that case the actor's remark makes an arrogant claim, in a way that was probably typical with comic poets,[81] by assuming that he and his fellow-performers will in fact have something to celebrate when the award for the contest is eventually made. That gesture is pure comic bravado, but the assumed participation of the priest makes good sense, given the central place of religious offerings in these celebrations, which the *Symposium* emphasizes and the other representations corroborate. As with his conspicuous seat of honour at the dramatic competitions themselves, the priest's presence at the epinikia and likely involvement in the religious activities pertaining to them helped clarify and give tangible proof of the god's abiding personal interest, the very ideal that was so carefully articulated by Dionysos' central appearance in the iconography. This metatheatrical interpretation of the actor's remark remains attractive. Even so, on the level of the dramatic fiction, the promise of 'Dionysos' to turn up and join the company of mortals as a *fellow-reveller* after the performances can be taken more literally, if the notion of religious experience suggested by the reliefs' depiction of Dionysos joining the poet's banquet as *sympotês* was already in place. It is worth recalling that the Dionysian Alcibiades (*Symp.* 212e4, 213a2) asked to be allowed to join the poet Agathon at his epinikian celebration in that very capacity.

The same anticipation of later festivities within the performance can be observed at various moments in Aristophanic plays where scenes of wedding and banquet celebration are introduced. In these cases the immediate purpose is to underscore the comic hero's success, but often enough this happy outcome is co-ordinated – sometimes quite overtly – with the victory that the poet himself hopes to achieve.[82] Of instances where this kind of thematic and contextual conflation takes place, the most important for our discussion comes toward the end of *Acharnians*, when Dikaiopolis suddenly receives an urgent invitation from the priest of Dionysos to join him at his house for the Choes feast on the second day of the Anthesteria. With this turn of events the culminating moments of the play put in the audience's mind an image of the successful hero celebrating his achievement in the intimate company of Dionysos' priest. As a kind of reward for all that he has accomplished, the play's hero joins the priest of Dionysos as *sympotês*, thus actually achieving what the actor in *Frogs* only hoped to experience.

If these possible connections between the dramatic plot of *Acharnians* and victory-celebration still seem vague, they become more conspicuous when other events are taken into account. At an earlier point (*Ach.* 377-82, 497-503), Dikaiopolis spoke in the person of Aristophanes both as composer of *Babylonians* and enemy of Cleon,[83] so that many in the audience will already have seen Aristophanes in Dikaiopolis and might have been predisposed to draw a comparison between their celebratory experiences at this later point. The audience's ability to identify Dikaiopolis' Choes celebration with epinikian practice is facilitated more explicitly by the song cited at the beginning of this essay (*Ach.* 1150-73), which covers the time of Dikaiopolis' celebration at the priest's house. With this song the Acharnians excoriate the *khoregos* Antimachos precisely because he had fallen short in his duty of furnishing his chorus with a sumptuous banquet of the kind the priest of Dionysos now provides for the play's triumphant hero.[84] In timing and theme their song facilitates an identification of the Choes banquet with Dionysian epinikia,

[80] See the notes of Dover (1993) and Stanford (1983) on this passage.

[81] See especially the direct pleas for the judges' favour at *Nub.* 1115-30, *Av.* 1102-17, *Eccl.* 1154-62.

[82] Calame (2004) provides a useful discussion of the celebration scenes in Aristophanes and their relation to the dramatic contests. *Cf.* Wilson (2000) 348 n.248.

[83] The relationship between Aristophanes and Dikaiopolis has attracted much attention, but the main points are set out in detail by Bowie (1982).

[84] Notice too that Dikaiopolis' food-preparations that culminate in the Choes banquet were at one point compared with delicacies provided to comic choruses (*Ach.* 885-6).

and that effect is capped during Dikaiopolis' final entrance onto the stage. Staggering and supported by two prostitutes (*Ach.*1198-1203, 1216-17),[85] he now returns from the priest's banquet and shouts to the judges and the archon Basileus, who presided over the Lenaian competition where *Acharnians* was performed, to award him the prize for winning the Choes drinking contest (*Ach.* 1224). It is as much a plea for the play as for Dikaiopolis himself.[86] The final exit from the stage then has hero and chorus echoing the victory cry – τήνελλα καλλίνικος! (*Ach.* 1227-34) – that Herakles once used when he was victor at the Olympic games.[87] Developments within the play conspire in various ways to link the notions of victory, divine favour and ritual feast with the poetic epinikia such that, in its ultimate effect, Dikaiopolis' feast and victory at the Choes become emblematic of the victory Aristophanes hopes to celebrate.

With the difference that in these examples Aristophanes signals his favoured status with Dionysos through the god's human representative, his vision of victory-celebration is largely consistent with the ideal presented in the reliefs and other visual evidence. Having observed this basic connection and with it Aristophanes' own habit of incorporating epinikia celebration within his plays, we may consider one final example where interplay between celebration within the performance and post-performance victory-celebration has not been recognized – this time involving Dionysos himself. At a point in *Frogs* well after the actor playing Dionysos has dropped back into his stage persona, the god of the theatre ends up acting as judge in a contest between the two deceased tragic poets Aeschylus and Euripides. This fantastic situation is obviously intended to reflect dramatic festivals. To be sure, Dionysos' putative expertise, which is the basis for the role assigned to him in the contest, is premised upon the thorough familiarity with theatrical matters that he has gained by regularly attending such performances during his own festivals.[88] Although his decision in the contest is long delayed, ultimately Dionysos is compelled by Pluto to choose between the two poets. Under these circumstances he judges Aeschylus to be the victor: ἔκρινα νικᾶν Αἰσχύλον (1473). By having Dionysos portrayed on stage and directly overseeing the dramatic contest as judge, Aristophanes can reverse the usual relationship between god and theatre, so that now the god's actual award of victory becomes symbolic of the theatre audience's verdict (τί δ' αἰσχρόν, ἢν μὴ τοῖς θεωμένοις δοκῇι; 1475). Once this resolution is obtained, matters reach a point where, according to the usual pattern, it is only natural for a mood of celebration to dominate the final moments of the play. I suggest that in this scene Aristophanes has in mind the ideals of epinikia celebration, now fully realized because in this play the god is both physically present and directly involved in the management and enjoyment of his *heortê*.

Almost immediately after Dionysos proclaims his decision, Pluto invites the victorious poet and the god to enter his palace with him (χωρεῖτε τοίνυν, ὦ Διόνυσ', εἴσω, 1479). In response to Dionysos' inquiry as to the reason, Pluto goes on to explain that he wishes to entertain both of them before they sail off: ἵνα ξενίζω σφὼ πρὶν ἀποπλεῖν (1480). Any suggestion that the plural imperative χωρεῖτε extends to include Euripides is, however, set beyond the range of possibilities by Pluto's continuation. The dual σφώ clearly limits the invitation to just Dionysos and the victorious poet Aeschylus.[89] Hence, with the conclusion of a comically sketched poetic victory, the tragic poet and god of the theatre are now treated as an associated pair in the context of a formal banquet. Aeschylus assumes the favoured position next to the god of the theatre, which

[85] For the staging here, see Olson (2002) note on 1198.

[86] On the metatheatre of this scene, see Slater (2002) 64-6, who also adduces a contest of a theatrical nature that is attested in the fourth century for the Chutroi on the final day of the Anthesteria. That evidence is tenuous, but it is worth observing that Aristophanes' representation of epinikia through the Choes feast would be parallel with the visual formulation of epinikia, if the image of a drunken Dionysos was imported from *choes* illustrations.

[87] Scholia *Av.* 1764.

[88] For these themes, see especially *Ran.* 71-107, 785-6, 805-11.

[89] On the alternation from plural to dual and the vocative address to Dionysos alone, see Dover's note on line 1479.

was represented in various ways in the visual evidence. Much as in *Acharnians*, the feast of celebration that is the immediate destination of god and poet in *Frogs* is assumed to take place during the actors' brief exit from the stage. Their absence leaves room for the chorus to perform a song, whose theme is entirely appropriate for the event imagined to be taking place offstage, divided as it is between a eulogy for the victor and condemnation of the defeated (1482-99). For Aeschylus the song is a true *makarismos* (μακάριός γ' ἀνήρ, 1482), attesting to the superior state of blessedness and good fortune he has attained thanks to his agonistic success.[90] Finally, it is also noteworthy that, as in the reliefs, the celebration hosted by Pluto is characterized specifically as *xenismos* (ξενίζω, 1480) of Dionysos within the intimate setting provided by the palace of the underworld.[91] With the structure of Athens' dramatic festivals so readily available in this play, it is difficult not to sense that this Underworld Dionysia is now reaching a familiar conclusion.

Even in the few examples considered here, Aristophanes shows great variety in the way he incorporates epinikia themes within his comic plots. His technique, similar to that of Plato in the *Symposium*, is one of allusion and this is something that will have succeeded only if a recognizable pattern for poetic victory-celebration were already available for his audience to base their interpretations of these scenes on. Hints based on the splendour and luxury of victory feasting were perhaps easy to work out; more complex ideas relating to the religious nature of the event and the implications of the victorious performers' association with Dionysos less so. Images like those found on the Pronomos and other vases as well as commemorative sculpted pieces surely helped to disseminate recognizable visions of poetic celebration to a wider audience, and they may also have played a part in establishing some of the more idealizing elements of the event. These images show a variety and a technique of recombining familiar elements that in some ways matches Aristophanes' own. As for the 'Ikarios' reliefs, the *Symposium* makes it relatively clear that its entire iconography is based on a notion of victory-celebration that had already been established by the early fourth century. Moreover, its affinities with patterns of epinikia iconography that were emerging in vase illustrations by the end of the fifth century suggest that its genesis should be placed during the same period. That conclusion finds support in the allusion to a poetic victory feast at the end of *Frogs*, which offers a closely related paradigm of a freshly victorious poet banqueting alongside the god of the theatre. With actual epinikia the final stage of the Dionysian festival was reached. For *Frogs* this is true in so far as the *agon* in Hades is concerned, but the trajectory of Aeschylus' victory celebration is quite different. He and Dionysos leave Hades to return to Athens, where they will reappear at festivals in the theatre of Dionysos.[92] In its ultimate destination, therefore, Aeschylus' victory will connect up nicely with the one Aristophanes would soon celebrate himself. By this association Aristophanes perhaps anticipates the moment when he could take his place beside Dionysos in the manner of the anonymous poet on the reliefs.

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[90] For this idea as it fits into the epinikian praise of Pindar, see Kurke (1991) 124-5, 127. Lada-Richards (1999) 328-9 emphasizes a connection with mystic rites.

[91] Lada-Richards (1999) 123-58 offers a different interpretation of the theme of *xenia* in *Frogs*.

[92] Pluto's comment, 'before sailing off' (πρὶν ἀποπλεῖν, 1480), reminds us that for the tragic competition in Hades Dionysos was, as at the Athenian festivals, envisioned as a foreign god who reached the city at the time of the dramatic competitions. The anticipation of an Athenian festival at the end of *Frogs* would be clearer if the scene represented on a number of sixth-century vases, in which Dionysos appears aboard a ship-cart in a procession, could be connected specifically with the City Dionysia. For this conclusion, see Steinhart (2004) 94-5 (*cf.* Burkert (1983) 201 n.16, Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 12-13, Parke (1977) 109), against the attribution to the Anthesteria by, e.g., Deubner (1932) 102-3. As others have noted, that procession may also have inspired the earlier scene in *Frogs* (180-270) where Dionysos arrives in Hades on Charon's boat: Reckford (1987) 409-10, Bierl (1991) 37, Slater (2002) 186.

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