

Vanderpool

AD(24), 1961

THREE PRIZE VASES

(Figs. 1-2; Plates 1-4)

This article concerns three bronze vases of the fifth century B.C. with identical inscriptions marking them as prizes given by the Athenians at games for those who died in the war. They must, in fact, have been prizes at the games known as the Epitaphia.

1. In the collection of Mr. Paul Kanellopoulos in Athens there is a large bronze lebes with an inscription on the mouth (Pl. 1 a-b, 2; Fig. 1). The vase was found a few years ago in the plain of Marathon. Mr. Kanellopoulos later visit-

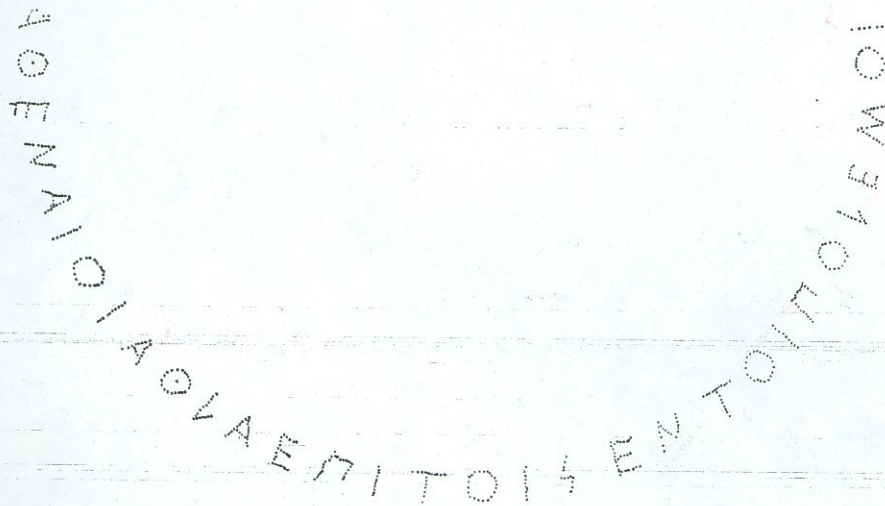


Fig. 1. The Kanellopoulos lebes: drawing of inscription

ed the place of finding in the company of the late John Papadimitriou who was then Ephor of Attica and was shown a spot a short distance inland from the Soros. The vase is reported to have contained charred bones at the time it was found and had evidently been used as a burial urn. The vase was cleaned and consolidated in the workrooms of the National Museum. I thank Mr. Kanellopoulos for allowing me to study this vase and publish it. The photographs are by Mr. James R. McCredie, the drawing of the inscription is by Mrs. Helen Besi.

The vase is a lebes of generous size, being about 0.45 m. in diameter and so considerably larger than the average vase of this shape. It is over 0.30 m. deep and has a wide circular mouth and a broad shoulder from which the sides drop down steeply. The bottom is rounded and there is no base, a stand being required on which the vase could rest. Much of the lower part of the body is missing. There are two

moveable handles on the shoulder engaged in semi-cylindrical spools, and two similar spools without handles are set between them. The spools are carefully and rather elaborately moulded and have beaded decoration on the ridges. They are 0.07 m. in length and 0.04 m. in diameter. The mouth has a lip in the form of a flat ring of solid bronze 0.23 m. in diameter. When the vase was found the lip was covered by another similar ring of exactly the same size so that the actual lip ring did not show. This upper ring may have been the rim of a cover the rest of which had disintegrated¹. When the vase was cleaned the upper ring came off revealing the true lip underneath and the inscription written on it.

The inscription is written in letters made up of small punched dots (pointillé) and reads as follows:

Ἀθηναῖοι ἄθλα ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ.

It is written in the early Attic alphabet with three barred sigma and Attic lambda. The alphas have sloping cross bars. The nus have the left hand stroke longer than the other two. The first epsilon has the vertical stroke extending below the lowest horizontal, and the horizontal strokes slightly raking; the other epsilons are more regular. The thetas are dotted. The letter forms would suit a date around or shortly after 480 B.C.

2. The Louvre has a vase similar to that of Mr. Kanellopoulos which was found at Ambelokipi near Athens in 1875 and is said to have contained charred bones². Mr. Devambeze has kindly allowed me to study the vase and publish it with new photographs supplied by the Museum (Pl. 3 a - b).

The Louvre vase is somewhat smaller and less finely made than the Kanellopoulos vase. It is about 0.31 m. in diameter and 0.22 m. in height. The spools on the shoulder are less carefully moulded and are decorated with pairs of lines. They are also smaller, being only 0.05 m. long and 0.018 m. in diameter. The moveable handles are simpler. The mouth is 0.20 m. in diameter. The vase has a cover 0.22 m. in diameter, a fairly substantial sheet of bronze slightly concave-convex with no trace of a separate rim. A round hole at the center, about 0.017 m. in diameter, evidently served to attach a handle, now missing.

The inscription on the mouth ring is in pointillé and reads as follows:

Ἀθηναῖοι ἄθλα ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐν τῷ πολεμῳ.

The alphabet is archaic Attic, but the letter forms are a little more upright and regular than on the Kanellopoulos vase and probably therefore a trifle later.

These two lebetes belong to a class of pot which is fairly common but which has not been much studied as it has little or no decoration, and the bodies are generally found rather crushed so that their exact shape is hard to determine. Often nothing is left but the handles or the spools. These pots are found in ceme-

1. It must be admitted, however, that the other covers that I have been able to examine have no such ring at the outer edge, being merely slightly concave-convex sheets of bronze. The larger size and the more elaborate workmanship of the Kanellopoulos vase may, however, have made it an exception.

2. A. de Ridder, *Les Bronzes antiques du Louvre*, II, p. 101, no. 2590, pl. 93.

teries where they often contain the ashes of the deceased and they also occur in the great sanctuaries such as Olympia, Delphi, the Argive Heraion, and the Athenian Acropolis where they must have been votives. A few, like our two and one from Eretria in the National Museum in Athens, carry inscriptions on the mouth marking them as prize vases³.

3. The Archaeological Museum in Salonica has a bronze hydria⁴ which was found by chance a few years ago in the course of construction work at Karabournaki, a promontory in the southeastern outskirts of Salonica where a small ancient settlement and cemetery are known to have existed⁵ (Pl. 4 a-b; Fig. 2).

The vase is 0.345 m. high and 0.27 m. in diameter and its mouth is 0.152 m. in diameter. The vertical handle is missing but the two side handles are preserved. A few holes in the body have been filled out. There are tongues on the rim and foot and around the attachments for the horizontal handles. The shape of the vase resembles most nearly two hydrias in Istanbul illustrated by Erika Diehl, *Die Hydria*, plate 11, and dated in the second half of the fifth century B.C. (ibid. pp. 32 and 218).

The inscription reads:

Ἀθηναῖοι ἄθλ{ο}α ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐν τῷ πολέμοι.

The scribe perhaps started to write the singular, ἄθλον, then changed to the plural. The letter forms are more developed than on the other two vases. Sigma has four bars. The cross bars of the alphas are nearly horizontal. The lambdas are still of Attic form, however, and omicron is still used for omega and epsilon for eta. The date therefore should be the second half of the fifth century B.C. which agrees with the date suggested above on the basis of shape⁶.

Our three vases, according to their inscriptions, were prizes given by the Athe-

3. The discussion of these vases by Furtwängler in the Olympia publication is still the *locus classicus* for vases of this shape: E. Curtius and F. Adler, *Olympia, IV, Die Bronzen*, bearbeitet von Adolf Furtwängler, pp. 134-136. The National Museum in Athens has a good number of such vases, some catalogued in A. de Ridder, *Catalogue des Bronzes de la Société archéologique d'Athènes* (Paris 1894), pp. 6-9, nos. 13-22, others acquired more recently. I was able to examine some of these vases through the courtesy of Mr. Kallipolitis and Mrs. Touloupa. There are a few words on vases of this and related shapes by K.A. Neugebauer in *RM* 38-39 (1923-1924), pp. 405-408. Humphry Payne in *Perachora*, I, pp. 160-163, discusses the poorly preserved vase fragments and the handles found at that site and adds a number of useful references. Some recent discoveries of similar vases: *Praktika*, 1935, pp. 88-89 and fig. 3 on p. 91 and fig. 3a on p. 94 (Marathon); *Praktika*, 1953, p. 81 and fig. 8 on p. 82 (Eleusis); *Praktika*, 1954, pp. 57-58 and fig. 7 (Eleusis); *BCH* 81 (1957), pp. 518-519 and fig. 17 (Draphi). There is a handsome example on display in the museum at Eretria.

4. Inv. 5243. For a preliminary notice by Mr. Petsas see *Μακεδονικά, Θ'*, (1969), *Χρονικά Αρχαιολογικά*, p. 135, Pl. 13, 14 a-b. I am grateful to Mr. Petsas for allowing me to study the vase and publish it here and for supplying photographs.

5. Excavation report, with references to earlier work, by K. A. Rhomaios in *Epitymbion Chrestou Tsounta* (Athens 1941), pp. 358-387. Summary in *AJA* 45 (1941), pp. 631-632.

6. The vase has another inscription, what seems to be a ligature of Δ and Ε, incised under the foot. One of the two Istanbul hydrias cited above (Diehl p. 218, no B. 123) has a somewhat similar ligature in pointillé letters on the mouth.

nians at games for those who had fallen in the war. These games must be those about which we read in Diodorus Siculus (XI. 33.3):

ὁ τῶν Ἀθηναίων δῆμος ἐκόσμησε τοὺς τάφους τῶν ἐν τῷ Περσικῷ πολέμῳ τελευτησάντων, καὶ τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν ἐπιτάφιον τότε πρῶτον ἐποίησε, καὶ νόμον ἔθηκε λέγειν ἐγκώμια τοῖς δημοσίᾳ θαπτομένοις τοὺς προαιρεθέντας τῶν ῥητόρων.

«The people of Athens adorned the tombs of those who fell in the Persian War and held the funeral games then for the first time and passed a law that chosen

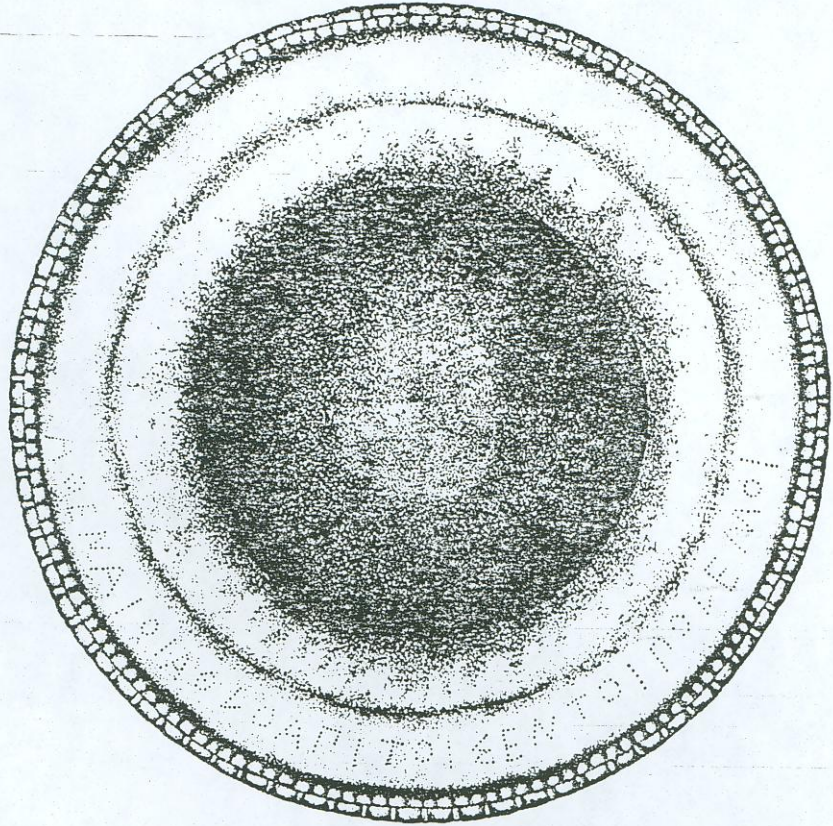


Fig. 2. The Salonica hydria. Drawing of inscription

orators should make speeches in praise of those who were given public burial».

These funeral games, which were later called the Epitaphia, were arranged by the Polemarch and continued to be celebrated throughout Classical antiquity; they were held at the Academy⁷.

7. Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.*, 58, 1; other references in J.E. Sandys' note *ad. loc.* and L. Deubner, *Attische Feste*, pp. 230-231. The text of the inscription on our pots, referring as it does to «games for those who fell in the war», seems to support that interpretation of the *Ath. Pol.* text in which the war dead are linked with the games rather than that in which they are linked with Harmodios and Aristogeiton. Pollux (8,91) also understood the *Ath. Pol.* passage in this way, as did Philostratos, *Vit. Soph.*, II, 30, *ad fin.*

The passage of Diodorus quoted above occurs in his account of the events of the year 479/8 B.C., and recent opinion has rightly come out strongly in favor of this date (or near it)⁸ and against the old view that these customs go back to the time of Solon and particularly against Jacoby's view that they were established in 464 B.C.⁹ The Kanellopoulos prize lebes with its inscription in early Attic characters obviously has a bearing on the problem and, although it cannot be dated exactly I feel that its inscription suits better the years 479 B.C. or shortly after rather than the years 464 B.C. or shortly after, thus fitting nicely with Diodorus' date and becoming one of the earliest prize vases from those games.

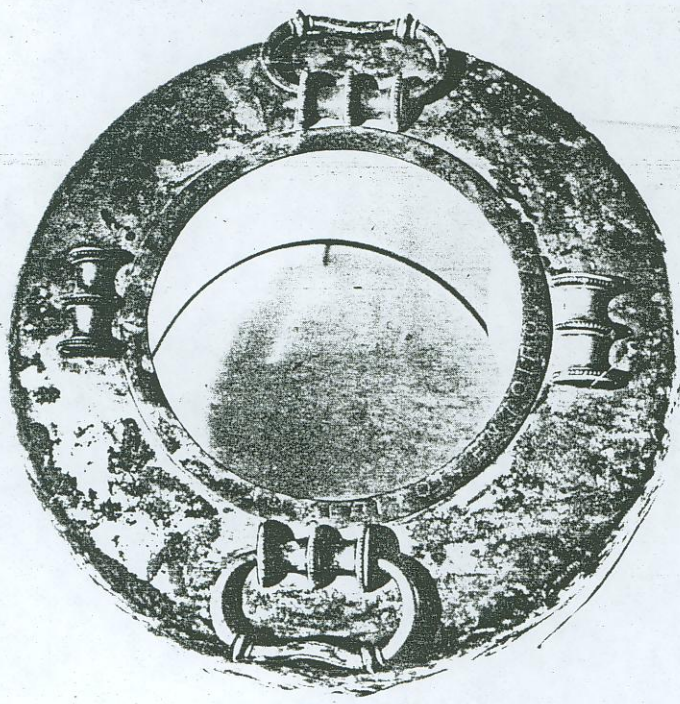
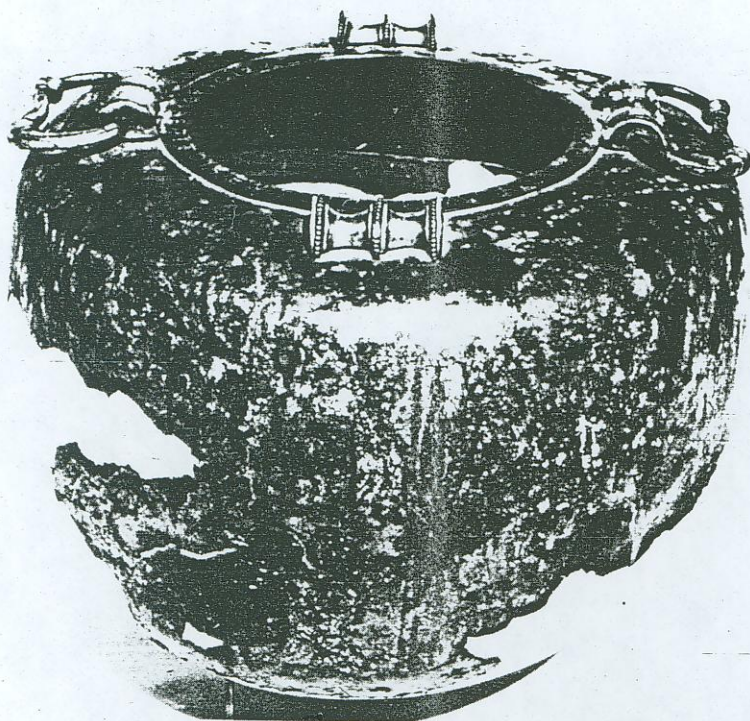
Ours are the first prize vases known from the Epitaphia, but many others must have been awarded and it is to be hoped that readers of this article may be able to identify some that may be preserved unrecognized in collections. These vases were valued by their owners during their lifetime and on their death the vases were buried with them or used as containers for their ashes, a custom well known from other prize vases, including Panathenaic amphorae, which have been found in tombs throughout the Greek world.

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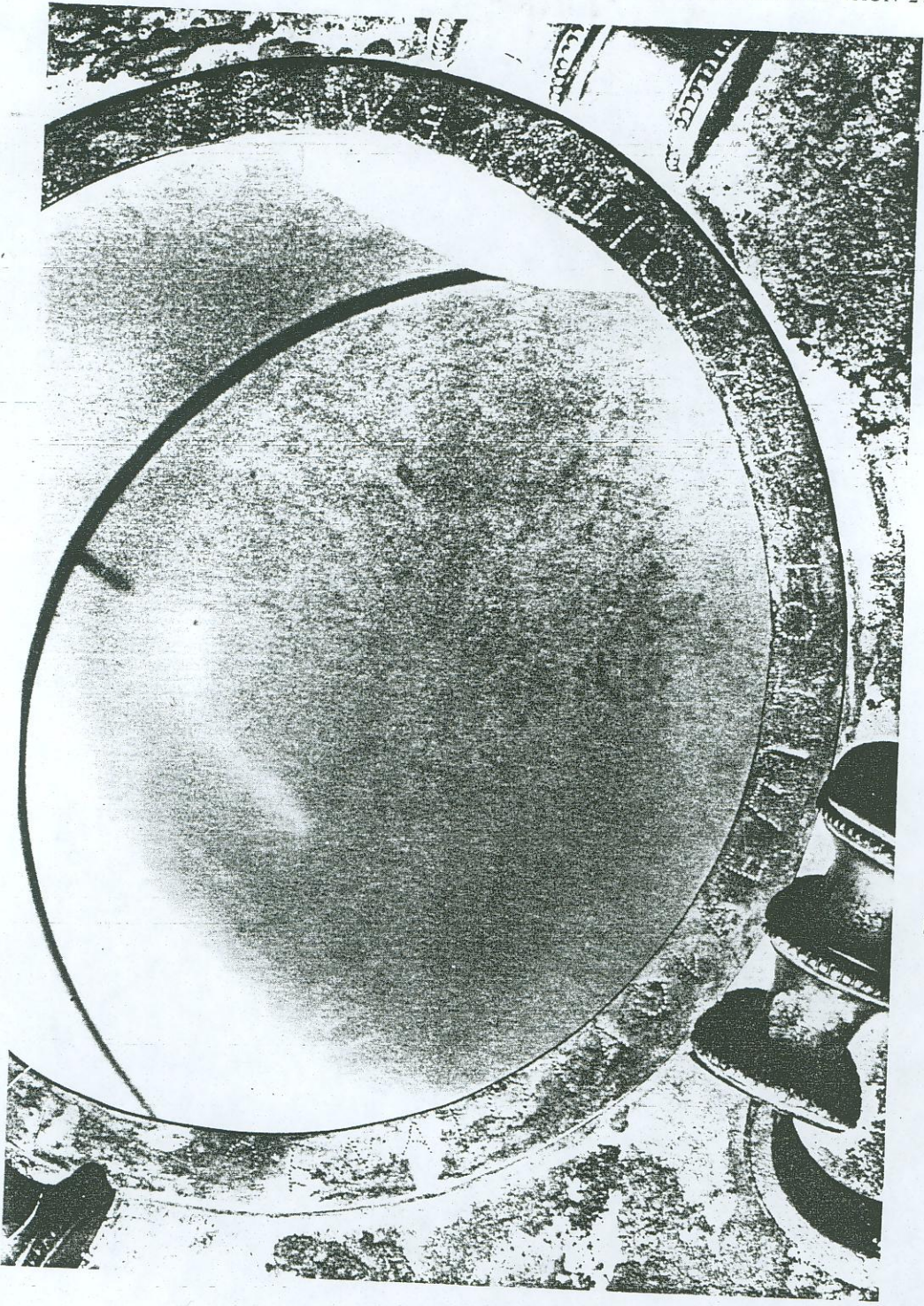
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8. W. Kierdorf, *Erlebnis und Darstellung der Perserkriege*, p. 87; N.G.L. Hammond, *CR*, 82 (1968), p. 80 and *C.Q.*, 63 (1969), pp. 118 and 142; D.W. Braddean, *CQ* 63 (1969), pp. 154-155.

9. «Patrios Nomos», *JHS* 64 (1944), pp. 37-66. Reprinted in F. Jacoby, *Abhandlungen zur griechischen Geschichtschreibung*, pp. 260-315.

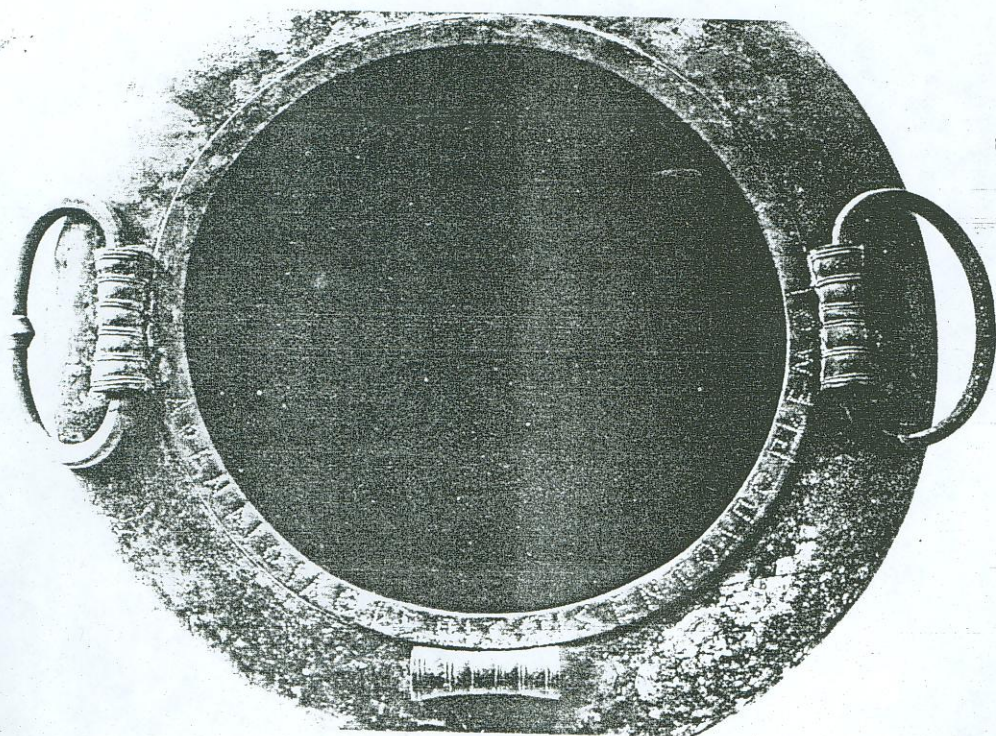
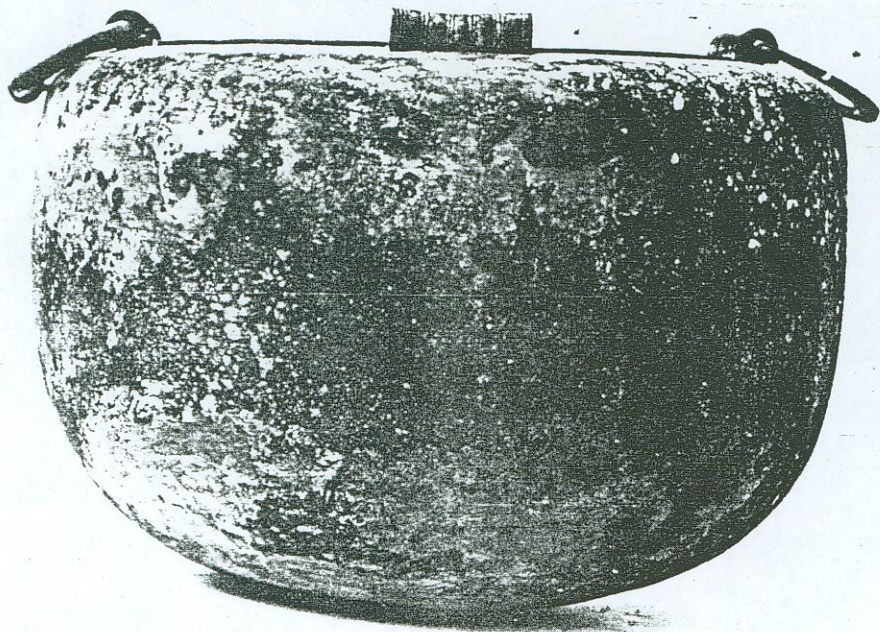


a - b. The Kanellopoulos lebes

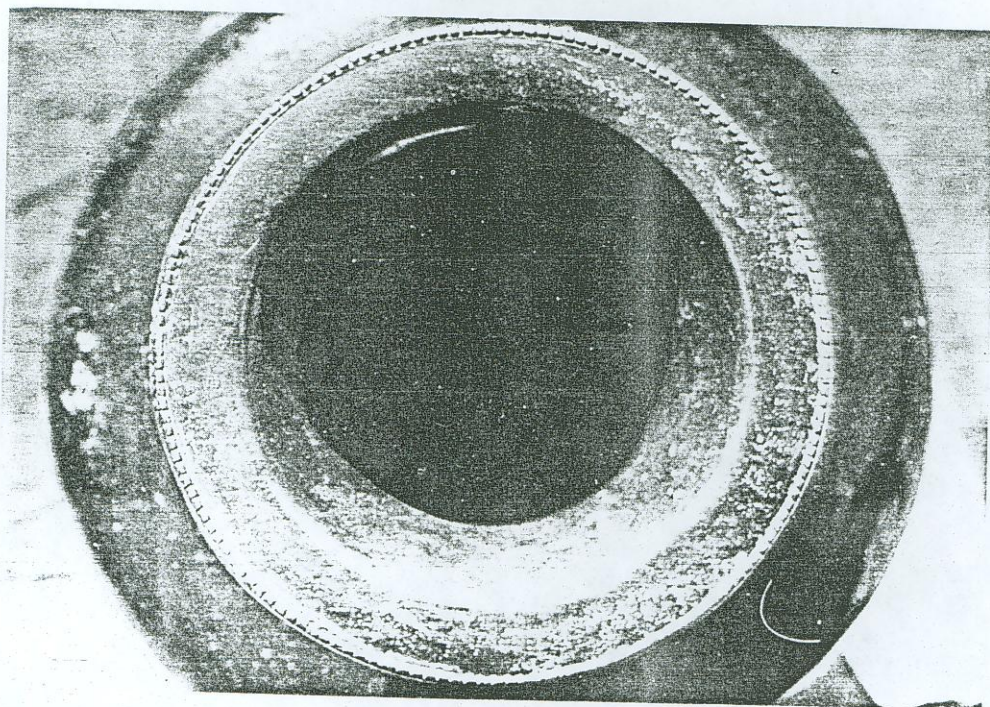


The Kanellopoulos lebes : detail showing inscription

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a - b. The Louvre lebes and detail



a - b. The Salonica hydria and detail

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Deme decree from Kephissia