

CHOREGIC DEDICATIONS
AND WHAT THEY TELL US ABOUT
COMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE FOURTH
CENTURY BC



ABSTRACT: Two fragmentary reliefs from the Athenian Agora, first published by Webster, constitute our primary evidence for the appearance of the ancient comic chorus. I will reconstruct the monuments from which these fragments were taken and discuss the relationship of the images to choral practice in the Athenian Theatre of Dionysus. I will also address the question of the unique nature of these two mid-fourth-century reliefs depicting comic choruses and argue that the reliefs belong to a new form of monument placed, like the tripod monuments for men's and boys' lyric choruses, on the Street of the Tripods. The new form is the result of a structural change in the sponsorship of comedy by which the choregoi were no longer appointed by the archon but, as in the lyric competitions, by the tribes.

AT THE ATHENIAN DIONYSIA from ca. 508 tripods were given as prizes for men's and boys' "circular" choruses, popularly called dithyrambos.¹ The prize notionally went to the tribe that sponsored the chorus but was given to the choregos who was obliged to mount it on a monument in a public space to commemorate the victory.² *Dramatic* choregoi memorialised their victories in a less magnificent manner. Our written sources indicate two kinds of memorial made by dramatic choregoi who were victorious at the Dionysia: masks and *pinakes*. The word *pinax* can refer to a painted wooden plaque, a painted or fired terracotta image, or a relief sculpture

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1. The official names of the lyric competitions are "men's" and "boys'". Though they might be popularly referred to as "dithyrambos", official speech avoids confusion with the cultic choral performances. The term "circular chorus" only appears fairly late in the fifth century BC. For convenience I will refer to them as "dithyrambic choruses" or "circular choruses" in this article, but with the caution that this usual modern nomenclature can be misleading. For problems with the terminology, see Fearn (2007) 165-225; d'Alessio (2013); Ceccarelli (2013); Csapo (2015) 93-105.
 2. Wilson (2000) 198-262.

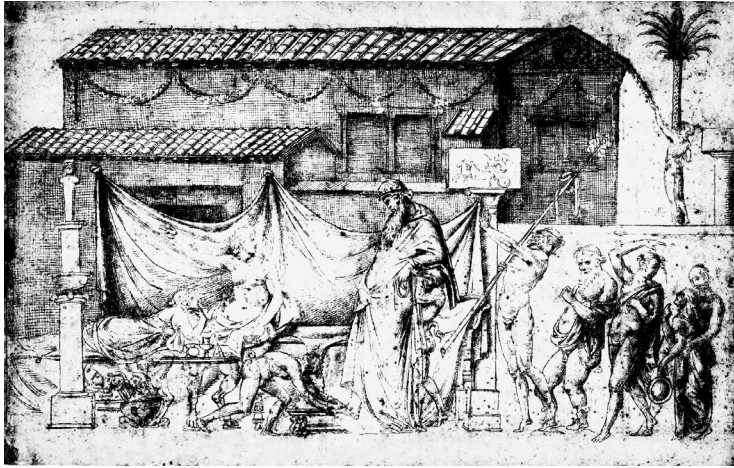


Figure 1: Sixteenth-century Artist's Sketch of "Icarius Relief."

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of stone or even bronze.³ The practice of dedicating masks is attested by ancient authors⁴ and confirmed by the use of hanging masks as an iconographic index of a temple or sanctuary of Dionysus.⁵ *Pinax* dedications for dramatic victories are attested by ancient authors as well as by the remains of several *pinax* dedications which we will look at in a moment.⁶

Like masks, *pinakes* could in Greek art serve as an iconographic index of a sanctuary of Dionysus, but unlike masks, *pinakes* could be dedicated to any god, not only to Dionysus, and therefore can in art indicate any kind of sanctuary setting. Scenes of divine sanctuaries reveal two kinds of *pinakes*: those that are attached to a wall in the temple or sanctuary, and those that are mounted on columns. Those mounted on columns can also be of two types. If the *pinax* is a painting, then it is protected by an often temple-shaped box with doors that you can open to look at the painting and close to protect it from the weather.⁷ *Pinakes* that are stone reliefs do not need such protection and so are mounted directly on a column. On the famous so-called Ikarios reliefs (Figure 1), Dionysus brings a ribbon to tie upon the head of a victorious

3. Hellmann (1992) 91–3.

4. Lys. 21.4; Aesch. F 78a S. (*Isthmiastai*) with Krumeich (2000); Ar. F 130 K.–A. (*Geras*); Call. *Ep.* 49 Pf.

5. Green (1982) 244.

6. Arist. *Pol.* 8.1341a 33–7; Plu. *Them.* 5.4.

7. As illustrated on an Attic bf pelike by the Rycroft Painter in Naples (MN 81083), nicely reproduced in Denoyelle (2009) 46–7.

poet or actor (note the masks underneath the couch of the victor). In this case the setting is clearly Dionysus' sanctuary as marked, among other things, by dedicatory victory *pinakes* (behind Dionysus in front of the precinct wall surrounding the temple and behind the satyr above and beyond the wall).⁸

THE FORM AND FUNCTION OF CHOREGIC DEDICATIONS FOR DRAMA

Quite a number of marble dedicatory *pinakes* survive, among them several that are identifiable as dedications of victorious choregoi at the Dionysia in Athens and in Attica (Figures 2-9). The total number of choregic *pinax*



Figure 2: Marble Relief *Pinax* found in Theatre of Dionysus, Athens NM 1750, 375-350 BC. Photo: courtesy of H. R. Goette.

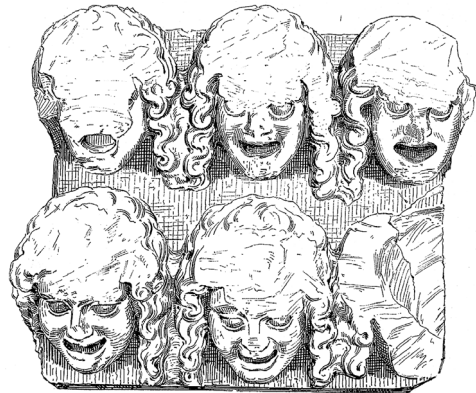


Figure 3: Drawing by Gilliéron in Reisch 1890, 145-6, fig. 13 of Marble Relief *Pinax* found in Theatre of Dionysus, Athens NM 382, late 1st to early 2nd c. AD?

8. Figure 1 is an anonymous sketch (London BM 1901,0619.2) of a relief now in the British Museum (1805.7-3.123; *MNC*³ 3AS 4). The relief itself, missing many details still visible in the sixteenth century, is a 1st c. AD copy of a probably 3rd c. BC original. On the so-called Icarius reliefs, helpful recent discussions include: Bacchielli (1996); Micheli (1998); Huet – Lissarrague (2005); Biles (2007); Csapo (2010). The *pinax* in the foreground shows the image of a winged Victory driving a chariot (Smith [1904] 242). Her wings are faint but distinctly visible on the monument itself (confirmed through autopsy). The subject suggests generic victory imagery rather than anything strictly appropriate to a dedication in a sanctuary of Dionysus.



Figure 4: Marble Relief *Pinax* from Ikarion, Athens NM 4531, ca. 360 BC.
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fragments is slim, but they do permit a typology of imagery that is frequently confirmed by echoes in contemporary Attic vasepainting, by dedications from the revival of the choregia in Roman times,⁹ or by artifacts from theatrical traditions influenced by Athens.

The most common type of dramatic choregic *pinax* to survive is a mask relief, an image that alludes to the other more expensive and less permanent type of dedication, namely a dedication of actual masks.¹⁰ Fragments of some two dozen *pinakes* with masks were found in the nineteenth-century excavations in the area of the Theatre and Sanctuary of Dionysus in Athens, although photographs of only two (Figures 2–3) were subsequently published.¹¹ The best known mask-*pinax* is probably that of Ikarion (Figure 4).¹² The masks are in

9. Wilson (2000) 276–8; Shear (2013).

10. Agelidis (2008) 79–80.

11. Sybel (1882) nos. 3875, 3877, 3882, 3883, 3968, 3978 are all explicitly from the “Theatre of Dionysus”, which included the Sanctuary, but probably also are nos. 1069, 1070, 1071, 3256, 3467, 3531, 4095, 4107, 4141, 4142, 4145, 4155, 4803, 5744, 6130.25–27, 6475, 6566, 6810. Cf. Reisch (1890) 145–7. The origin of Figure 2, Athens NM 1750 (*MTS*² AS 5), from the area of the Sanctuary of Dionysus is confirmed by Karouzou (1979) 111. She notes that the back of the *pinax* is smooth and was probably painted, so the relief is *antiprosopon*. Figure 3: Athens NM 382; *MTS*² AS 27.

12. Found in 1958 on property belonging to a Mr Eliopoulos at Dionysos (ancient Ikarion). Athens NM 4531; Karouzou (1968) 60–1; Zoumpakes (1987) 44–5 no. 10; Kalt-



Figure 5: Marble Relief *Pinax*, Athens NM 1513, ca. 350 BC. Photo: Author.
© Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports/ Archaeological Receipts Fund.

rough shape so we cannot name the genre for certain. Green thinks they are masks from satyrplay.¹³ What is certain is that this is a choregic monument. Surviving from an inscription on the upper border is an *O* for the final *OY* of a patronymic and *EXOPHΓEI*, “*X* son of *X* was choregos”.¹⁴ The fragment indicates that Ikarion shared this dedicatory practice with Athens.¹⁵

The other most common subject of dramatic *pinakes* is a series of worshippers who approach a recumbent, drinking Dionysus, normally with a female figure sitting at the end of the dining couch, and sometimes with an attendant fetching wine (Figures 5–8).¹⁶ That these are choregic is clear from the inscription on Figure 5, *ΛΥΣΙΑΣ ΑΠΟΛΛΟΔΩΡΟΥ ΧΟΡΑΓΩΝ*, “Lysias, son of Apollodoros, while choregos” (viz. “made this dedication” or possibly “was victorious”). It is unknown why the participle is in Doric dialect.¹⁷

sas (2001) 285 no. 600; Vierneisel – Scholl (2002) 32; Kaltsas (2004) 305 no. 181; Agelidis (2008) 53–4.

13. Karouzou (1968) 60 thought all of the masks tragic with the exception of the lower right-hand one, which she identified as comic. The mask in the lower right does have attributes that suggest a comic figure, but Green (1982) 244–5 detects pointed ears and a snub nose (though the damage is extensive) which suggest a satyr.

14. *SEG* 44, 131.

15. On the Dionysia at Ikarion: Wilson (2015). For art derivative from mask dedications, see Green (1982) and especially the terracotta plaque with masks from Amphipolis (Kavala 240; *MNC*³ 66, XT 1, 3rd c. BC; Froning [2002] 95 fig. 133).

16. Agelidis (2008) 80–2; Csapo (2010b) 86–96.

17. *IG* II² 4928; Csapo (2010b) 91–3.

That the worshippers approach a recumbant Dionysus is clear from Figures 6 and 8. The inscribed dedication on Figure 6 is to Dionysus: *HPAEEΣ ΔΙΟΝΥΣΩΙ ΑΝΕ[ΘΗΚ. . .]*.¹⁸ Note that only half of the pinax is there: to the right of the woman with the mask we see the knee of Dionysus reclining on his kline. Dedicatory inscriptions are normally centered on the upper frame and so there is room here for a “was choregos” and possibly further nomenclature. An inscription on the right of the lower frame of the Peiraeus relief (Figure 8) identifies the recumbant figure as Dionysus.¹⁹ The inscription under the young lady who wears a fawnskin at the end of the couch has been misread, usually as [*IIai*]δία, supposed to be a personification of satyr play. This is not totally appropriate to a scene with tragic choreuts, even if they are bacchantes (as indicated by the female dress, masks and tympana). It appears on reinspection of the remains that the young lady at the end of the couch is named] . φία, probably “Sophia”, a personification, perhaps not of wisdom, but of tragedy, which is referred to as σοφία in Aristophanes (as poetry in general is by several Classical authors).²⁰ That we are dealing specifically with drama is clear from the masks that appear in three of these *pinakes* and of course the choreuts, wearing or carrying masks and dressed as bacchantes in the Peiraeus relief. Two of these *pinakes* are from Attica and probably record dramatic victories at the Dionysia of Eleusis and Peiraeus.²¹ Note that remnants of the tenons that fixed the *pinakes* to columns are visible on Figures 5 and 7.

18. Cagliari Museo Nazionale 10918; *IG* XIV 605; *MTS*² 34, AS 6; Svoronos – Barth (1937) 525, fig. 239; Dentzer (1982) 505–6, R449, fig. 571; Vierneisel – Scholl (2002) 32 fig. 23; Froning (2002) 77–9, fig. 94; Csapo (2010b) 90–1, fig. 7.5.

19. For the history and interpretive problems, see Csapo (2010b) 94–6.

20. Ar. *Ra.* 882/3 (cf. LSJ σοφία 1). I have checked the plaster cast, now in Charlottenburg in Berlin, that was taken soon after this monument was pulled out of Peiraeus harbour in 1881. Autopsy of the original and the plaster cast leaves no doubt that her name ends in IA (thus excluding Robert’s [1882] initial reading of *II[ai]δηία*). On the plaster cast one can still see what appears to be the rising oblique stroke which made Robert think he could read delta and Schuchardt (1888) lambda, but this is merely a surface irregularity. There is no corresponding descending oblique, and it is in any case too far to the left. With a raking light from below, the traces of a phi are legible, much better preserved on the cast than on the original, giving the reading] . φία. “Sophia” therefore is likely, “Eumorphia” conceivable. Either abstraction seems calculated to characterise the wisdom or physical grace gained by the dedicants through their service to the deity. Marion Meyer (*per litteras*) kindly confirms that the traces of the inscription as preserved on the plaster cast in Vienna are consistent with what I found on the Charlottenburg cast. The Peiraeus *pinax* will get a thorough discussion in Csapo – Wilson (forthcoming).

21. The Dionysia in Peiraeus and Eleusis and other Attic demes will be treated thoroughly in Csapo – Wilson forthcoming. In the meantime see the survey in Csapo – Wilson (2015) 319–28.



Figure 6: Marble Relief *Pinax*, Cagliari MN 10918, ca. 360 BC. Reproduced by permission of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici per le Province di Cagliari e Oristano.



Figure 7: Marble Relief *Pinax*, Eleusis 30, 4th c. BC.



Figure 8: Marble Relief *Pinax* from Peiraeus, Athens NM 1500, ca. 400 BC.
Photo © H. R. Goette.



Figure 9: Marble Relief *Pinax* from Sphettos, Athens NM 2400, ca. 320 BC.
Photo © H.R. Goette.

Related to this subject is a *pinax* found built into a church near the ancient theatre in Sphettos (Figure 9).²² This *pinax* shows fifteen men (not including the diminutive attendant beside the pig) approaching a Dionysus (who holds a kantharos) on the other side of the altar. The men are evidently the members of a victorious tragic chorus as the central figure in the foreground holds the crown of victory in his hands.²³

All of these *pinakes* have what we might call religious subject matter. They seem to:

- have been placed in a sanctuary
- sometimes use the language of dedication

22. Athens NM 2400, found in the apse of the “Papa” church northwest of Koropi, the site of ancient Sphettos (Traill [1975] 48) by Milchhöfer in 1887. See Milchhöfer (1887) 98 no. 103; Reisch (1890) 124; van Straaten (1995) 87; Agelidis (2008) 51–3, pl. 10a; Csapo (2010b) 86–8, fig. 7.3; Goette (2014) 89–90, 105 no. 24, fig. 2.10; Takeuchi – Wilson (2014) 44–7 fig.1.

23. Voutiras (1991–1992) 39 (cf. Agelidis [2008] 52–3) has persuasively explained the garland as the crown of victory. Unlike the festival garlands that would normally be worn on the head (and which may have appeared on the figures of this monument) this is prominently displayed for its special significance. The scene is closely paralleled by a relief in the Louvre (Ma 756), including a display of the victory crown by a central (and in this case frontal) figure of another probably choral group. The figures on the Sphettos relief are evidently not a synecdoche for a men’s or boys’ chorus, because as Hans Goette points out to me, some of the choreuts are bearded and others not. It is in other words a mixed male Dionysian chorus of fifteen which must signify tragedy.

- have subject matter that shows dedications, worshippers bringing sacrifice, and worshippers approaching the god himself in his sanctuary.

This is as we might expect but it is important: the memorials for *dramatic* victories act like normal dedications — they behave in a manner quite unlike the tripod monuments, the memorials of victories for tribal circular choruses at the City Dionysia.

No base for or part of a tripod monument was certainly found in the Sanctuary of Dionysus²⁴ — the nearest monuments are those of Nikias and Thrasyllus, both of 319, which border the theatre — all other bases are on or adjacent to the Street of the Tripods.²⁵ The inscriptions of tripod monuments typically declare victory, name the personnel, the tribe, and the date. As Peter Wilson says “The urban khoregic inscription presents itself as a recorder of victorious personnel rather than a dedication. It presents itself as ... a ‘memorial of the khoros’, rather than a gift to Dionysos”.²⁶ The *reliefs* on tripod monuments, though they may show Dionysus, typically focus upon the symbols of victory: either the prizes (crowns, tripods and bulls) or Nikai, the personifications of victory.²⁷ When real people appear on tripod reliefs, it is usually the choral personnel: choregos or choreuts; occasionally one sees satyrs, the mythical correlatives of the choreuts.²⁸ More rarely does Dionysus himself appear in the mix.²⁹ This is even clearer on the vasepaintings

24. Amandry (1976,) 62 n. 64; Wilson (2000) 209, 366 n. 33; Shear (2013) 391.

25. Even in antiquity it was not always clear whether or not the theatre was part of the sanctuary: see Moretti (1999-2000) 378–80. Those who erected tripods seem to have encroached upon but never entered the theatre, suggesting that, whatever the limits of the “sanctuary”, the theatre was considered out of bounds. It is true that Plato (*Grg.* 472a) and Isaeus (5.41) refer to some fifth-century monuments as “tripods in the Dionysion” but this is likely to be shorthand for the open space between the Odeon and the actual temenos, the plateia formed at the end of the Street of the Tripods as it enters the Theatre. A marble base (Athens NM 1490; Agelidis [2008] no. 12; Csapo [2010b] Appendix A no. 4) is said by Reisch (1890) 57 to be from the Sanctuary of Dionysus, but this information seems to be an inference from Sybel (1881) no. 3983 who only saw the fragment “am Wächterhaus”, an inference, rightly, not made by Svoronos and Barth (1937) 621 no. 262, who simply identify the findspot as “Athens”. See also Agelidis (2008) 181–2 no. 133, 190 nos. 52–4.

26. Wilson (2000) 209.

27. Vierneisel – Scholl (2002) 22–8; Agelidis (2008) 82–4, 91–5; Csapo (2010b) 82–3, 125–6 Appendix A, nos. 1–7, 9, 10.

28. Csapo (2010b) 125–6 Appendix A, nos. 3–5, 7–8, 11.

29. Csapo (2010b) 125–6 Appendix A, nos. 3, 6, 7.

that adapt the imagery of dithyrambic victory.³⁰ It is victory, not Dionysus, that is celebrated here; and elation not piety that is thematised.

These differences between dramatic *pinakes* and tripod monuments may prove helpful, but they are not absolute. In general 50% of choregic memorials of all types from the demes have a dedicatory formula using *ἀνέθηκε*, as opposed to virtually none of the tripod monuments from Athens.³¹ This may reflect deme conservatism, but also probably the fact that, in the demes, memorials of victory were located in sanctuaries.

For dramatic dedications in the city, our evidence is admittedly limited. Apart from the reliefs we will look at in a moment, of the eight extant *pinakes* that can be identified as dramatic choregic dedications, four come from deme sites (Figures 4, 7–9), two more may be either Athenian or demotic since they have no recoverable point of origin (Figures 5–6), and only two objects are certainly from Athens (Figures 2–3). But the two that might be from Athens still have their accompanying inscription. One of these explicitly uses the language of dedication *HPAEEΣ ΔΙΟΝΥΣΩΙ ΑΝΕ[ΘΗΚ...]*, “Heraees dedicated this to Dionysus” (Figure 6). The other may leave the dedicatory verb to be implied, as often in dedications (see above on Figure 5). The language is very different from that of tripod memorials for the tribal dithyrambic competitors: here we have just credits, no language of dedication. The Lysikrates Monument’s inscription (*IG II² 1629*) is typical: “Lysikrates, son of Lysitheides, of Kikynna was choregos. Akamantis was victorious in the boys’ chorus. Theon played pipes. Lysiades of Athens was the *didaskalos*. Euainetos was archon”.

As mentioned earlier, it is not just the language of the tripod monuments that is non-religious. So is the imagery. In addition to more purely victory

30. See the list in Csapo (2010b) Appendix B and also Froning (1971). About a quarter of some fifty late Archaic and Classical Athenian vases now known to me to depict tripods and tripod monuments clearly allude to victories of lyric (“dithyrambic”) choruses at the Athenian Dionysia (or Thargelia): this is shown either by inscriptions, Dionysian motifs (e.g. dancing satyrs), or by musical motifs (musicians, choreuts). Another sign, though less secure, is the presence of a sacrificial ox, which was given along with the tripod as a prize for the choral victory. The primary reference of most of the other Attic vase-paintings showing tripods is probably but unprovably choral victory at the Athenian Dionysia or Thargelia. This is an inference not only from generic similarity to the demonstrably Dionysian or Thargelian imagery, but from the impression of the configuration of the tripods or the monuments, which in Athens were of specific dimensions and types. As they were prizes, their size and configuration was subject to standard measures: Amandry (1976) 68-70; Amandry (1977) 202. These are different from those in Delphi and elsewhere: see e.g. Amandry (1987); Papalexandrou (2008).

31. Wilson (2000) 249.

imagery another surviving subject for a monument for dithyramb is the performers themselves, the chorus, not as worshippers approaching Dionysus, but as celebrants of victory,³² or, in a very rare instance, the chorus in performance. The dithyrambic chorus in performance is indeed a subject unique, in choregic monumental art, to the Atarbos monument, a combined monument for a victory in dithyramb and pyrrhiche but almost certainly both at the Panathenaia, where no tripod prize was awarded, so it does not really come into this discussion.³³ Nor does an in some ways comparable fragment that shows pyrrhic choreuts from the Panathenaia.³⁴

There is indirect evidence of choregic dedications showing dramatic choruses in performance. The language of Aristotle when talking about the fad for gentleman playing the pipes in post Persian War Athens implies that you could actually see the choregos Thrasippos playing the pipes on the *pinax* he dedicated when he was choregos for Ecphantides.³⁵ Rarely, we also get images in vase-painting of tragic choruses in performance that might seem to be inspired by choregic *pinax*-art.³⁶

But of surviving *pinakes*, only the Peiraeus *pinax* for tragedy details the chorus members enough to give the vaguest hint of actual performance, even though we are clearly notionally in a sanctuary setting with Dionysus (Figure 8). We see three choreuts on the left in the costume of bacchants and approaching Dionysus. The leftmost choreut originally also wore a female mask (there are still fringes of the hair detectable on the shoulder) though the mask was chiselled out.³⁷ Probably some ancient Christian fanatic saw in it a sign of demonic possession. It is in fact something close to that. The choreut who wears the mask falls into his role. He raises his tympanon and seems to shake it. Here the movement is minimal, but it is a motif familiar from vase-paintings that are related to choregic art and appears to have been a stock motif from at

32. Agelidis (2008) 76–9 and the monuments cited above in note 28.

33. For the interpretation of the form of the monument see Shear (2003); Agelidis (2008) 56–62, 226–9; Makres (2009), all with earlier bibliography

34. Athens NM 3854; *SEG* 23, 103b; Poursat (1967); Wilson (1997); Rausa (1998).

35. Arist. *Pol.* 8, 1341a 33–7: “For in Lacedaemon a choregos played the pipes for his chorus himself, and at Athens it became such a fad that almost the majority of free men had a go at pipe-playing; as much is clear from the *pinax* which Thrasippos dedicated after being choregos for Ecphantides”. It is of course possible that Thrasippos merely held pipes in e.g. an adoration-type scene, but in this case it could have served as an attribute signifying general musical culture and a less striking proof that Thrasippos played for his chorus than Aristotle seems to intend.

36. Csapo (2010b) 96–103.

37. Robert (1887); Micheli (1998) 3; confirmed by autopsy.

least the mid fifth century. A half dozen vase-paintings include a contrast between choreuts who have removed their masks and regained their civic persona and a choreut who wears the mask and moves in a manner appropriate to the choral persona it portrays.³⁸ But the relevant scenes seem to presuppose a setting in the sanctuary before or after the performance and at a guess they take their initial inspiration from the kind of dedicatory scenes we have in the choregic *pinakes* where the choreuts are juxtaposed to the god.

THE FORM AND FUNCTION OF AGORA S 2098

Two comic reliefs from the Athenian Agora are therefore very special. They are the only reliefs from antiquity to show dramatic choruses in performance. Both have long been known: they were published by Webster in 1960.³⁹ But perhaps because of their fragmentary state, they have not been studied nearly as much as they deserve.

A single fragment of a choregic *pinax* of Pentelic marble (S 2098, Figure 10) was found during excavations of the Eleusinion in the Athenian Agora (Agora Grid U 19) on July 8, 1959, built into a wall in late antiquity.⁴⁰ Note that this is very far from the Sanctuary of Dionysus, and we will consider the importance of the location a little later. The frontal view of the block that appears in the published museum photograph makes it look squarish and chunky.⁴¹ But the squareness is an optical illusion created by the fact that the wall-builders cut an oblique slice out of the left side.

Two original edges are preserved and they show that the dimensions are those of an average largish *pinax* dedication.⁴² With a thickness ranging from 8 centimetres at the edge and extending to 17 centimetres at the bottom lip, it is roughly half a metre high and 40 centimetres in width. The original

38. Csapo (2010a) 17–19, 20, 22, 42.

39. Webster (1960) 263–5 nos. B 7, B 33, pl. 66. The second relief receives some preliminary comment in Webster (1956) 11 and Bieber (1956) 172.

40. Agora inv. S 2098; *MMC*³ AS 4; Pickard-Cambridge (1966) 215, fig. 104; Sifakis (1971) 416–20; Vierneisel – Scholl (2002) 30-1, fig. 21; Agelidis (2008) 219–20, no. 95. The information relating to the time and place of discovery is from the Agora inventory card.

41. Agora neg. 82.229. The apparent chunkiness no doubt contributed to the belief that this was part of the rectangular base for a monument: Vierneisel – Scholl (2002) 31 thought it a statue base; cf. Agelidis (2008) 220 (working from the photograph: see next note).

42. The bottom and lower front are relatively well preserved, and so is part of the original upper left surface. This is unreported by Agelidis (2008) 220, who was unable to see the original (see her n. 1035).

sculpture was probably closer to 60 centimetres in height and 80 centimetres to a metre in width. The sculpture is dated by style to the third quarter of the fourth century and most likely to 350-340 BC.⁴³

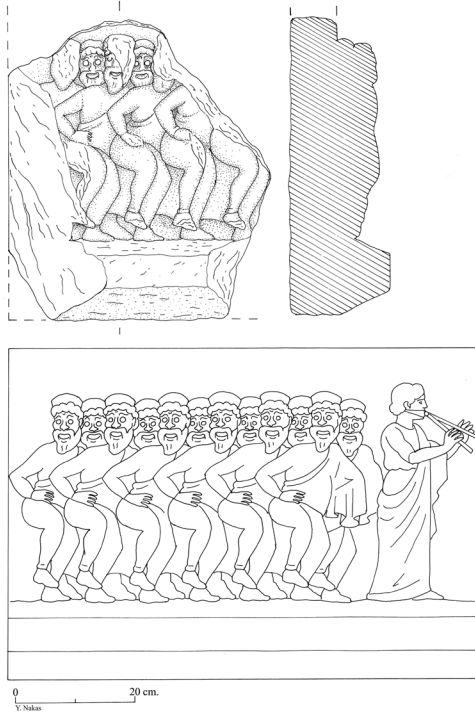


Figure 10: Drawing, Profile and Reconstruction of Marble Relief
Pinax from Athenian Agora, Agora S 2098, 350–340 BC.

The scene, drawn by Yannis Nakas under my direction, preserves a comic chorus dancing in rectangular formation (Figure 10). The chorus wears uniform masks with only slight and perhaps unintentional variation, and uniform costumes. It marches to a uniform step. There are clear indications of body-tights and the comic *somation* with buttock-and-belly padding, features of comic costume that choreuts evidently shared with actors. The high step prevents any determination on the hotly contested question whether choreuts also wore the phallus and if so was it the same or different to those worn by actors.⁴⁴ The choreuts wear a pillbox-style hat (Webster

43. I thank J.R. Green for his opinion (personal communication) on the date.

44. I share Taplin's ([1993] 77 n. 25) scepticism against nearly the entire scholarly tradition since Webster (1956) 111. Webster took the Agora reliefs as evidence that comic choruses wear no phalloi. Though generally sympathetic to the conclusion that comic cho-

identifies the hat as a *polos* but this is uncertain), a short chiton, a short cloak and possibly mask M, the mask of a mature (i.e. middle-aged) male.⁴⁵ The piper at the front is added to the reconstruction somewhat arbitrarily on the analogy of other scenes of this sort (more on this later).

The line is shown as two ranks deep. Although votives occasionally do show formations of groups of people with more than two ranks, two-deep is the universally preferred depth, if any depth is shown at all, when showing orderly groups like choruses.⁴⁶ Three or four deep creates visual confusion. Because we think we know that comic choruses were 24, this means that a six by two formation should stand for a formation of six by four. This *pinax* does not, however, show the side with four because the remains of a fifth first-rank choreut are visible at the upper left. The artist is giving the best impression of the mass of a comic chorus in rectangular formation that his medium will allow.

THE FORM AND FUNCTION OF AGORA S 1025 + S 1586

The other relief survives in four fragments found in the Agora between 1938 and 1952.⁴⁷ The monument shows a very similar kind of chorus to that depicted on Figure 10, but this time only a single rank is depicted. The chorus also wears pillbox hats and also dances with a high kick but is most markedly different in carrying short sticks over its left shoulders. The monument is best known through the standard, composite photograph of the four fragments, our Figure 11, first published by Bieber and subsequently republished in the most widely accessible discussions.⁴⁸ In this photograph the

ruses normally wore no phallus, I do not think it a possible deduction from these reliefs.

45. I thank J.R. Green (personal communication) for this judgement on the hat and mask. The hat is described as a *polos* at Webster (1960) 282 and in *MMC*³ AS 4.
46. The technique of showing a depth of formation by outlining a second row of figures behind a first is rare. For choral formations in Archaic and Classical Greek art, see the lamentation scenes, such as the cup by Lydos in the Kerameikos Museum (*ABV* 113, 81) or the terracotta plaque (Louvre MNB 905) by the Sappho Painter, and the vase-painting and choregic monument that show dramatic choruses (namely Basel Antikensammlung BS 415 (*CVA* (3) pl. 6.1–2, 7.3–5) and the Sphettos relief (Figure 9). On the choral nature of the lamentation scenes, consult Shapiro (1991).
47. Athens, Agora S 1025 + S 1586; *SEG* 28, 213; *MMC*³ AS 3.
48. Bieber (1961) 43 fig. 181; Pickard-Cambridge (1968) fig. 103; Dover (1972) fig. 5. Chief discussions by Webster (1960) 264–5, pl. 66; Sifakis (1971) 417–20; Vienneisell – Scholl (2002) 29–31, figs. 17–20; Froning (2002) 91, figs. 120–2 (p. 88); Agelidis (2008) 219 no. 94, pl. 9a–d; Csapo (2010b) 86 fig. 7.2.

monument looks flat and could be taken for a *pinax*, but the photograph is deceiving and the truth is more interesting.

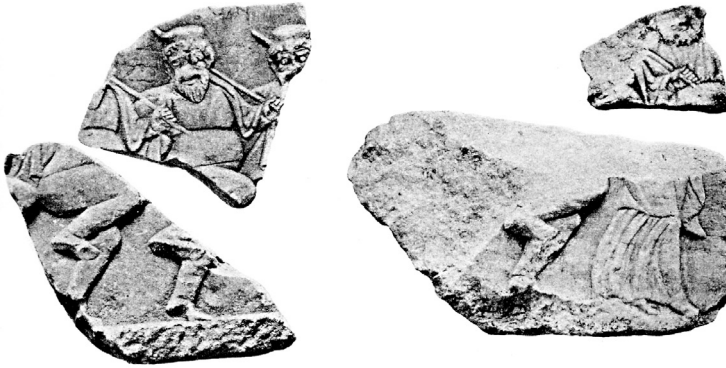


Figure 11: Commonly Published Composite of of Agora S 1025 + S 1586.
Reproduced courtesy of ASCSA: Agora Excavations.

The photograph omits the important information that the corner piece, fragment B, has a return which shows the legs of a choreut in the same pose as on the other fragments (Figure 12). This return is mentioned in the briefest of notes by Green in *MMC*³ AS 3, but was only first published in Sophie Agelidis' dissertation of 2008.⁴⁹ Knowledge of B2 makes a big difference. It proves that the original sculpture was a rectangular object with choreuts marching around at least two, and possibly three or all four, sides.



Figure 12: Agora S 1025 + S 1586, Fragment B, Sides 1 and 2. Photo: Author.

49. Agelidis (2008) no. 94, pl. 9a-d.

The layout of Bieber's composite photograph (Figure 11) is therefore misleading in several ways. Not only does it disguise the return on B, but it places D above the body of the piper, apparently mistaking the stick in D, and perhaps a line of the edge of the choreut's cloak, for auloi. The actual fragment, though sadly not the photograph of D, clearly shows parts of two stick-wielding choreuts much the same as their congeners on C (apart from a somewhat rounder beard, which will be discussed below). But it turns out that D cannot belong to the same side of the relief as do A, B and C. I asked Yannis Nakas to try to put all the fragments on one side as appears in Bieber's composite, but it did not work. Fragment D is on a different scale from the other pieces. You can see this most easily if you look at the disconnect in the stick carried by the second choreut after the piper in Figure 13. We have the top of a stick on C but it does not line up with the bottom preserved on D.⁵⁰ The choreut on D is of a smaller scale than those on the other fragments.

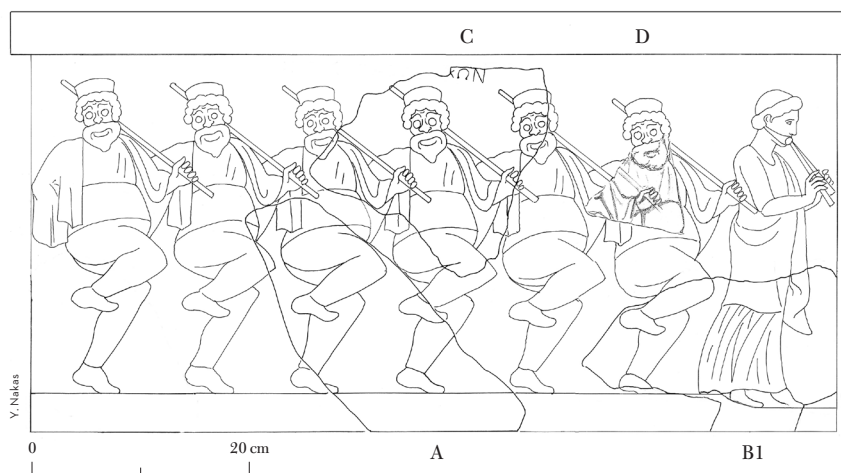


Figure 13: Reconstructive Drawing of Agora S 1025+ S 1586
Demonstrating Different Scale of Fragment D.

Along with the return on B, this too is evidence of at least two sides, and evidence that one side was drawn on a slightly smaller scale, probably reflecting the fact that the monument has much the same pattern running on both its length and width but is rectangular and not square.⁵¹ The difference in

50. The absence of any previous mention of the return on B is surprising. Webster certainly directly examined all the fragments in 1958.

51. J.R. Green also rejects the possibility that fragments A, B1, C and D all come from the same side. He found the scale and the grain of the marble different on fragments A and C (for the problem of scale, see further below). If I understand his note (at *MMC*³

scale is further complicated by the fact that even on the same side the figures get smaller as one moves from left to right. This seems an attempt to create perspective as if the figure on the left were closer to us than the figure on the right. We will look at this again. But the important thing to notice here is that on the short side the figures diminish at a greater rate. Possibly we also had no piper on the short side.

So what is the object that we are looking at? It has iconography very like the choregic *pinax* we earlier reconstructed but cannot itself be a *pinax*. The fragments must surely belong to the base of a choregic relief *pinax* (Figure 14).⁵² The original base formed a rectangle of ca. 75 centimetres wide across the ‘front’ and back and 57–65 centimetres on the sides, a base that would suit the size of *pinax* represented by the comic choregic *pinax* we just looked at (Figure 10). Indeed, there is nothing to exclude the possibility that our *pinax* and our *pinax*-monument base go together. The base is stylistically dated to ca. 350–340, the same date-range as the *pinax* (though the *pinax* was of course a stylistic comparandum, so there is a component of circularity in the mix, but not much since the dating, for which we can rely on the expertise of J.R. Green, is based on a much larger corpus of theatre iconography giving mask and costume details).⁵³ Whatever the absolute dating, the

AT 3) correctly, he thinks that B1 may belong to the same side as C, because both seem to belong to a smaller scale than A. Evelyn Harrison informed Webster ([1960] 265) that: “the veining of the marble suggests that he [i.e. the figure on D] would come either from the same side as the inscription [C] or from the opposite side”. Thus if both Green and Harrison are correct: A and B2 may belong to one side (or opposite sides) and B1 and C-D to a side (or sides) that meets A-B2 at right angles. I myself could see no difference between the grain of the marble on fragments A and C. Moreover A and C appear to me to be on the same diminishing scale (see below) while the scale of C seems incompatible with the scale of D. My reconstruction below does not therefore accept their groupings, but remains generally valid, I think, even if Harrison and Green are correct. If they are correct, one would have to add C to B2 and D somehow on Figure 18 (the opposite sides had presumably identical images, so it is only necessary really to sort out how the pattern on the “front” and “back” differed from that on the “sides”).

52. That this was a base for a choregic monument was a suggestion already aired by Webster (1960) 264 and has been accepted with growing confidence by scholars, particularly with the new collections and surveys of evidence and comparanda for choregic dedications in the last fifteen years: Sifakis (1971) 417; Vierneisel – Scholl (2002) 29–31; Froning (2002) 88; Agelidis (2008) 219; Csapo (2010b) 86.

53. Webster (1960) 264 dated “in the third quarter of the fourth century... probably ...a little later than the choregic inscription from Aixone decorated with five comic masks, which can be dated 340 BC, and contemporary with the relief of the Tyranny decree of 337/6”. The use of the Aixone decree relief as comparandum is highly problematic, as the decree most probably dates to 313/12 BC (Pickard-Cambridge [1968] 49;

subjects of the reliefs on both the base and the *pinax* have broad similarities: the pillbox hats, the masks (all probably M again), the body padding, but especially the choral formation and its stance.⁵⁴ All this suggests a close relationship between the two.

Another common feature is the findspot. Both of our sculptures must originally have been located near the Eleusinion just beyond the southeast corner of the Agora. Fragments A, B and C were found during the excavations around the Eleusinion in 1938-1939: fragment A was taken out of a “modern wall” just above the Eleusinion (“Modern Wall E of Hypapanti”); C was found during excavations a little to the southeast of the Eleusinion (section BB).⁵⁵ B and D were found in marble dumps, so presumably had wandered a bit, but not too far. B was found in a marble dump north of the Eleusinion (section HH); D was found in 1952 further to the north in a pre-war marble dump in the cellar of a modern house “636a/b, north of Holy Apostles’ Street”.

While I see no reason to exclude the possibility that the Agora choregic monument base and the choregic *pinax* belong to the same monument, I incline towards thinking that the common elements have more to do with the

Whitehead [1986] 418; Humphreys [2004] 193). The dating by J. R. Green given here is a personal communication.

54. I also owe the mask identifications to J. R. Green with whom I have discussed this relief extensively. Interpretation of the imagery has in the past been bedevilled by the assumption, going back to Webster ([1956] 111; [1960] 265; *MMC*³ AS 3) that we have two different types of mask: mask “A” on fragment C and a mask “M” on fragment D. I find Webster’s conclusion surprising as there is little more than the beard on the mask surviving on D, while what is not lost above the beard is badly damaged. This leaves hardly enough to support Webster’s theory, followed in Pickard-Cambridge ([1968] 215), that we have an actor somehow interacting with the chorus (a theory accepted also by Sifakis [1971] 419, though it goes against the grain of his main interpretation of the scene as a *parodos*). The beard on the mask on D is indeed less pointed than those on C but this certainly need not indicate that D must show an actor. The posture and costume of the figure on D is otherwise identical to that of the choreuts on C and the fragment shows that he stands fully integrated in the choral line: there should be no doubt that he is a choreut. Agelidis ([2008] 50) suggests that he is the *koryphaios* as the *koryphaios* is sometimes slightly distinguished by details of mask or costume (see e.g. *Personnage 25* on the *Pronomos Vase*: Taplin – Wyles [2010]). Webster rejected the hypothesis that the difference in mask indicated the *koryphaios*, only because “the leader would surely be next to the flute-player” ([1956] 111), but there are other considerations, discussed below, that determine the positioning of the piper. The slight difference in appearance between the masks may indeed be unintentional, possibly made by different hands of the same workshop, especially given that C and D appear to belong to different sides of the monument.
55. The information is from the Agora inventory cards.

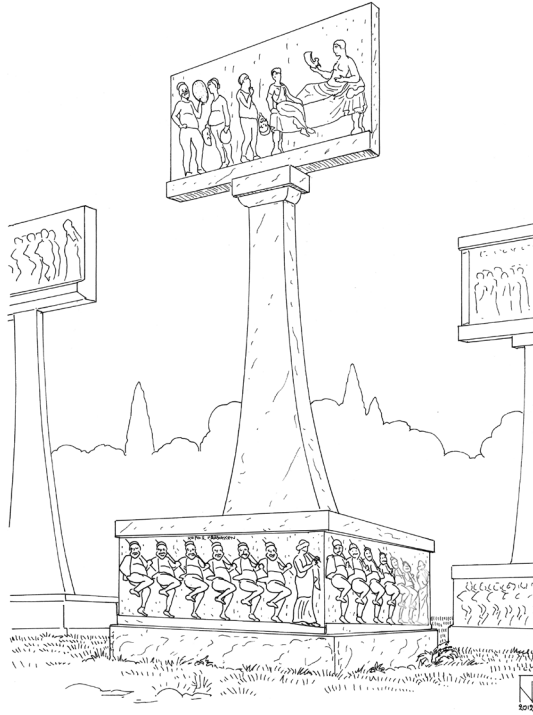


Figure 14: Imaginative Reconstruction of Monument Containing Agora S 1025+

stock characteristics of the choregic *pinax* sculpting industry of the mid fourth century BC (for this reason the reconstruction of the monument in Figure 14 contains, *exempli gratia*, a *pinax* offering a very unlikely comic parody of the Peiraeus *pinax*).

One reason for thinking the iconography generic is offered by the only other surviving image of a comic chorus in performance. A fragmentary chous in the Benaki Museum (Figure 15) has been dated around 360, a decade or two earlier than our sculptures.⁵⁶ It shows two groups of choreuts converging in a line towards a central piper. The novelty of this configuration may have less to do with actual choral practice than with the vase-painter's concern for balance and symmetry on the curved front of the pot. Pingliatoglou did use our sculptures as models for the high-stepping "march" movement in her reconstructive drawing, but this seems entirely justified by the degree to which the choreuts lean back, as seen in the preserved upper body

56. Athens, Benaki Museum 30895; Pingliatoglou (1992), pls. 64–5; Fotopoulos – Delivorrias (1997) figs. 208–9 (colour); Froning (2002) 89 fig. 123, 91–2; Csapo (2010b) 98–9, fig. 7.11.

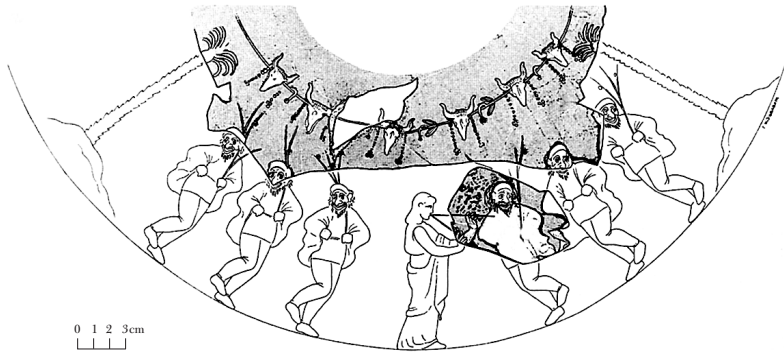


Figure 15: Reconstructive Drawing of Attic RF Chous, Athens, Benaki Museum 30895, ca. 360 BC. Reproduced courtesy of S. Pingiatoglou.

of the choreut right of the piper. The chous is in at least one way even closer to our reliefs than the reconstruction shows: the fragment preserving the upper body of the choreut indicates that the hands of the choreuts were placed on their hips, as in our sculpted pinax, and not tucked into their belts (the fragment offers no evidence of a belt).⁵⁷ There is in any case much that can be compared with our sculptures. On top of the usual belly-padded *somation*, we see a short chiton, short cloak and headgear. The headgear on the chous consists of a wide band across the forehead. Like the choreuts of our monument base the chorus carries sticks over its left shoulders, but in this case it carries boughs said by Pingiatoglou to be “with fruit but without foliage”.⁵⁸ Quite unlike the reliefs, we here have details of a background setting: a sanctuary indicated by the string of bull skulls with strings of knotted wool on their horns and the remnants of palm trees bordering either side of the image.⁵⁹ As in our monument base there is a piper who leads the chorus, but, surprisingly, the hands are in added white which might suggest that the piper is thought of as female.⁶⁰ There is, however, no reason to think the piper on the monument base is anything other than male, despite the fact that some early commentators were sometimes tempted to think him female because of the length of the garment: but this is standard (male) piper’s costume length in Classical Athens.⁶¹

57. I owe this observation to J.R. Green.

58. Pingiatoglou (1992) 294.

59. Sourvinou-Inwood (1985); Pingiatoglou (1992) 295.

60. On the question, cf. Taplin (1993) 75–8; Compton-Engle (2015) 33–5.

61. Bieber supposes without argument that the piper on the Agora base is female (1961) 43. The revisers of Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 215 identify the figure, without explanation,

THE AGORA RELIEFS IN THEIR DRAMATIC AND PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS

Something our monument base has that is quite distinctive is the trace of an inscription on the panel of the relief itself. The principal inscriptions for choregic pinakes or reliefs on bases for choregic monuments are on the upper frame above the image, and in much more formal lettering style than we find on our relief (see Figures 4, 5, 6).⁶² The letters on our comic relief are not well-cut, not squared and not written in a line. They most resemble the usually informal name-labelling one sometimes finds on the lower frame of sculpted votives, or the name labels found in vasepainting, whether influenced by choregic art or not.⁶³

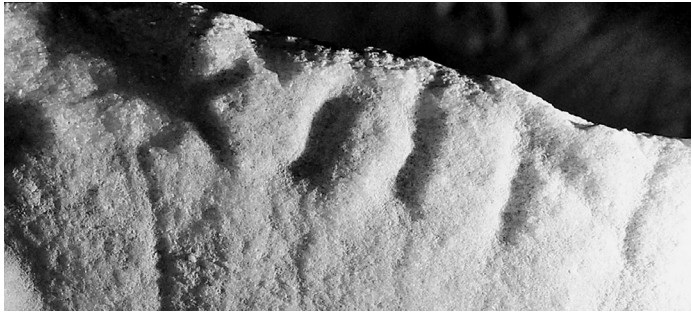


Figure 16: Detail of Inscription on Agora Choregic Monument Base. Photo: Author.

Webster first transcribed the inscription as [- - -]XΩN, with a chi.⁶⁴ In *Monuments Illustrating Old and Middle Comedy* this was changed to KΩN with a kappa, in conformity with the Agora catalogue card.⁶⁵ Possibly the transcribers hoped to read something like [XOPOΣ KΩMI]KΩN (comic chorus) though this is certainly too bland, and it is not strictly speaking correct Greek (which would use *χορὸς κωμοδῶν* or more properly just *κωμοδοί*).

as an actor. Webster (1960) 264, Sifakis (1971) 419 and Agelidis (2008) 50 argue that the figure is a piper and this is undoubtedly correct given the choral environment and the garment's conformity in every way to a standard theatrical piper's costume.

62. Compare also the inscriptions on the Atarbos monument, above note 33.

63. Figure 8, for example, or the votive *pinax* to Artemis and Dionysus in Munich (Glyptothek 552): Vierneisel – Scholl (2002) 1-20.

64. Webster (1956) 111; Webster (1960) 264.

65. This is also how it appears in *SEG* 28, 213.

[- - *XOPH*]ΓΩΝ ‘while choregos’ is definitely not an option. The visible traces of the inscription make Webster’s first reading of the first visible letter as CHI much more likely (Figure 16).⁶⁶

The high, march-like step may have influenced Bieber’s and Webster’s assumption that the chorus is composed of soldiers.⁶⁷ The pillbox hats are not, however, *kausiai* (typical Macedonian soldiers’ caps) and even Webster was uncomfortable with the idea of soldiers carrying sticks instead of spears.⁶⁸ Could they possibly be a chorus of stick-wielders, *rhabdouchoi*, who kept order at contests, like the chorus of the much earlier comedy of that name by the poet Plato?⁶⁹ This would account for the fact that the chorus gives a military impression but without displaying any definite military attributes. [*XOΠΟΣ ΠΑΒΔΟΥ*]ΧΩΝ (chorus of stick-wielders) would be at least a more descriptive label and I add it to my reconstruction on Figure 17 *exempli gratia*. Notice, that if we continue the line of the letters we find that they are not aligned to the frame of the relief, but oriented to the perspective line running over the choreuts’ heads. This seems to me a confirmation that the label is meant to characterise the choreuts, and not the monument as a whole.

The attempt at perspective can tell us something about the imagined choral formation. As with the *pinax*, the monument base has the remains of at least five choreuts in a line on what I will call the front panel.⁷⁰ If our late

66. The left half of the chi is completely lost. Enough of the surface survives however to show the absence of the line of the vertical where it should have stood if the first visible fragment of a letter was the remnant of a kappa.

67. Bieber (1956) 172; Webster (1956) 111; Webster (1970) 190 no. 31a.

68. The identification of the hat as iconographic index of a soldier goes back to Bieber (1956) 172. Webster struggled to reconcile the image with the theory that the sculpture depicted soldiers ([1960] 264): “I took the staffs, on which I thought I could see a differentiation for the blade of the spear, to be an abbreviation for spears and the hat to be a rather different stylization of the Macedonian *Kausia* worn with chlamys, chiton and a spear, by the braggart soldier’s slave in the lost Pompeian wall painting... The difficulties are 1) that the staff looks much more like a staff than a spear, and 2) that the *Kausia* is wider, has a sharp edge at the bottom, then a tight band, then an overlapping loose top”. A little later Webster, despite these qualms, followed Bieber’s interpretation referring to the sticks as “spears” ([1970] 56). There should be no doubt that these are sticks, not spears (cf. *MMC*³ AS 3; Agelidis [2008] 50). Tops and bottoms are visible in fragment C and relative to the size of the choreuts they represent objects that are to be imagined in reality as not more than a metre in length. Both ends have featureless tips.

69. Hartwig (2010) dates Plato’s *Rhabdouchoi* to 421 BC. For the officials who kept order in the theatre: Mancuso (2009).

70. This is true even if Harrison and Green are right about the differences in the grain of the marble (see above, note 51). The differences in scale (see below) shows that there are at least five choreuts even if we put B1, C and D all on the same side or symmetrical

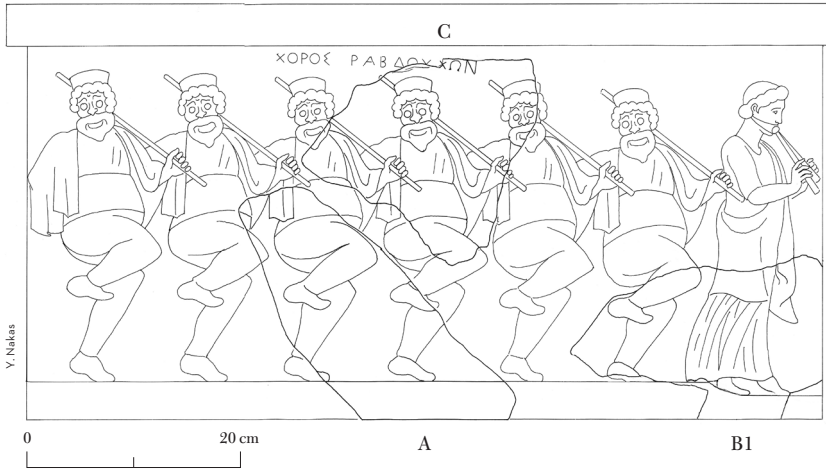


Figure 17: Reconstruction of the Scene on the “Front” of the Agora Choregic Monument Base.



Figure 18: Reconstruction of the Scene on the “Side” of the Agora Choregic Monument Base.

sources are right that comedy had 24 choreuts (there is no reason to doubt it!),⁷¹ then a rectangular formation would be 6 x 4 and we must be looking at the side that originally showed six. This conforms to what we might suspect to be the representational standard for a chorus in rectangular formation,

sides. The side or sides with the inscription have at least five surviving choreuts and must have shown six originally.

71. Müller (1886) 203–4 n. 5.

as, for example, on the Agora *pinax* (Figure 10), as well as the row of six choreuts on the comparable image on the Benaki chous (Figure 15).⁷² On our relief the bodies overlap from left to right and they get smaller as we move from left to right. On B2, for example, which must represent the extreme left of a line, the distance from ground-line to the toe of the choreut's raised foot is 8 centimetres. For the second choreut on A, the third in the sequence in our reconstruction (but second to fourth on any possible reconstruction), the same distance is about 7 centimetres. For B1, the last and sixth choreut in the sequence (on any possible reconstruction), the distance from ground to toe measures 6 centimeters. This is a particularly interesting use of perspective, as it is fairly rare in ancient sculpture, and may be a unique instance of its use in depicting human groups — hardly surprising since these choruses give us our only depictions from the Classical period of people in a regular formation. But experiments in architectural perspective from this period are well known, and theatre art played a large role in its development (hence its name *skenographia*).⁷³

The monument clearly shows a comic chorus in performance and, as such, notionally places us in the position of the theatre audience. Given the overlap of the figures from left to right and their gradual diminution from left to right we are clearly meant to see, at least on the front of the monument, choreuts as the first rank (1-6) seen from an oblique angle. This is what Pollux calls the formation 'by ranks' (Figure 19).⁷⁴

The sculptor has also cleverly manipulated the image in other ways to give the impression of an imposing approach by the chorus. He has lowered the ground line under the feet of the piper as if he were on a different plane (Figures 12, 17). This seems an attempt to show that the piper is not in the choral line but leading it from in front and centre, as we would expect. A truer perspective would have placed the piper in front of the middle choreuts awkwardly obscuring the chorus' imposing approach and would have given the piper importance at the chorus' expense.

Gregory Sifakis in 1971 cogently argued that we are looking at an important moment in the performance, the *parodos*, or the moment when the chorus entered the theatre. This is the moment in the drama when the chorus

72. One might also associate the convention of showing six masks on a mask-*pinax* (Figure 3; the Amphipolis plaque mentioned in note 15; and probably the Ikarion plaque, Figure 4 (with Green [1982] 244).

73. Bulle (1934); Pollitt (1974) 236-40; Keuls (1978) 63-6; Rouveret (1989) 65-127.

74. Pollux 4.108-9; Σ Aristid. 3.535 Dind.; Müller (1886) 204-10; Pickard-Cambridge (1968) 239-41.

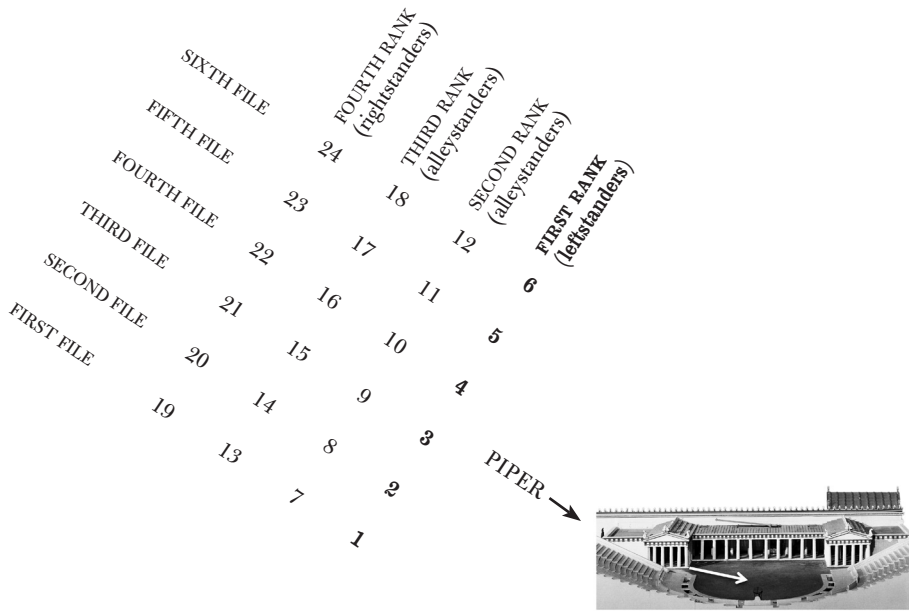


Figure 19: The Parodos Entry by Ranks (*κατὰ στοίχους*).

makes its biggest impact. Our angle of perspective would seem to confirm his observation that we are dealing with the parodos. We cannot totally exclude the possibility that we are dealing with the exodos of the chorus from the theatre.⁷⁵ But there are three considerations that greatly favour Sifakis' interpretation of our reliefs as “parodos impressions”:

- in Aristophanes' plays we often have marching entrances but generally disorderly exits in the form of a victory or marriage *komos*.
- the perspective we are given of the choral formation suits the god's eye view, that is to say from the middle of the front row of seats where Dionysus himself was located in the form of his icon.⁷⁶
- Most important, according to our sources, is that the best dancers be those most visible. This is best advantaged with an entrance “by ranks”. Choral terminology, from the time of Cratinus onwards, called

75. The preferred explanation in Webster (1970) 57.

76. As we know from such sources as Ar. *Eq.* 526-36; and for a later period D.Chr. 31.21; Philostr. *VA* 4.22; Perrin-Saminadayar (2007) 206-17, T 26 (= *SEG* 57, 36).

the best dancers “leftstanders”; the second best dancers, the “rightstanders”, closed the formation at the back; while the worst dancers stood in between: these were called “alleystanders”. A parodos in the formation “by ranks” allowed the best dancers to be most visible to most of the audience at least in the earliest stages of the parodos.⁷⁷

The *pinax* from the Agora (Figure 10) offers a comparable but different perspective. Here the figures overlap from right to left, not left to right, as on the base. We are probably still looking at the front rank of elite leftstanders, but they are not in the formation by ranks (where the piper leads six columns) but by files (where the piper leads four columns). We are privileging the same line of dancers, but they have been displaced 90 degrees clockwise

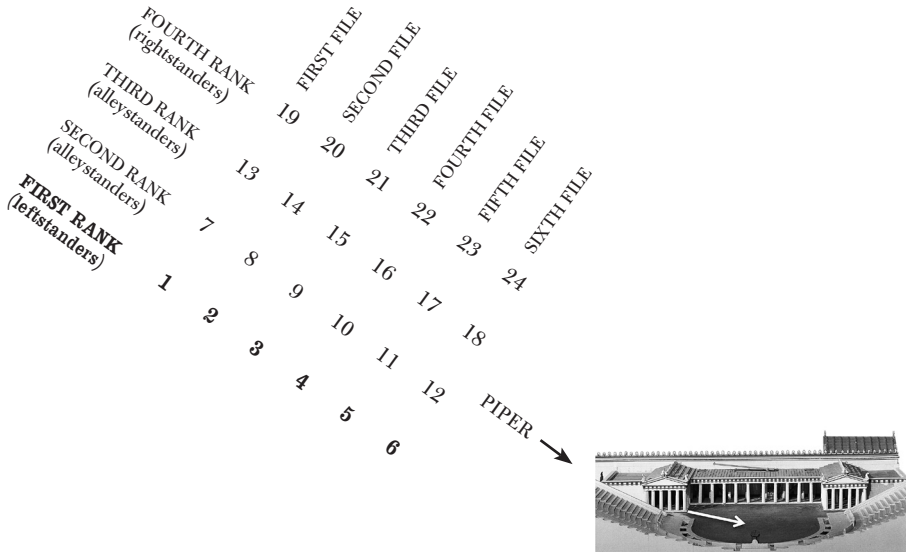


Figure 20: The Parodos Entry by Files (*κατὰ ζυγά*).

77. Cratin. frs. 186, 229, 467 K-A. Note that the images do not allow an easy solution to the question whether this left-right terminology privileges the formation by files or by ranks or whether it is from the perspective of the choreuts or from the perspective of the theatron or indeed whether the parodos was from the *eisodos* on the Street of the Tripods or from the *eisodos* on the side of the Asclepieion. Whatever the actual movement of a parodos or exodos, the artist is likely to have made the movement left to right because this is the conventional movement of victory in Greek and other iconographies: see Lushey (2002).

(Figure 20). An entry “by files” would seem to favour the choreographic development of the later stages of the *parodos*, as the best dancers emerge into view, but at the sacrifice of the large initial *éclat* created by an entry “by ranks”.

THE AGORA RELIEFS IN THEIR THEATRE-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Let’s turn now to some bigger questions: why are the only images of comic choral performance that survive from antiquity all artifacts made in the mid fourth century? And why were the two choregic reliefs that have such imagery not found in the Sanctuary of Dionysus, but on the other side of the acropolis in the area of the Eleusinion? I believe the answers to these questions about time and place are related.

Earlier in this discussion we observed some basic distinctions between dedications for drama and the memorials for victories in dithyramb at the Dionysia. Apart from our Agora monuments, all choregic dramatic *pinakes* were, so far as we can tell, dedications made in a sanctuary of Dionysus. They generally used an iconographic scheme that places the chorus as worshipper or bringer of offerings in some relationship to the god. Choregic tripod monuments for dithyrambic victories, on the other hand, show in Peter Wilson’s words an “avoidance of the actual sanctuary of Dionysus”, and also use language that displays what we might call an avoidance of the dedicatory: no divine recipient is mentioned, verbs of dedication are used only rarely; and the iconography is not primarily religious. Instead of being placed in the Sanctuary of Dionysus (i.e. *the* Athenian sanctuary), the tripod monuments are *around* the Sanctuary, and most especially along the public street leading to the Sanctuary, namely, the Street of the Tripods, from which they even spilled over, as recent finds show, onto adjacent streets. The language of tripod dedications memorialises the tribe, the choregos and sometimes the poet and piper. And the imagery, though it may have Dionysian content, is more intensely focused on victory symbolism. They present, as Wilson says, “a ‘memorial of the khoros’, rather than a gift to Dionysos”. In terms of these distinctions, it is obvious that the reliefs of comic choruses in performance that are the particular object of our investigation show all the wrong traits. We do not have the inscriptions that accompanied these monuments, but we can see that the focus of the iconography is on the performers, and most significantly that the monuments were found around the Eleusinion which is at the far end of the Street of the Tripods. The course of the Street of the Tripods is very

well marked by the remains of choregic monuments from the Theatre to no. 16 of the modern Odos Tripodon (where the ancient road turned onto the modern Prytaneiou).⁷⁸ From that point there are foundations of probable but not certain choregic monuments along Prytaneiou all the way to the Eleusinion on the Panathenaic Way.⁷⁹ The remains indicate a fork in the ancient road (at the intersection of modern Pritaneiou and Tholou): Travlos already showed the fork, but Choremi-Spetsieri locates it on more recent evidence a little further to the northeast.⁸⁰ The branches of the road then meet the Panathenaic Way on either side of the Eleusinion.⁸¹ It is in short overwhelmingly likely that the original location of our monuments was on the western end of the Street of the Tripods. So, our reliefs are behaving more like tripod monuments than like dramatic *pinakes*. How could this be?

My guess is that something happened that made celebrating comic performances more like celebrating performances for dithyramb. For most of the Classical period, dramatic victories were not public affairs in the same way that dithyrambic victories were. For drama it was entirely the work of an individual to recruit and train a chorus, but for dithyramb the production was in a real sense by the tribe, of the tribe and for the tribe. It is the phyletic nature of dithyramb that justified the placing of elaborate monuments to victory in a public space.⁸² The choregic monuments on the Street of the Tripods named the tribe as the victor. The choregos was licensed to glorify himself publicly as agent and representative of the tribe. The emphasis was clearly on celebrating the co-operative public spirit of choregos, tribal officials, and the members of the tribe who contributed annually the labour of a hundred of their sons for the glorification of Athens' principal annual festival. Dramatic choregoi, on the other hand, worked on more of an individual basis, without tribal affiliation, and comparatively few shared in their victory: their dedications were placed in the sanctuary, a public but not civic space. The memorials were comparatively modest, and for the most part, perishable, whereas the tribes pursued their

78. Kavvadias (2005) 172.

79. Choremi-Spetsieri (1994) 35–9; Kavvadias (2005) 174. Indeed choregic monuments from the first century AD revival were set up along the Panathenaic Way “apparently continuing the older tradition” (see Travlos [1971] 566 and figs. 711–12).

80. Cf. Sourlas (2014) 241–2.

81. This reconstruction is followed by most recent scholars: Kavvadias (2005); Ficuciello (2008) 70; Saporiti (2011) 530. Korres (2002), (2009), however, has the Street of the Tripods meet the Agora much farther north, just to the south of the Stoa of Attalus.

82. Full discussion of role of tribe in the organisation and memorialisation of Dionysian men's and boys' choruses in Wilson (2000).

competition beyond the Dionysia as if in perpetuity by accumulating trophies that vied in the public space for numbers, size and artistic magnificence.

But the sponsoring of comic choruses, that had for a century been individual, became tribal some time before ca. 325 BC. We know this from Aristotle whose *Constitution of the Athenians* tells us that the Eponymous Archon “formerly appointed five choregoi for comedy, but now the tribes have responsibility for them”.⁸³ We have no evidence for when this took place, but it is a reasonable guess that it was part of the Euboulan theatre-revitalisation project that saw, among other things, the building of the stone theatre that was finished under Lycurgus.⁸⁴ It was also under Euboulos that the monument known as the *Fasti*, if we accept the traditional dating, was erected.⁸⁵ In either case its main purpose was probably “to celebrate and stimulate the public spirit of the Athenian tribes and choregoi” and through their public zeal to increase the brilliance of Athens’ lucrative theatrical festivals.⁸⁶ Indeed indications are that the new tribal basis of comic competition was so successful that it continued even after the choregic system was abandoned in or by 307 BC.

I conclude, therefore, by suggesting that it was the change to tribal organisation that is behind the sudden appearance at about 350 BC of sculpted monuments showing comic choruses in performance. It is doubtless the emergence of a new kind of comic imagery into a new and very public space that struck the painter of the Benaki chous as something worthy of imitation. The reliefs focus upon the massed organised body of the comic chorus, stressing its depth, numbers and unity. This stress on numbers and unity may also resonate with a new way of producing comedy. The choreuts were now not just dancers but representatives of their tribe, a tenth-part of the Athenian population. Where once the entire cost and organisational burden had fallen upon a single individual, that burden was now shared by an efficient tribal apparatus for financing and training choreuts that had been in place already for a century and a half of dithyrambic competition. The speaker of Antiphon 6 for example names four tribal epimeletes who aided him in training his boys’ chorus.⁸⁷ The new imagery, like the new organisation, emphasized the dynamic entry of a new collective body into the Athenian theatre.⁸⁸

83. Arist. *Ath.* 56.3.

84. Cf. Csapo – Wilson (2014) 405-7.

85. Tracy (2015) has recently argued that the monument, albeit fourth century, postdates 328 BC.

86. Csapo – Wilson (2014) 404.

87. Antiphon 1.12-13; Wilson (2000) 82.

88. I am grateful to Greg Woolf and colleagues at the Institute of Classical Studies, London,

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