

A "Popilius Vase," in the National Museum, Washington

The accompanying photograph illustrates a charming little « Popilius Vase » or « Megarian Bowl » now in the National Museum at Washington (Inv. No. 195, 644) (1). Its height is 6.4 cm., and its diameter is 11.6 cm. A large part of the rim and about one quarter of the decorated area are restored. The color is a dark russet, one of the usual hues for ware of this type. The rim, however, is unusual in flaring horizontally instead of rising more or less vertically.



The interest of this bowl lies principally in its relation to the groups of vases published by Siebourg in *Röm. Mitt.*, XII 1897, pp. 40-55, under the title « Italische Fabriken ' Megarischer ' Becher » (2); by Hartwig, *Ibid.*, XIII 1898, pp. 399-408, « Ein Thongefäss des C. Popilius » (3); by Courby, *Les vases*

(1) My thanks are due to A. Wetmore, Esq., Assistant Secretary of the Museum, and to Dr. N. M. Judd, Curator of the Division of Archaeology, for their many courtesies during my studies of the Roman ceramics in their keeping.

(2) The illustrations are by no means complete, but references to previously published examples are included. For these see also DRACENDORFF, *Terra Sigillata* in *Bonner Jahrbücher*, 1895, pp. 37 f.

(3) This discusses two signed vases: one from Viterbo is ornamented conventionally; the other, acquired in Rome and now in Boston (CHASE, *Catalogue of the Arretine Pottery in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts*, p. 8, note 5, inv. No. 99.542; there are two other Megarian bowls in the same Museum, Inv. Nos. 95.59 and 95.60), parallels the famous Alexander Mosaic at Pompeii.

grecs à reliefs, pp. 415-422, *Bonner Jahrbücher*; and Oxé 1933, pp. 83-86 and Pl. XI, « Römisch-Italische Beziehungen der Früharrhetinischen Reliefgefäße ». Specifically, it bears a striking resemblance to Siebourg's No. 13, illustrated on his p. 47 and signed by *L. Quintius* (retrograde). The register of spirals advancing to the left, the meander pattern, and the use of radial leaves are precisely the same. The other elements, - leaves, thunderbolt, *pelta* and *boucrania*, - are not used by Quintius, but the last two are noted by Siebourg on p. 49 as details characteristic of *C. Popilius*, the most prolific producer of this type of pottery and of course its eponymous artisan. Furthermore, the acanthus leaf with wrinkled edges, appearing on our vase and Siebourg's No. 13, is also used on his No. 10 and on Oxé's Pl. XI, Fig. 2, both signed by (*C.*) *Lap(p)ius* (4). The former of this pair by Lappius in turn has other relations with the vases by Popilius (Siebourg, No. 3), and the latter shows advancing spirals similar to, though not identical with, ours. A third parallel to the acanthus leaves, also signed by Lappius, is in the British Museum (5). The plainer radial leaf of our vase is paralleled in Oxé, Pl. XI, Figs. 1 and 3, from Florence (though one cannot be sure that the same stamp was used), and other vases in the same figures recall, or perhaps reproduce, our meander pattern. Unfortunately the signatures on these vases, if any, are not transcribed, and the title of the pictures (*Popiliusbecher*) is ambiguous as used by Dr. Oxé. Finally, Courby's Fig. 91 shows several parallels to our vase, drawn from various Italian bowls.

The lack of a signature on our own in its present state is regrettable, but enough has been said to show its very strict connections with « Popilius Vases » as a class. Popilius himself labored at Oericulum and Mevania, as his signatures declare, and Quintius and Lappius, his associates or competitors, were likewise Umbrians. The distribution of their wares is remarkably concentrated upon Tuscan sites (6). The date of this ware is given by Siebourg, on epigraphical and historical grounds, as cir. 200 B. C., and his chronology is followed in *CIL*, I (ed. 2), Pars 2.1 in the headnote to Nos. 418 ff., which reproduce the « Megarian » signatures. Oxé, however, would reduce the dating to the latter half of the first century B. C., invoking the Etruscan script of the bilingual of Lappius (7) and the similarity between the radiating patterns of the school of Popilius and of the early Arretine potters (e. g. *Pantagathus C. Anni*). In the absence of dated examples, speculation is idle, since eventually a carefully excavated specimen from a dated deposit will settle the question

(4) The latter of these bears a bilingual inscription, Etruscan and Latin. It was found at Orvieto, and is now at Munich. The name with praenomen appears on a vase in Boston and is transcribed by Oxé, p. 84, Fig. 1, 13.

(5) WALTERS, *History of Ancient Pottery*, II, p. 491, Fig. 220.

(6) Oxé, p. 83, gives Rome as the provenance of the Alexander-bowl; however, Hartwig merely says it was acquired from a dealer there: « Als Provenienz wird Mittelitalien genannt » (p. 400). Courby extends the area to Campania (pp. 420-21), and suggests that some Italian bowls reached even Delos (p. 418).

(7) In this he follows Herbig, but before her untimely death the late Dr. Eva Fiesel was kind enough to examine the evidence and to tell me that although the letters can be late first century, they may also be earlier:

permanently (8); but we must comment for the moment that both datings seem a little extreme or a little dogmatic in the light of the conflicting evidence. The lettering of the inscribed signatures hardly seems Augustan — quite the contrary (9) — and yet the Alexander subject seems a trifle too Hellenized for 200 B. C. Is it likely, for instance, that this sophisticated and very complicated scene penetrated to the atelier of an Umbrian potter at about the close of the Second Punic War? (10) Then, too, the Cupid charioteer on one of the bowls of Oxé's Pl. XI, Fig. 1 is strongly suggestive of the Arretine repertoire: cf. Oxé, *Arret. Reliegefäße vom Rhein*, Pl. LIV, 262 (including *metae*), 263; Viviani, *I Vasi Arretini*, Fig. 27 (*M. Perennius Tigranus*); Chase, *Catalogue of the Loeb Collection*, Nos. 143-149; Chase, *Catalogue of the Arretine Ware in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts*, Nos. 82-87, with the comment on p. 85 (No. 84 by *Phileros C. Telli*); Comfort, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 1929, p. 180 (not illustrated); Metropolitan Museum Inv. No. 17.914.2112 (unsigned and unpublished). Cupids other than charioteers are also frequent as decoration on Arretine ware: cf. Chase, *op. cit.*, No. 88 (*Eros Rasini*); an unpublished fragmentary mould at Washington (*Bituhus P. Corneli*; Inv. No. 101, 975), etc.; and for the miniature Cupids on vertical rims of Arretine plates, cf. Comfort, *Am. Journ. Arch.*, XXXIII (1929), pp. 488 f. and ohlemoth, 24-25 *Bericht d. röm. germ. Komm.*, 1934-35, p. 237 and Fig. 1, 1. On sarcophagi the Erotes carrying garlands are dated to the principate of Augustus, and the first architectural example is the Tomb of the Julii at St.-Remy (11). And finally, not to extend *ad nauseam* our parallels between Popilius and Augustan art, we note the similarity between the vine-scrolls of Oxé. Pl. XI, Figs. 1 and 3 (two of the vases from Florence) and such Arretine products as the anonymous L 70 in Walters' *Catalogue of the Roman Pottery in the British Museum* (p. 23). The testimony of all these stylistic criteria is strong evidence of the first century B. C., and only the suggestively primitive forms of the inscribed letters point toward Siebourg's higher date. The truth doubtless lies somewhere between Scipio and Augustus, — possibly in the early years of the first century rather than in its latter half (12).

Returning to our Washington vase, it originally came from Città di Castello into the collection of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, and later was transferred to the National Museum. Two very similar Popilius-vases are still in the Field Museum, one of which (Inv. No. 24,944) is also from Città di Castello and, as nearly as I could tell, it may be identical with

(8) Courby notes a *Delian Megarian* bowl from the wreck at Anticythera, later than 50 B. C. (p. 389).

(9) And yet compare *CIL*, I, (ed. 2), 2329 a MAR|CI -AΓOV «in vaso Arretino, rep. Romae». See also *Ibid.*, 2330 b.

(10) KÖRTE, *Röm. Mitt.*, 1907, p. 22, comparing six Perugian cinerary urns from the Necropoli del Palazzone, believes that it did.

(11) ALTMANN, *Archit. und Ornamentik der Ant. Sarkophage*, pp. 74 f.

(12) In 1922 Courby had already come to somewhat the same conclusion: «Ainsi la fabrication des bols à reliefs étrusco-ombriens aurait duré depuis le milieu du III^e siècle jusqu'au commencement du I^{er}, c'est-à-dire, en somme, pendant tout le II^e siècle. Elle a donc été contemporaine de la même industrie à Délos, à Priène, en Crimée». But a duration of such length seems more extended than the amount of present evidence will permit.

the Washington bowl here figured. The other bowl (Inv. No. 24,949) is much like them and includes in its decoration the acanthus leaf of our example, boucrania, circular shields (13), a radial leaf much like Courby, Fig. 91, 23, and three upper borders, *viz*, a wreath of leaves on a central stalk (14) between registers of frets and advancing spirals (for which compare the Washington example). This vase is allegedly from Arezzo, but the provenance may be open to question. Like the Washington bowl, neither of the Field Museum vases is signed.

H. Comfort

(13) COURBY, Figs. 91, 7, and 92.

(14) COURBY, Fig. 91, 16 (?).