In 1801 the Italian author Luigi Targioni published in the *Giornale di Napoli* a letter to his friend the playwright Giovanni Gherardo de Rossi containing a learned, as well as an enthusiastic, account of an ancient Greek vase found at Agrigento, in Sicily. The discovery of this particular vase was of special importance and merited a detailed description, for it was the first Greek vase bearing the signature of its potter to become known in modern times. This masterpiece signed by Taleides, which was soon to become known as the Taleides amphora, has recently been acquired by the Museum. As it played such an important part in the historical appreciation of Greek vases, its fate since its rediscovery is worth summarizing.

At the time of its first publication in the *Giornale di Napoli* the amphora belonged to Captain Felice Nicolas, who had acquired it in 1800 while he was stationed in Palermo. Nicolas was at one time the superintendent of the Royal Factory of Porcelain at Naples, but he is better known as the first excavator of the necropolis at Paestum. He sold the amphora to the young English collector Thomas Hope, who had just purchased a large collection of ancient vases formed by Sir William Hamilton, the British envoy to the court of Naples from 1764 to 1800. On its way to England the amphora was shown to Aubin Louis Millin, the French scholar and antiquarian to whom we owe the first reproduction of the vase in his *Monumens antiques* (1806). Thomas Hope, like other great collectors, not only added to his collection but also sold what he did not want to keep. The Taleides amphora, however, stayed with the Hope family until 1917, when the entire collection was placed on sale in London. At that time the Museum bought only seven vases, and the bulk of the collection went to English museums and connoisseurs. The Taleides amphora was purchased by Viscount Cowdray, in whose collection at Dunecht House, in Aberdeenshire, it remained until last December, when it was once more auctioned off.

The vase (ill. pp. 222 and 223) is an Attic black-figured amphora with pictures set in panels, each surmounted by a broad decorative border of palmettes and lotus buds. The potter’s signature, Ταλέιδης ἐποίησεν (“Taleides made it”), appears on both sides, on one side coupled with the inscription: Κλειτάρχος ἀρχεῖον (“Kleitarchos is handsome”). The obverse is decorated with a mythological subject, the slaying of the Minotaur; the reverse gives a picture drawn from daily life—three men weighing merchandise.

The story of the Minotaur, so popular in literature and art, may be briefly retold here. Minos, the king of Crete, refused to sacrifice his best bull to Poseidon, whereupon the god made the king’s wife, Pasiphaë, fall in love with the beast. The offspring of this union was a monster, part bull, part man, who came to be known as the Minotaur, or bull of Minos, though his...
The back of the vase, with a painting of men weighing merchandise. This vase, found at Agrigento, is the first Attic vase signed by its potter to be known in modern times.
Theseus and the Minotaur. On an Attic black-figured kylix signed by the potters Archikles and Glaukytes. In the Museum antiker Kleinkunst, Munich

given name was Asterios. Minos, horrified by his wife's monstrous child, commissioned Daedalus, the court artist and architect, to build the labyrinth for its concealment. About that time Minos's son Androgeos was killed by some Athenians, and he laid siege to Athens. Finally the city, weakened by plague and starvation, consulted the oracle; its answer was to come to terms with Minos and to accept his demands. Minos asked for a periodic tribute of seven boys and seven girls, to be sent every nine years to Crete to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. When this tribute had fallen due a third time, Theseus, son of the king of Athens, volunteered to join the fourteen victims. He propitiated the gods, and upon his arrival in Crete, Ariadne, one of Minos's daughters, fell in love with him. She gave him the famous clew with the aid of which he was able to find his way through the labyrinth. By slaying the dread monster Theseus put an end to the human sacrifices and, with Minos's consent, he sailed home with the Athenian boys and girls.

While ancient artists did not entirely neglect other aspects of the Minotaur's life, his death at the hands of Theseus was the most popular episode. In depicting the fight the painter of our vase has followed a scheme which had been canonical since the middle of the sixth century B.C. An early example of this composition can be seen on a vase by Lydos in the British Museum (ill. p. 225). In this scheme the contest does not seem to take place in the darkness of the labyrinth, but out in the open, with Theseus' companions as interested onlookers. The number of these spectators varies according to the space available: on our vase there are but a girl and a boy on either side of the central group, whereas on a somewhat earlier band cup in Munich (ill. above) the artist was able to show not only most of the fourteen Athenians but also the goddess Athena, and even the Cretans—Ariadne, her nurse, and Minos himself.

The Minotaur first appears in art in the seventh century B.C. From the very beginning he is shown with a human body and the head and neck of a bull. Later a tail is added to emphasize his descent from the bull. On our vase his skin is stippled to portray a hairiness which he shares with other semihuman beings such as satyrs. He is naked and armed only with stones, the weapons of monsters, like centaurs and giants, who must use what nature provides. Theseus, on the other hand, is dressed in a short chiton and the skin of an animal; he wears shoes and is equipped with sword, scabbard, and baldric. His cloak, neatly folded over a rock, can be seen between his legs. The girls on either side of him wear richly embroidered peploi; the boys are nude and hold spears in their hands. All of them have fillets (painted red) in their hair.

On the other side of the amphora a transac-
tion is in progress. A pair of scales, apparently suspended from the upper border, is steadied by two boys seated on stools, while a man stoops over one of the pans with an oblong object held carefully in his arms. It has been suggested that the three are busy weighing bales: in that case the object in the pan on the left would be a
standard weight and the man would be exchanging the bale on the right for a lighter one that he holds in his arms. But the two objects lack the stripes by which the black-figure painters indicate bales (see ill. p. 227). Moreover, if the man is to exchange the bales, why did he not first remove the heavier one? A more plausible explanation has been advanced: the objects on the scales are containers for grain or other produce, and the man is equalizing their weight by means of a shovel-like scoop (perhaps the $\lambda \iota \nu \nu \varsigma$), shown in top view, while the boy parts the ropes. As, however, there are no incised details, any interpretation has to remain tentative until more weighing scenes are found.

The painter of our amphora has been called the Taleides Painter as his style can be recognized on most of the vases signed by the potter Taleides. Taleides was a maker of small vases. Our amphora is his largest extant work; but as amphorae go it is a small one, and the paintings in the two panels have all the delicacy and precision of miniatures.

In comparison with those of other black-figured paintings, the Taleides Painter’s men, women, and even monsters are conspicuous by an elegance which comes perilously close to mannerism. On our vase necks, hands, waists, and legs are long and slender; the eyes are large and intent. The tightly fitting drapery is neatly drawn with much attention to color scheme, patterns, edges, and borders. No folds are shown, but now and then we get a suggestion of corporeal perspective and an attempt at foreshortening. Anatomical details are incised with great deliberation: a long, hooked line for the ankle, two short arcs for the inside of the calf, a highly stylized pattern for the kneecap, another for the ear. As for his compositions, emphasis is placed on balance: a boy and a girl are grouped symmetrically on either side of Theseus and the Minotaur. Yet these onlookers are no mere ornaments, for their fate depends on the outcome of the contest: their gestures express confidence mixed with apprehension. This kind of balance produces a nervous ten-
sion which pervades the central group itself: the Minotaur, though caught by the horn, is not yet quite helpless. Presently one knee will touch the ground, but there is strength still left in his legs, for his weight is on the balls of his feet. Theseus himself seems to fight without effort, and there is something almost casual about the manner in which he holds his sword. Some of these stylistic traits can also be observed in the panel on the reverse. The three figures show the same intentness as the spectators and protagonists in the contest on the obverse. Here, too, the same differentiation of gestures enlivens the scene, and one can almost feel the arrested swinging of the scales.

The shape and style of the amphora suggest the work of the third quarter of the sixth century B.C., the time of the Amasis Painter and Exekias. Of the two, the Amasis Painter is closer to the Taleides Painter. The flanking figures on the obverse of our amphora recall many an onlooker on amphorae painted by the Amasis Painter, and youths with spears, in particular, are almost essential to his compositions. Another link between the two painters can be found in a technical peculiarity: in Attic black-figure the flesh of women is ordinarily painted white over the black glaze and their eyes are almond-shaped. On our amphora, however, the flesh of the two girls is left black and their eyes are incised in the shape traditional for men. This departure from the ordinary technique, also known from a wine jug by the Taleides Painter in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, occurs on several vases painted by the Amasis Painter and his circle.

The Taleides amphora, so widely admired in spite of unflattering reproductions during its long and distinguished seclusion, has now been placed on exhibition in the Third Greek Room.

NOTES ON THE INSCRIPTIONS

The inscriptions on the Taleides amphora are interesting for what they tell us of the potters in Athens during the sixth century B.C. The name Taleides itself is suggestive. Though the names of thousands of Athenian citizens have been preserved, it is not among them. A Talos appears, it is true, as the father of a man who made a dedication to Athena on the Athenian Akropolis some time before 480 B.C., but such dedications were often made by artisans and many artisans in Athens were resident aliens. The name Tallos, on the other hand, occurs in Boeotia and Talon just across the straits in Chalkis on the island of Euboea and in Thessaly, a land inhabited by a people related to the Boeotians. The maker of our vase was, therefore, probably not a native Athenian, but an immigrant from one of the regions where names similar to his are found.

Inscriptions complimenting popular young members of society are prevalent on Athenian vases of the sixth and early fifth centuries B.C. The one on our vase, Κλειταρχός καλός, Kleitarchos kalos, is remarkable for a misspelling that reflects a peculiar pronunciation. The vowel of the first syllable is written as i, whereas we write it as ei. In so doing we are following Attic spelling of the later fourth and following centuries B.C. At the time that our vase was made, however, the correct spelling of the name was Kletarchos. The vowel of the first syllable in this name was a long close e, pronounced with the tongue fairly high in the mouth (something like the e in pet as pronounced in standard English, but more sustained). By the first century B.C. the Athenian pronunciation of this vowel had become so close that it had finally passed into an i (as in machine).

The spelling Klitarchos on our vase is among the earliest examples of the shift from close ê toward i to be found in Attic inscriptions. A number of other instances occur on sixth-century Attic vases, particularly in names beginning with Kleit- and Klein- (both meaning “famous”). We find the spellings Klitas, Klitogoras, Klitomenes, and Klinias. The frequency of this misspelling in such names gave rise to the theory that they were derived, not from kleito- and kleino-, but from klino, “to make to lean or slope,” and klitos, “sloping.” This theory was disproved, however, by the discovery of a little stand, now in this Museum, made by the artists of the famous Francois vase, the potter Ergotimos and the painter who there signs him-
self Klitias, but on the stand spells his name Kletias. The latter signature shows that the name was derived not from *klito-* but from *kleito-* (i.e., *klēto-*) and that, consequently, Klitagonas, Klitarchos, Klitomenes, and Klinias are all misspellings of names derived from *kleito-* and *kleino-*. These misspellings may be explained by the hypothesis that in pronouncing a syllable composed of a long close *e* preceded by *kl* and followed by *t* or *n* the tongue tended to be raised so high that the resulting vowel was more like an *i* than an ordinary close *e*. This tendency in pronouncing such syllables seems to have been particularly strong in the Athenian potters' quarter of the sixth century B.C.

Why this was so we can only guess. There were many resident aliens in the potters' quarter, and the spelling we are discussing may reflect non-Athenian habits of speech. The shift from the long close *e* toward *i* did not take place simultaneously all over Greece. It was particularly early in Boeotia, where inscriptions of the fifth century B.C. give ample evidence of it. It is even possible that our Taleides was a Boeotian.

Since he signs, however, not as the painter, but as the "maker" (i.e., the potter) of the vase, we cannot be sure that it was he rather than the painter who wrote the inscriptions. It should be emphasized, furthermore, that these inscriptions are by no means in the Boeotian dialect. The most that could be hazarded is that they might possibly represent a Boeotian pronunciation of Attic. Such a pronunciation need not have been confined to Boeotian immigrants in Athens, for it could easily have spread to other inhabitants of the potters' quarter.

The reader may have wondered why the name Taleides does not show the same misspelling as Kleitarchos. The reason is that the sound represented by the *ei* of Taleides was not the close *e* of Kleitarchos, but a more open *e* followed by an *i*.

The accession number of the amphora is 47. 11.5. Its height is 11 3/4 in. (29.5 cm.). The vase was cleaned after its acquisition, old restorations were removed, and damage to its surface was repaired.

In parts the black glaze has turned olive
green and brownish red. Of the accessory colors, red is used for eight horizontal bands and, in the panels, for fillets, details of drapery, one of the Minotaur's stones on the obverse, and for hair and beard on the reverse, as well as details of the floral ornament on either side. Perhaps the three garments on the reverse were painted white, for there are traces of white on the garment of the man.


On vowel sounds in general see L. H. Gray, Foundations of Language (1939), pp. 54 ff.; on e sounds in Attic, K. Meisterhans and E. Schwyzer, Grammatik der attischen Inschriften (1900), pp. 18 ff., 35 ff.; on e sounds in Boeotian, F. Bechtel, Die griechischen Dialekte, i (1921), pp. 217 ff.; C. D. Buck, Introduction to the Study of the Greek Dialects (1928), pp. 29, 140. Note especially the spellings cited by Bechtel, pp. 220 f., which show that the long close e resulting from ei was near the sound of i at least as early as the fifth century B.C. For the spellings Klitias, Klitagoras, and Klinias see P. Kretschmer, Die griechischen Vaseninschriften (1894), p. 135; and for Klitomenes, H. R. W. Smith, American Journal of Archaeology, xxx (1926), pp. 437 f. The stand in this Museum (31.11.4) is published by G. M. A. Richter, Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, xxvi (1931), pp. 289 f. For the names Talos, Tallos, and Talon see Inscriptiones Graecae I, 2, 500; vii, 3206, 14; ix.2, 517, 81, 84; xii.0, 1098.

M. J. M.