The tombstones of Attica accurately reflect her history for several centuries. In an almost continuous series of monuments we can follow the political, economic, and artistic conditions of Athens from the eighth century B.C. on. The wealth and enterprise of her aristocrats, the restrictions imposed by her tyrants, the devastation of the Persian war, the revival under Perikles, the widespread prosperity during the fourth century, and finally the antiluxury decree of Demetrios of Phaleron (317-307 B.C.), all influenced the forms and the quality of these diverse monuments. In this long history the products of two periods stand out by their artistic excellence — the archaic statues and stelai of the sixth century and the memorials of the later fifth. During these two epochs sculptured tombstones were evidently restricted to the wealthier families, and their quality was often on a par with the best work of the time.

The Museum owns a number of excellent archaic gravestones, but few that date from the fifth century. A recently acquired marble example from that distinguished period is, therefore, particularly welcome (see ill. below and details on page 181). It is over five feet high and has the form of a lekythos, or oil jug. The long, narrow neck and spacious mouth adapted for slow pouring are familiar from countless small terracotta jugs which were used as practical oil and unguent containers. Such jugs also had a sepulchral use, for unguents were brought in them to the dead, as we know from many a representation in vase-painting and from references to this custom in ancient literature. A monumental marble lekythos was, therefore, an appropriate memorial, and it was often decorated with a relief representing some pertinent subject. The delicately carved relief on the vase acquired by the Museum shows three figures: a standing youth named Kallisthenes clasping the hand of a bearded man who is seated in a chair (klismos), one arm hanging limply at his side, and a woman standing behind them, her hand raised to her chin in the usual gesture of grief.
A young warrior bidding goodbye to his wife and his mother. Athenian gravestone, about 430-420 B.C. In the National Museum, Athens

One might think that the scene was taken from daily life—a boy saying goodbye to his parents before a journey; but that this is the last journey is indicated not only by the fact that the woman has cut her hair short as a sign of mourning but also by a strange stillness in the scene. The father and mother look at their son in a dazed manner, and the youth has a detached air, as if he already belonged to another world. It is this quiet pathos—grief suggested rather than represented—that makes these Athenian monuments so singularly moving. The awe of the parents, and their gestures, are more poignant than distorted faces could be.

To visualize the original appearance of the vase we must add in imagination not only the color on the relief (all Greek sculpture was, of course, colored) but the painted patterns on other parts of the vase, which have now disappeared except for a vague differentiation of surfaces. From examples in which clearer traces of this decoration remain we may guess that there was a tongue or maeander border above and below the figures, a design of palmettes and scrolls on the shoulder and the lower part of the vase, and perhaps scales on the neck. The actual width of the handle also must have been indicated in color by a narrowish
band along the edge. The abnormal height of the foot is explained by the fact that the lower part, which was left rough, was inserted like a tenon in a quadrangular block. We know the approximate appearance of the block, for one of limestone with the foot of a marble lekythos partly inserted in a central depression was found during excavations in the ancient Athenian cemetery of the Kerameikos.

To determine the date of our vase we have useful material for comparison. The general period is the second half of the fifth century. At that time sculpture received a great impetus from extensive building operations, and the production of elaborate gravestones, which had apparently been suspended since the Persian wars, was resumed. The poses of the figures in the relief on our monument, the rendering of the folds, the modeling, and, above all, the dignity of the composition recall the Parthenon frieze (442-438 B.C.). There is a striking similarity, for instance, between the father on our
ABOVE: Figures from the eastern frieze of the Parthenon, 442-438 B.C. In the British Museum, London. BELOW: Farewell scene on a terracotta lekythos by the Achilles Painter, about 450-440 B.C.; Achilles and Patroklos on a lekythos by the Eretria Painter, about 420 B.C.
relief and the seated Poseidon on the eastern frieze, and between Kallisthenes and some of the marshals on the same frieze (see, for instance, ill. p. 182). However, the greater softness in the modeling of the figures on our relief suggests that it was made at a slightly later date—near that, perhaps, of the base of the Nemesis of Rhamnous.

In his Attic White Lekythoi, J. D. Beazley draws attention to an interesting line of development in the sepulchral scenes on the white-ground terracotta vases of the second half of the fifth century. The formal, "collected" style of the Achilles Painter (about 450-435 B.C.; see ill. p. 182) is succeeded by the tenderer style of the Phiale Painter (about 440-425 B.C.), and that in turn is followed by the more emotional and restless style of the last two decades. The scene on our marble lekythos recalls those in Beazley's middle group. We may compare it, for instance, with the picture of Achilles sitting with bowed head by the bier on which his friend Patroklos lies (see ill. p. 182) on a lekythos by the Eretria Painter (about 420 B.C.).

A similar evolution from formal to tenderer to more restless was noted by H. Diepolder, in Die attischen Grabreliefs, in some of the reliefs on fifth-century Athenian gravestones. Those that resemble our monument most closely may also be assigned, on the evidence of their inscriptions, to about 430-420 B.C. A typical example is the fragmentary relief in Athens with a young warrior bidding goodbye to his wife and his mother (see ill. p. 180). The mother resembles the mother on our relief in attitude.
and gesture, in the rendering of the folds, and in the short, caplike hair.

About 430-420 B.C., therefore, is a likely date for the execution of the lekythos. Few marble examples of this period have survived, and the one that the Museum has acquired is among the finest and largest of them. A comparable piece is in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Athens.

The name Kallisthenes inscribed in Ionic and several are in the National Museum in letters above the youth on our vase was evidently common in Athens. At least two men of that name who lived about the period of the vase are known: one of the tribe Aigeis, an Athenian settled on the island of Lemnos, and one of the tribe Akamantis, who died at Byzantion. Their names appear in public lists of soldiers who fell in battle. As our gravestone dates from the period of the Peloponnesian war, it is possible that the Kallisthenes represented on it also died fighting for Athens.

The vase was probably set up, not as a monument on a single grave, but as part of an ensemble in a family plot. A tentative reconstruction of such an ensemble by A. Brueckner is shown on page 183. It was evidently the custom in the late fifth and the fourth century to erect groups of memorials of different forms in plots on high terraces. Only the fronts of the monuments were visible from the road that skirted the terrace; the backs were left rough (the handle and foot in our example, for instance, were not smoothed behind), for they were presumably hidden by shrubbery. Each family plot was, in fact, a kind of garden.

We may visualize our gravestone as standing in such a garden with a group of other memorials some time in the second half of the fifth century, the time when the influence of the Pheidian style made itself felt throughout Attica. We cannot tell just where it stood, for its provenience is not known; but it must have been erected somewhere in Attica, for it is Athenian in type and style.

The accession number of the vase is 47.11.2. Its height is 5 ft. 2 in. (1.576 m.); the height of the relief is 19 3/4 in. (51 cm.). The vase is made of Pentelic marble and is exceptionally well preserved. As, however, is often the case with marble of this kind, pieces have scaled off here and there; for instance, from the father's beard, parts of his face and back, and a leg of the chair. This last has been restored in plaster, together with largish chips along the edges of the mouth and shoulder of the vase and on the lower part of its body. Otherwise the vase is practically intact, retaining even the foot, the neck, and most of the mouth—important features for the enjoyment of the shape.

A comprehensive work on Athenian grave-stones is Die attischen Grabreliefs, in five volumes (1893-1922), by A. Conze. An Attic Cemetery (1943), by George Karo, gives a concise, up-to-date account of the Athenian Kerameikos from the Mycenaean age to Roman times.

The illustrations on pages 180, 182, top, and 183 are reproduced from A. Diepolder, Die attischen Grabreliefs, pl. 12, no. 1; A. H. Smith, The Sculptures of the Parthenon (1910), pl. 38; and A. Brueckner, Der Friedhof am Eridanos, p. 71. The vase paintings illustrated on page 182 are from lekythoi in the Metropolitan Museum, numbers 08.258.18 and 31.11.13 respectively.