Early this year the Museum acquired at an auction sale in Basel an Attic black-figured amphora of the mid-sixth century B.C. The amphora has been attributed by Sir John Beazley to the Princeton Painter, an artist not hitherto represented in the Museum’s collection of vases. One side of it shows in its panel a male figure seated with a scepter, flanked by two figures on either side, a scene to which we shall return. On the other side of the vase is an illustration of the great Panathenaic festival, which merits a more detailed discussion.

The spirit of competition, so characteristic of the Greeks, found expression in the many games held all over Greece at the festivals of the gods. Of the Greek games those at Olympia are perhaps most widely known, both because of their importance in antiquity, as the oldest instituted, and because of their modern revival. The Olympic games, together with those held at Delphi, Nemea, and the Isthmus at Corinth, were Panhellenic. Greeks from all states participated in them, even in times of war, when a special truce was declared to permit a free meeting of all contestants. But by side with those great Panhellenic festivals, other games were held periodically in almost every Greek city. Of the latter the Panathenaic festival, the subject of our vase, was held at Athens on the birthday of the goddess Athena, which was celebrated on the twenty-eighth day of the first month in the Athenian calendar, Hekatombeion (in July or August). It consisted of two parts, the religious ceremonies and the competitions. Our literary accounts of the festival are incomplete, but no one who has seen the processional road, recently unearthed in the Athenian Agora, and the representation of the procession on the frieze of the Parthenon can fail to visualize some of its splendor. The purpose of the procession was the presentation of the peplos, a woolen garment woven by specially chosen women and girls of Attica for the wooden statue of Athena Polias, the goddess of the citadel, that is, the Acropolis. In the same procession the sacrificial animals, cattle and sheep, were driven to the altars on the Acropolis. Prominent in this parade were the city officials, the masters of ceremonies, the priests and priestesses, officers and soldiers, and representative contingents of the various Attic townships, as well as some of the metics, the whole accompanied by musicians.

While the religious ceremonies of the festival lasted one night and one day, the different competitions must have been scheduled for three to five days, both before and after the feast day proper. The character and program of these events changed over the centuries. Two groups of competitions, however, are to be distinguished: one dedicated to sports and another to recitation and music. The sporting events consisted of horse and chariot races (the so-called hippic agones) and athletic contests (gymnastic agones), with foot races, wrestling, boxing, the pankration (a combination of boxing and wrestling), and the pentathlon, a series of five competitions: foot race, broad jump, diskos and javelin...
Attic black-figured neck-amphora, attributed to the Princeton Painter. The scene is a representation of the Panathenaic festival. The damaged portions above the foot have been restored. Middle of the VI century B.C. Height 17¾ inches. Rogers Fund, 1933
throw, and wrestling. The prizes in these contests were jars filled with olive oil. The musical competitions opened with rhapsodies, recitations from Homer; next came the playing of the lyre (kithara), and third the playing of the flutes. The lyre-players sang to their own accompaniment, flute-players appeared with singers. Here the prizes, at least for the fourth century, were wreaths of gold and sums of money, but perhaps these were later innovations, taking the place of earlier awards in oil, like the hippic and gymnastic prizes. Other competitions, of lesser importance, were the pyrrhic, a dance in armor accompanied by flutes, a relay torch race, held the night before the great day, and a rowing regatta.

The amphora illustrated here does not give us a sketch of any one episode of the Panathenaic festival, rather it highlights several of its aspects. To begin with, in its shape and syntax of decoration it resembles those amphorae which when inscribed with the official notation—one of the prizes from Athens—are called Panathenaic prize amphorae. Then there is in the center of one panel the goddess Athena, in armor and brandishing her spear, with a tripod emblazoned on the shield, or perhaps one should say the statue of Athena Polias, which recurs, in the same pose, though with variations in armor and drapery, throughout four centuries of Panathenaic vases. Some of the variations may be due to the style of drawing and the taste of the individual artist; others, to be sure, are real changes which the wooden statue underwent periodically, for not only was a new peplos woven for it every four years but its arms and armor, shield, aegis, helmet, and spear were likewise renewed from time to time.

Behind Athena a girl approaches, carrying a fillet in her right hand (another fillet being worn in her hair) and balancing on her head the heavy woolen peplos, neatly folded, perhaps over a board to act as stiffening. A small, round cushion between her head and its load is of the same type as those worn by women when carrying heavy water jars on their heads. The moment is the one just be-

ON THESE TWO PAGES: Scenes from an Attic black-figured neck-amphora, namepiece of the Painter of Berlin 1686, showing the procession at a festival of Athena. Mid 6th century. Berlin
fore the presentation of the peplos, as we know it from the Parthenon frieze: the garment was unfolded and draped on the statue by a priestess. To the left of Athena is her altar, with the fire kindled the night before at the conclusion of the torch race. The altar is of an early type, with a ledge on the right to act as a windbreak. In front of it, facing the goddess, is a flute-player in the rich costume of a performing artist: long white chiton (now faded) with a red mantle over it. Only one flute-player is shown, and there is no singer. Nor do we get the judges as they appear on other representations of musical competitions. Yet to the ancient artist and his clientele the meaning of the picture must have been quite clear: the shape of the vase is Panathenaic, the goddess in the center is the statue of Athena Polias, the altar ablaze is the altar on the Acropolis, the girl carrying the peplos stands for the great procession, and the flute-player recalls one of the many competitions that embellished the festival. The amphora cannot be counted among the prize vases, as it lacks the official notation and does not fully conform to the rather exaggerated proportions of a true Panathenaic amphora, the neck being less pinched and the foot being somewhat too big. Yet its Panathenaic picture tells us with singular directness of the festival, complete with goddess, altar, procession, and contest.

Panathenaic associations are indeed not confined to amphorae of the Panathenaic shape. The statue of Athena Polias appears on several vases of differing shapes, and contests are frequently shown which cannot be readily identified with the agones held at the Panathenaic festival. One of those vases, an amphora in Berlin, is illustrated here. It is of about the same date as the New York amphora. In one of its panels a cow is led to the altar (note the similar windbreak!), while a woman with olive branches salutes the statue of the goddess. On the other side musicians are shown: two men playing the kithara and two boys playing the flutes. All are dressed in rich, festive robes. The musicians are not necessarily competing but perhaps form part of the procession. The two
pictures are connected and seem to point to the Panathenaic festival, though it is not impossible that another Athenian festival was intended.

The scene on the other side of the Museum's vase can be less readily identified. In the center a bearded man with a fillet in his hair and a scepter terminating in a swan's head sits on a folding stool. He is saluted by a man in a short tunic with a shawl-like mantle over his left shoulder who carries a spear in his right hand. They are flanked by two women who plainly show their concern; another man on the extreme left concludes the scene. Scepter and bearing of the seated man suggest a person of some importance. A similar figure appears on an amphora by the same painter in Princeton, where he is surrounded by two winged females and two naked youths, and the same group recurs, without the youths, on an amphora in the Vatican (Raccolta Guglielmi 37) which is contemporary, though by another painter, and on a hydria in Rhodes (10595; Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum III H e, pl. 4, 2, and pl. 5).

While there is little doubt that in all these pictures the seated man should be Zeus, the winged women are a puzzle—Nike and Iris, two Nikai, or, because of their gestures, the Eileithyiai, the goddesses of childbirth? The representation of our amphora, though not the same in every particular as those of the vases just cited, is very similar and closely connected with them. A clue is perhaps furnished by the other side of our vase (the two sides of an amphora are at times related). If it depicts the festival of Athena's birthday, is it too farfetched to interpret the scene on the reverse as the miraculous birth of the goddess from the head of Zeus? The two women would then be the Eileithyiai, and the man in front of the seated figure could well be the god Hephaistos, whose surgery put an end to the labor of Zeus. The moment would be the one before the birth, the arrival of Hephaistos.

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Scene on another amphora attributed to the Princeton Painter, perhaps the birth of Athena. Mid vi century. Princeton Museum of Art