The Phlyax Drama

I. The “real” Phlyax play
   a. The Phlyakes – rustic farces produced in the Greek colonies in Southern Italy and Sicily during the 4th c. BCE
   b. The Fabula Atellana – Osca farces produced in Campania
      i. Atellan farces are very closely related, generally considered distinct
   c. The Phlyax vases – probably depicts neither, depicts Greek Old and Middle comedy

II. Origins
   a. φλυαρέω - “talk nonsense”
   b. φλέω – “swell” (costuming had a great deal of padding in front and back, causing it to swell up)
   c. Doric Farce
      i. Settlers brought it with them from Greece
   d. Attic Old and Middle Comedy

III. Staging and Costuming
   a. 4 masks/farces:
      i. Maccus (the fool), Bucco (the glutton or braggart), Pappus (the foolish old man), Dossennus (the cunning swindler or hunchback)
   b. Identical clothing to Greek Middle Comedy
      i. Stuffed tights, pronounced phallus, vest too small
      ii. Costumes were more grotesque and realistic
   c. Temporary stage
   d. No chorus
   e. Potentially w/ retinue
      i. jugglers, acrobats, mime-esque dancers

IV. Themes and Subjects
   a. Mythological burlesque
   b. Tragic parody
      i. Herakles – murdering children, etc.
   c. Travesties of myth
      i. the Trojan Saga – especially Odysseus!
   d. Humorous scenes from everyday life

V. Phlyakes and the Fabula Atellana
   a. Rhinthon (300 BCE)
      i. Made literary
      ii. Hilarotragoedia – “mythological burlesque”
   b. Fabula Atellana
i. Oscans keep the characters, the themes, the bawdiness and rudeness BUT change the language
ii. Parallels are tentative without evidence
c. The Phlyax Vases
   i. H. Heydemann in 1886
      1. Presumed connections to Rhinthon
   ii. Associations to Attic Old and Middle comedy
      1. Attic inscriptions, not Doric
      2. Attic costuming and masks
      3. Some scenes from extant plays
   iii. Mostly from 380-340 BCE
      1. Gone by late 4th c. BCE
      2. Sicily, Southern Italy (over 90 percent found in Apulia)
   iv. Reflects high popularity of the farces
      1. Produced in all 5 pottery workshops in the region
   v. Purpose of the vases is unknown
      1. Dramatic victory commemoration
      2. Funerary votives to Dionysus (Dionysus is figured prominently on many)

Bibliography


