



Playing with Persians in Atthenian Imagery of the 4th Century BCE

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Playing with Persians in Athenian Imagery of the 4th Century BCE

ABSTRACT–. Greek representations of Persians correlate to the complexities of their military and diplomatic relations. Over the 5th century BC, Persians in vase-painting range from the ethnographically accurate battle scenes to their belittlement as warriors. In the 4th-century BC context of more complex relations, Athenian artisans thrust Persians into entirely new directions. The amorous Persian emerges and figure-lekythoi of dancing Persians can even be winged. The projection of real-life Persians into creatures of fantasy most conspicuously appears in griffin-riding and griffin-hunting imagery. The contrast between the “fantasticization” of Persians in art and their imperial strength suggests an Athenian strategy of anxiety-displacement.

KEYWORDS–. Athenian vase-painting, Greek images of Persians

RÉSUMÉ–. Les représentations grecques de Perses sont contemporaines de relations militaires et diplomatiques complexes. Dans la peinture de vases, au cours du v^e siècle av. J.-C., les Perses figurent d’abord dans des scènes de bataille à valeur ethnographique, avant d’être ensuite dépréciés en tant que guerriers. Au iv^e siècle av. J.-C., où les relations sont plus complexes, les artisans athéniens figurent les Perses suivant des modèles entièrement nouveaux. Le Perse amoureux fait son apparition et des vases en forme de danseurs perses sont même parfois pourvus d’ailes. Le remplacement de Perses réalistes par des créatures fantastiques est particulièrement frappant dans les représentations de griffons montés et de chasse au griffon. Le contraste entre cette figuration fantasmatique des Perses et leur puissance politico-militaire suggère une stratégie athénienne de compensation.

MOTS-CLÉS–. Peinture de vases attique, images grecques des Perses

In the last chapter of his *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization*, after discussing Celts, Jews, and Romans, Arnaldo Momigliano considered “Iranians and Greeks.”¹ He outlined the various points of contact between Greeks and Persians from the time of Cyrus’ conquest of Lydia and noted that for the sixty years following 411, the Great Kings of Persia had “put far greater pressure on Greece” than in the time of Athens’ naval hegemony. After turning to analysis of Ctesias, Xenophon and the Alexander historians, Momigliano articulated an important point of puzzlement:

I find it very difficult to understand why the severe but appreciative attitude towards the Persian Empire prevailing in the fifth century yielded in the fourth century to a mixture of idealization of dead Persian kings and of gossip about contemporary court intrigues. Lack of interest in the realities

(1) MOMIGLIANO 1975, p. 132, 134. Please note that in this paper reference to Athenian vases include wherever possible the Beazley Archive Pottery Database (BAPD), which can be accessed online at <https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/xdb/ASP/dataSearch.asp>. This valuable resource includes a full bibliography of published photographs of the vases listed and often provides images. In addition, the abbreviation “RF” stands for “red-figured” as indication of the decorative technique.

of Persian political and social organization remained conspicuous in the historians who narrated its end.

Representations of Persians in Greek arts, notably Athenian ceramic, exhibit a similar trajectory.² Scenes of combat in red-figure vases of the earlier fifth century in which well-armed Persians valiantly battle Greek hoplites gradually become generic and then change into images of the fourth century that trivialize or fantasticize Persians. There are amorous Persians, Persians who have dealings with griffins, Persians who are more interested in dance than warfare. The murkiness of the phenomenon has led to its general neglect; it is appropriate in the present context to reconsider the question.³

In all the repertoire of subjects depicted on the thousands of Athenian decorated vases of the sixth through fourth centuries, subjects depicting scenes of life (as opposed to myth) number only in the hundreds.⁴ Within that select group, less than 150 vases are decorated with images evidently of Persians, despite the historical evidence for the continuing importance of the Persian Empire in all aspects of Greek life over the two centuries after the conquest of Lydia.

After the major campaigns of conquest by Cyrus, and then Cambyzes and Darius, the extent of the Persian Empire remained more or less stable for two centuries. Different satrapies at different times presented challenges to the Kings of Kings, but the strength and significance of the whole remained intact. The “liberation” of the Greek city-states by the campaigns of Cimon and the Delian League in the fifth century impacted only the western fringes of the empire; to the east the empire continued to stretch to the *ἔσχατα γῆς*, the edges of the known world. The fact of continuity despite the vicissitudes of royal authority at the top allowed the claim of Alexander of Macedon that he was “liberating” the peoples of the empire as he swept through to the outer reaches.

What did change over this period of time (ca. 546–323) was the representation of the Persians in Athenian arts. In the earlier sixth century, men in foreign dress tend to be some form of Scythian; of these, the “pointed hat Saka” (to use the term of Persian royal texts) are the most readily recognizable. The advent of Persians in Athenian vase-painting, with good reason, is typically linked with the Persian invasions of Darius (Datis and Artaphernes) and Xerxes that led to the land battles of Marathon and Plataea. In the Persian War period Athenian red-figure vases present scenes of battles against Persians that are notable for their accuracy in representing both Greek and Persian dress and weaponry. Here the Persians are a formidable enemy, both brave and well-equipped. Although in the imagery the general movement from left to right signals Greek victory by a standard convention, even in retreat the Persians battle on. In many ways the best example of this is the name vase of the “Painter of the Oxford Brygos.”⁵ On one exterior side of the cup, fully armed hoplites battle spear-bearing Persians properly equipped with their defensive weaponry, including both fish-scale and quilted linen corselets, and *gerron* shields. One Persian still grasps his sword even as he falls. Valiant defense by cuirass-wearing and sword-wielding Persians is similarly found on other paintings of the Persian Wars period.⁶

(2) Persians rarely appear in sculpture. However, in the fourth-century sculptural ornamentation of a statue base at Olympia, the Great King appears enthroned and is accompanied by the royal women (Olympia A 45). The associated statue, by Lysippus, celebrated the Thessalian athlete Poulydamas: PURGOLD 1884, p. 238–244. KOSMOPOULOU 2002, p. 73; cat. 36, fig. 55.

(3) Notably RAECK 1981 ended his excellent survey with the end of the fifth century. The only exception is the valuable consideration of SGOUROPOULOU 2004.

(4) See the brief but well-illustrated summary of OAKLEY 2020, with references.

(5) Oxford 1911.615, RF cup restored from fragments, signed by Brygos as potter, BOVON 1963, nr. 2, BAPD 204329.

(6) See the overview by BOVON 1963. Notably New York MMM 1980.11.21, Painter of the Paris Gigantomachy RF cup, long known as the “Basseggio Cup” and believed lost, BAPD 204549, BOVON 1963, nr. 7. See also: New York MMA 06.1021.117, unattributed RF Nolan amphora, BOVON 1963, Nr. 3, BAPD 275257.

Over the following decades, in art the threat presented by Persians is increasingly diminished. In general, they are displaced from the battlefield into domestic contexts.⁷ In the battle imagery a more caricatural mode predominates as, for example, a Persian fleeing in frontal-faced terror on a krater in Basel; for their part, the Greek hoplites battle naked, eschewing the need for corporeal defensive weaponry.⁸ In the last quarter of the fifth century a new class of drinking vessel shaped like human heads include some Persians. With their open mouths and furrowed brows, the Persians look distinctly worried perhaps, it has been humorously suggested, because they are about to confront a Greek drinker.⁹ [Fig. 1]

In the imagery of the fourth century, the historical Persian virtually disappears, even though in life the Persian Empire figured in all Greek strategic and military calculations and the fifth-century public arts of Athens continued to present conspicuous reminders of victory against Persians.¹⁰ In place of the historical or veristic mode a range of constructs develop that strip from the Persian his quality as a warrior. A hint of what is to come appears on the neck of the Persian head vase, where a youth in Persian dress pursues a peplos-wearing woman who looks back to him coquettishly [Fig. 1].



1. Ruvo di Puglia, Museo Nazionale Jatta, Inv. no. 1515. Red-figured head vase, Class W, The Persian Class (Sub-Meidian), 420/400. Photograph courtesy of Photographic archive Museo Nazionale Jatta—Ruvo di Puglia. Images used by permission of Direzione Regionale Musei Puglia—Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism.

THE AMOROUS PERSIAN

The “amorous Persian” takes off in fourth-century imagery, in a new mode that might be called novelistic [Fig. 2]. Although it appears infrequently in surviving ceramic, its occurrence on

(7) Overview in MILLER 2011, p. 140-145. Discussed in Miller forthcoming.

(8) Basel BS 480, unattributed RF calyx krater, ca 460, BAPD 1287; HÖLSCHER 1974, pl. 18. See also HUTZFELDT 1999, Abb.1. This is true also of the oinochoe Boston 13.196 recently considered by ZOURNATZI 2019, 122, Fig. 1. Persian weaponry and clothing tend increasingly to the generic. See further the fuller discussion in MILLER forthcoming.

(9) Head Vases Class W: The Persian Class, include Ruvo Jatta 1509, BAPD 218696, and Ruvo Jatta 1515, BAPD 218695, here Fig. 1. The best known is London 1849.0620.12 (E791), BAPD 218694, from Nola in Italy, on which see VILLING 2005, p. 239-240, and p. 248 for worried look. EBBINGHAUS 2008, p. 154, describes him as “distressed,” thanking Detlef Wannagat. Note that all three Persian head mugs were exported to Italy.

(10) One thinks of the Marathonomachy painting in the Stoa Poikile in the Agora and then, on the Akropolis decades later, as an architectural frieze on the Temple of Athena Nike. See HARRISON 1972; for a recent overview of construction history of the Nike temple see SHEAR 2016, p. 341-356.

a range of vessel types from different workshops across several decades attests to its popularity. Early examples include the tondo of a red-figured cup in Vienna and an oinochoe in Dresden, in which the pair calmly converse.¹¹ Such images have tended to be read as mythological, from which perspective the couple have been seen as Paris and Helen.¹² No clear indication that the two are to be so identified is visible, and the existence of analogous but more complex imagery over the fourth century argues against the notion. Already in late fifth-century imagery two lekanis lids present a circular composition of Persians (some bearded) pursing women.¹³ Their fragmentary state challenges certain reading, but the presence of vegetation and an altar put them in the Meidian category of the nostalgic *locus amoenus* so well articulated by Lucilla Burn.¹⁴

Elaborations on larger vessels include a Persian at centre on foot rushing to the right, with women on either side.¹⁵ The Persian can be mounted on a horse, as most simply on an early fourth century pelike in New York with only one woman.¹⁶ Two women moving to the sides appear on a hydria in St. Petersburg [Fig. 2].¹⁷ Here the peplos-wearing woman going to the right seems to hold



2. St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, Inv. no. GR-10515 (B-4550). Red-figured hydria, Europa Group (Kogiumtzi), ca. 375. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Konstantin Sinyavsky.

(11) Vienna AS IV 155, Painter of Vienna 155, 400-350, RF cup, BAPD 231111; Dresden 372, unattributed RF oinochoe Form VI, 400-375, BAPD 9034411.

(12) So, for example, JATTA 1869, p. 826, and more recently for the Dresden oinochoe HOFSTETTER-DOLEGA 2015, p. 72-73, pl. 58-59.

(13) Paris, Louvre CA 3668, exported to Cyrenaica, BAPD 220513, and Kiel B 908, BAPD 381, RF lekanis lids, Meidias Ptr., ca 420-400. See the exploration of explanations by BURN 1987, p. 48-50, who frames the subject as rape, perhaps by Pelasgians, but is puzzled that rape should appear on such a vessel type. Note that RAECK 1981 excludes them from his lists of Persians.

(14) BURN 1987, p. 94-96, on the function of the paradise garden in late fifth-century Athens.

(15) E.g. Sofia 5799, from Alexandroupolis, unattributed RF pelike, 400-380, not BAPD; TSIAFAKI 1998, Pl. 63a. Paris, CabMd 454, from Cyrenaica, unattributed RF hydria, ca. 350, not BAPD; DE RIDDER 1902, p. 345, Cat. nr. 454, pl. 18 (here Figure 4).

(16) New York MMA 63.48, Helbig-Reverse Group, RF pelike, 400-375, BAPD 2757225. Note that none of the mounts of the amorous Persians is ethnographically accurate.

(17) St. Petersburg, Hermitage GP 10515, B4550, RF hydria, Europa Group (Kogiumtzi), 375-350, not BAPD, SCHEFOLD 1934, Nr. 168; pl. 10.2. cf. Toronto ROM 919.5.38, RF pelike, Ptr. of Munich 2365, 370-350, BAPD 230401.

a tympanon, but with no other hint of maenadism and the woman running left simply extends her arms as she looks back. Most interesting is a hydria in Hildesheim, about mid-fourth century, with several figures, including an Eros hovering between the mounted Persian and a bejeweled woman.¹⁸ Pan looking on at right (his horns clearly rendered in extruded clay) strengthens the sense of rustic idyll; above sits a nymph partially dressed in a himation. The whole composition combines romance with country idyll.

PERSIANS WITH GRIFFINS

A most extraordinary elaboration of the idea develops in the early fourth century, as evidenced by a small pelike in Mainz: the Persian rides not a horse but a griffin and the woman running ahead, again wearing a peplos, holds what seems to be a casket in her upraised left hand [Fig. 3].¹⁹ The most elaborate examples of such imagery appear on two calyx kraters attributed to the Painter of the London Griffin-Calyx, dating from the mid-fourth century, one (the name vase) in London and the other in Copenhagen.²⁰ Here griffin riders moving both to the left and to the right are interspersed with youths in generic Persian dress running amidst women who run to the right, looking back. Some youths have fallen to their knee. While the predominate movement is in one direction, figures facing back or moving the other way present more of a confused, almost Dionysian, revel.

The other side of these kraters with griffin-riding youths presents a less friendly relationship with griffins: a single youth in larger scale, wearing Persian-looking dress and bearing a pelta shield, defends himself with spear against a griffin. The griffin rears up in attack. On the London krater, it seems to leap down from higher ground at left. A long tradition of scholarship sees such compositions as a battle



3. Mainz, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Inv. no. O.17298. Red-figured pelike, 400–375, Unattributed. Photograph courtesy of Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum.

(18) Hildesheim 1252, Hippolytus Ptr. (Schefold), 360–350, not BAPD, KREUZER 2011, p. 48–49, pl. 185–187.

(19) Mainz O.17298, unattributed RF pelike, 400–375, BAPD 2204; also, e.g., St. Petersburg b9026, RG pelike, ca. 350, GORBUNOVA 1997, nr. 54, pl. 347.

(20) Painter of the London Griffin-Calyx, ca. 350, calyx kraters, London 1931.1–13.1, BAPD 218269, and Copenhagen 3846, BAPD 218270. The latter was probably purchased in Italy with the aid of Thorwaldsen. Other vessels of the same workshop present similar imagery with fewer participants, such as Paris Petit Palais ADUR340 (328), BAPD 218271. As it originated in the Dutruit Collection, it was probably purchased in Rome by August Dutruit who lived there. In other words, this imagery went west.



4. Sydney, University Chau Chak Wing Museum, Nicholson Collection, Inv. no. 98.04. Red-figured pelike, Painter of Sydney 44 name vase (McPhee), 370-350. Photograph courtesy of Chau Chak Wing Museum.

between griffins and Arimasps [see Fig. 4].²¹ Arimasps are mentioned in a range of classical sources as a people who live north(east) of the Black Sea; Herodotus knows of them as living beyond the Issedones and being one-eyed (4.13-14), a tradition also known to Aeschylus, who adds that they ride horses (*Prometheus Bound* 804-805). One Aristeas of Proconnesus (in the Propontis), earliest mentioned by Herodotus in extant sources, reportedly composed an *Arimaspeia* that has been variously dated in a range between the later 7th to early 5th century.²² The most succinct account is that of Pausanias's description of the helmet of Athena Parthenos (1.24.6); he explains that Arimasps fight with griffins who guard gold that comes from the earth. A handful of archaic representations may show such a subject.²³ On one Attic small squat lekythos of ca 380 in London, two white griffins with blue wings flank a mound covered with gilt nodules of extruded clay, doubtless meant to be the gold.²⁴

Men wearing Persian-looking dress battling with griffins, and so usually identified as mythical Arimasps, frequently appear in fourth-century Athenian imagery. Especially from about 370, grypomachies are small scale, as on the pelikai in Paris, Sydney [Fig. 4] and, later, in Skopje.²⁵ The earliest full-scale combat adorns

an unattributed calyx-krater in Brussels dating from the second quarter of the fourth century; the best known is a Group G Falaieff krater in Paris dating mid-century.²⁶ Two details of these kraters are especially noteworthy: on both, bearded men number among the combatants who are normally beardless, and on the Paris krater one fighter wears the Persian *kandys*.

(21) DUCATI 1916, p. 294-307 links the *Arimaspeia* of Aristeas of Proconnesos with the subject in fourth-century imagery; this reading goes back to STEPHANI 1864, p. 77, as noted by SGOUROPOULOU 2004, p. 228. SCHOPPA 1933, p. 71, suggested that the imagery presents a myth unknown to us. GORBUNOVA 1997 includes all as Arimasps.

(22) Edition: BERNABÉ, 1996, p. 144-154: Aristeas *Testimonia* 1-24; *Fragmenta* 1-15. Date range: early: BERNABÉ 1996 following BOLTON, 1962; later: IVANTCHIK 1993. Fragments are preserved in Strabo, Pliny and Pausanias. Cf. Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 803-806.

(23) The depictions derive from different ceramic centres: Etruscan (London 1923.04-19.1; GORBUNOVA 1997, nr. 1) and Athenian (Angers Musée Pincée; GORBUNOVA 1997, nr. 2; see also London 1931.0216.22; GORBUNOVA 1997, nr. 3).

(24) London 1894.1204.2, squat lekythos, ht. 8 cm, ca. 380; the item is described by K. Lapatin as "a large gold nugget" in LAPATIN 2015, p. 20-21 with caption for fig. 11, a particularly good image.

(25) Paris, Louvre G553bis, Group G pelike, 370-350, BAPD 230237. Sydney CCW, Nicholson 98.04, name vase of Painter of Sydney 44 (McPhee), 370-350, not BAPD. Skopje 1159, Filottrano Ptr., pelike, 350-340, not BAPD, SANEV 2013, p. 23, fig. 6.

(26) Brussels A1944, unattributed RF calyx krater, 375-350, BAPD 12111. Paris Louvre, CA229, G529, Group G Falaieff krater, 350, BAPD 230372.

In some Athenian images of the griffin-riders, there are other hints of precisely accurate ethnographic detail in the form of the riders' tiara: the appearance of a distinctive rounded bump just above the forehead on pelikai in Mainz [Fig. 3] and Sydney [Fig. 4].²⁷ This feature closely resembles the tiara worn by Sogdians in Persian imperial arts, such as Persepolis Apadana Delegation XVII.²⁸ It is recognizable also on the figure above the Sogdians' cartouche on the base of the statue of Darius I recovered at Susa in 1972.²⁹ The precise association of griffin-riding with a satrapy in the far eastern Persian Empire places it in the general region where, according to Herodotus, lived the Issedones. In other words, these are not figures of a wild imagination among vase-painters so much as a reflection of what may be a popular general vision of a part of the world so distant that such bizarre creatures might have conceivably lived. Imported Persian glyptic with imagery of the royal hero in combat with a griffin perhaps helped concretize a Greek notion that Persians battled griffins.³⁰

EXOTIC IMAGERY AND TARGET-MARKETING

The question arises whether such exotic imagery was developed with a view to target-marketing on the part of the Athenian vase-painters. The provenance of many Athenian vases in European and other collections is not known but enough are known to consider the question. Certainly a few instances of target-marketing by Athenian potters have been convincingly identified, but they tend to relate rather to imitation of shape, as most famously the works of the sixth century Nikosthenic Workshop that precisely targeted Etruscan markets. For example, their production of the "Nikosthenic amphora" imitated an Etruscan bucchero shape associated with Cerveteri and is found to have been exported especially to Cerveteri.³¹ Although such strategic marketing is especially and most extensively attested for Italy to the west, it is attested also eastwards to Cyprus in the case of the Athenian sixth-century "Cypro-jug," an oinochoe produced in the form of Cypriote jug Type V.³² In contrast, very rarely can imagery be shown to be shaped by a desire to be attractive to a foreign audience although there is some evidence for Athenian targeting of Etruria in sixth-century black figure: a loincloth (*perizoma*) is given to figures normally naked in athletic or symposion imagery, and heterosexual intercourse, absent on vases found in Athens, is found on vases exported to Italy.³³

Some of the vessels considered in this paper do have suggestive provenances, most notably the "Xenophantos lekythos" [Fig. 5], found at Pantikapaion in 1836; the provenance of the hydria of Fig. 2 is not reported but its location in the Hermitage may indicate a similar findspot. Some vessels with romantic Persians did make their way to the Black Sea, like the griffin-rider pursuit in Moscow thought to be from Kerch; the combat between a bearded figure and two griffins now in Pilsen had

(27) So, too, Jumilla, the Jerónimo Molina Archaeological Museum NB 8024, pelike, linked with Ptr. of Munich 2365 and Ptr. of London Griffin-Calyx, with complex "pursuit" in which two griffin-riders run alongside two figures: CANO, PAGE DEL POZO 2007, p. 28.

(28) Persepolis, Apadana, Delegation XVII, Sogdians. SCHMIDT 1953, Pl. 45.

(29) Published by David Stronach: STRONACH 1974. For the base: ROAF 1974.

(30) Explored in a different context: MILLER 2020.

(31) RASMUSSEN 1985; TOSTO 1999: 201; OSBORNE 2001, p. 278.

(32) OHNEFALSH-RICHTER 1893 recognized that the form was Cypriot; BEAZLEY 1956, p. 441 gave the Athenian imitation its name. For type see GJERSTAD 1977, p. 51–52, no. 502, pl. 57.

(33) *Perizoma*: E.g., SHAPIRO 2000. Intercourse: LYNCH 2009 and DE LA GENIÈRE 2009, independently and simultaneously. See, too, OSBORNE 2007.

a provenance in Kerch.³⁴ However, griffin-riders pursuing women also decorated vessels that were exported to Italy and even Spain.³⁵ The very wide extent of the known findspots with these themes (amorous Persians, griffin-riding or griffin-fighting) attests to the export of vessels with such ornamentation not only to Spain and Italy, but also North Africa as well as elsewhere in Greece.³⁶ The choice of themes and the manner of their production was assuredly Athenian.

An innovative ornamental composition of grouped human and animal protomes emerged in Athenian painting about 380-370 and continued throughout the century. On the larger three-protome pelikai, the human heads wear some form of *tiara* and are typically positioned at centre, to be flanked by horse and eagle-griffin heads; McPhee aptly describes the arrangement as a visual synecdoche of grypomachy.³⁷ On the earliest, dating from the second quarter of the fourth century, McPhee identified the heads as beardless (youthful) males; a smaller group featured bearded heads with Persian tiara, presumably actual Persians.³⁸ The protome pelikai are perhaps all by one painter within Group G but were exported widely throughout the Mediterranean.³⁹ Sometimes the human heads may be female; some of them, youths and possibly women, dating from the mid to the late fourth century, wear the distinctive Sogdian tiara discussed above. The series perhaps presents a visual system in which Persians, Arimasps and Amazons are interchangeable. Occasionally a human is flanked by two of the same creature; for example, on a pelike exported to Galera in Spain a beardless figure who perhaps wears a Sogdian tiara appears flanked by eagle-griffin protomes. Regardless of the specific details, in this form of synecdoche, as McPhee observes, it is up to the viewer to read whether mounted griffin-combat or something else is intended.⁴⁰

Fourth-century griffin-fighting significantly is anticipated on two fifth-century Athenian vases, both with Persian contexts. The less well known is a ram-head cup (so, a Persianizing shape) whose neck is adorned with the image of a griffin attacking a bleeding horse while, on the right, a

(34) Moscow II 1b 1452, unattributed RF bell crater, ca. 350-325, not BAPD, TUGUSHEVA 2012, p. 22, pl. 18. Pilsen [Plzeň], UMP 8316, RF pelike, Near Group G, ca 350, BAPD 230383, BOUZEK 1990, p. 151, pl. 7.1.

(35) Italy: Ferrara 2395 758VT, RF bell krater, ca. 350, BAPD 230355, ALFIERI 1979, 112, fig. 285 (A). Copenhagen 3846, RF calyx krater, Ptr. of the London Calyx, BAPD 218270; on side B a figure in rider dress spears a rampant griffin; acquired in Rome. Spain: Jumilla, the Jerónimo Molina Archaeological Museum NB 8024, pelike, CANO, PAGE DEL POZO 2007, p. 28.

(36) North Africa: RF vessels from Cyrenaica in the pursuit scenes in Paris discussed above: Louvre CA 3668, pyxis lid, BAPD 220513, and CabMd 454, RF hydria [Fig. 4]. Also from Cyrenaica the battle on London E233 discussed below. Greece: Athens NM 1334: RF pelike, Amazon Ptr., from Tanagra, 340/310, BAPD 230455, presents a battle against griffins on the reverse of an Amazonomachy.

(37) MCPHEE 2019, p. 136-137, presents a clear overview of the iconography of the protome-pelikai, with the range of schemata and association of size with composition (smaller have one protome, larger have three). Synecdoche, p. 139. A full catalogue, p. 142-155, and illustrations, pl. IX-X.

(38) McPhee 2019 follows LANGNER 2012, p. 39, in seeing the bearded heads as Persians. Bearded protome pelikai: Ian McPhee kindly advises that he has found three instances, listed in MCPHEE 2019 as type E: (1) Chania Museum P6350, from Phalasarna (HADJIDAKI [Χατζηδάκη] 1987, fig. 333a photo; HADJIDAKI, INIOTAKIS 2000, p. 60-70, fig. 16 drawing; KOGIOUMTZI 2006, 302, no. P311; BAPD 43509). (2) Once Dardanelles, Calvert Collection (Photograph DAI-Athens: D-DAI-ATH-Calvert-0146,8 published by MARGOS 1980, fig. 9; BAPD 230322). (3) Manchester University Museum 1977.105, not yet published; I warmly thank Jamilla Briggs for her assistance with this important evidence.

(39) MCPHEE 2019, p. 147, suggests this may be an invention of the Ptr. of Athens 1472. The protome vessels are known from the Black Sea, but also were exported to Spain and Italy. Protome craters, Italy: Numana 58287 and 58288, McPhee 2019, pl. 2, 3. Spain: Madrid Museo Arqueológico Nacional 33440 (MAN 1922.3 GAL.T77.1), unattributed RF pelike, ht. 22.5 cm, from Galera Cemetery Tomb 77 (García y Bellido 1948, cat. 74.6; pl. 137, 6; BAPD 41864). Some stayed in Greece: Athens NM 18748 (E674), Near Amazon Ptr., ht. 17.6 cm, McPhee 2019, cat. no. P42; BAPD 230479). Also, from Rhodes: London 1885,1213.28 (F16), Khanenko Ptr., 350 BC, ht. 20.32 cm, BAPD 218145.

(40) MCPHEE 2019, p. 139.

bearded man armed and equipped as a Persian raises his sword.⁴¹ Much more familiar is the large relief squat lekythos signed by Xenophantos that depicts Persians engaging in a multiple-quarry hunt set in a *paradeisos* [Fig. 5].⁴² Many elements of the mold-made figures present high levels of ethnographic accuracy with regard to dress and equipment, such as the Persian riding cloths with distinctive borders. Here two features especially signify: first, several of the hunters are given explicitly Persian names, including Dareios and Kyros, and second, among the prey (boar and stag) are two griffins, one an eagle-griffin and the other the (much rarer and more certainly Persian) lion-griffin. These figures emphatically transport the Persians from the familiar to exotic lands. As Franks has put it, these Persians hunt at ἔσχατα γῆς, the very edges of the known world.⁴³ It was an easy step to suppose that this would especially take place in the far north-east of the Empire, the home of the Sogdians.



5. St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, Inv. no. Π1837. Red-figured and relief squat lekythos, Xenophantos, ca. 400. After drawing: Stephani, L., 1866, "Erklärung einiger Vasengemälde der kaiserlichen Ermitagen, Tafel 4," *CRPetersb*, p. 139-147. Atlas pl. IV

COURTLY PLEASURES

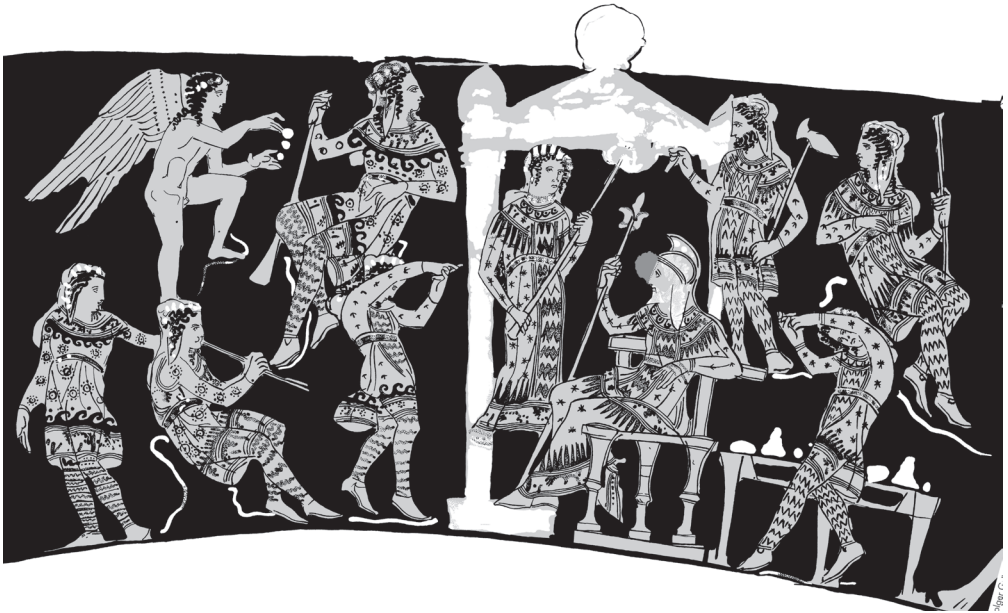
At the end of the fifth century, a new hedonistic projection of the Persian king emerged, most clearly presented on a small volute krater in Vienna dating from the early fourth century [Fig. 6].⁴⁴ Although the fan-bearer provides the attribute of royal majesty, this enthroned king relaxes, entertained by music and dance with his court. From the uneven ground-lines it appears that the scene is set in a garden pavilion. Nibbles are near to hand on a small table. One axe-bearing guard—the only bearded figure here apart from the king himself—alone alludes to the normal regalia of the Persian court. Two youths dance the sinuous *oklasma* dance on tiptoes, bending over with their hands clasped above their heads, to the music of the pipes. All is relaxed and serene; the winged figure with chaplet at upper left, if Eros, would hint at romance.

(41) St. Petersburg, Hermitage GP 475 b1819, plastic ram-head cup, Eretria Ptr. (Lezzi-Hafter), 420-415, BAPD 44218. MILLER, forthcoming, Cat. Nr. 112.

(42) St. Petersburg State Hermitage Museum Π1837, Xenophantos, RF and relief squat lekythos, ca. 400, BAPD 217907. Described STEPHANI 1864, p. 75, 77-79. Further discussion and drawing: STEPHANI 1866, p. 139-147.

(43) FRANKS 2009.

(44) Vienna KhM AS IV 158, volute krater, 390-380, Meleager Painter, BAPD 217917. It is RAECK 1981, P612, who recognized that the seated figure is meant to be the Persian king rather than some eastern divinity as assumed in prior scholarship, e.g. Curtius 1928, p. 288, fig. 10.



6. Vienna, Antikensammlung, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Inv. no. IV 158. Red-figured volute krater, unattributed, 390-380. Drawing by Holger Groenwald, commissioned.



7. London, British Museum, Inv. no. 1882,0704.1 (E695). Red-figured squat lekythos, late Aison (Lezzi-Hafter), ca. 400. After drawing: Furtwängler, Adolf, and Karl Reichhold, 1904, 1909, 1932, *Griechischen Vasenmalerei: Auswahl hervorragender Vasenbilder*, I–III (Munich: F. Bruckmann). Taf. 78.

A similar sense of indulgent lifestyle presents itself on a squat lekythos in London whose ostensible subject is a royal progress [Fig. 7].⁴⁵ The royal figure is mounted side-saddle on a camel with nose-plug whose Persian-style riding cloth has a decorated border. The king is attended by fan-bearer and torchbearer (gilt lines at top identify this as a torch rather than a flywhisk). But this is no sober procession as documented in various texts. It is enlivened by music of kithara, lyre and drum or tambourine. The only bearded men apart from the King raise their arms above their heads, dancing the *oklasma*. It is interesting to remember in this context that Aristotle while discussing the importance of education in music to young Athenians notes the contrast between Athenian and Persian practice, that the Persian kings enjoy listening to rather than benefit from the discipline of playing instruments (*Politics* 8. 1337a-1339b). Being surrounded by music and dance enhanced the pleasures of life at the Persian court.

The association of *oklasma*-dancing with royal entertainment may explain the emergence in Athens of a special class of figure-vessel, that is a closed vessel (commonly a lekythos or oinochoe) whose vessel form is disguised by a human figure.⁴⁶ One popular fourth-century type is *oklasma*-dancers wearing Persian dress. The dancers, both erect or kneeling, clasp their hands above their heads; while the best-known examples were exported elsewhere in Greece, in Athens fragments of some, even a mould, have been found.⁴⁷ A notable element is that these dancers tend to be winged, furthering the distance from the here and now.

ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Although by and large Persian figures in Athenian fourth-century imagery have little to do with the rigors of warfare (battles with griffins might be regarded as a form of courtly hunt), a handful of representations depict battle between Greeks and Persians: two pelikai and two hydriai.⁴⁸ They differ in almost every respect from their predecessors of the fifth century, as can be seen from the pelike excavated at Pella in 2007 [Fig. 8]:⁴⁹ the Persians are mounted, in three cases opposed by two Greeks, one on each side. The Greek hoplite, following the trends of the later fifth century, appears with only his helmet, shield, and spear, but on two of the vases, that in Pella and a hydria in London, his companion is a *psilos*, a light-armed warrior. On the London hydria, the *psilos* wears a chitoniskos and wields a bow; archers played an important role at Plataea (Hdt. 9.22.1–2). The

(45) London BM 1882,0704.1 (E695), squat lekythos, late Aison (Lezzi-Hafter), ca. 400, BAPD 2856.

(46) Especially explored by TRUMPF-LYRITZAKI 1969. See further, MILLER forthcoming, Chapter 11.

(47) See: Delphi 18913, trefoil oinochoe in the form of a winged *oklasma*-dancer, from East Necropolis, similar to London 1907-0519-3, 20 cm (no provenance). Berlin VI 4876, 24 cm, a male standing *oklasma* dancer, is said to have been from Thebes (TRUMPF-LYRITZAKI 1969, p. 40-41, cat. nr. 110; pl. 16a). Fragments from Agora Excavation; mould fragment, ca. 400, Agora, T3044; oinochoe, 400-350, Agora, P14515. Fragments from Kerameikos excavations: Kerameikos T 502, T 503 (TRUMPF-LYRITZAKI 1969, p. 41, nr. 111 and nr. 112).

(48) Pelikai: St. Petersburg Π1874.76, 370, where the Persian has a Sogdian tiara (from Pantikapaion). Pella 07/662, Pourtalès Ptr., 370 (references below, note 49). Hydriai: London E233 Nr Group G, 350 (from Cyrenaica); Rhodes Archaeological Museum, Xenakis property, grave 89, Illustrated: PAPACHRISTODOULOU 1993, fig. 49. TOUCHAIS 1996, p. 1314 (findspot), fig. 273 (grave goods). BAPD 29819 reports as an Amazonomachy, but LANGNER 2013, n. 32, reports a beard on the mounted figure.

(49) Pella 07/662, Pourtalès Ptr., 370; LILIMPAKI-AKAMATIS M., 2011, 126 and 127b; AKAMATIS 2012, figs. 1–3 (images). The sherds are reported as found in fill in a street but there is a chance that the original context was a burial (context: I. M. AKAMATIS 2009). I am much indebted to Alexander Vouvoulis for advising me of this important discovery, and to Nikolaos Pappas for permitting its study and photography.

fragmentary state of the pelike in Pella makes reading difficult, but while both Greeks wear a pilos helmet and carry a shield, the figure at right holds a stone.⁵⁰



8. Pella, Archaeological Museum Inv. no. 07/662. Red-figured pelike fragments, related to Pourtalès Ptr., ca. 380/370. The rights to the illustrated vase belong to the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports (N3028/2002). The pelike 07/662 is under the jurisdiction of the Ephoreia of Classical Antiquities of Pella. Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports / Archaeological Resources Fund. Photograph by Margaret Miller, with permission.

These battle images are striking for both their accurate and their generic elements. The Persians, although mounted on horses aligning with the historical sources' attestation to their strength in cavalry, ride mounts that have nothing to do with Persian equestrianism as attested in Persian arts.⁵¹ The accuracy in these scene lies in their inclusion of the wider range of combatants in

(50) AKAMATIS 2012, p. 144 and fig. 2.

(51) A good summary of the evidence in TUPLIN 2010; the minor arts of the Western Empire provide a limited but precise source. The most important evidence must be the satrapal coinage, owing to its design for wide circulation, even if the question of precise mint(s) remains unsure (Mildenberg 1993, Mildenberg 2000 argues for royal instruction; cf. Casabonne 2004), eg. London BM 1919,1120,114, 'Cyprus', silver stater, 340-330, associated with Euagoras (Curtis, Tallis (ed.) 2005, cat. no. 327); London 2000.0508.1, Tarsus, ca 400, obv. (Curtis, Tallis (ed.) 2005, cat. no. 373). Here the obverse Royal Archer image has as reverse a mounted figure with spear in rider dress whose horse has the tied forelock and tail familiar from the Apadana Delegations III and IX. In Anatolia it is visible on the frieze on Xanthus, Building G, ca. 480, Side frieze, London BM 312; Metzger 1963, pl. 38.2; Anderson 1961, pl. 13b as well as now the Tatarlı tomb: Summerer 2008, p. 275-276, fig. 7 (colour); Summerer, von Kienlin 2010. Particularly clear images with Persian mounts can appear in glyptic, like the blue chalcedony cylinder London BM 89816 (1869,0122.10): Curtis, Tallis (ed.) 2005, cat. nr. 420: Persian makes Parthian shot at lion-pawed animal. ?Paris from Syria: Seyrig 1952, Nr. 2 and Nunn, 2000, nr. 213: mounted Persian pursues stag. Murasu archive stamp seal impression, Sealing L985: Bregstein 1993, Nr. 162 (9 impressions): charging Persian with raised spear. To the East the riding cloth is seen on the border of the Pazyryk carpet: Rudenko 1970.

classical armies. This is not the occasion to debate whether the inclusion of the psilos is owing to a change in ideology in fourth century imagery; alternatively, it may reflect an oral tradition regarding the contributions of all Athenians to the land armies of the Persian War period.

In sum, some important innovations in the imagery of later fifth century led the way to the extraordinary near-disappearance of Persians as a subject of Athenian vase-painting in the imagery of the fourth century. Just as Momigliano observed regarding fourth-century literary sources, popular Athenian interest in Persians as reflected in vase-painting tended towards romance and sensual pleasure. Especially interesting is the shift in mode from the veristic, then caricatural, to the more novelistic and ultimately the fantastic, in that in the imagery Persians are cast out of lived reality by being merged with griffin-fighting Arimasps. In view of the continuing strength of the Persian Empire in the fourth century, and the relative weakness of the Athenians in controlling their fate, such displacement of the Persians may very well represent a form of compensation to deflect attention from a grim reality.

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