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A Laconian Cartoonist

Alan Johnston

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ΤΗΝ ΕΠΙΓΡΑΦΙΚΗ, ΤΗΝ ΝΟΜΙΣΜΑΤΙΚΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΠΑΠΥΡΟΛΟΓΙΑ

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Βιβλιοκρισία – Book Review
Περιλήψεις / Summaries / Zusammenfassungen / Sommaires / Riassunti

Alan Johnston, A Laconian Cartoonist, EYALIMENH 23 (2022), 1-5.

Το σημείωμα επικεντρώνεται σε δύο ασυνήθιστες μορφές ζωγραφισμένες σε λακωνικούς κρατήρες του πρώιμου δυο αι. π.Χ. από τη Ναύκρατη. Ο κρατήρας της Οξφόρδης είναι γνωστός εδώ και πολέ καιρό, ενώ ο κρατήρας στο Βρετανικό Μουσείο δεν είχε αναγνωριστεί έως τώρα. Η θέση τους στο πλαίσιο της λακωνικής αγγειογραφίας και οι προθέσεις του/των αγγειογράφου/ων εξετάζονται εν συντομία.

This note highlights two abnormal figures painted on early sixth century Lakonian kraters, both found at Naukratis. One in Oxford has long been known; the other in the British Museum was not previously been recognised. Their place in Lakonian vase-painting and the intentions of the painter(s) are briefly discussed.

Στρατής Παπαδόπουλος – Χαράλαμπος Οικονομίδης, Η αρχαία Πίστυρος και η οχύρωση της, EYALIMENH 23 (2022), 7-53.

Since antiquity, attack and defense were frequent phenomena in human lives and urban complexes. For this reason, the discovery of a defensive solution against any kind of attack was of an imperative necessity. In order to ensure the feeling of safety, people constructed fortifications, which protected their lives and their properties as well. Using as a reference point a small town, which was established near Nestos river (north Aegean), the preserved remains of a severe fortification that ringed this town will be examined. Initially, a brief mention to the town itself is presented in an attempt to clear out the historical context of it, the matter of its naming, the determination of its metropolis and many other topics concerning this town. The small town, which was possibly an emporion, stands today near Pontolivado village, in Kavala prefecture, at the northeast of Greece. This site is related to an archaeologically promising area, since the interesting findings from that place are constantly unveiling the past of the town that had been covered by the oblivion of time.

Ευαγγελία Δήμα, Οπτικά ενθύμια του ροδιακού κωμωδε, EYALIMENH 23 (2022), 55-96.

The comic theatrical act in Rhodes is represented by a catalogue of 45 comic masks and figurines, all recovered during rescue excavations in the city of Rhodes. This group of masks and figurines cover a period of about three centuries, consisting representative samples of an abundant Rhodian artistic production inspired by the theater during the Hellenistic period, when Rhodes emerges as a strong and prosperous naval power and becomes a cultural and intellectual center as well. The following catalogue includes depictions of comic types such as caricatures and grotesque figures along with protagonist types of the Rhodian comedians related to the New Comedy characters,
The burial is an extended inhumation in a stone-lined cist, unearthed in 1997, parallel to and in contact with the north wall of the more recent and smaller of two
chapels of the Early Christian period, located in the northwest sector of the area of the sanctuary at Symi. The East-West orientation of the deceased, placed supine in the grave with the head at the west facing east, dates the burial to the Christian era and the archaeological context dates it specifically to the 6th c. AD. The inhumation was that of a woman, at least 35 years old and 160.3 cm tall. Lesions on both shoulder joints may have been caused by repetitive trauma in the course of arduous daily tasks. Since the right shoulder was more severely affected than the left, she was probably right-handed. Dental hypoplasia shows that she had suffered from poor health in childhood when her teeth were being formed. The teeth, which were severely worn, also showed a build-up of dental calculus on the roots of the third molar indicating that she suffered from gingivitis in addition to caries. She also suffered from osteoporosis, perhaps as a result of a chronic infection caused by tuberculosis or brucellosis, compounded by pregnancy. When nutrition is inadequate, an expectant mother’s body is depleted of its reserves of calcium in order to sustain the foetus, which is in a parasitic relationship with the mother. The existence of an infant buried with the adult connects the infant to the woman. It would be too much of a coincidence for a woman and a child to be buried simultaneously unless they were related. So they are presumed to be mother and child. The woman’s death was probably the result of complications in childbirth, a common event in the poorest countries of the world today.

Eva Astyrakaki, Mythography and Archaeology: The Case of Eulimene
ΕΥΛΙΜΕΝΗ 23 (2022), 109-124.

Η παρούσα εργασία αποσκοπεί στο να προσφέρει μία νέα ανάγνωση στην ιστορία της Ευλιμένης, η οποία παραδίδεται από τον Παρθένιο, συγγραφέα του 1ου αι. π.Χ., στη συλλογή του με τίτλο Περὶ ἐρωτικῶν παθημάτων. Η συγκεκριμένη ιστορία αποτελεί ένα ορατό παράδειγμα συνεργασίας ανάμεσα στη Φιλολογία και στην Αρχαιολογία, αφού με την αρωγή των δύο επιστημών φωτίζονται διάφορες πλευρές. Η ιστορία σαφώς είναι δομημένη σύμφωνα με τα ελληνιστικά αισθητικά πρότυπα. Σκοπός, άλλωστε, του Παρθένιου ήταν να προσφέρει με τη συλλογή του ένα εφαλτήριο έμπνευσης στον φίλο του Κορνήλιο Γάλλο, για να συνθέσει ελεγείες και επύλλια. Ωστόσο, μία προσεκτική μελέτη, σε συνδυασμό με την αρωγή των αρχαιολογικών ευρημάτων, καταδεικνύει μία διαστρωμάτωση στοιχείων διαφορετικών χρονικών περιόδων στη δόμηση αυτής της ιστορίας.

Οι ήρωες που αναφέρονται στην ιστορία (Λύκαστος, Κύδων) μαρτυρούνται ήδη από τον Όμηρο ως Κρητικές πόλεις (πόλη Λέκαστος, Κέδωνες που κατοικούν στην Κρήτη). Η λέξη άπτερος χρησιμοποιείται από τον Όμηρο ως επίθετο θεοτήτων (π.χ. άπτερος Νίκη) και ως πόλη μαρτυρείται σε πινακίδες της Κνωσσού. Οι σχέσεις, λοιπόν, που υπάρχουν στη συγκεκριμένη ιστορία ανάμεσα στους επώνυμους ήρωες πιθανόν να απηχούν ιστορικές σχέσεις μεταξύ αυτών των πόλεων.

Η Ευλιμένη μαρτυρείται ήδη από την εποχή του Ησιόδου ως Νηρηίδα και υπάρχουν αρχαιολογικά ευρήματα που συνάδουν με αυτήν την ιδιότητά της. Ένα κομμάτι ύφασμα και μία πυξίδα δίνουν μία διαφορετική διάσταση, αφού συνδέουν την
Ευλιμένη με την Κρήτη και ιδιαίτερα με τη Φαίδρα και την Αριάδνη. Τίθεται λοιπόν το ερώτημα αν η Ευλιμένη αποτελούσε λατρευτικό τίτλο θεότητας στην Κρήτη. Παρατηρούνται ακόμη πολλά κοινά μοτίβα, αλλά και διαφορές, ανάμεσα στην ιστορία της Ευλιμένης και στην ιστορία της κόρης του Αριστόδημου (Μεσσηνιακή ιστορία, η οποία παραδίδεται από τον Παυσανία). Είναι πιθανόν η Μεσσηνιακή ιστορία να έχει δομηθεί με πρότυπο την Κρητική.

Επίσης, διάφορα μοτίβα (η τομή του επομφάλιου, η τέλεση της εροποραξίας, ο ρόλος του βασιλιά) παραπέμπουν σε αρχαϊκά αρχεία, ίσως και μινωίζοντα ή μυκηναϊκά χαρακτηριστικά. Επίσης, διάφορα μοτίβα (η τομή του επομφάλιου, η τέλεση της ιεροπραξίας, ο ρόλος του βασιλιά) παραπέμπουν σε αρχαϊκά αρχεία, ίσως και μινωίζοντα ή μυκηναϊκά χαρακτηριστικά. Από αυτή την άποψη, βρίσκω πολύ ενδιαφέρον το εύρημα της κ. Ανδρεαδάκη-Βλαζάκη στην ανασκαφή του μυκηναϊκού ανακτόρου της Κυδωνίας στα Χανιά.

The main aim of the present research work is to provide a new interpretative perspective on Eulimene’s story by combining literary testimonies and archaeological findings. The story is included in Parthenius’s collection entitled Περὶ Ἐρωτικῶν Παθημάτων, dating back to the 1st century BC. This story appears to be an exceptionally fertile example in which a multidisciplinary approach, that combines Philology and Archaeology, can, potentially, illuminate aspects and facts that would otherwise remain unearthed.

Eulimene’s story deals with eponymous heroes and city founders of Crete. The Cretan cities of Lykastos and Kydonia are attested as early as in Homer and Aptera and Kydonia are also cited in Linear B tablets of Knossos; the name of Eulimene, referring to a Nereid, and the adjective ἄπτερος, applied to some gods, were known to Hesiod and Homer, respectively. Given that Crete was sui generis in terms of its own mythology, it is likely that before Homer there was already a background relating to those Cretan cities.

Eulimene is known as a Nereid. Hesiod reports it in his Theogony and pottery as early as the 5th c. BC attests it, as well. A different perspective is introduced by a piece of textile and a pyxis, which hint at an association of Eulimene with Crete, particularly with Phaedra and Ariadne.

There is also a Messenian story, reported by Pausanias, which presents similarities and common patterns. However, the story of Eulimene is rather more complex since the Messenian story was arguably modelled on the predating Cretan version.

Eulimene’s story in Parthenius’ collection was structured according to the aesthetic standards of the Hellenistic era. However, the story seems to combine various elements, some of which echo Minoan times (the ritual of human sacrifice carried out by the king-priest, a union designed to result in fertility, interrupted in this case) and others which echo archaic times (dissection and forced extraction of the baby). Thus, I find particularly interesting the archaeological finding of the cut-up skull of a young girl, which Andreadaki-Vlazaki brought to light during the excavation at the Mycenaean palace of Kydonia at Chania.
Lakonian painted pottery of the 6th c. BC owes a lot to Corinthian models, especially in technique, but its producers also found pictorial inspiration elsewhere, for example the Egyptian and Cyrenaic echoes of the Arkesilas cup and they had their own ideas and quirks: bold use of incision and of added red, or the many experiments with tondo organisation on cups, often unfortunate, but used admirably on the same Arkesilas cup to accommodate lesser figures in the lower reaches. A perusal of the plates in Stibbe 1972 and 2004 will add much more. Here I offer a rather different example of quirkiness, though regrettably leaving the reader with little idea how it is to be explained.

One of two relevant sherds, both from Naukratis, is in the Ashmolean Museum and has been well published (fig. 1). A very normal stirrup krater rim, typical of the Naukratis painter, has, nestling against the handle root, a cameo of a male head in a style that one cannot resist calling a cartoon. Arthur Lane, cited also by Conrad Stibbe, has indeed given his view—“a caricature slyly inserted by an untrained hack”. It has otherwise drawn little attention. Mitchell may or may not have known of the piece when writing “the absence of freedom of expression is enough to explain the lack of humour in Laconian visual culture”. None of the other rim sherds from Naukratis belongs with this piece; they have either a smaller diameter or shorter key elements in the frieze; British Museum 1886,0401.649a-b is the closest but a smaller vase.

A second fragment is unpublished, though available online via Explore the Collection, British Museum 1924,1201.1141 (fig. 2); it is also listed by Anna Lemos, as a work of the Animal Chalice style of Chian manufacture. It is glazed inside and the outside shows much of a seemingly human head between rays. The slip is not Chian, nor is the very lightly micaceous, fine purplish tan clay; nor does that Chian style use human figures. More importantly, the sherd thickens from 0.6 to 1.0 cm, almost proving that it must be read with the rays upright and the head upside-down. Hence it is from the lower wall of a large vase, and the fabric points clearly to Lakonia, while the shape, glazed inside, cannot be other than a krater, of a date around 590-570 BC. There is an unusual feature, albeit within the Lakonian palette, of an apparent maeander frieze

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1 Schaus 2018; Skuse 2018.
2 Lane 1933-34, 150; Venit 1982, 561, E41; Stibbe 1989, 34 and 98, E9, pl. 6, 3. Not mentioned in Bergeron 2013.
4 Bergeron 2013, 8, fig. 9.
5 Lemos 1991, 253, no. 430.
6 The only other reasonable possibility, a lid, can be ruled out because of the steep angle of the wall. A referee for an earlier version of this note was confident the piece was from the shoulder of an East Greek hydria; to my knowledge it would be the first hydria with a smoothed and well glazed interior surface.
below the rays\(^7\). A further sherd from Naukratis, Brussels A1783\(^8\) (fig. 3), with at least two decorative friezes, may be from a Lakonian krater\(^9\), though its position on the pot is uncertain.

One is naturally very tempted to suggest that the two sherds with figures are from the same krater; if they are from different pots, we would have to concede that Lane’s “hack” was more reckless than “sly”; but Lane was an art historian and his judgement seems based on a view of more modern painters and their work. What more of substance can be deduced is uncertain in view of the lack of *comparanda*, and considerations of style are not going to solve the question whether the two heads are by the same hand; the considerable differences in the construction of the heads could well have an explanation in varied intentions of the painter, who is more careful than Lane’s comment implies; plenty of third-rate work is available in most contemporary production areas for comparison. One may note the difference in spacing of the preserved rays, very strongly suggesting that the head was painted or at least considered before the rays, presumably by one and the same person. In that respect the Oxford man could perhaps have been added to the small space by the handle after the maeander frieze had been completed. He seems to be bald but probably bearded, while the BM figure has either an elaborate hairstyle or headgear, or both. The fringe over the forehead is a common feature on contemporary pots, though it is difficult to find any parallel for the second band, seemingly diverting at an angle, albeit slight, from the first.

The eye-balls are rendered differently and the very different noses are striking, but the question of the mouth on the BM sherd is more problematic; basically where is it? The small indent immediately under the nose? Or is it the yawning gap below, reminiscent of the Scream? The lines on the cheek/neck might well indicate tensed muscles, though such rendering is best known from the self-harm of mourning females. If we do have a wide open mouth it would be a unique rendering to my knowledge. The presence of a “hidden” mourner on a krater would be bizarre but could of course be explained as a subversive element. On the other hand, if this figure is some kind of chinless wonder, we may be dealing with a human-headed Mischwesen of some kind (though I would not go as far as suggesting its suitability on a mixing bowl).

From the later 7th c. BC visual humour or, better, caricature, was frequently displayed by either “padded dancers” or small grotesque figures with large abnormal heads\(^10\). We have no bodies here and so are missing an important feature: the Oxford head does not seem to be over-grotesque or large. Hiding “gate-crashing” figures in subsidiary areas appears much earlier, under handles for example, while the ape climbing the friezes on the Macmillan aryballos is a well-known example. But our figures fit awkwardly into any similar framework. One can be confident that in their day they

\(^7\) An unusual feature for a Lakonian volute-krater is the spacing of the rays; normally they are adjacent to each other; the gaps here are in a sense explained by this unusual lower band of decoration, itself an unattested feature. The variety of decoration of Lakonian krater necks and rims suggests that feet may similarly vary. Certainly, the thickness of the rays on kraters varies considerably.

\(^8\) *CVA* 2 pl 3, 9


\(^10\) Mitchell 2009, 34; Wannagat 2015, 18-24. Arrington 2021, 152-153 discusses some Athenian caricatures of perhaps half a century earlier on an oenochoe from the Phaleron cemetery; he summarises that these large-headed figures “deconstruct elite features”.
would have been viewed as something “other” –“funny peculiar”– but we lack any evidence to say whether they were intended as visual jokes with some particular reference –“funny ha-ha”. The question of one or two kraters is significant; if two, then we must take these jokes seriously; if one, which seems unlikely, they are of perhaps passing interest. Stibbe classes the Oxford sherd under “kraters with geometric rim ornament only”; could he have been wrong, and did the “doodles” accompany figured body scenes? Unlikely; the excavators kept all figured sherds and one or two body fragments from such a krater, or even more so kraters, would probably have been found. The all-black krater was clearly inspired by metal prototypes, our cartoons clearly were not; but by what? A vast range of possibilities is available, some hinted at above. Solely the potter’s imagination? Or triggered by some particular event in his life? The likelihood is that it is a personal matter, but further one cannot go. At any rate, a ray of light on a drab Spartan life? But that did not yet exist at the time the doodles were drawn.

**Bibliography**


CVA 2 = *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* 2, Cretan, East Greek, and Othen Non-Attic Wares; Corinthian Pottery, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1995.


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Fig. 1. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, AN1896-1908-G.119.51. Preserved width 9,7 cm (© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford).

Fig. 2. London, British Museum 1924.1201.1141. Preserved width 7,5 cm (© Trustees of the British Museum).

Fig. 3. Brussels, Musée du Cinquantenaire, A1783. Preserved width 3,1 cm. Orientation uncertain (© Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Bruxelles).