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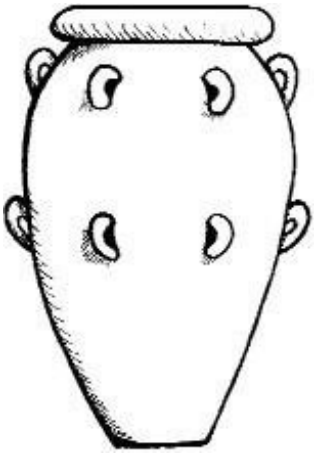
ΠΙΘΟΣ

PITHOS



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From the Editor

ΠΙΘΟΣ (PITHOS): a large earthenware jar used for storage.

Xaipete/Salvete/Hello all!

We are delighted to present to you the 20th issue of *Pithos*, the student-led journal of the Classics Students Association.

Classics, and academia in general, are changing. With ongoing threats to intellectualism and critical thinking, our dedication to studying Classics, and the world around us, is more important than ever. This year's contributions offer only some of the fruits of such dedication, and we hope that our readers are inspired to keep thinking and talking about the past and future.

We are excited to be able to showcase our department's hard work. We couldn't have done it without our ever-trusty and helpful advisor, Dr. Smith, and the rest of the faculty at SF State. We would also like to give an enormous thanks to all our contributors – *you* made this volume possible!

Thank you to everyone for reading *Pithos* and for supporting our journal. We hope you continue to live in the world of Classics with us.

Multas gratias tibi ago,
Dani Poortinga
Editor-in-Chief

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Celine Paguirigan is an undergraduate student in Art.

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Women Woven in Clay: Differences in Ceramic Depictions of Ancient Greek Women Surrounding Textile Creation

by *Celine Paguirigan*

INTRODUCTION:

The world of ancient Greek pottery is vast, made in ceramic workshops that produced wares ranging from accessible household plainware to the most intricate of vases. Clay ware was incredibly commonplace to the Greek citizen, and these vessels were often used as containers to hold oils, grains, or drinks, though some were created for purely decorative use for events. Funerary vessels have been shown to be some of the earliest uses for Greek ceramics, as well as vases made as marital commemorations. There have been a variety of styles throughout time, yet the usage of red and black glaze, always contrasting in their respective figurative styles, have become visually iconic in art history. This unique medium allows us to view aspects of society at the time, especially what standards the citizens held themselves to. The portrayal of the ideal Greek was depicted, more often than not, in these scenes as usually stoic and composed in manner and expression. These idealistic expectations were also carried out in the depictions of gender roles and assigned tasks, such as men with battle, and women with weaving or the like. Textile creation, while always shown as a female assigned task, was not just shown in one way-- and neither were the women. Depictions of women in Greek art acted as a glimpse of how the society of the time viewed women; fragments that are speculated and theorized over. Women in art and culture often go overlooked or deemed of lesser importance, as worded accurately by scholar Marie-Louise Nosch: "[T]extiles degrade and disappear in Greece, and women remain silent and invisible in the sources."[1] While many favor to gloss over them, women remain an

[1] Marie-Louise Nosch, "Voicing the Loom: Women, Weaving, and Plotting", in *KA-RE-ME-JA: Studies Presented to Cynthia W. Shelmerdine*, ed. Dimitri Nakassis, Joann Gulizio, and Sarah A. James (INSTAP Academic Press, 2014), 92.

important part of society and industry. From the aristocratic domestic wife, to the lower-class woman, and all in between, this exhibition compares three pieces that elaborate their contributions to the textile industry, and the societal differences between all three depictions.

Figure 1, Penelope and Telemachus, Penelope Painter, Skyphos Chiusi, 430 BCE

This High Classical skyphos depicts Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, and her son Telemachus framed by her famous loom. Its size is an indicator of its important role in the Odyssey, as it towers over the young prince and his seated mother. This creates a unique composition that frames the two figures within a prison of straight lines

that can also symbolize the helplessness the two felt in their own home. The intricately spun textile that Penelope had worked on all those years hangs unfinished--a symbol of the queen's clever wit, as well as her unyielding loyalty to her husband. Penelope represents the ideal Greek woman, as is exemplified by her weaving.[2] Greek vases often use figures from mythos as parallels for the contemporary Greek citizens, to show them idealized forms and behaviors, and this piece is an example of such a display of idealism. Thus, many scholars argue that depictions of women weaving are meant to show them with the steadfast loyalty and devotion that is shown by Ithaca's queen. Penelope is a stand-in for the perfect Greek wife. She is dedicated and loyal; she is smart enough to securely take care of the household; and she is very skilled in the trades women were expected to be adept in like weaving. Compared to the other pieces in this exhibition, this vase uses mythology to show the role of an aristocratic wife in Greek society. Textile creation, in this specific scene, is used as proof of Penelope's perfectionism. Using Penelope in this way solidifies the role of the wife and the specific way that they were meant to interact with textiles.[3] The carefully detailed patterns on the cloth show responsibility, devotion, skill and ability to master the massive looms that stood stationary in the households of upper-class Athenian citizens.[4] The large loom, heavy and stable, becomes a status symbol for the true ideal domestic woman.

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2 Nosch, "Voicing the Loom", 97.

3 Sheramy Bundrick, "The Fabric of the City: Imaging Textile Production in Classical Athens", *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 77, no. 2 (2008): 319.

4 Bundrick, "The Fabric of the City", 312.

Figure 2, Attic red figure hydria, Leningrad Painter, 470-460 BCE

This Attic red figure hydria from the High Classical period shows a scene of three women, possibly sex workers; and two men, male customers. Some scholars argue that the scene takes place in a house or another space outside of a brothel, one scholar even posits that the figure on the right is a wife catching her husband with a

handmaiden mid-affair.[5] Still, there are many iconographic indicators that allude to it being set in a brothel. Other than the blatantly sexual mannerisms displayed by the central couple, the women wear garments that imply their profession. The closed-bag type headdress, such as the one worn by the figure on the left, has been attributed to women associated with Aphrodite or Dionysus, both gods with ties to the east, including sex-workers.[6] The patron goddess of these workers was Aphrodite, who was also known to be associated with textiles, through items as her headdress and sash.[7] But there are other items in the room that also speak to this association with Aphrodite and ones that tie this vase into this exhibition: the hand loom. The hand loom itself was mostly used for simpler weaves, such as sprang, and bears a resemblance to the harp.[8] These hand looms were portable and more convenient ways of making basic textiles and scholars theorized them to be used in the downtime of Athenian sex-workers to create products such as sprang hairnets that could then be sold as additional means of making money.[9] The figures show the practicality unique to the hand looms, and the demographic they more commonly leaned towards. The women here are not heroes or wives of myth; they are Athenian women doing their jobs. In this vase, we see a sex-worker, with the loom still in her hand, as she comes to greet the customers with the other women. She is probably just ending a short reprieve; time she used to work on a simple weave that she could later sell for further income. Within this genre scene, we see another aspect of textile production. This scene of textile creation is not utilizing the textiles themselves as a tool for idealism. The basic weaves that are associated with this simple loom are a far cry away from the detailed and revered weaves that are expected of higher-class women, grounding the iconography of the

5 Bundrick, "The Fabric of the City", 299.

6 Marina Fischer, *The Prostitute and Her Headdress: Mitra, Sakkos and Kekryphalos in Attic Red-figure Vase-painting ca. 550-450 BCE* (VDM Verlag, Berlin, 2009), 52.

7 Fischer, *The Prostitute and Her Headdress*, 54.

8 Louise Clark, "Notes on Small Textile Frames Pictured on Greek Vases", *American Journal of Archaeology* 87, no. 1 (1983): 92.

9 Marina Fischer, "Ancient Greek Prostitutes and the Textile Industry in Attic Vase-Painting ca. 550-450 BCE", in *The Classical World* 106, no. 2 (2013): 234.

hand loom into a social space within that of lower-class Athenians. Much like the handloom itself, this depiction of textile creation is seen as convenient, but unmistakably feminine.

Figure 3, 2 Women Spinning Yarn, Attic red figure kylix tondo by Douris, 480 BCE

This High Classical Attic red figure kylix by Douris depicts two women in the process of spinning yarn. One stands as the other is seated, rolling loose yarn over her exposed leg. This is the first piece in the exhibition to show figures in the middle of a textile creation process, though the status of the two women is debated. Some

scholars believe that any woman shown spinning must be that of a respected rank,[10] though, as seen with the previous example, the Athenian textile market was heavily contributed to by sex-workers and slaves.[11] The fact the women are shown wearing open-wrapped headdresses may imply that these women are lower ranked Athenian women. There is also the depiction of two kalathoi in the painting, a symbol that embodies feminine sexuality and is often placed in scenes with sexual connotations.[12] The presence of a kalathos alone, however, does not necessarily imply that these women are sex-workers, since it is pictured in domestic scenes as well. Still, the meaning is ambiguous. The painting on the outside of this kylix is a symposium scene, though there is a lack of women pictured within the fray of dancing and musical men. This prohibits the viewer from correlation between the two scenes, alienating this domestic scene from the symposium itself. The other pieces in this gallery have a clearer meaning and contain contrasting depictions of "idealized domestic" vs. "implicated eroticism" while in this vase, there is a contextual ambiguity in modern interpretations of this spinning scene. This piece is somewhere in the middle, asking a certain question to the viewers: does it convey a voyeuristic eroticism of women at work that could be enjoyed by those men at the symposiums, or is it a completely unrelated scene that has a more practical meaning? The depiction of textile creation in this piece creates this grey area; the isolated action of spinning the yarn makes the meaning of this scene unclear. By spinning, the figures become women of action, and occupy an active female role in society, something that others may try to deny.

CONCLUSION:

Women are often placed in isolated boxes, away from the world of men, certainly detached from each other. Historians paint a picture of two sides of women in Greek society: caricatures of the demure

[10] Fischer, *The Prostitute and Her Headdress*, 166.
[11] Fischer, *The Prostitute and Her Headdress*, 182.
[12] Fischer, *The Prostitute and Her Headdress*, 171.

housewife and bawdy sex-worker. Never to be anything other than their given roles, they become nonautonomous figures trapped in the conceptions of what is deemed respectable and not; and this importance placed on status bleeds into interpretations of the textile industry. The textile market was an invaluable resource, and a demanding one that needed a large amount of labor. A labor-intensive work market would have been contributed to by slaves and sex-workers, yet presentations of weaving are commonly designated only to upper class women. It should be acknowledged that there were many different kinds of people that contributed to such an important industry. To limit interpretations to only that of stereotypes of 'pure wives' would be an incredible disservice to all those that worked in textile creation. This exhibition seeks to amend that static narrative and explore the social variety of market contributors, as well as mentioning some scholarly papers that sought to shift the perspectives on depictions of women. Sheramy Bundrick's paper on Attic textile productions expanded on the portrayals of domestic women, Marie-Louise Nosch wrote about weaving as a form of communication in tales of myth, and Marina Fischer wrote extensively on reframing the visuals and perceived iconographies of sex-workers in Greek ceramics. These scholars help paint pictures of a different way to interpret these women woven in the clay. Women who were mothers or wives, taking care of their house and those in their care; working class women who wove in their spare time for more income, and even those unlabeled and in between. All these women should be able to coexist in this social space. As much as some may contest, there is, nor ever was, one correct way to be a woman.

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The Croci of Xeste
by *Celine Paguirigan*

Genderfluidity and the Sliding-Scale of Masculinity Represented in Homeric Epic

by *Al Thompson*

When looking at representations of gender within ancient Greek society, it is often easy to see masculinity as appearing in a rigid, exaggerated performance of male aggression and domination. This is particularly evident when viewed in comparison to the variable performances of masculinity seen in today's culture. However, when analyzing the narratives of ancient Greek epic, it becomes apparent that there exists a more fluid scale of masculinity that the heroic male can present. This is especially true for Odysseus, who often stands apart from his other heroic counterparts within Homer's epic poems.

Compared to other heroic protagonists, such as Ajax and Achilles, Odysseus often appears to be less masculine. There is less focus on his masculine physicality and more on his skill in strategy and wordsmithing—he is, after all, the man of twists and turns. This is not to say, however, that Odysseus is not a physically capable warrior; but unlike Ajax and Achilles, who are primarily praised for their prowess in hand-to-hand combat, Odysseus' real strength is intellectual rather than physical. To put it more colloquially, traditional masculinity is not his defining character trait. Using this as a guiding point against traditionally masculine characters like Ajax and Achilles, it is possible to then explore the levels of masculinity that exist within Homer's epic poems and potentially broader society.

Ajax and Odysseus functionally serve as examples of a sliding-scale model of ancient Greek masculinity. Between the two, there are represented points of hypermasculinity, masculinity, and hypomasculinity—often, Odysseus is represented in a way that places him more on the hypomasculine range of the scale. However, there are points in which he fluctuates through both the masculine and hypermasculine traits, while Ajax primarily resides within the range of hypermasculinity.

For the purposes of this paper, masculinity is defined primarily by the traits of pridefulness, bravery, direct confrontation, and physical strength or prowess that one may possess. Pridefulness serves as a character's direct reflection of how they view their skills, while bravery is a narrative representation of how the character may perform in battle – often from the perspective of others. The same is true in looking at the ability to engage in direct confrontation and of language describing a character's physical strength – they function as tools to show how the character and their masculinity should be viewed within greater narrative. Oftentimes, male characters will also be described by their physical traits, their direct role within the army, or their lineage. Hypermasculinity is then the excess of those qualities, in which we see emotions bordering on fury, rage, and the overall lack of control within one's masculine space. This is true in the descriptions of the rage of Achilles, the fury of Ajax later described in Sophocles' play, and in descriptions of Odysseus' conflict with the Cyclops. Finally, hypomasculinity is reflected in instances where these masculine traits are lacking, or there are otherwise traits that border on feminine tropes and behaviors. Although, hypomasculinity is not femininity for the purposes of this paper. Rather, it is the lack of traditional masculine traits, instead of the introduction of feminine traits. These traits include instances of cowardice, the use of terminology relating to plotting or schemes, or an overall focus on one's lack of physicality within a given context.

The fact that Homer's epics treat different types of communication as gendered was noted by Karen Bassi in the article "Orality, Masculinity, and the Greek Epic". Overall, the article focuses on the exploration of oral communication and the values it holds through face-to-face communication versus mediated communication; Bassi points out that face-to-face communication in the epics is considered a masculine mode, while mediated communication is presented as more feminine. Accordingly, she describes the *Iliad* as a more masculine poem and the *Odyssey* as a more feminine poem due

to the generalized nature of communication within the two narratives.[1] With Bassi's useful framework in mind, my aim here is to analyze Odysseus' masculinity (given his consistent role of communicator) compared to other heroes within both poems.

In the context of the *Iliad*, Odysseus sits within the relatively neutral baseline for masculinity, although there are instances when he will dip into the realm of hypomasculinity when compared to the roles played by Ajax, Achilles, and other masculine heroes. It is understandable that Odysseus might be portrayed as less masculine than Achilles, given that the latter is the primary protagonist of the *Iliad*—the focus of the narrative being the rage of Achilles. However, this trend continues when Odysseus appears in scenes with other heroes as well.

A primary example of Odysseus' hypomasculinity in the *Iliad* is in Book Four, when the Greek armies are retreating from the Trojan forces. Odysseus stands frozen amongst the retreating soldiers until Agamemnon—functioning as the primary masculine figure—sees Odysseus neither retreating nor fighting. Agamemnon then goads Odysseus into action, swaying him more into the realm of baseline masculinity, in which he then defends himself; however, in doing so, Odysseus tells Agamemnon to "watch Telemachus' loving father lock and fight…"[2] Odysseus does not highlight his role as a warrior, but rather his role as a father to the child that he has not seen since leaving for war. This is especially significant within the context of heroic narratives, as lineage is typically presented through the means of referencing backwards to one's father or grandfather, rather than forwards to their child.

Comparatively, Ajax typically resides well within the masculine realm of this sliding scale within the *Iliad*, especially in scenes of battle. One of the most prominent instances of this is Ajax's duel with Hector in Book Six. Although initially hesitant to battle—as were most of the Greek soldiers—Ajax is ultimately described as "bent

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1 Karen Bassi, "Orality, Masculinity, and the Greek Epic," *Arethusa* 30, no. 3; 329.

2 Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York, NY: Penguin, 1998), 157.

on glory" and "march[ing] like a giant God of battle, wading into the wars of men" against his powerful opponent. [3] The duel ends in a win for Ajax through the exchange of gifts between Hector and himself, and ultimately reflects the masculinity that he has within his physicality and prowess as a warrior.[4]

Finally, in Book Nine of the *Iliad,* there is an instance where the two heroes operate in tandem. In doing so, Odysseus once again reflects a more hypomasculine state in direct comparison to the hypermasculinity of Achilles and the masculinity of Ajax. In the embassy to Achilles, Odysseus serves as the primary speaker on behalf of Agamemnon—something Bassi points out as negatively reflecting on Agamemnon[5]—but it could also serve as a negative reflection of Odysseus' masculinity through his role in this indirect communication. While Odysseus functions as the main ambassador and uses his rhetorical tactics to try to convince Achilles to accept Agamemnon's offer, Ajax does not outwardly try to convince Achilles and thus does not put his masculinity into question. This is only exacerbated further as Achilles directly refers to this act of embassy as being a "scheme" of the Greeks to get him to rejoin the warfare[6]— again, reflecting the idea of indirect communication being less masculine along with cowardice, other instances of plotting and a marked lack of physicality. In the same conversation, Ajax directly cites that Achilles has become too proud, "so savage," that he will no longer consider what is best for the other men, reflecting the theme of masculinity in excess as ultimately negative.[7]

This sort of gendered language is also found in the *Odyssey,* through descriptions of excess pride, rage, and wildness concerning both Ajax and Odysseus—although Ajax is primarily relegated to the confines of Book Eleven. When Odysseus and Ajax meet in the

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3 Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Fagles, 220-1.

4 See Donlan (1989) for more on the nature of gift-exchange within Homeric Epic and its reflections on social superiority and masculinity within the Homeric Epic.

5 Bassi, "Orality, Masculinity, and the Greek Epic," 330.

6 Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Fagles, 265.

7 Ibid., 272.

Underworld, it is Ajax who takes the hypermasculine role, directly mirroring Achilles—where Ajax, following his suicide due to the acts of Odysseus, refuses to speak on account of continued anger that he holds towards the man and his "headstrong pride." [8] Odysseus is otherwise agonized at his former friend's refusal to speak.

Beyond interactions with Ajax and Achilles, Odysseus still has many instances that reflect this sliding scale of masculinity within the *Odyssey*—oftentimes in comparison to women. In Book Five, Calypso is described as singing and physically weaving on her loom before Odysseus accuses her of plotting ways to get him to stay on her island.[9] Later in Book Nine, while telling the tale of his battle with the cyclops Polyphemus, Odysseus explains that his "wits kept weaving, weaving cunning schemes" for how to escape. [10] Although perhaps not intentional, it is a direct allusion to Calypso and possibly even to this hypomasculinity that borders on femininity. In addition, there is an explicit comparison between Odysseus' behavior and that of a woman that occurs just before Odysseus' allusions in his story. Stepping back into Book Eight, he is directly described as having "…melted into tears, running down from his eyes to wet his cheeks… as a woman weeps."[11] In this instance the emotional behavior of Odysseus has been placed directly equal to that of a feminine counterpart.

This comparison, however, is in direct contrast to another account of Odysseus' masculinity—in one of Odysseus' own recollections, Polyphemus calls into question the masculinity of the hero. Odysseus references his own unchecked pride by explaining the way he "began to taunt the cyclops," directly putting his men at risk.[12] Is this perhaps a way of compensating for his deficiency of masculinity through the performance of hypermasculinity? This theory may be

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8 Homer, *The Odyssey,* trans. Robert Fagles (New York, NY: Penguin, 1998), 267.
9 Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Fagles, 154.
10 Ibid., 224.
11 Ibid., 208; Foley (1978) explains more on these scenes and their role as "reverse similes" that reflect the fluidity of identity, social, and traditional gendered roles within *The Odyssey*.
12 Ibid., 226-7.

further supported by the way Polyphemus emasculates Odysseus in the same scene by highlighting his lack of physical stature and calling him spineless. Odysseus nevertheless focuses on the description of his mental capabilities rather than his physicality even after explaining the physical act of blinding Polyphemus.[13] Also, the focus on the mental rather than physical may also be attributed to Odysseus' role as the narrator in these sections—the language he utilizes, as well as his goals for communication in these instances, reflect his own perceived masculinity. Thus, one can see another layer of narrative reflections of Odysseus' masculinity.

In such cases as this, analyzing epithets can also be beneficial in analyzing the scale of masculinity that a character may reflect outside of specific scenes. Throughout the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Odysseus is referred to as great tactician, long enduring, tactful, great teller of tales, man of exploits, as well as raider of cities. This final epithet, however, appears in Books Eight and Nine of the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus is performing his more excessive hypermasculinity in his conflict with Polyphemus. Ajax, on the other hand, is almost exclusively referred to as "greatest in build," "greatest in works of war," "captain of armies," and "the strongest spearman of Achaea." He is comparable to Achilles, who is similarly referred to with epithets relating to his physicality or skills as a warrior— "great ", god-like," "swift-runner," and "starved for war." Between the three characters, it is only Ajax and Achilles who are often referred to in reflections of their physicality in warfare, while Odysseus is primarily relegated to realms of mental skills and capabilities.

As mentioned, the heightened focus on Odysseus's mental capabilities is not a reflection of his total lack of masculinity within the ancient Greek context; conversely, it shows the fluidity of how this masculinity may often be represented while still being within the scope of masculinity overall. Odysseus is still very much a masculine figure; however, he falls into the more hypomasculine realm in comparison to heroes like Ajax and Achilles—even within his own perception of

[13] Ibid., 223-4.

himself. In other words, there is clearly a *standard* ideal of masculinity in Greek epic; and Odysseus represents an *alternative* ideal. And this alternative ideal includes traits that are normally considered feminine. While ancient Greek masculinity differs from the ways that masculinity is presented in the world we know today, there is more fluidity to these presentations than what may be commonly believed. This can be seen within the epic narratives written by Homer, especially through characters such as Odysseus, who is, in his own right, a heroic masculine protagonist while still exhibiting incredibly hypomasculine characteristics within the framework of the values of ancient Greek masculinity. This is evident through the usage of language that may depict him without relying on masculine terminology or tropes or through the skilled utilization of epithets that do not directly reflect his physicality, unlike heroes such as Achilles or Ajax. There is much more to be said in the discussion of gender presentation and traits within ancient Greece; however, they are certainly as diverse as the gender performances that we see today.

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A Living Buddha

by *Jake Burtnett*

In the Buddhist text *Samyutta Nikāya* ("Kindred Sayings" or "Connected Discourses" when translated from Pali to English), which is thought to date back to the pre-sectarian period before Buddhism split into separate schools around 250 BCE, the teacher explains to us that we should despise the body. "Feeling disgust (with the body) he becomes free from passion, through freedom from passion he is emancipated, and in the emancipated one arises the knowledge of his emancipation. He understands that destroyed is rebirth, the religious life has been led, done is what was to be done, there is nought beyond this world" (Thomas 192, 89). This doctrine seems to be at odds with the importance of relic worship (*sarira puja*, directly translates to "body worship" from Pali) in Buddhist religious ritual. Perhaps this apparent contradiction is not a contradiction at all. According to the Buddha himself, we are soulless and lacking in any kind of permanent existence, the body and its current existence in this world is the horizon of our being. It is only through the worship of the material body that one can come to see the falsity of it. In other words, the only way out is through. Hence, we come to the Bimaran reliquary or casket, itself an important relic of early Buddhism. Discovered by the East India Company-employed archaeologist Charles Masson (real name James Lewis) at stupa no. 2 in Bimaran, eastern Afghanistan, in the 1830s and brought to the British Museum in 1900. This piece is an enigmatic, fascinating, and essential work of Buddhist religious art. It contains the first known depiction of the Buddha in human form. This depiction makes it a groundbreaking piece, as it marks a radical departure from the tradition in earlier Buddhist art of using abstract symbols like trees or footprints to represent the Buddha. Such an innovation could only have been made possible by the introduction of Greek artistic ideas, particularly the Greek love and appreciation of the human body, into Bactria and India. In addition to the human form itself, his *contrapposto* pose and the wet drapery in his garment, along with the Greek architectural structure that holds the overall design together, make this figure a Hellenic Buddha and make this piece the first

instance of a distinct Greco-Buddhist artform. This innovative Greco-Buddhist artform was responsible for creating the humanized image of the Buddha. Thus, we may give the Greeks credit for providing the world with the image of the Buddha, an image that had a lasting power and spread far beyond the lands that Alexander the Great conquered, from Tibet to Japan to Thailand.

There are multiple aspects of the reliquary's design that merit attention. Firstly, it is rather small, with a diameter of 6.6 cm and a height of 6.7 cm. Its small size makes it incapable of holding much. It is unclear what, if anything, it might have held inside, as there was nothing in the vessel when it was found, but there has been speculation that it may have contained small remnants of the Buddha's cremated bones, which were scattered and deposited in various stupas throughout South Asia. The vessel is cylindrical in shape and seems to have had a lid at some point, but this has been lost. It is made entirely of gold, with garnet gemstones inset in rows running across the circumference on both the top and bottom. Next, we come to the outward design of the vessel. It is decorated in *repoussé*, with an architectural structure showcasing Greek influence. There is a frieze showing an arcade of eight arches running across the sides of the vessel, with eight figures under each one. The arches rest on the Greek-style capitals of the Greek-style pilasters, which in turn rest on the Greek-style base moldings. This makes the beholder feel as if they are seeing the Buddha and his companions in a Greek temple and engenders a cheeky interplay between ideal space and real space, with the macro architectural idea and the micro ready-at-hand reality. There are numerous decorations across the sides of the vessel, with eagles between the arches, floral motifs between the garnet gemstones along the upper and lower sections, and an eight-petalled lotus on the very bottom. Next, and most importantly, we come to the figures themselves. Taking the spotlight is the Buddha, but he is accompanied by the Hindu gods Indra and Brahma, along with another figure believed to be a bodhisattva, a follower of Buddha who is on the path to attain Buddhahood. All of these figures are duplicated almost identically on the other side. First, we will examine the star of the show.

He (along with his copy on the other side) is the only one facing forward while his companions are facing sideways. His left foot appears to be slightly raised and his right foot is on the ground facing sideways to the right. The position of his feet, along with the curve in his legs and hips, gives him a *contrapposto* pose and suggests movement. It is as if he is delivering a walking lecture while we, his students, are trying to keep up both physically and mentally. His arms are bent, with his left hand at rest and his right hand raised up with the open palm extended and facing us. This gesture is called the *abhaya mudra* (literally translated from Sanskrit to English as "gesture of fearlessness") and is fairly common in South Asian art. Next, he has a mustache and his hair appears to be arranged in some kind of bun. Perhaps contemporary Western Buddhists are not without precedent in sporting the man-bun. He has a calm, dispassionate expression on his face, reminiscent of the stoic countenances of the figures depicted in older Greek art. Lastly, his garment is strikingly detailed with realistic-looking lines and folds. This garment is an example of wet drapery, a technique that was highly popularized among Greek artists of the late classical and Hellenistic eras. This aspect makes it comparable to classical Greek works such as *Nike Adjusting Her Sandal* from the late fifth century BCE. Both works employ the wet drapery technique to accentuate the figure of the one wearing the drapery, making them seem more life-like and real. Lastly, there is a halo atop his head. The other figures are haloed as well, but the one atop the Buddha's head appears more distinctly. Passing on from the Buddha, we now come to his companions. He is flanked by Indra to his left and Brahma to his right. Both Indra and Brahma are facing sideways toward the Buddha, making it clear that he is supposed to be the subject of the beholder's focus and veneration. The wet drapery is also present in their clothing, as is the sense of movement in their stances. Indra is holding his hands together in prayer, while Brahma is raising up his right hand and holding a water jug with his left. Finally, the bodhisattva is the least conspicuous figure depicted, as he is even more turned to the side than Indra and Brahma are and is facing downward. It almost seems as if he is trying to hide himself, considering himself unworthy to be in the presence of such an august divinity. Overall, the scene seems to show

a kind of apotheosis of the Buddha, as he is the center of attention and even such mighty gods as Indra and Brahma venerate him. In this sense, we may compare this piece to *The Apotheosis of Homer* by Archelaus of Priene. Both of these works show a mortal man being made divine on natural (bodily) materials that have been beautifully fashioned so as to contain such a sublime thing. Thus, they both embody the self-alienation of nature into spirit, as Hegel would put it. Interestingly, they both embody the zeitgeist, namely, the idea that a mere mortal has the potential to become God-like through the strength of his own will. This idea was made possible by Alexander, who underwent his own apotheosis almost immediately after his death.

The reliquary was found in a steatite container along with various other objects such as gold ornaments, various gemstones, and burnt pearls. Copper coins, which bear the name of the first century BCE Indo-Scythian king Azes II, were also found nearby outside the steatite container. It is unclear whether the coins were minted and deposited in the stupa simultaneously with the other items found in the steatite container or if they were a later addition. This ambiguity with respect to the coins makes it difficult to precisely date the creation of the reliquary. A range of dates from the third century BCE to the first century CE have been suggested. If the coins were minted contemporaneously to the creation of the reliquary, then it must have been created sometime in the first century BCE, or perhaps slightly later in the early first century CE. In any case, it seems appropriate that coins would be found in close proximity to it. As a reliquary that is itself a valuable relic worthy of veneration, its depiction of the Buddha is reminiscent of the Indo-Greek practice of promoting the ruler cult through the depiction of the king's image on coins. Since this reliquary contains the first known depiction of the Buddha, we may view it as playing a similar role in helping to spread the cult through the use of image, especially since the image is depicted on something so valuable. Additionally, the very material out of which the reliquary is made imparts on it a quality of sacredness, as it contains two of the seven materials that were held in particularly high esteem by Buddhists. As Morris explains in reference to a hoard of treasure found at another site,

"This curious range of material recalls the *saptaratna* (the seven precious substances), which was probably understood in early northwest South Asia as gold, silver, blue precious stones, transparent precious stones, red jewels, pearls, and coral. Together, they are conceptually associated in Buddhist texts with wealth, happiness, and paradises, and were considered appropriate donations to accompany *stupa* relic deposits" (Morris 2023, 168). Coins would also be deposited at stupas, as they were considered to be appropriate donations to the Buddha as well. Imbued with intrinsic value from the materials it is made out of and its potential promotion of the cult of the Buddha through the depiction of his image, the reliquary can be characterized as a kind of religious relic currency that serves some of the same functions as regular currency. It is worth its weight in gold, so to speak.

The spread of Greek culture throughout the satrapies of the former Achaemenid Persian Empire and beyond led to the development of unique cultural and artistic syntheses. The Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek cultural and artistic synthesis in Gandhara (eastern Afghanistan) is one of the most unique and mysterious examples of this phenomenon. Gandhara was a diverse, frequently crisscrossed crossroads, coming at various times under the dominion of Persians, Indians, Greeks, Scythians, Kushans, and others, along with a consistent autochthonic Gandharan presence. Buddhism spread to the region sometime in the fourth century BCE and eventually became the dominant religion. At least one of the Greco-Bactrian kings would convert to Buddhism, thereby following in Alexander's footsteps by ingratiating himself to the local population through the adoption of native customs and beliefs. This, along with other unique, syncretic aspects of the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek kingdoms, has led some scholars of the Hellenistic era to characterize these kingdoms as especially representative of the high-minded ideals that Alexander (supposedly) pursued in his empire-building endeavors. As Holt puts it, "The later Greek kings of Bactria and India allegedly did what Alexander nobly dreamt-they created a true partnership with the native population, the peaceful union of Greek and barbarian that Alexander

had intended" (Holt 1999, 11). But whether this adoption of local customs, both on Alexander's part and on the part of the Greco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek rulers, was an expression of noble ideals or simply a matter of pragmatic expediency is a matter of debate. Indeed, while the introduction of Hellenic culture did engender a cross-cultural fusion in Bactria and India, the Greco-Macedonians still remained separate and aloof towards the local peoples in these far eastern realms to some extent, just as they did in other Hellenistic kingdoms. At least since the Persian Wars of the early fifth century BCE, the contrast between Greek and barbarian was key to the conceptual formation of a distinctly Greek identity, and the Greeks carried this conceptual contrast with them wherever they went. As Holt puts it, "Alexander certainly brought to the region many Greek mercenaries, and he made them stay, but they created no brotherhood of man in Bactria. Their assigned task and natural temperament were to impose a severe, age-old antithesis between Greeks and barbarians, civilization and savagery, urbanization and tribalism, farming and nomadism" (Holt 1999, 24). Paradoxically, it was this very aloofness and retention of their own distinctly Greek artistic notions within a non-Greek cultural context that led to the development of a Hellenized Buddha. This may be understood as an antithesis between form and content. The Greco-Macedonian artists and artisans who came to this region, so far away from home, retained the artistic forms that they were used to working with. But, finding themselves enveloped in a completely alien culture, they eventually became compelled to adapt aspects of this culture, such as the content of potential artistic representation, for their own purposes. Hence, our Bimaran reliquary.

If one thing is clear, it is that the object of our examination is a unique and peculiar work of art, to say the least. It embodies contrast through and through. There is contrast in space, contrast between Greek and barbarian, contrast between mortal and immortal, contrast between intrinsic value and intangible value. In this sense, we may say that it is symbolic of its age. The age after the death of Alexander the Great when his successors tried to fill his shoes was an age of contrast, in which the world existed in a kind of limbo. This limbo had its highs

and lows. Without a doubt, one of the highs was this curious little vessel hidden away at the stupa of Bimaran.

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Imitating the Imitator: Greek Cultural Significance of Representing the Octopus

by *Dominic Conte*

We typically associate Ancient Greek ceramics and the paintings on them with the human condition. They showcase idealized bodies in various scenes of Greek triumph and tragedy, mythological and genre scenes, and the drunken parties of symposia. Long before corporealism took hold on Greek vase painting, there was only the sea and nature to look to for inspiration. The iconography of the vases reflected this ideological shift, as the human body largely supplanted natural forms, animals, and seascapes which inspired painters from generations prior. This exhibit explores the relationship between art, nature, mortality, and how these themes connect to the icon of a pre-corporeal period in Greek art: the octopus.

The island of Crete – largest in the Aegean Sea – was home to the thriving maritime society of Minoa around the 20th century BCE. Minoans were active in trade, traveling around the Aegean and making a life on the sea, selling their bountiful agricultural products and most notably, their pottery. Jars of Cretan origin were found in manifold landmarks such as Rhodes, Kos, Kalymnos, Naxos, mainland Greece, Asia Minor, Italy, and Skyros (Cristofaro 2020, 36). Minoan life was predominantly ocean-centric. Exposure over time led to a fascination with the sea, inspiring the artists who would paint vases to be sold overseas. Of the multitudinal marine life present, the most enamoring and intriguing creature Minoan artists chose to paint was the humble octopus.

Octopuses are highly intelligent, aquatic hunters that live in solitude. They are masters of disguise that can mimic their surroundings to hide from predators or to sneak up on their next meal. Their eight independent appendages allow them to deftly traverse the seabed and latch onto prey, debris for camouflage, and, in the case of this exhibit, vases. We see them on a wide variety of ceramics, mosaics, and paintings, however the most common place to see them in 1900

BCE was on funerary vases. The earliest Octopus Style vases were discovered in Ialysos – an island far to the East of Minoa – which scholars deemed imports from Crete (Doi 2007, 24). But why funerary vases? What is the connection?

Ancient mythological belief established the sea as a kind of netherworld, and the "glitter path" would lead souls to the afterlife (Cristofaro 2020, 39). This "glitter path" is what the human eye sees as the sun sets on a body of water (the ocean for Cretans). Light reflects off the surface in a path linking the shore to the Sun. Octopuses were metaphorical stand-ins for the glitter path (also referred to as the glitter pillar). Minoan belief held octopuses in a position of regard as they saw the creatures as protectors of those crossing into the afterlife (36-37). We also occasionally see them on shields in paintings, possibly as an element of surprise. Octopuses are always painted facing the viewer head on, combatting their gaze. This was extremely uncommon in painting and would have reasonably thrown an opponent off guard. Adding to the unsettling and commanding presence that octopuses wield are their writhing and seemingly infinite tentacles. On every Octopus Style vase, its tentacles entangle and leave a "greedy handprint" on the vessel (Bates 2024, 160).

The myriad depictions of octopuses in Minoan ceramics cement it as an entity approaching omnipotence and a guarantor of safe passage into the afterlife. The exhibition ahead demonstrates fascination and reverence for one of, if not the, most intelligent creatures in the sea.

Staring at the Sun: A Brief Look at Octopodal Vases

Marine Style Pilgrim Flask, Crete, c. 1500 BCE

This Minoan flask is a prime example of fascination with the natural world, specifically in the sea. Living in constant interaction with the ocean, the artist was inspired by the abundant sea life they would have seen every day. Art as a practice was gaining more traction around the time this flask was created, which would eventually lead to new innovations in pottery, the pottery wheel being one of them. The flask had to have been made with a pottery wheel given the preciseness of its spherical shape, and the neck, lip, and handles were added by hand. Black slip is used to paint the vase. With a careful hand, the artist outlines this creature and adds decorations to create the scene. What can only be described as "cartoony" by today's standards, the octopus on this vase wraps and tangles around the flask with its tentacles stretching out to their maximum length. The octopus conveys great motion as it sprawls itself across the body of the vase. Its large, innocent eyes stare directly at the viewer, acknowledging our presence and dancing around in the water regardless, or hurriedly searching for a hiding spot. We see the octopus in its natural environment, surrounded by coral, sea urchins, and shells filling any available space. "Horror vacui," or "fear of empty space" is a property of a myriad of

Greek vases for hundreds of years, and this flask is no exception. The flask is on the smaller side of Greek vases, standing at 27 centimeters (10.5 inches). Due to its size it was likely used for more precious liquids like oils or perfume. A thinner neck with stirrup handles attached allowed for a more controlled pour of these liquids, aiding in the conservation of valuable products. Altogether, the Marine Style Pilgrim Flask demonstrates an intense awe of oceanic flora and fauna, and creating artwork gives off a fun and playful tone.

Terracotta Stirrup Jar with Octopus, Central Greece, c. 1200 BCE

The 12th century BCE was a tumultuous time for the Minoans. They resided on the small island of Crete, which left them open to attack by sea. The Mycenaeans, warlike seafarers, conquered and effectively demolished Minoan society. What Minoans once held as a deep respect and captivation for the ocean and the mysteries within, Mycenaeans drew inspiration from or directly copied. This stirrup jar is one of many examples of such. Displaying an octopus front-and-center, this vase exudes pattern and symmetry, as was valued by Mycenaean artists. The artist uses an outline style and fills in the body with dark slip, leaving voids for the eyes which are later filled with concentric circles giving the octopus a feral gaze. The octopus grips

the body of the vase tightly, attempting to circumnavigate the vessel with its tentacles. The shape of the vase as well as the placement of the octopus assist each other in emphasizing the shape of both. Accompanying everyone's favorite cephalopod are a handful of fish and aquatic plant life.

While there is plenty of empty space, it is reasonable to interpret the placement of these elements as horror vacui. The inclusion of geometric patterning filling the gaps between the octopus's tentacles and head reinforces this notion. A thin band separates the shoulder from the body, distinguishing the decor on the neck and handles from the scene below. In addition to adopting Minoan painting style, Mycenaeans were interested in the way vases were constructed and purposed. Much like the other vessels in this exhibit, this vase is smaller in scale and would have been used for oil or other valuable fluids with the stirrup handles allowing for easier distribution. Despite the efforts of Mycenaean artists to mimic Minoan style, none could recreate the charm seen in popular Minoan works like the Marine Style Pilgrim Flask.

Minoan Stirrup Jar with Octopus, Crete, c. 1300-1200 BCE

Looking at this Minoan stirrup jar, it is exceedingly apparent which pottery Mycenaeans referenced more than others. This haunting

spectacle of an octopus is both unsettling and eye-catching. Its large body and thick tentacles do what any octopus would and attempts to constrict the space it occupies. It has gaping, sunken eyes that almost suck the viewer in, which is likely exactly what this octopus wants. The top of its head is smaller than average, and it seems to have a beak as well, a feature that is often overlooked when painting octopuses. The artist uses an outline style to draw attention to the octopus, adding extraneous details like spirals and tracing the shape of its body. Horror vacui is ever present in Minoan art and is clearly seen in the doodles and dots that fill most of the empty space around the jug. The octopus further integrates itself into the scene by engulfing the designs themselves with its writhing arms. Aside from monstrous tentacles, a series of bands wrap around the vessel with varying weights. They sit at the widest point of the body to highlight its shape. An intriguing point of note is the head of the octopus and the decorative bands overlap. Overlapping isn't used as a technique in vase painting for hundreds of years which raises the question: which element overlaps the other? A reasonable assumption would be that the bands were painted on first, and the octopus was an afterthought. Maybe the artist finished painting and decided they wanted something more pleasing to the eye? Another possibility is this jar was painted solely with bands and was purchased by a particularly creative Minoan. It is entirely within human nature to decorate the more mundane objects we interact with. In this case, and across Minoan culture, the subject of enchantment is the humble octopus.

Imitating the Imitator: Concluding Prey for Thought

Octopuses have been the subject of inquiry and imagination for millenia. The inclusion of octopuses in artwork is not a new phenomenon, nor is it an uncommon one. They alter their physical structure to disappear into oceanic environments. They safeguard the souls of the deceased and guide their voyage to the next realm. Octopuses are unique specimens with near human-like intelligence and sentience. Peoples all over the world and throughout time have looked to them for inspiration as well as answers about the natural world, even

adapting social tactics from their behavioral patterns. With all that we know now, what made octopuses so special to ancient civilizations like Minoa and Mycenae?

The first thing about octopuses the average observer would notice is their ability to actively camouflage. Their skin is able to change color and create protrusions that mimic the bumps and rough texture of rocks and coral commonly strewn about the seabed. This makes them the ideal hunter in the water. They are able to vanish from sight to evade predators and encroach on unsuspecting, tasty morsels. Greeks idolized this skill, going so far as to center the octopus in philosophical debate, scientific study, and "[conceptualize the animal] itself as a master of visual imitation" (Bates 2024, 158, 164). The artists themselves reflected this rousing ability to hide from predators: Greek vase art has an extremely limited quantity of signatures or artist-identifying characteristics beyond stylistic tendencies. This occasionally occurs in the modern age too, suggesting a timeless tendency for artists to "hide" in some fashion. Do artists want to hide from larger, more predatory visionaries, or do they desire subtly making their way into art collections for some ulterior motive? When octopuses weren't educating people on conflict aversion, they served as reminders of mortality.

The fear of death would lead anyone to look for certainty of an afterlife. As most Octopus Style jars were discovered in various tombs spread throughout the Aegean, evidence indicates that people turned to octopuses for reassurance (Doi 2007, 24-29). Aegean cultures entrusted our cephalopod ferrymen as protective guides to souls traveling the "glitter path." The specific positioning of the octopus reinforces the glitter path theme. The Minoan and Mycenaean stirrup jars from this exhibit show the octopus facing upright. This places the figures perpendicular with the horizon line, giving directionality and reference to the path leading into the Sun. The octopus on the Minoan Stirrup Jar, in particular, has eyes that radiate like the Sun, its solar rays in the form of tentacles dance with the viewer around the vase (Cristofaro 2020, 39, 43). Cretan funerary vases performed very well

in Aegean trade and exported dozens to neighboring societies, attracting the gaze of the Mycenaeans.

Mycenaeans were war-mongering seafarers from the Peloponnese in Greece. Eager to capitalize on the success of Cretan Octopus Style jars, they sacked and conquered the Minoans. After taking control of Cretan vase distribution, Mycenaean imitations of Octopus Style jars appeared and entered circulation. Though they differed greatly from the naturalistic and lighthearted style of Minoan artists, Octopus Style stirrup jars functioned the same: as a funerary allegory and to store perfumed oils. Athanasia Kanta (1980) posits that octopuses were a sort of "trademark" of perfumed oils, implying Mycenaean traders may have sought to use the Octopus Style as a marketing tactic (286). The Mycenaean stirrup jar on display shares quite a few similarities with its Minoan counterpart. Thankfully, it's stylistic differences distinguishing the two as culturally separate. Centuries of interpretation and reinterpretation came and went for octopuses before the scope of vase art shifted to the human figure. However, contemporary research on Greek vases and current popular media have resurfaced debates on the octopus. How is the octopus contextualized to fit a modern audience? It can be argued the philosophical significance of the octopus is largely consistent with that of Ancient Greece. "The octopus' skill in camouflage was co-opted early on in archaic and early classical poetry as a metaphor for describing how humans might blend in with the social, cultural and political orthodoxy by suppressing their authentic selves and copying those around them instead" (Bates 2024, 163). Changing one's physical appearance and behavior to fit in with a crowd is visible just about everywhere. Instead of expressing genuine personal interests, people find it easier to smile and nod in agreement to avoid denouncement or confrontation. There is also the matter of octopodal intelligence that humans are drawn to. Octopuses famously solve puzzles and escape from seemingly inescapable enclosures in viral videos followed by raucous astonishment. The capacity of their mind is what many find so alluring. Their limits are not yet known, but this leads to questioning the octopus' level of sentience. If they exert

agency and display informed decision making, who's to say they do not have free will, much like humans do? Is it possible that humans, above all that is fascinating with the octopus, see themselves in the animal? Relating to the octopus on a more personal level raises ethical concerns, too. If we are to regard octopuses anywhere close to intellectual equals, concerns can be raised surrounding their inclusion in cuisine. Consuming a fellow sentient creature with thoughts and feelings becomes problematizing. What is stopping food markets from serving primates and dolphins, other members of the animal kingdom observed to be free-thinking and intelligent? Additionally, humans are the only known species in Earth's history to destroy their own habitat. Drastically changing climates and loss of habitat, among other consequences of human overreach, pose a grave threat to octopuses and the natural world as a whole. Our tentacled friends aren't currently in danger of extinction, but we must do everything possible to prevent a reality where they are. Ocean acidification, overfishing, and trawling are all severe issues that affect all marine life: they are all worthy of protection. Octopuses in days long past were revered for their protective qualities and mimetic abilities, but not so much as thinkers. Today, we can appreciate them for their quirky behavior and ability to solve complex puzzles, lest we forget their honorable origins.

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