

The Classical Reception of the Hybrid Minotaur

by

Devon Lohrasbe
BA, University of Victoria, 2015

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Greek and Roman Studies

© Devon Lohrasbe, 2018
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

Supervisory Committee

The Classical Reception of the Hybrid Minotaur

by

Devon Lohrasbe
BA, University of Victoria, 2016

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Brendan Burke, Supervisor
Department of Greek and Roman Studies

Dr. Laurel Bowman, Departmental Member
Department of Greek and Roman Studies

Abstract

This thesis offers an interpretation of the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur that accounts for its popularity in fifth century Athens. The myth of the Minotaur had particular political resonance in Classical Athens because of the Minotaur's hybrid character and eastern connotations. In the wake of the Persian wars, Theseus came to embody Athenian democratic and anti-Barbarian ideals. His canonical opponent, the Minotaur, represented the enemy of the Athenian citizen: an eastern hybrid such as the Persian/Carian/Lycian groups of Anatolia and the east. By aligning the Minotaur with his Near Eastern origins, the story of Theseus sailing to confront the Minotaur can be viewed as the story of Greeks, specifically Athenians, facing what was for them, very real threats from the east. By integrating iconographical and mythological evidence for the myths of Theseus and placing the Minotaur myth within the wider historical and political context of fifth century Athens, this thesis shows that the hybrid Minotaur was a stand in for the Persians.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 – The Myths of Theseus	8
Chapter 2 – Heroic Combat.....	27
Chapter 3 – Hybrid Enemies	48
Chapter 4 – The Greek Bull-headed Man	69
Chapter 5 – The Myth of the Minotaur in Fifth Century Athens	88
Conclusion.....	105
Illustrations.....	108
Bibliography.....	125

List of Figures

Figure 1 -Theseus and the Minotaur, Attic Lekythos, Getty Mus. 85.AE.376.....	109
Source: LIMC, <i>Minotauros</i> n.10	
Figure 2a – Rayet Skyphos.....	110
Source: Morris 1992, Plate 10a	
Figure 2b– Rayet Skyphos.....	110
Source: Morris 1992, Plate 10b	
Figure 3a – François Vase.....	111
Source: Shapiro, M. Iozzo, and A. Lezzi-Hafter 2013, Plate 4	
Figure 3b – Detail of Theseus with a lyre, François Vase.....	112
Source: Shapiro, M. Iozzo, and A. Lezzi-Hafter 2013, Plate 15	
Figure 3c– Detail of Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs, François Vase.....	112
Source: Shapiro, M. Iozzo, and A. Lezzi-Hafter 2013, Plate 4	
Figure 4 – Theseus and Poseidon, Red-figured oenochoe, Yale 1913.143.....	113
Source: Morris 1992, Fig 54	
Figure 5 – Theseus in Tyrannicide pose, from British Museum Kylix E84.....	114
Source: Kardara 1951, Plate 22	
Figure 6 – Drawing of Corinth Gold Plaque, Berlin.....	115
Source: Shear 1923, Figure 1	
Figure 7a – Shield Strap from Olympia.....	116
Source: Kunze 1950, Tafel 17	
Figure 7b – Group IVe, Olympia Shield Straps.....	117
Source: Kunze 1950, Tafel 18	
Figure 7c – Group IIIId, Olympia Shield Straps.....	117
Source: Kunze 1950, Tafel 15	
Figure 7d – Group VIIId, Olympia Shield Straps.....	118
Source: Kunze 1950, Beilage 7	
Figure 7e – Group Ve, Olympia Shield Straps.....	118
Source: Kunze 1950, Tafel 21	

Figure 8 – Detail from Relief at Palace of Ashurnasirpal at Nimrud.....	119
Source: Canby 1971, Plate 14 Figure A	
Figure 9 – Phoenician Bowl (Cy8)	119
Source: Markoe 177, N. Cy8	
Figure 10 – Drawing of seal showing Moon god Nanna, Early Dynastic III Period.....	120
Source: Ornan 2001, Fig 3	
Figure 11 – Terracotta relief of a goddess on a throne.....	121
Source: Weiss 1985, n. 163	
Figure 12 – Ba'al, limestone stele from Ugarit.....	122
Source: Klingbeil 2009, Figure 2	
Figure 13 – Bull-headed Ba'al attacking a serpent.....	122
Source: Ornan 2001, Figure 16	
Figure 14 – Pasiphae with baby Minotaur, Paris Cab. Med. 1066 From Vulci.....	123
Source: LIMC, <i>Pasiphae</i> 25	
Figure 15 – Theseus and the Minotaur, Athenian Red-Figure Krater.....	124
Source: Beazley 206430, LIMC <i>Minos</i> I 21 VI, Pl 313.	
Figure 16 – Midas on throne, Attic Red-Figured Cup from Vulci.....	125
Source : Morris 2003, Fig 5	

Introduction

This thesis offers an interpretation of the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur that accounts for its popularity in fifth century Athens. The myth of the Minotaur, a bull-headed hybrid creature who lives in the labyrinth on Crete, has been remarkably enduring and is still well known today: King Minos demands a human tribute of Athenian youths to feed to the Minotaur annually. Theseus, the Athenian hero, puts an end to this bloody custom; he sails to Crete, and with the help of Minos' daughter, Ariadne, navigates the labyrinth and slays the Minotaur. The slaying of the Minotaur was among the most popular scenes in Greek visual culture (Fig 1). It played a prominent role in Classical Athenian vase painting and public sculpture. This strong visual evidence is in striking contrast to the available evidence for the Minotaur story in contemporary literature and drama where it is relatively scant, yet it is popular in much later periods. Homer does not mention the Minotaur, but does refer to Minos, Theseus, and Ariadne. The most detailed literary source for the Minotaur myth is Plutarch, writing in the first century AD, but visual sources can be traced back to the mid-seventh century BC.

In Classical sources, Theseus was also said to have defeated countless foes and promoted democracy in Athens. That these many new achievements did not outshine his earliest deed, the slaying of the Minotaur, is demonstrated by the predominance of this image in Athenian pottery; Athenian vases showing the slaying of the Minotaur outnumber all other representations of Theseus combined.¹

Despite the popularity of Theseus versus the Minotaur in Classical sources and its endurance into the Roman era, modern scholars have focused on other legends of Theseus in the late Archaic and Classical periods. These include Theseus' role as a model citizen, and the tension between his identity as both outsider and archetypal Athenian; as both king and instigator of democracy. In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, for example, Theseus' connection with his divine father, Poseidon, is stressed and he ultimately uses this father-son tie to ruin his relationship with his own son,

¹ Morris 1992, 354

Hippolytus.² Theseus and Poseidon shake hands on Athenian fifth century vases, as if forming a contract to guard the seas from pirates.³ On the metopes of the Athenian Treasury at Delphi, which show the hero's canonical deeds, Theseus is presented as a "second Herakles," a Panhellenic hero who fights the enemies of civilization.⁴ This relationship between the two heroes is further explored in Euripides' *Herakles*, where Theseus offers a humiliated Herakles refuge in Athens.

Amongst Theseus' many adventures, the Minotaur episode is treated as a remnant of an archaic Theseus, an aspect of Theseus' character that is more connected with an uncertain Bronze Age ritual than Classical Athenian politics. I suggest, however that his role as hybrid-slayer was a foundational aspect of Theseus' character and deserves further analysis. Therefore, my investigation takes a different approach, focusing on the early and quintessential opponent of Theseus, the Minotaur. Since Theseus represents the ideal citizen, the Minotaur can be regarded as more than simply one foe; rather, the Minotaur embodies a danger that threatens all citizens. By exploring the origins of the Minotaur and his characterization, we can further understand the reception of this myth in Classical Athens.

Little attention has been paid to the Minotaur in scholarship. This is in part due to the tendency of modern scholars to privilege literary rather than visual sources. Although the Minotaur does not appear in literature until at least the fifth century, the slaying of the Minotaur is one of the earliest and most numerous scenes of Greek myth in art. As this study shows, the iconography of the myth of the Minotaur is telling.

Young has catalogued early representations of the Minotaur and other bull-headed men in Near Eastern and Greek art.⁵ This survey is useful but contains little analysis of the myth itself. Scholars such as Nilsson, Evans, and McInerney discuss the Minotaur in passing and attempt to connect this myth with a possible Bronze Age ritual or myth involving bulls.⁶ Burkert and Nilsson, among others, have interpreted this myth as an historical memory of mainland Greeks

² Walker 1995, 114

³ Morris 1992, 326

⁴ Neer 2004, 76

⁵ Young, E. 1972.

⁶ Nilsson 1932; Evans 1921; McInerney 2010

(Mycenaeans) taking over Crete in the Late Bronze Age.⁷ While this may reflect an archaeological truth recognized today by Aegean prehistorians, it does not address the intriguing popularity of the myth with particular reference to Classical Athens. Most often, the Minotaur is given only brief consideration in studies of Theseus. For example, Morris discusses the Minotaur in connection with Levantine rituals on Crete and as one of the many myths of Theseus and Neils discusses the iconography briefly in her monograph on the youthful deeds of Theseus. Given the small role of the Minotaur in Classical literature, there is scant reference in literary studies of Theseus, such as that by Walker.⁸

This thesis argues that the myth of the Minotaur had particular political resonance in fifth century Athens because of the Minotaur's hybrid character and eastern connotations. In the wake of the Persian wars, Theseus came to embody Athenian democratic and anti-Barbarian ideals. His canonical opponent, the Minotaur, represented the enemy of the Athenian citizen: an eastern hybrid such as the Persian/Carian/Lycian groups of Anatolia and the east. By aligning the Minotaur with his Near Eastern origins, the story of Theseus sailing to confront the Minotaur can be viewed as the story of Greeks, specifically Athenians, facing what was for them, very real threats from the east. The hybrid Minotaur, I propose, was a stand in for the Persians.

The approach here integrates iconographical and mythological evidence for the myths of Theseus by placing it within the wider historical and political context of fifth century Athens situated alongside the rest of Greece. The first chapter discusses the myths of Theseus, from their appearance in the Homeric poems to the Classical period. Sources range from artistic depictions on pottery and public monuments to representations of the myth in Homer and Greek tragedy. The slaying of the Minotaur is identified as foundational to Theseus' character, but by the fifth century this episode becomes just one of the hero's numerous accomplishments.

In literature and art of the Archaic period, Theseus is connected with two sagas, the adventures of Peirithoos and the Cretan adventures, in which he plays two roles, abductor of women and slayer of monsters. It is only later that Theseus is attributed with a new cycle of labours, maritime associations, and the creation of democratic institutions. These myths, first represented

⁷ Burkert 1985; Nilsson 1932

⁸ Morris 1992; Neils 1987; Walker 1995

in the Classical period, served to promote his new role as ideal Athenian citizen. The sources for the myths in both art and literature reflect Theseus' central role in Athenian propaganda and mythmaking following the Persian Wars.

While this chapter gives important background information regarding the character of Theseus in the Archaic and Classical periods, it also introduces the context of my specific inquiry into the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Many scholars have noted the tremendous popularity of Theseus in the Classical period.⁹ Significant changes and additions in the mythology of Theseus have been connected with events in Classical history and developments in Athenian political ideology. More recently, there has been a recognition of Theseus' place in Athenian self-presentation in the periods of the Persian wars and Athenian hegemony. However, Theseus' role as Minotaur slayer has not yet been integrated and contextualized into these discussions. As I will show, the early and primary identification of Theseus as Minotaur slayer facilitated later Athenian elaboration and reinvention of Theseus in the fifth century, when, as a slayer of Eastern hybrid monsters, he gained new resonance in the era of Greek hostility towards the Persians.

In the second chapter, I narrow my focus to the first manifestations of the Minotaur myth in Greece. I review the earliest depictions of the Minotaur in Greece and identify a consistent element in these representations: the heroic combat scene. The main sources for early depictions of Theseus and the Minotaur are metalwork, pottery, and architectural terracotta. Although some interest in narrative details is demonstrated in late sixth century pottery, the heroic combat scene between Theseus and the Minotaur remains the core of this myth in art. This chapter will demonstrate that in his very origins Theseus was a hybrid slayer and that the Minotaur was his earliest opponent. The Minotaur appears only in this context and his opposition to Theseus is crucial; the Minotaur exists only as the opponent of the hero, and, in doing so, defines the hero.

Using the Olympia shield straps as a case study, I closely investigate the defining elements of the heroic combat scene between Theseus and the Minotaur. This allows a search for an iconographical model, which is found in Near Eastern traditions, especially Phoenician Iron Age

⁹ This includes Walker (1995), Morris (1992), and Neils (1987), among others.

art. Finally, I connect the Orientalizing origins of the Theseus and the Minotaur heroic combat scene with a larger movement of goods and ideas from East to the West during the Archaic period.

The third chapter explores the role of hybrid creatures in Greek myth and thought. Through a consideration of Amazons and Centaurs, two hybrid groups which have been more thoroughly examined than the Minotaur, this chapter provides the framework for a more detailed consideration of the Minotaur's hybrid form to come in the next chapter. While doing so, I argue that hybrid beings in mythology participated in the process of Greek self-definition, while simultaneously challenging that very same definition.

By the fifth century, Theseus was said to have taken a leading role in Greek battles against the Centaurs (half human, half horse) and Amazons (half male, half female). Theseus was involved in the Centauromachy from his earliest appearance in Homeric poetry, but his role in the battle with the Amazons was developed in the fifth century through an analogy with Herakles. Modern scholars assert that in the years after the Persian wars, battles between Greeks and mythical hybrids, such as Amazons and Centaurs, came to represent the Greek's contemporary hostility towards the Persians.¹⁰ This interpretation is supported by fifth century changes in the iconography and mythology of the Amazons and Centaurs, who are portrayed in a manner that is increasingly bestial and Eastern.¹¹

This interpretation of mythology is predicated on the idea that Greeks defined themselves through opposition: human not animal, male not female, Greek not Barbarian.¹² The Amazons, Centaurs, and Persians were assimilated into this definitional effort because they were all, in essence, non-Greeks. A review of the evidence shows that Centaurs and Amazons had a particular political resonance in Classical Athens as stand ins for the contemporary enemy and provides a framework for a similar consideration of the Minotaur.

¹⁰ Dubois (1982), Tyrrell (1984), Padgett (2003), Morris (1992)

¹¹ Padgett (2003)

¹² See especially Dubois (1982)

Furthermore, I suggest that mythological beings, such as Centaurs and Amazons, were useful tools for negotiating Greek attitudes towards the East precisely because of their hybrid nature. The dual nature of a hybrid creature embodied Greek ambiguity towards the East. Despite modern emphasis on Greek hostility towards the Persians, significant evidence shows that the Greeks also admired and respected their Eastern adversaries.¹³ Since a hybrid creature embodied two aspects of a binary (both human and animal in the case of Centaurs, both male and female in the case of Amazons), a hybrid enemy resonated with a sense that the Persian enemy, however barbarian, was in some ways not so foreign after all. In Aeschylus' *Persians*, for instance, Hellas and Persia are represented by two "sisters of the same family" yoked together, both "flawless in beauty" (line 180).

The fourth chapter suggests that, like the Amazons and the Centaurs that stood for the Persians on Athenian public monuments, the Classical Minotaur should also be interpreted as having Eastern associations. In this chapter, I seek to define the Minotaur's specific hybrid nature in order to consider what kind of threat it embodied. I explore elements of the Minotaur myth that encourage an alignment of the Minotaur with the East, including the Minotaur's form and genealogy. I elaborate on the significance and connotations of bulls for Greeks and suggest that this element also connects the Minotaur with Greek ideas about Eastern rituals, divinities, and kingship. This chapter will demonstrate that, for the Classical Athenians, the Minotaur represented an eastern threat.

At the same time, this strict dichotomy was undercut by the Minotaur's part human nature. The Minotaur was an eastern monster, but he was also part human. This dual quality made the Minotaur an appropriate representation of Greek ambiguity towards the East. In the Classical reception of the Minotaur, we can identify both hostility towards the East and an understanding, perhaps somewhat repressed, that we and the enemy are in some ways alike.

The fifth chapter brings together the threads of inquiry discussed so far to give an interpretation of the myth of the Minotaur that accounts for its popularity in Classical Athens. Changes in the

¹³ Morris (1992), Miller (2004)

Minotaur myth indicate that King Minos, rather than the Minotaur, was Theseus' true enemy in the Classical period. The demonization of Minos was accompanied by an increasingly negative view of Crete, especially after the Cretans failed to support the Greek side at the Battle of Salamis. I suggest that Theseus' primary identification as Minotaur slayer facilitated the later Athenian reinvention of Theseus as principal hero of the democracy. The myths of Theseus, the Minotaur and King Minos were re-interpreted as one of many battles between West and East, which was a potent analogy that resonated with Athenian ideology in the Classical period.

In conclusion, this thesis endeavours to show that the Minotaur myth was reconceptualized in the fifth century. Independent of its original meaning during the Bronze Age, the slaying of the Minotaur by Theseus, the Athenian's own hero, was reinterpreted in the fifth century as one of many battles between East and West. This study also locates Theseus and the Minotaur within a much wider context of Near Eastern themes reinvented in Greek art and myth.

The aim of this thesis is not to give new evidence for the origins of the myth, but to suggest an interpretation of the myth in the Classical period that accounts for its continuing popularity in Athenian art. The Minotaur emerged in an era when Greek heroes fought foreign looking monsters, but in the Classical era the bull-headed man and his master could represent a very real threat: The Persians.

Chapter 1 – The Myths of Theseus

Theseus was the most popular and most politically-charged hero of the Classical Athenian polis. The Classical Athenians credited Theseus with defending the democracy from brigands, establishing central institutions such as the synoecism, and above all, with handing down his kingdom to “the people.” The Archaic Theseus, however, was little more than a typical archaic hero: a slayer of monsters and abductor of women. This significant evolution of his status and role was the result of Athenian mythmaking throughout the fifth century, and especially in the decades after the Persian Wars.

This chapter describes the evolution of the Theseus myths from their first appearance in the seventh century until the end of the fifth century BC. In this survey, I follow the development of themes in iconography and extant literature.¹⁴ Although the archaeological evidence for the myths of Theseus is far more available than the literary evidence, this approach underlines a preference for similar themes in both mediums. By situating these changes in iconography within a historical and cultural context, I suggest that the development of the Theseus myths in the Classical period was driven by Athenian ideology and deliberate mythmaking. This consideration of the myths of Theseus more broadly will provide the background for a closer analysis of the Minotaur episode in later chapters.

In his earliest appearances in art and literature, Theseus is associated with two mythological sagas: the adventures with Peirithoos, and the Cretan adventures. Theseus is an Attic hero from his inception¹⁵ but depictions of Theseus are more commonly found outside of Attica, most notably in the Peloponnese. We can detect no special interest on the part of the Athenians in the earlier period, which contrasts with the central role that Theseus played in Athenian ideology of the Classical period.

¹⁴ Comprehensive surveys of the sources for the myths of Theseus can be found in Neils 1987 and Brommer 1982.

¹⁵ Walker 1995, 13

Around the turn of the fifth century BC, the frequency with which Theseus is depicted in Athenian art increases dramatically. Theseus continues to be represented with the Minotaur, but this deed is incorporated into a larger cycle of deeds concentrated on the Saronic gulf. Theseus' exploits act as mythical precedents for Classical Athenian achievements, while his enemies become representative of the new democracy's adversaries. Theseus' battles with Centaurs and Amazons become analogous to the contemporary war between the Greeks and their eastern enemies, the Persians. The hero came to bridge the gap between the Athenian hoplite victory at Marathon, which had mythical precedent in Theseus' engagement with the Marathonian bull, and the naval victory at Salamis, which Theseus' growing maritime association seemed to anticipate.

The significant elaboration of the Theseus myth, and the ascription to Theseus of some of the most important Athenian cultural institutions in the early Classical period, demonstrate the central role that Theseus played as mythical model for the democratic citizen. Theseus' place on the earliest and most emblematic Athenian public monuments, such as the Athenian Treasury at Delphi, underlines his integral role in Athenian image and self-image. Despite the many innovations in Theseus' representation, however, the motif of Theseus and the Minotaur endured as the most popular of his deeds; the number of representations of this deed is more than the total of all Theseus' other exploits combined.¹⁶ As Morris writes, the duel between Theseus and the Minotaur "belongs, in fact, to the most popular legends in the history of Greek art."¹⁷

Theseus of the 7th and 6th Centuries BC

In the seventh and sixth centuries BC, Theseus appears in art and literature in two guises: as a slayer of monsters and an abductor of women. Theseus makes his first appearance in literature in the works of Homer.¹⁸ Throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Theseus is mentioned as part of

¹⁶ Morris 1992, 354

¹⁷ Morris 1992, 354

¹⁸ All the Homeric passages that mention Theseus have been suggested at one time or another to be interpolations. This is largely based on the testimony of Hereas of Megara, who wrote that Peisistratus was responsible for interpolating the lines in order to bolster the role of Athens in the Homeric poems. However, more recent scholarship (see Walker 1995, Morris 1992, or Young 1972) see no reason to treat these lines as interpolations. Even

two mythological sagas: the exploits with Peirithoos, prince of the Lapiths, and the Cretan adventures.

There are two, possibly three, Homeric references to Theseus as companion of Peirithoos. In *Iliad* 2, Nestor mentions Theseus, son of Aegeus, as one of the heroes who fought alongside Peirithoos against the Centaurs (2.260-265). In *Odyssey* 11, Odysseus says that he would have liked to see earlier men such as “Theseus and Peirithoos, far-famed children of the gods” (11.631). This reference, which takes place in Odysseus’ excursion to the Underworld, is appropriate because Theseus and Peirithoos were two heroes known to have visited the Underworld and returned alive. They had made the journey with the hope of abducting Persephone but failed, and needed rescue by Herakles. The third possible reference to the adventures of Theseus and Peirithoos is the mention of Aithra, daughter of Pittheus, at *Iliad* 3.144. This may be an allusion to the rape of Helen, since after Helen’s recovery by the Dioscuri, Aithra (Theseus’ mother) was taken as Helen’s handmaid.

The Cretan adventures are alluded to on several occasions in the Homeric poems, both with and without reference to Theseus himself. In the description of Achilles’ shield in *Iliad* 11, there is a “χορὸν like the one Daidalos fashioned in wide Knossos for fair-haired Ariadne” (11.590-592). The χορὸν, most often translated as “dancing place,” may be connected to the victory dance performed by Theseus and Ariadne on Delos, or perhaps, as Nilsson prefers, connected with the worship of Ariadne on Crete; but this is speculation.¹⁹ The passage refers to Ariadne, Daedalos, and Knossos but there is no mention of Theseus, Minos, or the Minotaur. It is possible that it represents an early variant of the myth now lost.²⁰

In *Odyssey* 11, Odysseus sees “fair Ariadne, the daughter of Minos of baneful mind, whom once Theseus was fain to bear from Crete to the hill of sacred Athens; but he had no joy of her, for Artemis slew her in sea-girt Dia because of the witness of Dionysos” (11.321-325). This passage establishes a connection between Theseus and Ariadne, as well as the involvement of Dionysos

if these lines are interpolations, the characterization of Theseus in the Homeric poems is consistent with his portrayal in other mediums in this period, and therefore this issue does not greatly affect our purposes here.

¹⁹ Young 1972, 14, Nilsson 1950, 524

²⁰ Young 1972, 16

(who would later rescue Ariadne and marry her). There is also a sense of movement from Crete to Athens, with a stop on an island. Ariadne is identified as daughter of Minos, who is further described in the *Nekyia*. Minos is called a “close companion” of Zeus and wielder of the scepter of judgement over the souls in the Underworld (11.598).

In summary, the Homeric poems identify Theseus as a participant in the battle of Centaurs and Lapiths alongside Peirithoos, with a possible indirect reference to the abduction of Helen and the journey of Theseus and Peirithoos to the underworld. Theseus is also mentioned in association with the Cretan adventures, but his participation seems secondary to the roles of Ariadne, Minos, and even Daidalos. The important legendary locales of Crete, Knossos, and Athens are implicated in the narrative, but there is no mention of the Minotaur or heroic combat on Crete.

Other early literary evidence contributes relatively little to this brief sketch, but some additional comments will illustrate the fact that the myths of Theseus were mentioned in other works of this period. A few fragments from Hesiod, or the Hesiodic school, may also refer to these adventures of Theseus. The *Shield of Herakles* 182 gives an identical line to *Iliad* 1.265, and was likely borrowed from the *Iliad*.²¹ According to Plutarch and Athenaeus, Hesiod wrote that Theseus abandoned Ariadne “for dreadful passion for Aigle, daughter of Panopeus, weakened him” (Plutarch Theseus 20.1, Athenaeus frag. 298). Unfortunately, it is unclear whether the sources for this line should be trusted. Finally, a papyrus fragment of the *Catalogue of Women* seems to describe Pasiphae and her involvement with Minos. Lines 13 to 17 may describe the birth of the Minotaur, but they are heavily restored. The only line that remains relatively intact reads, “She bore to Minos... a wonder [θαῦμα].”²²

Additionally, a few references to the myths of Theseus are known from allusions to lost works.²³ Later historians refer to elements of the Theseus myths in the lost *Cypria*, a work which was

²¹ Young 1972, 21

²² Young 1972, 22

²³ A sixth century *Theseid*, an epic poem about Theseus, has been conjectured by modern scholars. This theory is based primarily on the evidence from pottery painting around the turn of the fifth century and supposes that such a consistent and sudden proliferation of visual depictions must have derived from a lost major literary work. However, there is no need to posit a literary work to explain changes in visual art (since they can occur without such a

written sometime after the *Iliad* to describe events before the Trojan war.²⁴ Prokles wrote that Nestor referred to “the things concerning Theseus and Ariadne” (Prokles, *Chrestomatheia*). No fragments shed light on this part of the *Cypria*, but scholia indicate that the *Cypria* also included the story of the abduction of Helen.²⁵ Servius, in a commentary on *Iliad* 6.21, writes that the number of tributive youths whom Theseus liberated was given as seven youths and seven maidens by Plato, Sappho, Bacchylides, and Euripides.²⁶ This suggests that the element of the tributive youths was known as early as the sixth century BC.

In the visual representations of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, Theseus is also represented in association with Peirithoos and in the Cretan adventure. One deed has been absent from our review of early literature but dominates the early visual representations of Theseus: the slaying of the Minotaur. The heroic combat encounter between Theseus and the Minotaur is likely the earliest visual representation of Theseus, and as mentioned above, it is the most enduring, remaining popular into the Classical and Roman periods.

The Olympia shield straps show some of the earliest mythological scenes in Greece, dating from the mid-7th to mid-6th centuries BC.²⁷ As elsewhere, Theseus is represented in the many scenes on shield straps as woman-abductor and monster-slayer. He is shown with Peirithoos and Herakles in Hades, presumably in the moments after Theseus and Peirithoos fail to abduct Persephone and require Herakles’ help in returning to the land of the living.²⁸ There are many representations of the heroic combat between Theseus and the Minotaur on the Olympia shield straps, the portrayals being of varying degrees of quality.²⁹ This series remains strikingly consistent in composition: Theseus and the Minotaur face each other in a one to one combat scene derived from Near Eastern models (see the next chapter). In some representations, there is an additional figure shown between the two combatants, who may be Ariadne.

stimulus), nor is there any other evidence that a *Theseid* was written in the sixth century BC. The modern creation of a sixth century *Theseid* is explored further in Walker 1995, 38-39.

²⁴ Young 1972, 23

²⁵ Young 1972, 23

²⁶ Young 1972, 23

²⁷ Kunze 1950, 127-132

²⁸ Walker 1995, 18

²⁹ Kunze 1950, 127-132

The heroic combat scene between Theseus and the Minotaur remains in this canonical form from its beginnings in Greece in the seventh century BC until the Roman period. There are a few sixth century developments, however, that demonstrate interest in other elements of the Cretan adventures narrative. The most common is the addition of figures. On the Rayet skyphos from Boeotia (c. 600-550 BC), alongside the duel between Theseus and the Minotaur are a female figure (again, possibly Ariadne), two rows of figures (tributive youths from Athens?), and an additional male figure (possibly Minos) (Figs 2a and 2b). This is the earliest work that shows several narrative elements that become more common in the later Athenian versions of the myth.³⁰

At least by the mid-seventh century, Theseus is represented with Peirithoos in the abduction of Helen on vases primarily from the Peloponnese.³¹ The iconography of Helen's abduction is complicated by the second act in that story, her rescue by her brothers the Dioscuri, and the composition of these representations is a central female figure flanked by two male figures. Is this Helen's abduction by Theseus and Peirithoos, or her rescue by the Dioscuri? In many instances, the answer remains unclear. Nevertheless, such representations show that the abduction and rescue of Helen was known in visual art of Peloponnese, the home of Helen and the Dioscuri.

The François Vase (c.570 BC) not only alludes to both mythological sagas of Theseus but shows several scenes for the first time (Figs 3a, 3b, 3c). Theseus is portrayed playing a lyre next to Ariadne. This arrangement also becomes standardized; Pausanias describes Theseus with a lyre next to Ariadne on the Chest of Kypselos (5.19.1). Beside the couple stands Ariadne's nurse and a group of dancing youths. This has been interpreted as the Crane dance on Delos or a dance on Crete and is the first time this episode of the Cretan adventure is depicted in Greek art. In the lower register, Theseus is portrayed a second time in the battle of Centaurs and Lapiths. The François vase is the first visual depiction of Theseus fighting alongside the Lapiths.³²

³⁰ Young 1972, 113

³¹ Walker 1995, 20; Neils 1987, 20

³² Walker 1995, 19

In summary, the early literary and iconographical evidence for the myths of Theseus demonstrates the hero's involvement in two mythological sagas, the adventures with Peirithoos and the Cretan adventures, and in two main roles, as monster-slayer and woman-abductor. Before c. 520 BC, Theseus appears in only these two contexts.³³ The earliest sources do not indicate any special Athenian promotion of the myth, but a few examples from early Athenian art such as the François vase show growing Athenian interest in Theseus. It is only in the fifth century BC that Theseus becomes the dominant figure of Athenian mythology.

The Turn of the Fifth Century: A Chronological Issue

The chronology of the sources for the myths of Theseus around the turn of the fifth century is complicated and highly debated. Innovations in the myths of Theseus have been dated as early as the Peisistratid era and as late as the career of Kimon.³⁴ Recent scholarship supports a post-Peisistratid dating, but there is still disagreement regarding whether the earliest innovations in the Theseus myths should be dated before or after the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC. This dispute, which concerns a difference of about 15-25 years, has significant implications for the interpretation of mythical innovations, especially if we wish to connect mythological changes with historical events and attitudes.³⁵ An earlier dating scheme suggests that changes in the myth took place prior to the Persian wars, while a later date indicates these changes developed in the wake of Greek struggles with Persia.

I prefer a later dating scheme based primarily on the evidence of the Athenian Treasury, an Athenian-sponsored monument at Delphi. The date of the Treasury is important in the chronology of the Theseus myths because the cycle of Theseus' deeds appear on its metopes. The cycle of deeds is a new invention; it appears in this period for the first time in both vase painting and monumental sculpture. It is widely accepted that the Athenian Treasury and the first cycle cups are contemporaneous, and that the lavish Treasury inspired the prolific creation of the

³³ Neils 1987, 28

³⁴ Walker 1995, 35-66

³⁵ Morris 1992, 340 suggests that a 15-20 year period of flexibility should be assumed in vase chronology in almost all circumstances.

cycle cups. Scholars prefer to date the cycle cups and the Treasury to the same period, regardless of whether they prefer the earlier or later chronology. Therefore, a secure date for the Athenian Treasury should also provide the most likely date for the first cycle cups.

Pausanias writes that the Treasury was dedicated in response to the Greek victory at Marathon (10.11) and this fact was accepted by the French excavators of the monument.³⁶ However, some scholars have argued for an earlier date based on the style of the relief sculpture.³⁷ These scholars suggest that Pausanias was referring to a base which was added to the side of the monument after Marathon to commemorate that victory. However, the most recent study of the foundations of the Athenian Treasury show that this base was incorporated into the earliest construction of the Treasury itself.³⁸ Therefore, it seems most likely that the Athenian Treasury was built after Marathon in commemoration of the Greek victory, consistent with Pausanias. Some of the figural sculpture may be intentionally archaizing, but, as we will see, the subject of the sculpture is undoubtedly appropriate to the post-Marathon public image and self-image of democratic Athens.

In addition to making contextual sense, a later dating also helps bridge a gap between the chronology of visual and literary representations of Theseus.³⁹ If the earliest changes in the myths in art are given an earlier dating, there is a period of roughly 15 years before the same changes appear in literature, whereas a later dating for the changes in art renders the gap not nearly so large.

Although I support a later dating scheme, for our present purposes strict dating is not as important as the changes themselves.⁴⁰ The crucial implication is that the myth underwent changes in the period between 520-480 BC and that the Theseus of the post-Persian Wars era had undergone significant reinvention as a result of early Classical Athenian mythmaking.

³⁶ Neer 2004, 67

³⁷ For example, see Dinsmoor 1946

³⁸ Amandry 1997

³⁹ Morris 1992, 340

⁴⁰ I follow the dating of Walker 1995, but it should be remembered throughout that the chronology is uncertain.

Theseus of the Classical Period

Theseus was portrayed with increased frequency in Athenian art during the years immediately after 500 BC, and in a variety of newly invented, or reinvented, mythological episodes. After 510 BC, Theseus becomes more popular than Herakles in Athenian vase painting.⁴¹ Before 510 BC, Theseus appears on about one in twenty Attic vases, and in the period after 510, on one in four vessels.⁴² The increase of images of Theseus on Athenian vases occurs at the same time as the creation of a canonical cycle of his deeds, his appearance in the public iconography of Athens, and important changes in Athenian politics.

Classical innovations in the deeds and character of Theseus had deliberate resonance with contemporary circumstances. Although it can be misleading to link developments in myth with specific people or events, it is productive to consider the cultural context within which that myth arose. After all, myth is both a product and a creator of culture. In the case of the Theseus myths, the development of myth was powerfully shaped by the ideology of Athenian democracy and growing hostility to the enemies of democracy, both in the East and closer to home.

The most conspicuous change in the Theseus myths in the early Classical period was the invention of a cycle of deeds for the hero. This cycle is known primarily from cycle cups, so named because they displayed multiple deeds on the same vessel, but the cycle was also represented on public monuments such as the Athenian Treasury and the Hephaestion at Athens. The cycle cups are usually said to appear around 510 BC, but as alluded to earlier, new evidence suggests a post-Marathon date is more appropriate.⁴³ Regardless of the date of the earliest examples, more substantial interest in Theseus' youthful deeds was evident in the following decades.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Walker 1995, 24; Boardman 1975, 2

⁴² Walker 1995, 24

⁴³ Morris 1992, 340

⁴⁴ Morris 1992, 342

Deeds from the cycle could be represented alone or in groups of varying combinations.⁴⁵ The cycle often included the Minotaur and the Marathonian bull, as well as Theseus' newest foes: Peiriphetes (the club-bearer), Sinis ("the one who bends pinetrees"), the Crommyonian Sow, Sciron (the robber), Cercyon (the wrestler), and Procrustes (the stretcher).⁴⁶ In his new exploits, Theseus is represented as youthful. Theseus' Classical conceptualization, as a young Athenian ephebe, informed fifth century depictions of the Minotaur-slaying. In Archaic representations of his duel with the Minotaur, Theseus boasts the full beard of a mature man, but in the Classical versions, he is clearly a youth.⁴⁷

The oldest deeds in the cycle look back to Theseus' archaic character. The duel with the Minotaur remains his most popular deed but is relegated to one of many exploits in this period. Theseus and the Minotaur become especially popular in Athenian vase painting in the years between 540 and 530, especially among Group E painters.⁴⁸ The bull of Marathon appears in vase painting between 550 and 540.⁴⁹⁵⁰ Appearing earlier than the other new deeds, this exploit may have been evocative of Theseus' early connections with Aphidna, often believed to be the hero's original homeland.⁵¹ Although it appears in a few early examples, the bull of Marathon becomes most popular after the Battle of Marathon, and in fact becomes an emblem of that conflict.⁵² A new, more civilized ending to the exploit is now preferred; instead of killing the bull in the original duel, Theseus brings it to an altar to be sacrificed.⁵³ It is possible that two other deeds, the Crommyonian Sow and perhaps Skiron, might have appeared as early as 515 BC on the Skythes cup.⁵⁴

Many of Theseus' youthful deeds take place in the Saronic Gulf and can be connected with Athenian dominance over that area.⁵⁵ Scholars agree that political motivation should be sought in

⁴⁵ Neils 1987, 40

⁴⁶ Pausanias, *Theseus* VIII-XI

⁴⁷ Morris 1995, 354

⁴⁸ Neils 1987, 25

⁴⁹ Walker 1995, 24

⁵⁰ If the chronological adjustments suggested above hold, these dates would be lowered by 10-20 years.

⁵¹ Walker 1995, 14

⁵² Morris 1992, 339

⁵³ Morris 1992, 340

⁵⁴ Neils 1995, 19; 1987, 34-35; Walker 1995, 46

⁵⁵ Walker 1995, 51

the creation of the cycle, although they disagree about which political factions promoted the myth at different times.⁵⁶ While the deeds on the Skythes cup may represent Athenian interest in the Megarid in the time of the Peisistratids, the invention of a canonical cycle of deeds celebrates Athenian control of the entire region.⁵⁷ Theseus' new adversaries are notably dissimilar from the monsters he fought in the Archaic period. Rather than mythical hybrids, these new adversaries are the human enemies of a civilized democracy: thieves and brigands. Theseus fights his new adversaries with not only his might, but also with his mind. Theseus often defeats his enemies by turning their own methods against them. Sinis, a brigand, had a cruel way of saying goodbye to guests: he would ask for help to bend a pinetree to the ground and, letting go, the innocent person would be launched into the air. Theseus played the same trick on him, launching Sinis to his death. The youthful deeds of Theseus were also referred to in literature. In Bacchylides' *Ode 18*, the deeds of a heroic stranger on his way to Athens are recounted by King Aegeus. This poem is usually dated to the 470s, which coincides quite well with a later dating of the cycle cups.⁵⁸

The cycle of deeds explains how Theseus came to be king of Athens and also puts the young hero in the same league as Herakles. This mythological story seems to reflect a cultic reality: Theseus is absent from the earliest figures worshipped at Athens and therefore his sudden appearance in Athenian myth and cult is explained through his mythology.⁵⁹ This discrepancy between the supposed central role Theseus played in the early days of Athens and the lack of cult spaces dedicated to him was remarked upon in antiquity and is reflected in the story described in Euripides' *Herakles*. After Herakles is driven mad and mistakenly kills his wife and children, Theseus offers the panhellenic hero refuge in Athens and transfers his own cult areas to the previously homeless Herakles (1313-1339). This story cemented the relationship between Herakles and Theseus, but also explains the lack of Theseus' cult sites in Athens. Furthermore, it casts Theseus as a selfless and generous hero-king, whose distinction was such that he was suitable to assist the greatest of all heroes, Herakles.

⁵⁶ Walker 1995, 41-42

⁵⁷ Walker 1995, 51

⁵⁸ Morris 1995, 351

⁵⁹ Walker 1995, 21

The Athenian Treasury demonstrates the Athenian promotion of Theseus through comparison with Herakles. Neer has thoroughly explored the dating and significance of the Athenian Treasury.⁶⁰ The metopes of the Athenian Treasury displayed the deeds of both Theseus and Herakles. Although scholars disagree about the arrangement of the metopes, it is clear that this monument was intended to suggest that Theseus was a “second Herakles.” As is often noted, Theseus’ youthful deeds were consciously modelled on the labours of Herakles, the great pan-Hellenic hero.⁶¹ This deliberate elevation of Theseus to the rank of Herakles is demonstrated clearly by Metope 5, which shows Athena and Theseus. The goddess Athena was thought to have a special relationship with Herakles and had previously only been shown by herself alongside him. Now, her presence with Theseus suggests an equivalent relationship between her and the Athenian hero. The Treasury’s iconographical programme also stressed the Amazons, who were fought by both Herakles and Theseus. The battle against the Amazons was soon to become analogous to the Greek war with the Persians. If the Treasury is to be dated after the Battle of Marathon, then this may be an early manifestation of that trend.

Theseus is endowed with a birth story, but it is notable that there is no evidence for Theseus’ birth at Troezen until after the battle of Salamis. In fact, Bacchylides’ recounting of the cycle of deeds begins at the Isthmus of Corinth (*Ode 18*). It is possible that the cycle first celebrated only the Megarid area and was extended to Troezen in the aftermath of the Battle of Salamis. In the Themistoklean Decree, it is stated that the Athenians retreated to Troezen for refuge when the Persians took the Acropolis; this is the earliest evidence for a connection between Theseus and Troezen.⁶² It is not simply fortuitous but likely deliberate that the birthplace of Theseus, the ideal Athenian citizen, provided a refuge for Athenians during the Battle of Salamis. Theseus’ Troezenian origin is also explored in a bronze statue from the Acropolis, which showed Theseus lifting the rock to find a sword and sandals. The story of Theseus’ birth explains how the hero was simultaneously an outsider and the model Athenian: although he was born in Troezen, his destiny was always to reign in Athens.

⁶⁰ Neer 2004

⁶¹ Neer 2004, 74

⁶² Walker 1995, 55

Alongside his youthful adventures that were celebrated in art and literature were many other additions to the exploits and character of Theseus. These include Theseus' relationships with women, his battles with Amazons and Centaurs, his maritime associations and connection with the god Poseidon, all contributing to his looming presence in the ongoing narrative of Athenian myth-history. As with his youthful deeds, these stories were also informed by the historical and political context of fifth century Athens.

In the Archaic period, depictions of Theseus' relationships with women were dominated by abductions. In the Classical period, there was some attempt to distance Theseus from this characterization.⁶³ Stesichorus wrote that Theseus had at least four children, each by a different woman (Stesichorus Frag 16, lines 21-26). In contrast to earlier depictions, in the Classical period there is relatively little interest in the abduction of Helen or Persephone by Theseus and Peirithoos. In the newer depictions, Theseus defended women as part of his heroic character. In Bacchylides' *Ode 18*, the confrontation between Theseus and Minos is instigated when Theseus steps in to protect Eriboia from Minos' advances. A new version of the abandonment of Ariadne suggests that Theseus only left her because he was asked to do so by Athena or Artemis.⁶⁴ Early Classical depictions of this moment show Athena addressing Theseus, ostensibly requesting that he leave Ariadne behind.⁶⁵ This reading transforms the abandonment of Ariadne into a symbol of Theseus' piety and is one illustration of the transformation of his character.

An interesting development is that in the Classical period attention is diverted away from Theseus' abduction of Greek women (Helen, Ariadne, Persephone) and is instead focused on Theseus' seizure of a foreign woman, Antiope the Amazon. The rape of Antiope appears in visual depictions between 520 and 490 BC.⁶⁶ Apollodorus wrote that Simonides called Antiope by the name of Hippolyta, so this story was known in literature at least by the time of Simonides (second half 5th century).⁶⁷ The rape of Antiope is the earliest of Theseus' exploits that survives

⁶³ Morris 1992, 346

⁶⁴ Morris 1992, 356

⁶⁵ Morris 1992, 357

⁶⁶ Walker 1995, 24

⁶⁷ Walker 1995, 37

in monumental art; it decorated the Temple of Apollo Daphnephoros at Eretria which is usually dated to the end of the sixth century.⁶⁸

In the early Classical period, this episode was followed by a second act. The Amazons attacked Athens in retribution for Theseus' actions; either for the kidnapping of Antiope or for leaving Antiope for another woman. The earlier interactions between heroes and the Amazons had taken place far in the East, but this new battle took place on Attic soil. The battle of Athenians and Amazons at Athens does not appear in sources before the Persian Wars.⁶⁹ The Amazons are said to have launched their attack on the Athenian Acropolis from the Areopagus, the very place the Persians had attacked from in 480 BC. In Classical Athenian art, Amazons are increasingly portrayed in Eastern dress.⁷⁰ These details suggest that the re-invented myth of the Amazons was thought of as a mythical precedent for the recent historical invasion of the Persians.

Over the course of the Classical period, the battles of Greeks with Amazons and Centaurs became common themes in Athenian public art. Although Theseus is not always the central figure in these depictions, the expected association between hero and battle made both subjects appropriate to the public image of Athens. Two iconic battles were central to the Parthenon's sculptural programme: the west metopes depict the Amazonomachy, while the south metopes show the Centauromachy. For the Athenians, these conflicts served as further proof for their contemporary beliefs in their cultural superiority. Just as Greeks had prevailed in the mythical battles of the Centaurs and Amazons, so too they had inevitably conquered their most recent foe, the Persians. The inclusion of these themes on Athenian public monuments reminded other Greeks of the role the Athenians had played in conquering the Medes and suggested that Athenian leadership was ancient and preordained.

Another facet of the Classical Theseus were his maritime associations. Although the Homeric poems mentioned only King Aegeus as Theseus' father, there was new emphasis on the relationship between Theseus and his divine father, Poseidon. After the Athenian-led naval

⁶⁸ Walker 1995, 44; Von Bothmer 1957, 126

⁶⁹ Morris 1992, 312

⁷⁰ Neer 2004, 77

victory at Salamis, Poseidon was given special attention in Athenian cult and myth. Classical Athens was in many ways defined by this naval victory, and new narratives were invented to suggest that Athens had long been a maritime power.

The increasing emphasis on Poseidon, Theseus, and their relationship gave the Athenians an opportunity to incorporate maritime themes into their new identity as a naval democracy.⁷¹ The invention of a mythical contest between Poseidon and Athena for the status of principal deity of Athens established Poseidon as one of the earliest patrons of Athens.⁷² The cult place of Poseidon at Sounion was elaborated and a Temple of Poseidon was built that included the deeds of Theseus and the Centauromachy in its sculptural programme.⁷³ The relationship between Poseidon and Theseus was emphasized in vase painting, where the father-son pair were often shown shaking hands as though affirming a contract (Fig 4).⁷⁴

Such maritime themes were treated by Bacchylides in *Ode 17*. Bacchylides' narrative describes a contest between Theseus and Minos en route to Crete. Minos challenges Theseus to prove his divine parenthood by throwing a gold ring into the sea and demanding that Theseus retrieve it. Theseus dives down and visits Amphitrite, who gives him a golden crown, then returns to the surface. This story was also recounted in Pausanias (1.17.3), Hyginus' *Astronomica* (2.5), and was also the subject of one of Mikon's paintings. The elevation of Theseus to leader of a maritime democracy necessitated that the character of Minos, the ruler of the first thalassocracy, be cast as a contemporary enemy. Accordingly, Minos is increasingly portrayed as tyrant-like and Oriental (discussed further below).⁷⁵ Ancient commentators noted the ill-repute that Minos acquired in Athenian drama, much of which has lamentably been lost to us.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, in the myth of Minos as ruler of the first thalassocracy, Theseus' defeat of Minos' navy becomes a mythical precedent for the Athenian defeat of the Persian navy.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Morris 1992, 324

⁷² Morris 1992, 325

⁷³ Morris 1992, 325

⁷⁴ Morris 1992, 326

⁷⁵ Morris 1992, 353

⁷⁶ See later chapter

⁷⁷ Morris 1992, 355

By the time of Plutarch, several features of the Athenian democratic constitution were attributed to Theseus. Although Plutarch is a late source, it is likely that some of these changes were first attributed to Theseus in the Classical period. This is in keeping with the Classical Athenian mythmaking practice of creating mythical precedents for recent historical and political events, a pattern that is evident throughout this consideration of the Theseus myths.

Several aspects of the Kleisthenic reforms are attributed to Theseus. These included the synoecism of Attica and the creation of many polis-wide festivals (Plutarch, *Theseus* 24). Theseus himself is absent from the eponymous heroes, an omission which suggests he was already considered a pan-Athenian hero and unsuitable to represent a single deme. However, Theseus' grandfather, father, and son are all eponymous heroes of the Athenian tribes.⁷⁸ Theseus' abdication of kingship in favour of a democratic constitution allows him both the glory of the age of Mycenaean kings as well as that of the contemporary democracy. The hero's role, as both king and first democrat, are explored in Athenian drama, such as Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *Suppliant Women*.⁷⁹ By attributing certain vital aspects of Athenian democracy to Theseus, the Athenian political system is given the esteem of ancient origins.⁸⁰

In the 470s or 460s, Kimon, responding to the Delphic oracle, brought Theseus' bones to Athens from Skyros.⁸¹ This act was certainly intended to bolster the popularity of Kimon, but it also legitimized a new Athenian custom; the bringing home of soldier's bones for collective burial. The institution of public funeral oration and burial was an opportunity to reinforce Athenian political goals. It justified a soldier's death by recalling the inevitable glory of Athenian hegemony. The Athenians used the return of Theseus' bones to Athens to provide a mythical heroic precedent for this practice.⁸² Theseus became a substitute founder-hero for the autochthonous Athenians.⁸³

⁷⁸ Morris 1992, 333

⁷⁹ Walker 1992, Chapters 4 and 5

⁸⁰ Morris 1992, 338

⁸¹ Morris 1992, 348, Zaccarini 2015

⁸² Morris 1992, 348

⁸³ Morris 1992, 348

These stories about Theseus' role in the creation of democratic institutions lent the authority of antiquity to developments that were, in reality, very recent, and the connection between Theseus and democracy was made even more concrete through the use of iconography. One of the ways in which Theseus was associated with democracy in art was through visual association with the Tyrannicides.⁸⁴ An amphora by Myson shows Theseus and Antiope on one side, and the Tyrannicides on the other.⁸⁵ This association through juxtaposition was taken one step further when Theseus was portrayed in the poses of the Tyrannicides.⁸⁶ By assuming the poses of Harmodios or Aristogeiton, Theseus was presented as upholder of democracy and enemy of tyrants. On the Elgin Throne, Theseus is shown in combat with Amazons in the poses of Harmodios and Aristogeiton (Fig 5).⁸⁷ In early Classical art, a variety of figures could assume these poses, but by the end of the fifth century, Theseus is the only figure shown in this way.⁸⁸ In public monuments, such as the Hephaisteion and the Temple at Sounion, Theseus fights his adversaries in the same stance evocative of the famous Tyrannicides sculpture on the Acropolis.⁸⁹ That this pose was eventually considered inappropriate for any figure other than Theseus indicates the close connection that was felt between the hero and the democratic institutions of Athens.

Two series of paintings in Athens demonstrate how the myths of Theseus were built into a larger narrative of Athenian myth-history in the Classical period. One series was shown in the Theseion, the cult area of Theseus in central Athens. This construction has not yet been located by archaeologists, but it is described by Pausanias. It is unclear whether the area was constructed or expanded at the time when Kimon brought Theseus' bones back to Athens.⁹⁰ In Pausanias' description of the Theseion, he mentions three (possibly four) paintings (1.17.2). These are the battle of Amazons at Athens, the battle between Centaurs and Lapiths, and Theseus' dive to the bottom of the ocean.⁹¹ The fourth may include Theseus and Herakles but is uncertain. These

⁸⁴ Morris 1992, 301

⁸⁵ Morris 1992, 301

⁸⁶ Kardara 1951

⁸⁷ Morris 1992, 301

⁸⁸ Morris 1992, 301, 349

⁸⁹ Morris 1992, 350

⁹⁰ Walker 1995, 21

⁹¹ Morris 1992, 312

three themes highlight Theseus' role as leader of Athenians on both land and sea. As in Homer, Classical Theseus' involvement with the Centaurs and the Cretan adventures are central to his characterization. In the larger narrative drawn between those episodes and other events in Athenian history, Theseus' role as defender of Athens has been amplified.

The Stoa Poikile, from later in the Classical period, demonstrates how thoroughly the exploits of Theseus were integrated into the narrative of Athenian history. Four paintings were shown in the Stoa Poikile: Athenians and Spartans at Oinoe (a battle in Peloponnesian War), Theseus and the Athenians against the Amazons, the capture of Troy, and the battle of Marathon. This series of subjects shows how the exploits of Theseus, and by extension, the Athenians, were integrated into a much longer narrative of events that pitted Greeks against barbarians, and finally, Athenians against Spartans. It alludes to a similar phenomenon in Athenian written tradition, that of the recitation of Athenian erga.⁹² As can be seen in the funeral oration of Pericles (Thucydides 2.35-2.46), this tradition invoked a long-standing historical emphasis on Athenian excellence. As the fifth century continued, there were fewer references to mythical deeds and more references to the excellence of contemporary Athenians, especially those who fought and died in battle against the Persians. The recitation of Athenian erga gave validation for Athenian lives lost in battle and suggested that Athenian/Greek cultural superiority was predetermined, and thus victory (first in the Persian wars, then in the Peloponnesian wars) was inevitable.

In the aftermath of the Persian wars, the Athenians rebuilt their Acropolis and incorporated aspects of earlier but crumbling buildings into a new foundation wall. Just as they rebuilt their physical city, using old materials in new ways, the Athenians also employed old elements of mythology to forge a new identity. This new identity was informed by politics, such as the need to justify and validate the political ideology of democracy, and by recent historical events, such as the hostility towards the East that came with war against Persia. A third important factor was the need to justify Athenian leadership and hegemony in the post-war Greek world order. The myths of Theseus solidified the validity of democracy and Athenian hegemony and suggested that the Athenians had always been poised to take on a leading role. The Archaic Theseus had

⁹² Morris 1992, 313

captured significant women and slayed formidable foes but had only played a minor role in the Homeric sagas. In contrast, the Classical Theseus was not only the Minotaur slayer, but also the defender of Athenian democracy and symbol of Greek victory over an eastern enemy.

Conclusion

In summary, several important variations may be identified in the myths of Theseus. These changes, when considered in the historical and political context of fifth century Athens, reveal aspects of Athenian mythmaking. Theseus' original identification as abductor of women and slayer of monsters is elaborated in the fifth century in association with his newfound role as polis-hero of the Athenian democracy. By the fifth century, the many accomplishments of Theseus included a cycle of deeds comparable to the labours of the panhellenic hero Herakles and the establishment of central democratic institutions. In the post-Persian Wars era, the myths of Theseus participated in the negotiation of Athenian attitudes towards the eastern enemy as well as of Athens' new role on the Greek stage, as leader of the Delian League and later the Athenian empire. Despite the many new myths of Theseus, the hero's most famous and most defining adventure was still his journey to Crete. Although the Cretan adventure was also elaborated in the fifth century, the iconographical tradition was conservative and continued to represent the moment of heroic combat between Theseus and the bull-headed man, the Minotaur.

The Minotaur may appear lost in this analysis of the numerous additional exploits of Theseus in the Classical period. However, despite these new accomplishments and the elaboration of Theseus' story, the encounter between Theseus and the Minotaur remained one of the most popular images on Attic vase painting, not just of Theseus' deeds, but of all Greek myth.⁹³ Hence this question drives my inquiry: Why does the fifth-century, civilized Theseus still fight his archaic adversary so often?

⁹³ Morris 1992, 354

Chapter 2 – Heroic Combat

The previous chapter described the evolution of the Theseus myths from their first appearance in the time of Homer to the end of the Classical era. Notwithstanding the accumulation of many additional achievements, Theseus' most popular act of heroism in Greek art remained his iconic duel with the Minotaur. Many scholars have recently linked changes in the myths of Theseus with the hero's role in Classical Athenian political ideology and historical circumstances. This investigation offers a different perspective, focusing not so much on the hero but on the quintessential opponent of Theseus, the Minotaur. Since Theseus represents the ideal citizen, the Minotaur embodies a danger that threatens all Athenian citizens.

Ideally, a full appreciation of the Greek Minotaur should include not only his individual form, but also the context in which this form arrived in Greece, the heroic combat scene. It was during the Orientalizing period that the heroic combat scene, one of many related concepts, was incorporated into Greek visual language. A survey of the earliest representations of Theseus and the Minotaur demonstrates that the kernel of this myth is the heroic combat scene.

Iconographical comparison suggests that the earliest scenes of Theseus and the Minotaur were modelled on heroic combat scenes of the Iron Age Levant and Western Asia, especially Phoenician metal bowls.

The Earliest Representations of Theseus and the Minotaur

Theseus first appears in Greek art as slayer of the Minotaur; this was his original role and turned out to be the most enduring one. Visual representations of this scene took a standardized form, the heroic combat, which derived from the Near East. Heroic combat scenes show two figures, human, animal, or fantastical, in close combat. Such depictions of one-on-one combat, as opposed to group warfare, emphasizes the heroism of the two participants, much as Homer singled out the duel between Glaucus and Diomedes among the wider engagement between Trojans and Greeks (*Iliad* 3.120-235). The heroic combat scene was used to represent other early Greek heroes and their exploits, including the fight between Herakles and Acheloos and the duel

between Zeus and Typhon. Representations of a heroic combat scene involving a human as hero and a bull-headed man as adversary appear in Greece by the mid-seventh century, and by the beginning of the sixth century BC, the story and motif were well known.

The earliest representations of a hero and a bull-headed man in combat are from the Peloponnesus. Five small gold plaques, now housed in Berlin, were allegedly found in a grave at Corinth (Fig 6).⁹⁴ Three figures are shown. The first, a woman, is usually identified as Ariadne based on the narrative version of the myth known from a later era. She is at left, behind Theseus, and holds something in her hand, possibly a ball of thread or a rock, and her other arm is raised. Theseus occupies the center of the frame and is involved in combat with the Minotaur, who is on the right. Theseus holds a very simply drawn sword in his right hand, while the Minotaur grabs Theseus' left hand with his right hand, and the blade of the sword with his left hand.

This heroic combat scene is clearly derived from Oriental prototypes. Young notes special similarities between this scene and Neo-Hittite orthostats of the ninth century BC and Cypriote bowls of the seventh century which show men who fight upright griffins.⁹⁵ The spectator, possibly Ariadne, is usually considered a Greek addition.⁹⁶ However, as Markoe discusses in his analysis of a Spartan shield, attendants are frequently found in Near Eastern heroic combat scenes.⁹⁷ It is possible that the Greek "spectator" is a translation of the Near Eastern "attendant" figure. Nevertheless, it is tempting to read narrative into this early example, especially given the possibility that the Ariadne figure holds a ball of thread. These plaques are dated to around 650 BC on stylistic grounds.⁹⁸ They are usually considered Corinthian, or at least Peloponnesian.⁹⁹

Kunze has catalogued numerous bronze shield straps from Olympia including several that show Theseus and the Minotaur (Figs 7a-7e).¹⁰⁰ This group is especially useful because they illustrate how iconographical composition evolved over time and with varying degrees of execution.

⁹⁴ Young 1972, 101; Shear 1923, 185

⁹⁵ Young 1972, 102

⁹⁶ Young 1972, 103

⁹⁷ Markoe 1996, 50

⁹⁸ Young 1972, 103

⁹⁹ Young 1972, 103

¹⁰⁰ Kunze 1950

Kunze dates the earliest representations of Theseus and the Minotaur, group Ve, to the end of the seventh century B.C..¹⁰¹ In comparison with the Corinthian gold plaques, the Minotaur is larger and assumes a strange pose, with one knee bent and the other touching the ground.¹⁰² Theseus has more elaborate hair and beard and his sword is much larger.¹⁰³ Like the Corinthian gold plaques, the Ve type is very similar to Oriental prototypes, especially scenes in which the animal is shown upright and the sword is held horizontally.¹⁰⁴ Although there are some variations among the groups, the form of heroic combat remains consistent.

This same set of consistent iconographies emerges in the earliest evidence for the myth of the Minotaur on pottery. The slaying of the Minotaur was one of many heroic combat scenes which may have served as a source of comparison or inspiration for others. The pairing of an exploit of Theseus with an exploit of Herakles, which begins in these earliest examples, would later become an important device during the Athenian promotion of Theseus.

Two Corinthian vase paintings show the slaying of the Minotaur. The duel is shown fitted into extra space on a gorgoneion cup from shortly before 575 BC.¹⁰⁵ The main depiction is of Herakles and another bull-man hybrid, Acheloos. Although adapted to fit available space and the different medium, Theseus and the Minotaur remain essentially the same as they are depicted on the Olympia shield straps. A second Corinthian vase, an amphora dated between 575 and 550 BC, is preserved only in a drawing. From what can be seen, it appears to show similar elements as the gorgoneion cup.¹⁰⁶

Pausanias mentions scenes associated with Theseus in his description of two sixth century monuments, the Chest of Kypselos and the Amyklai throne. The Chest of Kypselos, which Pausanias saw at Olympia, was a work of the early sixth century BC.¹⁰⁷ It had five rows of figures and likely had inscriptions naming each figure; quite possibly Pausanias read those

¹⁰¹ Young 1972, 104; Kunze 1950, 12, pl. 21, #9e, pl. 54, #11e

¹⁰² Young 1972, 104

¹⁰³ Young 1972, 104

¹⁰⁴ Young 1972, 105

¹⁰⁵ Young 1972, 107; Brussels Inv. A1374

¹⁰⁶ Young 1972, 108; Louvre E 651

¹⁰⁷ Young 1972, 108

inscriptions. In the fourth row, between Herakles and Geryon on one side and Achilles and Memnon on the other, Theseus stands with a lyre and Ariadne with a crown (5.19.1). He also mentions the Dioskouroi standing beside Helen, and Aithra, Theseus' mother, who has fallen to the ground beside them (5.19.3). Pausanias does not mention the Minotaur.

The Amyklai throne was built by Bathycles of Magnesia, but Pausanias does not say for whom the monument was built for (3.18.9). The building surrounded a colossal statue of Apollo. Pausanias identifies a relief on the outside of the structure that shows “the bull of Minos” being led away alive by Theseus (3.18.11).¹⁰⁸ It is possible that he has confused the story of the Marathon bull, originally from Crete.¹⁰⁹ A second representation, from a relief on the inside of the building, showed the duel between Theseus and the Minotaur (3.18.16). Unfortunately, Pausanias does not mention any details that could help reconstruct the iconography of this scene.

An Orientalizing vase, possibly of Sicilian manufacture, belongs to the middle or late seventh century BC.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, this vase has not been well-published and very little information is available about the scene that shows Theseus and the Minotaur.¹¹¹ One side shows Centaurs seizing women, and the other shows Theseus and the Minotaur with several unidentified figures.¹¹² The scene resembles the Olympia shield straps, but Theseus' sword is lowered and the two figures are quite far apart.¹¹³ Two women appear to watch the scene from the side.¹¹⁴ This vase is significant in that it connects two instances of combat against hybrid creatures, the Minotaur and Centaurs.

Theseus and the Minotaur have been identified on a fragment of a bronze plaque from Aigina.¹¹⁵ The fragment shows only the top of the scene, which is markedly different from the Olympia plaques. The Minotaur raises his left hand and Theseus stands with hands on his hips, perhaps

¹⁰⁸ Young 1972, 109

¹⁰⁹ Young 1972, 109

¹¹⁰ Young 1972, 110

¹¹¹ Young 1972, 110

¹¹² Young 1972, 110

¹¹³ Young 1972, 111

¹¹⁴ Young 1972, 111

¹¹⁵ Young 1972, 111; Furtwängler 1906

drawing his sword.¹¹⁶ The Minotaur is smaller than Theseus, as on the Corinthian gold plaques. A second plaque from the Athenian acropolis has been identified as the same scene based on similarities to the Aigina fragment, but they are in extremely poor condition.¹¹⁷

The Rayet skyphos from Boeotia is dated to the first half of the sixth century BC (Fig 2a, 2b).¹¹⁸ It is considered “an imitation of Corinthianizing Attic.”¹¹⁹ On one side of the skyphos, Theseus slays the much larger Minotaur to his right. Theseus has elaborate hair, beard, and dress, while the Minotaur is shown naked. To Theseus’ left, a female figure with a thread, possibly Ariadne, watches. Behind the Minotaur are shown two ranks of figures, seven men and seven women. These appear to be the Athenian tribute of seven youths and seven maidens. The Rayet skyphos is the earliest depiction that shows many of the narrative elements that are common in the later Athenian versions of the myth.¹²⁰

An engraved scaraboid gem from Cyprus shows the duel between Theseus and the Minotaur with the addition of an onlooker.¹²¹ This gem is dated by Boardman to the first half of the sixth century.¹²² Due to the small size of this artifact, it is difficult to make out the form of the Minotaur, but it is clear that the composition resembles Oriental versions of the heroic combat scene. Theseus thrusts his sword at the Minotaur but appears also to wear a bow and quiver on his back. The third figure, possibly Ariadne, either holds out her veil or holds a stick in her hands.¹²³

Architectural terracotta reliefs from Sardis and Gordion in Asia Minor also depict the duel between a hero and bull-headed man. The Gordion fragments date to the first half of the sixth century.¹²⁴ Only one fragment from Sardis is preserved and, because of its poor condition,

¹¹⁶ Young 1972, 111

¹¹⁷ Young 1972, 111; Nat. Mus. 6961a and 6965

¹¹⁸ Young 1972, 112; Louvre MN 675; Morris 1992, Plates 10a and 10b

¹¹⁹ Young 1972, 112

¹²⁰ Young 1972, 113

¹²¹ Young 1972, 113

¹²² Young 1972, 114; Boardman 1968, 45

¹²³ Young 1972, 114

¹²⁴ Young 1972, 114; Glendinning 102

interpretation and dating is disputed.¹²⁵ The fragments from both sites appear to follow the same composition. A hero is on the left and he faces a smaller opponent who seems to have a human body and a bull's head, ear, and horn.¹²⁶ The hero grabs the Minotaur's horn and stabs him with a sword. Shear dates this tile to the end of the seventh or beginning of the sixth century BC but Åkerström prefers after 550 BC.¹²⁷ The fragments from Gordion are better documented. Åkerström dates the frieze to between 547 and the early fifth century BC.¹²⁸ In some of the plaques, Theseus wears a plumed helmet. The Minotaur is a larger size than Theseus. Young sees the Gordion Minotaur in the tradition of the Olympia plaques and the Rayet skyphos, while the Sardis fragment is closer to the Corinthian and Aiginetan representations.¹²⁹ It seems strange that the only two surviving early depictions from architectural reliefs in relatively close proximity should be considered categorically unrelated. Without further evidence, a connection between the fragment at Sardis and the fragments from Gordion should not be dismissed.

Given the important role of Theseus in Attic mythology, it is surprising that the material evidence suggests no special Attic interest in the battle between Theseus and the Minotaur in this early period.¹³⁰ The slaying of the Minotaur scene appears in Attica only after the black-figure style is established in the second quarter of the sixth century.¹³¹ The earliest Attic examples show interest in the subsidiary details of the myth, but this is soon to be followed by a narrowing of elements to the core duel between Theseus and the Minotaur.

A few examples demonstrate the ways in which early Attic artists depicted elements of the wider narrative. One notable work, the François vase by Kleitias, alludes to the Minotaur myth without representation of the duel (Fig 3a).¹³² This well-known vase, dated to c. 570 BC, shows a variety of mythical episodes on a single vase. The François vase has a significance that goes beyond the fact that it is the first known representation of Theseus in Attic art, since it alludes to both

¹²⁵ Young 1972, 114, Shear 1923

¹²⁶ Young 1972, 114

¹²⁷ Young 1972, 114-115; Åkerström 1964; Shear 1923

¹²⁸ Young 1972, 114; Åkerström 1964

¹²⁹ Young 1972, 115

¹³⁰ Young 1972, 128

¹³¹ Young 1972, 128

¹³² Florence Inv. 4209

Theseus' role in the Cretan adventures and his involvement with Peirithoos in the battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths.¹³³ The François vase shows Theseus with a lyre while Ariadne, holding a ball and ribbon, and her nurse look towards him. Fourteen young men and women dance to their left. Scholars do not agree on the location of this scene. It may represent the Crane dance on Delos or perhaps a dance taking place on Crete.¹³⁴ Some have even suggested that this scene illustrates the “dancing place” from Homer’s description.¹³⁵ Other fragments attributed to Kleitias show youths hand in hand, which may suggest that this subject was treated in the same way on other vases.¹³⁶ In her analysis of iconographical themes on the François vase, Neils sees Theseus as a personification of aristocratic civic life. She describes Theseus on the vase as “the well-educated musician who leads his people; the suitor who woos and wins over the daughter of a king; the able team-fighter who conquers the uncivilized forces disrupting society (centaurs); the founder of competitive games in honor of the city’s patron deity.”¹³⁷ In the presentation of several myths of Theseus on a single work, this vase anticipates the elaboration of Theseus’ character in the fifth century.

The Minotaur himself is not depicted on the François vase. One interpretation of this omission is that the artist generally avoided the direct representation of battles between heroes and monsters.¹³⁸ This same argument is often put forward to explain Homer’s omission of the Minotaur. Regardless of why the creators of the François vase omitted the Minotaur, it is clear that they were interested in a developed expression of the myth that included references to narrative elements other than the duel.

The first Attic representation of the duel between Theseus and the Minotaur is on a cup made by Glaukytes and Archikles.¹³⁹ It shows Theseus slaying the Minotaur in the presence of Athena with a lyre, Ariadne with a ball and wreath, Ariadne’s nurse, and twelve youths.¹⁴⁰ Theseus and

¹³³ Von den Hoff 2013, 133

¹³⁴ Young 1972, 130

¹³⁵ Young 1972, 130

¹³⁶ Young 1972, 130

¹³⁷ Neils 2013, 128

¹³⁸ Young 1972, 130; Munich Inv. 2243, ABV 163 #2

¹³⁹ Young 1972, 131

¹⁴⁰ Young 1972, 131

the Minotaur are engaged in Oriental-style heroic combat. Theseus wears an animal skin, which is common in Attic black-figure, and the Minotaur is naked, his animal hide emphasized by speckles.¹⁴¹ This representation is similar to the Rayet Skyphos in that it shows both the duel and other narrative elements.

A hydria from Leyden shows the duel between a bearded, animal-skinned Theseus and the nude Minotaur.¹⁴² Athena stands behind Theseus, while Ariadne stands to the side of the Minotaur. Behind Athena, Hermes and three others look on. Minos stands behind Ariadne but looks in the other direction towards the seated figure of Demodike. This depiction seems to show the duel between Theseus and the Minotaur as a contest to be judged by Demodike.¹⁴³ One interpretation of this scene is that Ariadne and Minos are sympathetic to the Minotaur.¹⁴⁴ If accurate, this aspect of the myth is not known from other sources.

While these three examples demonstrate early Attic interest in narrative elements of the myth, they are followed by a canonization of the heroic combat scene to the exclusion of most other elements. In later Attic black-figure, and then red-figure, Theseus and the Minotaur are depicted in a stock motif that is very similar to the Orientalizing heroic combat scenes on the Olympia Shield straps. This iconographical motif remains extremely static from its appearance in Greece until the end of the Classical period.

In conclusion, this survey demonstrates that in its earliest manifestations the Minotaur myth was primarily represented through a heroic combat scene. The myth was first depicted in the Peloponnese, but it is found in many places in the early Greek world. It is notable that the Minotaur myth does not appear in Crete at all in this period and neither is it especially prevalent in Attica. In this survey, we have encountered two main approaches to the depiction of the Minotaur myth.¹⁴⁵ On the one hand, there are works that show only the heroic combat scene, such as the Olympia shield straps. On the other, there are those that emphasize narrative

¹⁴¹ Young 1972, 131

¹⁴² Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden: XIV3; Beazley Archive # 310125, ABV 104 #126

¹⁴³ Young 1972, 131

¹⁴⁴ Young 1972, 131

¹⁴⁵ Young 1972, 126-127

elements and exclude the battle scene, such as the François vase. We have also seen several depictions that incorporate both the heroic combat scene and other narrative elements.

The heroic combat between Theseus and the Minotaur is standardized from its first appearance in Greece. The consistent way in which the scene is represented suggests it was modelled on an established visual tradition. In cases where the Minotaur myth is alluded to without the inclusion of the Minotaur, such as on the François vase or in Pausanias, Theseus is represented playing the lyre. In the later version of the Minotaur myth, Theseus plays the lyre as part of the celebratory dancing and festivities on Delos; perhaps Theseus plays his lyre because the Minotaur has already been slayed. In this sense, both scenes would represent the victory of Theseus and death of the Minotaur. In later iconography, however, the slaying of the Minotaur would become the standard reference to the myth as a whole.

Theseus and the Minotaur in Early Greek Visual Language

Based on the survey above, it is clear that the earliest representations of Theseus and the Minotaur in Greek art show the two figures in one-to-one combat. A closer investigation of the heroic combat scene between Theseus and the Minotaur will point out some consistent elements of this image. This foundational inquiry will allow us to identify some possible models that could have influenced how Greek artists first portrayed Theseus and the Minotaur. The Olympia shield straps, which range in date from the end of the seventh century to the mid-sixth century, provide a useful case study of this scene. Kunze has catalogued almost all the shield straps and organized the images into groups based on iconographical changes.¹⁴⁶

An analysis of several versions of the Theseus and the Minotaur scene highlights both the earliest variations among the image as well as the most consistent features. All versions of Theseus and Minotaur on the Olympia shield straps show a hero and animal-headed man in combat. The hero is usually on the left but may appear on the right. The nude hero is bearded, his hair comes down his neck in curls and on occasion wears a headband. The hero's weapon is a

¹⁴⁶ Kunze 1950, 127-132

usually nail-like sword; he may or may not wear a sheath around his chest. In group IVe, the hero wears a sheath but wields a rock over his hand (Fig 7b). In group IIIId, the hero bears a sword, but the Minotaur holds a rock (Fig 7c).

In contrast to the nude hero, the Minotaur wears a chiton-like garment, or at least a skirt (as in group Ve). He is identified as a bull-headed man because of his horn but the hybrid's head takes a variety of forms. The Minotaur from group VIIId has a very leonine face, echoing the depiction of lions on other shield straps (Fig 7d). The Minotaur from group Ve has a more equine face (Fig 7e). The Minotaur's mane is depicted with varying degrees of detail but there is a consistent use of lines to indicate a mane on the neck. Typically, the Minotaur holds no weapon but is occasionally shown with a rock.

The most canonical aspect of this image is how the two characters engage in combat. Although the rendering of Theseus' or the Minotaur's appearance and weapons vary along with artistic whim and trends in later Greek art, the way in which the two combatants interact with each other is remarkably consistent. The hero stands fully upright, with one hand holding his weapon and another grabbing the Minotaur's horn. This pose may be connected with the smiting king or smiting god posture known from Egyptian and Near Eastern art.¹⁴⁷ The Minotaur crouches in what is called "knielauf" pose: a lunge with one knee to the ground and the other knee bent. He reaches towards the hero with one arm, sometimes grabbing him. The other arm is bent at the elbow. The knielauf pose may simply be a compositional device: it allows the Minotaur, who grows in size as the series of shield straps progresses, to fit on the same plane as the smaller hero. This pose may visually indicate the monstrous nature of the one who holds it (as is the case with the gorgon) or could simply indicate motion (as with early Nike figures). It may also indicate that the scene depicts the moment of the Minotaur's submission.

In the later shield straps, additional elements supplement the heroic combat scene and allude to the wider narrative of the Minotaur myth. In group VIIId, a much smaller figure occupies the space between the two combatants (Fig 7d). Based on later narrative, this figure is usually called

¹⁴⁷ Markoe 1989, 90

Ariadne, though she could be an anonymous onlooker. She is identified as female based on her dress, which drapes to her ankles. She faces the direction of Theseus and holds a hoop in her right hand. It is tempting to connect this hoop with the crown or ring known from later versions of the myth, but this is otherwise unattested until much later in the Classical period. In group IVe, there is a sun-like motif in the upper right-hand corner. This may also be a variant on the crown or ring symbol but could also simply be designed to fill space.

Another of these alterations, mentioned above, is the addition of a rock. In group IIIId, the Minotaur holds a rock, perhaps intended to mirror Theseus' sword. In group IVe, it is Theseus who holds a rock. Although we have no literary sources that indicate what weapon Theseus used to slay the Minotaur, it is curious that Theseus should use a rock when he also wears a sword sheath. The inclusion of a rock in several groups, in the hands of either the Minotaur or Theseus, may suggest an early aspect of the myth now lost.

With the exception of a few common variations in the latest examples, the Theseus and the Minotaur scene is represented with remarkable consistency among the Olympia Shield Straps. In its first appearance in Greek art, then, the essential elements of the image have already been established. This suggests that the Greek image of Theseus and the Minotaur drew elements from an earlier and well-established tradition. I suggest that the heroic combat scene between Theseus and the Minotaur image is derived from Iron Age art of the Near East.

Iconographical Origins in Near Eastern Art

In the eighth and seventh centuries BC, there were a variety of heroic combat forms in the visual language of the Levant and Western Asia that Greeks could have seen and imitated. These heroic combat scenes were influenced by a long artistic tradition in the Near East that goes back to at least 3000 BC. Four sources demonstrate the types of heroic combat scenes that were available for Greeks to use as models: Neo-Hittite orthostat reliefs, the Nimrud ivories, the Ziwiyeh treasure, and, most importantly, Phoenician bowls.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Young 1972, 49

North Syrian and Neo-Hittite orthostat reliefs, dating from c.900 to 700 BC, show a man versus lion heroic combat.¹⁴⁹ The Tell Halaf orthostat is the early example, dated by von Oppenheim to the early 9th century BC. An upright lion bites his attacker while a hero plunges his sword into the animal's stomach. The man has long hair, no beard, and wears a long tunic. A similar scene is known from an 8th century orthostat from Carchemish.¹⁵⁰ An upright lion faces right, but only the arm and tip of the hero's weapon is preserved. On this relief, the heroic combat scene is alongside depictions of animal combat, griffin-headed men and Mesopotamian bull-men, and other monsters and battle scenes.¹⁵¹ A third orthostat from Karatepe, c. 700 BC, shows a man facing an upright lion.¹⁵² The hero reaches towards the lion's head with one hand, and points the other at the animal's stomach. On the same monument, a hunting scene is depicted.

The Nimrud ivories are separated into several groups, two of which contain heroic combat scenes. The Loftus group from the South East Palace is dated to the late 9th and early 8th centuries and contains several pyxides with lion combats and one griffin combat.¹⁵³ In several combat scenes, a beardless man wearing a Syrian tunic strides to the right. The hero holds a sword in his left hand, tip already piercing the animal's chest, while his right hand grabs the animal's neck. The animal's front feet are raised off the ground. Two other versions of lion combat are known from this group. In one, a man attacks a lion from the rear; he plunges his sword into its flank while he grabs it behind the ear. In the other, shown on one fragmentary pyxis, a man runs toward a lion, holding his sword horizontally.

The Fort Shalmanesser group, dating to the late 8th century, contains many griffin combats of several types.¹⁵⁴ In one heroic combat scene, a youth dressed like an Egyptian pharaoh with wings uses a spear to slay a griffin, who stands on his hind legs and turns his head toward the hero. On another, the griffin has fallen on his front legs with his back legs in the air. The griffin

¹⁴⁹ Young 1972, 50; von Oppenheim 1955

¹⁵⁰ Young 1972, 51; Hogarth and Woolley 1914

¹⁵¹ Young 1972, 51 Hogarth and Woolley 1914

¹⁵² Young 1972, 51; Akurgal 1980

¹⁵³ Young 1972, 52

¹⁵⁴ Young 1972, 52

turns its head upward and the hero aims the longsword at the griffin's mouth while he presses one knee or foot against the griffin's shoulder. This is often referred to as the "leaping griffin" type.

Several heroic combat scenes are also known from the Ziwiye treasure. These finds are usually dated to the early 7th century, but this date is disputed.¹⁵⁵ Three ivory plaques from the Ziwiye treasure show men in Assyrian dress fighting animals with spears. On two plaques, men holding small shields and spears fight an upright lion. Below, a man holding spear and shield attacks a bull, its body facing right, and head turned back towards the man. On the third, a man with a spear attacks a lion with forelegs spread, holding the animal by its forelock. Some gold plaques from the Ziwiye treasure may also show a man versus lion combat scene, but it is thought that they may be forgeries.¹⁵⁶

Young has connected the Ziwiye scenes with a 9th century stone relief from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal at Nimrud (Fig 8).¹⁵⁷ This relief decorates the garment worn by one of the large figures. One section of the relief shows an Assyrian man in a long skirt plunging his sword into the neck of an upright lion with its forelegs spread to left and right. There are also other animal and monster duel scenes on the garment. Young believes the heroic combat scenes known from the Ziwiye treasure and the Palace stone reliefs combine Assyrian elements with provincial qualities.¹⁵⁸ They all show a man in one to one combat with a lion or bull.

The closest iconographical models for Theseus and the Minotaur that I have found are the heroic combat scenes between a hero and an upright griffin on Phoenician bowls. Several types of heroic combat are known from Phoenician bowls: man versus upright lion, man versus upright griffin, and man versus leaping griffin. The bowls employ a range of styles and types; in fact, one of the defining features of Phoenician art is the amalgamation of many Near Eastern artistic traditions, including Aegean, North Syrian, Assyrian, and Egyptian elements.¹⁵⁹ Markoe

¹⁵⁵ Young 1972, 53; Barnett 1956, 111-116

¹⁵⁶ Young 1972, 54

¹⁵⁷ Young 1972, 53; Canby 1971, 42

¹⁵⁸ Young 1972, 55

¹⁵⁹ Markoe 1985, 3

catalogued almost all known examples of Phoenician type bowls found on Cyprus and abroad in his monograph, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean*. Heroic combat is featured on the decoration of many of the bowls. A closer look at one example will show remarkable similarities to the Theseus and the Minotaur scene in Greek art.

Catalogue n. Cy8 from Markoe's work is a useful case study (Fig 9).¹⁶⁰ This shallow bowl is from Cyprus, now housed in the Metropolitan Museum. It is made of silver, with gold plated figural decoration. According to Cesnola, the original publisher, this bowl was part of the "Treasure of Curium", found during an excavation of a rock-cut vault or chamber beneath a columned structure, which he identified as the temple of Apollo Kourios.¹⁶¹ However, more recently, it has been suggested that the treasure chamber was fabricated by Cesnola and that the ensemble probably came from a wealthy tomb nearby.¹⁶² Cy8 is decorated in a medallion style, with narrative frames in concentric circles around a central image. There are three heroic combats on Cy8. In the central circle, a winged Assyrian hero slays a lion. In the outer register, there is a hero in Assyrian dress slaying a griffin, a hero in a loincloth slaying a fallen griffin, and a "Melqart" figure who slays a lion. There are also animal scenes, a smiting Egyptian king figure, a winged Egyptian goddess, and heraldic pairs of animals.

The heroic combat scene in the top outer register provides the closest parallel to the Theseus and the Minotaur scene on the Olympia shield straps. The hero is a man dressed in Assyrian attire. He holds a longsword horizontally in his right hand and grasps the griffin's forelock in his left hand. The griffin stands on its hindlegs, with its left foreleg reaching towards the hero and its left paw wrapped around the hero's right arm.

A comparison between this heroic combat scene with the Theseus and the Minotaur image known from the Olympia shield straps yields significant correspondences. The two heroic combat scenes are between a hero and a mythical creature. The hero in both images holds a longsword horizontally, his elbow jutting away from his body. He reaches toward the animal's

¹⁶⁰ Markoe 1985, 177 N. Cy8

¹⁶¹ Cesnola 1978, 302

¹⁶² See Markoe 1985, 176 n.19 for further discussion.

head with his other hand. In the case of the griffin, the hero grabs the forelock, but in the Minotaur's scenes, the hero grabs the Minotaur's horn. Both hero figures are bearded and have similar hair, which drapes to their shoulders. The griffin reaches toward the hero with one hand and wraps the other around the hero's outreached arm. In many examples, the Minotaur reaches toward the hero, sometimes grabbing his torso or arm. These important aspects of the iconography suggest that an image such as this Phoenician bowl was used as a model for the Theseus and the Minotaur images on the Olympia shield straps.

In addition to heroic combat, bull-headed men appeared in Near Eastern art in many contexts. Greek artists, having seen heroic combat scenes between heroes and hybrid monsters as well as bull-headed men on Near Eastern works of art, may have combined the two visual ideas in order to represent the Greek myth of the Minotaur. Alternatively, these visual representations may have been instrumental in the creation of the myth itself.¹⁶³

A Near Eastern inspiration for the Theseus and the Minotaur image would also explain the leonine appearance of the early Minotaurs. Although bull-headed men were never the adversary in Near Eastern heroic combat scenes, a lion is perhaps the most common adversary. If the combat scene between Theseus and the Minotaur was modelled on Near Eastern combat scenes, it is not surprising that early depictions of this new hybrid adversary, the Minotaur, should have similar features to the most common Near Eastern adversary, the lion.

It is not a coincidence that the closest iconographical models for Greek representations of Theseus and the Minotaur are found on portable Phoenician metal bowls. Phoenician metal bowls were exported throughout the Mediterranean in the Iron age and have been found at multiple Greek sites, including Olympia, Delphi, Athens, and Rheneia.¹⁶⁴ Morris has drawn attention to the role of Phoenician artistic models, and even Levantine immigrants, in the origins of Greek art.¹⁶⁵ Since the Phoenician style was so often imitated, it is often difficult for scholars

¹⁶³ Morris 1992, 163, who discusses how Near Eastern motifs on portable arts appear in later Greek narratives expressed in poetry

¹⁶⁴ Markoe 1985, 1-2

¹⁶⁵ Morris 1992, chapters 4-7

to identify which bowls are Phoenician-made and which are imitations.¹⁶⁶ Phoenician bowls were manufactured in mainland Phoenicia but also in significant and independent locations, especially those on Cyprus.¹⁶⁷ Recent scholarly works have also emphasized the role of Cyprus in the transmission of ideas from East to West.¹⁶⁸ For these reasons, the Phoenician bowls are prospective candidates for the transmission of heroic combat scenes from East to West in the Iron Age.

In the Iron Age, several variations of the heroic combat motif were in circulation in the Near East and the Aegean and would likely have been accessible to Greeks. None of these representations depict a particular myth or a particular hero. Often, heroic combat scenes were used simply as repeating decorative motifs. As Young writes, “The heroic combat was available to Greeks without being tied to any specific identity or narrative.”¹⁶⁹ The Greek form of Theseus and the Minotaur was not an exact imitation of a Phoenician, or other Near Eastern, image. Instead, it was based on an iconographical model and altered it to suit a Greek story. The Greeks adapted this form and adjusted it to fit earlier narratives, or perhaps even built narratives from the visual motifs they saw. This was also the case with the form of the Minotaur himself. Although a mythical creature, the griffin, was often represented as a hero’s adversary, there is no precedent for a bull-man hybrid shown as the adversary in the same manner as the Greek Minotaur. Composite creatures were depicted in art and played a major role in the cosmology and religion of the Near East.¹⁷⁰ The Greeks who first spoke of or depicted the Minotaur may have imagined this monstrous hybrid on analogy with the Near Eastern monsters they knew from art and story.

Cultural Transfer in the Orientalizing Period

Close comparison of heroic combat scenes in early Greek art with the much older Near Eastern tradition shows that the Theseus and the Minotaur scene was based on Near Eastern models. The Greek representation was especially similar to heroic combat scenes depicted on Phoenician

¹⁶⁶ Markoe 1985, 3

¹⁶⁷ Markoe 1985,3

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, Morris 1992, Burkert 1992, or Markoe 1985

¹⁶⁹ Young 1972, 61

¹⁷⁰ See Goodnick-Westenholtz 2004 or Padgett 2003

metal bowls. This thesis fits well with wider trends in the movement of goods and ideas in the early Archaic period. At this time, in the so-called “Orientalizing” period, there was a great influx of Eastern goods and ideas into Greece. Although scholars debate the extent and nature of this process, it is clear that Eastern influence on the development of Greek art and myth was pervasive, and the many ways in which Oriental goods and ideas permeated Greek culture in the Bronze and Iron Ages have received much scholarly attention in the past fifty years.¹⁷¹ The evidence is too extensive to recount here. Instead, I wish to highlight some features of the “Orientalizing” process that particularly affected how Eastern forms manifested in Greek myth.

Eastern goods were not conveyed to Greece in one movement. Merchants stopped at many waypoints on their journey and each was an opportunity for an idea or object to influence a new area. This consideration of the logistics involved has far reaching implications for how ideas were translated across cultures. The sporadic movement of goods that accompanied merchants throughout the Mediterranean meant that meaning and value were constantly reinterpreted and reappraised. An image that emerged in the far East in the Bronze Age might be nearly unrecognizable by the time it manifested in the Iron Age Aegean.

One example of this phenomenon is the heroic combat scene, a motif that originated in Mesopotamia and became popular in Syrian and Aegean art. Mycenaean heroic combat scenes seem to have developed from Syrian and Aegean styles. In Young’s reconstruction, the Mycenaean type is then adopted in Syria, where it is transferred back towards the East. Finally, in the Archaic period, it appears in Greece once again. Another example is the movement of the Egyptian guardian of childbirth, Taweret. She first travelled from Egypt to the Levant and then appeared on Crete where she acquired some Aegean and possibly Anatolian aspects.¹⁷² Taweret, along with the sphinx and the griffin, adorned Minoan palaces and later appeared on the Greek mainland in Mycenaean culture.¹⁷³ The sphinx and griffin continued to be represented on Crete and were eventually reintroduced to the Greek mainland from the East in the early Archaic age.

¹⁷¹ See, for example, Burkert 1992, Morris 1992, Bernal 1987, or West 1997

¹⁷² Wengrow 2011, 137

¹⁷³ Wengrow 2011, 137

Sarah Morris has shown how objects flowing East to West were often physically changed en route or acquired new meaning, or both. She describes how Egyptian stone bowls might be “improved” in Crete, cylinder seals recut in Cyprus, or Oriental bronze reliefs applied to Greek sculpture.¹⁷⁴ Morris refers to Crete and Cyprus as important waypoints on the journey from East to West. She also describes the conservative approach of these islands, which meant that Orientalizing traditions may have held out longer there than elsewhere.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, Burkert emphasizes the central connective role of Syria, Crete, and Cyprus.¹⁷⁶ Morris and Burkert both support a model of cultural continuum, or reciprocal influence, across the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁷⁷

It is likely that many Eastern goods were carried to Greece by the Phoenicians. Recent research suggests a strong Phoenician presence throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, as both merchants and immigrants.¹⁷⁸ As middle men, the Phoenicians both deliberately and inadvertently influenced which particular eastern objects landed on Greek soil. In their own art, they combined various elements of other Near Eastern traditions.¹⁷⁹ They may have also played a role in explaining these objects to the Greeks, but there is little direct evidence for this. The spread of at least one intellectual development, the alphabet, which had profound intellectual, cognitive, and cultural implications, suggests that more than material goods were exchanged between Phoenicians and Greeks at this time.

Particular kinds of eastern media were especially likely to influence Greek artists. Due to the logistics of transportation, it is probable that the majority of eastern items that arrived in Greece were small and portable. Markoe emphasizes the role of Phoenician bowls, while Wengrow and Morris note the importance of small trinkets like cylinder seals.¹⁸⁰ Foreign objects could also have been seen at sanctuaries, particularly the growing panhellenic sanctuaries of Delphi and

¹⁷⁴ Morris 1992, 105

¹⁷⁵ Morris 1992, 110

¹⁷⁶ Burkert 1992, 15 (Syria), 63 (Crete), 103 (Cyprus)

¹⁷⁷ Burkert 1992, 128; Morris 1992, 95

¹⁷⁸ Morris 1992, 159

¹⁷⁹ Markoe 1985, 2

¹⁸⁰ Markoe 1985; Wengrow 2011; Morris 1992, 116

Olympia, which may also have hosted itinerant Eastern craftsman.¹⁸¹ Scott details the many eastern dedications that could be found at Delphi beginning in the late seventh century: “craters, jars, vessels, bowls, lions, bulls, shields, statues, necklaces, girdles or even simple blocks of metal.”¹⁸²

Once these Oriental goods appeared in Greece, they were interpreted and adapted by the Greeks in a variety of ways, a diversity that reflected the reality that the “Greeks” at this time are not a uniform group and any given community did not necessarily interpret eastern motifs in the same ways as their neighbors. Each group had their own localized cultural customs, styles of art, and versions of stories. Oriental elements, such as composite creatures, could be woven into these local customs to produce hybrid elements distinct to that community. Eastern elements might be rearranged to fit into an indigenous visual language, or new narratives might be created to make sense of foreign elements. For example, Burkert discusses the way in which images of Lamashtu, a Mesopotamian demon associated with childbirth, were “shaken up, taken out of their context, and placed in a new order” in the Greek myth of Medusa.¹⁸³

The question of cultural borrowing has been addressed quite extensively in the past twenty years, especially in the works of Burkert, West, and Morris.¹⁸⁴ A telling example is the Greek alphabet, which was developed around this time based on Phoenician letters. Bianchi uses the development of the Greek alphabet as a model to explain how visual motifs from the Near East were incorporated into the cultural record of Greek city-states, and later modified further.¹⁸⁵ The Greek city-states were not united and this led to the creation of various initial letter forms in response to the Phoenician alphabet.¹⁸⁶ These letter forms have many similarities, both to the Phoenician forms and to one another, but each reflects a local adaptation of a Phoenician model.

¹⁸¹ Burkert 1992; Morgan 35-39

¹⁸² Scott 2010, 45

¹⁸³ Burkert 1992, 85

¹⁸⁴ Burkert 1992, Morris 1992, West 1997

¹⁸⁵ Bianchi 2004, 18

¹⁸⁶ Bianchi 2004, 18

Bianchi suggests that we envision the incorporation of Near Eastern composite creatures in the same fashion. No single Greek city-state was responsible for the adoption of a particular image and each group might have had a different adaptation of a motif.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, each Greek manifestation could have been a response to a different Near Eastern version. There were many variations of composite creatures in early Greek iconography and myth and canonical versions did not appear until much later. This model of varied development also applies to the stories that accompanied Near Eastern visual depictions.¹⁸⁸ Even if it was the same image that was seen by different groups, the ways in which a motif was interpreted could nevertheless be varied.¹⁸⁹

As we consider how aspects of Eastern culture were adapted to a Greek context, it is important to remember that these portable objects communicated primarily through visual forms. Although scholars such as M. L. West have demonstrated the strong links between Oriental and Greek literature,¹⁹⁰ it was still through material exotica that many eastern motifs were known to the Greeks. As Sarah Morris writes, epic motifs most often “took their origin in foreign images, not formulas, and may have travelled with objects, not poetry.”¹⁹¹ The potential for creative misunderstanding when these images crossed the Aegean can make it difficult to identify and define specific connections between Oriental and Greek motifs, but the overwhelming evidence suggests that these connections were common and significant.

The visual nature of this transfer becomes especially important when we consider Eastern influence on emerging Greek mythology. Although many scholars prefer to imagine that Greeks simply employed eastern motifs to express an already established mythology, such is not always the case. It is just as likely that some Greek myths were invented precisely to explain eastern motifs. The evidence for the development of each myth is different and must be evaluated individually. Often, as is the case with the Minotaur myth, there is not enough evidence to settle the argument. It is clear that the earliest images of Theseus and the Minotaur were based on

¹⁸⁷ Bianchi 2004, 18

¹⁸⁸ Bianchi 2004, 18

¹⁸⁹ Bianchi 2004, 18

¹⁹⁰ West 1997

¹⁹¹ Morris 1992, 116

Eastern models, but the extent to which Eastern ideas interacted with already established elements of the myth remains vague.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the earliest scenes of Theseus show his heroic combat with the Minotaur. The consistency in which the scene is represented suggests that it was built on an established model, which was found broadly in the tradition of the Near Eastern heroic combat scene and specifically in the Iron age art of the Levant. The heroic combat scene was one of many Near Eastern ideas that influenced the development of Greek art and myth in the Orientalizing period.

This investigation has highlighted the centrality of the heroic combat scene in the earliest visual representations of the Minotaur myth. Both Theseus and the Minotaur are defined by this scene: they appear in opposition to each other and the one defines the other. This chapter has located the earliest examples of the scene and suggested a connection with the Near East that will reappear throughout this study. In order to further understand the antithetical roles of Theseus and the Minotaur, we will now turn to the hero's other hybrid adversaries: the Centaurs, the Amazons, and even the Persians.

Chapter 3 – Hybrid Enemies

This chapter explores the role of hybrid creatures in Greek myth and thought. Through a consideration of Greek myths and representations of the Centaurs and the Amazons, two hybrid groups which have been more thoroughly studied than the Minotaur, this chapter provides the framework for a more detailed exploration of the Minotaur's hybrid form, to follow in the next chapter. In particular, this chapter seeks to outline the process through which Centaurs and Amazons became analogs for the Persians in fifth century Athens and to suggest that hybridity was key to their similarity.

The modern interpretation of mythical Centaurs and Amazons is predicated on the assumption that Greeks, and particularly fifth century Athenians, thought about differences in species, gender, and culture through polar opposition and by analogy. Therefore, in order to present an understanding of these two mythical groups as they were perceived by the Greeks it is necessary to briefly outline this way of thinking.

This is followed by a consideration of Centaurs and Amazons in myth. The myths of Centaurs and Amazons each addressed a category of difference, but in their hybrid nature, they also challenged a binary model of difference by ascribing some positive qualities to the category of Other. The Centaurs allow a deeper discussion of how mythical stories embodied, expressed, and created Athenian ideals, while the Amazons allow a more thorough discussion of how these mythical stories developed specifically in the wake of the Persians wars. Through both analogy and comparison in art, Centaurs and Amazons were an allusion to the Persians.

A discussion of Athenian reception of the Persians reveals a similar reaction of simultaneous rejection and receptivity. Some, such as Hardwick, emphasize the tendency of scholars to project later ideas about the polarity between Hellenism and barbarism onto fifth-century Greeks.¹⁹² At the very least, scholarly emphasis on fifth-century hostility towards the East is an overstated and one-sided reading of the evidence. In the discussion that follows, I hope to draw attention to the

¹⁹² Hardwick 1990, 32

paradoxical response of fifth-century Athenians to the Near Eastern enemy, a response which simultaneously professed an emerging ideology of anti-barbarism while acknowledging kinship with and even admiration of the Persians.

Centaur, Amazons, and Persians were received in fifth century Athens with mixed attitudes. Centaur and Amazons were analogous to the Persians in their opposition to the Greek male ideal, but I suggest that they were also equivalent in that they all elicited complex attitudes towards categories of difference. I suggest that this element made battles between Greeks and mythical hybrids such a potent analogy for the Persian Wars.

Polarity and Analogy

Scholars often state that the Classical Athenians perceived social categories in terms of a polar opposition between “same” and “other”.¹⁹³ This is exemplified in an ancient quote often attributed to Thales of Miletus: “I am grateful to Fortune for three things: first, that I was born a human being, not an animal; second, that I was born a man, not a woman; and third, that I was born a Greek, not a Barbarian” (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 1.33). The adult Greek, male citizen was the norm as well as the ideal. He was defined by what he was not: an animal, a female, a foreigner. As DuBois writes, “the Greek male human struggled against imaginary barbarism, bestiality, and effeminization”.¹⁹⁴

The adult male Greek experienced his relationship to others through ideas of species, gender, and ethnic difference. This model of difference is based on polarity and analogy.¹⁹⁵ Animals, females, and foreigners are defined as polar opposites to the norm, the Athenian male citizen. All manifestations of the abnormal Other are aligned in their opposition to the ideal, the Athenian male citizen. The animal, the female, and the foreigner, however different they are to one another, are analogous in their opposition to the Athenian male citizen. Analogy between

¹⁹³ DuBois 1991, 5; see also Hall 1959, Miller 1997, Morris 1992, or Vlassopoulos 2013, for example.

¹⁹⁴ DuBois 1991, 5

¹⁹⁵ DuBois 1991, 2

animals, females, and foreigners are expressed in Greek art and poetry in which they are often aligned and conflated.

This binary model is reflected in Athenian public art and rhetoric of the fifth century. In public art, Greeks fought barbarians in many guises including Trojans, Giants, Amazons, and Centaurs. In funeral oration, public eulogies recounted these victories as inevitable triumphs of superiors over inferiors. In philosophy, Greeks discussed what separated them from animals, and on the stage, in works such as *the Oresteia*, women were cast as inferior, dangerous, and volatile.

Hybrids in Myth

The concepts of polarity and analogy are integral to understanding the fifth century Athenian reception of two creatures that were recurrent in Greek myths, the Centaurs and the Amazons. The Centaurs, part human and part animal, are always regarded as inferior because of their bestial instincts. The Amazons, part male and part female, are always conquered because of their inferior and unpredictable femininity. In an idealized binary model of difference, the essential qualities of these foes necessitated that they will always be defeated in battle by male Greek warriors.

The myths of Centaurs and Amazons each addressed a category of difference, but each group also tested a binary model of difference by ascribing some positive qualities to the category of Other. This was accomplished primarily through their characterization as hybrids, part like the Athenian male citizen while simultaneously different. In the fifth century, depictions of battles against Centaurs and Amazons refer to contemporary battles against another categorical Other, the barbarian. Stories about Centaurs reveal how mythical hybrids were vehicles for the expression of Greek ideas of difference. Tales of Amazons also express ideas about difference, and a further analysis of changing iconography in the wake of the Persian Wars demonstrates more clearly how a mythical group could come to represent contemporary Greek interaction with the Persians.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ See Castriota 1992

The Centaurs

The Centaurs were a hybrid race, half human and half horse. Their bestial nature combined with their hyper-masculinity made them formidable foes of Greek heroes while preventing them from participation in human, that is Greek, culture.

Pindar describes the origin of the Centaurs in *Pythian 2*. Ixion, king of the Lapiths, had been given refuge by Zeus but “in his maddened mind he fell in love with Hera, who belonged to Zeus for joyous acts of love” (27-29). Zeus, aware of Ixion’s intentions, sent a cloud in the shape of Hera instead (35-44). The result of Ixion and the cloud’s union is Kentauros, who “mated with Magnesian mares in the foothills of Pelion, and from them issued a wondrous herd of offspring similar to both parents, with the mother’s features below, the father’s above” (45-48). Thus, the race of Centaurs was born of sexual indiscretion. Licentiousness, an expression of over-masculinity, became central to their character.

A well-documented myth involving the Centaurs is the battle between Centaurs and Lapiths, also known as the Centauromachy.¹⁹⁷ Theseus was associated with the Centauromachy from his earliest appearance in literature. This scene is frequently depicted on fifth century Athenian monumental sculpture, such as the Treasury at Delphi and the Parthenon, and it appears in literature as early as the Homeric epics. The Centauromachy occurred at the wedding of Hippodameia and Peirithoos, prince of the Lapiths (a Thessalian tribe) and comrade of Theseus. The Centaurs, lacking self-discipline, drank too much wine. When the bride appeared, a centaur was seized with lust and launched himself upon her. As a result of this licentious action, violence erupted between the Lapiths and the Centaurs. Eventually and with the help of Peirithoos and Theseus, the Lapiths won the battle. This episode portrays the race of Centaurs as primitive beings who cannot observe the rituals or laws of civilization. In this way the Centaurs are concerned only with satisfying their appetites for sex, food, and alcohol.¹⁹⁸ By contrast, the Greek Lapiths stand for the values and ideals of civilization.

¹⁹⁷ See, for example, Diodorus Siculus IV 70

¹⁹⁸ Padgett 2003, 3

Marriage was an important marker of civilized culture. In their inability to participate in the proper exchange of women, the Centaurs were excluded from Greek culture.¹⁹⁹ This exclusion was further explored in a myth about Herakles. On his way to challenge the Erymanthian Boar, one of his canonical labours, Herakles is a guest of the centaur Pholos and the two establish a bond of *xenia* or guest-friendship. When Pholos gives Herakles wine from the common cellar of the Centaurs, however, other centaurs arrive and attack Herakles, thus destroying the proper guest-friendship between Pholos and Herakles.²⁰⁰ Given such unpredictability and lack of principle, the Centaurs were regarded as creatures who could not participate in the exchange of women, nor of food and wine, which were integral for the development of bonds between cultured men.

As these examples demonstrate, myths about the Centaurs project Greek views about the differences between humans and animals and between nature and culture. In a polar model of difference, the Centaurs were aligned with the Other and therefore stood in opposition to the Greek male. The Centaurs, through their unruly behaviour, reinforced the necessity that men maintain the important structures of culture such as marriage. The Greek defeat of the Centaurs emphasized the superiority of culture over nature, of man over beast.

Further consideration of the myths suggest that the Centaurs embody not only an opposition to the Greek male ideal but a regression. The centaur's behaviour is that of the uncivilized man. He evokes the danger that every Athenian male must resist, the risk of deteriorating into a savage lifestyle and into the desires and whims of beasts.

The Centaurs represented regression from Athenian male citizen in two ways: a regression from the present to the heroic past and a regression from culture to the primitive world of nature. The Centaurs are remnants of the age when mortals and gods intermingled, when Ixion was permitted to take refuge in the house of Zeus. This heroic past was not regarded with pure disdain, however, since it also invoked nostalgia and longing for a simpler time; a recurrent theme

¹⁹⁹ On the exchange of women as foundational to male culture, see Tyrrell 1984, especially chapter four

²⁰⁰ DuBois 1991, 28

through history. The Classical Athenians looked back to the age of Homeric heroes with reverence and admiration, but with the simultaneous recognition that Bronze Age kings and primitive heroes would not be tolerated in the democratic and civilized demos.²⁰¹ The negotiation of a new character for Theseus in the Classical era, which contrasted greatly with his Archaic image, is part of this phenomenon. As DuBois writes, for the Greeks “the world before culture was viewed with nostalgia as well as loathing.”²⁰²

The close association between Centaurs and the natural world was demonstrated in their animal nature and their knowledge of *pharmaka* (which include drugs, poisons, and spells). This affinity for nature is demonstrated in the typical visual representation of Centaurs: from their earliest appearance, Centaurs are depicted holding a branch.²⁰³ *Pharmaka* were associated with nature and also with another categorical Other; women. Rather than the masculine rationality of the Athenian male ideal, *pharmaka* represented feminine trickery. Poisons and drugs were composed of mysterious plants from the natural world. In their use of *pharmaka*, then, the Centaurs were associated with the dangerous powers of the natural and the feminine.

Although the race of Centaurs was portrayed negatively, one centaur, Chiron, was recognized as good. It is telling that Chiron was endowed with an alternative genealogy: unlike the other centaurs, Chiron was born of Chronos and the nymph Philyra. His half horse, half man composition was explained by Chronos' appearance as a horse. Chiron was related to the other centaurs by appearance only. Chiron was said to have tutored heroes such as Achilles, to have taught humans the art of *pharmaka*, and to have even married and had children.²⁰⁴ His positive characterization is thus derived from his ability to bring the powers of nature to the service of culture. However, this closeness to nature was his ultimate demise since Chiron was killed by a *pharmaka* (Ovid, *Fasti* 5.397-99). The figure of Chiron seems to overcome the differences between nature and culture, however, never fully human, he was ultimately victim to his own animal nature.

²⁰¹ Walker 1995, 48

²⁰² DuBois 1991, 30

²⁰³ Padgett 2003, 7

²⁰⁴ Padgett 2003, 18

In summary, the Centaurs represented the dangers of the uncivilized, but their characterization included an element of ambivalence. As half human, the Centaurs were not wholly bestial. As half beast, they were not wholly civilized. Their hybrid appearance is mirrored in their hybrid characterization, and this hybridity undermines their identification as a categorical “Other.” The Centaurs are Other, yes, but they are also part human and, in their connection with the heroic past and the natural world, evoke a nostalgia for what was lost in the transition to civilization.

This interpretation is supported by developments in the iconography of the Centaurs, who appear increasingly humanized in the later decades of the fifth century.²⁰⁵ The earliest depictions of the Centaurs show only males, but in the fifth century female centaurs appear for the first time.²⁰⁶ This process, which represents Centaur reproduction and gender differentiation on a human model, culminates at the end of the fifth century in depictions of families of Centaurs. Lucian describes a painting by the artist Zeuxis of a female centaur suckling her baby, “giving it the breast in human fashion” (Lucian, Zeuxis 4). In earlier Centauromachies, there is no question of Greek superiority; the Greek heroes are invariably overpowering the Centaurs. In contrast, by the fifth century, a few depictions give individual centaurs the upper hand. Pausanias (1.17.4) describes a painting in the Theseion of the battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths: “Theseus has already killed a centaur, but elsewhere the fighting is still undecided.” These changes may reflect an evolving attitude towards the categorical enemies of the Greeks, one which emphasizes aspects that they share.

The Amazons

The Amazons, a mythical tribe composed of women who act like men, were also interpreted as a categorical “Other.” While the myths of the Centaurs explored the difference between humans and animals by presenting a regression of the Athenian male ideal, the Amazons symbolized another kind of ambivalence by representing a reversal of Athenian gender roles.

²⁰⁵ Padgett 2003, 25

²⁰⁶ Padgett 2003, 27

For the Greeks, the Amazons were women in body but men in spirit. Their hybrid nature made them admirable as well as terrifying. As Tyrrell writes, the Amazons represent “the reversal of sexual asymmetry of male privilege.”²⁰⁷ In Classical Athens, the ideal adult male is citizen, warrior, and father. The Amazon is a woman and yet takes part in “masculine” activities. She participates in politics and makes decisions for her people, she fights bravely in war, and she controls her own reproduction. By doing so, the Amazon embodies Athenian male anxiety about the female. The female is seen as a danger to a male-dominated society, but she is also necessary for the very production of citizens. Due to this dual designation, of lesser than a male yet critical in her potential to take control of reproduction, the female Athenian is both resisted and feared – like the Amazon. The Athenian woman’s potential to overthrow male society, which stems from her ability to reproduce, must be circumscribed by male institutions such as marriage in order to maintain the status quo.²⁰⁸ While the female is therefore always a danger to the male, there remains a recognition that the female possesses capabilities that are necessary and even laudable. This anxiety regarding the necessary yet dangerous aspects of women pervade (male) Greek ideas about gender and presents itself in the male fantasy of reproduction without women in many fifth century works, such as the *Oresteia*.²⁰⁹ The hybrid Amazons, a group of individuals that encapsulate both the male and the female simultaneously, allow the articulation and justification of gender difference by presenting the inevitability of male dominance. The Amazons, however masculine in behaviour, are defined as women and will therefore always be conquered by Greek men.

As with the centaur Chiron, mythology puts forward a figure who seems to resolve a problem of difference while eventually subverting that possibility by showing the incompatibility of polar opposites. The character of Penthesilea challenges the male-female distinction but, in death, her true identity as female is confirmed. Penthesilea was queen of the Amazons. Her story was told in the epic *Aethiopsis*, written by Arctinus and known to us from Proclus. She arrived to aid the Trojans in war and it is in battle that “Achilles kills her while she is fighting at her best” (Proclus, *Chrestomathia* 175-180). This detail is telling: not only does Achilles vanquish her, but

²⁰⁷ Tyrrell 1984, xiii

²⁰⁸ Tyrrell 1984, xiv

²⁰⁹ See Tyrrell 1984 for discussion

she is defeated while she was fighting *at her best*. At the moment of Penthesilea's death, Achilles falls in love with her. That is, once her capabilities as a warrior – a masculine realm – is extinguished by a male, she is able to be loved as she has been shown to be a woman after all. As a capable warrior, Penthesilea was dangerous and feared by men, but as a conquered foe, she was a suitable object of affection. This interpretation suggests that while Achilles' love for Penthesilea seems at first reading to reconcile and display the positive attributes of female and male in a single person, on closer consideration such is not the case since Penthesilea is only loved once she is clearly identified as female at her death. Just as Chiron's bestial nature was confirmed by the way he was killed, so too Penthesilea's masculinity was neutralized and she was consigned to her feminine nature in death.

In summary, the myths of the Amazons, like those of the Centaurs, expressed Greek ideas of difference but also undermined total polarity by ascribing some positive traits to the categorical "Other". In the fifth century, mythical battles between Greeks and Centaurs or Amazons were used to allude to contemporary conflict with Persia. Centaurs, Amazons, and Persians were all conceptualized as manifestations of the foreign, feminine, bestial Other. As such, all were analogous in their opposition to the Greek ideal. Scholarly interpretations suggest that it is this logic that allows mythical tribes to allude to historical enemies.

A closer look at the development of the Amazon myths in fifth century Athens demonstrates how the conception of the Amazons changed in the aftermath of the Persian Wars and provides support for this interpretation. Changes in myth, as well as iconography, demonstrate that the Amazons were increasingly conceptualized as ancient predecessors of the contemporary eastern enemy. As Greek heroes like Herakles and Theseus had conquered the Amazons in the past, so too the Classical Athenians had been destined to defeat the Persians. Three mythological episodes demonstrate how the Amazons evolved in Athenian myth: Herakles' quest for Andromache's girdle, the rape of Antiope, and the battle between Amazons and Athenians at the Athenian Acropolis.

The first, and earliest, encounter between Greeks and Amazons is Herakles' quest to capture the girdle of Andromache. This episode appears in art after 575 BC and is considered one of

Herakles' canonical labours in the Classical period.²¹⁰ In early depictions, the Amazon's femininity is not stressed: she wears the armor and dress of a male Greek warrior.²¹¹ The encounter between Herakles and the Amazons faded in popularity by the end of the 6th century, to be replaced by the much more popular interactions between Theseus and the Amazons.²¹²

In the years between 575-550 BC, Attic pottery depicted Amazons alongside Herakles or in anonymous battles between Amazons and Greeks, which may represent amazons at Troy.²¹³ However, near the end of the sixth century and in the fifth century, Amazons were increasingly portrayed in scenes of daily life.²¹⁴ These artistic representations helped create the characterization of the Amazons as women who act like men. On Attic late sixth and fifth century pottery, the Amazons participate in male activities such as arming and setting out for battle, returning from battle with their dead, leading, riding and dismounting horses, and using chariots.²¹⁵

Herakles' escapade among the Amazons provided the antecedent for a similar deed of Theseus, the rape of Antiope, which in some accounts occurred on Herakles' expedition to acquire Andromache's girdle. The abduction of Antiope appears on Attic pottery around the turn of the fifth century in both black and red figure.²¹⁶ Scholars cite the abduction of Antiope as one of many attempts to align and equate Theseus with Herakles, a linking that is most evident on the Athenian Treasury at Delphi.²¹⁷ By involving Theseus with the Amazons, the Athenians suggested that the Pan-Hellenic hero and the Athenian hero were comparable.

Since Theseus was already known to have participated in the rapes of Helen, Persephone, and Ariadne, this more recent account was not one that was out of character for him. Tyrrell believes

²¹⁰ Tyrrell 1984, 2

²¹¹ Tyrrell 1984, 2; Von Bothmer, 1957

²¹² Tyrrell 1984, 3; Hardwick 1990, 30

²¹³ Von Bothmer 1957, 29; Hardwick 1990, 28

²¹⁴ Von Bothmer 1957, 91

²¹⁵ Von Bothmer 1957, 91

²¹⁶ Von Bothmer 1957, 124-129. Though Bothmer dates these examples to the years before 490 BC, as has been outlined above, it cannot be definitively determined that the rape of Antiope scenes were not contemporaneous with, or produced in the years following, the battle of Marathon.

²¹⁷ See Neer 2004

that the confusion over Antiope's name (by the fourth century, she was called Hippolyte) indicates the myth's youth.²¹⁸ Antiope, in contrast to Helen and Ariadne, was not a Greek woman but a foreigner. In some versions, she went with Theseus willingly, while in others she was taken by force. She bore to Theseus a son, Hippolytus, but was eventually replaced when Theseus married Phaedra. A later version of this story relates that on the day of Theseus and Phaedra's wedding, Antiope tried to attack the bride but was killed either by Herakles or other wedding guests. This story, while a later development, is notable because it draws a connection between the behaviour of Amazons and Centaurs: this same sequence of events occurred at a different wedding, when the centaurs ruined the wedding of Peirithoos and Hippodamaia.²¹⁹

The rape of Antiope was the first exploit of Theseus to be recorded in monumental sculpture. It adorned the pediment of the Temple of Apollo Daphnephoros in Eretria, built in 510 BC. Though this is a notably non-Athenian context, von Bothmer suspects it was constructed in an Attic style.²²⁰ The rape of Antiope disappears from the visual record in the years after the Battle of Marathon, when another encounter, a full-scale Amazonomachy, became popular. Tyrrell suggests that one reason why the rape of Antiope disappears from Athenian art in the years after the Persian wars is because it indicates that the subsequent invasion of Amazons was a result of Theseus' indiscretion.²²¹ Another suggestion is that the abduction did not sit well with Theseus' civilized Classical persona, where he was portrayed more often as the gentlemen who defended Eriboia against Minos' advances (Bacchylides *Ode 17*).

The most telling myth of the Amazons is the second Amazonomachy, the battle between invading Amazons and defending Athenians at the Athenian Acropolis. While the earliest Amazonomachy had taken place on Themiscyra, the island of the Amazons, this new myth brought the invaders into the heart of Athens. This Amazonomachy only appears in the years after the Persian wars. The Amazons, in retribution for Theseus' treatment of Antiope (either her abduction or his abandonment in favour of Phaedra), launch an attack on Attic soil. From the Areopagus (the same position that Xerxes launched his attack in 480 BC), they attack the

²¹⁸ Tyrrell 1984, 5

²¹⁹ Tyrrell 1984, 6

²²⁰ Von Bothmer 1957, 126

²²¹ Tyrrell 1984, 6

Athenian Acropolis but are repelled by Theseus and the Athenians. Every Amazon is killed; no survivors remain to tell their story.

This climactic battle was represented on Attic vases but also on significant monumental works such as the west metopes of the Parthenon and the metopes of the Athenian Treasury at Delphi. The battle was also depicted on influential paintings, since lost. Pausanias describes the paintings in the Theseion at Athens (1.17.4). A painting of the Amazonomachy was displayed alongside other episodes from Theseus' life: his dive for Poseidon's ring, the battle with the Centaurs, and his journey to the Underworld.²²² The Stoa Poikile, which is dated later in the fifth century than the Theseion, also displayed a painting of the battle between Athenians and Amazons. Here, the Amazonomachy was connected with a long history of Athenian triumph: it was presented alongside paintings of the battle of Troy, the battle of Marathon, and the battle between Athens and Sparta at Oinoe. These monuments present the Amazonomachy at the Athenian Acropolis as one of many Athenian victories that eventually led to the Greek victory in the Persian Wars, and even Athenian success against the Spartans.

The Amazons of the fifth century increasingly wore eastern clothing and carried eastern weapons. In their first appearances, the Amazons wore the armor and clothing of Greeks. Greek artists frequently recorded the names of individual Amazons on vases. As Hardwick writes, these details suggest that the Amazons were “not primarily perceived as having a communal identity.”²²³ These early Amazons were thought of as the foes of heroes, in the tradition of the archaic monsters of heroic combat. In black figure pottery, the Amazons are depicted more often in Athenian garb and they often fight in the manner of a hoplite. This development may be connected with the rise of the hoplite in Athenian warfare. In red-figure, the Amazons are increasingly represented in eastern dress. They wear trousers, sleeves, and pointed caps. They are also increasingly shown as archers rather than hoplites. Although the Persians and their subject peoples relied more on the spear than the bow, the Greeks depicted archery as the Persian battle skill of choice.²²⁴ Tyrrell writes, “in the language of weapons code, then, the bow is ambivalent.

²²² It is unclear whether Theseus' journey to the underworld was displayed in a painting or Pausanias merely mentions it next.

²²³ Hardwick 1990, 28

²²⁴ Tyrrell 1984, 51

It denotes a mode of fighting that is both beneath a Greek and terrifying to them – a suitable weapon for an Amazon, a woman yet a redoubtable foe.”²²⁵ I would extend this reasoning further: the ambivalent qualities of the bow made it suitable also for a Persian. A second major shift in iconography is attested in Classical red-figure, large-scale battles. Full-scale Amazonomachies now adorned both pottery and public monuments.²²⁶ In contrast to the early depictions of Amazons which seem to emphasize heroic combat between individuals, these full-scale battle scenes portray battles between culturally distinct groups. Alongside this change is an increased tendency to emphasize the feminine aspects of the Amazon, who is now often depicted bare-breasted.²²⁷

Clearly, the focus of myths of Amazons followed Athenian politics and history. The paucity of examples of non-Attic representations of Amazons in von Bothmer’s monograph, *Amazons in Greek Art*, demonstrates just how integral Amazons became to Athenian myth in particular.²²⁸ Amazons entered Athenian mythology as one of many foes of Herakles. As Theseus rose in prominence as hero of Athens, the abduction of Antiope came to signal his likeness to Herakles. Finally, in 480 BC the Persians laid siege of the Athenian Acropolis in the run up to the Battle of Salamis. It is not a coincidence that the Amazons, whose iconography now resembled more closely the eastern enemy, were then said to have launched an attack on the Athenian Acropolis itself. In inventing this myth, the Athenians created a mythical precedent for the recent barbarian invasion of Attica and subsequent Greek victory at Salamis. As Theseus had defended the Acropolis from the Amazons and saved Greece from a foreign foe, so too the Classical Athenians had led the repulsion of the Persians and saved Greece once more. Castriota summarizes this phenomenon: “By the mid-fifth century, the old tale of heroic exploits against these warrior women had been carefully reworked into an Athenian victory over an invading imperialist horde from Asia bent on the domination of all Greece, thereby furnishing a more thorough comparison for the events of 480 BC.”²²⁹

²²⁵ Tyrrell 1984, 51

²²⁶ Von Bothmer 1957, 161; Hardwick 1990, 29

²²⁷ Von Bothmer 1957, 169

²²⁸ Von Bothmer 1957, 111-115, for example

²²⁹ Castriota 1995, 32

The myths of the Amazons explore Athenian anxiety about women who act as men. Then, in the final battle for the Athenian Acropolis, this anxiety is soothed: the Amazons are wholly destroyed by the men of Athens, and, along with them, the possibility that a female or a foreigner could successfully dominate the Greek male.

Centaurs and Amazons as Persians

As I have demonstrated, myths about Centaurs and Amazons explored Athenian ideas of difference. The Persians too stood in opposition to the Greek male ideal and they were also implicated in a discussion of Greek-Barbarian polarity. In the fifth century, Centaurs and Amazons were used in public iconography as stand-ins for the Persians. This argument, put forward by many modern scholars, is based both on the groups' analogical equivalence as opposites of the Athenian male ideal and their frequent association in art.²³⁰ The analogy between Persians and Amazons feminized the eastern enemy, while the analogy between Persians and Centaurs characterized eastern culture as inferior and regressive. Greek battles against Centaurs and Amazons were presented as conscious mythical antecedents for the defeat of the Persians in art and in rhetoric. The Classical Athenians did not represent the battles of Marathon or Salamis on the Parthenon, the famous temple built by the success of the Athenian empire; instead, the Parthenon metopes show Greeks fighting Trojans, Giants, Amazons, and Centaurs. Mythology represented the inevitability of Greek dominance over foreigners.

In the above interpretation, the analogy between hybrid mythical groups and contemporary eastern enemy is successful because of the status of all three as manifestations of the Other. I suggest, however, that a further analogy can be made between Centaurs, Amazons, and Persians: each represents Greek ambiguity towards a category of difference. The Centaurs represent the difficulty of reconciling a belief in complete difference between nature and culture with the obvious possibility for cultured men to participate in primitive behaviour. The Amazons represent the difficulty of reconciling a belief in complete difference between men and women with the obvious similarities among humans of both genders. Thus, Greeks regarded the

²³⁰ See Castriota 1995

Centaurs and Amazons with mixed feelings: on the one hand, they represented a dangerous alternative to the Athenian male ideal that must be continually repressed and repulsed, but on the other hand, they still embodied some desirable qualities. The Greek ambivalence towards the Centaurs and Amazons was quite literally embodied in their hybrid natures.

In this section, I extend this reasoning to the Greek reception of the Persians. By demonstrating the ways in which Greeks responded to the Persians with both hostility and receptivity, I show that Greek attitudes towards the Persians were equally ambivalent. The Persians embody Greek paradoxical attitudes about a third categorical of difference, that between Greek and non-Greek. They introduce the difficulty of reconciling complete opposition between Greek and Barbarian with the reality that Athenians admired and even assimilated aspects of Oriental culture.

Centaurs and Amazons were analogous to the Persians in their opposition to the Greek male ideal, but they were also analogous in that they too elicited complex attitudes towards categories of difference. I suggest that this element is what made battles between Greeks and mythical hybrids such a potent analogy for the Persian Wars.

Greek Reception of the Persians

Until recently, a strict dichotomy between Greek and Barbarian was considered to be the foundational determinant in Greek conceptions of the East. Easterners are portrayed as luxurious, effeminate, and slave-like, the antithesis of the Greek values of self-control, masculinity, and equality. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that this emphasis on polarity does not accurately characterize the multiplicity of ways through which the Greeks envisaged Eastern cultures. A more nuanced interpretation is that the Greeks employed a rhetoric of hostility while simultaneously admiring and emulating Eastern cultures.²³¹

A dominant, public discourse of enmity towards eastern foreigners is present in many fifth century Athenian works. On the stage, the Persian enemy was depicted as slavish and cowardly

²³¹ Both Vlassopoulos 2013 and Miller 1992 apply this approach throughout their works.

(such as in Aeschylus' tragedy, *The Persians*, produced in 472 BC) as well as luxurious and effeminate (such as in Aristophanes' comedy, *The Acharnians*, produced in 425 BC). The division of the world into Greek and non-Greek peoples pervades the opening lines of Herodotos' *Histories* and it is possible to read Herodotos' work as an exploration of the differences between Greeks and non-Greeks.

This public verbal rhetoric of stark difference was supported by fifth century Athenian art. As discussed above, the Persians, alongside other traditional enemies of the Athenians, were depicted in battle with the Greeks on many monuments, especially those that addressed Greek victory in the Persian Wars. Buildings such as the Stoa Poikile included the Greek (and especially, Athenian) victory against the Persians in a long line of battles between Athenians and their enemies. The repeated opposition between victorious Greeks and vanquished barbarians underscores the exclusivity of each category.

In contrast to this perspective, recent scholarship has called for an interpretation of the evidence for Greco-Persian relations that recognizes the variety of ways in which the Greeks engaged with the eastern enemy. This reinterpretation stems from a recognized discrepancy between a public ideology of enmity towards the Persians, most often expressed in historical and literary sources but also in public monuments, and an accompanying response of receptivity to aspects of eastern culture, such as can be seen in iconographical evidence. This approach also emphasizes the variety of social divisions within the Athenian state and the possibility that each group responded in different ways. This perspective, which aims to incorporate both ideal and real engagement, is much more comprehensive and suggests a complicated, even dual, attitude towards the East.

An important contribution to this perspective is Margaret Miller's work, *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC*. Miller shows that, rather than contempt, Athenian responses to Achaemenid Persian culture in the late sixth and fifth centuries reveal some facets of receptivity.²³² She refers to this phenomenon as *Perserie*.

²³² Miller 1997, 2

Miller's review of contact between Greeks and Persians²³³ reveals that many Greeks had personal experience of eastern foreigners. By establishing the extent of contact between Athenians and Persians, Miller provides the framework for further discussion of cultural transfer.²³⁴ Athenians observed *barbaroi* through war, diplomatic interactions, trade, and even residence in the East. The significant amount of direct interaction counters the idea that the Greeks unfailingly thought of the Persians and their subject peoples as some distant, unknown culture. Rather, Miller suggests that the Athenians "willfully misunderstood" their eastern enemies.²³⁵ In addition to the possibility of direct contact, indirect experience of easterners and their customs occurred through the importation of eastern goods, an influx of which arrived in the early fifth century through gift-giving between elites, war booty, and trade. The great significance of these luxurious items is underlined by Herodotos' lengthy description of the spoils of war in Book 9 of his *Histories* (e.g. 9.80-82).²³⁶

In the late sixth and fifth centuries, the Athenians incorporated elements of Persian material culture into their ceramics, dress, and architecture.²³⁷ Miller stresses the instances of active and intentional engagement with Achaemenid culture through the processes of imitation and adaptation, rather than a process of "passive influence."²³⁸

Ceramics are a useful example.²³⁹ Receptivity manifested in pottery-production in three primary modes: imitation (attempt at exact copy), adaptation (modification of foreign objects to render them practical for local custom), and derivation (the use of a foreign decorative language on native form).²⁴⁰ The first two phenomena, imitation and adaptation, are attested by the end of the sixth century, at the same time as the first instances of contact with Achaemenid culture in Asia Minor.²⁴¹ In the second quarter of the fifth century, adaptation increases in number and variety,

²³³ It is important to note that the Greeks often conflated Persians and other eastern peoples. It is likely that Athenians had the most experience with subject peoples from the Western parts of the Persian empire, since geography made their interaction more likely.

²³⁴ Miller 1997, 3

²³⁵ Miller 1997, 3

²³⁶ Miller 1997, 29

²³⁷ Miller 1997, chapters 6-8

²³⁸ Miller 1997, 136

²³⁹ Miller 1997, chapter 6

²⁴⁰ Miller 1997, 136

²⁴¹ Miller 1997, 146

most likely in response to Persian War spoils and their effect on Athenian taste.²⁴² Derivation is a more general response to longer, sustained contact and is not necessarily conscious.²⁴³ It is more easily detected in the later decades of the fifth century.

Persian culture was associated with luxury and luxury was condemned in Athenian public rhetoric as a mark of weakness and effeminacy, and even love of Persia or tyranny. Thucydides has Pericles declare in his funeral oration, that “we [the Athenians] cultivate refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show” (2.40.1). This rhetorical disdain for extravagance, effeminacy, and misuse of wealth is however undercut by the iconographical evidence for increasing Athenian taste for luxury. As Miller writes, “contact with Persia, far from bringing luxury into general dispute, both stimulated the appetite of wealthy Athenians for prestige goods and enlarged the number of prestige goods available.”²⁴⁴

In her discussion of Athenian use of Persian symbolism, Miller emphasizes the role of class differentiation and the emergent Athenian empire’s need to employ the status-symbols of imperialism.²⁴⁵ With no native language to communicate their new status, both in relation to the aristocracy and to the wider Greek world, the democratic Athenians employed a foreign system of signification. Thus, the Athenians adopted elements of Persian symbolism while they publicly declared their opposition to the very values those symbols had signified.

What is clear throughout Miller’s work is the discrepancy between an Athenian primary discourse represented in rhetoric and a secondary discourse represented by behaviour as recorded in iconography. These examples collectively demonstrate that Athenian attitude towards the east was, at the very least, complex. Miller’s analysis of the Odeion of Pericles and its Persian associations suggests, furthermore, that not only private individuals but the state as a whole

²⁴² Miller 1997, 146

²⁴³ Miller 1997, 147

²⁴⁴ Miller 1997, 215-216

²⁴⁵ Miller 1997, chapter 9

appropriated Persian culture.²⁴⁶ These acts of appropriation and incorporation contradict the disdain for eastern culture expressed elsewhere in Athenian rhetoric.

The evidence for a discourse of receptivity towards the East is not limited to iconography. Ancient sources describe Athenian willingness to import goods (and along with them, customs) from all parts of the Mediterranean. Thucydides has Pericles remark that “to the Athenians the fruits of other countries are as familiar a luxury as those of his own” (2.38.2). The Old Oligarch writes that “the Athenians have mingled with various peoples and discovered types of luxury... Further, hearing every kind of dialect, they have taken something from each; the Greeks rather tend to use their own dialect, way of life, and type of dress, but the Athenians use a mixture from all the Greeks and non-Greeks.” (2.7-2.8). Hermippos’ mock-epic, quoted in Athenaeus 1.27e-8a, lists the many international goods that flow into the Piraeus.

Some ancient traditions voice a tradition of kinship, if in the distant past, between Greeks and Persians.²⁴⁷ One tradition names Perses, son of Perseus and Andromeda, as ancestor of the Achaemenid Persians.²⁴⁸ This connects the Persians with Greeks through mythical genealogy. The union of Perseus and Andromeda looks back to a time when various peoples of the Mediterranean intermarried, when the parity of the ethnic groups, such as Greeks, Egyptians, and Persians, were cemented through the exchange of women. In Herodotos’ explanation of the enmity between East and West, he gives the kidnapping of women (Io, Medea, Helen) as the antecedent for the Persian Wars. Herodotos’ Persian informants describe the hostility between West and East as beginning in this way: “the Greeks, for the sake of the Lacedaemonian woman [Helen], recruited a great armada, came to Asia, and destroyed the power of Priam. Ever since then we have regarded Greeks as our enemies” (1.4.3-4). The Greeks and Persians once exchanged women on good terms, but when Greeks crossed to Asia in retaliation for the kidnapping of Helen, the great antagonism between East and West began.

²⁴⁶ Miller 1997, 243

²⁴⁷ It is interesting to compare the tradition of kinship between Greeks and Persians with the similar tradition of kinship between the Lapiths and the Centaurs. Although immortalized as enemies through the Centauromachy, the Centaurs and Lapiths were related through genealogy. In one tradition, they shared a common ancestor, Ixion king of the Lapiths. In another variant, Kentaurus and Lapithos were twin sons of Apollo.

²⁴⁸ Perseus in LIMC

In Aeschylus' *Persians*, Atossa, Xerxes' Mother, dreams of "two women in beautiful clothes, one in Persian garb, the other in Dorian attire... both far more striking in stature than are the women of our time, flawless in beauty, sisters of the same family" (181-185). One was from Hellas, the other from the land of the Barbarians (186-187). This personifications of Hellas and Persia are represented as "sisters of the same family" and both "flawless in beauty" suggests the kinship and parity between Greeks and Persians. Atossa says the two sisters "seem to provoke each other into a mutual feud" (188-189). Xerxes, Atossa's son, attempts to yoke the two sisters together, as if they were horses. It is now that the difference between the two sisters becomes apparent: while one sister "bore herself proudly in these trappings and kept her mouth obedient to the rein," the other "struggled and with her hands tore apart the harness of the car... then dragged it violently along with her and snapped the yoke in two" (190-199). The Persian sister is compliant and, to the Athenian mind, slavish, while the Greek sister refuses to comply with Xerxes' yoke. In his description of the two sisters, then, Aeschylus draws forth both the intrinsic kinship and the present disparity between the Greeks and Persians.

Furthermore, while many Greek texts maintain a fundamental divide between Greeks and Barbarians, they simultaneously admire, respect, or at the very least, display genuine interest in eastern peoples. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* reflects respect and appreciation for Persian customs, while Herodotos' many inquiries into the customs of foreign cultures displays Greek curiosity about barbarians. These works contain messages of Greek superiority, but at times also betray respect for much older traditions. For example, Herodotos prefers the Egyptian calendar to the Greek (2.4.1) and writes that the Greeks borrowed the names of the gods from the Egyptians (2.4.2).

Many Greek traditions consciously celebrate technologies or stories inherited from the East. The story of Cadmus the Phoenician celebrates an easterner who brought the technology of the alphabet, or cadmeian letters, to Greece. As has long been noted, this mythical story endorses Greek acknowledgement that the alphabet was an eastern invention.²⁴⁹ Archaic poets celebrated

²⁴⁹ See Edwards 1979

the luxuries of the symposium, the heart of archaic Greek aristocratic lifestyle, as Lydian in origin.²⁵⁰ For example, Anacreon uses the phrase “living in Lydian style” to mean “living in luxurious style” (Frag 18). Wise men, such as Solon, were said to have travelled to Lydia and Egypt (1.30.1). These traditions contributed to an association between wise men and the East. These examples show that Greeks recognized that some Greek traditions, ideas, and values were derived from foreign sources; that is, they recognized that there was value in adopting some aspects of foreign, and particularly eastern, cultures.

This brief (not exhaustive) review of Greek responses to the East in various media illustrates a clear discrepancy between a dominant, public discourse that expressed enmity towards the Persians and a secondary response of receptivity. In this way, the Athenians perceived the Persians as a kind of hybrid entity: an enemy to be continually rejected and repulsed, but also a respected culture with elements that could be incorporated into Athenian society. Collectively, Athenian attitudes towards the Persians reflect a negotiation of the differences between Greek and Barbarian.

Conclusion: Hybridity in the Analogy between Amazons, Centaurs, and Barbarians

This discussion suggests that the analogy between Centaurs, Amazons, and Persians goes deeper than simple equivalence between enemies of the Athenian male citizen. The hybrid character of Centaurs and Amazons allowed an expression of conflicting responses to a model of polar difference. A brief analysis has shown that the Athenians responded to the Persians in a similarly dual manner. I suggest that it is this capacity of the mythical hybrid to encapsulate paradoxical responses to the enemy that provides the foundation for a successful analogy between Centaurs, Amazons and Persians. The analogy between mythical hybrid and Persian is enduring precisely because it works on two levels: it expresses both a dominant discourse of anti-barbarism and a secondary acknowledgement of similarity between the Athenian and his enemy.

²⁵⁰ See also Xenophanes, Fr. 3 “And having learned useless luxury [ὑβροσύνη] from the Lydians, while they were free of hateful tyranny, they used to go to the agora wearing robes all of purple, no fewer than a thousand as a rule, proud and exulting in the splendour of their hair, drenched with the scent of the most refined unguents. And they were so dissolute because of untimely drinking that some of them saw neither the rising nor setting sun”

Chapter 4 – The Greek Bull-headed Man

The Minotaur defies easy categorization: his form and character incorporated both human and bovine aspects. Though his taurine qualities made him monstrous, the Minotaur's human qualities complicated a simple label. Unlike the Centaurs and Amazons, who were envisaged as whole societies with customs and habits, the Minotaur was a singular and unique entity in Greek myth. As a result, the characterization of the Minotaur in Classical sources was not as comprehensive as other mythical opponents. Nevertheless, the Minotaur's primary attribute, his hybrid bovine and human nature, is revealing.

This chapter discusses the Minotaur's hybrid form and his mythical genealogy in order to consider the particular kind of threat that he embodied. The Minotaur's bovine nature, which can be associated with Near Eastern divinities, kingship, and ritual, reveals a strong connection with the East. This evidence, combined with the Minotaur's genealogy expressed in Greek myth, demonstrates that the Classical Athenians considered the Minotaur a particularly eastern threat.

Bulls, Divinity, and Kingship

In Greece, as in the ancient eastern Mediterranean as a whole, there was an important symbolic connection between bulls, divinity, and kingship. Though prominent in the Bronze Age Aegean, by the Classical period much of the potency of this symbolic nexus had faded in Greece and was replaced by new ideas about anthropomorphic gods, though it was preserved to a certain extent in myth and ritual. By contrast, the association between bulls, divinity, and kingship was still strong in the Near East. As a result, though bovine symbolism was deeply ingrained in Greek myth and ritual, a human figure with bovine attributes had more emphatic Near Eastern associations. Two particular aspects of Near Eastern bovine symbolism seem to have affected the Classical Greek reception of the Minotaur: the tradition of a bull-headed or bull-horned deity and the shamanistic ritual of bull-mask or bull-horn wearing.

Cattle play a central role in Greek culture as objects of veneration, trade, and prestige. As McInerney has shown, the concept of herding, latent in a society somewhat nostalgic for pastoralism, “foregrounds practices and experiences that end up dominating entire cultural fields: institutions from marriage to war, concepts of prestige and value, modes of social interaction, negotiation of social hierarchies, all end up being refracted through the prism of herding.”²⁵¹

The particular symbolism of cattle developed as a result of domestication and worked at multiple levels. The process of domestication meant that humans saw themselves in a different relationship with other beings.²⁵² This was the beginning of a conceptual divide between the natural world and the world of civilization. Cattle embodied this tension between wild and civilized, since they existed both inside and outside human culture. McInerney connects this moment with a religious and cosmological change, in which “the earth as mother and sustainer of life was complemented by the masculine power embodied in the bull.”²⁵³ The bovine metaphor therefore participated in definitions of nature and culture, of female and male, and of animal and human.

Bulls and cows were considered ideal animals for Greek sacrifice. The consumption of a domesticated animal is a continual source of tension for humans. In contrast to the killing of wild animals, the butchery of domesticated animals involves the particular betrayal of killing an entity which was previously fed, sheltered, and protected. The bond established between herd and shepherd is nurtured until the moment of butchery; at that moment the bond is violently and absolutely severed. Sacrifice, which occurs only in societies with domesticated animals, resolves some of this tension.²⁵⁴ The cultural and religious institution of sacrifice gives the killing of an animal life a cosmological significance beyond the act itself.

Cattle had a special role as mediator between mortals and gods derived from, or perhaps contributing to, their role as ideal sacrificial victim.²⁵⁵ This makes them particularly charged

²⁵¹ McInerney 2010, 5

²⁵² McInerney 2010, 5

²⁵³ McInerney 2010, 40

²⁵⁴ McInerney 2010, 40

²⁵⁵ McInerney 2010, 4

symbols in mythology and ritual. The myth of the Minotaur is only one of many Greek myths that involve cattle. Cows were involved in the founding of cities, as in the story of Kadmus, who followed a cow to the future site of Thebes.²⁵⁶ Cows often figured in divine punishment; in the origin-myth of the Minotaur, a vengeful Poseidon causes Pasiphae to fall in love with a bull and give birth to a bull-headed man.

The prestige of cattle was already established in Greek culture by the time of the Homeric epics. Both heroes and their enemies are portrayed as such partly through their treatment of cattle. While Odysseus' wealth on Ithaka is demonstrated through the many livestock he owns, the suitors are represented as greedy and impious by their gluttonous consumption of meat in Odysseus' absence. While Odysseus, in his wisdom, fasts rather than steal the cattle of the sun god Helios, his comrades have no self-restraint and are consequently doomed in a shipwreck. The association between cattle and heroes is perhaps most vivid in the image of the heroic feast. Sarpedon, son of Zeus, asks Glaukos, "Do you know why we are honoured with the choicest cuts [of meat]?" (*Iliad* 12.310-311). Proper and constrained consumption of meat is a sign of heroic character.

Outside the Homeric epics, heroes proved their nature by fighting wild bulls or stealing domesticated cattle. Herakles, the most panhellenic of heroes, did both. He sailed to the far West to steal the cattle of Geryon and defeated the Cretan Bull as part of his 12 canonical labours. The cattle raid and the heroic combat were the heroic exploits par excellence. Both types of stories have deep roots in Indo-European mythology.²⁵⁷

Greek conceptions of cattle as objects of prestige and as mediators with the divine are part of a broader trend in the east Mediterranean that can be traced back into prehistoric times. Bulls were the dominant animal symbol of the Southwest Asian Neolithic period.²⁵⁸ At Çatalhöyük, one of the best preserved Neolithic villages, bull crania and horns were incorporated into the site's iconography, ritual activity, and architecture.²⁵⁹ Excavations between 1995 and 2009 have

²⁵⁶ See Edwards 1979

²⁵⁷ McInerney 2010, 100

²⁵⁸ Twiss and Russell 2009, 20

²⁵⁹ Twiss and Russell 2009, 21

uncovered 12 466 Neolithic cattle horn cores and fragments at the site.²⁶⁰ Only two cattle horn cores are known from burial at Çatalhöyük, but one burial is particularly intriguing: a cattle frontlet was found with a human skull nestled beneath its center, as if the deceased was buried wearing the frontlet as a hat or mask.²⁶¹

Bronze Age ideas of kingship and divinity were intimately tied with bovine imagery, a nexus of symbols that can be seen most clearly in the literature and iconography of the Near East. In the third, second, and first millennium BC, the bull and its horns were symbols of Near Eastern lunar and storm deities.²⁶² The Moon deity, known as Nanna-Sin among the Mesopotamians, was connected with the tide of rivers since the third millennium BC.²⁶³ In this role, the moon god was a fertility deity, for he provided a source of life to all living things.²⁶⁴ As a fertility figure, the lunar deity became associated with the bull, who was the most powerful and fertile member of the herd.²⁶⁵ This symbolism can be identified in a cylinder seal from the Early Dynastic III period (Fig 10). The moon god, Nanna, sits on a throne that rests on the back of two bulls with prominent horns. His own crown is also made of horns.

The bull was also associated with the Near Eastern storm deity. Ornan believes the association of the bull contributed to a (sometimes deliberate) conflation between storm and lunar deities of the various Near Eastern pantheons.²⁶⁶ In this context, the bull maintained his associations with virility, but with the fertile energy of rainfall rather than rivers.²⁶⁷ The bull was an appropriate avatar of the storm deity not only for its power and fertility, but also for its mighty bellowing. This was an important aspect of bull-deities for the Greeks, who associated the power of the river (and therefore, the river deities) with the bellowing and sound of the bull's thunderous gallop.

²⁶⁰ Twiss and Russell 2009, 22

²⁶¹ Twiss and Russell 2009, 28

²⁶² Ornan 2001

²⁶³ Ornan 2001, 3

²⁶⁴ Ornan 2001, 3

²⁶⁵ Ornan 2001, 3

²⁶⁶ Ornan 2001, 15

²⁶⁷ Ornan 2001, 15

Being prominent visual symbols of the bull, horns became a short-hand for divinity, and diverse Near Eastern gods and goddesses wore the horns of the bull to demonstrate their power and divinity. The goddess Ishtar often wears a multi-horned helmet and the god Shamash wears a horned helmet as he legitimizes Hammurabi's law code.²⁶⁸ Near Eastern kings also represented themselves wearing the horns of divinity. A terracotta relief from Meskene shows a goddess wearing a horned crown (Fig 11), while a stele erected by Naram-Sin in 2250 BC shows the king wearing a horned helmet trampling over his enemies.²⁶⁹ This symbolism conveyed the idea of divinely sanctioned kingship: just as the storm god wore a horned helmet, so too the king that ruled in the god's honour.

What made the image of the bull so appropriate to divinity and divinely-sanctioned kings? Once domesticated, cattle were both dangerous and central to the establishment of agricultural societies, as providers of protein and draft power.²⁷⁰ Of all cattle, the bull epitomizes this tension. The bull is the largest, strongest, most dangerous, and most virile member of the herd. The bull is also the most prized and hence the most suitable for sacrifice. The bull, leader of his herd and yet barely contained, made an excellent symbol of the divine or the kingly, since these powers too were magnificent yet dangerous. This interpretation is exemplified in the figure of Gilgamesh, who is called the "bull-king."²⁷¹ The king and hero Gilgamesh is connected with bovine divinities through genealogy; he is son of Nin-Sun the "Wild Cow" and he is also descended from Lugalbanda, who is referred to as "the wild bull of the mountains" (*Epic of Gilgamesh*, SB 1.35-36)²⁷² As McInerney points out, throughout the epic, Gilgamesh is characterized as a bull both positively and negatively.²⁷³ His identification as a bull signals his divinity and divinely sanctioned kingship, but it also suggests his unruly nature.

The bull was a useful symbol for negotiating the role of kings because of its dualism: a powerful king was at once capable of bringing great good to the community and also bringing great

²⁶⁸ McInerney 2010, 41

²⁶⁹ Weiss 1985, 309-310; McInerney 2010, 41

²⁷⁰ McInerney 2010, 7

²⁷¹ McInerney 2010, 41

²⁷² McInerney 2010, 41

²⁷³ McInerney 2010, 41

danger. This same dichotomy made bovine elements appropriate to represent the power of the gods. As McInerney writes, “each [divine and royal power] reinforces the other, and both draw upon the contradictory associations with cattle as ways of configuring this power as potentially overwhelming and thus having to be appeased.”²⁷⁴ The bull-headed or bull-horned figure, often used to represent a god or a king in the Near East, thus linked kingship, divinity, and the power of the bull.

This bovine symbolism was also characteristic of Minoan society, where in addition to the symbolism discussed above, the bull had a special connection with Minoan palatial and administrative systems.²⁷⁵ The palatial centers held great control over Crete’s cattle, and demonstrations of the triumph of civilization over nature were perhaps re-enacted in the famous Minoan ritual of bull-jumping.²⁷⁶ Though Minoan bull cult is often connected with the origins of the Minotaur myth, I prefer to emphasize how broadly bull imagery and symbolism was utilized in the various cultures of the eastern Mediterranean starting from the Bronze Age. A common interpretation and use of bovine symbolism allowed the Minoan export of bull jumping as well as the Minoan art of bull frescos to be incorporated throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. Bull jumping frescoes have been found on several sites on Crete, the Greek mainland, and even at the Egyptian Hyksos capital, Avaris.²⁷⁷ Representations of bull jumping have also been found on Canaanite seals and seals from Alalakh in Syria.²⁷⁸ Horned altars are known from the Greek tradition,²⁷⁹ Canaanite traditions,²⁸⁰ and Bronze Age to Archaic Cyprus.²⁸¹ In Plutarch’s version of Theseus’ stop on Delos, Theseus danced the labyrinthine Crane dance around “the altar called Keraton,” that is, the horned altar (*Theseus* 21). The Hebrew Bible records a tradition of worship of Yahweh in the form of a bull.²⁸² Bulls, as symbols of divine and kingly power, were part of a Bronze age Aegean “koine” that was inherited by the Classical Greeks.

²⁷⁴ McInerney 2010, 36

²⁷⁵ McInerney 2010, 49

²⁷⁶ McInerney 2010, 53

²⁷⁷ McInerney 2010, 58

²⁷⁸ McInerney 2010, 59

²⁷⁹ Burkert 1985, 65

²⁸⁰ Obbink 1937, 45-48

²⁸¹ Karageorghis 1982

²⁸² Waterman 1915, 229

Classical Greek Reception of Bovine Gods

The Classical Greeks were heirs to some of this bovine symbolism from their Bronze Age past in the form of myth, but bovine imagery was not nearly so common in Classical Greece as it remained in the East. The difference between Classical Greek and Near Eastern conceptions of the gods is summarized by Carpenter: “Where the Egyptian mind saw nothing strange that Isis should be a cow and at the same time an immortal goddess and an earthly mother, the untheriomorphic Greek imagination applied the categories of strict logic as literally as Ovid in his metamorphoses.”²⁸³ For the Classical Greek, Io was not a cow goddess who mated with a god in the form of a bull, but a girl turned into a cow by spiteful gods. Burkert notes that “the Greeks avoid calling Zeus or Hera bull or cow even metaphorically, although in Egypt or Ugarit gods were addressed in this way without scruple.”²⁸⁴

McInerney attributes this phenomenon to a religious change in the Archaic period, through which the Greek pantheon became more anthropomorphized.²⁸⁵ Bovine avatars, like Zeus as a bull, were replaced by gods like Apollo and Hermes who were conceived as cowherds.²⁸⁶ McInerney associates bovine divinities in myth and cult with an older view of the Greek gods, one that had been replaced by the Classical period by a hierarchical pantheon that followed the leadership of Zeus.²⁸⁷ Local gods who had stronger ties to both Near Eastern and theriomorphic traditions were slowly overshadowed by the anthropomorphic gods of the Classical period, who resembled humans in form and in behaviour. In his view, bovine gods arose organically from a common cattle culture in the eastern Mediterranean. McInerney thus describes the lack of bovine gods in Greece as representative of a decline in older traditions.

In contrast, other scholars such as Burkert and Morris view Greek myths about bulls and bull-gods as strong evidence for the influence of Near Eastern ideas into Greek myth. For example, Morris writes that “the characterization of gods in the form of a bull has a long history in the

²⁸³ Carpenter 1950, 183

²⁸⁴ Burkert 1985, 64

²⁸⁵ McInerney 2010, 113

²⁸⁶ McInerney 2010, 113

²⁸⁷ McInerney 2010, 126

Near East, where it is attested in Ugarit, Phoenicia, and Israel, and may have reached the Aegean from the Levant via Cyprus in the Bronze Age.²⁸⁸ Similarly, Burkert finds the origin of the Greek association between bulls and divinity in the religious traditions of Asia Minor and the Hittites.²⁸⁹

Despite such differences, it is clear that bulls were a common symbolism of the Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean, a tradition which declined in Greece but remained strong in the Near East. Still, an element of theriomorphism remained in important ways, especially in the many metamorphoses known from myth and the Greek conceptions of the gods Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, and Dionysos. Walter Burkert noted the prominence of Greek gods who undergo metamorphosis into animals in order to mate with human woman.²⁹⁰ Among the mortal women who mate with the gods in bovine form are Io and Europa, who are connected with the myth of the Minotaur through genealogy (discussed later). The tradition of divine metamorphoses may seek to rationalize earlier traditions of gods as animals.

Specific Classical and later traditions may allude to earlier worship of the Greek gods as cattle. The *Orphic Hymn to Zeus* preserves a description of Zeus as a bull: “His head and beauteous face the radiant heaven / reveals and around him float in shining waves / the golden tresses of the twinkling stars. On either side bull’s horns of gold are seen, sunrise and sunset, footpaths of the gods” (Porphyry, *On Images*, Frag 3.11-3.15). This passage is reminiscent of the association between bull’s horns and sky deities that are also present in the Near East. The bull was considered the ideal animal to sacrifice in honour of Zeus, and some variants of his cult maintained bovine elements. The cult of Zeus Atabyrios on Rhodes, for example, revered cattle who were supposed to bellow if danger was near and was likely influenced by the influence of Phoenician worship of the horned god, Baal Tabor.²⁹¹

The goddess Hera was given the Homeric epithet “βοῶπις,” usually translated as “ox-eyed” or “cow-faced.” In later literature, this adjective could be used to describe a woman’s beauty.

²⁸⁸ Morris 1992, 185

²⁸⁹ Burkert 1985, 65

²⁹⁰ Burkert 1985, 64

²⁹¹ McInerney 2010, 115

Carpenter suggested that this epithet actually looks back to a time when Hera was conceived as, quite literally, cow-headed.²⁹² At the Heraion on Samos, the cult state of Hera wore a headdress with horns in the tradition of Near Eastern deities like Isis and Hathor of Egypt or Ishtar-Inanna.²⁹³

The Greek tradition of the hieros gamos, or sacred union, between Zeus and Hera may reflect the hieros gamos of a god as bull and goddess as cow known known from Near Eastern mythology. The hieros gamos between Zeus and Hera, was celebrated at the Great Daidala festival where each participant sacrificed a bull to Zeus and a cow to Hera.²⁹⁴ The hieros gamos is also present in mythology in the union of Zeus and Io, Zeus and Europa, and Pasiphae and the bull. Morris writes that the union between Pasiphae and the bull “derives from legendary encounters between gods-as-bulls and women, common in Near Eastern images and myths.”²⁹⁵ She draws special attention to the union between a god as a bull and a goddess in the story of Baal and Anat.²⁹⁶ In the story of Pasiphae and the birth of the Minotaur, the Greeks effectively reject this tradition: the union between bull and mortal woman inevitably result in the birth of a monster. It is important to note that the story of Pasiphae’s union with the bull only becomes popular after it is presented on the Attic stage.²⁹⁷ Given the absence of the Minotaur from early sources, there remains a possibility that the Minotaur’s “monstrousness” and Pasiphae’s indecency were stressed only in the Athenian versions of the myth. In the Classical Athenian story of Pasiphae, a bovine hieros gamos becomes an obscene act with a grotesque result. The Minotaur, in his status as monster rather than divinity, suggests what the Classical Greeks really thought of the bull-headed gods of the Near East.

In some contexts, the gods Dionysos and Poseidon were also associated with the bull. In Euripides’ play, *Bacchae*, Dionysos was said to have been born ταυρόκερον, “with the horns of a bull” (100). In a ritual at the boukoleion in Athens, the Basilinna engaged in a re-enactment of

²⁹² Carpenter 1950, 180

²⁹³ McInerney 2010, 119; Carpenter 1950, 182; Kardara 353

²⁹⁴ McInerney 2010, 120; Burkert 1965, 63

²⁹⁵ Morris 1992, 176 and 186

²⁹⁶ Morris 1992, 176

²⁹⁷ Papadopoulos in LIMC

an hieros gamos with Dionysos.²⁹⁸ Burkert notes the Greek willingness to call Dionysos a bull as an exception.²⁹⁹ Burkert claims that Dionysos was worshipped as tauromorphic in Kyzikos, and that an uncommon myth tells of how he was slaughtered as a calf and eaten by the Titans.³⁰⁰

The bull-horned Dionysos contributes to his characterization as “foreign.” In the opening lines of the *Bacchae*, Euripides has Dionysos recount his journey from East to West. “Leaving behind the gold-rich lands of the Lydians and Phrygians,” he says, “I found my way to the sun-drenched plains of the Persians, the fortifications of Bactria, the harsh country of the Medes, prosperous Arabia, and all that part of Asia Minor that lies along the briny sea and possess fine-towered cities full of Greeks and outlanders mingled together. I have now for the first time returned to Greece” (13-21). As a god from the east, Dionysos could be horned.

Poseidon is the god most closely associated with the bull.³⁰¹ One interpretation of the Minotaur myth sees the Minotaur as an avatar of Poseidon, sent in retaliation for Minos’ impious act against him. The union of the bull and Pasiphae, therefore, may be construed as an hieros gamos between Poseidon and Pasiphae. Coins from Poseidonia show Poseidon on one side and a bull on the other.³⁰² In Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, Theseus prays to his father Poseidon to take revenge on his son Hippolytus. Poseidon responds by sending a pack of bulls. The association between Poseidon and the bull may derive in part from the frequent connection between cattle and water.³⁰³ River deities, such as Acheloos, were also thought to shapeshift into the form of bulls.

In summary, bulls were symbolically charged in Greek consciousness, as reflected in myth and ritual, but by the Classical period they were clearly associated with the East. The bull was an important symbol in the negotiation between humans and animals, but also between humans and the divine. Although bulls are more easily connected with ideas of divinity and kingship in Near Eastern literature and iconography, this connection was maintained in myths that told of

²⁹⁸ McInerney 2010, 117

²⁹⁹ Burkert 1985, 64

³⁰⁰ Burkert 1985, 64

³⁰¹ McInerney 2010, 117

³⁰² McInerney 2010, 119

³⁰³ McInerney 2010, 7

metamorphoses and sacred unions between gods and mortals, and in the conception of particular Olympian divinities. The Near Eastern horned storm deity finds a counterpart in Zeus, who hurled thunderbolts from the Heavens. Both Zeus and Ba'al had female counterparts, like Hera or Anat, who united with them in an *hieros gamos* between a god as bull and goddess as cow. In the storm or lunar god's association with water, he could be identified with the Greek Poseidon, who was also represented with bovine affinities. The bovine associations of Zeus, Hera, and Poseidon were confined primarily to reminiscences in myth, but Dionysos was directly referred to as bull-horned. As the Olympian god most strongly associated with the East, it was appropriate for Dionysos to be horned.

Bulls in Near Eastern Iconography and Ritual

Two elements of Near Eastern bull cult that provide particularly close parallels for the form of the Minotaur are iconographic portrayals of bull-headed gods and the use and representation of bull-masks. It is not coincidental that much of our evidence for these two traditions comes from the edges of the Near Eastern world where Phoenician influence was prominent and there was much contact between easterners and Greeks.

A varied Near Eastern iconography of divinities represented as bulls or with bull attributes was available for Greeks to see. Of particular relevance to a discussion of the Minotaur are the bull-headed gods often associated with Canaanite iconography. Klingbeil's study of the iconographical semantics of the Ba'al the Storm god, in his various manifestations, identifies three elements of iconography common to the god: horns, a bull-head, or a position standing on a bull.³⁰⁴ One example of each will demonstrate the range of iconography. A limestone stele from Ugarit shows Ba'al with a raised weapon and a spear (Fig 12). An Egyptian limestone stele shows a bull-headed Ba'al-Seth attacking a serpent, hand also raised with a spear (Fig 13).³⁰⁵ Finally, a cylinder seal mentioned above shows the god standing atop a bull (Fig 10). This iconographical tradition is also found on Phoenician stamp seals of the eighth to sixth century

³⁰⁴ Klingbeil 2009, 217-221

³⁰⁵ Ornan 2001, 22

BC.³⁰⁶ The bull-headed deity was shown on seals in both smiting pose as well as seated on a throne.

As discussed previously, the Classical Greek tradition did not have a bull-headed god, though some gods could have bovine attributes. Even in the case of deities most strongly associated with the bull, such as Zeus or Dionysos, descriptions of gods as “bull-horned” are found in literature rather than iconography. For example, although Zeus wore gilded horns in Orphic poetry,³⁰⁷ Cook’s study of Zeus as an ox produced only a single representation of a horned Zeus.³⁰⁸ The lack of horned gods in Greek iconography (usually limited to the god Pan, who was introduced only in the Classical period and had goat, not bull’s, horns) would have drawn attention to the prevalence of horned deities in Near Eastern iconography.

There is a great likelihood that Greeks were familiar with Near Eastern iconography of bull-horned or bull-headed deities, considering the significant contact between Greece and the Near East, noted throughout this study. It is possible that some Greeks had observed or heard of Near Eastern ritual involving “bull-headed men” as well. Evidence for rituals involving the wearing of bull-masks is known primarily from Cyprus. Mask-wearing rituals allowed the participant to enter in closer association with a god.³⁰⁹ The prominence and longevity of these rituals on Cyprus suggests that at least some Greeks would have associated bull worship, and bull masks, with Near Eastern (perhaps specifically Phoenician or Cypriot) ritual and cult.

Cyprus is known to be an area of interaction between Greeks and the East. Skulls of bulls and other animals were found at the 12th and 11th century sanctuaries of Enkomi.³¹⁰ The skulls were intentionally shaped as masks, presumably to be worn during religious ritual.³¹¹ The two Enkomi sanctuaries centuries also housed the so-called “horned ingot gods.” These bronze cult statues show gods wearing horned helmets.

³⁰⁶ Ornan 2001, 23

³⁰⁷ Morris 1992, 185

³⁰⁸ Burkert 1985, 64; Cook 1964, 430-706

³⁰⁹ Karageorghis 261; see also Napier 1986 for lengthy discussion of masks and ritual

³¹⁰ Karageorghis 1971, 262

³¹¹ Karageorghis 1971, 263

A deposit of a dozen oxen skulls was found in the floor of the temple of Astarte at Kition and have been dated to c. 800 BC.³¹² Like the examples from Bronze Age Enkomi, the skulls had also been manipulated so they could be worn as masks. Several figurines from archaic Cyprus show humans wearing bull masks.³¹³ Bull-masks were also dedicated as votive offerings.³¹⁴ These statues suggest that horns were also worn without the full bull crania, perhaps sewn onto pieces of leather.³¹⁵

These horned masks were associated with the myth of the *Kerastai*, the horned ones, known from Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, X, 220-242) and connected with cult on Cyprus.³¹⁶ The bull-masked figures are often thought to be priests.³¹⁷ One interpretation of the ritual is that the sacrificer dons a mask to disguise himself as the victim; simultaneously, he keeps the victim alive by embodying it.³¹⁸ Burkert connects this practice to the use of goat masks in early satyr plays and other ritual associated with the god Pan.³¹⁹

Unfortunately, no evidence survives to help us understand the purposes of the particular rituals or performances where the bull or horn masks were used. While speculation should be minimized, what we can say is that given the contact between Greece and the Near East, and especially between Greeks and Levantine populations (as has been emphasized recently by Morris) it is likely that Greeks came into contact with elements of Eastern bull cult. Therefore, the forms of Near Eastern bull cult known from literary sources and archaeological remains was likely to have influenced the Greek conception of the Minotaur.

In his half-bull half-human form, then, the Minotaur was visually and conceptually aligned with long-held associations between bovine symbolism, divinity, kingship, and the east. This

³¹² Karageorghis, 1971, 263

³¹³ Karageorghis 1971, 262

³¹⁴ Karageorghis 1971, 262

³¹⁵ Karageorghis 1971, 263

³¹⁶ Burkert 1985, 65; Papantoniou 2012, 278

³¹⁷ Papantoniou 2012, 278

³¹⁸ Burkert 1985, 65

³¹⁹ Burkert 1985, 65

conclusion is complemented by the analysis of Theseus and the Minotaur heroic combat scenes in chapter two, which found the iconographic roots of the Minotaur in the East. It is likely that Greeks would have seen Near Eastern iconography of bovine gods and horned kings and heard of a shamanistic cult practice involving priests who wore bull-masks. It was with this frame of reference that a Classical Athenian would have interpreted the Minotaur as particularly eastern. The alignment of the Minotaur with the East was elaborated further in the tradition of the Minotaur's mythical genealogy.

The Minotaur's Genealogy

The Minotaur's form, derived from Near Eastern iconography, was explained in Greek myth through the story of his birth.³²⁰ Minos wished to reign over Crete, but his rule was opposed. He claimed that he received rule over Crete from the gods, and as proof he said that whatever he prayed for would be accomplished. He appealed to Poseidon to send the most beautiful bull as evidence of his divine favour which Minos promised to sacrifice if the god granted his wish. When Poseidon sent the bull, Minos sacrificed another instead, keeping the prized bull for himself. In retribution, Poseidon inspired Pasiphae, Minos' wife, to fall in love with the bull. With the help of a contraption made by Daedalos the inventor, Pasiphae mated with the bull and the Minotaur was born of their union. This story accounts for the Minotaur's half human, half bull nature.

Although the Minotaur's immediate birth story justifies his half-bovine nature, a much deeper understanding of his characterization can be gained from an analysis of his broader ancestry. The Minotaur was the child of sexual misconduct between Pasiphae and the bull, but in as much as Pasiphae's attraction to the bull was the result of Minos' impious act, the Minotaur may also be understood as the offspring of Minos. Therefore, a discussion of both Minos and Pasiphae's ancestry is warranted.

³²⁰ As recounted, for example, in Apollodorus 3.1

In the earliest inscriptions found on pottery, the Minotaur is referred to only as the “bull of Minos.” Only after 400 BC is his name contracted from “minoio tauros” to “minotauros”.³²¹ This important etymological evidence demonstrates that the connection between Minos and the Minotaur was integral to the Minotaur’s original characterization. It is not uncommon for a single mythological figure to have multiple fathers, such as Theseus who is son of both Poseidon and of Aegeus. Minos also acts as the Minotaur’s caregiver, albeit in a grotesque manner, when he imprisons the Minotaur in the labyrinth and feeds him human children.

Through Minos, the Minotaur is connected with a constellation of myths that explore the geography and peoples of the Mediterranean. His family history also demonstrates a repeated hieros gamos between god and cow or goddess and bull. From this perspective, the Minotaur may be viewed as a perversion of the hieros gamos tradition, a tradition which has roots in the Near East.³²²

Minos’ genealogy goes back to Io, daughter of Inachus. It may be significant that Inachus is usually characterized as a river-god; Greek river-gods tend to metamorphosize into bovine forms (for example, Acheloo in combat with Herakles). One version of Io’s story is recounted in *Prometheus Bound* (645-687). Io rebuffed Zeus’ advances, and was plagued by recurring nightmares. When she told her father, Inachus went to Delphi to inquire what they should do. The Pythia instructed him to throw Io out “to roam at large the remotest confines of the earth” (666) and that, if he did not, Zeus would destroy his whole race with a thunderbolt (668). In obedience with the oracle, Inachus threw Io out of Argos. Io then changed into the form of a cow, growing horns, and was repeatedly stung by a gadfly that kept her moving around the Mediterranean (674-676). The gadfly was presumably sent by Hera, jealous of Zeus’ affection for Io.

Herodotos noticed the similarity between Io and the Egyptian goddess Isis. He writes that “the images of Isis are in woman's form, horned like a cow, exactly as the Greeks picture Io, and cows are held by far the most sacred of all beasts of the herd by all Egyptians alike” (2.41.2).

³²¹ Young 1972, 7-11; Morris 1992, 184

³²² Morris 1992, 186; Burkert 1985, 65

Io's name is interpreted by some modern scholars as a Greek rendering of the Egyptian word for moon, "iooh".³²³ The Egyptian Isis was represented as a cow or a woman with horns and a disk above her head, with either lunar or solar connections.³²⁴ Carpenter also associates Io with celestial bodies; he connects the myth of Io's wanderings with the movement of the moon through the sky.³²⁵ The story of Io also has a close Near Eastern antecedent in the Neo-Assyrian birth incantation about the goddess Geme-Sin.³²⁶ Here, the story is of a union between a divine bull and cow and it is one that gives good luck to the woman in birth.³²⁷ Thus, the figure of Io may be connected to Near Eastern figures in iconography, etymology, and literature.

The many places that Io visited during her wanderings are recounted in the *Prometheus Bound* at length (707-735, 790-816, 829-850). Her journey ends in Egypt, where "Zeus' touch" brings her back to her senses and she begets Epaphos. Epaphos is often conceptualized as a black bull, which Herodotos equates with the Egyptian god Apis (2.38).³²⁸ Epaphos, in union with Memphis (the female eponym of Egypt) gave birth to Libya. When Poseidon ravished Libya, she gave birth to Belus and Agenor. According to Apollodorus, Belus ruled in Egypt while Agenor ruled in Phoenicia (Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 3.1.1). The story of Io thus posits a connection between Argos, Egypt, and Phoenicia through mythical genealogy.

Io's bovine journey is repeated in the story of Europa (*Bibliotheca* 3.1.3-4). Agenor, ruler of Phoenicia and descendant of Io, married Telephassa the Phoenician princess, and together they came birth to Europa, Cadmus, Cilix, and Phoenix.³²⁹ Zeus desired Europa and, turning himself into a bull, carried her across the ocean on his back. When they arrived on Crete, Zeus and Europa begat Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon. Europa's father, Agenor, sent his wife and sons to find her. After much searching, they gave up and settled down in various places across the Mediterranean. Phoenix settled in Phoenicia, Cilix in Cilicia, and Telephassa and Cadmus in

³²³ McInerney 2010, 78; Carpenter 1950, 182

³²⁴ Carpenter 1950, 181-182

³²⁵ Carpenter 1950, 182

³²⁶ McInerney 2010, 79; West 1997, 557-64

³²⁷ McInerney 2010, 79-80

³²⁸ McInerney 2010, 78

³²⁹ Sometimes, Phoenix is given as the father of Europa, in a version where Cadmus and Europa are the children, rather than siblings, of Phoenix. In any case, they are all understood as related.

Thrace (*Bibliotheca* 3.1.2). Thus, the dispersal of Agenor's family reflects a mythical tradition of movement from the East around the Mediterranean. Morris sees Europa as a manifestation of the particularly Phoenician movement from Phoenicia to Crete and outwards across the Mediterranean.³³⁰

On Crete, Europa married Asterius, local prince of the Cretans. Europa and Asterius brought up the children that Europa had begot to Zeus. When they were grown, Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon quarreled over a love interested and eventually turned to war. Minos was triumphant, following which the others fled and founded new homelands; one more mythological explanation for how new Greek communities were founded by older groups from Crete and the Near East.

Having eliminated his competition, Minos married Pasiphae. Pasiphae was the daughter of the Helios (that is, the East) and Perse the Oceanid (Hesiod, *Theogony* 346). Pasiphae was related to other powerful women of Greek mythology, such as Circe (her sister) and Medea (her niece).³³¹ Pausanias writes that Pasiphae is a title of the moon (3.26), though Helios being her father suggests rather an affiliation with the solar deity. Minos and Pasiphae had many children, including Deucalion, Androgeus, Ariadne, and Phaedra. As recounted above, after King Asterius' death Minos asked the gods to answer his prayers and show their divine support for his kingship. When Poseidon sent a beautiful bull at his request, Minos betrayed the god by sacrificing another bull in its place. Poseidon, in retribution, caused Pasiphae to fall in love with the bull, thus resulting in the birth of the Minotaur. In some traditions, Pasiphae named her half-human, half-bull child Asterios (*Apollodorus, Bibliotheca* 3.1.4).

A common element in the genealogical myths of the Minotaur is the hieros gamos. The repeated appearance of the hieros gamos throughout the myth of Minos' ancestry expresses his dynasty's special relationship with the gods. This is mirrored in the special relationship the Greeks believed Minos had with Zeus, discussed below. McInerney suggests that these myths maintain an element of bovine symbolism: Zeus, the bull of the herd, mates with three cow consorts in

³³⁰ Morris 1992, 176

³³¹ Although there is no evidence that it was part of Pasiphae's characterization in the Classical period, later traditions associated Pasiphae with trickery and sorcery, such as the story in which she placed a fidelity charm on Minos, which caused him to ejaculate serpents, scorpions, and centipedes (*Apollodorus, Bibliotheca* 3.197-198).

turn: Hera, Io, and Europa.³³² Cattle and women were both sources of prestige and wealth and could be conceptually interchangeable. For example, in the *Odyssey*, the suitors vie as much for the cattle wealth of Odysseus as they do for his wife, Penelope.³³³ This conceptual alignment may have meant that women could be substituted in myth for cattle.³³⁴ As mentioned previously, Herodotos attributed the cause of the Persian Wars to raids between Greeks and Persians, not for cattle, but for women. He singles out Io and Europa (alongside Medea and Helen) as part of this cause. This dynamic made the adjective βοῶπις, “cow-eyed,” an appropriate compliment for a woman, whose worth, like cattle’s, ultimately derived from her value to men.

For the Greeks, a figure’s genealogical history had tangible implications for their character. As the curse of the Atreidae affected each generation, so too the elements of family history repeated themselves in new generations. Pasiphae, in the logic of mythology, had very little to do with her backwards hieros gamos with Poseidon’s retributive bull. The Minotaur’s genealogical links to the East, through both Pasiphae and Minos, therefore strongly indicate that his eastern qualities were central to his Classical reception. In mythology as well as form, then, the Greek bull-headed Minotaur was aligned with the East.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that bovine symbolism and mythical genealogy would have informed Classical Athenian reception of the Minotaur. The bull-headed man recalled the iconography of Near Eastern divinities and kings and, through both his genealogy and themes presented in his story, the Minotaur was described as Eastern. This made the Minotaur a particularly appropriate enemy for Theseus in the fifth century and facilitated his alignment with Centaurs and Amazons as analogs of the historical Persians.

The Minotaur’s bovine nature identifies him with the power of eastern kings and tyrants, but his half human character complicates this characterization. Though born a monster, his hybrid nature

³³² McInerney 2010, 76

³³³ McInerney 2010, 86

³³⁴ McInerney 2010, 112

was not the fault of his own or of Pasiphae; he was the result of Minos' impiety. A cup from Vulci shows Queen Pasiphae with a young Minotaur on her lap (Fig 14).³³⁵ This scene may betray some sensitivity to the plight of the Minotaur as a helpless pawn of the gods. Moreover, being an unsuitable heir to Minos' throne, the Minotaur was imprisoned in a labyrinth commissioned by his surrogate father. Nevertheless, in Athenian iconography the Minotaur remained the canonical adversary of Theseus. In the fifth century, Athenian attention to the Minotaur as Theseus' opponent was replaced by a re-interpretation of the myth that emphasize the role of King Minos.

³³⁵ Paris, Cab. Med. 1066. From Vulci. *LIMC* Pasiphae 25.

Chapter 5 – The Myth of the Minotaur in Fifth Century Athens

In fifth century Athenian versions of the Minotaur myth, Theseus continues to engage in combat with the Minotaur, but the physical struggle is part of a greater feud between the prince of Athens and the King of Knossos, Minos. The Homeric King Minos had been received as a just lawgiver and ruler, but in the years after the Persian Wars he was increasingly construed as an eastern tyrant. The myth of the Minotaur thus participated in the negotiation of the Athenian attitudes towards easterners and tyrants. In the fifth century, Theseus' conflict with the Minotaur could be interpreted as the story of an Athenian prince defeating an eastern tyrant and his bull-headed monster.

The Homeric Minos

Minos' characterization, both in his earliest appearances in the Homeric poems and in his evolving role in Classical art and iconography, shows his frequent association with the East and with kingship. Though Minos is a king with eastern associations in his earliest attestations, in Classical Athens Minos came to more closely resemble, both in iconography and literature, an Oriental tyrant like the Great King of Persia.

Minos' earliest appearance in literature is in the Homeric poems. Morris notes the particularly Levantine characterization of Minos in Greek myth.³³⁶ Minos was “the most kingly of mortal kings, and used to lord over the greatest number of men dwelling around, holding the scepter of Zeus, with which he also ruled over cities” (Hesiod frag 144). Minos' “Levantine” character was underscored by the description of the urbanized, polyglot society he ruled over on Crete, a society that was reminiscent of older eastern communities in the Levant.³³⁷

Odysseus introduces his so-called Cretan tales by describing Knossos “where Minos used to rule for nine years [ἐννέωρος], the intimate [ὄαριστή] of great Zeus” (Od 19.178-179). This passage

³³⁶ Morris 1992, 174

³³⁷ Morris 1992, 172-194

is discussed extensively by Morris, who notes the many ways in which it may be interpreted. Minos' identification as "ὄαριστής" of Zeus is significant. Morris translates this word as "confidant" or "familiar" and notes that it is elsewhere used in ancient Greek as a word for conjugal intimacy or a bond in battle.³³⁸ Morris connects this word with the *Homeric Hymn to Zeus*, where Zeus whispers private words to Themis, the goddess of law (23.1-3).³³⁹ This connection suggests that Zeus speaks intimately to Minos in his role as divinely inspired lawgiver.³⁴⁰ Morris finds a parallel with the relationship between Moses and Yahweh, which she notes was recognized by Greeks and coloured Greek ideas about Moses.³⁴¹

The adjective, ἐννέωρος, may denote that Minos' reign lasted nine years, after nine years, or began when he was nine years old.³⁴² Alternatively, following Plato's interpretation in *Minos*, the adjective may qualify the word ὄαριστής (319E).³⁴³ In this reading, Minos ruled in Knossos and took counsel with Zeus every nine years.³⁴⁴ This would connect the tradition of Minos' relationship with Zeus more strongly with the eastern tradition of counsel between Moses and Yahweh.³⁴⁵ Moses received the commandments from Yahweh in periods of seclusion, while Minos was believed to consult privately with Zeus on Mt. Ida. It is possible that the tradition of consultations between Zeus and Minos involved both law and religion, and contributed to the Greek tradition of ascribing religious knowledge to Crete.³⁴⁶ Though the relationship between Zeus and Minos was connected with Moses and Yahweh (and even Lykourgos and Apollo) by later Classical writers such as Diodorus (1.94.102) and Strabo (16.2.38), the presence of this line in Homer suggests a much earlier common heritage.³⁴⁷ As a lawgiver who receives status in direct consultation with the god, Minos is characterized as Eastern.

³³⁸ Morris 1992, 177

³³⁹ Morris 1992, 177

³⁴⁰ Morris 1992, 177

³⁴¹ Morris 1992, 177-178

³⁴² Morris 1992, 178

³⁴³ Morris 1992, 178

³⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that Plutarch uses the same adjective to describe how often the tribute of Athenian youths were demanded by Minos to feed the Minotaur (Plutarch, *Theseus* 15).

³⁴⁵ Morris 1992, 178

³⁴⁶ Morris 1992, 179

³⁴⁷ Morris 1992, 179

Classical Greeks associated both legal and religious wisdom with the East, and with Crete. This is exemplified in the tradition of Solon's travels. Solon, the Athenian lawgiver and wise man, was said to have visited Egypt, Lydia, and Crete; all places where one could expect to absorb the wisdom of the East. Solon was said to have received wisdom from Epimenides of Knossos (Plutarch, *Solon* 12) and Cretans were involved in the establishment of the most central of Greek religious institutions, the oracle of Apollo at Delphi (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo*). Accordingly, in his role as wise ruler and just lawgiver, Minos can be viewed in this tradition of eastern wise men. In the *Odyssey*, Minos wields the scepter of judgement over souls in the Underworld (11.598). He is called son of Zeus and Europa, the daughter of Phoenix (11.311), perhaps drawing attention to his Levantine heritage. Both Minos and his brother Rhadamanthys had reputations as lawgivers.³⁴⁸ One tradition has Hephaistos build the bronze giant Talos for Minos, who traveled throughout the island prescribing laws (Plato, *Minos* 321c). Minos' name has even been associated with Egyptian etymologies, including *MNA*, the first lawgiver and pharaoh of Egypt who is mentioned by Herodotos (2.4, 99).³⁴⁹ It is possible that the Egyptian *MNA* reached the Aegean through North Syria, providing a further connection between Minos and the Levant.³⁵⁰

Though Morris may overstate Minos' Levantine character, the Homeric Minos certainly embodied important ideas about eastern rulers in his role as lawgiver, just ruler, and mortal king with a special connection to Zeus. In his Classical reinterpretation, King Minos became even more clearly associated with Greek perceptions of eastern kingship.

The Classical Minos

In the Classical period, the Minotaur is reduced to an avatar of Minos. While the visual tradition continues to represent Theseus' combat in Crete against the Minotaur, the literary tradition increasingly represents Theseus' mission as one against Minos. Therefore, when the Athenian democratic hero Theseus defeats the Minotaur, what he really overcomes is the tyranny of King

³⁴⁸ Morris 1992, 181

³⁴⁹ Morris 1992, 181

³⁵⁰ Morris 1992, 181

Minos. This interpretation is supported by ancient sources that discuss Minos' new ill-repute, his more central place in representations of the Minotaur myth, and by parallels with other eastern kings and tyrants.

Although never fully erasing his Homeric reputation as just lawgiver, classical stories about Minos increasingly demonized him and associated him with the east and with tyranny.

McInerney connects the demonization of Crete with processes of Greek self-definition in the Iron Age.³⁵¹ However, evidence from iconography and literature suggests that the demonization of Minos and Knossos was a particularly Athenian phenomenon that occurred in the decades after the Persian Wars. As Morris writes, "later perspectives on Minos, including his association with infant sacrifice or cannibalism, evolve with Greek attitudes towards the past and the Orient."³⁵² The myth of the Minotaur, like those of Centaurs and Amazons, was part of a wider negotiation of Greek attitudes towards the East.

Titles and fragments of lost plays demonstrate that King Minos frequently appeared on the Athenian stage.³⁵³ Some of these works included six plays called *Theseus* (by Sophocles, Euripides, and an unknown author), Sophocles' *Phaidra* and *Kamikoi*, and Euripides' *Cretans*.³⁵⁴ One of the most influential plays concerned the birth of the Minotaur, Euripides' *The Women of Crete*.³⁵⁵

Ancient authors, such as Plutarch and Plato, were aware of the contrast between how Minos had been characterized in early literature and how he was portrayed in Classical Athens. Plutarch attributes this change in Minos' reception directly to the Attic stage. He writes that "Minos was always abused and reviled in the Attic theatres, and it did not avail him either that Hesiod called him 'most royal' or that Homer styled him 'a confidant of Zeus,' but the tragic poets prevailed, and from platform and stage showered disgrace down upon him, as a man of cruelty and violence" (*Theseus* 16).

³⁵¹ McInerney 2010, 74

³⁵² Morris 1992, 182

³⁵³ Morris 1992, 354

³⁵⁴ Morris 1992, 355

³⁵⁵ Bažant in LIMC, *Minos*

The contrast between the Homeric Minos and the increasingly vilified Minos of the Classical era made “the defense of Minos” a popular subject of ancient Greek literature. Plato treats this subject in his dialogue on law, appropriately called *Minos*. Plato’s interlocutor says that Minos was “a savage sort of person, harsh and unjust” to which Socrates responds, “Your tale, my excellent friend, is a fiction of Attic tragedy” (318D). Thus, Plato also attributes the demonization of Minos to the Attic stage. Later, Socrates says that Minos’ mistake was “in waging war against this city of ours,” that is, Minos was deemed wicked only because he had opposed Athens, who now told his story. “Accordingly, we get Minos on the rack of verse,” Socrates says, “and thus avenge ourselves for that tribute which he compelled us to pay. This, then was the mistake that Minos made – his quarrel with us – and hence it is that, as you said in your question, he has fallen more and more into evil repute” (231A). In the view put forward in Plato’s *Minos*, the king was just and wise but simply ended up on the wrong side of history.

The negative portrayals of Minos on the Attic stage were accompanied by a proliferation of new, unflattering stories about Minos and tales of Minos in later literature feature progressively negative portrayals. One tradition claims that, tired of her husband’s constant philandering, Pasiphae used a grotesque spell on Minos which caused him to ejaculate scorpions and spiders (Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.15.1). The story of Minos’ death is rather unheroic: having chased Daedalos to Sicily, Minos dies trapped in a bathtub filled with scalding water (*Epitome* on Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 14-16). Across such depictions, the story of the Minotaur was construed as a story of Minos’ impiety and tyranny, from which only the democratic hero Theseus could save the Athenians.

Morris notes that the rejection of Minos’ role as early law giver and authority is part of a larger phenomenon in which Athenians located the origins of Greek institutions in Athens.³⁵⁶ This same phenomenon made Daidalos, the legendary craftsman who fashioned the labyrinth, a resident of Athens rather than Knossos.³⁵⁷ It is not a coincidence that as Minos (and other Cretans, like

³⁵⁶ Morris 1992, 182

³⁵⁷ Morris 1992, Part IV

Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus*) were increasingly portrayed in a negative light, Athenian rhetoric about their own superiority and fitness for leadership was growing.³⁵⁸

In conjunction with his portrayals on the Attic stage, Minos appeared more centrally in visual and poetic representations of the Minotaur myth in the Classical period. The earliest representations of the Minotaur myth showed Theseus and the Minotaur in heroic combat and, even with the addition of onlookers, Minos did not figure in early scenes.³⁵⁹ Young, in her analysis of the iconography of Theseus and the Minotaur, notes the consistency with which the scene was depicted in the fifth century.³⁶⁰ “The one noticeable change,” she writes, “is the increased frequency of the bearded male onlooker, who presumably was intended as Minos.”³⁶¹ The more central role of Minos in the Minotaur myth is more clearly represented in literature. Though the Homeric poems had mentioned Minos’ seat of power at Knossos on Crete, he was not mentioned in connection with Theseus (or the Minotaur, who is absent from the Homeric poems). In the fifth century, a new episode in the myth draws attention to Minos’ new role as enemy of Theseus.

The contest between Theseus and Minos en route to Crete was represented in Bacchylides’ *Ode 17* and in paintings by Mikon. The story, as recounted by Bacchylides, goes as follows: Minos, Theseus and the other tributive youths were on their way to Crete. Minos began to harass a maiden, Eriboia, when Theseus stepped in to stop him. Minos called upon his father, Zeus, to prove his power; Zeus responded with a thunderbolt. Minos then threw a golden ring into the sea and demanded that, in evidence of his divine parentage, Theseus dive in and retrieve the ring from the realm of his father Poseidon. Theseus dives to the bottom of the sea, where he is received by Amphitrite, and returns to the ship (the ring is not mentioned again).

A number of changes in the dynamic between Theseus and Minos are demonstrated in this episode. Firstly, it is Minos, not Theseus, who is painted as an aggressor towards women. Earlier tradition had Theseus play a role in the abduction of Helen, Persephone, Antiope, and Ariadne,

³⁵⁸ Morris 1992, 355

³⁵⁹ Bažant in LIMC, *Minos* 573

³⁶⁰ Young 1972, 158

³⁶¹ Young 1972, 158

but in this story, he heroically protects the maiden Eriboia. Some scholars have suggested that this myth was part of a deliberate erasure of Theseus' earlier behaviour, and this theory is supported by the lack of Classical interest in Theseus' earlier abduction scenes. This story sets Minos and Theseus up as antagonists who fight with words rather than strength, but it also makes them equals, both sons of a god. The hero Theseus practices restraint and stands up for justice, while Minos is tyrant-like in his misuse of authority. Castriota interprets this story as "a parable of the retribution meted out by the gods and their heroic champions against arrogant opponents who abuse their strength or power."³⁶²

In Classical Athens, then, Minos' reputation declined even as his centrality to the myth of the Minotaur increased. Two elements of Minos' Classical characterization set him up as an appropriate enemy for Theseus: his eastern qualities and his association with kingship. By emphasizing Minos' eastern heritage, the king was aligned with other eastern enemies of the Greeks, like the mythical Amazons or the historical Persians. In his role as king, Minos was aligned with other enemies of democracy, such as tyrants. In his dealings with the Minotaur, Minos was aligned with other tyrants and kings whose ill-repute was signaled by their strange dealings with bulls. These strands come together to portray Minos as a hubristic oriental king, an appropriate opponent for Theseus in the decades that Athens led the fight for freedom from eastern tyranny under the Persians.

Classical plays likely emphasized Minos' eastern heritage. In fragments from Euripides' *Cretans*, Minos is identified as "son of Phoinix-born Tyrian, child of Europa" (frag. 476.1-2), thus highlighting his eastern parentage.³⁶³ Though born of Zeus, Minos is not native to Crete, and he replaces the native king Asterios only with great effort. In Plato's *Gorgias*, Minos is called a "stranger" and an "Asian" (523e).³⁶⁴

Minos was not cast as simply eastern but was portrayed in the particular role of eastern tyrant. In the Homeric poems, Minos already receives divine sanction and sits in judgement over others.

³⁶² Castriota 1992, 60

³⁶³ Morris 1992, 175

³⁶⁴ Morris 1992, 177

Morris identifies these traits as comparable to eastern ideas of kingship.³⁶⁵ In the Classical period, Minos' role as despot was magnified as he came to resemble the Great King of Persia. Morris compares Minos in Bacchylides' poem to Greek traditions about Xerxes.³⁶⁶ She writes that Minos "formed an anti-Athenian figure with Oriental trappings in Athenian mythology, as a foil to Theseus, and the Persian king who offers gold to the sea, in vain, parallels the Cretan king who also throws precious metal into the sea, trusting in his god in vain."³⁶⁷ Castriota also draws this parallel. He writes that "as a specifically 'oriental' monarch or thalassocrat, Minos could effectively prefigure Xerxes himself, precisely as Aischylos portrayed him in the *Persians* at just about the same time – a reckless and hybristic tyrant of land and sea alike, unbound by any strictures of law or moderation."³⁶⁸

In Classical pottery painting, Minos is bearded and often wields a scepter or spear, two attributes of kings.³⁶⁹ An Athenian red-figure Krater³⁷⁰ from c. 500-450 BC, now in Brussels shows the heroic combat scene between Theseus and the Minotaur with Minos watching from the right (Fig 15). Although Theseus is clearly in direct physical conflict with the Minotaur, the composition draws attention to the opposition between Theseus and Minos, both upright and with outstretched arms. The same composition is seen on a red-figure Krater from Italy, now in the Museo Nazionale di Spina.³⁷¹

Minos' identification as an eastern king was shaped by similarities with other tyrants and kings who had disreputable interactions with bulls. The idea that tyrants and kings were connected with grotesque bull imagery is telling; while Homeric heroes demonstrated their heroic virtues by dealing properly with cattle, tyrants did the opposite, and abuse of cattle symbolized misuse of power. As discussed previously, bovine imagery was also particularly associated with the East. An earlier symbolism that made bovine imagery a positive marker of prestige, power, and divinity, now came to be an indicator of the perversion of power. Bovine imagery was

³⁶⁵ Morris 1992, 177

³⁶⁶ Morris 1992, 353

³⁶⁷ Morris 1992, 353

³⁶⁸ Castriota 1995, 61

³⁶⁹ Morris 1992, 355

³⁷⁰ Beazley #206430

³⁷¹ Beazley #206431

appropriate in the age of divinely-sanctioned kings, but for democratic Athenians, it came to be associated with the greed and misuse of authority attributed to eastern kings and tyrants.

Diodorus Siculus writes of the Sicilian tyrant Phalaris, who also used a bull to punish his enemies (*Fragments of Book IX*, 18-19). The attic bronze-worker Perilaus, the Sicilian counterpart to Daedalus, made a bronze bull for Phalaris. As Perilaus describes it to the tyrant, “If you ever wish to punish some man, O Phalaris, shut him up within the bull and lay a fire beneath it; by his groanings the bull will be thought to bellow and his cries of pain will give you pleasure as they come through the pipes in the nostrils” (19). Phalaris, like Minos who was said to have locked the inventor Daedalus in his own labyrinth, burned Perilaus in his own invention. The tradition was known much earlier: Pindar refers to Phalaris in *Pythian I* as “that man of pitiless spirit who burned men in his bronze bull” (95-56).

King Midas was an eastern king known for his wealth. Both Minos and Midas had indulged in great greed, to their own detriment: while Minos had kept the prized bull for himself instead of sacrificing it to Poseidon, Midas wished that everything he touched would turn to gold (Ovid, *Metamorphoses XI*, 86-145). Both kings are shown in similar guises on Greek pottery: both bearded, with scepter, and often seated or near a throne.³⁷²

The legendary King Midas of Phrygia contributed to the Greek association between horns and kingship. A music contest took place between Marsyas and Apollo and, although Apollo was judged the winner, King Midas sided with Marsyas. For this, Apollo gave Midas the ears of a donkey (Ovid, *Metamorphoses XI*, 145-193). As Ovid wrote, “Human otherwise, he was punished in this, that he wore the ears of a sluggard ass.” (XI, 178-179). Although this story does not appear in literature until the Roman period, Midas had sported animal ears in fifth century Greek vase painting (FIG 16).³⁷³ Morris has shown that donkey ears were associated with Hittite kingship in the Bronze Age. She interprets the story of King Midas and his donkey ears as “some memory of this royal attribute.”³⁷⁴ The rock-cut relief of Tarkasnawa at Karabel near Smyrna,

³⁷² Young 1972, 158; Morris 2003, 10

³⁷³ Morris 2003, 10

³⁷⁴ Morris 2003, 12

which Herodotos records in his *Histories* (2.106), showed a king with donkey ears.³⁷⁵ In Morris' reconstruction, the story of Midas' actions at the contest between Marsyas and Apollo was a Greek invention to explain something they saw in Hittite art. I suggest further that the image of the eastern King Midas and his "animal ears" contributed to a broader association between animal "horns" and eastern kings.

Another episode connected Midas with bovine imagery. According to a tradition cited by Plutarch, King Midas, "dispirited and disturbed, as it appears, as the result of some dreams, reached such a state of mind that he committed suicide by drinking bull's blood" (*Moralia* 8). This story participates in a wider tradition connecting bulls and punishment or death. The gods often used bulls as punishment in myth, such as the bull sent by Poseidon in the *Hippolytus* or the Minotaur himself. The tyrants Phalaris and Minos condemned subjects to death by feeding them to bulls, and an eastern king, disturbed by his own animal horns, killed himself with the animal's blood.

In summary, in the decades after the Persian Wars, King Minos played a greater role in the myth of the Minotaur. He was vilified with the imagery of an eastern tyrant, a tradition which drew from the long history of bovine imagery in the Aegean and the Near East. These changes in the myth of the Minotaur suggest that, in the Classical period, Minos was the true enemy of Theseus, while the Minotaur acted primarily as Minos' avatar. This interpretation accounts for the continued representation of the duel between Theseus and the Minotaur as well as the new myths, centered on Theseus' encounters with Minos, represented in fifth century art and poetry. The confrontation between Theseus and Minos/Minotaur set up a greater confrontation between Athens and Crete.

³⁷⁵ Morris 2003, 12

Athens and Crete

Iconographical and literary evidence show that it is Minos' position rather than that of the Minotaur that changes in the fifth century. This in turn raises another question: why was a myth of Athenian dominance over Crete so compelling in the fifth century?

I suggest that Crete, like Minos, was construed as eastern. As the seat of the eastern tyrant King Minos, Crete was a place that encouraged atrocities; it was there that the feeding of Athenian youths to a bull-headed man took place. This negative perspective was stimulated by contemporary events, above all by Crete's refusal to support the Greek side at the naval Battle of Salamis. Mythical Knossos was already characterized as strange, exotic, and eastern. When the Cretans did not show up to support the Greek side at Salamis, contemporary Crete was decisively aligned with the east as well. Finally, in the construction of the myth of Minos' thalassocracy, Crete was cast in direct opposition to Athens, a confrontation that led to Athens being victorious.

Morris has demonstrated that Crete was characterized as Levantine as early as in the *Odyssey*.³⁷⁶ The urbanized, polyglot society described by Homer (*Od.* 19.179-180) reflects mixed populations known from archaeological evidence of Crete.³⁷⁷ Despite Morris' insistence on a "Levantine" description of Crete, it is notable that the Cretans are included among the many other Greeks that fought at Troy. This suggests that the Cretans, regardless of their geographical distance from the mainland, were thought of as Greeks. Crete's contributions to Greek religion, philosophy, and law have already been noted. Yet even at this early date, the Cretans may have been associated with piracy and trickery, as reflected in the tradition of Daedalos and Odysseus' Cretan Tales. This mix of eastern and Greek features is central to ideas about Crete, which is a hybrid locale: it is foreign and it is Greek. The mythical genealogical tradition associated with Crete also supports a mixing of indigenous and Oriental populations and, therefore, traditions. This is exemplified in the figure of Minos, who is the son of a Greek god and a Phoenician princess.

³⁷⁶ Morris 1992, 173

³⁷⁷ Morris 1992, especially chapter 6

One famous element of Crete's mythical geography is the labyrinth. Although the modern conception of the Minotaur's labyrinth is linked with Crete, the earliest labyrinth known to the Greeks was actually in Egypt (Herodotos 2.148). Pliny describes four labyrinths (*Natural History*, 36.19.84-93). Given that history, the Labyrinth should be considered a work of exotic and complex technical character rather than specifically Cretan. The "labyrinth" meander motif is known from many early artistic traditions. In the Roman tradition, it is known as the "Trojan game" motif. In this capacity, it is connected with a dance. It is possible that the labyrinth symbol was originally associated with Ariadne's string or the dance performed on Delos and later came to represent a place. It is only in the fifth century that the labyrinth became directly associated with the Minotaur. This is most apparent on coinage from Knossos, which shows the labyrinth meander symbol.³⁷⁸ Taken together, these depictions suggest that we should perhaps interpret the labyrinth as more evocative of an ancient and exotic civilization rather than a reference to Knossos specifically as is typically the case in the modern era.

A striking element of the Minotaur myth is the feeding of youths to a monster, which may reflect a specifically Levantine tradition of child sacrifice. In this interpretation, the Greek myth contains a kernel of historical memory of a Near Eastern religious ritual. Morris writes that infant sacrifice was "a tradition that may have been practiced on Crete in the Late Bronze Age and survived in the legend of human tribute to the Minotaur."³⁷⁹ Morris also connects the story of the Minotaur with the Levantine tradition of El, the god who receives infant sacrifice among non-Greeks as Kronos.³⁸⁰ El was called "the bull" in Ugaritic literature.³⁸¹ Diodorus Siculus describes a bronze idol of Cronus to which children were sacrificed at Carthage (20.14).

A relief from Pozo Moro in Spain, associated with a Punic site, features a strange bull-headed creature often connected with the Greek Minotaur.³⁸² Interestingly, Rundin interprets this figure as either a bull-headed El or a bull-masked priest imitating El who conducted child sacrifice.³⁸³

³⁷⁸ Morris 1992, 190

³⁷⁹ Morris 1992, 165

³⁸⁰ Morris 1992, 185

³⁸¹ Ornan 2001, 17; Rundin 2004, 433

³⁸² Rundin, 2004, 428

³⁸³ Rundin 2004, 235

He writes that if the figure is bull-headed or bull-masked, “its connection to the Minotaur is obvious.”³⁸⁴ In Rundin’s view, the Pozo Moro relief confirms the interpretation that the Minotaur myth is connected with Northwest Semitic child sacrifice on Crete.³⁸⁵

Regardless of whether the myth of the Minotaur represents a Greek distortion of a Levantine ritual, the displacement of a practice otherwise associated with Levantine cult onto Cretans is telling. Not only was Crete a place where a human princess would desire to mate with a bull, but it was a location where a King could demand a “backwards” sacrifice, the killing of humans for the sake of a bull.

Therefore, Crete could be characterized as a liminal or even hybrid space. It was eastern but also Greek, and it was the seat of a great King but also a great monstrosity. The labyrinth as an exotic structure and child sacrifice as an eastern ritual contributed to the alignment of Knossos with the East. This combination of Greek and Oriental elements was present from the earliest reflections of Crete, but in the wake of the Persian Wars, the glory of Knossos was overshadowed by perceptions of its eastern affiliations.

In the fifth century, both mythical and contemporary Crete was increasingly aligned with the East. Much of this perception was due to the behaviour of Crete during the Persian Wars, of which Herodotos is our main source. The Greek allies send embassies out to recruit poleis for their cause against the Persians. The Cretans appealed to Delphi to see if they should participate (7.169.1). The Pythia answered that they should not, since although the Cretans had supported Menelaus at Troy, none had come to their aid to avenge Minos’ death in Sicily (1.169.2). As Herodotos writes, “when this was brought to the ears of the Cretans, they would have nothing to do with aiding the Greeks” (1.169.2). Herodotos circles back to explain: when the Cretans went to Sicily to avenge Minos’ death, their land was left desolate and had to be repopulated. Then, when the Cretans went to Troy, they returned to famine and pestilence, until Crete was desolate again. Yet later a third influx of Cretans came, the ancestors of those now asking the Pythia.

³⁸⁴ Rundin 2004, 435

³⁸⁵ Rundin 2004, 436

Therefore, the Cretans were not allies of the Greeks during the Persian Wars. A subsequent tradition proclaimed their involvement at the Battle of Salamis, but this is usually dismissed as a belated attempt to save face.³⁸⁶ If the Cretans were indeed present at Salamis, they were likely there as mercenaries. For our purposes, the tradition of their absence is more important than whether or not they were present.

Classical authors recognized the importance of heroic age Crete but neglected contemporary Crete. This is surely influenced by our sources, which all come from outside Crete. Thucydides mentions Crete in his *Archaeology*, but only to describe Minos as the first ruler of a thalassocracy (1.4). Thus, in both Herodotos and Thucydides, Crete is mentioned in conjunction with its ancient mytho-history. Modern scholars interpret the literary sources as evidence for a policy of isolation from mainland commercial, intellectual, political, and military developments of the fifth century.³⁸⁷ Morris summarizes this phenomenon, “Crete did not participate in this new [post-Persian Wars] world except by exporting its specialists, and hence the island’s political and economic importance did not revive until the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Precisely for this dormancy in culture, Crete, like Sparta, invited foreign fantasies disparaging or romanticizing its culture. The island’s absence at the battle of Salamis established its lack of prestige in the classical period and opened it to the vilification applied to Minos.”³⁸⁸

Modern scholars have long noted that the myths of Crete are known only from the perspective of fifth century Athens. In his consequential discussion of Cretan mythology, Nilsson wrote, “I cannot leave this subject without emphasizing the fact that reminiscences of Minoan Crete are found in Attic myths only. This fact is really worth considering and an explanation is needed.”³⁸⁹ Nilsson suggests that this phenomenon is connected with the division of Greek tribes, but, following Morris and Walker, I suggest that the Cretan myths, as manifested in the Classical period, were the result of Athenian mythmaking in the years after the Persian Wars. The myths of Crete as we know them were consolidated in the fifth century not by the Cretans, but by the Athenians. As is the case with history, mytho-history is also written by the victor. In the

³⁸⁶ Erickson 2005, 621

³⁸⁷ Erickson 2005, 622

³⁸⁸ Morris 1992, 172

³⁸⁹ Nilsson 1932, 180

Classical period when these myths were elaborated, who stood to gain from a story of Theseus defeating Minos and his bull? The victor is clearly Athens and “Cretan” myths say more about Athens than they do about Crete.

The opposition between Minos and Theseus is made even more relevant during the post-Persian War period with the tradition of Minos’ thalassocracy. This feature makes the King of Knossos a foil to Theseus, now the hero and predecessor of the Classical Athenian navy.

The thalassocracy of Minos is absent from the oldest traditions. Ancient sources refer to a land empire rather than sea, based on similar use of words to refer to *perioikoi* in Lakedaimon.³⁹⁰ Morris writes, “only in political mythology, not the poetic vision of Euripides, does Minos acquire a naval empire fit to compare with that of the Phoenicians and, deliberately, that of Athens.”³⁹¹

Therefore, the myth of Minos’ thalassocracy was late and artificial, a fact that is often obscured by modern interpretations of Bronze Age archaeology.³⁹² Though in Thucydides (1.4) and Herodotos (3.122) it was Minos who freed the seas of pirates, Athenian historiographers like Kleidemos (*FGrH* 3b, 74-75) has Theseus launch the expedition against piracy and the sons of Minos, who are clearly on the side of the pirates.³⁹³ Plutarch describes a story where, before he sailed away from Crete, Theseus staved the bottom of the Cretan ships so they could not pursue (*Theseus* 14).

This pitting of Athens against Crete was bolstered by a popular tradition emphasizing Theseus’ divine father, Poseidon. Who better to exemplify the naval power of Athens than a son of Poseidon himself? Minos may be son of Zeus, a fact exemplified in his role as “most kingly of kings,” but it was Theseus who was most fit to rule in the age of the Delian League.

³⁹⁰ Morris 1992, 175

³⁹¹ Morris 1992, 175

³⁹² See Hägg and Marinatos 1984

³⁹³ Morris 1992, 356

The tradition of an ancient rivalry between the navies of Crete and of Athens seemed particularly relevant in light of the contemporary Greek naval victory at Salamis. As Morris points out, the Phoenicians formed the bulk of the Persian navy, and therefore were the primary naval enemy of Greece in the Persian wars.³⁹⁴ Consequently, Morris attributes the demonization of Minos in the Classical period to two primary causes: his mythical connection with Phoenicia and the failure of the Cretans to support the Greek cause at Salamis.³⁹⁵ The tradition of Minos' thalassocracy, which was bested by Theseus, was a mythical precedent for the contemporary success of the Athenian navy against the Persians.

By positing an earlier tradition of thalassocracy which was overcome by Theseus, the Athenians claimed to have out-manuevered even King Minos on the sea. In Thucydides' account, Minos is said to have ruled over the Cyclades, expelled the Carians, sent out colonies and eradicated piracy (1.4). In these activities, Minos' thalassocracy was antecedent to the Athenian empire.

Through stories about the labyrinth, Daidalos, Minos, and above all, Theseus, the Minotaur was linked to a larger constellation of myths that characterized Athens as a place of heroic glory, both in legend and in fifth century reality. This process transferred some of the glory of Bronze Age Knossos to ancient Athens. In their invented triumph over such a powerful kingdom, the Athenians coopted that glory for themselves.

Conclusion

Although the origins of the myth may be obscure, Classical Athenians construed the story of the Minotaur as the story of an Athenian conquering a particularly eastern threat. The Minotaur, in form and genealogy, was construed as an eastern monster. King Minos, once associated with wisdom and just rule, came to represent the real enemy of the Classical Athenian democracy: Oriental tyranny. This displacement of hostility, from the Minotaur to Minos, may be one reason why the Minotaur does not appear in literature until late in the Classical period. Though the slaying of the Minotaur was an established visual reference to the myth as a whole, literary

³⁹⁴ Morris 1992, 375

³⁹⁵ Morris 1992, 377

sources preferred to explore Minos as antagonist to Theseus. The more Minos was vilified, the greater was Theseus' standing. By locating the canonical deed of their polis-hero Theseus on the island of Crete, fifth century Athenians could coopt the glory of heroic age Knossos while increasingly characterizing the island as a regressive culture, where children were sacrificed to a bull-headed monster. This conception of Crete was especially appealing after the Cretans refused to support the Greek cause in the Persian Wars.

By re-inventing the myth of the Minotaur, Classical Athenians constructed a legendary antecedent for their leadership in the victory at Salamis and the naval empire that followed. Like the Greek triumph over the Centaurs or the Athenian defense of the Acropolis under Amazon attack, the myth of the Minotaur demonstrated the inevitability of Athenian victory and glory over an "Other." In the case of the Minotaur, the heroic deed of Theseus represented the Athenian victory over the particularly eastern threat of tyranny and monstrosity. The horns of the bull had once been a symbol of divinity and sacred kingship and remained so in the Near East. In the eyes of the Classical Athenians, who pursued freedom from tyranny in the name of democracy, the Minotaur represented the east, tyranny and kingship, and the perversion of proper Greek religion.

The myth of the Minotaur was a traditional tale reinvented to suit contemporary political and historical purposes. In the myth of the Minotaur, fifth-century Athens claimed the glory of the heroic age and triumphed over the east, over tyranny and kingship, and over the mythical embodiments of these ideas, King Minos and the Minotaur. The myth was not just a contest between a man and a monster, but between democracy and tyranny and between West and East. Theseus' fight against the Minotaur, like the contemporary Greek battle against the Persians, would decide whether Athens was slave to an eastern ruler or free to spread her democracy in the Aegean.

Conclusion

The ancient Greek myth of the Minotaur had roots in the Bronze Age, but in fifth century Athens the story acquired new resonance in light of political and historical developments. Although many modern studies have explored the figure of Theseus, few have offered an interpretation of the myth of the Minotaur despite acknowledging it as Theseus' earliest and most popular heroic deed. This study places the myth of the Minotaur within the numerous myths of Theseus and locates its origins in iconography derived from the Near East. By considering the role of other hybrid enemies and the connection between the Minotaur's form and character with the East, this thesis suggests an interpretation of the myth with particular relevance to fifth century Athens.

Theseus was in origin a hybrid slayer; in his earliest exploits he fought Centaurs and the Minotaur. The myths of Classical Theseus demonstrate the many ways in which the Athenians used Theseus to construct and support their new identity, as both victors in the wars against the Persians and leaders of a new naval empire. Despite the many additions to Theseus' story in the Classical period, the slaying of the Minotaur remained the hero's' most popular and defining deed.

The earliest depictions of the Minotaur in Greece are within scenes of heroic combat between a hero and a bull-headed man. This image has roots in the Near East and particularly in the Iron Age art of the Levant. Given the increased contact between Greece and the East in the early Archaic period, it seems likely that Greeks created the image of Theseus and the Minotaur based on Near Eastern prototypes. The myth of the Minotaur emerged in Greece during a wider process of cultural and commodity interchange between East and West in the Orientalizing period.

The Minotaur, in his hybrid form, resembles other composite creatures known from Greek mythology. A consideration of two other hybrid foes, the Centaurs and the Amazons, demonstrates that in his guise hybrid-slayer, Theseus was emblematic of the Greek struggle against the Other. In the Classical period, battles against hybrids from the mythical past became both analogies and precedents for the contemporary hostility towards the Persians. I suggest that

Centaur and Amazon were useful analogies for the Persians not only because they represented the “Other” but also because their hybrid nature reflected ambiguity towards difference. In public rhetoric, the Athenians often disparaged the Persians as the antagonistic Other, the opposite of Athenian male ideals. However, a deeper analysis of the evidence suggests that a secondary discourse of receptivity towards the Persians existed simultaneously with public hostility. The hybrid enemy, part the same and part other, was an appropriate means of expressing this ambiguity.

A consideration of the Minotaur’s hybrid form and genealogy connects him to Near Eastern iconography of bulls, divinity, and kingship. The Classical reception of the Minotaur as eastern may have been informed by his real iconographical origins in the East. Following the consideration of Centaurs and Amazons, I suggest that the myth of the Minotaur gained new resonance in the fifth century as analogy for the battle between East and West. The Minotaur, half bull but half man, part same and part other, was an appropriate embodiment of Greek ambiguity towards the east.

This interpretation is further supported by the figure of Minos, who also embodies ambivalence towards the East. Both a just lawgiver and a ruler with close connections to Zeus, King Minos was demonized on the Athenian stage as his portrayals increasingly evoked the tyrant kings of the East. The Minotaur’s role does not change but his heroic combat with Theseus declines in popularity as a new Cretan enemy, King Minos, takes the stage. The Minotaur had served as an appropriate opponent for the archaic Theseus, the slayer of hybrid monsters, but the true enemy of Theseus in the Classical era was not the bull-headed man but his begetter, King Minos.

At first glance, Theseus’ early identification as hybrid slayer may seem at odds with his later characterization as ideal Athenian democratic citizen. However, I suggest that Theseus’ primary role as hybrid-slayer facilitated his later role in Athens. Theseus challenged whoever sought to disrupt the physical and social boundaries of Athens. The Archaic Theseus had fought hybrid monsters, like Centaurs and the Minotaur, who challenged the delineation of nature and civilization. As Archaic concerns were replaced by Classical anxieties and especially in the wake of the Persian Wars, Theseus went on to fight the Amazons, who challenged male-dominated

culture, and King Minos, who represented the threat of eastern tyranny. Since Theseus represents the ideal citizen, the Minotaur embodies a danger that threatens all citizens. Theseus had always been a slayer of hybrids but faced with the real threat of the Persian empire, the Athenians reinterpreted the myth of the Minotaur: the story of Theseus sailing to confront the Minotaur and King Minos was the story of Greeks, and particularly Athenians, facing the threat from the east.

Illustrations



Figure 1 – Theseus and the Minotaur, Attic Lekythos, Getty Mus. 85.AE.376



Figure 2a – Rayet Skyphos



Figure 2b – Rayet Skyphos



Figure 3a – François Vase



Figure 3b – Detail of Theseus with a lyre, François Vase



Figure 3c – Detail of Battle of Lapiths and Centaurs, François Vase



Figure 4 – Theseus and Poseidon, Red-figured oenochoe, Yale 1913.143

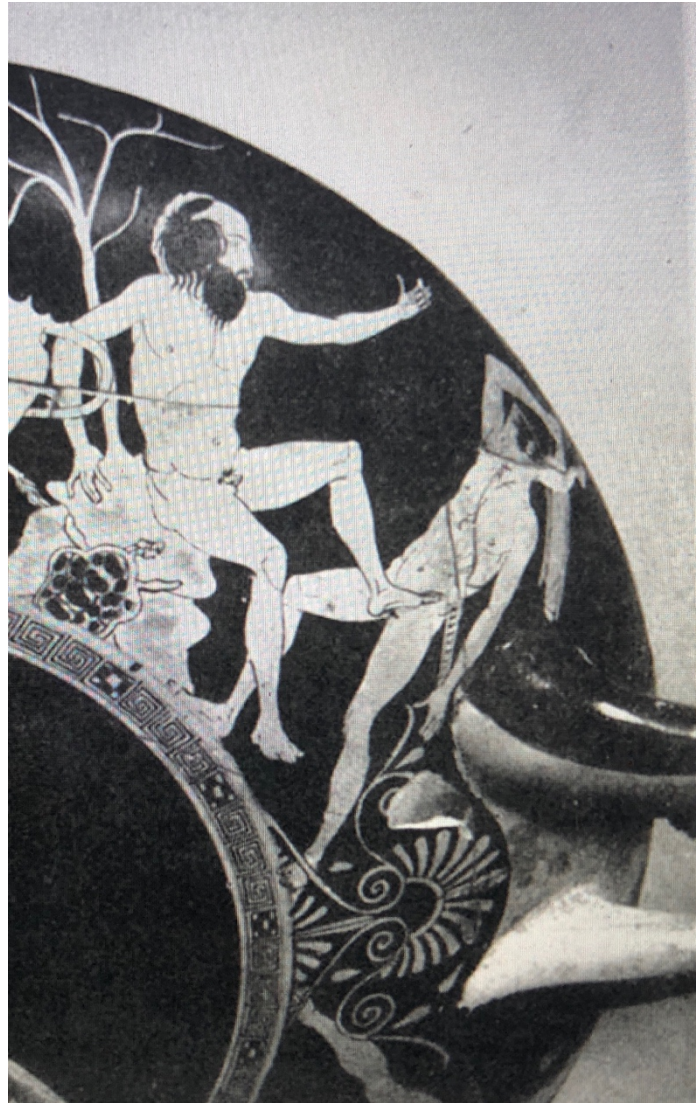


Figure 5 – Theseus in Tyrannicide pose, from British Museum Kylix E84

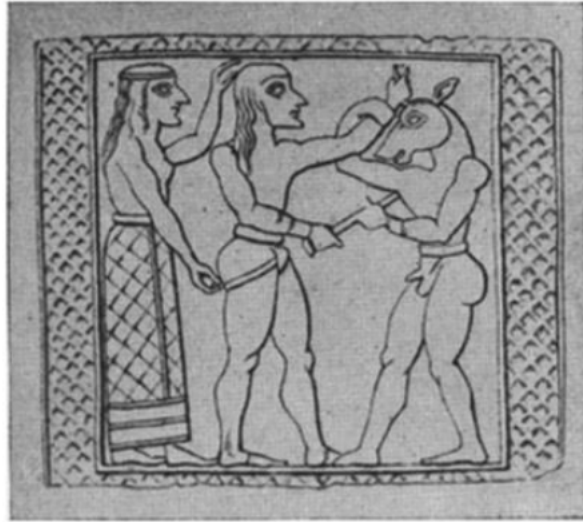
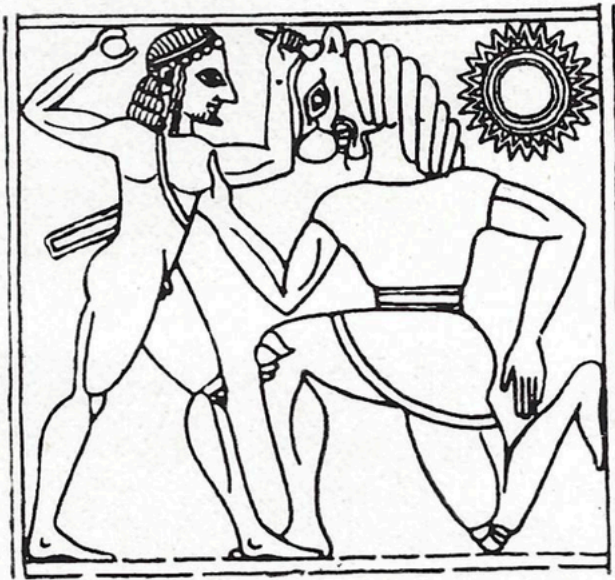


Figure 6 – Drawing of Corinth Gold Plaque, Berlin

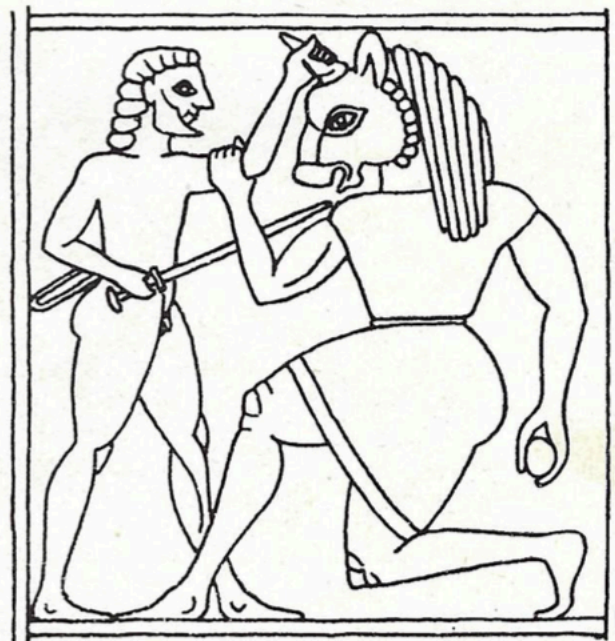


Figure 7a – Shield Strap from Olympia



IV e

Figure 7b – Group IVe, Olympia Shield Straps



III d

Figure 7c – Group IIIId, Olympia Shield Straps



6 Feld VII d.

Figure 7d – Group VIId, Olympia Shield Straps



V e

Figure 7e – Group Ve, Olympia Shield Straps

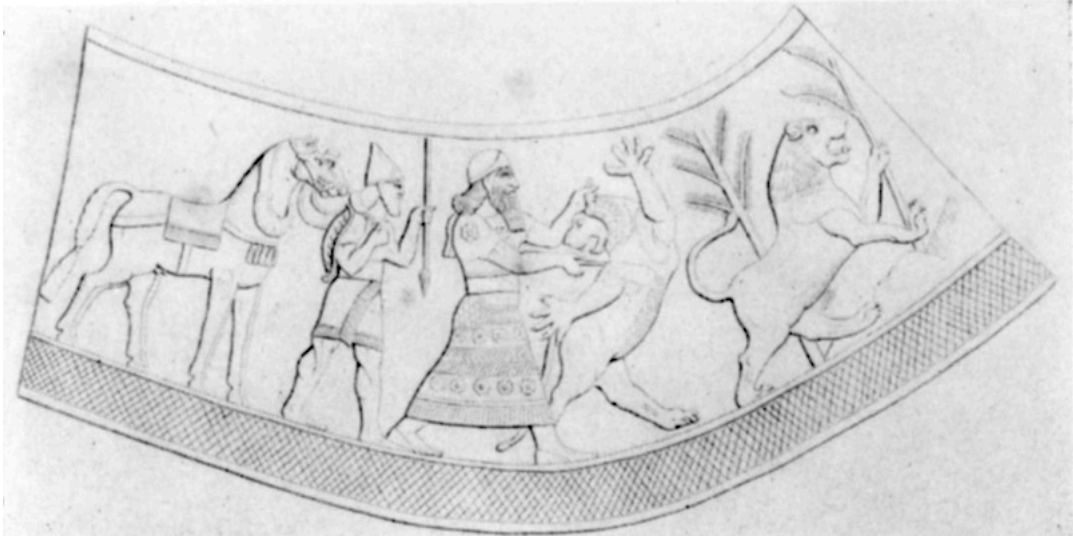


Figure 8 – Detail from Relief at Palace of Ashurnasirpal at Nimrud



Figure 9 – Phoenician Bowl (Cy8)



Figure 10 – Drawing of seal showing Moon god Nanna, Early Dynastic III Period



Figure 11 – Terracotta relief of a goddess on a throne



Figure 12 – Ba'al, limestone stele from Ugarit



Fig

Figure 13 – Bull-headed Ba'al attacking a serpent



Figure 14 – Pasiphaë with baby Minotaur, Paris Cab. Med. 1066 From Vulci.



Figure 15 – Theseus and the Minotaur, Athenian Red-Figure Krater



Figure 16 – Midas on throne, Attic Red-Figured Cup from Vulci

Bibliography

- Åkerström, Å. 1964. *Die architektonischen Terrakotten Kleinasiens*. Lund: Gleerup.
- Akurgal, E. 1980. *Orient und Okzident: die Geburt der griechischen Kunst*. Baden-Baden : Holle.
- Amandry, P. 1998. "Le 'socle marathonien' et le trésor des Atheniens." *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 122 : 75-90.
- Barnett, R. D. 1956. "The Treasure of Ziwiye." *Iraq* 18.2: 111-116.
- Bernal, M. 1987. *Black Athena: the Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*. 3 Vols. London: Free Association Books.
- Bianchi, R. S. 2004. "The Greek Reception and Transformation of Ancient Near Eastern Composite Beasts." In *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, edited by J. Goodman-Westenholtz. Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum.
- Boardman, J. 1975. "Herakles, Peisistratus, and Eleusis." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 85: 1-12.
- Boardman, J. 1968. *Archaic Greek Gems*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Brommer, F. 1982. *Theseus: die Taten des griechischen Helden in der antiken Kunst und Literatur*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Burkert, W. 1992. *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek culture in the Early Archaic Age*. Translated by M. Pinder and W. Burkert. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Burkert, W. 1985. *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*. Translated by J. Raffan. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Canby, J. V. 1971. "Decorated Garments in Ashurnasirpal's Sculpture." *Iraq* 33.1: 31-53.
- Carpenter, R. 1950. "Argeiphontes: A Suggestion." *American Journal of Archaeology* 54.3: 177-183.
- Castriota, D. 1995. "Barbarian and Female: The Other on the West Front of the Parthenon." *Source: Notes on the History of Art* 15.1: 32-38.
- Castriota, D. 1992. *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality: Official Art in Fifth Century B.C. Athens*. Madison: Wisconsin University Press.

- di Cesnola, L. P. 1978. *Cyprus: Its Ancient Cities, Tombs, and Temples*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.
- Cook, A. B. 1964. *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*. New York: Biblo and Tannen.
- Dinsmoor, W. B. 1946. "The Athenian Treasury as Dated by Its Ornament." *American Journal of Archaeology* 50.1: 86-121.
- DuBois, P. 1991. *Centaurs and Amazons: Women and Pre-History in the Great Chain of Being*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Edwards, R. B. 1979. *Kadmos the Phoenician: a Study in Greek Legends and the Mycenaean Age*. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert.
- Erickson, B. 2005. "Archaeology of Empire: Athens and Crete in the Fifth Century BC." *American Journal of Archaeology* 109.4: 619-663.
- Evans, A. 1921. *The Palace of Minos at Knossos*. London: MacMillan and Co.
- Furtwängler, A. 1906. *Aegina*. Munich: Verlag der K. B. Akademie der wissenschaften.
- Glendinning, M.R. 1996. "A Mid-Sixth Century Tile Roof System at Gordion." *Hesperia* 65.1: 99-119
- Goodnick-Westenholtz, J. 2004. "Hybrid Creatures in the Ancient Near East: Their Character and Their Role." In *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, edited by J. Goodnick-Westenholtz. Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum.
- Hägg, R. and Marinatos, N., eds. 1984. *The Minoan Thalassocracy: Myth and Reality*. Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag.
- Hall, E. 1959. *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition Through Tragedy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hardwick, L. 1990. "Ancient Amazons – Heroes, Outsiders or Women?" *Greece & Rome* 37.1: 14-36.
- Hogarth, D. G. and C. L. Woolley. 1914. *Carchemish I*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Karageorghis, V. 1982. *Cyprus, From the Stone Age to the Romans*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Karageorghis, V. 1971. "Notes on Some Cypriote Priests Wearing Bull-Masks." *The Harvard Theological Review* 64.2: 261-270.

- Kardara, C. P. 1960. "Problems of Hera's Cult-Images." *American Journal of Archaeology* 64.4: 343-358.
- Kardara, C. P. 1951. "On Theseus and the Tyrannicides." *American Journal of Archaeology* 55.4: 292-300.
- Klingbeil, M. G. 2009. "Mapping the Literary to the Literal Image: A Comparison Between Sub-metaphors of the Heavenly Warrior Metaphor in the Hebrew Psalter and Iconographic Elements of the Storm- and Warrior-god Ba'al in ANE Iconography." *Die Welt des Orients* 39.2: 205-222.
- Kunze, E. 1950. *Olympische Forschungen II Archaische Schildbänder*. Berlin: Verlag Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Markoe, G. 1996. "The Emergence of Orientalizing in Greek Art: Some Observations on the Interchange between Greeks and Phoenicians in the Eight and Seventh Centuries B.C." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 301: 47-67.
- Markoe, G. 1989. "The "Lion Attack" in Archaic Greek Art: Heroic Triumph." *Classical Antiquity* 8.1: 86-115.
- Markoe, G. 1985. *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McInerney, J. 2010. *The Cattle of the Sun: Cows and Culture in the World of the Ancient Greeks*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Miller, M. 1997. *Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC: A Study in Cultural Receptivity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morgan, C. 1990. *Athletes and Oracles: The Transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the Eighth Century BC*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morris, S. 2003. "Frogs around the Pond? Cultural Diversity in the Ancient World and the New Millennium." *Syllecta Classica* 14:1-21.
- Morris, S. 1994. *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Napier, A. D. 1986. *Masks, Transformation, and Paradox*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Neer, R. 2004. "The Athenian Treasury at Delphi and the Material of Politics." *Classical Antiquity*. 23.1: 63-93.
- Neils, J. 2013. "Contextualizing the François Vase." In *The François Vase: New Perspectives*, edited by H.A. Shapiro, M. Iozzo, and A. Lezzi-Hafter, 119-130. Zürich: Akanthus.

- Neils, J. 1995. "Inventing the Other: The Opponents of Theseus." *Notes on the History of Art* 15: 17-24.
- Neils, J. 1987. *The Youthful Deeds of Theseus*. Roma: Bretschneider.
- Nilsson, M. P. 1932. *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nilsson, M. P. 1950. *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion*. Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup.
- Obbink, H. T. 1937. "The Horns of the Altar in the Semitic World, Especially in Jahwism." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 56.1: 43-49.
- Ornan, T. 2001. "The Bull and its Two Masters: Moon and Storm Deities in Relation to the Bull in Ancient Near Eastern Art." *Israel Exploration Journal* 51.1:1-26.
- Padgett, J. M. 2003. *The Centaur's Smile: The Human Animal in Greek Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Papantoniou, G. 2012. *Religion and Social Transformations in Cyprus: From the Cypriot Basileis to the Hellenistic Strategos*. Leiden: Brill.
- Rundin, J. S. 2004. "Pozo Moro, Child Sacrifice, and the Greek Legendary Tradition." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123.3:425-447.
- Scott, M. 2010. *Delphi and Olympia: The Spatial Politics of Panhellenism in the Archaic and Classical Periods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shear, T. L. 1923. "A Terra-Cotta Relief from Sardes." *American Journal of Archaeology* 27.2: 131-150
- Twiss, K and Russell, N. 2009. "Taking the Bull by the Horns: Ideology, Masculinity, And Cattle Horns at Çatalhöyük (Turkey)." *Paléorient* 35.2: 19-32.
- Tyrrell, W. B. 1984. *Amazons: A Study in Athenian Mythmaking*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Vlassopoulos, K. 2013. *Greeks and Barbarians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Von Bothmer, D. 1957. *Amazons in Greek Art*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- von den Hoff, R. 2013. "Theseus, the François Vase and Athens in the Sixth Century BC." In *The François Vase: New Perspectives*, edited by H.A. Shapiro, M. Iozzo, and A. Lezzi-Hafter, 131-152. Zürich: Akanthus.

Von Oppenheim, M.F. 1955. *Tell Halaf III: Die Bildwerke*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co.

Walker, H. 1995. *Theseus and Athens*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Waterman, L. 1915. "Bull-Worship in Israel." *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 31.4:229-255.

Weiss, H., ed. 1985. *Ebla to Damascus: Art and Archaeology of Ancient Syria*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Wengrow, D. 2011. "Cognition, Materiality, and Monsters: the Cultural Transmission of Counter-Intuitive Forms in Bronze Age Societies." *Journal of Material Culture* 16.2: 131-149.

West, M. L. 1997. *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Young, E. 1972. "The Slaying of the Minotaur. Evidence in Art and Literature for the Development of the Myth, 700-400 B.C." Ph. D. diss, Bryn Mawr College.

Zaccarini, M. 2015. "The Return of Theseus to Athens: A Case Study in Layered Tradition and Reception." *Histos* 9: 174-198.