

from hippias to kallias

**greek art in athens
and beyond
527-449 bc**

Edited by Olga Palagia
& Elisavet P. Sioumpara



PROSPERITY & ART IN ATHENS (527-449 B.C.)

Petros Themelis

Wealth as a constituent element of human “happiness” is composed of money, land, buildings, livestock, and slaves.¹ Athenian slaves took part in the battle of Marathon, and their dead were honored with burial in a special tomb (Paus. 1.32.3).² Slaves in the Athenian state were divided into domestic slaves, who worked in the home, the fields, or the shop of their master, public slaves, who performed policing, clerical, street-cleaning, and escort duties, and prisoners of war (*andrapoda/captives*) who worked mainly as rowers on merchant ships or laborers in mines.³ The functioning of the silver mines of Laurion depended on the slaves of Attica.⁴ To slaves was owed in some degree the economic flourishing, the social organization, and the cultural (artistic) explosion of the Athenian state during the transitional period defined by the end of the archaic age and the development of the so-called “Classical miracle.”⁵ The existence of the mines of Laurion is mentioned by Aeschylus (*Pers.* 238: ἀπύουποι πηνύοι). According to Xenophon (*Vect.* 4.2), the mines (μέταλλα) operated in early ages, and there is no doubt that the production of silver was one of the principal reasons for Athenian prosperity. They were property of the Athenian state, which sold or leased certain areas of the Laureotike to individuals or companies at prices equivalent to one twenty-fourth of total production.⁶ Shortly before the beginning of the Persian Wars, a large quantity of money deposited in Athenian funds came from the silver and lead of Laurion, of which one part, worth ten drachmas, was distributed to each Athenian citizen. Themistocles persuaded the Athenians to make these monies available for building ships to enlarge the Athenian fleet (Hdt. 7.144; Plut. *Them.* 4).

With its successes in the Persian Wars, Athens significantly strengthened its prestige and is deservedly recognized as the dominant power of the age. The first half of the fifth century B.C. was for Athens a period of wealth, absolute dominance, and constant overseas expeditions, a period during which the democratic constitution was transformed and stabilized, while the procedures for choosing the city's leaders were also established.⁷ The view that the Athenian state did not prosper during the 470s and 460s as it had in the preceding decades is not supported by the extant evidence.⁸ The Athenians reaped huge profits from the military spoils of battles on land and sea at Salamis, Plataia, Mycale, and especially at the Eurymedon.⁹ The end of the first fifty years of the fifth century B.C. is marked by the peace with the Persians and the planning of the program for rebuilding the destroyed temples that was subsequently implemented. “The victory over the Persians in 480 B.C. played a vital role in shaping the state of mind that is inherent in early and high Classical Greek Art.... The deliverance which the great Greek naval victory at Salamis brought in 480 B.C. must therefore have seemed more miraculous and epoch-making than most victories.”¹⁰ The economic, political,

1 Arist. *Rh.* 1.5.7; Tsimpoukides 1991, 46.

2 Themelis 1974, 226-244.

3 Westermann 1955; Ducrey 1968, 16-26; Garlan 1982; Vidal-Naquet 1988; Wiedemann 1989; Pritchett 1991, 169-173.

4 Lauffer 1956; Themelis 1989.

5 Papenfuss and Strocka 2001; Brule and Oulhen 1997; Hunt 1988.

6 Crosby 1950; Hopper 1968; Jones 1985; Themelis 1989; Themelis 1992-1998; cf. Davies 1981, 34-37 and 50.

7 Boardman 1989, 11.

8 Starr 1970, 81; Kurtz 1975, 134-135.

9 Ar. *Eq.* 814; Ath. 12.533E; Diod. Sic. 12.3-4; Arist. [Ath. Pol.] 24.1; Vickers 1987.

10 Pollitt 1972, 9, 13-14.

Fig. 1

Naples, Museo Nazionale 2421.
Attic red-figure volute-krater by the Niobid Painter.
About 460 B.C.
Theseus fights the Amazons.

Photo
From Boardman
2001, Fig. 223.



and military development of Athens is reflected in the visual arts. In the vase painting of the period, themes appear that express the new social situation and the new spirit which dominates in the transition from tyranny to democracy: battles of gods and giants, with Amazons (Fig. 1) and with Centaurs, battles from the Trojan War, battles between Greeks and Persians (Fig. 2), as well as Dionysiac subjects and Orientals. On the changes that occurred in monumental sculpture in the years of transition from the sixth to the fifth century B.C., especially the so-called Severe Style, from the statues of the Tyrannicides to the pediments of Olympia, a great number of pertinent studies have seen the light of day. The brilliant marble Gigantomachy on the pediment of the old temple of Athena that was erected on the Acropolis after 510 B.C. is thought to be a symbol of the removal of the tyrants from the city of Athens.¹¹

With the Andokides Painter, probably a pupil of Exekias, the change from black-figure to red-figure style takes place, with the appearance of transitional so-called “bilingual” vases.¹² The names of the potters (ἐποίοντες) and the painters (ἔγραψεν) which are written on Attic vases represent a very small percentage in relation to the number of preserved black-figure and red-figure vases.¹³ Names such as Brygos (=“Phrygian”), Syriskos (=“little Syrian”), Lydos (=“Lydian”), and Skythes (=“Scythian”) show that they were foreigners and very probably slaves, while the names Onesimos and Epiktetos are diminutives that mean “Useful” and “Acquired.” The names Smikros (“Small”) and Makron (“Tall”), as well as Phrynos (“Frog”), which are used to typify slaves, are also diminutives.¹⁴ Free citizens of course could also be potters. The principal aim of all the vase painters was for the depictions of their works to be

11 Childs 1994; Stähler 1972; Delivorrias 1993; Shapiro 1994, 123. The sculptural program of the Hephaisteion, dated to about 430 BC, is based on Athenian leadership in the victory over the Persians, a victory made possible by a high level of technical skill, hence the dedication of this temple to Hephaistos and Athena Ergane. See also Stewart, this volume.

12 Folsom 1975, 130-138; Beazley 1951; Francis and Vickers 1983, would move the beginning of the “gold-figure”/red-figure style down from the conventional date around 530 BC to about 470, explaining it as the Athenians’ use of booty captured after the Persian Wars; Francis and Vickers 1988; Gill 1988; Gill and Vickers 1989. *Contra* Boardman 1984; Amandry 1988; Gill and Vickers 1990.

13 Up to now, 400 different artists’ hands (generally anonymous) in black-figure vase painting and 800 in red-figure have been attributed to these 10,000 and 20,000 vases respectively: ABV; ARV²; *Paralipomena*; Carpenter 1989 (=Sparkes 1996, 93-94).

14 Sparkes 1996, 110-111.



Fig. 2
Edinburgh,
National Museum of
Scotland 1887.213.
Attic red-figure cup
by the Triptolemos
Painter. About 480
B.C. Duel of Greek
and Persian.

Photo
From Boardman
2001, Fig. 194.

accepted and understood by their customers. The vase paintings of the so-called Mannerists of the second quarter of the fifth century B.C. constitute a significant source of information about many aspects of Athenian society and life.

After the end of the Persian Wars, representations of battles between Greeks and Persians (Fig. 2) multiply, such as the famous wall painting of the Battle of Marathon in the *Stoa Poikile* in the Agora (Paus.1.17).¹⁵ The battle scenes in Athenian vase painting make reference to clashes with hostile Easterners, sacrilegious, violent, and womanish (Fig. 3) according to the then-prevailing opinion.¹⁶ As one scholar has recently put it, “the Greeks seem to have had a bad view of their Eastern neighbors; they saw them as culturally inferior, barbarous, and even effeminate in some of their customs.”¹⁷ The impious Persians had destroyed the sanctuaries of the Athenians, like the Giants who had denied the gods and were punished by them. In the words of Michalis Tiverios, “*the depictions of the Gigantomachy symbolize the victory of the gods of Olympus over disorder, impiety, arrogance, barbarism, and irrationality. And without a doubt, symbolism also lurks in the images of the Amazonomachy. In the first decades of the 5th century B.C. and until around the middle of that century, representations of the Amazonomachy symbolize the victory of the Greeks over the Persians.*”¹⁸ The Persians had behaved in an extremely barbaric fashion, destroying the olive trees and the sown fields of Attica; they were easterners like the Trojans who had been defeated by the Achaeans in the ten-year war and were punished like the Centaurs.¹⁹ For the Attalids, victors over the barbarous Galatians, the depiction of the Gigantomachy on the magnificent frieze of the Pergamum Altar had analogous symbolic-metaphorical significance.²⁰ That sculp-

15 Bovon 1963; Harrison 1972, 366-367.

16 Vickers 1987, 22. Cf. the image on the oinochoe from the circle of the Triptolemos Painter (460 BC), where a Greek with the name “Eurymedon” approaches a terrorized Persian (Fig. 3) with the aim of sodomizing him (Schauenburg 1975; Brinkmann 2013, figs. 80-81). The worst insult for a Persian would be to call him a woman: Hdt. 8.88, 9.107, 9.20; cf. Root 2008.

17 Nichols 2016.

18 Tiverios 1994, 136.

19 Xen. An. 4.3.17-22; Vickers 1987, 22.

20 Radt 1999, 169-174; Andreae 1997. The Amazonomachy on the pediment of the Temple of Apollo Sosianus at Rome symbolized the victory of Augustus over the Egyptians, in accordance with the Athenian examples from the fifth century B.C.: La Rocca 1985, 89.

Fig. 3

Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe 1981.173.
Attic red-figure oenochoe with Eurymedon. About 460 B.C.

Photo
From Brinkmann
2013, Fig. 81.



ture groups of bronze were set up next to each other as a unified conceptual entity on the Acropolis of Athens near the wall above the Theater of Dionysos is no coincidence: the Gigantomachy, the Amazonomachy, the battle between Greeks and Persians at Marathon, and Attalos I's victorious fight against the Galatians (Paus. 1.25.2).²¹

The Amazons were figures of myth who existed outside the boundaries of the civilized world, not behaving in ways befitting women in the Greek polis—biologically and socially inferior to men—but as if they were men. In terms of their dress and symbolic value, they were assimilated to the hostile Persians (Fig. 1).²² The view generally prevailing in male-dominated Athenian and Greek society generally is mirrored in the words that are attributed to Thales of Miletos by Socrates (Diog. Laert. 1.33): “I thank Fortune first that I am a human being and not an animal, second, that I am a man and not a woman, and finally that I am a Greek and not a barbarian.”

The Centaurs and other fantastic hybrid beings, whose depiction derives in many respects from the East, indicate the opposition between the wild, undomesticated world of nature and the world of culture, between the barbarians and the world of Greeks.²³ From 500 B.C. onward, an essential change took place in the thematic range of vases from the Athenian Kerameikos, when it was renewed by the introduction of the images mentioned above, along with depictions of young men and women accompanied by Nikai and Erotes, scenes of the departure of young warriors in the presence of women (Fig. 4), as well as images of young men exercising (Fig. 5), scenes of libations by women, women making preparations for marriage, and erotic scenes. It is the private world of women and young men that now interests vase painters, and even the gods appear younger. The vase painters turn generally to the promotion of the new national and social identity of the Athenian aristocracy, excluding foreigners and inferiors.²⁴

21 Stewart 2004; cf. Ridgway 2005.

22 Beard 1991, 31-34; Stupperich 1994, 97; Blundell 1995, 58-62; Sparkes 1996, 137.

23 Gantz 1993, 135-139; Sparkes 1996, 137.

24 Bazant 1987.



Fig. 4
Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen 2307. Attic red-figure amphora by Euthymides. Warrior arming. About 510-500 B.C.
Photo
From Williams 2005, Fig. 1.

Until the end of the sixth century B.C., in the representations of warriors' departures and farewells, the figures of the family members who accompany the warrior and are shown in the scene are, as a rule, the father and the grandfather, not the women of the family, who appear on a second level behind the men, sometimes holding a small child in their arms and extending it toward the warrior to move him and keep him near. Around 500 B.C., the close relatives who frame the warrior are mainly women—the mother or the wife—not men. A male military theme par excellence unfolds in a female context. The women who bid farewell to their warrior sons or husbands do not weep or try to hold them back; on the contrary, they themselves hand the men their arms (Fig. 4), encourage them, and inspire them. With the mother or the wife present in the departure scene, the warrior father is now not the one who counts, but the young adolescent warrior son who has not yet had children.

The iconographic themes associated with the world of women revolve around the following rituals: 1) funerals; 2) weddings; and 3) sacrifices. In the scenes related to funerals and burial customs generally, the role of women acquires particular weight in the fifth century B.C.: they surround the corpse and take part in all the rituals. In the marriage scenes as well, a change is observed during the transition from the sixth to the fifth century B.C. The newly-wed couple no longer appears seated in a chariot, but walking, accompanied by their relatives. The element that is generally emphasized in marriage rituals is the last moments of a free woman before she is transformed into a married housewife and subsequently into a mother. The scenes of sacrifice are changed from bloody offerings that are a men's affair into a libation made by a woman at an altar.

These three iconographic units, with images of rituals which normally used to project the political and economic power of the ruling class, are depoliticized in the fifth century B.C.; they cease to express social antagonisms and become constituent elements of life, of human existence generally, of death, of love, of religious experience.

The development of athletic themes during the fifth century B.C. is also significant (Fig. 5). In this period, interest shifts from the projection of shining victory, the agonis-

Fig. 5

Berlin, Staatliche Antikensammlungen 2180. Attic red-figure calyx-crater by Euphronios.
About 510-500 B.C.
Athletes exercising.

Photo
From Boardman
2001, Fig. 116.



tic spirit, and the assimilation of athletic contests to single combat in war, as in the representations of the previous generation of the sixth century B.C., to these same young men and their daily lives. In addition, it is scenes of the education of ephebes in the gymnasium and scenes of school that are now introduced into iconography. These are the new heroes; one admires the beauty and accomplishments of these young men in the images. Because of their young age, they are also situated outside the social hierarchy; they are, however, potential citizens at a stage of transition from adolescence to the class of men. The adolescent boy prepares for war, the adolescent girl for marriage.

There are certainly representations that make reference to men's interests outside the family, images of female *hetairai* and young male *eromenoi* (lovers) which definitely come from the sixth century B.C., when their role was nonetheless secondary. Toward the end of the sixth century B.C., *hetairai* and *eromenoi* become independent and take a leading role in scenes painted on vases. In the fifth century B.C., scenes which emphasize sexuality, payment for the provision of services, and tokens of affection (small hares, etc.) may have challenged common sentiment. According to the view held by certain researchers, these portrayals of *hetairai* and *eromenoi* are the first in the world to depict "anti-heroes;" they constitute the necessary pendant to the virtuous woman and wife as well as to the young male warrior.²⁵

In depictions of departures of young warriors of the fifth century B.C., a Nike is portrayed, while an Eros appears, as is usual, in erotic scenes of *hetairai* and *eromenoi*, but also in depictions with lawful wives. Consequently, there is no differentiation between commercial and celestial love.²⁶

The change of regime and way of governing, the radical transformation of economic and social life between the sixth and fifth century B.C. had an influence, as we have noted above, on the form and the content of scenes which certainly have their roots in earlier traditions of depictions of rituals (funeral, marriage, sacrificial), war (warriors' farewells),

25 Bazant 1987, 36-37.

26 Bazant 1987, 36-37.

athletics, and education. The ideology that animated the representations of the sixth century B.C. was that of aristocrats who were promoted and praised in them. The women and young men who are portrayed are “objects” in their possession that confirm their wealth and promote the noble clan and social authority of male aristocrats, as do the horses and other goods associated with their property and prosperity. With the ascendancy of democracy in the fifth century B.C., the elements that promoted the social hierarchy and alluded to class differences no longer exist; now wars are not depicted, nor great athletic events, large hunts or great families with mature heroes.²⁷ Artistic interest now turns to the women and young men who enjoy a comfortable but somewhat tedious life. The repertoire of images is not directed only to the salons of aristocrats, but also to the homes of ordinary residents and metics. Athenian vase painters and artists in general depoliticized depictions of social life and remained neutral in the clash between the aristocratic ethos and democratic reality, between aristocrats and their social inferiors. At the same time, the great men of politics who came from the aristocratic families of Attica were also being deconstructed; this is where ostracism came into play. The citizens of Attica had the opportunity and the enjoyment, I would say, of decreeing the exile of a politician without trial, resorting to a paradoxical type of plebiscite known as ostracism (ἀστρακισμός / ἐξαστρακισμός).²⁸ Between 487 and 416 B.C., personalities of Athenian political life such as Aristides “the Just,” Themistocles, Cimon, and others were exiled in this way, while Pericles, Alcibiades, and Nicias were in danger of being exiled.

The creation of the Demosion Sema along the road which led from the Kerameikos to Plato’s Academy was a democratic act.²⁹ Interment at public expense in a place established by the state for all those who fell fighting for the fatherland, including foreigners and metics, corresponded to the *isonomia* (equality before the law) of the new political ideology.³⁰ In the vase painting of the fifth century B.C., the theme of the dead warrior’s transport from the battlefield to the fatherland by Hypnos and Thanatos (Sleep and Death) was considered appropriate for the Demosion Sema.³¹

With the reforms of Kleisthenes a little after 508/7 B.C. is also connected, rightly in my opinion, the law prohibiting luxury in funerary monuments that Cicero mentions (*Leg. 2.26 [64-65]*),³² that no grave monument (or, rather, grave-mound) was to be more elaborate than what ten men could accomplish in three days.³³ The great grave mounds and the grave goods, the funerary stelai and the statues that constantly promoted the “heroized” status of the dead members of the aristocratic class and maintained their families’ political influence “by visual suggestion” were abruptly terminated.³⁴ The great grave mounds of the Kerameikos were given over to graves for all citizens.³⁵ Marble tomb sculptures of affluent private individuals, mainly metics from Caria, were destroyed and their fragments were built into the Themistoclean Wall. Robert Garland attributes their

27 Bazant 1987, 38.

28 Raubitschek 1951, 221; Karusos 1961, 43; Thomsen 1972; Stupperich 1994; Humphreys 1994, 27.

29 Loraux 1986, 23.

30 Loraux 1986, 32-37; Stupperich 1977; Morris 1992, 167-168; Stupperich 1994, 100.

31 Stupperich 1994, 100.

32 Clairmont 1970, 11 and 43; Morris 1992, 164-165.

33 Humphreys 1994, 88-90; Stupperich 1977.

34 Karusos 1961, 59-71; Stupperich 1994, 93.

35 Knigge 1976, 14.

destruction to the democrats.³⁶ The attribution of these monuments' destruction to Persian soldiers that supposes they were encamped around that area is not well-founded.³⁷

The artists of the fifth century B.C. abandoned the traditional aristocratic hero of Greek art. They sang the praises of eternal values, the eternal flights of human existence and soul, principally of love. The vase painters offer us the life of women and of young men; the real and the fantastic—the mythic—are nonetheless inseparable.

From the second half of the fifth century B.C. onward, tendencies towards renewal appear in the repertoire of Athenian vase painting; in the main, religious subjects are introduced. The number of vases that the Attic Kerameikos produced gradually diminishes. According to Beazley's catalogues, approximately 10,000 painted vases were made during the first quarter of the fifth century B.C., 7,000 during the second quarter, while only 4,000 were made in the third quarter of the century.

36 Garland 1985, 122; cf. Themelis 1976.

37 Stupperich 1994, 101 n. 12; Salta 1991, 8-10.

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