

The Mission of Triptolemus and the Politics of Athens

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THE ANCIENT GREEKS generally attributed the workings of nature to divine intervention, whether it was Boreas aiding the Greek fleet against the Persians or Poseidon causing the earth to shake. Sixth- and fifth-century Greeks viewed natural products as gifts from the gods—grapes from Dionysus, olives from Athena, and grain from Demeter—and although they were skilled farmers, they needed a divine introduction to the science of agriculture. It was for this purpose that Demeter sent Triptolemus, first to the deme of Attica and then to all Greece, to teach the Greeks the art of growing grain. By bringing grain and its cultivation, Triptolemus also brought civilization, and he came to be a symbol in both Athenian art and rhetoric of these gifts to humankind from, on the one hand, Demeter and, on the other, from Athens herself. This paper will first survey the range of Triptolemus scenes in Greek vase painting up to the end of the fifth century and then explore, as others have done in part, the rôle these scenes played in Athenian thought and propaganda.¹

¹ The following discussions of Triptolemus in Greek vase painting will be cited by author's last name: C. DUGAS, "La Mission de Triptolème d'après l'imagerie athénienne," in *Receuil Charles Dugas* (Paris 1960) 123–39; H. MEITZGER, "L'imagerie éleusinienne des VI^e et V^e siècles," *Recherches sur l'imagerie Athénienne* (Paris 1965) 7–32; A. PESCHLOW-BINDOKAT, "Demeter und Persephone in der attischen Kunst," *JdI* 87 (1972) 60–157, esp. 78–89; L. BESCHI, "Demeter, Kore e Trittolemo," and "La missione di Trittolemo," s.v. "Demeter," *LIMC* IV.1, 872, nos. 333–71, 886 and 890f, pls. 585–88; I. K. and A. E. RAUBITSCHKE, "The Mission of Triptolemos," *Essays in Honor of Homer A. Thompson* (= *Hesperia* Suppl. 20 [1982]) 109–15; G. SCHWARZ, *Triptolemos: Ikonographie einer Agrar- und Mysteriengottheit* (= *Grazer Beiträge*, Suppl. II [Graz 1987]); H. A. SHAPIRO, *Art and Cult under the Tyrants in Athens* (Mainz 1989) 67–83; K. CLINTON, *Myth and*

Triptolemus is arguably best known from representations on Athenian vases, specifically in depictions of his Mission from Demeter to bring agriculture to the Greeks. He does not play a significant rôle in Greek mythology otherwise, and he is mentioned in Greek literature almost exclusively in connection with this event. The canonical representation of the Mission on vases is well represented on the splendid calyx krater by Polygnotos in the Duke University Museum of Art (PLATES 1, 2), which especially typifies the scene as it is shown by classical vase painters.² Here Triptolemus appears on his winged chair, accompanied by Demeter, who will give her envoy grain and instruction, and Kore, who pours an offering at his departure. These three figures are the core of the story as it appears in art. Hecate, named by inscription, stands behind Triptolemus; her rôle will be discussed below.

The subject is a common one with quite a long life. According to the most recent compilation,³ the Mission of Triptolemus appears on over one hundred and fifty black- and red-figure vases covering the two centuries from the mid-sixth to the mid-fourth. The vast majority show a central triad of Triptolemus in his vehicle facing right, flanked by Demeter and Kore, rendering these scenes so familiar to modern viewers that they seem almost formulaic. There are variations within the canon, however, and these variations raise

Cult: The Iconography of the Eleusinian Mysteries (=ActaAth-8° 11 [Stockholm 1992]) and "The Eleusinian Mysteries and Pan-hellenism in Democratic Athens," in W. Coulson *et al.*, edd., *The Archaeology of Athens and Attica under the Democracy* (=Oxbow Monograph 37 [London 1994]) 161-72; T. HAYASHI, *Bedeutung und Wandel des Triptolemosbildes vom 6.-4. Jh. v. Chr.* (=Beitr.z.Arch. 20 [Würzburg 1992]). The LIMC entry on Triptolemos had not appeared at the time of writing, and I have not been able to consult the Berkeley dissertation on the Mission of Triptolemos by Virginia Altman.

² Inv. no. DCC 1964.27, Gift of Dr and Mrs James Semans for the Thomas and Virginia Breckenridge Semans Teaching Collection; J. D. Beazley, *Paralipomena* (Oxford 1971) 442 no. 29*bis*; K. Stanley, *A Generation of Antiquities: The Duke Classical Collection 1964-1994* (=GRBS Monographs [Durham (N.C.) 1994]) 51ff, cat. no. 63, pls. 24ff, with previous bibliography; S. B. Matheson, *Polygnotos and Vase Painting in Classical Athens* (Madison 1995, forthcoming; hereafter 'Matheson') cat. no. P 33, pl. 4.

³ Hayashi 126-74.

questions about both the origins of Triptolemus and the interpretation of the Mission scenes.

As background for these questions, a review of what we actually know about Triptolemus is in order. He first appears in literature in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*,⁴ receiving no mention by either Hesiod or Homer. The date of the Hymn is disputed,⁵ as is well known, but that is less important here than what is said about Triptolemus in it. Triptolemus appears only twice in the Hymn. On the first occasion (lines 153–56),⁶ the wandering Demeter, distraught at the loss of her daughter, has come to Eleusis, where she encounters the daughters of the Eleusinian king Celeus drawing water from a well. Although they do not recognize the goddess in her disguise, Celeus' daughters speak kindly to her and tell her of the welcome she would receive at any of the houses of the powerful citizens of Eleusis. These noble citizens are named, and among them is Triptolemus. Nothing more is said of him here, however, for Demeter chooses to go to the house of Celeus.

Triptolemus is mentioned for the second time near the end of the *Hymn* (473–79), after Demeter has been reconciled to the Olympian gods and has agreed to end the famine her grief has caused. After she “made fruit to spring up from the rich lands,” she went to “the kings who deal justice, Triptolemus and Diocles, the horse-driver, and to doughty Eumolpus and Celeus, leader of the people, she showed the conduct of her rites and taught them all her mysteries, to Triptolemus and Polyxeinus and Diocles also.”⁷ There is no mention here of the Mission to teach agriculture to the Greeks, only of Triptolemus as an Eleusinian king who is one among several to whom Demeter teaches the mysteries.

The first literary reference to the Mission seems to be in Sophocles' lost play *Triptolemus* of 468 B.C.⁸ The plot of the drama

⁴ See N. J. RICHARDSON, ed., *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford 1974; hereafter 'Richardson').

⁵ A good review of the evidence is provided by Richardson 5–12.

⁶ Richardson 108, 194–99; Schwarz 7, SQ 3.

⁷ See Richardson 133f, Schwarz 7, SQ 4; the translation is that of H. G. Evelyn-White (Loeb series, Cambridge [Mass.] 1959) 323.

⁸ For the surviving fragments, see A. Nauck, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* I (Leipzig 1856) 208–12, fr. 536–55.

is not preserved, but surviving fragments mention Triptolemus flying about in his snakey chair (δράκοντε θαιρὸν ἀμφιπλιξ εἰληφότε),⁹ almost certainly referring to the Mission. Frank Brommer notes that although scholars have generally taken Sophocles' *Triptolemus* to be a tragedy, the surviving fragments do not preclude its being a satyr play.¹⁰ As evidence in support of the latter possibility Brommer cites a fragment of a calyx krater by a member of the Peleus Group, now in Syracuse, which shows Triptolemus in his winged chair accompanied by two dancing satyrs.¹¹

The later writers generally acknowledge the Mission as Triptolemus' major (if not sole) act.¹² He is called the first to cultivate grain, the first sower, and even the first plower, although this last innovation is also credited to Bouzyges, eponymous founder of a major Athenian clan. Pausanias (1.38.6) says more specifically that, according to the Eleusinians, Triptolemus first sowed grain on the Rharian plain, near Eleusis: "Here they show you Triptolemus' threshing floor and altar." Pausanias mentions other specific locations where Triptolemus instructed particular individuals in the art of growing grain, citing, for example, king Eumelus of Patras (7.18.2), who was also said to have learned architecture or engineering ("how to build a city" [οἰκίσαι διδάχθεις πόλιν]) from Triptolemus, and Arkas, the successor to Pelasgus as king of Argos (8.4.1), who introduced to his people not only the cultivation of crops, learned from Triptolemus, but also the arts of breadmaking, weaving, and spinning. Clearly these stories are part of a series of traditional local explanations for the origins of necessary crafts and skills, *aitia* for basic anthropological developments. That Triptolemus was the ultimate source for the knowledge of agriculture in each of the local legends, however, indicates the prevalence of the story of the Mission in Greek traditional thought.

⁹ Nauck fr. 536=Schwarz 8, SQ 5.

¹⁰ F. Brommer, *Satyrspiele*² (Berlin 1959) 47, 79.

¹¹ Syracuse, Museo Archeologico Regionale 24114; ARV² 1041 no. 1; Brommer (*supra* n.10) 79, cat. no. 126, fig. 40; Matheson, cat. no. PEM 2. Brommer also cites a fourth-century example of the same theme on a calyx krater in Athens, ANM 12249 (79, cat. no. 127; ARV² 1427 no. 37 [Telos Painter]; Hayashi cat. no. 138); Triptolemos appears with Demeter and Persephone, satyrs, and a woman.

¹² The sources are collected by Schwarz 8–26, SQ 10–67.

Far less agreement is evident in the descriptions of the origins of Triptolemus himself. His parentage can safely be called obscure. Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 1.5, 2) calls him the child of Celeus and Metaneira—brother, therefore, to the daughters of the Eleusinian king who welcomes the wandering Demeter at the well.¹³ Other versions of Triptolemus' parentage are cited by Apollodorus in the same passage: Panyassis made him the son of Demeter and Eleusis,¹⁴ while Pherecydes calls him the son of Ocean and Earth.¹⁵ Oceanus and Gaia are named as the parents again in a poem attributed to Musaeus that is mentioned by Pausanias (1.14.3), although he questions Musaeus' authorship.¹⁶ In an Argive legend cited by Pausanias (1.14.2), Triptolemus is said to be the son of Trochilus of Argos, who fled to Attica and married a woman from Eleusis who bore him Triptolemus and Eubuleus. Orpheus, in a poem whose authorship Pausanias (1.14.3) again questions, agrees that Triptolemus and Eubuleus were brothers, but he makes their father Dysaulus. Pausanias says in the same passage that the

¹³ Brother also to Demophoön, the baby whom Demeter nursed while she lived disguised in Celeus' household, and whom she would have made immortal by placing him nightly in the fire, had his mother not foolishly intervened. The story of Demophoön is also told in the *Hymn*, where it concludes with the anger of Demeter at the parents and the people of Eleusis, her promise that the Eleusinians would wage war among themselves, and her demand for appeasement in the form of a temple and altar, which Celeus commanded the people to build. Demophoön survives in the *Hymn* but is consumed by the fire in Apollodorus' version. Apollodorus makes no mention of the temple, but says instead that Demeter gave Triptolemus a chariot of winged dragons and wheat, with which he (flying through the sky) sowed the whole inhabited earth—apparently a sort of consolation prize for losing his brother.

¹⁴ On Panyassis as a possible source for the tradition, reported by Xenophon, that Triptolemos revealed the Mysteries to Heracles, see Shapiro 79 n.119; for another interpretation of this "showing" of the Mysteries, see Clinton, "Panhellenism" 171 n.29.

¹⁵ This reference is not included among the Testimonia and Fragments listed by H. S. Schibli, *Pherekydes of Syros* (Oxford 1990) 140–75, 178f, suggesting that he attributes it to Pherecydes of Athens; on the confusion of the two in ancient sources, e.g., the scholia to Apollonius, see Schibli 79f n.2.

¹⁶ Pausanias (1.22.7) prefers an attribution to Onomacritus, restricting the list of Musaeus' work to his *Hymn to Demeter*; see also I. and A. Raubitschek 111. Although perhaps not the poet his reputation would suggest, Musaeus was said to have been able to fly, a gift of the North Wind (Pausanias, cited above).

Athenian tragedian Choerilus, who was a contemporary of Aeschylus, wrote a play in which he said that Triptolemus was the son of Rarus and the daughter of Amphictyon. It would not surprise us to find other versions. As Pausanias says in another context (1.38.7), "These ancient legends when they had no poem to follow were always inventive, but nowhere more so than in the genealogy of divine heroes."¹⁷ His name itself adds nothing conclusive to the search for his origins, for, like his parentage, its etymology is obscure. "Thrice-plowed," or "thrice-sown" are possible translations, and the name seems to have linguistic sources in epic dialect.¹⁸ All that this confusion really shows is that without any early mythological source such as Homer or Hesiod to prescribe a genealogy, the Eleusinians, the Argives, the Orphic School, and anyone else who was interested could stake a claim to having given Triptolemus to the world.

The surviving literary sources thus fail to explain the origins of Triptolemus and the story of his Mission. The vases seem to offer more help. The earliest surviving representations of Triptolemus on Athenian vases show him bringing grain or teaching agriculture to the Greeks. These are black-figure vases dating from the mid-sixth century B.C., the earliest being two neck amphorae by the Swing Painter, one in Göttingen, the other in Brussels.¹⁹ In both representations, Triptolemus is shown seated on his vehicle, holding grain and flanked by those he would instruct. From the beginning there is something magical about Triptolemus, as he flies through the air on a wheeled chair. The practical Greek mind would later add wings to this vehicle in order to explain the method of transport more clearly, but in these first representations the chair seems to levitate. A flying vehicle of any sort does seem to imply divinity—one remembers also the Berlin Painter's Apollo

¹⁷ Tr. P. Levi, Penguin edition (Harmondsworth 1971), 108.

¹⁸ Perhaps an early form of *τρίπολος*; see also Richardson 196. I would like to thank Alan Nussbaum for his helpful insights on this question.

¹⁹ Göttingen, Archäologisches Institut der Universität, inv. no. J.14; *ABV* 309 no. 83; E. Bohr, *Der Schaukelmaler* (Mainz 1982) pls. 104f; Shapiro pl. 33d. Brussels, Musées Royaux d'art et d'histoire (Cinquanteenaire) inv. no. A 130; *ABV* 308 no. 82; Bohr pl. 123; Shapiro pl. 33e.

flying over the ocean in a winged tripod.²⁰ The idea of a flying cart may be derived ultimately from one used by Dionysus, although a winged seat carrying Dionysus appears in vase painting only rarely, and also later than the Swing Painter's vases. An example survives on an amphora by the Priam Painter in Compiègne, where it is paired with a Mission of Triptolemus.²¹ Dionysus' winged seat was made for him by Hephaestus, who gives it a test drive on a red-figure cup by the Ambrosios Painter of around 500 B.C., now in Berlin.²²

The wheeled seat seen on the Swing Painter's vases is a relative of the country cart drawn by mules in the wedding procession on the Amasis Painter's lekythos in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.²³ It is made from a similar sort of stool mounted on a platform, although on Triptolemus' seat the cart wheel has been replaced by a chariot wheel.²⁴

In all the black-figure representations, Triptolemus is bearded and wears either a chiton and mantle or (in one case) a short chiton. On the Swing Painter's amphorae, he holds several stalks of grain in his outstretched hand, and he appears to be talking to the figures standing around him, instructing them in methods of planting the

²⁰ Vatican City, Musei Vaticani; ARV² 209 no. 166; J. D. Beazley, *The Berlin Painter* (Mainz 1974) pls. 25f.

²¹ Compiègne, Musée Vivenel 975; ABV 331 no. 13; CVA Compiègne (France 3) 10, 4, 7; I. and A. Raubitschek 110; M. Robertson, "Two Pelikai by the Pan Painter," *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum* 3 (Malibu 1986) 85 figs. 5a-b.

²² Antikensammlungen 2273; ARV² 174 no. 31 (as Hephaestus). A. B. Cook, *Zeus I* (Cambridge 1914) 216, identifies the figure as Dionysus, the tool as a double axe, not a hammer; like Beazley, J. BOARDMAN, *Athenian Red-figure Vases: The Archaic Period* (New York 1975: hereafter 'Boardman, ARFV I') fig. 120, prefers Hephaestus, as does E. Simon, *Die Götter der Griechen* (Munich 1985) 223 fig. 209.

²³ Inv. no. 56.11.1; Beazley, *Paralipomena* 66; D. von Bothmer, *The Amasis Painter and his World* (Malibu 1985) 182-84, cat. no. 47. A similar cart may have been used in the Panathenaic games, for it appears in the representation of the *synoris* on the Burgon Group Panathenaic prize vase in the British Museum (Inv. no. B 130; ABV 89 no. 1; J. Boardman, *Athenian Black-figure Vases* [London 1974] fig. 296).

²⁴ For the wide variety of seats that appear in Triptolemus' vehicle, see Hayashi 30-55.

grain.²⁵ Both men and women listen attentively. No divinities are present.

Several slightly later black-figure amphorae show Triptolemus with figures who have been interpreted as Demeter, Kore, and other divinities. An unattributed amphora in Munich²⁶ shows Triptolemus flanked by two women who may be Demeter and Kore, although attributes are lacking, while another, in Tarquinia,²⁷ shows him with a single female, accompanied by a deer. The deer suggests Artemis, of course, but no specific link between these two occurs elsewhere in vase painting.²⁸ An unattributed amphora in Budapest²⁹ shows Triptolemus with two women who may be the Eleusinian goddesses, along with Apollo, who plays a cithara. Finally, on an unattributed amphora in Würzburg³⁰ Triptolemus appears with the two goddesses and two male figures, the standing figure probably Hermes, and the seated figure Hades, or alternatively Celeus, Eumolpus, or an Eleusinian hero.³¹

Although varied in their supporting cast, these black-figure scenes introduce one fundamental image that will remain consistent throughout subsequent representations of the subject, that is, Triptolemus in his flying wheeled seat holding sheafs of grain. The major changes that take place in red-figure versions of the Mission

²⁵ Clinton ("Panhellenism" 164f) suggests that rather than instructing the Athenians, Triptolemus has given them grain, a seed of which one of the two women now holds in her hand. He argues that the women were unlikely recipients of instruction in agriculture, which would in turn argue against the traditional interpretation of this scene that is accepted here; but would the women be any more likely to be the recipients of grain, if they were not to be told what to do with it? The position of the women's upraised hands is a familiar gesture in Athenian vase painting in any case, one that can mean greeting, salute, or many other things; objects held in the hand are normally clasped between the tips of the fingers and thumb. Clinton also prefers to see all four recipients of grain as Eleusinians rather than Athenians.

²⁶ Antikensammlungen 1539; Peschlow-Bindokat figs. 12f.

²⁷ Museo Nazionale Etrusco RC 982; Peschlow-Bindokat figs. 10f.

²⁸ Hecate, who appears on occasion in the Mission scenes, can be associated with Artemis (*LIMC* VI.1 985f *s.v.* "Hekate"), but there is no reason to believe that the female on this vase is Hecate.

²⁹ Szépművészeti Múzeum 50.732; Peschlow-Bindokat fig. 7.

³⁰ Martin von Wagner Museum 197; Dugas pl. 26.1; Shapiro pl. 35a.

³¹ For the possible identifications of these figures, see Shapiro 77 n.106.

scene prior to the fourth century are, first, the addition of wings and often snakes to Triptolemus' flying seat; second, the consistent presence of Demeter and Kore; and third, the offering made by one of the Eleusinian goddesses that indicates Triptolemus' imminent departure. Again, the Duke krater can be cited as typical, as can the name vase of the Triptolemus Painter, a stamnos in the Louvre.³²

Several of the red-figure versions of the Mission scene are multi-figured compositions including other deities, Eleusinian heroes, and occasional personifications. The best known example of this type is the skyphos by Makron, potted by Hieron, in the British Museum.³³ Here the normal triad of the Mission scene is accompanied by the personification of Eleusis (here a female, in contrast to the literary idea that Eleusis was a king and, according to one source, father of Triptolemus). Seated next to her, under the handle of the skyphos, is Eumolpus, the mythical ancestor of the Eumolpid clan who controlled the office of hierophant at Eleusis. Also present are Zeus, Dionysus, Poseidon, and his wife Amphitrite, the last two figures holding dolphins.

The Berlin Painter decorated a remarkable number of vases with Eleusinian subject matter, more by far than any other single artist.³⁴ His twelve scenes appear on pots of almost every shape in the painter's repertoire, and they span all the stages of his career.³⁵ They range from the typical Berlin Painter's pairing of single figures on each side of a vase, such as the Triptolemus and Demeter from the painter's middle period on a pelike in Vienna,³⁶ to a less canonical representation where Triptolemus is about to climb into his winged seat on the painter's late volute krater in Karlsruhe.³⁷ Another

³² Inv. no. G 187; *ARV*² 361 no. 2; Dugas pl. 28.2.

³³ Inv. no. E 140; *ARV*² 459 no. 3; Shapiro pl. 34a-d.

³⁴ *ARV*² 201 no. 69, 203 no. 97, 205 nos. 113 and 119, 208 no. 158f, 210 nos. 180f, 211 no. 198, 1634 no. 183 *bis*, 1635 no. 201 *bis*; *Paralipomena* 344 no. 131 *bis*.

³⁵ Early, e.g., *ARV*² 201 no. 69; middle, 205 no. 113; late, 208 nos. 158f; very late, 201 no. 97.

³⁶ Kunsthistorisches Museum 3726; *ARV*² 205 no. 113; D. C. Kurtz, *The Berlin Painter* (Oxford 1983) pl. 51b-c.

³⁷ Badisches Landesmuseum 68.101; Beazley, *Paralipomena* 344 no. 131 *bis*; Boardman, *ARFV* I fig. 154.

variant, a pelike by the Triptolemus Painter in Copenhagen,³⁸ shows Triptolemus seated between the two goddesses, his vehicle nowhere in sight. It is interesting that the Mission scene is primarily a subject for pot painters; very few examples of the scene occur on cups.

Several of the major Early Classical painters have left Mission scenes, including the Villa Giulia Painter, the Pan Painter, the Chicago Painter, and two Yale Painters—the Yale Oinochoe and the Yale Lekythos Painters.³⁹ Some of these represent a continuation of Makron's preference for subsidiary characters, although the cast is generally different. Characteristic is the bell krater in Palermo by the Oreithyia Painter, where the usual Eleusinian triad is flanked by Celeus on one side and Hippothoön on the other, both named by inscriptions.⁴⁰ Celeus, as we noted above, was the Eleusinian king who sheltered Demeter and, according to the Homeric *Hymn*, was responsible for building her temple at Eleusis; the column that stands behind him on the vase may symbolize that structure. Hippothoön, son of Poseidon and Alope (Paus. 1.39.3), was the eponymous founder of the controlling tribe of the Eleusinian deme. He had a heroön at Eleusis (Paus. 1.38.4), and his statue was part of the monument of the Eponymous Heroes in the

³⁸ Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek 2695; *ARV*² 362 no. 19; M. Robertson, *The Art of Vase-painting in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1993) 114 fig. 113.

³⁹ Villa Giulia Painter: London, British Museum E 496, *ARV*² 620 no. 23, Hayashi no. 73; Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional 11023, *ARV*² 622 no. 57, Hayashi no. 76. Pan Painter: pelike in Ferrara, Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Spina, inv. no. 1234, *ARV*² 554 no. 83, Hayashi no. 56; pelike in Malibu, Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. no. 81.AE.62, *ARV*² 558 no. 130, Hayashi no. 57. Chicago Painter: Munich, Antikensammlungen 2432 (J. 340), *ARV*² 630 no. 31, Hayashi no. 80. Yale Oinochoe Painter: Paris, Musée du Louvre G 368, *ARV*² 502 no. 10, Hayashi no. 72. Yale Lekythos Painter: Ferrara, Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Spina 2665 (T 605), *ARV*² 658 no. 16, Hayashi no. 81; Brussels, Musées Royaux d'art et d'histoire A 10, *ARV*² 661 no. 86, Hayashi no. 85.

⁴⁰ Museo Regionale 2124, from Agrigento, *ARV*² 496 no. 5; *Veder Greco: Le necropoli di Agrigento* (Rome 1988) 208f, cat. no. 66; *LIMC* V 471 pl. 330, Hippothoon no. 10. Celeus is fairly common, Hippothoön less so; for other instances of the latter in Mission scenes, see *LIMC* V 471, Hippothoon nos. 9–17.

Athenian agora (1.5.2). He appears again in a Mission scene on a footed dinos by the Syleus Painter in the J. Paul Getty Museum.⁴¹

The Niobid Painter and his probable teacher the Altamura Painter both painted the Mission scene, on a total of thirteen kraters and one hydria between them. Both painters do not hesitate to add extra, often unnamed, figures to the peripheries of their Mission scenes, and in several instances they relegate the subject to such subsidiary areas as the neck of a volute krater, as on the Altamura Painter's name vase in London,⁴² or the lower register of a double register calyx krater, as on that by the Niobid Painter now in Ferrara.⁴³ Like the Berlin Painter, the Altamura Painter presents one scene where Triptolemus has not yet taken his seat in his vehicle, on a calyx krater in Munich.⁴⁴ In the Altamura Painter's version he stands in front of the car, grain and sceptre in hand, looking back at Demeter as she pours an offering. Another of the Niobid Painter's scenes, on his amphora in the British Museum,⁴⁵ eliminates the vehicle altogether, showing standing figures of Demeter and Triptolemus facing each other, the goddess holding a torch and handing Triptolemus the grain. This is perhaps the time to point out the difficulty all scholars have admitted in trying to distinguish between Demeter and Kore in Mission scenes; lacking inscriptions such as those on the Duke krater, there is insufficient consistency in the use of clothing, hairstyles, actions, or attributes to permit certain identification, as in this case. Here it is more important to note the garments worn by Triptolemus—the standard long chiton and himation that he wears in red-figure Mission scenes—so that we can recall them in relation to a similar scene that will come up shortly.

⁴¹ Malibu, Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum 89.AE.79; Clinton (*Myth*) 106f, figs. 43–47.

⁴² British Museum E469, *ARV*² 589 no. 1; M. Prange, *Der Niobidenmaler und seine Werkstatt* (Frankfurt 1989) cat. no. A 1, pl. 51.

⁴³ Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Spina T 313, *ARV*² 602 no. 24; Prange (*supra* n.42) cat. no. N 32; T. B. L. Webster, *Der Niobidenmaler* (Leipzig 1935) pl. 16.

⁴⁴ Antikensammlungen 2383 (J. 299), *ARV*² 591 no. 23; Prange cat. no. A 32, pl. 46.

⁴⁵ Inv. no. E 274, *ARV*² 604 no. 53; Prange cat. no. N 69, pl. 47.

A more typical depiction of the Mission scene is on the Niobid Painter's kalpis in New York.⁴⁶ Here we have the standard triad without extras, but with one important innovation: the figure of the goddess standing in front of Triptolemus is shown frontally, among the first occurrences of a pose that will become increasingly popular in these scenes. From such representations as this the Duke krater and other versions by Polygnotos and his Group are directly descended.

The dozen Mission scenes that we have from the Group of Polygnotos represent the greatest number of surviving vases of any Classical workshop—only one by the Achilles Painter and two by the Phiale Painter remain to represent the other major workshop of the third quarter of the fifth century.⁴⁷ Five versions of the scene by Polygnotos himself survive, and several members of his workshop painted them as well.⁴⁸

The Duke krater is the earliest version by Polygnotos, in my view, and it is quite close in style and feeling to the Niobid Painter's representation on a stamnos in Basel.⁴⁹ Also early are Polygnotos' stamnos in Capua⁵⁰ and his badly damaged neck amphora in the Latsis collection in Athens, with its unusual three-quarter view of the winged seat.⁵¹ Later is the version on a neck amphora in the British Museum, where the style of drapery and the poses of the

⁴⁶ Metropolitan Museum of Art 41.162.98, *ARV*² 606 no. 80; Prange cat. no. N 69, pl. 47.

⁴⁷ Achilles Painter: Naples, Museo Nazionale Archeologico 3093, *ARV*² 988 no. 17, Hayashi cat. no. 93. Phiale Painter: lekythos, London, British Museum E 595, *ARV*² 1028 no. 109, J. H. Oakley, *The Phiale Painter* (Mainz 1990) cat. no. 108, pl. 88B–C, Hayashi cat. no. 120; lekythos, Munich, Antikensammlungen 7518, *ARV*² 1021 no. 109, Oakley cat. no. 109 pl. 88, Hayashi cat. no. 119.

⁴⁸ See also Matheson 192ff.

⁴⁹ Antikenmuseum BS 1412; Beazley, *Paralipomena* 395 no. 41 *ter*; Hayashi cat. no. 55, Matheson pl. 5.

⁵⁰ Museo Campano 7529, *ARV*² 1038 no. 7, Hayashi cat. no. 99, Matheson cat. no. P 6, pl. 6.

⁵¹ Collection of Mrs Marianna Latsis; *ARV*² 1031 no. 37, Hayashi cat. no. 95, Matheson cat. no. P 42, pl. 12.

figures reveal the influence of the Parthenon frieze on the vase painter's work.⁵² Still later is the stamnos in Florence.⁵³

All the Mission scenes by Polygnotos, as well as those by members of his Group, show Demeter, or more likely Kore, pouring an offering into a phiale held by Triptolemus as he sits in his chair ready to depart. It seems clear that this motif derives from the offering typical of red-figure scenes of a departing warrior, particularly those of the Classical period. The offering enters the Mission scene at about the same time that it enters the departure of warrior scenes, that is, in late archaic red-figure, namely with the Kleophrades Painter for the offering at the warrior's departure, and with Makron and possibly Oltos for the offering at Triptolemus' departure.⁵⁴ Classical representations of the Mission often bear close compositional similarities to scenes of departing warriors, such as the departure scene on a neck amphora by the Hector Painter in Brussels,⁵⁵ and a Mission scene by the Niobid Painter in Perugia.⁵⁶ These Mission scenes sometimes incorporate the architectural elements of the departure scenes that suggest a courtyard or sanctuary setting for the family's farewell to its warrior son, as well as the seated figure at far right who is normally the warrior's father—an example by the Duomo Painter in Würzburg can be cited.⁵⁷ In the Mission scenes, the seated figure becomes an Eleusinian hero or personification, while the column can be read as a reference to Demeter's temple at Eleusis. Scenes of

⁵² Inv. no. E 281, *ARV*² 1030 no. 36; Hayashi cat. no. 94, Matheson cat. no. P41, pl. 31.

⁵³ Museo Archeologico Etrusco 75748, *ARV*² 1028 no. 8; Hayashi cat. no. 100, Matheson cat. no. P 7, pl. 32.

⁵⁴ Kleophrades Painter: Munich 2505, amphora, *ARV*² 182 no. 5, J. D. Beazley, *The Kleophrades Painter* (Mainz 1974) cat. no. 5, pl. 7. Makron: London, British Museum E 140, skyphos, *ARV*² 459 no. 3, Shapiro pl. 34a–d, Clinton (*Myth*) figs. 51–54. Oltos: Athens, National Museum E 13 (Acropolis 449), skyphos fragments, Hayashi cat. no. 25, pl. 4.

⁵⁵ Bibliothèque Royale Albert I^{er} 15; *ARV*² 1036 no. 2, Matheson cat. no. H 2, pl. 75.

⁵⁶ Museo Archeologico Nazionale 846, *ARV*² 603 no. 34, Hayashi cat. no. 69, Prange (*supra* n.42) cat. no. N 44, Peschlow-Bindokat fig. 18.

⁵⁷ Martin von Wagner-Museum L 529, *ARV*² 1117 no. 5, Hayashi cat. no. 104, *LIMC* VI 991 pl. 656, Hekate no. 22.

departing warriors, which begin in black-figure vases as heroic and mythological representations, focus increasingly in red-figure on the mortal Athenian family, particularly in the second half of the fifth century. The popularity of this motif in the Mission scenes places Triptolemus in a family setting, emphasizing his close association with Demeter, of course, but perhaps suggesting something else as well. I argue elsewhere that the departure of warrior scenes marked by offerings can in some cases be read as dedications of warriors to the service of the polis and its gods, rather than simply as literal departures for battle.⁵⁸ If that is indeed the case, then the departure of Triptolemus accompanied by an offering might also be read as a dedication of Demeter's envoy to the service of Athens.

To return to the Mission scenes painted by Polygnotos and his Group, one of the three versions by the Hector Painter offers an interesting variation. Two of the three are canonical, namely the stamnos in Florence⁵⁹ and the amphora in Los Angeles.⁶⁰ His bell krater in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris, however, shows Triptolemus mounting his vehicle in the presence of Demeter and Kore; he has both grain and sceptre in hand, while Demeter holds a plow, perhaps a reference to the tradition preserved in later literary sources of Triptolemus as the inventor of this key agricultural device.⁶¹ Even more atypically, Most of the other Polygnotan versions are of the usual type,⁶² with the exception of the Kleophon Painter's version in the Stanford University collection, which is

⁵⁸ Matheson 269–76.

⁵⁹ Museo Archeologico Etrusco 80190, *ARV*² 1036 no. 6, Hayashi cat. no. 101, Matheson cat. no. H 5, pl. 79.

⁶⁰ Los Angeles County Museum of Art 50.8.23, *ARV*² 1036 no. 4, Hayashi cat. no. 96, Matheson cat. no. H 3, pl. 81.

⁶¹ Inv. no. 424, *ARV*² 1036 no. 12, Hayashi cat. no. 113, *LIMC* IV pl. 587, Demeter no. 365 (Demeter with plow), Matheson cat. no. H 11. *Cf.*, e.g., Schwarz SQ 54, 65.

⁶² An unnamed painter in the Group of Polygnotos painted another version on a type B amphora in Athens (National Archaeological Museum 1166 [CC.1220], *ARV*² 1059 no. 129, Hayashi cat. no. 97, Matheson cat. no. PGU 151); another unnamed hand painted a kalpis in Ferrara (Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Spina T 293 VP, *ARV*² 1061 no. 151, Matheson cat. no. PGU 177). On the Polygnotan amphora at Harvard University showing standing figures of Demeter and possibly Triptolemus, see 370f *infra*.

unique in combining the Mission with a representation of Demeter seated on the ἀγέλαστος πέτρα, the "mirthless rock."⁶³

The Duke krater (PLATES 1–2), to which we now return, differs from the other Polygnotan versions in one basic way, namely the addition of Hecate. Here she stands behind Triptolemus, holding a lighted torch and a sheaf of grain. Both are also held by Demeter, who stands at the far right on this vase. The two figures are similar in dress and pose, but Demeter holds a sceptre and we have inscriptions to confirm the figures' identities. The torch is a key attribute of Hecate, who is called δαῖδοφόρος and φωσφόρος by ancient writers,⁶⁴ and it is as a torch-bearer that she appears in most Athenian vase paintings. I am speaking here, of course, of the single-bodied Hecate type, as opposed to the triple Hecate by Alcmanes that stood near the temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis and is only rarely represented in vase painting.⁶⁵ Our torch-bearing Hecate first appears in art at the beginning of the fifth century, and she is found most often on vases with Eleusinian subjects. Some sculptural images of her may echo this association, if the identification of the running torch-bearing figure from the temple of Eleusis and figure G from the East pediment of the Parthenon can both be accepted as Hecate. Others appear to reflect a seated cult statue of Hecate as torch-bearer; these, like the triple Hecate, may have functioned as apotropaic or guardian figures at entrances.

The vase paintings showing Hecate as torch-bearer are consistent with the rôle the goddess plays in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (52),⁶⁶ where she holds a torch in her hands as she tells Demeter of hearing Persephone's cries as she was carried off to the underworld. Hecate appears again the *Hymn* (434–40) when she greets Persephone on her return from Hades.⁶⁷ The episode is reflected in vase painting when a torch-bearing Hecate lights the way for

⁶³ Stanford University Museum of Art 70.12; I. and A. Raubitschek pls. 15f, Hayashi cat. no. 102, Clinton (*Myth*) 124f, figs. 11–14.

⁶⁴ See *LIMC* VI 985–87 *s.v.* "Hekate" for references. On Hecate in general, see H. Sarian, *LIMC* VI 985–1018, pls. 654–73; T. Kraus, *Hekate* (Heidelberg 1960); Clinton (*Myth*) 116–20; E. Simon, "Hekate in Athen," *AM* 100 (1985) 271–84.

⁶⁵ For the triple-bodied type, see *LIMC* VI 1014–16, Hekate nos. 112–215; *cf.* 987 for previous bibliography.

⁶⁶ See Richardson 155–57, 169.

⁶⁷ Richardson 293–95.

Persephone emerging from Hades, as on the Persephone Painter's name vase, a bell krater in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.⁶⁸ This rôle reflects Hecate's chthonic nature and her ability to serve as messenger between the living and the dead.

Hecate's main rôle in Eleusinian iconography on vases is as torch-bearer in scenes of the Mission of Triptolemus. These begin with a cup in Frankfort in the manner of the Brygos Painter, and continue in Mission scenes by the Niobid Painter, the Painter of London 183, and the Duomo Painter, as well as at Duke.⁶⁹ All but the last two of these are multi-figured Mission scenes, where the main characters are complemented by Eleusinian heroes. Hecate's presence in Mission scenes remains rare, sufficiently so that she is generally named by inscription.

Hecate appears in two non-Eleusinian scenes on vases from the Polygnotan Group, and because both appear to be unique representations, it seems worth mentioning them here. The first is on the name vase of the Peleus Painter, a calyx krater in Ferrara.⁷⁰ Hecate is once again a torch bearer, here lighting the wedding procession of Peleus and Thetis. In this rôle, she takes the place usually held by Artemis, as John Oakley and Rebecca Sinos have noted, reflecting the syncretic relation between Artemis and Hecate alluded to in the literary sources and several votive inscriptions.⁷¹

In her second appearance she is a deputy of Artemis, inciting the hounds killing Aktaeon on a bell krater in the Borowski collection in Jerusalem, generally attributed to the Dinos Painter.⁷² This

⁶⁸ Inv. no. 28.57.23, *ARV*² 1012 no. 1; J. Boardman, *Athenian Red Figure Vases: The Classical Period* (London 1989) fig. 121.

⁶⁹ *LIMC* VI 991, Hekate nos. 18 (manner of the Brygos Painter), 19f (Niobid Painter), 21 (Painter of London 183), and 22 (Duomo Painter)—all but the first illustrated (pls. 655f).

⁷⁰ Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Spina 2893 (T 617), *ARV*² 1038 no. 1, Matheson cat. no. PE 1 pl. 91.

⁷¹ J. H. Oakley and R. H. Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens* (Madison 1993) 31 and 137 n.58.

⁷² Jerusalem, Elie Borowski collection; J. R. Guy, *Glimpses of Excellence: A Selection of Greek Vases and Bronzes from the Elie Borowski Collection, exhibition catalogue, Royal Ontario Museum 18 December 1984–30 June 1985* (Toronto 1984) 22f, cat. no. 17 (attribution D. von Bothmer); *LIMC* I 462 pl. 357, Aktaion no. 83a; *LIMC* VI 997, Hekate no. 96; Matheson cat. no. D 41, pl. 133.

Hecate is very different from the decorous figure in peplos or chiton and himation that we have seen in the Mission scenes. Dressed in a short patterned chiton over a long plain one, Hecate is winged here, and emerging from her head are the head and forepaws of a barking hound. Hounds belong to Hecate in her chthonic aspect, so she appears here in part as the emissary of death. The visual detail of the hound emerging from her head occurs elsewhere only once, in another version of the Death of Atkaeon by the Lykaon Painter, an earlier painter in the Polygnotan group, on a bell krater in Boston.⁷³ On the Lykaon Painter's vase, however, the figure from whose head the hound emerges is not Hecate but Lyssa, the personification of madness, who is serving a similarly aloof Artemis in the same rôle as the inciter of the hounds. The Borowski krater is the only known representation of a winged Hecate; fortunately, both she and Lyssa are named by inscription.

The Mission scenes as we have examined them here are a remarkably consistent group. Representations of Triptolemus and the Eleusinian deities on fourth-century vases in Athens and South Italy are quite different in appearance and emphasis. The name vase of the Pourtales Painter, a bell krater in London, is representative.⁷⁴ Triptolemus is no longer the central figure, nor is his departure on his Mission the central theme. Rather, a convocation of Eleusinian deities and worthies covers the surface of the vase, reflecting, as Metzger (30) has noted, an increased emphasis on the Eleusinian cult and its expansion into a panhellenic phenomenon. Triptolemus in his winged seat appears in these convocations, as well as atop the columns of Athena on panathenaic amphorae of several archon years in the fourth century—for example on a prize vase of 336/335 B.C., in the British Museum,⁷⁵ but the Mission as a primary subject essentially disappears from vase painting before the end of the fifth century, although Triptolemus and his winged, snakey chair sur-

⁷³ Museum of Fine Arts 00.346, *ARV*² 1045 no. 7, *LIMC* I 462 pl. 357, Aktaion no. 81; Matheson cat. no. L 7, pl. 69.

⁷⁴ British Museum F 68, *ARV*² 1446 no. 1; Boardman (*supra* n.68) fig. 372.

⁷⁵ Inv. no. 608, *ABV* 417 no. 1; N. Eschbach, *Statuen auf Panathenäischen Preisamphoren des 4. Jhs. v. Chr.* (Mainz 1983) cat. no. 65, pl. 29.3; for additional examples from this and other archon years, see Eschbach cat. nos. 16–19, 25f, and 63–67.

vive somewhat longer in votive reliefs.⁷⁶ Indeed, because only two Mission scenes remain on vases from the years between 425 and 400, one might better date its demise in this medium to the period of the Peloponnesian War.

Let's look for a moment at the distribution of Mission scenes from their inception in the mid-sixth century to their finale *ca* 425 B.C. (*Fig. 1*).⁷⁷ From the earliest representations of Triptolemos teaching agriculture, that is, the two amphorae by the Swing Painter of around 540, to the end of the sixth century, we have a total of twenty-two representations of the subject. Of these seventeen are black-figure, and five red-figure of *ca* 510-500 B.C. From the first quarter of the fifth century, there are three black-figure and twenty red-figure, for a total of twenty-three, or approximately the same as the second half of the sixth century. From the second quarter of the fifth century, a total of forty-three vases survive, that is, nearly twice the total for the first quarter of the century. Only three of these are black-figure (late lekythoi), while the remaining forty are red-figure. From 450-425 there are thirty-three representations, all red-figure; and, as I mentioned earlier, there are only two in the fourth quarter of the century. The peak is thus clearly in the second and third quarters of the fifth century.

Two questions arise from these statistics: first, why did the subject begin in the first place, and why at the time that it did? and second, why was it particularly common, and shown in such a particularly formulaic way, in the fifty-year span between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars?

⁷⁶ *E.g.* a votive relief in the Eleusis Museum, inv. no. 5061, of *ca* 330 B.C. *LIMC* IV 875 pl. 589, Demeter no. 379; a second in Naples, Museo Nazionale Archeologico, *ca* 330 B.C., *LIMC* IV 878 pl. 594, Demeter no. 412.

⁷⁷ The statistics in the discussion that follows are based on the catalogue published by Hayashi 126-74.

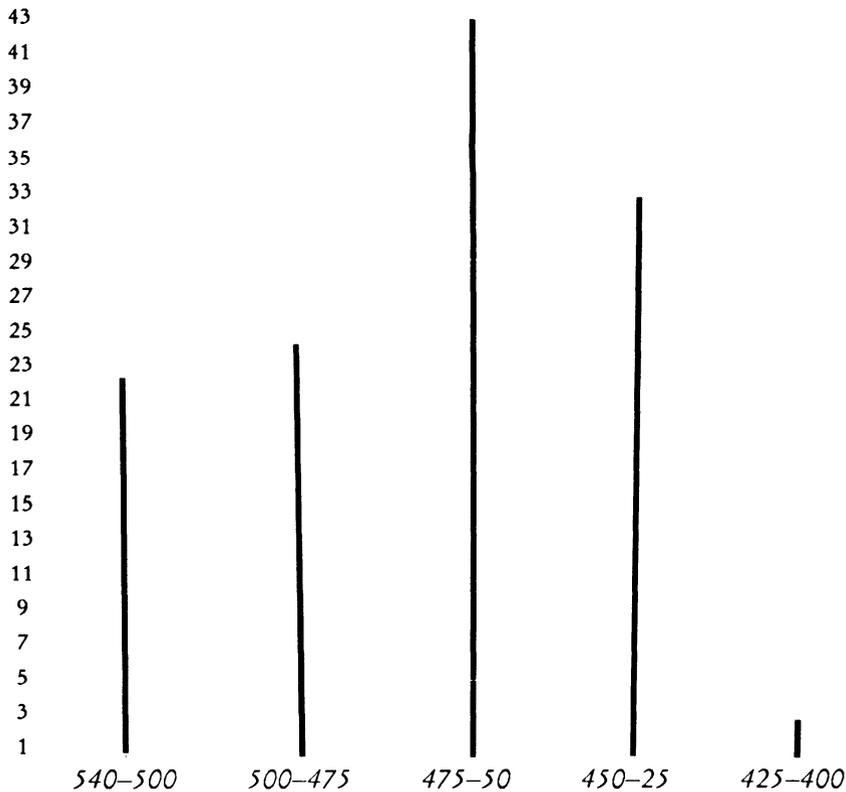


Figure 1
Mission of Triptolemus Scenes: Distribution

We have already seen that Triptolemus was a figure of obscure parentage who came on the scene first in vase painting, without any mythological history from earlier literary sources to provide a pedigree or visual identity. His arrival around 540 and his rapid development in the subsequent few decades into a stock character with a specific rôle will probably not have occurred in a vacuum, and I am hardly the first to suggest an association of this and other Eleusinians subjects with the policies of Pisistratus and his sons. John Boardman, the pioneer of the study of associations between vase painting and politics, focused on the rôle of Heracles and

with Pisistratid iconography.⁷⁸ Boardman argued that much of the active intervention of Athens at Eleusis, including rebuilding, increased control of the cults through the establishment of the Kerykes as a new priestly *genos* in charge of the Mysteries for Athens, and the founding of the Lesser Mysteries in Athens itself, took place under Pisistratid rule.

Part of the argument for Pisistratid content rests on a black-figure representation of Triptolemus, where he appears, not undertaking the Mission, but as part of a procession of divinities and heroes surrounding Demeter. Fragments of an amphora in the Manner of Exekias in Reggio di Calabria⁷⁹ show Triptolemus, identified by a retrograde inscription, standing next to a chariot driven by Demeter, at left, who is mostly lost but still identified by her attribute, the ears of grain that she holds. Athena and Heracles stand next to the horses, while Hermes stands at their heads, perhaps leading them. A bearded man holding a sceptre stands at the far right, named by inscription "Ploutodotas." Above this scene, on the neck of the vessel, Heracles leads Cerberus out of Hades—these are the very fragmentary figures at the far left, accompanied by Iolaos and Athena.

Most scholars have accepted an Eleusinian setting for the arrival of Demeter that seems to be represented in the main picture. A few, however—among them Boardman and Alan Shapiro—have seen the emphasis on Athena and Heracles in the two scenes on this vase as an indication of an Athenian connection.⁸⁰ Boardman links the two scenes here to the story that Heracles was initiated at Eleusis prior to his mission to Hades for Cerberus. Boardman views the popularity of the Cerberus story, which begins at this time, and the involvement of Heracles in the Eleusinian cult as reflections of Pisistratid policies designed to promote the cult and the hero, making the combination here an example of Pisistratid propaganda. He sees the non-violent version of the Heracles and Cerberus scene featured on the Reggio fragments as indicative of Heracles' acceptance as an initiate by Persephone. In combination

⁷⁸ J. Boardman, "Herakles, Peisistratos, and Eleusis," *JHS* 95 (1975) 1–12.

⁷⁹ Archaeological Museum 4001, *ABV* 147 no. 6; Metzger pls I.2. and II.1, 2; Shapiro pl. 33a.

⁸⁰ J. Boardman (*supra* n.78) 1–12; Shapiro 78ff.

with the main scene on the Reggio vase, which Boardman sees as the arrival of Demeter in Athens, the Heracles episode symbolizes Athens' new importance for Eleusis.

Shapiro suggests that the scene on the belly of the amphora may refer to the Lesser Mysteries, which took place at Athens. Mythologically, the Lesser Mysteries were established for the purification or naturalization of Heracles prior to his initiation at Eleusis; Shapiro concurs with Boardman that they were probably expanded, if not actually founded, under Pisistratid rule. Noting that, aside from the Mission scenes, Triptolemus is not depicted as being at Eleusis on vases, Shapiro uses his presence on the Reggio vase to expand Boardman's arguments for an Athenian venue for the scene. Athenian tradition claimed that Triptolemus revealed the Mysteries to Heracles and the Dioscuri. If these Mysteries can be taken to be the Lesser Mysteries, then the combination of Heracles and Triptolemus on the Reggio vase might reflect this tradition of Triptolemus as first hierophant. Demeter in her chariot could be explained as the goddess arriving in Athens for the founding of what Shapiro (79) calls "her new 'branch' cult and the initiation of its first *mystes*." Hermes would then be present as an ancestor of the Kerykes, the Athenian family charged with overseeing the Lesser Mysteries.

Isabelle and Antony Raubitschek argued that the Mission scenes themselves reflect Pisistratid policy, which fostered the cultivation of grain as well as grapes and promoted the cults of Demeter and Dionysus.⁸¹ Such a joint emphasis in policy could well be reflected on vases such as the black-figure amphora by the Priam Painter discussed above, which combines the Missions of Triptolemus and Dionysus on opposite sides of the vase. There may be a link between the introduction of Triptolemus scenes and the founding of the City Eleusinion in Athens, which several scholars have proposed took place under Pisistratid rule, although the precise date of the earliest structures here is uncertain.⁸²

Alan Shapiro, who endorses the Pisistratid inspiration for the Mission scenes, sees the non-canonical nature of the earliest

⁸¹ I. and A. Raubitschek 110.

⁸² The Raubitscheks 111, Shapiro 69ff; on the uncertainty of the foundation date, see *Agora* XIV 150ff.

versions of the Mission scene on vases, that is, the two amphorae by the Swing Painter, as evidence in itself that the story was new at the time these vases were painted, and that the canon only developed afterwards. Shapiro also dates the earliest canonical Eleusinian versions of the Mission story—that is, those with Demeter and Kore present—to within the Pisistratid tyranny. He proposes that the story was created under the Pisistratids by a poet of the Orphic circle, and he attributes a significant rôle to Orphic poems, among them an Orphic version of the *Hymn to Demeter*, in the restructuring of the cults of Demeter and Kore under the Pisistratids. Shapiro believes that such Orphic influence could help to explain the puzzling figure on the Reggio amphora identified by inscription as *Ploutodotas*, for this epithet or a version of it features frequently in Orphic writings. At least one Orphic poet in the Pisistratid court circle, Onomacritus, is said to have composed poems and oracles about Triptolemus, some of which he seems to have falsely attributed to Musaeus.⁸³ Onomacritus provides a primary link between the Pisistratids and Orphic doctrine, which several scholars have cited as influential in the development of Eleusinian ritual and iconography, a topic beyond the limits of this paper.

Within this context, a further link between Athens and Eleusis in vase painting of the Pisistratid period, not previously noted, can be seen on a black-figure cup from the Bareiss collection now in the J. Paul Getty Museum, signed by Nikosthenes as potter and dating to ca 530 B.C. (PL. 3).⁸⁴ Here the three heads on side B, which I would identify as Demeter, Kore, and Triptolemus, are paired with the heads of Athena and Heracles on side A.⁸⁵ Lacking the narrative content of the later amphorae, this vase is more emblematic, but no less symptomatic, of the political connection proposed for the

⁸³ The Raubitscheks 111; Shapiro 70f.

⁸⁴ Malibu, California, collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum 86.AE.170, formerly in the collection of Walter Bareiss (Bareiss no. 82), *ABV* 231 no. 30; F. Brommer, "Herakles und Theseus auf Vasen in Malibu," *Greek Vases in the J. Paul Getty Museum II: Occasional Papers on Antiquities III* (Malibu 1985) 189–92.

⁸⁵ Other identifications for the figures on side B have been suggested, as reviewed by Brommer (*supra* n.84) 102; Demeter, Persephone, and Hades (Schefold); Hera, Hebe, and Zeus (Bruckner and subsequently Beazley); Brommer prefers to leave the question open.

Mission scenes. If one accepts the basic Boardman thesis that political content can be read into black-figure paintings, as I do, then it seems that the case for the connection between Pisistratid policy and the introduction and early development of the Mission of Triptolemus scene can be defended.

The snakes on Triptolemus' winged chair, mentioned by Sophocles and a common feature in many vase paintings of the Mission, may provide one last link with the Pisistratids.⁸⁶ Boardman has argued, as noted above, that the establishment of the Kerykes as a new priestly *genos* for Athens as a rival to the Eumolpidae of Eleusis took place under the Pisistratids.⁸⁷ The Kerykes traced their ancestry back to the legendary king Cecrops, whose symbol, as we know from the shield of the Athena Parthenos, was the snake. Triptolemus' snakes could well serve the same function. They would add an Athenian slant to what could otherwise be mistaken for a purely Eleusinian subject.

Assuming for the sake of argument that the significant increase in the number of Mission scenes in the second and third quarters of the fifth century is not merely an accident of survival, we are led to ask why this emphasis should characterize the period between the wars. Others have argued convincingly that the increase in popularity of Theseus stories on vases immediately after the Persian Wars, and more specifically the group of vases that associate Theseus with Poseidon, reflect the historical circumstances of the Athenian victory at Salamis that ended the war and Cimon's foundation of the Delian League. If Theseus, as her national hero, personifies or embodies Athens, and Poseidon personifies the Athenian navy that won the war and made her a rich maritime power, as seems to be true in the vases, can we identify a similar level of symbolism in the Triptolemus vases that would likewise link them to specific historical circumstances?

⁸⁶ For alternative interpretations, notably that the snake is a symbol of the Mysteries, see Hayashi 57f; this idea is refuted by Clinton, "Panhellenism" 172 n.57.

⁸⁷ Boardman (*supra* n.80); Shapiro 71f, suggests that the evidence is inconclusive, although there is nothing to argue against it; K. Clinton, *The Sacred Officials of the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Philadelphia 1974) 8, notes that both *gene* held priest-hoods at Eleusis.

One could hardly argue that Eleusis or the Eleusinian gods played the critical rôle that Poseidon or Boreas did in the Athenian victory at Salamis, but there are two ancient references to a similar sort of aid that can be mentioned here. Herodotus (8.65) relates a tale told by an Athenian of a supernatural cloud of dust such as a host of 30,000 men might raise, and of a loud cry that sounded like the mystic hymn to Iakkos. The dust and noise advanced from Eleusis toward the Athenian fleet lying in jeopardy at Salamis, a sign that the fleet of Xerxes would suffer defeat.

Plutarch, in his *Life of Themistocles* (15), gives another version of the story, describing how, at the battle site itself, a "great light suddenly shone out from Eleusis and a loud cry seemed to fill the whole breadth of the Thriasian plain down to the sea, as though an immense crowd were escorting the mystic Iakkos in procession. Then, from the place where the shouting was heard, a cloud seemed to rise slowly from the land, drift out to sea, and descend upon the triremes."⁸⁸ Both sources cite the same phenomenon, and one may well be repeating the other, but they do show that the myth was current. It is at least possible that the popularity of Triptolemus scenes in the wake of the Persian Wars owes something to reports of this miraculous event.

A more likely explanation may be found in the image of Athens as the bringer of civilization to the rest of Greece, civilization which first and foremost took the form of agriculture.⁸⁹ This dispensation is embodied in the Mission of Triptolemus, and both the idea and the use of Triptolemus as its symbol pervade patriotic literature of Athens in the fourth century. Isocrates, for example, who has been described as the "spokesman of Athens in the fourth century B.C.,"⁹⁰ extols Athens in the following words, published in 380 (*Paneg.* 28–29):

⁸⁸ Translation by I. Scott-Kilvert (Penguin edition, Harmondsworth 1960) 92.

⁸⁹ Clinton ("Panhellenism" 164), citing some of the same literary sources quoted below, prefers to emphasize Athens' gift of the Mysteries to the Greek world, drawing a parallel between the growth and spread of the Mysteries and the increasing popularity of Triptolemus and his Mission scenes reflecting his rôle as *spondophoros* in the Mysteries.

⁹⁰ W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and their Gods* (Boston 1955) 286.

... that which was the first necessity of man's nature was provided by our city.... When Demeter came to our land, in her wandering after the rape of Kore, and, being moved to kindness towards our ancestors by service that may not be told save to her initiates, gave these two gifts, the greatest in the world—the fruits of the earth, which have enabled us to rise above the life of beasts, and the holy rite which inspires in those who partake of it sweeter hopes regarding both the end of life and all eternity—our city was not only so beloved of the gods but also so devoted to mankind that, having been endowed with these great blessings, she did not begrudge them to the rest of the world but shared with all men what she had received. The mystic rites we continue even now, each year, to reveal to the initiates; and as for the fruits of the earth, our city has, in a word, instructed the world in their uses, their cultivation, and the benefits derived from them.⁹¹

Similarly, Xenophon reports that Callias offered the following argument in his speech to the Spartans advocating peace between Athens and Sparta in 371 B.C. (*Hellenica* 6.3.6):

We ought never to raise our hands against each other, for we are told that Triptolemus our ancestor revealed the secret rites of Demeter and Kore first of all to Heracles, your national hero, and the Dioscouri, your fellow-citizens, and made a gift of the seed of Demeter's fruit to the Peloponnese before all other lands. It cannot be right, therefore, either for you to march out and destroy the crops of those from whom you received the gift of seed, nor for us to deny full abundance of food to those to whom we gave it.⁹²

Callias is referring in general to the Athenians here, of course, but in the passages preceding this one in his speech he has been describing the esteem in which his own family, the Kerykes, is held. One wonders whether the "our" in "Triptolemus our ancestor" might refer to the family as well as the Athenians,

⁹¹ Tr. G. Norlin (Loeb series, Cambridge [Mass.] 1954) 135.

⁹² Tr. Guthrie (*supra* n.91) 286; Clinton ("Panhellenism") 161, discusses the implications of this text for Athens' image as a Panhellenic leader.

providing a link between Triptolemus and the Athenian priestly family with the most powerful rôle in the rites at Eleusis.⁹³

Plato echoes the sentiment, but he places it in the mouth of Aspasia, whose funeral oration for the Athenians Socrates is quoting for Menexenus, thus implying that the idea was current in Periclean times (*Men.* 237–38):

Now our land, which is also our mother, furnishes to the full this proof of her having brought forth men; for of all the lands that then existed, she was the first and the only one to produce human nourishment, namely the grain of wheat and barley, whereby the race of mankind is most richly and well nourished, inasmuch as she herself was the true mother of this creature [*i.e.*, man] ... this her produce grain she did not begrudge to the rest of the world, but dispensed it to them also.⁹⁴

According to Xenophon, the claim that Athens was the benefactor of all mankind was a standard topic in the *Epitaphioi logoi*, the Athenian public funeral orations. The claim seems to have formed the basis for the requirement that sacrifice be offered to Triptolemus along with Demeter and Kore, as part of the first fruits offering at Eleusis.⁹⁵ A copy of the Eleusis decree governing first fruits offerings and ordering sacrifice to Triptolemus was apparently also set up in the Eleusinion in Athens, where a small fragment of it has been found.⁹⁶ It must also have inspired the introduction of worship of Triptolemus in the Eleusinion at Athens, attested by Pausanias' mention of a temple to Triptolemus (1.14.1), its location still uncertain, and the discovery in the Eleusinion of a fragmentary fifth century relief showing Triptolemus in his snakey winged chair.⁹⁷

It may also have inspired a vase painting on an amphora at Harvard by another unnamed painter in the Group of Polygnotos, showing Demeter handing grain to a standing figure

⁹³ On the Kerykes see Shapiro 71–74.

⁹⁴ Tr. R. G. Bury (Loeb series, London 1961) 345.

⁹⁵ *I.G.* I² 76.3638; I. and A. Raubitscheck 44.

⁹⁶ *I.G.* I² 76.29–30; *Agora* III 134 no. 411.

⁹⁷ *Agora* Museum S 1013; J. Travlos, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens* (London and Tübingen 1971) 201 fig. 262.

often identified as Triptolemus.⁹⁸ Kevin Clinton has questioned this identification, rightly noting the differences between the travelling garb worn by this figure and the traditional chiton and himation we have seen Triptolemus wearing throughout the Mission scenes, and I find his alternative suggestion of Theseus more appealing.⁹⁹ If Clinton is correct, then we would have a composition parallel in meaning to those exemplified by the Yale Oinochoe Painter's name vase, where Theseus as the symbol of Athens acknowledges the gifts of Poseidon, who in turn symbolizes the naval power of Athens.¹⁰⁰ On the Harvard amphora Theseus acknowledges the gift of grain from Demeter in a similar way, and like the Mission of Triptolemus, the exchange between goddess and hero symbolizes an important aspect of the image Athens wished to project for herself.

Athens' claim to have brought Demeter's gifts to the world is in no way better visualized than in the Mission of Triptolemus, whether depicted as narrative, as on the Duke krater, or as emblem, as on the Troilos Painter's kalpis in New York.¹⁰¹ The idea that the Mission scenes embodied the claim renders them important documents in Athenian political propaganda in the fifth century and goes a long way to explain their popularity after the Persian Wars. With Athens' loss of power as a result of the Peloponnesian War, this sort of propaganda became less appropriate, and as a result the vases with Triptolemus scenes almost disappear.¹⁰² In the late fifth century Eleusis became caught up in a conflict between democratic and oligarchic forces, ending in a brief period of independence for Eleusis; Alcibiades was alleged to have profaned the Mysteries; and the procession from Athens

⁹⁸ Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University 1959.187, *ARV*² 1059 no. 126 (as Triptolemus); Hayashi 152f, cat. no. 98 (as Triptolemus), Matheson cat. no. PGU 147.

⁹⁹ Clinton (*Myth*) 43f, figs. 65f.

¹⁰⁰ Yale University Art Gallery 1913.143, Gift of Rebecca Darlington Stoddard; *ARV*² 503 no. 25; J. J. Pollitt, "Pots, Politics, and Personifications in Early Classical Athens," *YaleBull* 40 (1987) 8–15, fig. 2.

¹⁰¹ Metropolitan Museum of Art 56.171.53, *ARV*² 297 no. 14, Boardman (*ARVF* I) fig. 189.

¹⁰² Hayashi 68–77 offers a convincing argument for attributing the demise of the subject to the effects of the Peloponnesian War.

to Eleusis was suspended. This climate would hardly have fostered a flowering of Eleusinian subjects in art or literature. The change in emphasis in fourth century versions of Eleusinian subjects on vases presumably reflects the renewal of the annual festival and its connection to Athens once again, and the spread of the rites through the western Greek world, especially to South Italy and Sicily, that is attested in literature and in South Italian vase painting. The propaganda value of the Triptolemus story survived in rhetoric, as we have seen, and perhaps in the last gasp of Athenian vase painting, atop the columns of fourth-century panathenaic amphorae.¹⁰³

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¹⁰³ A version of this paper was delivered at a symposium on Greek vase painting at Duke University, held in January 1995 in conjunction with an exhibition celebrating the thirtieth year of the Duke Classical Collection. It is a pleasure to offer my thanks to Keith Stanley, organizer of the symposium and author of the exhibition catalogue (*supra* n.2), for the invitation to participate and for the opportunity to publish this paper here. My thanks also to my fellow symposiasts, Mary B. Moore, Brian Sparkes, Diana Buitron-Oliver, John Oakley, and especially Joan Mertens, for their helpful suggestions about areas of interest to this topic that should be pursued. They will note that not all have been answered as yet, but it is my expectation that an expanded publication on this topic will address them in the future. Thanks also to J. J. Pollitt and Kevin Clinton for invaluable perspectives on the larger historical questions.

MATHESON PLATE 1



Mission of Triptolemus. Red-figure calyx krater by Polygnotos, *ca* 440 B.C. Duke University Museum of Art DCC 1964.27. Side A.



Mission of Triptolemus. Red-figure calyx krater by Polygnotos,
ca 440 B.C. Duke University Museum of Art DCC 1964.27.
Side A, detail.



(a) Side A: Athena and Heracles



(b) Side B: Persephone, Demeter, and Triptolemus

Black-figure Eye Cup signed by Nikosthenes as potter, *ca* 530 B.C.,
Malibu, California, Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum,
86.AE.70.

PLATE 4 DICKIE



Seated Statue of Posidippus (Vatican Museum, Inv. no. 735;
photograph courtesy German Archaeological Institute in Rome)