MARATHON

AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM


Kalentzi
Apano Súli
Marathóna
Spáta
Sefért
Béi
Kokrení
Vrana
Stamáta
Vréda
Agrieliés
Kleiner Sumpf

(Pentélikon)

Malacasi(sh)

Limiko

Phonari or Phanj

Malisi

Limni Kumbara

Kato Suli

Sumpf

Canal Satzo von Marathon

Canal Satzo

Drakonera Halbinsel

Salzsee Drakonera

Chani

Punagia Mavroportiani

Plasi

Cap Marathon od. Stomi

BUSEN VON MARATHON

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GEORGE STEINHAUER

MARATHON

AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

CONTENTS

Two and a half thousand years ago, the citizens of Athens became aware of the power of democracy. This small society, full of self-confidence and expectations for its future, was experimenting with a new type of governance, unprecedented for the times. Every citizen had the right to express himself, participate, vote and be elected into office.

Radical and innovative, the new system rejected autocracy and oligarchy, the collection of power in the hands of one or a few men. It treated every citizen, every minority, with respect.

For the standards of those days, democracy must have seemed unorthodox, strange, and too weak to rise to the occasion during difficulties, at times when decisions had to be taken quickly and followed by all. It must have seemed too inadequate to deal with crises.

Pheidippides' "We have won" was something more than the announcement of a victory. It was the announcement of the victory of one belief system over another. The belief that all people are equal before the law, and that societies built on this belief are stronger than those based on the power of the few.

This is why the spirit of Marathon has survived until today: to remind us of the power that democracy has over autocracy, the power of "we" over "I".

It is a simple political decision for us to get behind this tradition, utilize it and disseminate it to every corner of the world. Not only because this idea was created by our forefathers, or only because quantities of Greek blood have been shed for it, but because, as Greeks, we have a profound belief in democracy, the right of free expression and the rights of minorities.

Looking forward to a global society that ardently seeks new values, we are convinced that there is a place for the values we stand for.

PAVLOS ΥEROULANOS
Minister of Culture and Tourism

This year's book, the tenth in the *Museums Cycle* series published every year by the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation and Eurobank EFG, differs from the earlier volumes. While the latter focused on ancient art as a human creation, this book focuses on humanity itself, and its singular ability to invent history through the most unexpected and imaginative scenarios.

The unequal struggle of the Athenians and the Plataeans against the expected victors, the Persians, outstripped the narrow boundaries of a tactical victory in the long-lasting clash of two great peoples and two world-views, and has been ranked in our historical consciousness as a great feat. It is one of world history's paramount examples of a complete reversal of fortune, a victory exceeding the bounds of the possible and, throughout the centuries, one of the most vivid examples of the ideal of freedom prevailing against the might of weapons and against all logic. Marathon warriors, eternal symbols of courage and ethos, forged the consciousness of the citizens of Athens and pointed the way to the dawn of a new era for ancient Athens and for humanity.

The serene valley of Marathon had the good fortune to be identified with the history of the battle, whose mythical dimensions are highlighted by the charming simplicity of the Museum exhibits, which are representative of daily life in those days. They underscore humankind's transcendence, as well as the truly extraordinary feat accomplished 2,500 years ago.

Our decision to publish this book dedicated to Marathon and its Archaeological Museum constitutes both homage and sacred duty. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the author, the archaeologist George Steinhauer, for his work, the product of his deep love and abiding concern for the region. We also owe a debt of gratitude to everyone whose work on the excavations contributed to unearthing the history of Marathon. Warmest thanks are also due to the Ministry of Culture, which in so many ways supports our efforts to promote our cultural heritage.

MARIANNA J. LATSIS

There are places that offer refuge in the beauty of nature or the adventure of history, and others that mark a return to the true essence of things. Just as some books help us deal with the passage of time and the forgetfulness of self, while others urge us to make up for lost time and to regain our own deeper, forgotten self. Marathon is one of those magical places that stir our memory, and constitutes the subject of this book, which aspires to see this little museum tucked away in a corner of Attica transformed into a major gateway on the road leading from a great past to a bright future.

This unique sense of historical continuity in the Marathon landscape – from the dawn of the Neolithic Age and the first Early Helladic settlements, culminating in the brilliant Mycenaean period in prehistoric Attica and the birth of the Athenian democracy in which all citizens were equal before the law – can be captured by visitors strolling through the Museum halls or leafing through the pages of this book as they assimilate the ordinary life that is condensed in the plain shapes of high art.

Although the modest funeral gifts from the Classical graves at Marathon cannot compete with the masterpieces in great museums, it is only through these former objects that we can acquire a sense of the slow pace of life in this corner of rural Attica where, one day in September, 2500 years ago, fate decreed a truly unique moment in which the placid Marathon landscape was illuminated by a lightning bolt of great history that has marked it for eternity. And if the small but charming collection of vases in the museum speaks in simple terms of the life and death of the many anonymous people who lived parallel to history, the grave offerings found in the Tumulus of the Marathon warriors have kept alive the material presence of these heroes, just as the marble trophy retains the imprint of the battle's eternal glory.

There have been other, greater battles in history. The victories at Salamis and Plataea may have been more decisive than that of Marathon in terms of the future of civilisation, but it was the Battle of Marathon that dealt the first major blow to Persian arrogance, and brought about the maturation of the Athenian democracy. Behind the scenes there may have been clashes about the future of the city between individuals and viewpoints, there may have been conspiracies and even betrayals. The subsequent glory of the battle may have been, to some extent, the creation of and pretext for Athenian hegemonic policies. Nevertheless, this battle – in addition to and beyond everything else – constituted

the first great test of its unity and the wellspring of its self-confidence, which laid the foundation for the grandeur of Athens and the spirit of a great era. Whether the name of Marathon is for many millions or even billions of people in the world today associated with an Olympic sport is of little consequence. For those who have had a classical education and are part of the European tradition, 'Marathon' is not a word devoid of meaning or a mere historical reference to significant events of the past. It is a constant call to the daily struggle for freedom, the idea that distinguishes our culture (rather than technological progress) and that – whether guiding the masses to the barricades of Paris or shedding light on the way to the New World – permeates Western history as the essence of a truly human attitude.

The tradition contained in this small museum is reinforced by the plain monuments dotted around the Marathon plain – a grassy tumulus, some drums and the capital of a marble column, a few scattered inscriptions – but it can only be preserved as long as we keep it alive and allow it to guide us from afar in planning our lives. The book you are holding aspires to remind us of this. Which is why it will never be just another coffee table book serving to while away the time, and also why we should not regard Marathon as a tourist attraction but as rather a pilgrimage into the past and a commitment to the future.

I should like here to thank all those who contributed to the publication of this book. First of all, of course, the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation and in particular Mrs Marianna Latsis and EFG Eurobank Ergasias, without whose initiative and assistance this book could not have been published. Thanks are also due to Vangelis Chronis, who did me the honour of entrusting me to write the text and for his interest and support at every step of the way; to Eirini Louvrou for her tireless, always graciously pressing concern to make the book as perfect as possible; to Dimitris Kalokyris to whose consummate taste the book owes its final form, and finally in particular to Socratis Mavrommatis, whose superb photographs have lent fresh meaning to the text and breathed new life into the Museum's exhibits.

GEORGE STEINHAUER

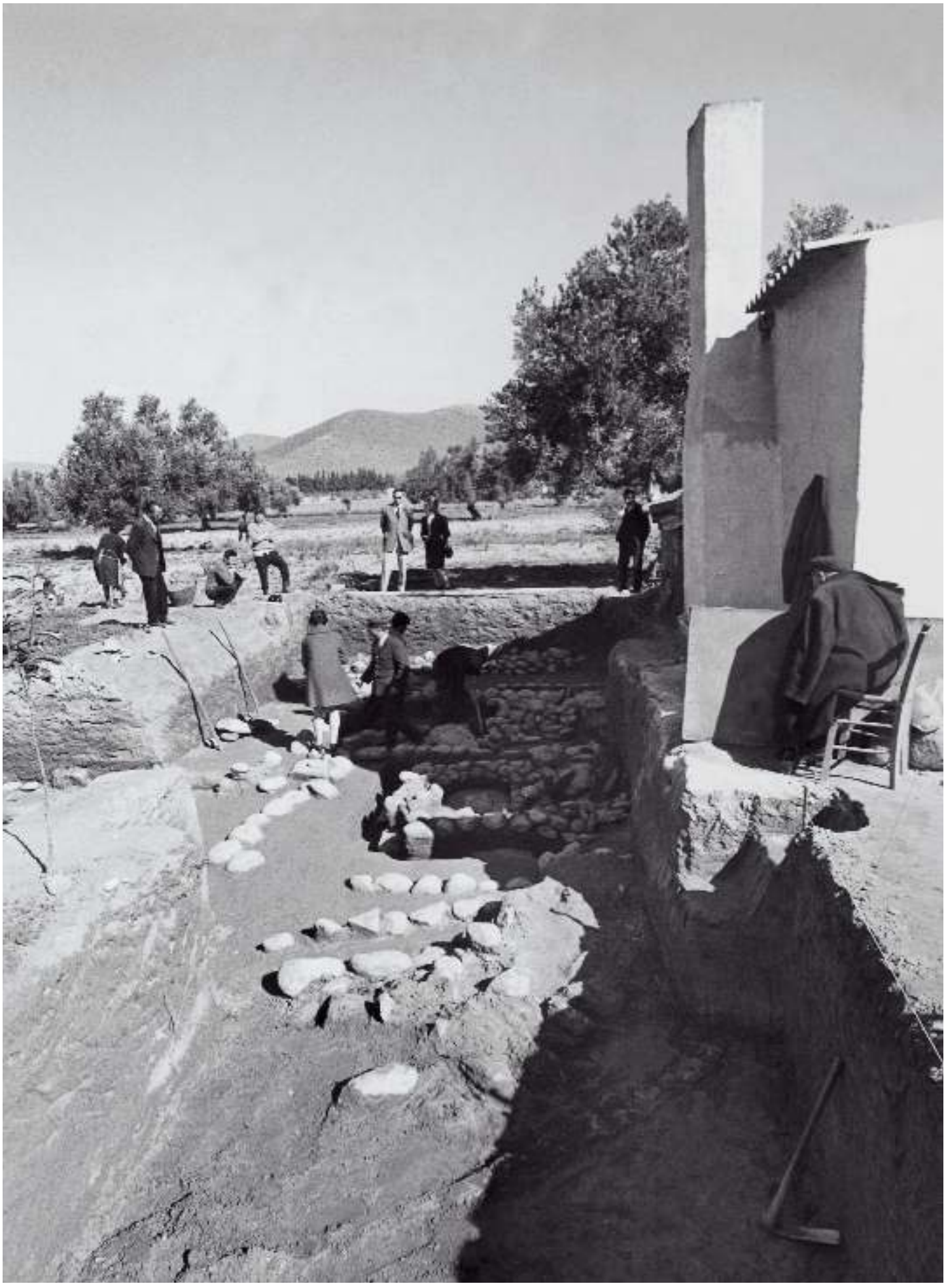
The Tumulus of the Athenians circa 1910. Photograph from the H. Pernot Collection.

INTRODUCTION

Neglected for centuries in a corner of Attica bereft of inhabitants, the region of Marathon (=the plain with the fennel [*marathos*]), had retained no more than the memory of its glorious name. Indeed this glorious name that its new inhabitants – aware, I wonder, of its significance? – gave to their village at the exit of the Oinoe ravine had, for the rest of the world that was re-discovering antiquity, been identified in the meantime with the idea of democracy's victorious resistance against Asian despotism, the distant predecessor of that which, by some tragic irony, had spread its dark shadow over Greece during the same period. The growing numbers of pilgrims from the west, who had begun travelling to this distant corner of Attica in the 17th and 18th centuries, did not come looking for beautiful objects to enrich their collections or for archaeological evidence to satisfy their scholarly curiosity. What they were searching for in their wanderings on the plain and among the sheepfolds in the surrounding mountains were the magic traces that would link it with that great past. And when someone recognised the "tumulus of the Athenians" or "Miltiades' trophy" among the olive trees, or when he bent over a shard, an arrow, or some other tangible evidence of the Marathon fighters, he felt their heroic breath touching him.

The need of the new, positivist and materialist era for "objective" archaeological documentation and for the "type" of the traces of history led to the first excavations of the Marathon land in the 19th century. Interest was focused initially on the mound "standing high in the middle of the famous Marathon plain", which travellers such as Leake, Bursian and others soon identified as the tomb of the Marathon fighters. The disheartening and only half-finished, owing to weather conditions, trial exploration conducted by Heinrich Schliemann in 1884 was followed in 1890 and 1891 by Valerios Staïs's discovery elsewhere of the tumulus of the famous "layer with the cremated bones of skeletons thrown at random on the pyre" which has ever since then been associated with those who fell heroically in the battle. On the contrary, the identification by Marinatos 80 years later of an early classical tumulus near the Museum at Vranas as the tomb of the Plataeans has been treated with reservations. Scholarly interest in classical Marathon was then associated with the topography of the battle. The reconstruction of the moves and final deployment of the adversaries in 490 BC was ultimately to depend on the – still controversial – location of the sanctuary of Heracles, or *Heracleion* (G. Sotiriadis, *PAE* 1933, 42, P. Themelis 1974), site of the Athenian encampment and centre of the deme of Marathon, which has been placed by some at Plasi and by others at Vranas, both sites with significant Geometric and Classical cemeteries.

The initial stages in the excavation of the Early Helladic cemetery at Tsepi.



The occasion on which prehistoric Marathon was discovered was the digging of a well in Tsepi. The photograph is from the initial stages in the excavation of the Early Helladic cemetery.

On the other hand, the discovery at Mesosporitissa by Eugene Vanderpool in 1966 of the remains of the Athenian trophy, and recently by Manolis Korres of its base, marks definitively the site of the final defeat of the Persians.

Excavating in the cave of Pan by the light of an acetylene lamp. The vase had just been excavated from the accumulated soil in the cave.

The first step in investigating the more distant past of the historic Marathon land, which for a while monopolised the interest of research, was the discovery in 1933-1935 by Georgios Sotiriadis of the "royal" Mycenaean tomb, a particularly important monument in terms of understanding the status of Marathon in Attica in the last and most brilliant period of Greek prehistory. The excavation of this tomb was completed with the amazing discovery in 1958 by Ioannis Papadimitriou of the burial of two horses at the beginning of the *dromos* (the corridor leading to the entrance of the tomb).

The beginning of life in Marathon, also the first settlement of Neolithic man in Attica, was corroborated by Dimitrios Theocharis's excavation in 1955 (completed by Maria Pantelidou from 1977 on), of a large settlement dating to the Neolithic period (6000-4700 BC) in Nea Makri (ancient Probalinthus), while I. Papadimitriou discovered (*Ergon*, 1958, 15-22) and partially excavated the cave of Pan located near the village of Marathon, in ancient Oinoe, dating from the last phase of the same period (3700-3200 BC).

Of particular significance in reconstructing the prehistory of Marathon, if not of Greek territory more generally, as well as an occasion for renewing interest in the region on the part of the archaeological community and the public alike, was the discovery a decade later, in 1968, of two other large monuments dating to the 20 centuries between the end of Neolithic activity in the cave of Pan and the period of the ("royal") tholos tomb, which are expected to shed new light on major problems of the Bronze Age, such as the advent of the Hellenes and the creation of central power in Attica. This was the chance discovery (when a well was being dug in a farmyard at the foot of Mt Kotroni) of the Early Helladic cemetery at Tsepi, and the identification in that same year, a few kilometres to the west, of the Middle Helladic tumuli at Vranas. It was these finds and the stir created by the Marinatos excavation (*AAA* 3 1970, 67, 154-165, 349-450), which was continued by Maria Pantelidou in 1977, that provided the impulse to organise the archaeological site (expropriation of the land and construction of the first protective roof) and a few years later, in 1975, to build the Museum. This founding project would not, however, have been possible without the generosity of Eugene Panagopoulos, an antiquity-loving businessman of Greek origin, whose memory is preserved by the marble inscription at the entrance to

Professor Spyridon Marinatos, as he was photographing the Middle Helladic tumuli that had just been unearthed at Vranas.

Circular pit grave in the Early Helladic cemetery at Tsepi.

Typical pit grave with constructed walls in the cemetery at Tsepi.

The small Marathon Museum in a corner of Vranas.

the Museum. The archaeological picture of prehistoric Marathon is supplemented every year with new data from the excavations by the Second Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities. Of special interest with regard to our knowledge of the Early Helladic period were the rescue excavations at Plasi conducted by Euthymios Mastrokostas and the recent exploration of the site of the Olympic Rowing Centre and the Marathon Route by Maria Economakou prior to her untimely death.

In the Roman era, Marathon lived under the aura of Herodes Atticus, Marathonian millionaire and friend of Roman emperors, whose presence is attested by luxurious facilities visible on the plain and in the surrounding hills: the Gate of Concord in Avlona, known of old, the so-called Pythion near the cave of Pan and medieval tower at Oinoe (S. Marinatos, *PAE* 1972, 6-7), and finally the complex of the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods (Andreas Vavritsas 1968, Iphigenia Dekoulakou from 1999) and the baths (Xenia Arapogianni 1988) on the edge of the marsh at Brexiza.

That Marathon has never ceased, above all, to constitute a sacred symbol can be proved by the acerbity of the recent dispute over the Olympic rowing venue at Schinias. Its positive result was the awakening of public interest in the region and the decision by the Ministry of Culture to fund a broad programme to upgrade and unify the sites, to renovate the Museum and to continue explorations at the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods in Brexiza.

MARATHON

A HISTORIC SITE OVER TIME

There are places, usually cities, in which the great history that affects the destiny of peoples and civilisations surrounds us with echoes of the past at every step we take, as part of our daily lives. Elsewhere, as in places like Marathon, history rips through the immobile landscape like a bolt of lightning, changing everything in one unique moment whose memory will illuminate us forever.

Which is not to say that until that day in September of 490 BC, Marathon had lived outside history; quite the contrary. As nowhere else, the leisurely flow of history is perceptible here as an uninterrupted continuum of the human presence. The region provides an opportunity to take a unique voyage into the distant past through a succession of sites scattered over the plain, in the shady ravine of Oinoe, at the edge of the lagoon in Kato Souli, on the estuaries of the river at Plasi and on the edge of the Arnos plain. Here visitors can see opening out before them a rare panorama of prehistory and life in Attica from the historical period up to the Roman Renaissance. Nevertheless, it is the great historic moment of the battle that will lend its lustre to the name of Marathon forever.

THE LANDSCAPE

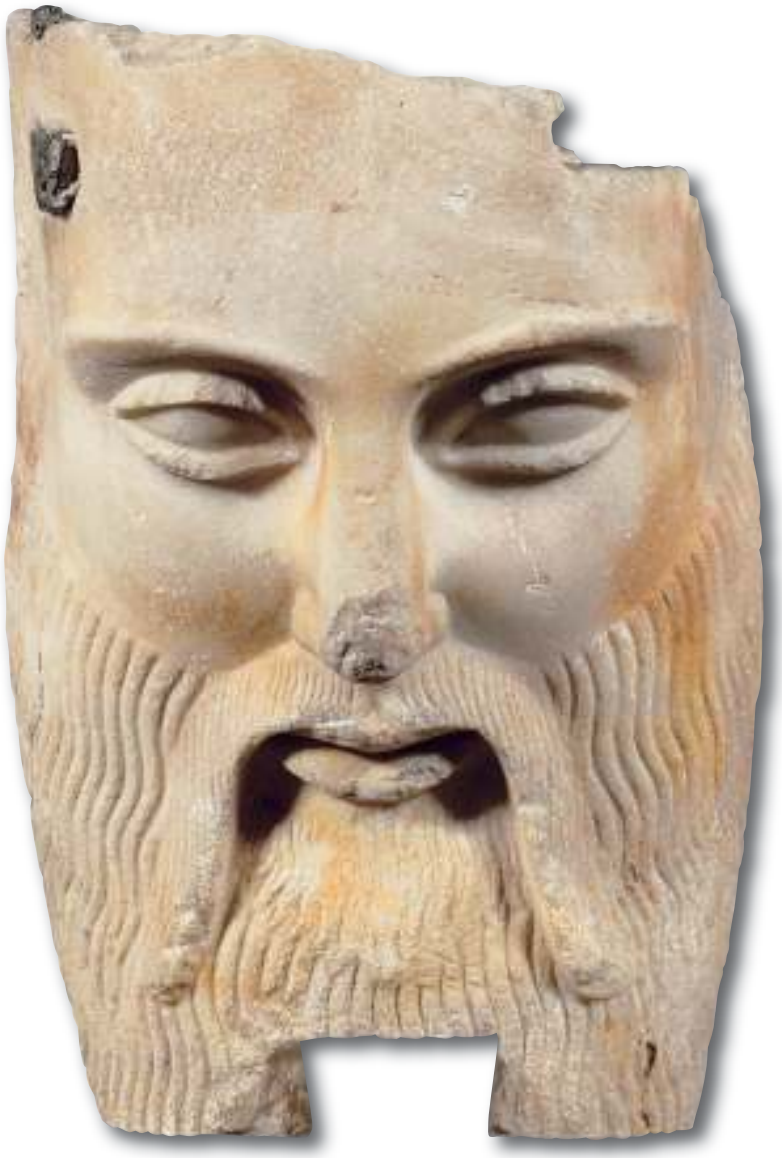
The fate of a place may be determined by its geographical location on this earth, its terrain and the quality of its soil. Its history, however, is freely defined and will always be written by man.

Isolated on the northeast corner of Attica, the valley of Marathon extends between the low but steep eastern foothills of Penteli and Parnitha, whose altitude does not exceed 500 metres: Agrieliki, Aphorismos, Kotroni and Stavrokoraki, with Dragonera to the north and the sea to the east. It is linked to the rest of Attica by today's coastal road to Athens through Pallene and two western passes: the longer road through the Oinoe ravine, from the present village of Marathon to Stamata, and the much shorter but exceptionally

The interior of the restored tholos in the Mycenaean "royal" tomb at Marathon.

The Marathon plain in about 1820. Watercolour by H.W. Willians.

difficult path from Vranas through the Rapentosa ravine to Dionysos. To the north, a third road leads to Rhamnus. To the east, past the sand dune of Schinias, the plain opens out onto the Aegean world, Euboea and the Cyclades. Apart from the arid mountains, the landscape has nothing in common with the other coastal flatlands of Attica, such as the basin in which Athens is located and the Thriasian plain. The mountains here reach down almost to the sea, leaving no more than a strip of fertile land. The waters that inundate it are at once a curse and a blessing for this "fruitful" land (Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, 13.110); they flow, with an abundance unknown in the rest of Attica, through the lush karstic springs of Makaria and Valaria to the foot of the limestone mountains, or overflow from the steams that drain all of northern Attica, carrying mountains of pebbles and soil in their turbulent passage toward the sea and spreading out over the centuries at the expense of the arable land. They are Skorpio Potami that will disappear on the plain, and the Haradros, with the vigour of a bull, as depicted by the bust in Berlin. At the north and south ends of the



Marble mask of a horned river god, probably Haradros, from Marathon. Circa 470 BC. Berlin Museum.

plain, two marshes are thus formed, the large marsh to the north that is fed with fresh water from the Makaria and is separated from the sea by the narrow, pine-clad sand dune of Schinias, and the small marsh of Brexiza to the south. The wild vegetation, reed-beds and forests of aquatic plants, animals, birds and, needless to say, mosquitoes, lend the "charming meadows" of Marathon (Aristophanes, *Birds*. 346) a sub-tropical character foreign to the rest of Attica.

FOLLOWING PAGES: *Marathon: the village and view of the plain. 1810. Engraving.*

PREHISTORY

This land, a minor Mesopotamia that seems to have been spawned by the waters, must have been an ideal place for early farmers to settle who, harried by drought and the lack of land, crossed the sea, bringing with them the magic art of sowing seeds.

"A little beyond the plain is the cave of Pan, a remarkable cave: its entrance is narrow, but inside there are rooms and baths and the so-called 'flock of Pan's goats', which are rocks that many people think resemble goats." (Pausanias, I. 32.7)

Shards from the last period of the Neolithic Age found in the cave of Pan, with panels of the stepped pattern and dotted decoration.

The Neolithic Age

These first settlers moored off the coast of Nea Makri, where the most ancient Neolithic settlement on Attic soil has been discovered, together with beautiful pottery. At Marathon, their traces are still faint: a few huts on the plain and recently (on the occasion of the Olympic works) the foundations of a dwelling were found on the Marathon highway, at the foot of Kotroni hill. At the end of the Neolithic Age, as in other parts of Greece – for reasons unknown to us, probably owing to the arrival of new settlers who were technologically more advanced, like the bearers of the Bronze Age civilisation – the older farmers were pushed out to the edges of the plain, where they sought refuge in caves, including the cave of Pan, at the bottom of the shady verdant ravine of Oinoe, which today starts from the Marathon dam. A small votive inscription from the 1st century BC, erected by three Athenian youths in the clearing in front of the cave, confirms the information provided by Pausanias, the 2nd-cent. AD traveller, about the dedication of a cave to the god from Arcadia who assisted the Athenians in the battle. The inscription reproduces regulations for votive offerings that are pleasing to the god. Today the entrance to the cave is closed to protect the pottery that can still be found on the site, awaiting systematic excavation and exploration. For Pausanias, it was a noteworthy cave with a narrow entrance, many successive chambers, baths (obviously natural basins) and stalactites, in which visitors recognised a flock of goats, as befitting a precinct of Pan. From the cave and its finds, we have a picture of habitation and burials from the Neolithic Age up to the cult of Pan in the Classical era in the first hall of the Museum. Among the artifacts of habitation, stone hoes stand out and wonderfully intact vases with the characteristic coloured, incised or impressed decoration of the Late Neolithic Age. Among the Classical finds, references are not limited to Pan. In addition to the terracotta figurine of the squatting Arcadian god, we will encounter figurines of the Mother of the Gods and lovely scenes on red-figure vases, on which enthroned figures of Apollo and Dionysus can be recognised. The multitudes of Classical and Hellenistic lamps do not appear strange, as they were essential to the visitor.

Stylised marble head of a Neolithic figurine from the excavations of the Marathon route, near Tsepi.

Neolithic clay figurine from the excavations of the Marathon route. Notwithstanding its stylisation, the anatomy of the figure attests to its origin in the sympathetic magic of Neolithic fertility cults.

(PAGES 34-37) *The painted black matt pottery of the Late Neolithic period (5300-4300 BC), fine examples of which have been found in the cave of Pan, is noteworthy because of the variety of soft, inanimate linear decoration (triangles, lozenges and reticulated, zigzag, stepped and fringed patterns), without burnishing or gloss, flanked by clusters of horizontal and diagonal lines.*

On one shard, we can see evidence of the local tradition (known from Nea Makri) on a panel of incised lines.

Fragment of a vase with painted black matt decoration from the Late Neolithic.

Fragment of a vase from the last phase of the Late Neolithic, decorated with broad diagonal, intersecting bands on yellowish slip.

Vase and shards with incised, relief, impressed and fluted decoration from the last phase of the Neolithic. The random arrangement of clusters of parallel lines in various directions and the decoration with relief rope-like lines are characteristic motifs. Cave of Pan.

Another two shards decorated with moulded bands and incisions (on the left in imitation of the rope used to bind vases, and on the right with a hole for hanging) from the Final Neolithic (4300-3200 BC) found in the cave of Pan.

Fruit bowl with a high base. The vase, which was re-assembled from fragments found in a repository in the cemetery of Tsepi, dates to the end of the Neolithic.

This pithoid storage jar, covered by a lid in the shape of a similar jar with incised disks and dotted decoration, concealed a hoard of hundreds of beads, coloured stones and rock crystal, a few stone blades and shellfish. Cave of Pan.

Part of a vase with incised and dotted decoration in panels of the stepped pattern. Final Neolithic.

Pithoid vase with vertical handles from the Final Neolithic and a deep cup (phiale) with banded handles and disk-like lugs. Painted black matt decoration with broad diagonal bands. Late Neolithic.

Jug (prochous) *with strictly structured painted matt black decoration. Horizontal lines highlight the rim, and vertical panels of the stepped pattern articulate the globular body of the vase, leaving most of it undecorated. The starting point of the banded handle on the shoulder of the vase is highlighted by a fringed motif. Late Neolithic.*

Samples of painted black matt, fluted and incised pottery of the Late and Final Neolithic period.

Two shards from the rim and body of a vase with white decoration on a black ground.

The lower part of the same vase with the legs of a rare hollow figurine with dichromatic patterns of reticulated lines, lozenges and zigzags.

The Early Helladic Period

More monuments of the great Bronze Age, which witnessed the building of the town, the smelting of metals and probably the advent of the Hellenes, have been found recently all along the coast of Attica, and even inland (Pallene). Many of them are not visible today, whereas those that have been preserved on the coast of Ayios Kosmas and Cape Askitario near Rafina appear to the visitor like a complicated labyrinth of scanty foundations overgrown with weeds, where it is difficult to distinguish the shape of a dwelling or a road, so that the visitor's contact with that distant age is more of a poetic relationship with a site, beach, plain or hill that was once inhabited.

On the contrary, the Early Helladic settlements on the beach at Schinias, at Plasi and on the Vranas plain give us a more complete picture not only of the manner of habitation, but also the new spirit of the Early Bronze culture. Through the description provided by the monuments of an age that has left no written documents or images, the ideas, traditions and models of the inhabitants take on material form.

On the northern edges of the Great Marsh, as has been shown by recent excavations, habitation was limited to scattered, solitary houses. Two rooms, possibly with a small storeroom, seem to have been the form appropriate for these lakeside dwellings, on which the reinforcement of the foundations indicates the proximity of threatening waters, whose changing levels have left traces in white layers of salt deposits. Their sole furnishing was usually a storage jar, the shape of which retains the memory of the archetypal round shapes of the fruit that it replaced. Most of the settlement, however, was located farther west, and is still lost among the reeds and rushes of the Makaria spring.

Also unexplored is the form of the other two large contemporary settlements, one at Plasi near the estuaries of the Haradros, the other at Tsepi to the west. The wall that seems to have protected the former can be explained by its exposed coastal location. Regarding the latter, we have as yet found no trace of the large settlement to which the Early Helladic cemetery at Tsepi must have belonged. However its lost form, and to some degree the organisation of the society of Tsepi as well, can be recreated through the picture presented by the finds from the large cemetery (at least 65 family graves containing from six to 15 or 20 bodies have been excavated to date). The graves were dug in a row with remarkable regularity and uniformity that can be found only in modern cemeteries. Their form, which is not encountered anywhere else, is reminiscent of megalithic monuments in miniature. They are rectangular pits faced with stone masonry or upright slabs, with an entrance blocked by an upright slab and a threshold, while the elevated exterior floor is demarcated by an enclosure made of a row of stones so regularly placed as to remind one of a scout camp. These morphological features appear to have been established at some point, and were then added to earlier, simpler graves. In the systematic organisation and uniformity of these dwelling-places of the dead, we can see the organisation being repeated in parallel rows of uniform houses, with two or three chambers typical of the known, rationally designed Early Helladic settlements, true precursors of our cities. This tedious repetition, one of the main features of a society with equality, presupposes the existence and acceptance of some general principles of

The sun shining on the newly generated world of the Aegean radiates out from the whirling centre in successive waves to the edge of this Early Cycladic vase.

This bone pigment grater was the sole grave gift in a family tomb with many burials. Owing to the frequent presence in Tsepi of similar objects, sometimes with traces of red pigment (and the marble graters in Cycladic graves), it has been speculated that they were used as toilet articles to colour the face and/or body.

organisation and probably also the presence of a strong central authority that replaced the spontaneous community of the Neolithic village. In this particular form, the liberation of the family unit from the community of the tribe is expressed not by highlighting particular personal or family attributes, but by conformity to generally accepted norms of behaviour.

More about the origin of these new inhabitants of the plain is revealed by the objects they created: their pottery, jewellery, figurines and tools. Through the primitive shapes and rudimentary decoration of the earliest vases, the simple round shapes of their storage jars with the high necks and open bowls on which the texture and colour of the clay are paramount, and the ancient natural models, some continuity can be discerned with the site's Neolithic past. Their island origin is attested by the general affinity with Early Cycladic pottery and the presence of the typical Cycladic shapes (not imported vases), such as the frying-pan vessels, and decorative motifs like the continuous spiral that covers entire surfaces, and finally the famous, highly stylised marble figurines and the jewellery.

These people, too, came from somewhere across the sea, rowing day after day, from island to island, in long narrow boats with a fish or a bird on the prow, as depicted on their vases, to show the way. They moored at Marathon, Rafina and Ayios Kosmas, at Asteria Glyfada and elsewhere, bringing with them

General view of the cemetery at Tsepi.

knowledge from the East about the smelting of copper and the secrets of creating bronze that made it possible to manufacture new, more effective tools and weapons, but also the Cycladic art of working marble, which was destined to rise to unrivalled heights in Attica. At this point, history abandons us again. What happened to that civilisation, how did it evolve, how and when did it collapse, and what succeeded it on the site of Marathon?

Large globular toiletry box (pyxis) *decorated with vertical moulded ribs. Two pierced lugs under the narrow conic neck were used to hang it.*

FOLLOWING PAGES: *Part of the Early Helladic (EH I – beginning of EH II) cemetery at Tsepi, in which the uniform construction and systematic organisation of the graves is visible.*

Three early marble Cycladic figurines. The planar, highly stylised (trapezoidal) torso with a very long neck and no distinguishable head is slightly differentiated in the middle figurine, and especially in the one on the right, where the slope of the shoulders is emphasised, and stumps indicate rudimentary arms.

(PAGE 53) *The later figurine stands out from the previous ones due to the richer outline of the body, the rendering of the buttocks and the (still unnaturally short) legs. The stumps of the arms are more clearly indicated, and the head is now distinguishable from the long neck.*

Frying-pan vessel with incised decoration. Local imitation of a type known from the Cyclades. The use of these vessels is still a matter of speculation. It has been hypothesised that they were of a ritual nature. The centre of the bottom surface is dominated by a Cycladic sun that radiates out to the edge of the vessel in successive concentric radial bands.

On the more complex decorative pattern of the second frying-pan vessel, the rays seem to be diffused through the waves of the Aegean, indicated by the panel with spirals joined by oblique lines.

Two phiale-shaped vessels, probably pyxis lids. ABOVE*: In the centre, as always, the sun is shining, here from within a four-point star. The incision of the design is rough.* BELOW*: the more careful and systematic decoration consists of two concentric lozenges with convex sides rendered with a double incised line flanked by two rows of dots.*

Pithos-shaped two-lug jar and deep basin with two handles.

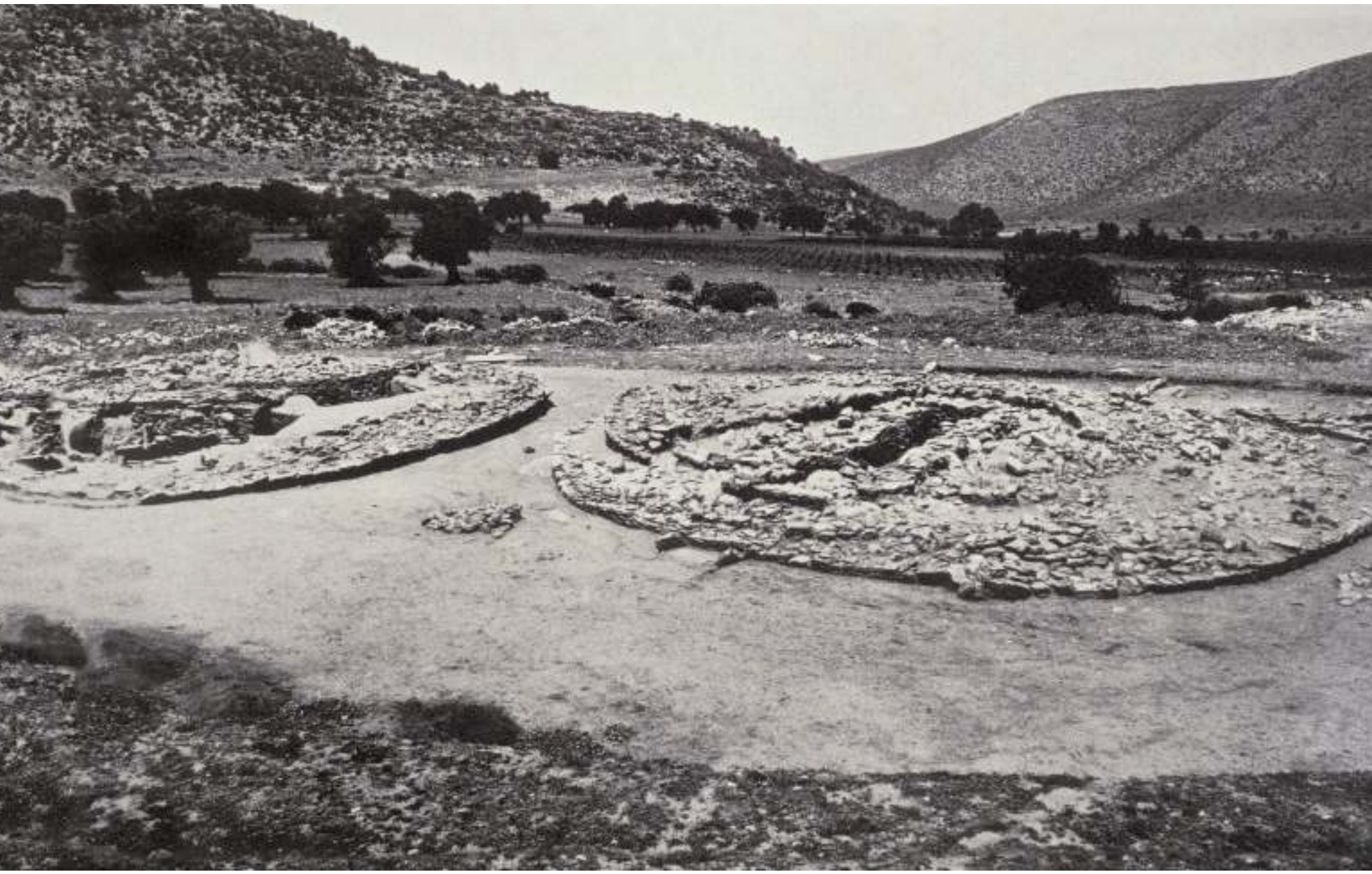
Two views of the lakeside settlement on the northern part of the rowing venue at Schinias. The dwellings consisted of two rooms with adjacent structures. Below we can see the reinforcement of the foundations necessitated by proximity to the marsh.

Small amphora with a conic neck, amphiconic belly and two pairs of cylindrical handles pierced vertically. The feature that differentiates this vase from others of the same type is the decoration that imitates braided models, with clusters of horizontal lines defining the neck and rim, and vertical and oblique incised lines on the body.

Five small amphorae with high cylindrical neck and pairs of pierced handles on the belly, a shape that is frequently encountered in the Early Helladic graves at Tsepi.

A general view of the excavation of the Early Helladic dwellings in the lakeside settlement on the north side of the rowing venue.

ABOVE: *Pithos-shaped jar with a conic neck and amphiconic body. The influence of contemporary metal vessels is obvious both on the body and in the rendering of the burnished black surface with incised decoration.*
BELOW: *The same metallic impression is created by the glossy black surface, moulding of the rim and deep incision at the point where the neck is attached to the body of the vase, with its typical pierced handles.*



This photograph, taken just after the excavation, shows the two large Middle Helladic tumuli at Vranas in their natural setting next to Skorpio Potami, at its exit from the Rapentosa ravine.

The Middle Helladic and Mycenaean Age

We will be able to pick up the lost thread of history through monuments located several kilometres inland, at Vranas, a fertile corner of the plain at the exit of the ravine that descends from Dionysos and is at the same time the end of the road from Oinoe and Stamata. The seven large tumuli (up to 15 metres in diameter) that are lined up along the right bank of the ravine, tell us in their monumental language about the progression from an organised community of early Cycladic colonists to the Middle Helladic society controlled by powerful inland families and to the Mycenaean kingdom.

This progression is illustrated in an exemplary way by the two successive, now roofed tumuli at Vranas, next to the Museum. In the larger and older (2000-1600 BC) of the two, an inner circle encloses the tomb, obviously that of a chieftain, while another seven members of the family were buried within its perimeter. On the contrary, in the more recent one (after 1550 BC), the entire tumulus with its three successive inner enclosures was used to cover just one tomb with a long, uncovered passage leading up to it (*dromos*). It is almost as though, through this succession, we are seeing the concept of central power taking shape before our very eyes as the imposition on the family of a single leader's authority. The pottery, plain in form and decoration, some of which imitates metal vessels, belongs to a different world. It has been assumed that they were a newly arrived people, a warrior nation from the north (wasn't it said that Xuthus, the first mythical king of Marathon, had come from Thessaly?), swarming over the plains with their chariots and destroying the early Bronze Age towns, bearers of a new military social organisation and a dynamic new world theory. The graves, however, were not accompanied, as one might have expected, by the invader's weapons, nor does the skeleton of a horse that was found in a tomb appear to have belonged to one of those first chariots on Greek soil. We can see the features of these new inhabitants being integrated in the Mycenaean era that followed, so named after its largest centre. The hegemonic evolution of the tumuli, which we observed previously under the roof at Vranas, culminated in the neighbouring large tholos tomb of Arnos (with a built, not hewn dome, 7 m. in diameter and 7.20 m high). When we stand at the beginning of the long (25 m.) sloping corridor (*dromos*), with the magnificent gateway that is barely discernible in the semi-darkness, with its enormous monolithic lintel and relieving triangle, we can have no doubt as to a royal presence, perhaps one of the local Mycenaean kings, who – like the inhabitants of the tholos tombs at Thorikos and Acharnes (at Lykotrypa, Menidi) – protected Attica before Theseus' unification of Attic communities was established (1450-1380 BC). Proof of the significance of the war chariot in this new Mediterranean world, which we know from Asia and Egypt, is provided by the sacrifice made at the beginning of the corridor (*dromos*) of two horses from the royal chariot, a custom known from the *Iliad*, but very rare in Greece.

No palace, or any house of the Mycenaean settlement has yet been found. There is, however, no doubt that the Mycenaean heyday of Marathon, attested by the construction and size of the tomb as well as by the gold cup that accompanied the dead man, was due to the organisation of agricultural production under centralised Mycenaean authority. A basic role must have been played here, too, in the tradition of the large eastern kingdoms, including that of Egypt, by the harnessing and exploitation of the waters that flooded the plain, destroying crops and threatening houses. To this great Mycenaean flood-prevention project, which essentially cut the plain in half, belongs the section of a very stout wall 1.5 m. high that was discovered recently at the foot of Koraki hill during the works to extend the Marathon road.

FOLLOWING PAGES: *General view of the roofed tumuli. In the foreground is tumulus I (2000-1600 BC). Around the older inner circle that contains the initial grave (in front) is an outer circle with a row of cist graves between them. In the background is tumulus II dating to the 16th cent. BC.*

*The high-handled wine cup (*kantharos*), well-known vessel of Dionysus, with two banded handles and a high foot, is the characteristic shape of Middle Helladic pottery. There is an obvious imitation of metal models in the crisp outline of the body and shape of the handles and on the surface of the vase.*

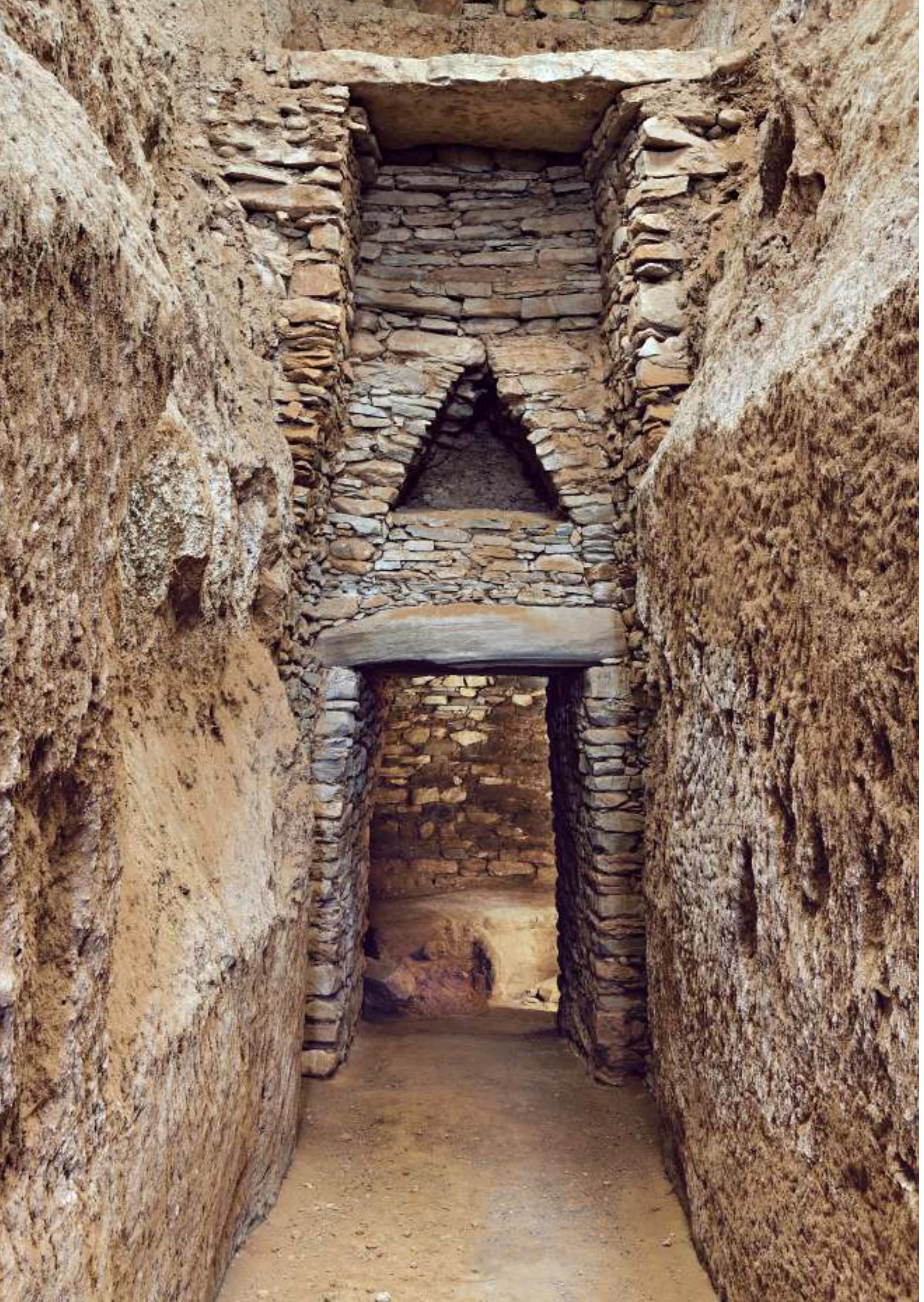
Two examples of kantharoi *with upright handles that start from the rim. Typical of the period is the ash colour of the surface and the horizontal fluting (here in the panel containing the handles under the rim).*

Two large-mouthed amphiconic Middle Helladic vessels. The one above has a high foot, horizontal pierced handles and a lid; the lower one has a moulded rim and vertical banded handles.

Beak-spouted globular jug (prochous) *from the Cyclades, matt painted, decorated with brown and red bands on the neck and the figure of a bird with its wings spread and its head, painted black and red, looking backwards. The scene is demarcated by a double horizontal line below it. The presence of this jug at Plasi proves the on-going relationship of the Middle Helladic inhabitants of Marathon with the Aegean.*

Beak-spouted jug, also from the Cyclades, with faded black decoration of lines and upside down triangles suspended from the shoulder.

Pithoid amphiconic Minyan vase with a basket handle.



*The magnificent entrance to the Mycenaean tholos tomb at Marathon, with its massive monolithic lintel and relieving triangle. In addition to this, only two other tholos tombs have been found in Attica: at Menidi and Thorikos. At the entrance to the tholos tomb, a long, 25-metre sloping corridor (*dromos*) was dug, which was covered over with soil after the burial. In front, at the beginning of the dromos, a trench can be seen in which the remains were buried of two horses that had been sacrificed.*

The gold cup found in one of the inner graves of the tholos tomb proves the wealth and power of the local kings. National Archaeological Museum.

The interior of the tholos tomb, 7 metres in diameter, with the two pit graves covered by large stone slabs. The bones and charcoal that covered the graves prove the continuity of the heroic cult of the leaders.

The burial of the two facing horses, possibly from his own chariot, that accompanied the leader in death, was a custom known from Homer and from the royal tombs of Mesopotamia that survived in Cyprus. The tomb at Marathon is the first example found on Greek territory.

The finds from tumuli II and III at Vranas constitute incontrovertible proof of the continuity from the Middle Helladic (tumulus I) to the Mycenaean period. To this latter period belong the Mycenaean-type arrowheads (of obsidian, pyrite and copper) illustrated on the opposite page that date to about the mid-16th cent. BC. The steatite conic spindle whorls and bronze objects from tumulus III are dated slightly later.

Mythological Marathon

In the imagination of subsequent generations, these brilliant kings were metamorphosed into heroes, and their burial site into a place of worship. A thick layer of bones and charcoal covered the two pit graves testifying to the sacrifices – offerings to the *manes*, deified souls of dead ancestors – that continued for many years inside the large tholos tomb.

The memory of these major works has survived even longer in myth. Whether reference is to the draining of lakes such as at Lerna, Stymphalos and Copais, or to harnessing the rushing Alpheus or Achelous rivers, these Mycenaean engineering achievements are everywhere associated with the name of Heracles. The particularly close relationship of this Panhellenic hero with Marathon is demonstrated by the monuments to his presence in every corner of this land. One of the main sanctuaries in the deme was that of Heracles, called the Heracleion. The hero's children, pursued by Eurystheus in his anger, sought refuge here as suppliants of Theseus; while the Makaria spring is associated with the sacrifice of his daughter of the same name, and with the end of Eurystheus, whose head Iolaus buried beside the spring, under the road (Strabo). In this way, his myth was linked to that of the local hero, Theseus, the Attic hero who would eventually destroy the terrible wild bull of Marathon, personification of the fierce onrush of the river Haradros which, with great force, flooded a large area of the plain, an exploit whose historicity was recently confirmed by the discovery of the Mycenaean dam.

The Classical Tetrapolis

The tradition of civil-religious unity in Xuthus' Mycenaean kingdom (Strabo, 8.7.1) survived in the Marathon *Tetrapolis* (four-city) structure, the four classical villages of Probalinthus, Marathon, Tricorynthus and Oinoe that shared the plain, south of the boundary of Nea Makri, where Probalinthos was located, up to Kato Souli (ancient Tricorynthus) on its northern edge. The Tetrapolis, as we know from inscriptions, had two common sanctuaries that have been identified archaeologically, that of Heracles on the border between the demes of Marathon and Probalinthus (we will see this later, as Herodotus associates its location with the Greek camp) and that of Dionysus in the middle of the plain, near Plasi. A fragmentary glance at the religious life of the Tetrapolis has been provided by some scattered inscriptions that came from these or other, unknown sanctuaries, from the boundary stone of the sanctuary of Athena and from the cave of Pan at Oinoe. From the mountainous hinterlands near Stamata, probably from the sanctuary of Zeus Ecalesius (Plutarch, *Life of Theseus*. 14) came an inscription (*IG* II^2 1358), now lost, with a record of the sacrifices in the sanctuaries of the four demes.

Of the ancient names of the demes, together with that of Marathon, the name of Oinoe has been retained in the present-day name of Nonoi, while light is shed (not pleasantly) on the site of Tricorynthus by information regarding the local mosquitoes, which to this day annoy the people living around the large swamp. One section of a road in this latter deme has been preserved, together with the adjacent cemetery and a farmhouse that were excavated during the construction works on the Olympic Rowing Centre beside the road to Souli. Pinpointing the deme of Marathon has nevertheless been a major issue that has preoccupied historians and archaeologists alike, owing primarily to its significance in the description of the battle. It has been sought frequently but in vain; some people look for it in Plasi, on the site of the Early Helladic

Archaic black-figure cup (kylix) *depicting Heracles wrestling with the lion of Nemea. The scene, as was customary in vase painting at that time, is enacted under a grapevine, on which the hero has rested his cloak and club. To the right and left are two of his friends (500-480* BC*).*

Two inscriptions from the deme of Marathon. LEFT: *the base of a votive herm dedicated by six youths in an unknown sanctuary (Heracleion), related to athletic contests. 4th cent.* BC *from Plasi.* RIGHT: *Boundary-marker of the shrine of Athena (*ΗΟΡΟΣ ΤΕΜΕΝΟΣ ΑΘΗΝΑΑΣ*), found near the Museum to the southeast.*

settlement located on the coast, near the mouth of the Haradros ravine, and others in Vranas, both sites on which the concentration of cemeteries (Geometric and Classical) appears to presuppose some corresponding habitation density. It is highly probable that the deme of Marathon, like most Attic demes, to the degree that recent excavations have shed some light on their residential organisation, did not have the same cohesive image as today's villages: they were composed of farmlands dispersed over the plain, which might here and there have been grouped into a small settlement consisting of a few houses, perhaps of related families. But more than the houses, which are rarely found, these residential cores are indicated by family grave enclosures, which in the Classical era rarely constituted organised cemeteries. The bonds of the society were kept alive not so much by daily co-existence in the village, as by the citizens' meetings at feasts and festivals in the sanctuaries and in the centre of a deme, where there would be two or three buildings, perhaps also a makeshift wooden theatre and a vacant lot used as a gymnasium, all of which would have been around or near an unlandscaped square. People lived "in the fields", near their land, and the settlement was thus scattered over the entire area of the plain, up to the deme borders, with a radius of 3 or 4 km, which citizens could easily travel on the days specified for their meeting.

On the inscription carved on the base of an Archaic gravestone, it is not the dead man, but the monument speaking "I am the marker of …" (the name is illegible).

THE HISTORIC MOMENT

Never, in the quiet routine of their agrarian life, could the inhabitants of these four villages that shared the seaside plain in this isolated corner of Attica – cultivating the land they had toiled to claim from the wild, and with the constant threat of torrents roaring down from the surrounding mountains flooding the land every so often and forming vast wetlands along the coast – have imagined that one day, towards the end of summer, at the beginning of the year of the Archon Phaenippus (for us, 490 years before the birth of Christ), they would suddenly pass into history as a symbol of the eternal clash of the humanitarian spirit and freedom with tyranny.

The historic moment had long been in the preparation stage in the workshops of time: since the day when the great Median and Persian kings reached the east coast of the Aegean and succeeded in subjugating the proud cities of Ionia, in defiance of the angry inability of their kindred on the west coast to help them. Thus was the great 5th century to begin, with the inevitable clash between two great nations and two great civilisations that were both at the peak of their power: a clash that was destined, more than any other single event, to determine the course of world history. On the one side was the vast Persian Empire, heir to the thousand-year tradition of world domination by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, which had reached the culmination of its power in the kingdom of Darius, having surpassed every precedent in terms of both range and organisation. It was an alliance of the ancient peoples of the East, disparate tribes and nations from a large part of the world, with the greatest economic power and the most fearsome military machine the world had ever seen, under the despotic governance of the Great King. Against it, fragmented into viciously in-fighting cities, was little Greece which, while apparently unprepared for such a conflict, was nevertheless imbued with an unprecedented sense of freedom, for which the unrelenting war between its cities was no more than an expression of its militant spirit, another form of competition in games, that kept them internally united and in a state of constant preparedness. Their real weapon was the power of the citizens' free spirit, which had acquired a specific form in the Assembly of the people (*Boule*) and in the phalanx, against which the barbarian multitudes would soon prove to be powerless.

At the turn of the century, 500 BC, the clouds of war were gathering over Greece, and a Persian offensive looked inevitable. The Great King, who beyond his own borders knew only subjugated peoples, could

"The Frieze of the Archers" from the palace at Persepolis. Late 6th cent. BC. Louvre Museum.

A daric (gold stater) from Darius' rule, late 6th/early 5th cent. BC). Numismatic Museum. The Greeks gave the name of dareikos *(daric) to the famous Persian gold stater (8 gr.), which Darius minted first in 515 BC to replace the coinage of Croesus, 30 years after the conquest of Lydia. The daric, minted in enormous quantities, was for centuries the main currency used in the East.*

not tolerate this hotbed of unrest and dispute of the empire's authority on its western frontiers. The Persians had taken their first steps on the continent of Europe in 516 BC in the campaign against the Scythians to extend their rule to Thrace and Macedonia. The event that sparked the invasion of the Greek cities on the west coast of the Aegean was the uprising of the Ionians on its east coast during the immediately preceding years from 499 to 493 BC.

For Darius, this campaign was in some way essential to his prestige, to make an example of the Ionians, as an epilogue to their revolution, and closing the circle that had been opened by Miltiades' attempt to incite the Ionians during the Scythian campaign and by the burning of Sardis in the Ionian uprising. A slave would remind him of it at every meal with the phrase: "Lord, remember the Athenians." Its specific objective was to punish the cities that helped the insurgents and to secure Ionia from future Greek interference by installing pro-Persian regimes in Eretria and especially in Athens. Thus it was a mission to punish Athens and Eretria, but also to frighten Sparta, which at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, was to accuse Athens of having brought the Persians to Greece at Marathon.

What was Athens for Darius, and what was Sparta, even with its formidable military reputation? A few troublemakers among a clutch of cities on the other coast of the Aegean who were constantly squabbling among themselves, incapable of joining forces and therefore easy prey. On the other hand, however, at a difficult moment, they could be dangerous. So it is not strange that to a large degree, his plan was based on exploiting the internal discord in Eretria and Athens and the known rivalry among Greek cities.

On the obverse of the daric, the Great King is depicted bearded, wearing the Persian crown and a long tunic, hastening to the right, and holding a bow and spear. The reverse is concave with an indiscernible figure.

FOLLOWING PAGES: *Site of the Persian landing on the sandy beach at Schinias, at the north end of the Marathon coast. Photograph by D. Harissiadis, 1960.*

The Landing

Things worked out in such a way that – thousands of years after that first, peaceful landing by the peoples who brought the Neolithic revolution with them – a new wave of people from the East arrived, this time to wash up hundreds of would-be conquerors' ships on the shore. They came, having conquered the Cyclades and Euboea. In their blind arrogance, certain of victory, they brought with them an enormous block of marble which was intended, according to tradition, for the trophy to commemorate the victory they anticipated against the Athenians. This marble was eventually used for a statue of Nemesis, goddess of righteous anger, whom they met on the coast of Marathon.

The army was accompanied by Hippias, son of Peisistratos, who was preparing himself to be reinstated as tyrant of Athens. This may have been the reason for choosing to land on this corner of Attica. The site offered the Persian forces ideal conditions for landing and establishing a Persian bridgehead in Attica, before advancing on Athens. It was an exceptionally propitious geographical location, near Eretria and near the Persians' supply depot, a long, level coast, protected from the north winds and, above all, an unguarded shore that could offer safe anchorage for a large number of ships. It was likewise a fertile, flat plain, with abundant water and fruit, a most appropriate place on which to maintain a large heavy infantry force and to deploy the Persian cavalry, which thanks to the unbroken succession of foothills with steep cliffs that surrounded it, offered the necessary natural fortification, and finally, as Hippias believed, the probable advantage of a favourably disposed population. As a young man, he had proposed the same strategy to his father to restore the tyranny (Herodotus, 1.61-64), a strategy that was applied successfully at the battle of Pallene. As tyrant of Athens himself, he had faced Anchimolius and the Spartans at Phaleron in 511 BC (Herodotus, 5.63) with the help of the Thessalian cavalry, and he knew how risky it was to land in the Athens basin. Now an old man in his 80s, he was tormented in his dreams by nostalgia for his homeland, by the conviction that he would find support from the old-time party of the Peisistratids – his grandson, Hipparchos, son of Harmos, was archon in 496-495 BC – but at the same time, through intuition, even though he was already standing on the soil of Marathon, he felt this venture would not succeed. Deep down, he must have realised how times had changed, and that he was no longer the right person to arouse his old followers and lead the foreigners to victory. Perhaps he had learned that among the hoplites who had hastened to Marathon was his grandson, the last of the Peisistratids. What else could his bitter comment have meant, as he searched desperately for his lost tooth in the sand of Schinias? "He groaned, as he could not find the tooth", Herodotus (6.107) relates, "and said to those around him. This land is not ours, nor will we be able to conquer it. Whatever of it belongs to me has been claimed by my tooth."

The situation in Athens at that time was anything but pleasant. Strife was rampant between the factions struggling to seize power and to chart the future of the new republic. On one side was the party of the Philaids who rallied the class of hoplites led by Miltiades, former tyrant of Chersonese, who was for this reason treated with suspicion by the Athenians; but he knew about Persian affairs and was a firm advocate of facing the Persians directly and of reconciliation with Sparta. On the other side was Cleisthenes' party, the Alcmaeonids, who after playing a leading part in ousting the tyrants and founding the republic, were prepared to collaborate with anyone to defend it, and finally those who, like Themistocles, already envisioned a different Athens, a naval power, relying on its large number of *thetes*, citizens of the fourth class who were mainly employed as light infantry or seamen. And all this, at a time when, with each passing day, the horizon was growing darker with omens of the storm approaching from the east: the marshalling of the Persian fleet in Cilicia, its course across the Aegean, the conquest of Naxos, the old-time master of the sea, the sub-

jugation of Paros, the surrender of Carystus, the desperate defence by its ally Eretria and the rumours of their predicted fate at the hands of the Persians (the terrible combing of Eretrian land and the mass displacement of its population). The spectre of annihilation loomed over what was still, in essence, the unwalled city of Athens, while opposite it could be discerned, still threatening despite its recent humiliation, the shade of the ever vacillating island of Aegina.

It is curious how little we know about this famous clash between Greeks and Persians, the first on Greek soil, and at the same time the first amphibious operation in history, about the strategic goals of the invaders, the size of their forces in terms of ships, warriors and horses, the topography of the battle (from the place of landing and encampment to that of the fighting), but also about the adversaries' tactics before, during and after the battle. Our only source, Herodotus, confines himself to a brief narration of its main episodes based, it would appear, not on sources or on a study of the site but on the memories of veterans whom he met and on information that he gathered from contemporaries. The person on the spot, however, is not the best possible witness in such cases. Through his narrative and the viewpoint of those who lived the events, the general climate and atmosphere can be captured, but not the actual succession of events, much less their cohesion and causes. There are no replies to the historian's questions, nor even the inspiration sought by the poet. At Herodotus' Marathon, we will find none of the accuracy characteristic of his own description of the battle of Plataea or of Thucydides' description of the Peloponnesian War, but neither will we find the poetry that keeps Aeschylus' lines about Salamis alive in our memory. As summarised by W. Gomme's now renowned phrase, "Everyone knows that Herodotus' narrative of Marathon will not do." The objective representation of events is further obscured by the subsequent fame that inspired the rhetorical (Demosthenes, Isocrates) or poetic references to the battle and the site, the epigrams of Simonides and Aeschylus and the comedies of Aristophanes, as well as the sparse, often ill-considered information gathered by later authors such as Cornelius Nepos, Plutarch and Pausanias the traveller. Significant assistance in understanding the unfolding of the battle – to the extent that the various attempts to identify the sites do not increase confusion – is provided by the shape of the plain and the topography of the monuments associated with the battle, such as the tumulus of the Athenians, which we assume to have marked the centre of the battle, the sanctuary of Heracles, which Herodotus mentions as the site of the Greek encampment, the Trophy, where the destruction of the enemy was concluded, and finally by the deme of Marathon and the roads to Athens. This uncertainty is confirmed by the great multitude of theories that scholars try to reconcile in lectures, articles and books, interpreting or rejecting the available evidence so as to formulate a coherent description of what happened then.

How large was the Persian force that invaded Attica? At what point on the endless beach did the Persian army land? As is the case with every mythical battle, reported magnitudes exceed the narrow scope of common sense, and information suffers from inevitable exaggerations. If Herodotus, who was closest to the events, conveys what the Athenian hoplite saw, regarding a "huge well-equipped land army" (6.95), Athenian propaganda, in an effort to inflate the significance of the battle and the glory of the Athenians, soon raised the count to tens of thousands of warriors. In a variation of the known epigram of Simonides, Lycurgus refers to 90,000 men, and later, since Marathon had by then passed into the realm of myth, we find Cornelius Nepos reporting 210,000 men, and Justin 600,000. More down-to-earth, modern scholars usually calculate the Persian army at about 25,000: Hammond at 25-30,000, Wallinga at 40,000, with Doenges pitching his estimate lower, reckoning it at no more than 12-15,000. The cavalry must not have exceeded 200 (Doenges) or at most 1,000 (Hammond).

The reasons for imposing restrictions on the Persian forces are related to both the amphibious nature of the Persian expedition and battle tactics. The transportation alone of an army larger than 25,000 men

The head in the Acropolis Museum, which in all likelihood portrays the features of Miltiades, probably belonged to a Roman copy of the votive offering of the Athenians at Delphi. To the same group have been attributed copies of the heads of Athena (in the same Museum) and Apollo.

would have required an enormous number of ships, much larger than the already exaggerated number (conventional, since the same is said of Salamis) of 600 ships quoted by Herodotus. It is known that the deck of a trireme could carry, at most, 40 armed men, and that of a troopship 70; transporting horses would have required many more ships. On the other hand, in the event of such a large arithmetical difference, i.e. with the Persian army two or three times larger than that of the Athenians, the battle would not have been possible in the form described, as it would have inevitably led to the Athenians being overrun and surrounded.

It is likewise unknown at what point on the long Marathon beach the Persian army landed. There are many who hypothesise that this point was today's coast at Schinias, a long narrow pine-clad sand dune, a kind of islet that closed the Great Marsh (a lake or lagoon in antiquity) that occupied the entire northeast edge of the Marathon plain, as it does today. The natural fortification provided by the marsh and the narrow inland pass have been put forward as an argument for this theory, which ignores the respective difficulties of camping and deploying such a large army and the danger of it being strangled in the event of a mass retreat. For the same, purely defensive reason, it is hypothesised that Datis established his camp on the enclosed plain of Tricorynthus (Lower Souli) which is located at the opposite, north/northwest end of the marsh, a theory based on information provided by Pausanias (1:32.6) regarding hypothetical traces of the stone troughs of Artaphernes' cavalry and of his tent (probably an ancient quarry), that were being shown to travellers in his day. In addition to the protection of the mountains, the site likewise offered a water supply (the Makaria spring) and secure communication with Boeotia. In both cases, it is supposed that the Persians' main concern was not, as would have been appropriate for a large invasion army, to capture the most strategic position as soon as possible in order to control the plain and the road to Athens, but rather to entrench themselves in a distant (6 km. from the target), protected, not to say isolated, defensive position between the mountain and the marshes, from which they would conduct sorties like commandos, burning (for what reason?) the farms around Oinoe and Marathon, while communication with the camp at Schinias on the other side of the lagoon and with their ships would only have been possible, as appears from the map, across the lake. Irrespective of Datis' initial encampment, the rest of the story leaves no doubt but that the Persian camp was finally set up west of the Haradros ravine, in the region of Mesosporitisa between the ravine and the marsh. The ships were kept ready to sail, behind the Persian lines, i.e. near the site of the landing that started from Schinias and extended along the Marathon beach to the mouth of the Haradros.

The Reaction of the Athenians

The Greeks were aware of the Persian threat, as pointed out above, if not as early as the surrender of Naxos, certainly by the conquest of Carystus and the siege of Eretria.

The Athenians could not have remained unperturbed by the threat that was already at their allies' gate. Their momentary panic and the stance of those Athenians who argued in favour of defence inside the walls can be explained by the exaggerated information put out by the "fifth column" of traitors and "defeatists" as to the overwhelming military superiority of the Persians and the inevitability of disaster, as well as the possibility of a landing at Phaleron (was it not said that this was the initial aim of the Persians?) where the Persian army, with the support of the cavalry, would have confronted the Athenian forces on an open field.

At that moment, the role played by Miltiades was decisive. He may have suspected that Datis, too, had every reason to avoid an engagement which, like any landing in sight of the enemy, ran a serious risk of total rout. With the vote passed by the Assembly of the deme, whose members were terrorised by rumours, it was decided to preclude any idea of surrender and for everyone to rally together to save Eretria, starting with the 4,000 Athenians who held lots in Chalcis. A general mobilisation was ordered, from which not even slaves were exempted and who were indeed liberated to this end. No dates are mentioned. But it must have been the sixth day of the month of Boedromion, the feast of Artemis Agrotera, when the news arrived of the siege of Eretria and the decision was made to fight. The day was recalled in the years to come by Miltiades' – or perhaps Callimachus' – solemn vow to make an annual sacrifice to the goddess of one goat for every dead Persian. The Athenians would already have been mustered, and might even have set out for the beleaguered city, when on the 8th of the month, the news of the Persian landing fell like a thunderbolt, obliging them to turn with all their forces towards Marathon, where the salvation of their own city of Athens was at stake. In an effort to justify abandoning the allies, Herodotus speaks at this point of

Part of the late 6th cent. BC inscription referring to the lawmaking work of Cleisthenes, probably to his organisation of the courts. The backof the slab was used 20 years later (see page 97, below) to inscribe regulations for the Heracleia Games at Marathon.

ABOVE: *base of a votive offering to Heracles dedicated by a winner of the Heracleia Empylia games that were established after the Battle of Marathon, to which Pindar refers repeatedly. This is one of the two inscriptions on which the decisive positioning of this famous sanctuary, together with the Athenian camp, was based. Mid 5th cent.* BC. *The second* (BELOW), *which dates to the decade after the victory (490-480* BC*), concerns the organisation of the games, and specifically the election of thirty citizens (three from each clan, not less than 30 years old) to judge the games.*

the Athenian lot-holders of Chalcis who, when the siege began, had hastened to Eretria and proceeded immediately afterwards to Oropos, disheartened, he says, by the climate prevailing in the besieged city, and by the fear of being cut off by the Persian fleet. With the attack expected but before the site of the Persian landing was known, the Athenians had called upon their allies the Plataeans for help, and the courier Pheidippides, a professional messenger, left for Sparta bearing a request for help. He must have arrived the next day, on the 9th of the month, having travelled (as Herodotus says) 250 km in one day, an incredible feat. He would have told the ephors (perhaps even before the city fell) the dramatic story of the sufferings of Eretria and appealed to them not to tolerate the subjugation of the ancient Greek city of Athens to the Persians. The Spartans decided to send help, but not before the full moon, as religious custom dictated (only Plato preserved the excuse that they were prevented by the revolution of the Messenian helots). Their sincerity, which has only been disputed by a few isolated scholars, is proved by their prompt arrival immediately after the full moon.

The Athenians may have had to face the terrible enemy alone, but it is upon this fact precisely that the morrow's glory and the city's future status as leader of Greece would rest. What they must all have realised then, as a harbinger of the future greatness of the city, was that when the time came to fight the invader, they were all united. Everybody was there. In this mythical army we will see rallied together, fighting side by side in the spirit and among the ranks of the infantry phalanx, all those famous men who built the political, material and cultural greatness of Athens: Themistocles, Aristeides and Aeschylus, as well as the last descendant of the Peisistratids. This was the message sent by Marathon to Greece, Persia and the future. In comparison, the technical aspect of the battle is of secondary significance. Therefore it is possible that Herodotus' outline (6, 111-114), in contrast to his detailed description of the battle of Plataea, may be due not to the historian's disdainful indifference but precisely the opposite, to his recognition of the primarily symbolic value of the event.

How many men set out and what course did they follow to get to Marathon? Although conventional, since it obviously just reproduces the nominal force of 1,000 men per tribe, subtracting the reserves necessary to protect the city, the number of 9,000 is probably not far from the truth. Regarding their route, there are not a few who argue that the Athenians selected, perhaps necessarily if the news reached them after they had set out, not the longer route (28 miles) over the level coastal road through Pallene and Nea Makri, but the shorter one (25 miles) through mountainous terrain from Dionysos to the mouth of the Rapentosa ravine at Vranas, a road that may have been uneven, especially in the pass over Penteli (Rapentosa ravine), but this would not have been a hindrance to Athenian hoplites. The reconstruction of the Athenians' route is important to us only to the degree that we would regard it, as many historians do, as decisive in determining the eventual site of their camp, and the deployment of the adversary ranks in the battle, and even in identifying the tumuli. The Vranas valley in which the mountain road ended not only afforded all the possible advantages of an ideal camp site, such as water supply, the possibility of securing a supply route from the hinterlands of Attica, and above all the natural fortification provided on the north and south by two mountains (Agrieliki and Tsepi) on the flanks of the Athenian army, but also because it fits Pindar's description of the site of the Heracleion "at the inlet of Marathon" as does no other. However, the past identification of the sanctuary of Heracles – where according to Herodotus, the Greeks camped – with some sparse ruins (at the chapel of St Demetrius) has now been abandoned, following the discovery on the Valaria site on the northern edge of the Brexisa Small Marsh, of two 5th cent. BC inscriptions referring to the cult of Heracles. The possible reference in one of the inscriptions to the contest dedicated to Heracles Empylius, a name that suits the narrow southern entrance to the plain between Mt Agrieliki and the sea, seems to be linked to the particular strategic importance of this new site. The establishment of the Athenian camp there, if it is

View of the Vranas region, at the exit of the Avlona roads from Oinoe and the Rapentosa ravine and from Dionysos.

valid, shows the concern of the Athenians to protect the narrow passage between Agrieliki and the sea, the only route providing access to Athens through Pallene that would be passable by the Persian army. Starting from there, the Athenian ranks must however have also covered the Vranas valley through which the 1,000 Plataeans, the Athenians' faithful Boeotian allies, shortly descended to join forces with them.

Things become even more difficult for the historian as the crucial moment of battle approaches and many questions arise that Herodotus leaves unanswered.

Awaiting the Battle

First of all is the chronological order of events, or what we would call the timing of the operations. One central point was the inexplicable, tension-filled week that elapsed between the arrival of the Athenians on the 8th or 9th of Boedromion, and the battle on the 16th of the same month: a nerve-wracking eight days of waiting, when neither of the adversaries, each one closed in his naturally fortified camp, appears to have wanted to take the first step.

The Athenians, who believed that time was on their side, were in no hurry, watching events unfold from the sidelines. Camped on their own land and having secured their supply lines from the hinterlands, they could wait patiently for the full moon that would bring the Spartans, with Miltiades justifying this tactic as he awaited his turn in command.

The waiting stance adopted by the Persians, on the contrary, appears to be less justifiable and more suspicious. Datis' inexplicable week-long inactivity, under the increasing pressure on his men's morale that was created by the prolonged wait on foreign soil, is one of the points still obscure, which Herodotus' narrative, and obviously the testimony of the Marathon fighters on which it was based, has left unexplained, and as a result, much deliberated gaps. If the ultimate target of the landing was Athens, nobody can understand what power – or weakness – kept the Persian general immobilised on the edge of the field, between the marsh and the sea, waiting to attack until all the area's reserves had been depleted and the Spartans had arrived. This irrational tactic cannot be attributed either to fear of the Athenians or to the inability to take advantage of their supposedly strong position on the field, between the sea and Agrieliki, or at the foot of the latter hill. Had the latter been the case, he would have retreated. Nor can this delay be justified by the hope that public opinion would change in Athens or in the Athenian army. The usual explanation, which associates the delay with conditions in the city and the expectation that the newly constituted democracy would be overthrown with the help of its internal enemies, would have been meaningful only in the event of Miltiades' military failure. On the contrary, it was certain that the delay favoured the Athenian commander exclusively, who, having secured the road to Athens, could afford to wait for the arrival of the Spartan reinforcements.

Of particular interest is a hypothesis formulated in the past by Munro in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, according to which the underlying reason for Datis' waiting stance and the simultaneous goal of his strategy, which Miltiades must

It is characteristic of the spirit of the Cleisthenes reforms that not one gravestone of the generation that fought against the Medes has been preserved. That of Aristion from Velanideza dated 520-510 BC, a modern copy of which adorned the tumulus of the Athenians for many years, renders the figure of a man holding the weaponry of a Marathon fighter, but it is still lightened by the cheerful expression of the late Archaic period.

soon have suspected or even been certain of, was to immobilise the Athenian forces on a corner of Attica until the fall of Eretria. Marathon was not, therefore, a bridgehead or a trap, but a chess move. It presupposed the division of the Persian army, a large part of which and virtually all the cavalry, remained in Eretria to wind up their tasks there, while the entire Athenian army would be stuck at the edge of Attica, waiting passively for the fall of the allied city and for the Persian army to be reunited and to launch a general offensive at Phaleron. Any further movement by Miltiades would have left the road to Athens open, while retreat would have constituted an indication of weakness and paved the way for betrayal. This theory explains many of the gaps that have been left unexplained by the usual reconstructions of events: Datis' long wait, as well as Miltiades' abrupt decision to act – on the very day, the 12th of the month, when the message arrived that Eretria had fallen – in which case he sought, with the support of the supreme military commander Callimachus, and, after what appears to have been a fierce dispute, received the consent of the other commanders to assigning him command of the operations, irrespective of whether or not it was his turn. Four more days were spent waiting, watching the Persians' moves and hoping that the new moon would appear soon, presaging the arrival of the famed Spartan army. It was, coincidentally, the day of Miltiades' regular turn in the command post, the 16th of Boedromion (the previous time it had coincided characteristically with the beginning of the siege of Eretria, on the 6th of the month) when the news arrived. Artaphernes, having completed the suppression of Eretria by systematically combing the countryside in search of prisoners as described by Plato (*Menexenus* 240 a-214 c, *Laws* 698 b-d), weighed anchor to join Datis, with Phaleron as their final objective.

The time had come to confront the Persian army at Marathon. No further delay was permissible. The decision had nothing to do with Miltiades' official turn in office, as is sometimes argued. This was a formal reason that could not have preoccupied the mind of a commander. A decisive role in making this decision was played (as we are informed by the famous entry from the *Suda Lexicon*, "without horses") by the news supplied by Datis' Ionian soldiers, who climbed the trees and observed that, on that day, the cavalry had withdrawn and was somewhere else. The absence, at the crucial moment, of the renowned Persian cavalry, regarding whose marshalling and transportation Herodotus had much to say, and which had played such a significant role in the selection of Marathon, continues to be a puzzle. There is no point trying to make sense of the strange explanations – each one more ridiculous than the other – that have been put forward from time to time, such as that the grooms who had led the horses to pasture were deceived (that particular night) by the absence of a moon, and forgot to return in time, or that, owing to lack of communication between the infantry and cavalry commands, the cavalry had (without explaining how it had crossed the Greek lines) taken control of the coastal road to Athens. These are wild speculations that ignore the presence of a commander with Datis' stature. The fact is that the only cavalry present in the battle was confined to the ghosts of horses reported by Pausanias.

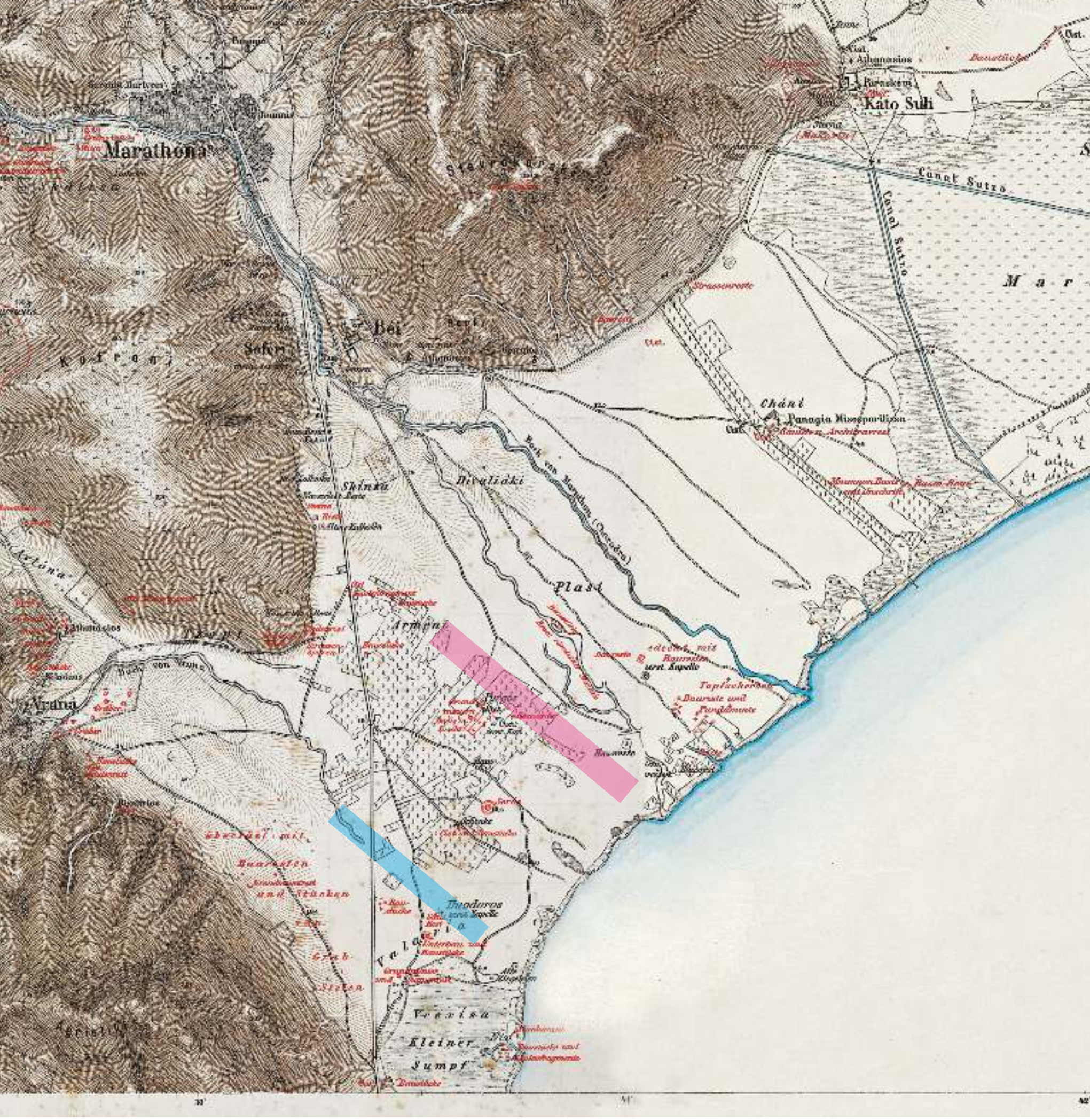
For Miltiades, however, the absence of the cavalry did not mean dissolution of the enemy array, or even removal of the threat that his flanks would be assaulted, thus facilitating the Persian attack. It was a sign that the Persians had already begun boarding their ships and that if he wanted to avoid the Persian army being reunited, he could no longer postpone his attack. Thus, on that morning of the 16th Boedromion, when the Persians descended as usual and deployed themselves on the plain south of the Haradros ravine, something had changed. Standing opposite them were the Greeks, lined up in battle array, ready to fight.

The Clash

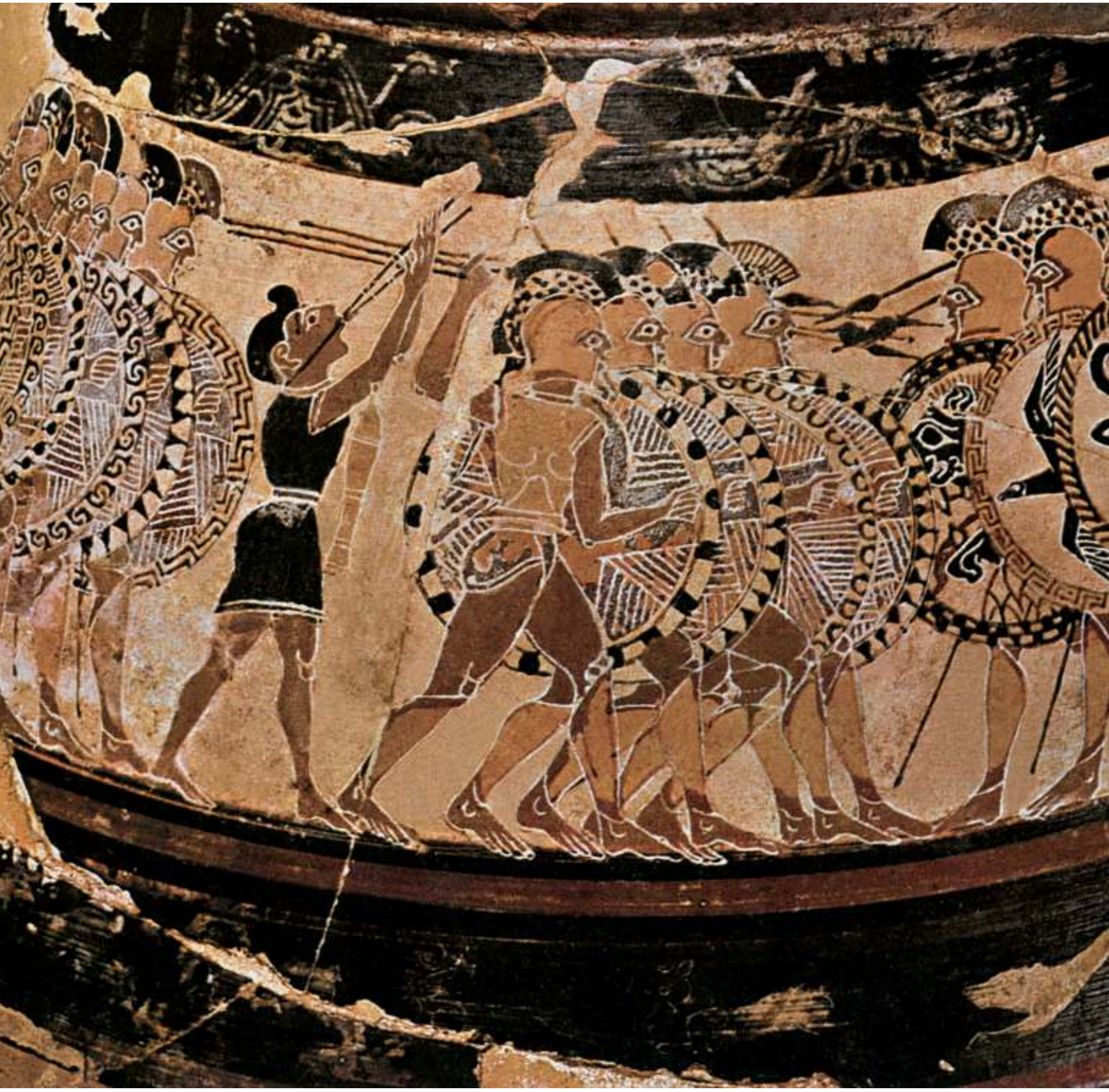
You stand in the middle of the plain and try, using shreds of information and your reason – which was not necessarily the reasoning of those who lived and created the events – to reconstruct the story of the battle: its array, the first moves, the tactics of the adversaries and its course. Starting with the scene of the clash, there has been to date not a single person, even among those who disputed the identity of the famous tumulus (see recently A. Mersch, *Klio*, 77, 1995, pp 55-64) who has not agreed that the action took place at some point on the plain, between Valaria, Vranas and Plasi south of the Haradros, where the *Soros* (tumulus of the Athenians) now stands. Differences are essentially related to how the ranks were deployed and – as noted earlier – depend on whether the site of the Heracleion was at Valaria or Vranas. Based on an older hypothesis formulated by Leake and by commentators on Herodotus (How & Wells and Macan), which still has many supporters (Pritchett, Hammond), the adversaries were deployed in two lines parallel to the coast. According to this view, the Athenians occupied the Vranas entrance that controls the pass to Athens between Rapentosa and Stamata, but leaves the road to Pallene open. The army was drawn up between Kotroni and Agrieliki, so that the mountains would cover its flanks. The Persians were facing them in front of the Soros, with the Marathon coast a kilometre or so behind them. Thus the information provided by Herodotus about the pursuit of the Athenian centre "inland" is justified. Despite the above, however, the more likely possibility appears today to be that the adversaries were lined up vertically, or even better, diagonally to the coast, with the Athenians having their backs to Agrieliki and the Persians to the Plasi coast. The Athenians would have closed the pass to the coastal road to Athens, between the beach and Agrieliki, while the Persians would have had the Haradros ravine right behind them, and behind that their camp on the south edge of the Great Marsh. In the latter case, it is possible, although this cannot be concluded from the texts, that the Athenians had foreseen the need to protect their flanks from the possibility of a sudden cavalry attack by building a stake fence.

Of even greater interest than the position of the adversaries is perhaps the disposition of their forces. Two things must have concerned Miltiades that morning, as he could see his army being deployed on the plain: first was the danger of being overrun and encircled by the larger Persian army (the Persians must have been less than double the number of the Athenians, as otherwise the latter would inevitably have been surrounded), the second was to ensure coverage on the flanks from any possible cavalry attack. If the number of Athenians is calculated as 9,000, totalling 10,000 together with the Plataeans, the front of the line – with three-foot intervals and with a normal depth of eight men, could not have exceeded 1,500 metres. The danger of being enveloped by the more numerous enemy line obliged the commander to extend the length of his own ranks. A similar lateral movement must have been made automatically by those heading the wings, in an effort to cover their flanks. The result was to create a gap in the middle, which the future protagonists of Athenian political life, Aristeides and Themistocles, undertook to hold, fighting side by side at the head of their tribes, facing the powerful Persian centre. The weakening of the centre – in conjunction with the reinforcement (according to Greek military tactics) of the collision force on the right wing, where the supreme commander Callimachus was at the head of his Aiantis tribe, and with the presence of the Plataeans on the left – appeared from the outset to prefigure the course of the battle.

This was how the two armies stood, facing each other at last, after a week of waiting. At the distance of eight stades (about 1,500 metres) that separated them, as Herodotus says, the Greeks could just about have discerned some details of the dense barbarian ranks that filled the horizon. Against this multicoloured, noisy crowd, the solid, silent phalanx must have looked like a bronze wall from a distance, ominously blinding



*Map of the Marathon region by E. Curtius – J.A. Kaupert (*Karten von Attica*, XVIII-XIX, Berlin 1904) in which the positions of the adversary ranks are marked: the Greeks in blue, the Persians in red.*



in the rising sun. Sacrificial animals were slaughtered and the omens deemed favourable. Miltiades gave the signal by raising his arm.

The phalanx must have been terrifying as it started moving across the plain, with the high-pitched sound of pipes emphasising its inexorable pace, as though it were a storm approaching slowly, to break out in the last 150-200 metres, the range of the enemy arrows, in a torrent sweeping everything along. It was an unprecedented scene that would paralyse the Persians for decades to come, as we know from Xenophon's *Anabasis Kyrou*. Now let us imagine this phalanx plunging forward and covering, not just 150 m., but the entire 1,500 m. that separated it from the ranks of the adversary, on the run. This is the picture provided by Herodotus. "The Persians" he says, "thought the Athenians must be mad and headed for total disaster, as they could see how few there were, and that they were running without either cavalry or archers. That was what the invaders thought, but when the Athenians charged ahead in dense array and came to grips with the barbarians, they fought brilliantly." This statement looks unbelievable even for a professional army. It was not just the physical exhaustion of the heavily armed infantry (even Olympic hoplite races did not have to cover more than two stades, and the athletes held only their shield), but also the inevitable breaking of the line, essentially destroying the cohesion of the phalanx. This mad rush might have remained in history and been associated with the feast of Boedromion. However, if one takes into account solely the danger of being assailed on the flanks by the (non-existent) cavalry, it might be justified, although it is not out of the question that this too, as so many other points, belongs to the myth surrounding the battle.

In the fighting that followed, the Persians and the Sacae, the selected troops that made up the Persian centre in which the flower of the army was traditionally gathered, bent the resistance with their sheer mass, as was to be expected, and having broken through the thin line of the Athenian ranks, pursued them inland, i.e. towards Agrieliki (or Vranas, if the line was deployed parallel to the beach). This was the crucial moment of the battle. As everything depended on the centre holding, from the moment that it was broken, there was a direct and visible threat of encirclement and the destruction of both wings of the Greek army. In the meantime, however, the Athenians and Plataeans who held the wings had had time to rout their adversaries and, closing the pincer movement, crushed the victorious Persian centre. It was all over for the Persians. Herodotus' "long time" (*polys chronos*) could not have been more than a few hours.

The battle was monumental, full of exploits and wonders. And we are not even talking here about the powerful impression of the sight of the barbarian horde with its strange uniforms, battle cries and weapons, instead of the usual adversaries, or the magnitude of the carnage, unheard of in the wars between the cities, or the appearance of gods and heroes about which more will be said below. The climate is described by Herodotus as experienced by the hoplite (whose name is cited) who was suddenly blinded by the appearance of the phantom of a huge man in heavy armour with a long beard, who passed him by and killed the man beside him. However, despite the fierceness of battle, the small number of Athenian casualties at this point (many of the total 192 dead were, as the historian says, from the second and even fiercer phase of the battle in front of the Persian ships) shows that the phalanx retained its unbroken unity throughout the course of the battle, even when the centre fell back.

A particularly impressive picture of the phalanx in battle formation accompanied by a flute-player is depicted on a much earlier vase, the Corinthian wine jug (Chigi olpe*) from 640 BC, now in the Villa Giulia, Rome.*

ΑΥΤΟΜΕΔΩΝ. ΑΡΗΣ ΘΕΥΣ. ΗΦΑΙΣΤΟΣ. ΗΡΑ ΚΑΙ ΑΘΗΝΗ. ΕΡΜΗΣ.

ΑΝΤΑΡΤΗΣΙΟΣ. ΜΙΛΤΙΑΔΗΣ. PHOTOLITH. v. H. A. PUNKE, LEIPZIG.

The reconstruction by Carl Robert of the mural depicting the Battle of Marathon in the Painted Portico in Athens endeavours to combine Pausanias' description with the conventions of contemporary painting. The picture is divided into three zones with the action unfolding from right to left in three episodes, like a tragedy. It starts with Miltiades giving the signal to attack (on the lower level, the Plataeans are distinguishable by their Boeotian shields), the clash follows in the centre (the encounter of Epizelus with the mysterious giant can be identified, as well as the heroic dog) and the flight of the Persians; on the left is the battle at the ships. On the upper level are the gods and heroes watching or participating in the battle, while at the two ends the chariot of Helios (Sun) and an equestrian Selene (Moon) specify the time frame. Robert did not take into account the story about the painter Micon being obliged to pay a fine because he depicted the Persians as being taller than the Athenians (obviously owing to their high turbans).

Arrowheads and spear tips from the battlefield (British Museum).

It would be difficult to say whether Miltiades had systematically planned the events from the beginning and even more so whether, without the appropriate tough training of the citizen-hoplites and the necessary means of communication, he would have been able to control the course of the battle and to coordinate precisely the required army moves, or whether he would even have been aware of the crucial moment when his centre folded and could have directed the moves of the wings accordingly. We saw how the general array, both the reinforcement of the ranks on the wings and the weakening of the centre, was the automatic result of being outnumbered by the adversary. The factors that conduced to the victorious outcome of this battle were: Miltiades' experience of Persian tactics that allowed him to make the correct prediction, his conviction of the capabilities of the Greek phalanx, and his ability to turn disadvantage to profit.

After the victory, the Athenians, unharried by enemy cavalry, which even at that crucial moment had failed to arrive, pursued the defeated Persians to the sea and cut them down before they could seek refuge in their fortified camp near their ships. Many, especially those on the right wing who, in their retreat, had been cut off from the sea, must have got lost on the plain and in their search for the path to the beach were either slaughtered or drowned in the Great Marsh, which is to this day fed by the waters of the Makaria spring (see Pausanias, I,32,5: "a river runs from the lake"). We owe the picture of the slaughter in the marsh, which Herodotus leaves out, to the description, some 550 years later, by the traveller Pausanias (I,15,4) of the famous mural of the battle of Marathon in the Painted Portico (*Poikile Stoa*) in the Athenian Agora, a work by Panaenos, brother or nephew of Pheidias, and Micon (Aelian, *On Animals*, 7,38). The three successive episodes of the battle were depicted either on three horizontal levels or arranged from right to left of the painting. On the right you could see the main battle with the Plataeans and the Athenians; in the centre towards the bottom of the painting were the Persians who, after leaving the battlefield, got lost and fell into the marsh; and to the left are the Phoenician ships and the Greeks who are pursuing and killing the enemy as they attempt to board their ships.

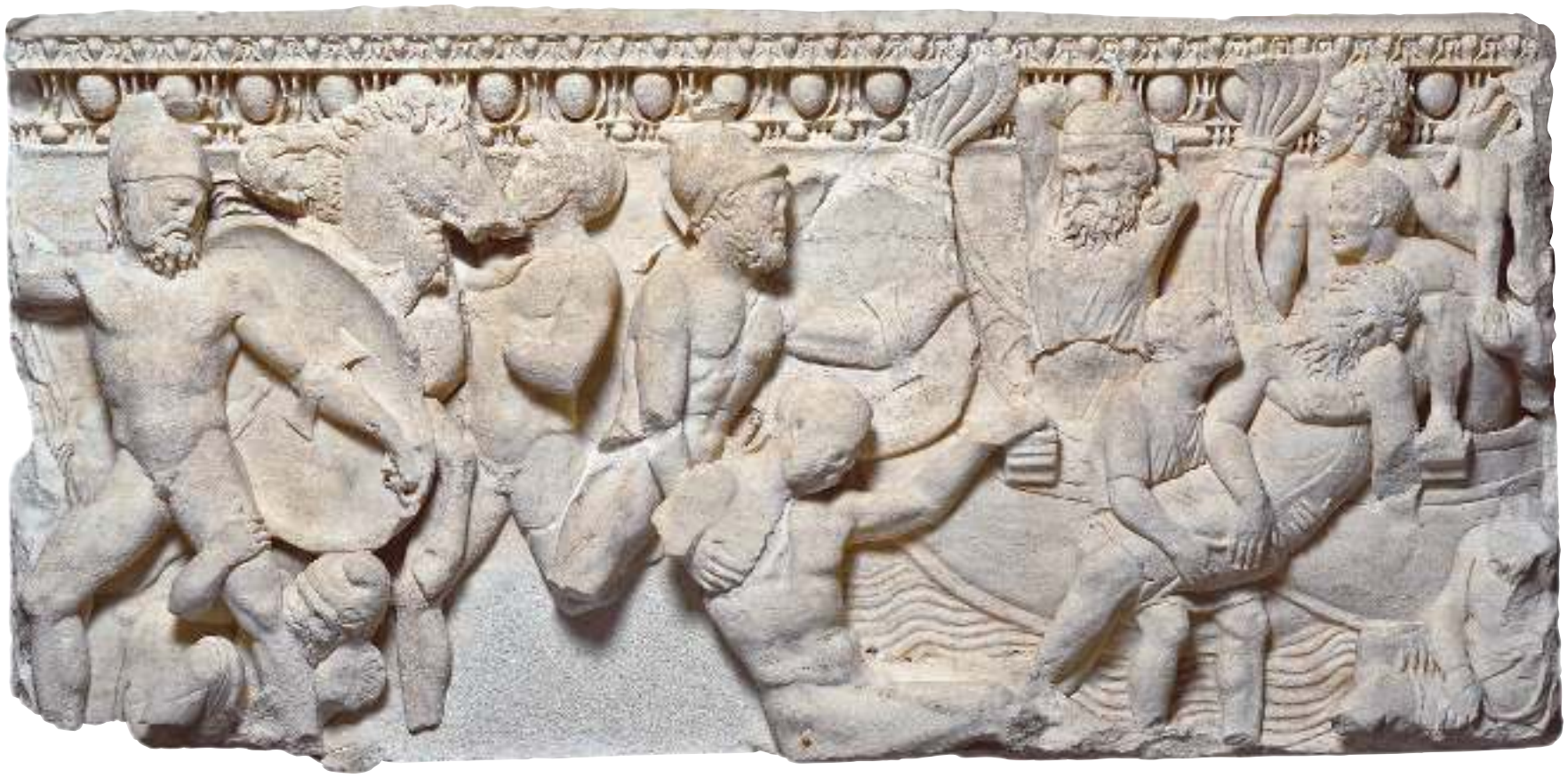
Single combat between an Athenian and a Persian. The hoplite is preparing to deliver the final blow to the Persian who is already on his knees. It is typical of the iconography of the Persian Wars that, in contrast to the mythical clashes with Amazons or Centaurs, an Athenian hoplite is never seen to succumb to a Persian. From the inside of a red-figure Attic kylix, by the Triptolemos painter. The National Museum of Scotland, circa 480 BC.

There, beside the Persian ships, a second and more savage clash followed, as Pausanias says (I.32.6), at the point where the Persians suffered their worst casualties. The Athenians' resolute efforts to complete their victory by burning the ships or, by tooth and nail, preventing them from putting out to sea, take on Homeric dimensions in Herodotus' description, as also in the representation of the episode on the Roman sarcophagus of Brescia, which in the imagination of contemporaries, as well as in the later Classicist Roman world, recaptured images from the *Iliad*. The savagery of the battle is confirmed by information about the heroic death there (not in the main battle) of the supreme commander Callicrates who died on his feet, pierced by multiple spears, and of the commander Stesilaus the son of Thrasylaus, but also about the courage and persistence of Aeschylus' brother Cynegeirus, who was fatally wounded when he grabbed the stern of an enemy ship in an effort to hold it back.

The site of the crucial turning point in the battle and the defeat of the Persians was marked on the plain at two points mentioned by Pausanias (I.32.3-5): the marble trophy of the Athenians and the mass grave, not a mound but a pit in which the victors unceremoniously buried the bodies of the Persians. Both have been found around the chapel of Mesosporitissa. It is a serene, idyllic part of the plain where, until the recent restoration of the trophy, there was nothing to remind us of the ferocious battle. Next to the white chapel of the Virgin Mary, between it and the abandoned stone neo-Gothic winery of Skouzes that is hidden by a clump of palm trees, Eugene Vanderpool found pieces of the trophy built into the walls of a crumbling medieval tower, that are today exhibited in the Museum. The site of the trophy has been recently confirmed by Manolis Korres's discovery of the base of the monument. Not far from here, in the Skouzes vineyard, and in a region extending as far as the marshes, a large number of roughly buried bone remains, which appear to have belonged to hundreds of bodies, was found a long time ago (by von Eschenburg, *Topographische, archaeologische und militarische Betrachtrungen auf dem Schlachtfelde von Marathon*, Berlin 1886, p. 10).

Everything points to this being the site on which the final slaughter of the Persians took place. The site that witnessed the culmination of the battle could not have been other than the rich Persian camp of Datis, near the anchorage. This point is today about 1,300 metres from the marsh, and roughly the same distance from the beach (in antiquity, however, the sea must have been much closer) where the Persians had moored some 300 ships over a distance of 1,500 metres. On the other side, the distance of slightly more than three kilometres from the tumulus constitutes a reasonable limit to pursuit by heavy infantry. It was at this point, near the Persian camp and landing stage, where the last and most dramatic episode of the battle took place, that the trophy was erected later, as was natural. On the point where most of the invaders were killed, one would also expect their common grave. How many there were remains unknown. Eschenburg never conducted systematic excavations, and there is serious suspicion that the 6,400 Persian dead cited by Herodotus, a number precisely 33 times larger than the Athenian casualties, is not merely conventional, but in the end totally unrealistic. Even though it is obvious that there were no prisoners, if this number were accepted, it would have meant the loss of approximately one-third of the Persian force. Only the unlikely hypothesis that a large part of the Persian army had been left behind in the hasty boarding of the ships could answer this doubt and explain the eventual success of the Persian withdrawal, i.e. how they managed to get their army and cavalry on board and to launch their ships, with the loss of just seven triremes, as Herodotus explicitly reports.

A more realistic answer to this question is provided by the sudden appearance of the cavalry and the support offered to the Persian rear guard during the fighting near the ships. Its depiction in the Painted Portico and on the Brescia sarcophagus may surprise the viewer, but it provides a plausible and indeed the only logical explanation for the cavalry's absence from the main battle, as well as for Miltiades' decision to



On the 2nd-cent. AD Attic sarcophagus in the Brescia Museum is the sole depiction to have been preserved of the battle at the ships, but also the only information regarding the presence there of the Persian cavalry. The iconography was generally inspired by the Iliad, *although the adversary forces can be identified by their barbarian dress and brutal behaviour, e.g. the Persian biting the leg of the first hoplite on the left.*

attack, which was that the cavalry had already begun to board ship, the first stage in the Persian army's preparations for departure, in order either to abandon the operation definitively just before the arrival of the Spartans or, on the contrary (as Herodotus and most scholars believe), to end it with a surprise landing at Phaleron, the final target of the Persian plan. But there can be no doubt that, however much the plan to attack Athens may have been based on the surprise element and on the collusion of the fifth column (but who could have been involved in an already lost cause?) or on the possible lack of walls, such an enterprise could not possibly have been undertaken by a decimated army.

The old theory that the sole purpose of the Marathon landing was to immobilise the Athenian army until the conquest of Euboea was complete is reinforced here, as it provides a single explanation for all the gaps in Herodotus' narration that have been pointed out so far: i.e. the long inactivity of the Persian force at Marathon, the absence of the cavalry from the battle, the speed with which the ships were boarded, and finally the famous signal of the shield that was given to the fleet from somewhere on land notifying them that everything was ready for the surrender of Athens, a story of betrayal described by Herodotus, who wondered himself about its link with the Alcmaeonids. In fact, an attempt to land at Phaleron would have been meaningful only as a joint expedition by the now united Persian fleet, to which alone the signal of the shield must have been addressed, and not to an army defeated in battle, with ships half empty of warriors, like that of Datis. For us who know the subsequent brilliant history of the Athenian navy, one question remains about the role of the

fleet in this story. Not that the 50-70 Athenian ships could have intercepted the attack, but they could certainly have caused problems, by obstructing or monitoring the movements of the Persian fleet before the landing and during the hasty boarding, or en route to Phaleron. These ships may have provided the information regarding the movements of the Persian forces in Eretria that assisted Miltiades in his decision to go into battle, and the signal of the shield (visible only from the sea), or the movement of the fleet towards Sounion.

These are issues that do not appear to have preoccupied ancient historians, which is natural, from the moment the battle was transformed from a historical event into a symbol, a symbol of the superiority of the Greek heavy infantry phalanx (the citizen-soldier) over the barbarian line; the spear and the sword over the barbarian bow; and the ranks of the Athenian hoplites against the growing threat of the mobs of seamen serving in the navy.

In this superb depiction of the battle on the contemporary black-figure lekythos (dated to 490-480 BC) in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, the repeated figure of the archer and the ominous presence and size of the arrows – which literally dominate the scene, as they did the memory of the Athenians who survived the battle – create a sense of the immediacy of the battle as it was experienced. (See details on pages 114 and 115.)

The Marathon Runner

The long-term glory of Marathon, which is evoked by the mention of its name, perhaps retained a particularly strong emotional charge for many people in this globalised world after the Marathon race was incorporated into the revived Olympic Games, because of the story of the Marathon runner who ran to Athens bringing the news of the victory and, after uttering the victorious cry "*nenikikamen*", fell dead of exhaustion in front of the prytaneum, despite the fact that the historicity of this event is disputed. The information we have from the ancient tradition is sparse and all of it from a later date, when Marathon had already passed into the realm of legend.

The first to mention this Marathon runner was Heracleides Ponticus (Wehrli fr. 156), a historian and traveller of the 4th century BC, who calls him Thersippos and says that he was from the deme of Erchia (today's Spata), and according to the same source, most people gave him the fitting nickname of Eucleus (=famous). The information was passed on by Plutarch (*Moralia* 347c).

Lucian (*pro lapsu inter saltandum*) called him Philippides, obviously confusing him with the courier Pheidippides who had been sent to Sparta before the battle. Similar stories were also told about other local runners, such as Euchis of Plataea who bore the message of victory from Plataea to Delphi and died on return (Plutarch, Aristeides. 20. 4-6). The story is replete with human greatness, but very probably fictitious. No runner could possibly have travelled such a distance in less than three to five hours, much less someone who had just taken part in a fierce military confrontation. Furthermore, there was no lack of cavalry, signal fires or, as we know from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and from the manuals of war, other means of visual communication that would have announced a victory or an invasion. The true precursor of the Olympic Marathon race must therefore be considered the *hoplitodromia*, a short race by men in armour (hoplites), which is known from representations and, in terms of the distance, the *dolichos*, an endurance footrace that covered a total of four stades, or 4.6 kms.

Irrespective of whether or not the story of the Marathon runner is truth or fiction, it has carried an important message down through the ages regarding man's ability to overcome the restrictions imposed by material obstacles and his own abilities and endurance, vindicating his existence in this way alone. The anonymous Marathon warrior knew this, although it may have cost him his life. So did Spyros Louis of Maroussi, the first winner of the Marathon race in the revived Olympic Games in 1896. The issues that have so preoccupied modern commentators are of much less interest, such as documenting the precise distance of the route of 40 (as initially believed) or 42 kms (as established in 1928) that the runner would have taken, and whether he took the easier route through Nea Makri and Pallene or the shorter one over Penteli, as not a few argue.

*The gravestone of a runner in armour (*hoplitodromos*), dating to about 10 years before the battle of Marathon, gives form to the splendid myth of the warrior who breathed his last as he announced the victory.*

The Day After

The Athenians had no time to rest after the battle, it would appear, not even to bury their dead, when the direct threat against Athens obliged them to hurry back to the city. To what degree the fears that so preoccupied Herodotus were justified we do not know. Among whom should we seek those who longed for the days of tyranny and for the aged heir of Peisistratos, and how many of them can there have been? Is it conceivable that far-seeing politicians like the Alcmaeonids, to whom the city owed its regeneration and its brilliant democratic future, would have sought support from the Persian King for their policy to benefit the people? And even more, can there possibly have been thinking people in Athens, who had already heard the news of the victory, and would still have been able to foresee the possibility of a Persian landing at Phaleron? On the other hand, is it possible that all the rumours of conspiracy – which appeared to have paralysed the Athenians when the news of the landing became known, and during the period of waiting at the Marathon camp – were totally groundless and based solely on the political adversaries' slanderous propaganda campaign, even at the moment the Persians fled, with which Herodotus linked the traitorous signal of the shield? Must we look behind all this for the satanic mind of a man like Themistocles who was to exert a major influence on political life throughout the entire decade to come?

The fact is that, whether because Miltiades knew about the reinforcement of the Persian army or because he did not wish to leave anything to chance, immediately after the battle, he hastened back with the entire army to help the city. The hypothesis that would have that army – after their running attack, the double battle (at the tumulus and at the ships) and the pursuit of the Persians – regrouping and marching from the sanctuary of Heracles in Marathon to that at Cynosargus, as Herodotus reports, on the same day, shows to what degree the myth of Marathon has deceived us into accepting something that is humanly impossible. We have seen the same thing in the story of Pheidippides who sprints in one day to Sparta, and the Marathon runner who dies after announcing the victory.

Aristeides, commander of his tribe Antiochis, had stayed behind in Marathon. He was the incorruptible man (the following year he was elected Eponymous Archon of Athens), to whom was assigned the honour of guarding the prisoners and the rich booty of gold and silver vessels and lavish fabrics from the Persian camp. It was he who undertook to bury the dead and welcomed the 2,000 Spartans who arrived the following day, after the full moon, covering the distance from Athens with astonishing speed, just in time to see the dead Persians and to admire the greatness of the victory – the first and possibly most important, recognition of Athenian power by her future adversary. To this first appearance of Aristeides as the archetype of an incorruptible politician, tradition contrasted the story of the greedy torch-bearer Callias, called *lakkoploutos* (pit-wealthy) by comedians, owing to the buried treasure that a Persian prisoner offered him in a vain effort to save his life. (Plutarch, *Aristeides*. 5)

The makeshift and unceremonious mass burial of the Persians can more plausibly be explained, if not justified, by the sheer volume of the work entailed and by the threat of mid-September heat, rather than by hatred or disdain. The 192 dead Athenian Marathon fighters are known to have been buried on the battlefield. This detail was emphasised in particular by Thucydides (2.4), on the occasion of the burial in the public burial place (which did not exist prior to Cimon) of those fallen in the first year of the Peloponnesian War.

FOLLOWING PAGES: *The Soros (Mound) in Marathon, which has been identified as the Tumulus of the Athenians, preserves in this serene landscape the memory of the ferocious battle.*

For him, and obviously for all contemporaries of Pericles, this was recognition of the valour of the Marathon fighters. The same is repeated by Pausanias. He saw the graves himself and the gravestones of the dead in tribes (I.32.3) and some way off (no distance is mentioned), the tomb of the Plataeans and the freed slaves.

Regarding the form of the graves, the traveller does not provide details. The identification of the *Soros* (large tumulus), which always stood out owing to its size – nine metres in height and 50 metres in diameter – among the smaller tumuli that had been preserved until the 19th century, was discussed by Leake, excavated and explored by Schliemann. But it was not corroborated until after the excavation by Valerios Staïs in 1890-1891, who discovered a thick layer of ash, with the decayed remains of skeletons thrown at random on the pyre, on top of which, after they were burned, some 30 vases had been scattered, mainly small black-figure lekythoi. Near the centre of the tumulus, an offerings ditch was found, similar to those known from most Archaic Attic tumuli, with traces of fire and the remains of the *perideipnon*, the memorial meal that followed the cremation of the dead. Broken pottery (some much older than the battle) covered its entire length.

The identification of the tumulus received additional support when a number of arrowheads were discovered in the tumulus soil and within a small radius around it. Less certain is the identification of the tomb of the Plataeans with a contemporary second, much smaller (height 3 m.) tumulus with 10 graves, 2 cremations and one child's grave, which was excavated near the Museum, 3 kms from the Soros. Apart from the distance, the variety of the graves and their unknown final number, since the excavation was never completed, cast doubt on this identification.

The funeral gifts from the pyres of the Marathon fighters' mound are no different from the burials in the disputed tumulus of the Plataeans (beside the Museum). There were vases hastily purchased from local shops, alongside some family heirlooms that date from the middle and second half of the 6th century BC, the tripod jewel box with representations of gods (Apollo, Athena and Poseidon) and the water-jar depicting Dionysus with a goat in the middle of a group of satyrs and maenads, or the much older (580/70 BC) Corinthian-type amphora of Sophilus with friezes of lions, panthers and sphinxes, which must have been in the family of the dead man for three generations before his relatives brought it to his grave. Outstanding among them, in terms of its provenance and use, is a Euboean *calpis* (type of water-jar) used as a funeral urn which, it has been assumed, held the ashes of one of the two commanders, either Callimachus or Stesilaus. The reason why the remains of the other casualties, whose ashes covered the area over the tumulus, according to the archaeologist, could not have been thus collected is an enigma.

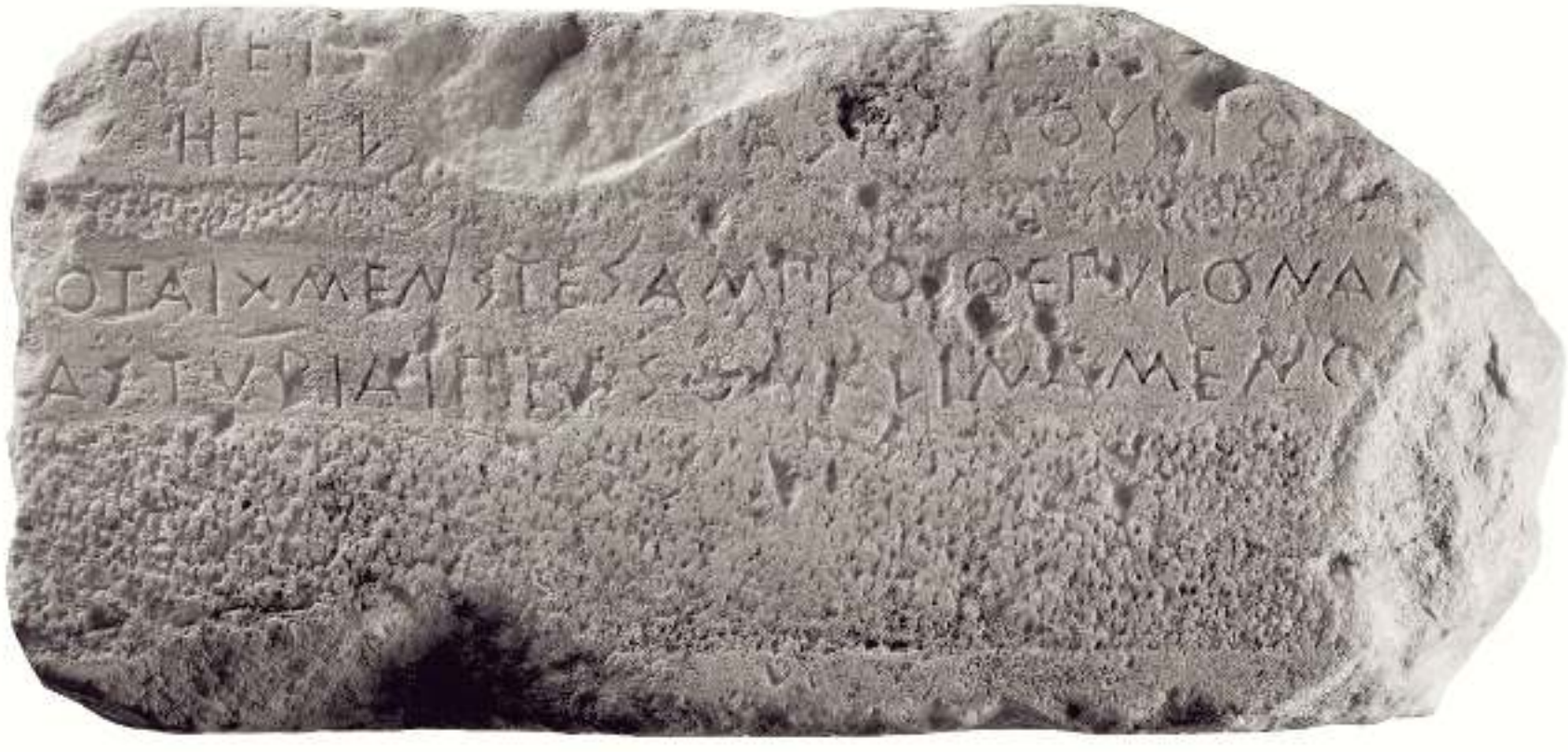
*On the Boston wine jug (*oinochoe*), the classical concept of the figure has almost stripped the clash of the violence portrayed on an earlier lekythos, in an absolutely harmonious composition, in which a solitary arrow retains the memory of the horrifying experience of the battle. By the Chicago painter 460-450 BC.*

A rare piece of good luck, however, has preserved to this day a unique genuine monument of the battle in a corner of the Peloponnese. On or beside the tumulus, a row of marble slabs recorded the names of the fallen by tribe, as was customary. The only slab remaining of those that crowned the tumulus was found in a Roman villa in the Peloponnese owned by the well-known Marathonian multimillionaire, Herodes Atticus, orator and friend of emperors. This sturdy rectangular slab of Pentelic marble, which is crowned by a cyma reversa moulding, bears as a title in large letters widely spaced to occupy the entire width of the stone, the name of the Erechthis tribe, which was followed, before the names of the dead, by a rare instance of a densely written epigram, an elegiac couplet praising their achievement: *The fame that reaches the ends of the bright earth, will carry the news of the virtue of these men, how they died and how they brought glory to Athens, fighting the Medes, few against many.* The marble slab bears 21 names. The total number of the fallen, as calculated by estimating the original height of the slab, may have exceeded 25 or even 28 men, and this agrees with the expected casualties among the Erechthis, who occupied the victorious right wing of the line. The names (one name per line) are written in such a way that the letters are lined up like the bricks that were as tightly laid in a course of isodomic masonry as a phalanx of hoplites, according to the simile of Demetrius of Phaleron. Nobody

knows who Dracontides, Apsephes, Xenon, Glaucrates, Timoxenus, Theognis, Diodorus, Exias, Euphroniades, Euctemon, Kallias, Araithides, Antias, Tolmis, Thucydides, Dios, Amynomachus, Leptines, Aischraious, Peron and Phai[d]rias were, nor is this of any historical consequence; although they should not be forgotten.

Only fragments of the epigrams have been preserved from the base (the slabs with the names have been lost) of the splendid cenotaph that the Athenians erected immediately after the Persian Wars on the public burial place outside the gates of Kerameikos in Athens in honour of those who fell in the battle for Greece's freedom. Who could fail to recognise the reference to the Marathon fighters in this inscription found in the Agora, and cited here, as supplemented by B.D. Meritt:

These men had invincible courage in their hearts
When they battled before the gates against countless foes
Thwarting the army of the Persians who planned by might
To burn their far-famed city by the sea.



Part of the base of the monument erected in Kerameikos for those fallen in the Persian Wars, now in the Stoa of Attalus in Athens. The beginnings of two epigrams can be discerned; above, for those who died at Salamis and below, for those at Marathon. Fragments of another six epigrams have been identified.

*Large black-figure flat dish (*lopas*) in the centre of which is a whirling rosette.*

Two ordinary undecorated pots, a cup (kylix) *and a* pyxis.

An Archaic polychrome tripod pyxis *with rich incised decoration, one of the oldest and most beautiful of the funeral gifts found at Marathon, that must have been in the family for decades. On each leg of the pyxis a separate scene is depicted. The first two have a similar theme of a goddess mounting a chariot. In the first, we recognise Athena with Poseidon, who is bidding her farewell with his arm raised; in the second an unknown goddess is accompanied – in the middle, between the chariot and the horses – by Apollo playing his lyre and opposite him a female figure, most likely Artemis with a flower in her hand. In front of the chariot sits a small, elderly figure. The third leg is dedicated to Apollo who is surrounded by five wreathed female figures, probably Nymphs, who are also holding a flower (530-520 BC). (Details on the next two pages.)*

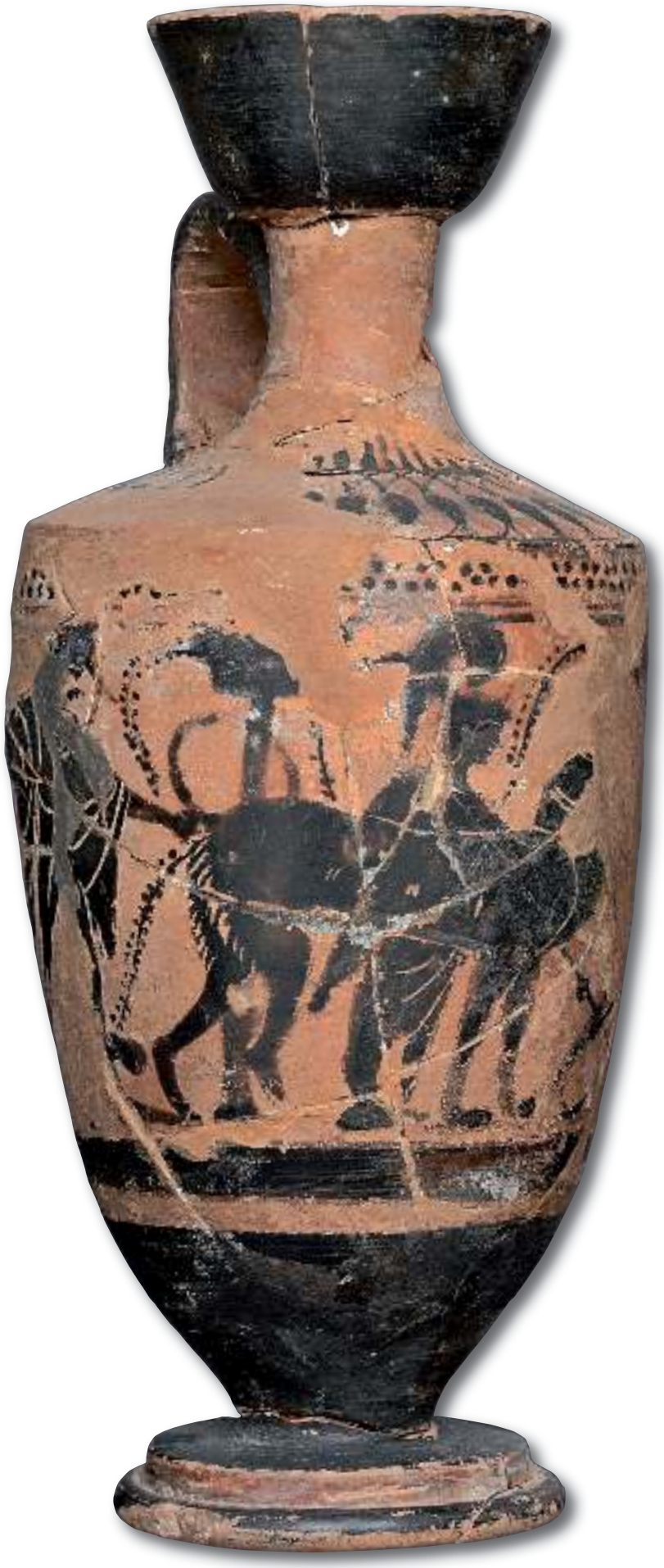
*Black-figure water jar (*hydria *of the so-called calpis type). Most of the frieze around the globular body and on the shoulder of the vase is dominated by the figure and spirit of Dionysus. In the middle, the wreathed god is holding a kantharos in one hand; ivy sprouts from his other hand and embraces the entire scene. He is accompanied by the goat behind him, and to the left and right symmetrical – almost ritual – groups of an ithyphallic satyr with a maenad on his shoulder. By the Nikoxenes painter, circa 500 BC. (Details on pages 128, 130 and 131.)*

The most ancient of all the broken vases found around the offerings ditch of the Tumulus is the amphora (today in the National Archaeological Museum) made by the painter Sophilus, the first of the Athenian pottery painters to sign his works, in about 590-570 BC, almost a century before the battle. The elaborate decorative disposition, influenced by Corinthian workshops, which dictated that the surface of the vase be organised in panels and dominated by strictly symmetrical, often heraldic patterns, awakens nostalgia for the bold, sometimes awkward forms of earlier Protoattic art that were so full of vitality.

(PAGES 134-139) *A selection of the many black-figure* lekythoi *purchased on the spot – characterised by rough workmanship and mythical and Dionysian scenes that are often incomprehensible – to be scattered over the layer of ashes covering the 192 Marathon fighters. Dionysus with a satyr.*

Representation of Dionysus' chariot and a dancing maenad.

Theseus defeating the Minotaur.



Heracles wrestling the lion of Nemea with the help of Athena.

The lekythos in which Dionysus' chariot is accompanied by a maenad holding a sistrum, welcomed by Hermes in front with his caduceus.

Lekythos with a chariot race scene.

Two lekythoi: the first has typical floral decoration; on the second, the design merely fills the space, without particular significance.

*In the specially laid out "tumulus of the Plataeans", the corridor (*dromos*) and portal give the impression of a Mycenaean tomb. The excavator retained only the outer shell of the tumulus, and had the interior laid out like a hall in which the excavated graves have been preserved that were once covered by a pile of rocks. Doubts about the identification of the tumulus with the Plataeans are created by the variety of burial methods (cremations, burials, burials in earthenware jars) that do not match the picture of a common tomb of warriors fallen in battle (*polyandrion*), nor does its distance from the Tumulus of the Athenians suggest a relationship with the battle.*

Two plates from the "tumulus of the Plataeans". ABOVE: *Scene of hoplites running to the right. 520* BC. BELOW: *Maenad or nymph dancing between two satyrs. The figure on the left is interesting, as he appears to be jumping with both feet in the air at the same time. Early 5th cent.* BC.

*Ritual water jar for weddings (*loutrophoros*). On the high neck are two mantle-clad women with wreaths. On the body, barely visible, is the chariot carrying the newly weds, accompanied by Apollo (the kithara has been preserved) and a woman holding a flower. The scene is flanked by another two male figures. 525-500 BC*

ABOVE: *Deep cup (*kotyle*) from the grave of the hypothetical captain of the Plataean Command (to him belonged the sole funeral inscription from the tumulus).* BELOW: *black-glazed* pyxis *(500-490 BC) from the same tumulus.*

Two black-glazed bowls (phialae) *with a central boss from the early 5th cent.* BC, *found in the "tumulus of the Plataeans".*

Nine early 5th cent. BC broken black-figure squat lekythoi and a plate from the "tumulus of the Plataeans".

The Monuments of Victory

The pride of the Athenians in the great victory that they alone of, and for, the Greeks, achieved against the barbarians was declared by the wreath (four olive leaves) that from then on adorned the helmet of Athena on her city's coins. It has been surmised, and is not out of the question, that the owl with open wings that decorated the famous decadrachm of 486 BC may be an allusion to the goddess' epiphany at Marathon, as was known to have occurred prior to the battle of Salamis (Plutarch, *Themistocles*. 12). The lines of Aristophanes (*Wasps* 1081-1086) would have suited the former battle equally as well, if not better.

> *Armed with spear and shield we rushed, all our stalwart swarm,*
> *Man to man we fought amain, our glands secreting juices warm.*
> *In the fury of the fray we bit our lips till they grew pale;*
> *The very heavens were eclipsed by enemy arrows' hail.*
> *Before the evening, with heaven's help, we smote them hip and thigh;*
> *Over us the owl, Athena's bird, hovered in the sky.*

But the Athenians honoured Artemis as well, placing a waning moon – a personification of the goddess as well as an allusion to the time of the great battle – beside the owl on the reverse of the tetradrachm that was minted after the battle.

Like the graves of those who fought in the battle of Marathon, the first monuments of the victory were few and plain. First came the sanctuaries. Olympia, in accordance with the sanctuary's long tradition, was the place where the warriors would have symbolically dedicated their victorious weaponry and that of the defeated enemy. Marathon was represented there by two helmets: a Persian one, a votive offering by the Athenians from the booty, with the inscription "Athenians took it from a Mede", and a Greek (Corinthian)

The bronze Corinthian helmet which, as attested by the inscription on the rim, was dedicated by Miltiades himself in the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, a treasured personal object of the battle commander.

helmet with a simple dedication by the commander "Miltiades offers this to Zeus", a personal votive offering and, for this reason, even more moving. However, the site of the panhellenic proclamation of the Athenian victory (according always to the tradition of the sanctuary) was the Ionic sanctuary of Delphi. The pilgrim was welcomed by a group of heroes from the Attic tribes, standing on a base in the entrance, while higher up, at a turn in the sacred way, a small Doric temple came into view in which the votive offerings of the Athenians were kept. The brief inscription in the adjacent small triangular space referred to the origin of the votive offerings (perhaps also to construction of the temple) from the tithe on the booty from the battle: "Athenians dedicate to Apollo the choice booty from the Persians". The metopes on the little temple narrated the respective feats of the two heroes that are pre-eminently associated with Marathon, the Panhellenic hero Heracles and Theseus, who expresses the spirit of the up-and-coming power of Athens. Similarly, the Plataeans, from the booty they reaped from the battle, dedicated a temple to Athena Areia.

This was just the beginning. The great monuments that would perpetuate the glory of Marathon belonged to the next generation, to that of Miltiades' son Cimon.

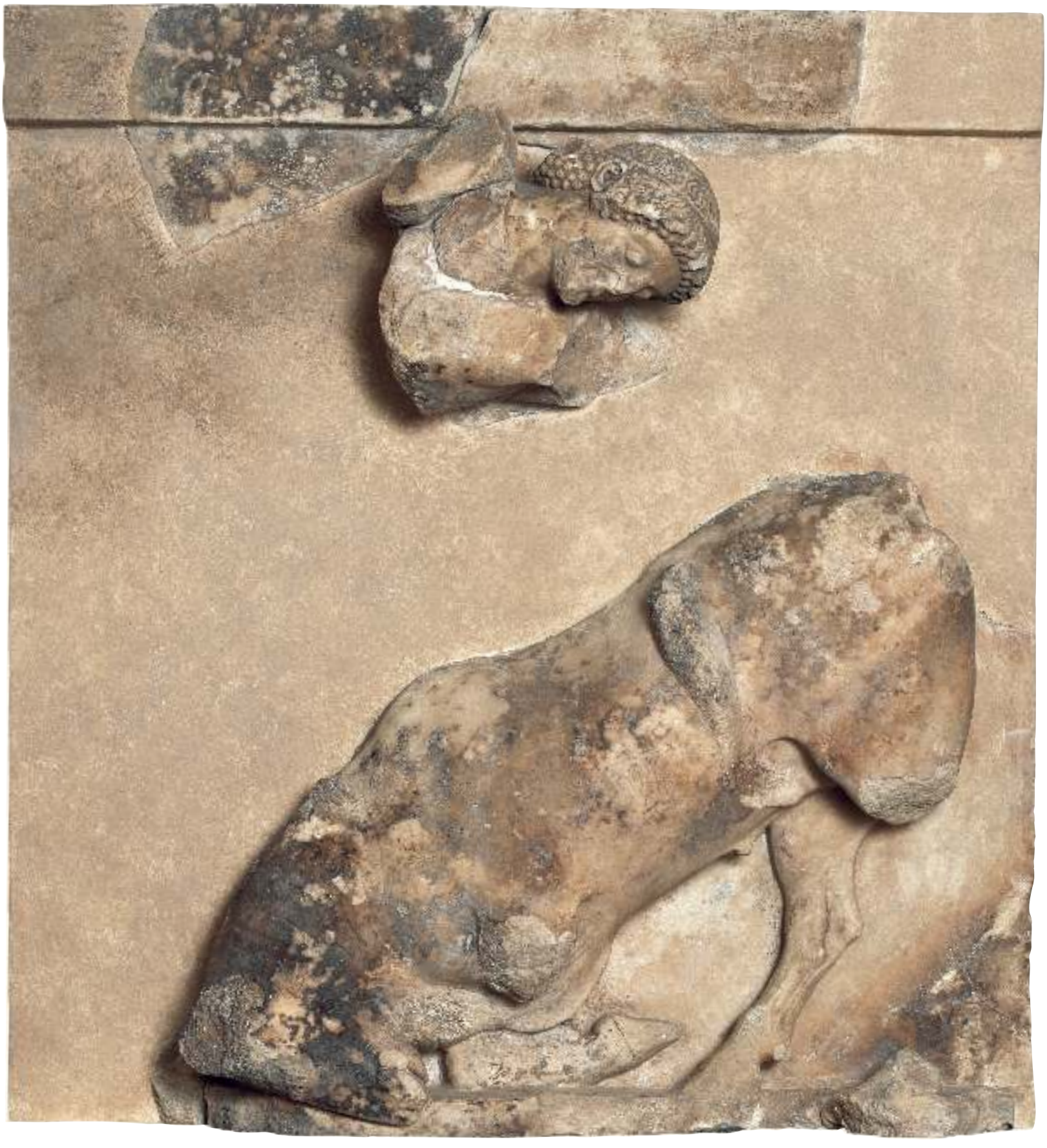
Conic bronze Eastern helmet, from the booty of the defeated Persians. Votive offering from the city of Athens to Olympian Zeus.

FOLLOWING PAGES: *The elegant Doric Treasury of the Athenians that stands proudly on a bend in the Sacred Way of the sanctuary at Delphi is believed to have been built to house the tithe from the booty of Marathon, in thanksgiving to the god Apollo, although many date its establishment earlier, to the last decade of the 6th cent.* BC. *Characteristic of the Athenians' pride in the new republic is the fact that the metopes on the façade of the Treasury and on the side visible from the Sacred Way were dedicated to the Athenian hero Theseus, to his various feats and his role in the battle against the Amazons, since he had led the Athenians at Marathon. On the contrary, the labours of the other Panhellenic hero Heracles were limited to occupying the remaining, essentially unseen sides.*

The booty from Marathon was displayed on a separate base on an extension of the Treasury's foundation, right under the metopes of the Amazonomachy, the mythical expression of the expulsion of the new barbarian invaders. The votive inscription, which was restored later, tells us that the Athenians dedicated to Apollo an offering from the booty taken at Marathon. It was the source of Pausanias' information about the link between the Treasury and the victory of Marathon. (The stones have recently been re-positioned by the Delphi Ephorate of Antiquities.)


ΣΤΗΣ ΑΡΕΤΑΙΟ


ΑΚΤΟΣ



The second metope from the right on the façade of the Treasury depicts the Marathonian achievement of Theseus: The body of Theseus formed a dynamic curve above the diagonal of the wild bull that has already been brought to its knees.

The image of the owl preparing to take flight over the Athenian army as a harbinger of the victory appears frequently on Athenian coins after the Persian Wars. Numismatic Museum.

The significance of the victory for the fledgling republic can be seen in the way it was stamped on Athenian coins: on the obverse, by the addition of olive leaves to the wreath worn by Athena, and on the reverse, by the crescent moon that accompanies the owl discreetly as a symbol of the assistance of Artemis and a reference to the season in which the battle was fought. Numismatic Museum.

THE GLORY OF MARATHON

The Real and Symbolic Significance of the Battle

It is obvious to anyone who approaches the description of the battle with a critical eye that this expedition cannot be compared, in terms of goals, magnitude or results, with the battle in which King Xerxes himself was defeated ten years later. In Aeschylus' play *The Persians*, the Medes cursed "hated Athens" for years as they recalled the "large and fine army" that was lost at Marathon. However, it was not Marathon that saved Greece, but Salamis and Plataea. Indeed, the Spartans perceived Marathon as having precipitated or created the conditions required for the great Persian offensive against Greece. From the military standpoint, the special feature of the expedition by Datis and Artaphernes, and indicative of their intentions and limited goals, but also of the self-esteem of these two commanders – who appeared to control the sea, but who did not, however, have sufficient forces to confront the united force of large Greek cities such as Athens and Sparta – was its amphibious nature. Commenting ironically on the classicist tradition of inflating the significance of Marathon for the future of Europe, a fine example of which is the famous saying by John Stuart Mill that this battle was more important for England than the battle of Hastings, Robert Graves (in continuation of those who "disparaging and maligning" had already begun whispering in the heart of Greco-Roman classicism, see Plutarch, *Moralia*, 862 B-F) has given us a light-hearted view of the other side in "The Persian Version":

Truth-loving Persians do not dwell upon
The trivial skirmish fought near Marathon.
As for the Greek theatrical tradition
Which represents that summer's expedition
Not as a mere reconnaissance in force
By three brigades of foot and one of horse
(Their left flank covered by some obsolete
Light craft detached from the main Persian fleet)
But as a grandiose, ill-starred attempt
To conquer Greece – they treat it with contempt;

Irrespective of its fictitious treatment in Aeschylus' *Persians* or by Graves, irrespective of the assessment of its results by the Spartans and in the end, irrespective of everyone's "What if…?" speculations on

The "beautiful trophy" of Marathon, which Aristophanes and Plato praised and Pausanias described, was an unfluted marble column about 10 metres high with an Ionic capital crowned by a statue of Nike (Victory). A monument worthy of the significance of the victory, it was erected several years after the battle at the point of the Persians' final defeat on the edge of the Great Marsh, and replaced the earlier traditional dead tree with armour on it. Two drums of the column and its capital are exhibited in the Museum.

historical matters, the main interest here lies in the undisputed fact that the true magnitude of the conflict can never be compared with the enormous ideological significance of the Marathon victory for Athens and her future, and beyond, for our entire civilisation. The young democracy, through its victorious confrontation on the battlefield with the great Persian Empire, proved its ability to survive and acquired the boundless self-confidence on which it was to base its subsequent leadership in politics and culture.

It may be that the later inflation of the magnitude and panhellenic importance of the victory won by the Athenians, defending the Greeks virtually single-handedly, was actually intended to provide ideological support for the city's hegemonic ambitions in respect of their allies (is it accidental that from that time on, the mythical king of Marathon, Xuthus, is presented as the father of Ion, Dorus and Achaeus?) or, on the domestic front, proof of the superiority of the tradition of the hoplite or warrior class in relation to the naval mob of the *thetes*. The elevation of the Marathon victory to the status of national symbol was, however, done by the mature power of the city, which, in its contemporary tragedy, was able to grasp and render the deeper, poetic and philosophical dimension of the moment.

The Mythical Dimension of the Battle

For those who lived it, the clash between the Athenian citizens and the army of the Great King of Persia had the myth-generating power of all such events that exceed the standards of daily life and reason. The events of that day – like all great moments, great upheavals, great acts, even those of the recent past that do not, and could not possibly, have an ordinary form or regular time – have become eternal and timeless. The epic nature of the battle resulted in associating with the name of Marathon not only incredible feats, such as those of Cynegeirus, Callimachus and Epizelus, but also stories like that of the dog who fought heroically, which was why it was depicted in the Painted Portico. As in the *Iliad*, but more rarely after the Persian Wars, gods and heroes would descend to help in some great battle: Pan from the mountains of Arcadia, Theseus from the Underworld, Heracles from Olympus together with Athena, the local hero Marathon and the peasant farmer Echetlus, personification of the ploughshare, all came to help the Athenians and to protect common land. And as the local people told Pausanias, at night the battlefield was haunted, filled with cries and the neighing of horses and the invisible presence of dead heroes.

And that was not all. The entire plain was illuminated by the glory of victory. Every corner of Marathon had something to say about it, its marks were imprinted at every point. Pan, who had appeared suddenly to Pheidippides as he crossed the mountain paths of Arcadia, true to his promise, came to help in the battle by sowing "Panic" among the Persians, and was worshipped in the cave of Oinoe, in which even then, the traces of distant antiquity must have been discernible. In Roman times people were still pointing to the hollows on Mount Trikeri as troughs used by Persian horses and to the marks left by Artaphernes' tent. The towering marble column of the trophy with its Ionic capital, instead of the customary dead tree clad in enemy armour, recalled the point of the Persians' final defeat. And in the depths of the plain, in the great marsh, people would show the point at which Persian arrogance was drowned in mud. The focus however was on the graves of the Marathon fighters. As Pausanias says in the 2nd century AD, the Athenians continued to honour them as heroes up to his time. In tribute to them, funeral games were held around their graves very soon after the battle. The sole monument to have been preserved is a bronze cauldron with the plain dotted inscription: "The Athenians gave prizes to those who took part in the war", a prize that became the funeral urn of an athlete who wanted to be buried

The bronze cauldron (lebes) *in the Kanellopoulos Museum, which was found near the Tumulus, a prize in the games established in honour of those who fell at Marathon, as indicated by the dotted inscription around the rim, was used as a funeral urn for the victor, probably a Marathon fighter himself, who wanted to be buried near his heroic comrades.*

there near the battlefield (could he have been one of the Marathon fighters?). Even up to the late Hellenistic period, the mound was a memorial site for Athenian youths, who would come to sacrifice and crown the graves of those who had died for freedom.

The presence of a metaphysical element in the battle, the preservation of the heroic nature of the site, the monuments and the rituals for the dead, taken together, made Marathon a unique phenomenon in Greek life, and constituted the first step towards symbolic sublimation of the battle and the site, which, by the Classical era, was complete. As part of Athenian national memory, Marathon was thus included among the mythical conflicts that laid the foundation for the Hellenic world and took on further ethical and even cosmic dimensions. Behind the Persian Wars were the shades of the Trojan War, the battles with Amazons and Centaurs, and even further back, at the highest level were the battles of the gods of Olympus with the Titans and Giants. In the mind of the Athenian, the clash with the Persians was the updated version of all those mythic conflicts that had brought the Greeks into confrontation with the East, with barbarism, with oppression and with brute violence, and had brought their gods to battle with the mindless, physical forces of the Earth. For centuries, these images were part of the Greek world view.

On the real level of politics, the battle was for Athens a great test that confirmed her superiority and guaranteed the future of Cleisthenian equality before the law (*isonomia*). It was victory by the Attica of the demes, and established the worship of the gods who came to their assistance in battle: Arcadian Pan, the great reconciler of town and country, whose sanctuaries now filled the caves in the surrounding mountains, and the goddess of the fields, Artemis Agrotera, whose cult spread all over Attica, uniting its people more closely together. At the same time, the battle was also the turning point in the Athenian hoplite's self-confidence compared to the Asian archer, in that of Athens whose radiance could now be seen on the panhellenic level, particularly in the Ionian world, in contrast with monolithic Sparta. Starting right after the battle, the theme of the Athenian hoplite victory over the Persian archer inspired Athenian pottery painters in Kerameikos. With these representations, rare for their historical timeliness, the Athenian kept alive in his home, or took with him to his grave, a direct memory of the unprecedented moment of that day in September that so illuminated his daily routine.

The goat-footed god of Arcadia who came to assist the Athenians in the battle of Marathon, was later worshipped in every cave in Attica, usually together with the Nymphs and Hermes, leader of the nymphs (Nymphagogos). *This relief from the cave of Pan on the north slope of the Acropolis rock, like many others dedicated to Pan and the Nymphs, was given the outline or moulded form of a cave, site of divine epiphanies. National Archaeological Museum in Athens.*

The inscription to Pan and the Nymphs that Athenian youths put up under the archonship of Theophemus (61/60 BC) at the entrance to the Neolithic cave documents the official nature and duration of the god's cult, which revitalised the Neolithic sanctuary. The text recalls the sacred law that prohibited offering coloured cloths to the god.

In a cave-like environment, Nymphs with Hermes and a small, seated Pan receive a libation from Agathemeros. From the cave of the Nymphs on Penteli (4th cent. BC). National Archaeological Museum.

The Political Background of the Victory

The myth and the ideal of Marathon did not however come into being as an automatic continuation of the battle; they were products of a long process closely linked, as was everything in Athens, to politics and partisan in-fighting. The role of the commander Callimachus who fell heroically in battle may not be recognised in our sources, where emphasis is placed more on his willing cooperation with Miltiades than on his strategic abilities. But it was Callimachus' friends who erected the statue of the messenger of the gods on the Acropolis (possibly his own pledge before the battle), the epigram on which recalled his role in the victory. Also, it was Diophanes from Deceleia, very probably from Callimachus' circle, who raised an objection in the Assembly when the proposal was made to grant a wreath to Miltiades. The latter's unfortunate and much slandered expedition to Paros, by which he had perhaps sought to create a zone safe from Persian expansionism in the Aegean, provided his adversaries – the Alcmaeonids (Xanthippus led the attack against Miltiades) and the rising star, Themistocles, who couldn't sleep due to brooding over "Miltiades' trophy" –

The statue of Iris, messenger of the gods flying to bring the news of victory to the ends of the earth, was erected high up on an Ionic column on the Acropolis to remind people of the role played by the commander Callimachus in the battle of Marathon. Owing to the fragmentary state of the inscription carved on the fluting of the column, it is impossible to decipher the name of the dedicator, which is of interest primarily to the historian. Acropolis Museum.

with an opportunity to blemish the fame of the victor and the glory of the victory. Thus it happened that a man like Miltiades was left to rot and die in prison (the story is eerily similar to the fate of Theodoros Kolokotronis, leading figure in the 1821 Greek War of Independence), while rumours and slander (such as the famous signal of the shield at Marathon) would be used by political leaders to destroy each other through a series of ostracisms. In this way, the Peisistratids (Hipparchos 488/7 BC) and the Alcmaeonids (Megacles 487/6 BC) were both described as being sympathisers of tyranny.

It was not until after the family alliance with the Alcmaeonids and the rise of Miltiades' son Cimon (478-462 BC), a great, perhaps the greatest Athenian *strategus*, that Athens was able to pay her debt to Miltiades. Most of the monuments to the battle date to the time of Cimon and are attributed to him, and it was then that the military-political ideal of the hoplite was at its height. At Marathon, the marble trophy (as stated in *Olkades*, a lost play by Aristophanes, and cited in Athenaeus' *The Gastronomers*, 3.111) and the cenotaph of the great commander were erected, while the Delphi group of eponymous heroes of the Attic tribes was now supplemented with the statue of Miltiades, which took the place it deserved, between those of Athena and Apollo.

The attribution to this group of two larger-than-life-size bronze statues of warriors in virtually the same stance with a slight variation – that were created in the mid-5th century BC in an Attic workshop, pulled out of the sea off Riace and are now exhibited in the Museum of Reggio Calabria – is particularly appealing. In the older one, the concentrated power and rigid stance of the magnificently structured body, the square shoulders with one leg placed slightly ahead of the other and standing with its sole firmly on the ground, as in the early work of Phidias, can be recognised one of the tribes' heroes (Cecrops or perhaps Erechtheus) by the broad filet around his head (possibly for attaching a crown), the voluntary turn of the head and the mouth half-open, ready to speak. The identification as Miltiades of the younger figure, which is Polycletean in stance, is favoured by the angle of the head and the traces of the helmet characteristic of the Commander. Two heads from the Acropolis Museum have recently been attributed to this group, with even greater likelihood, Roman copies of works dating to 465-460 BC. The realistic (in contrast to the Riace work) features of the man with the long hair tied in plaits around his head, who is being crowned by the goddess Athena, if this identification is

The marble column that once bore the statue of Iris, with the parts of the votive inscription to Callimachus that have been preserved.

valid, would make them the oldest example of a contemporary commander being elevated to the status of hero, plausible only in the age of Cimon's absolute power, to which their originals have been dated. In these works, in the haughty stance of the idealistic head of the Riace warrior and in the determined portrait on the Acropolis should be sought the true features of the great Miltiades rather than in the soulless Roman bust in Ravenna that bears his name, possibly a copy of the statue erected by Lycurgus in the 4th century in the Theatre of Dionysus. Contemporary with the votive offering at Delphi must have been the great mural in the Painted Portico in the Athens Agora, also dedicated by a relative of Cimon's, that depicted, as we have seen, a panoramic view of the decisive moments of the battle, with Miltiades flanked by its gods, heroes and protagonists. From then on, the feat of Miltiades at Marathon was projected behind the victory at Eurymedon, offering the vision of panhellenic freedom to the ideology of the Delian League. It was a vision whose realisation Sparta would not or could not undertake: the Spartans arrived in Marathon too late to do anything but admire the magnitude of the Athenian victory just as, after Mycale, they would step down from the leadership of the Greeks, leaving protection of the islanders and their brothers on the coast of Asia Minor to the Athenians.

Thus, it was not until a generation after Marathon, and ten years after the Battle of the Eurymedon River, with Athens at the height of her glory, but now in the maelstrom of battle on two fronts, against both the Persians and the Peloponnesians, that this unique battle acquired new meaning, and was acknowledged as the symbol of Athenian military virtue and of Athens as defender of Greece. This is expressed by the famous Simonidian epigram: "Athenians fighting before all other Greeks at Marathon, defeated the power of the gold-clad Persians", and the two large works by Phidias: the colossal bronze statue of Athena Promachos on the Acropolis, a delayed offering from the tithe of the booty from the battle (as reported by Pausanias "from the Medes who landed at Marathon"), and by the huge acrolithic statue of Athena Areia erected in the city of Plataea, the loyal ally.

The memory of the Persians also dominates the monument that, for us, marks the culmination of the Golden Age of Athens. It is possible, as has been hypothesised, that the ideal horsemen on the Parthenon frieze could be recognised as a dedication to those who died at Marathon, elevated to the status of heroes.

Despite their doubtful attribution to the Athenians' votive offering at Delphi, the two larger-than-life-size Riace warriors are to this day the only statues that can give us some idea of the classical grandeur of that monument.

The features on the classicist Roman herm in the Museum of Ravenna, the sole portrait of Miltiades to be certified by an inscription, seem to belong more to a philosopher than to the commander at Marathon.

The Ideal of the Marathon Fighter and the New View of Man

Many epigrams were written about Marathon and about subsequent battles with the Persians by Simonides and by other known and unknown poets. Among the verses dedicated by Aeschylus to this day, the most stirring testimony of the significance of this battle for all those who fought in it is provided by the epitaph he wrote for his own grave, distilling the meaning of an entire creative lifetime in this one historic moment: "This gravestone covers Aeschylus, son of Euphorion, from Athens, who died in fertile Gela. The field of Marathon will speak of his bravery, as will the longhaired Mede who learned it well." For Aeschylus, this battle must have meant the dawn of a new age, the revelation of a profound contemporary change in the view of man, of which the victory against the Persians was not a prerequisite, but its result and most brilliant expression. What happened early in the 5th century BC in Greece belongs to the more profound upheavals about which history, here as well, rarely speaks, and which find expression only in art: in tragedy and contemporary sculpture, in this case. We can see it gleaming on the bodies and faces of young athletes, in the new seriousness, the new ethos which – in the determined physical and moral stance of the statuary of the time and the awareness of tragic human destiny depicted in contemporary tragedy – expressed the end of innocence, the liberation of the mind from the security of the archaic religious spirit, and of the body from the certainty of earthly gravity. Pindar, who celebrated so many athletic victories, may have disregarded the victory at Marathon, but the spirit that inspired it is echoed in every word and every stanza of his hymns. Thus we can understand why, until the end, Aeschylus regarded his participation in this battle as the sole memorable event in his life; and why it was this battle that shaped the type of the good, old-time Athenian, which Aristophanes – at an age of profound crisis of the state – insisted upon citing for his contemporaries as a measure of comparison.

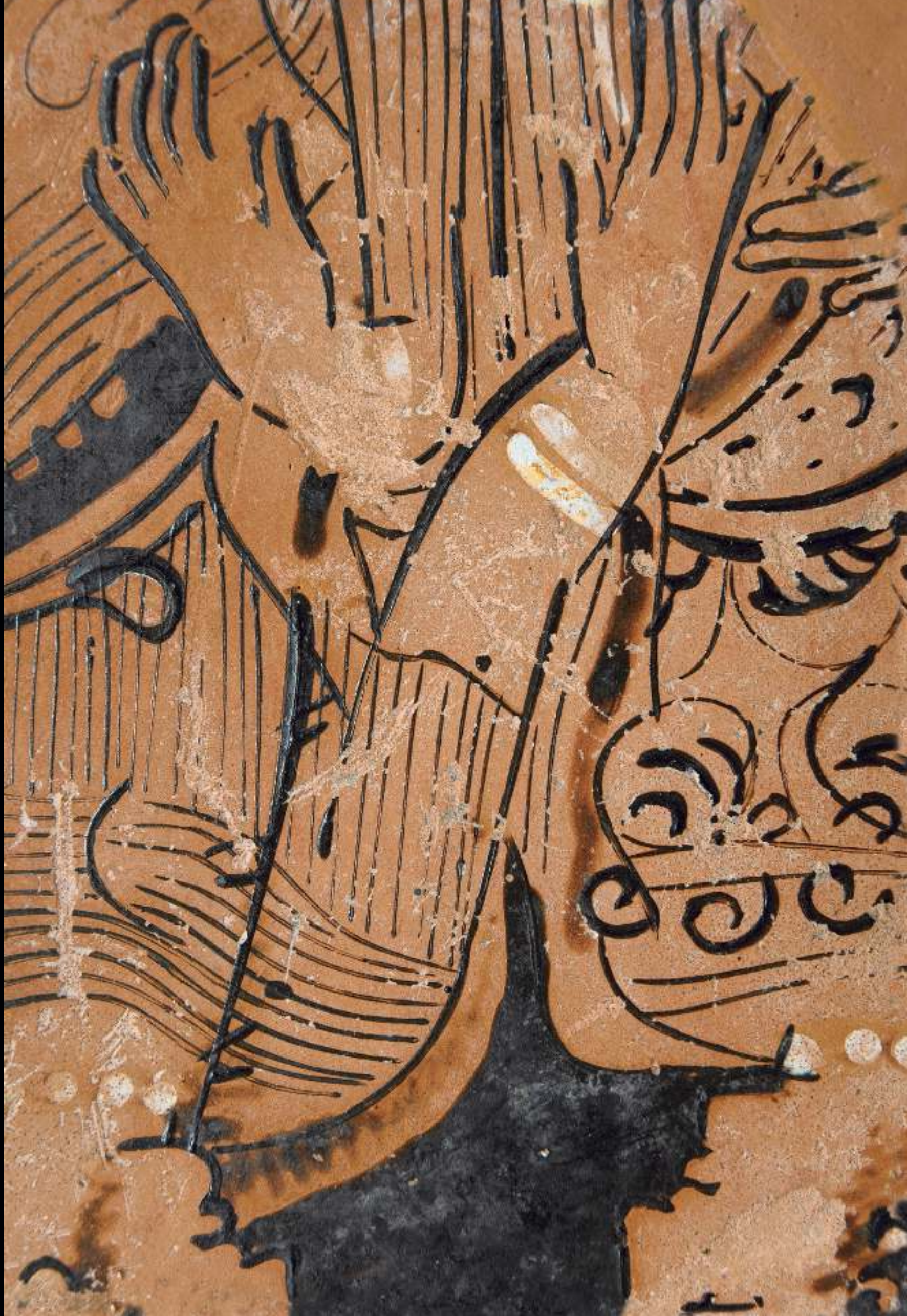
The Significance of the Battle in the Modern World

The Marathon fighter who expressed the ethos of the good, old-time Athenian in the 5th century BC, was to be idealised from the 4th century on, when the Athenian ideal became international, and then in Rome and in the contemporary world, as a representative of the ideal of liberty against the despotism of the monarch, of order against hubris, and finally of Europe against Asia, a development that is associated with the need of later eras for ideals and symbols.

As part of the classical culture, Marathon is today so profoundly rooted in the European mind that any critical approach to the historical event would be meaningless. Its prestige is so widespread that it will forever radiate the name of the place, and it is so closely linked with the ideals of our civilisation, that a society of people who would ignore the spirit of freedom nurtured by classical Athens does not even deserve the name of civilisation.

Perhaps in today's globalised and levelling society, the importance of the battle for the future of what we call western European civilisation may tend to be forgotten or deliberately erased. And for the majority of people today, the Marathon race in the modern Olympic Games may be their sole reference to the universal significance of the battle. Regardless, however, of its historical and ideological significance for western culture, what remains as the eternal and universal message of Marathon is what constituted the experience of the Athenian warrior on that day, when he felt himself as bearer of the spirit of freedom, of a unique human outlook, against the threat of annihilation. The monuments of the battle that visitors can see on the site today may be very few and are not even necessary. It is more the aura of the events rather than the monuments that make every corner of this land pulsate with the presence of the great history that touched it. Anyone who, standing in front of the plain tumulus overgrown with weeds and the unique column of the trophy that was lost on the plain (now restored), fails to be transported to this dimension, who cannot feel the war-cry that stirred even Pausanias' contemporaries or understand the meaning of freedom that it expresses, has no place here, and should perhaps consider abandoning the visit.

On the bust in Naples that has been identified as Aeschylus, fighter and eulogist of Marathon, one can see something of the gravity, bullish look and heroic manner of which Aristophanes spoke. Also visible is the distance from the psychological refinements of the portraits of Sophocles and Euripides.



THE MARATHON OF THE HISTORICAL PERIOD AT THE MUSEUM

The memory of the battle is preserved at the Museum by the findings from the tumulus and, in the middle of the hall, the battle trophy, a replica of which has been erected on its original site beside the church of Mesosporitissa. Of the trophy, two entire drums of the unfluted column and the Ionic capital that crowned it have been preserved. The rich plasticity of the volutes, the combination of the concave back and convex front, as emphasised by a moulded band and decorated in the centre by a carved palmette, indicates its dating to the decade after the Persian Wars, very possibly during the period of Cimon, who by erecting monuments at Delphi, Athens and Marathon endeavoured, as noted above, to lend new prestige to the Athenian victory and restore his father's glory. The hollow on the top surface of the capital held some statue, probably a Victory, of which just one piece, rendering the pleats in her garment, has been preserved.

The trophy is surrounded by inscriptions that are important to identifying the site of the battle. Of particular interest – owing to where it was found on the Valaria site near the small marsh – is the sacred law regarding the organisation of the Heraclean games (specifically the manner in which the 30 judges were elected, three from each tribe), which dates from the decade after the battle. The inscription was carved on the back of a decree from the late 6th cent. BC that may have referred to the Cleisthenian reforms. Another inscription dedicated to Heracles confirmed with certainty the identification of the Valaria site with the sanctuary of Heracles, where the Athenians established their camp. It is the base of a mid-5th cent. BC votive offering to Heracles on which the hero is referred to as Empylius. According to some, the inscription refers to the Empylian Games, a name that alludes to the passage between the Small Marsh and Mt Agrieliki. The boundary marker of the sanctuary of Athena came from a site near the church of St Demetrius, which had in the past been identified as the sanctuary of Heracles, and is exhibited to the right of the trophy.

A different spirit prevails in the exhibits in the portico flanking the atrium on the right. Among the monuments of death, gravestones and funeral gifts, we can see the quiet, undifferentiated agrarian life of the res-

Hands and eyes intersect, declaring the deep bond, unaffected by the forthcoming wedding, between the two women (friends? mother and daughter?).

idents of Marathon on the sidelines of both the great battle in 490 BC and the greatness of Periclean Athens, as well as its gradual decline in the 4th century BC. These monuments tell us nothing about history but rather about everyday life, its joys and sorrows. Their art may not be great art, but its resonance in the humble grave monuments that inhabit these halls testifies to the high level and high morale of these peasants.

In vain, however, will we search through them for some sign of the feelings of the people who lived those unique moments. As frequently happens, life walks beside history without realising it. The cemeteries in the demes of Marathon, Vranas, Skorpio Potami and Plasi, as well as those of the demes of Probalinthus (in Ayios Andreas) and Tricorynthus (on the road to Kato or Lower Souli), the only examples of habitation in the municipalities of Marathon, very few residential traces of which have been found, were in use from the Geometric period to the 5th century BC. The funeral gifts from the Classical graves were usually flowered *lekythoi* and *kylikes*, frequently bearing obscure mythological or Dionysian scenes, representations of battles, chariots, or symposia, distant and faint memories of great pottery painting. Among them can be singled out a moulded vase from the 5th century BC with two similar women's heads back to back.

The wealth of the fertile Marathon land is not revealed here in magnificent tomb enclosures, as it is in neighbouring Rhamnus. The plain agrarian people we meet in the Museum's few funeral reliefs have been bound in the realm of death, beyond time and history, with rare and formal references to life and none to history. At the time of the battle and for many decades to come, the use of relief gravestones, which in the Archaic period had provided so many powerful images of hoplites (among them was that of Aristion, the Velanideza copy of which adorned the Tumulus for years) had declined. More than a century separates the earliest reliefs from that great moment and from the "spirit of Marathon", no memory of which is visible anywhere. It is accidental but typical that among these reliefs not a single warrior can be found. On the oldest, the relief of Pasimache of Vranas from the first half of the 4th cent. BC, we find the dead woman, deep in thought, bending over an open *pyxis* containing the jewellery that represented for her the fleeting brilliance of a lost world. On another relief preserved in fragments from Tricorynthus, the dead mother hands over her infant to the maidservant standing in front of her. There is also the youthful athlete leaning pensively on a pillar, with a young slave in front of him, as was customary, holding his athletic gear, in this case the strigil he used in the palaestra to scrape the dust and oil off his body, and below, his loyal hunting dog, licking his feet devotedly.

Two marble Panathenaic amphorae decorated the grave of Geles, victor in games, who is presented in conversation with his father Theagenes, a priest, as indicated by the ungirdled tunic and the knife he is holding in his lowered hand. On the back is a group of women, the youngest is the standing Thrasyboule from Ikarion (present day Dionysos), wife of Geles, and their daughter who is leaning on the knees of her seated grandmother, Pheidostrate. From a larger grave monument is the statue of a woman with an inset head holding a pyxis containing jewellery. Similarly carved in the round is the grave statue of an enthroned female, whose youthful age is indicated by the bird in her hand, as was customary in representations of young girls.

In the Museum atrium, grave reliefs of citizens, as we have seen, flank the monuments of the battle: at the back, bathed in light, as an irony of history, the trophy looks out over the previous half-lighted hall containing the monuments of the East, not from a Persian sanctuary, which it did not know, but from an Egyptian one established, some 650 years later, by a Roman from Marathon, the multimillionaire senator Herodes Atticus.

Askos-type flask moulded in the shape of a bird, with a conic base. Decorated with diagonal lines. Protogeometric period (10th cent. BC).

*Middle Geometric cup (*kylix*) with a band of parallel zigzag lines between the handles (850-800 BC).*

*Middle Geometric cup (*kantharos*). The panel between the handles is decorated with a meander flanked by vertical bands. (850-800 BC)*

Late Geometric kantharos *with high handles. In the middle, two panels with birds flank a panel of checkerwork symmetrically. (750-730 BC)*

Late Geometric trefoil oinochoe with a twisted handle. Repeated decorative panels (parallel reticulated and zigzag patterns with rays around the base) cover the entire body of the vase uniformly, while three broader bands of meander highlight its structural features: the neck, shoulder and belly. (750-730 BC)

Flask with concentric decorative bands of dentilated and reticulated patterns with a cross in the centre.
(Early Geometric period, 850 BC)

Two Late Geometric toiletries boxes (pyxides) *adorned with friezes of meander, swastika and quatrefoil patterns, a disk with a spiral, etc. (c. 750 BC)*

(PAGE 180 AND PAGE 181 ABOVE) *Pyxis with conic lid. The impression of emptiness left by the decoration (central panel with clusters of dots and angles alternating with dot rosettes, flanked above and below by reticulation and a running spiral) dates the vase to the Late Geometric period. (735-700 BC)*

The figures, a deer kneeling between two aquatic birds, float on the Late Geometric deep cup (skyphos)*, free of the spatial limits imposed by panels and friezes. (735-700 BC). Details on following pages.*

*Late Geometric trefoil jug (*oinochoe*). The globular body is covered uniformly with horizontal lines, so that the viewer's attention is focused on the little horse in the panel on the neck. (735-700 BC)*

*Pitcher (*prochous*) with high handle. The curve of the rim extends beyond the curved outline of the body of the pot. The central frieze of marching hoplites on its enormous neck is bordered by triangles above and below. (735-700 BC)*

Vase and decoration of the same type as the previous one. The shape of the vase is more severe, with a small amphiconic body and a straight, slightly curved neck outline decorated by the figures of dancing, palm-bearing women. (735-700 BC)

*Pitcher (*prochous*) with a high handle. The more balanced proportions of the globular body and handle and the traditional panel with the aquatic bird on the neck, highlighted on the shoulder by a running spiral, date this vase to the period just before the previous one. (750-735 BC)*

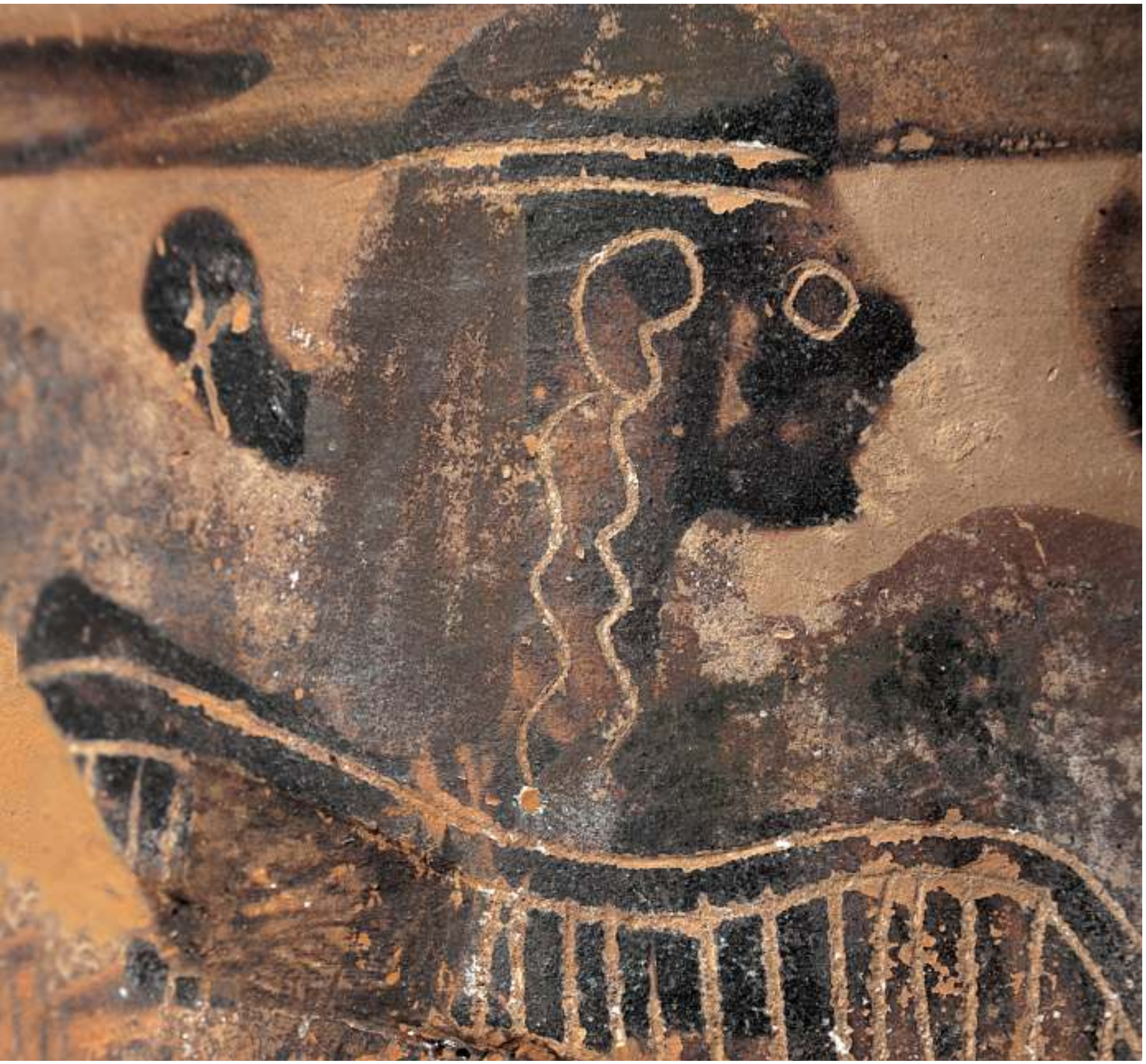
Another pitcher of the same type as the previous ones. Here, the neck is covered not by a frieze of warriors or women, but by a uniform checkerwork pattern, lending the vase a more conservative style. (750-735 BC)

Trefoil oinochoe. The decoration on the body consists of concentric circles around a central star. (735-700 BC)

Plate whose central motif is a wheel flanked by clusters of angles with a running spiral around the rim. (735-700 BC)

Plate influenced by Corinthian pottery, in the Orientalising style. The strictly structured decoration and elegantly stylised familiar animals (deer, horses) of Geometric pottery have now been replaced by mythical monsters of Eastern origin, here combined with sphinxes and felines around the rim, and on the body around a cruciform pattern of palmettes and lotuses in the centre. Rich but careless incising of the outlines adorns the roughly painted polychrome figures. By the "polos painter" (575-550 BC), so named because of the characteristic polos (women's head covering) worn by his figures. (See details on the following pages.)

(PAGES 198-201): *The neck of a ritual water jar (*loutrophoros*) by the same painter. There are two panels: a row of rosettes, below which are three sphinxes.*



*Skyphos of the Corinthian type (*kotyle*) depicting a long-necked aquatic bird with open wings, and in the background leafed rosettes. On the back is another aquatic bird crowded between two facing animals (lion and panther). (575-550 BC)*

Three views of a miniature wedding cauldron (lebes). *The decoration of the globular body consists of two pairs of facing animals, open-mouthed lions in front and geese on the back. On the conic stand there are two aquatic birds, and a monster consisting of a siren with a lion's head. The spare decoration is highlighted by the discreet use of colour on the mane and wings. (about 570 BC).*

Archaic black-figure lekythos. In the middle is a winged female figure running with a long stride and open wings, occupying the greater part of the field and flanked by two symmetrical figures of armed, cloaked men. On the shoulder of the vessel is a siren with open wings. Discreet and careful use of incision and added colours. (540-530 BC). Details on following pages.

Part of the shoulder of a loutrophoros, most of which is covered by a rooster; in front is part of a palmette from which sprouts a tendril with a lotus bud. On the right side, the hind quarters of a large animal. From the workshop of the painter Lydos. (560-550 BC)

*Corinthian scent bottle (*aryballos*) decorated by a bird's wing and incised rosettes. (570-560 BC)*

*Small conic vase without handle, with a cylindrical neck (*lydion*).*

Black-figure lekythos, with three women, among whom are two youths greeting them in a strong movement with their heads turned to the back. From the workshop of the painter Lydos. Mid-6th cent. BC.

*Two views of a black-figure unguent pot (*alabastron*). The white ground was altered during firing so the figures are barely visible. Bearded Hermes with his caduceus is moving to the right, while turning his head around to a woman behind him holding a flower. Opposite him (with his back turned) is Apollo, with a lyre, a deer and Artemis. By the Diosphos painter, about 500 BC.*

Alabastron with two panels of cross-hatching. Circa mid-5th cent. BC.

Black-figure lekythos with warriors in a battle scene: an attacking horseman and a defending hoplite. Behind the rider is a cloaked man holding a spear. On the shoulder of the vase are two lions, transferring the combat to the domain of wildlife. Circa 500 BC.

*Black-figure lekythos. Two cloaked riders, one wearing a helmet, the other a broad-brimmed hat (*petasos*), flank a scene from the battle of the gods with the giants (Gigantomachy): Athena attacks an armed giant who has been put to flight. From the Tumulus of the Athenians. Early 5th cent. BC.*

Black-figure lekythos with a symposium scene:
a woman and a man are reclining on cushions.
The woman is raising a kantharos in her right hand.
Early 5th cent. BC.

Black-figure kylix-skyphos. *A four-horse chariot (quadriga) is depicted front and back, flanked by two palmettes sprouting from the handles of the vase. (480-470 BC)*

Cup (kylix) *adorned with a panel of palmettes, last quarter of 6th cent.* BC.

Miniature column krater. The decoration is in two bands, with dot wreaths above and inverted aquatic birds below (550-500 BC*).*

Aryballos-type lekythos with palmette. (400-390 BC*)*

Black-figure cup (kylix) *depicting the Gigantomachy. Under a grapevine, Athena attacks her adversary, who has already fallen to his knees. The scene is flanked by another two crouching giants, the one behind the goddess appears ready to pounce. Inside the cup, a maenad dances. White has been added to the exposed parts of the bodies of Athena and the maenad, to crests, to blazons on shields, and to grapes. (600-480 BC)*

Cylindrical pyxis. The outside of the vessel is decorated with a row of aquatic birds, the water is indicated by clusters of lines. The same motif, stylised, is also found on the lid. (550-500 BC)

Plate with banded handles. In the centre is a multi-pointed star, on the rim a row of ten black disks surrounded by dots. (450-435 BC)

Stone disk with the votive inscription: ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣ Μ᾽ ΑΝΕΘΕΚΕΝ. *(Dikaios dedicated me). Circa mid-5th cent.* BC. *From Ayios Andreas, Attica.*

Folding wooden mirror case.

*Small flat dish (*diskarion*) with a curved rim used as a stand, adorned with a Gorgon's head. Late 6th cent.* BC.

Head of a clay female figurine. 6th cent. BC.

Head of a clay figurine. (570-550 BC)

Clay figurine of a woman or goddess enthroned. The face has been badly damaged. Circa 500 BC.

On the body and arms, the rigid stance characteristic of the entire series is maintained (pp. 230-233). The stereometric structure of the face is emphasised on which the Archaic smile has been lost. Early 5th cent. BC.
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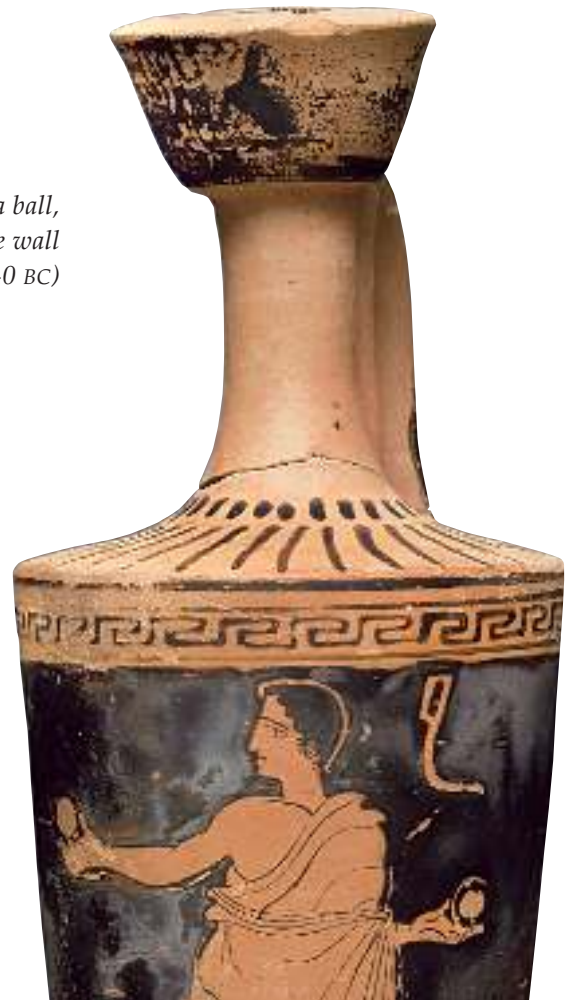
Two clay figurines of enthroned women or goddesses. Early 5th cent. BC.

PAGE 232: *The figurine of the enthroned woman or goddess still retains the Archaic smile and traces of the colours that enliven her dress. About 500* BC.

*Moulded vase (*aryballos*). It has the rare form of two female heads made from the same mould, but in different colours. On one side, the woman is fair-haired (the colour of the clay) and on the other, dark. 490-480 BC. According to one theory, in the late 6th and early 5th century BC, the broad dissemination of vases in the form of a head was associated with the rise of the theatre.*

FOLLOWING PAGES: *Medallion from the inside of a red-figure cup* (kylix) *from the cave of Pan. A woman holding a bowl* (phiale) *is preparing to pour a libation. Opposite her is a young man wearing a mantle. By the Callipolis painter. (430-425* BC*)*



Red-figure lekythos. A young man in a mantle is holding a ball, with two others on a base, beside him. The strigil on the wall indicates the environment of a gymnasium. (460-440 BC)

Small ewer (chous) *given to children at the festival of Anthesteria, it was naturally decorated with scenes from the world of children. Here a boy is running, waving a rope in his right hand, while holding a small empty pot in his left. (425-400 BC)*

Red-figure loutrophoros *from the classical cemetery at Marathon (Skorpio Potami), depicting a scene from a divine wedding. A wreathed Apollo with a laurel branch on the left is holding the bride, probably Creusa, ceremonially by the wrist. She is being crowned by a small flying Eros. Below, between the two figures is a censer. Behind the bride are two women with gifts; behind Apollo, another two with torches, as was customary in the celebration of a wedding. (440-430 BC)*
Details on following pages.

Part of a loutrophoros, *from the cave of Pan. The woman's world that had captured Attic vase painting by 420* BC *was absolutely dominant by the end of the century. Here, two well-dressed and bejewelled women, close friends as shown by their stance (or perhaps mother and daughter), are sitting in an ox-drawn carriage. This is most likely the carriage taking the bride and her mother to the house of the groom. To the right is the shoulder of a third figure (bridal attendant?). Late 5th or early 4th cent.* BC.

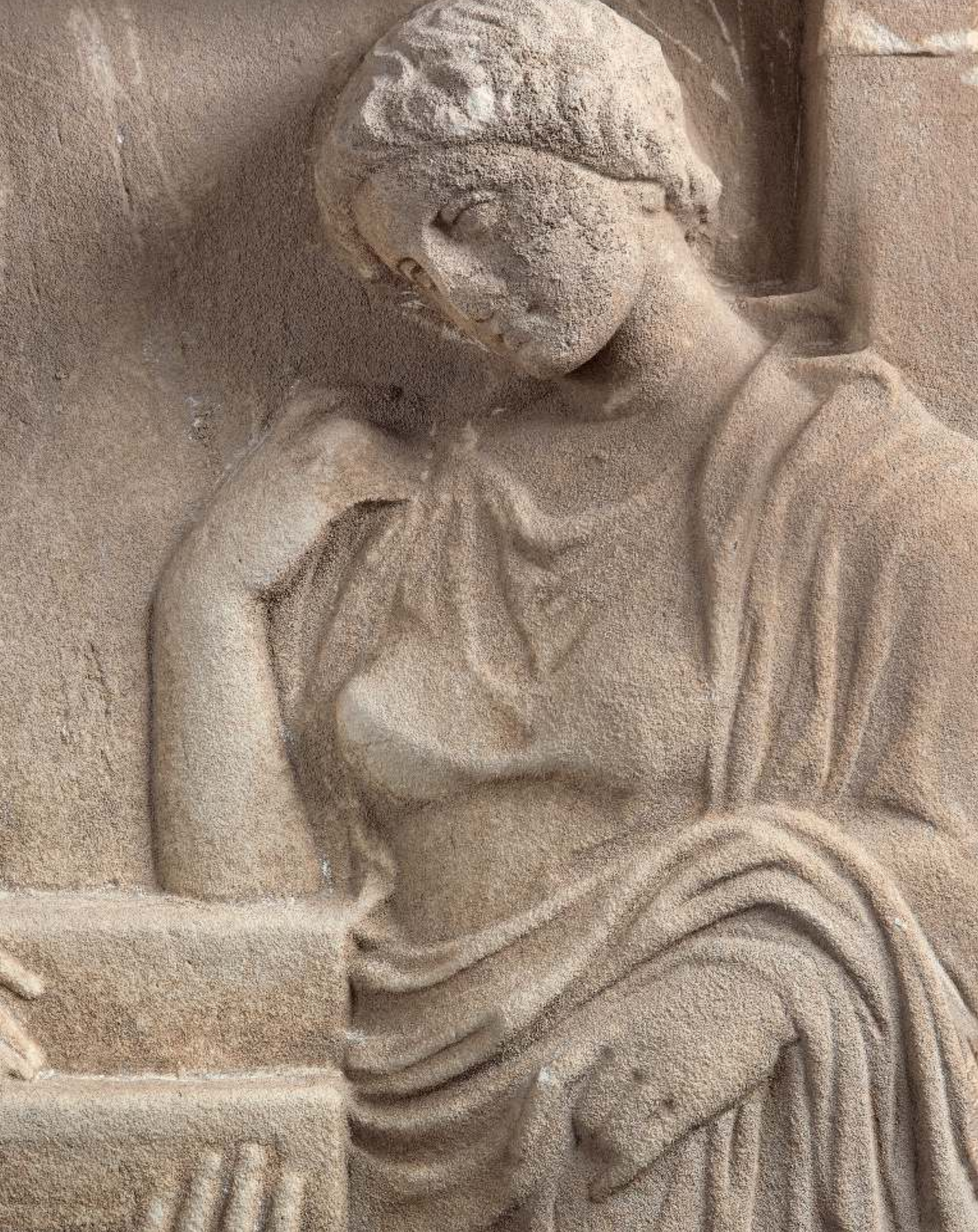
Aryballos-type squat lekythos. Eros is holding a small wooden chest decorated with a rosette, in front of an altar (?). (425-400 BC)

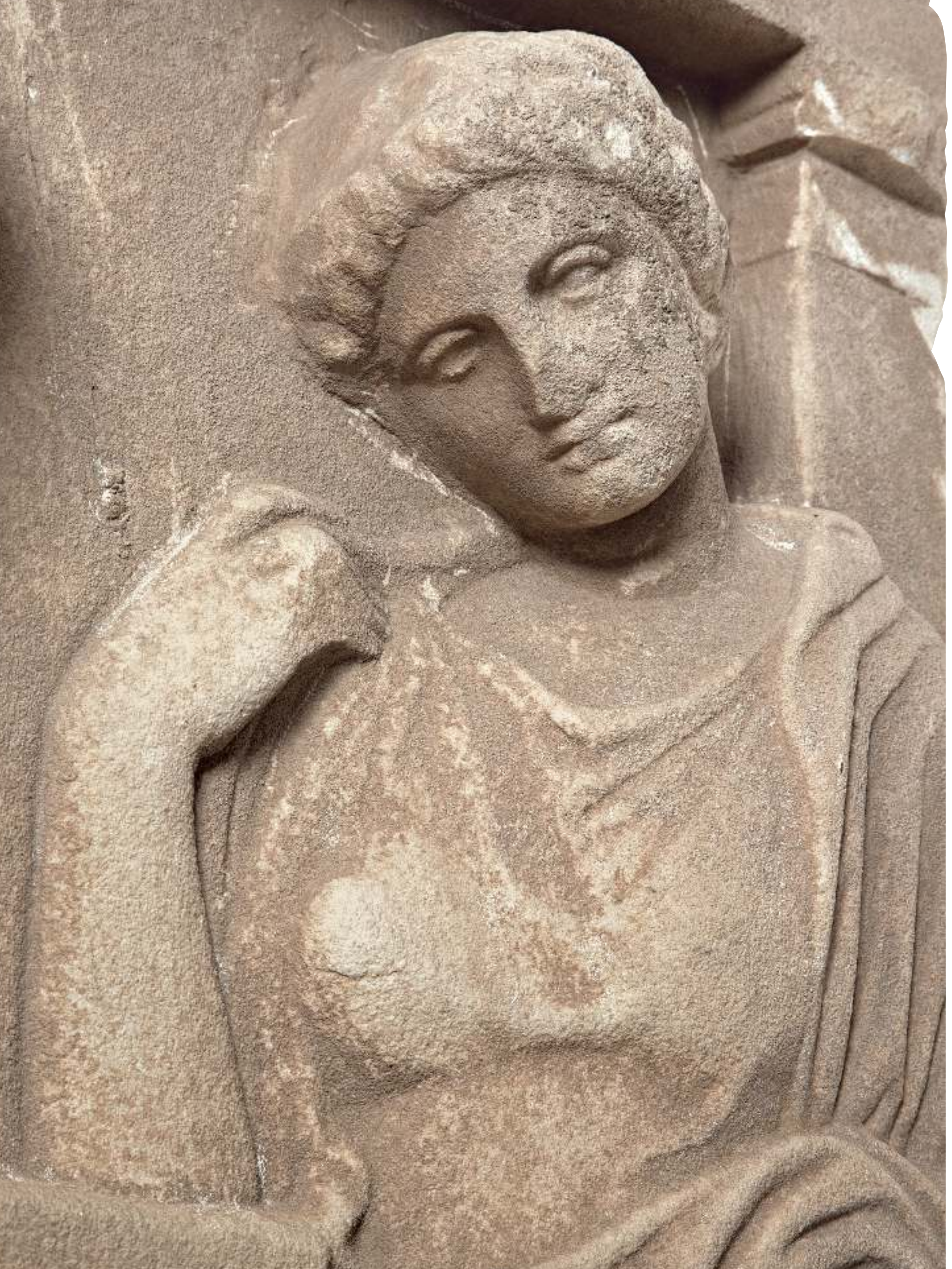
Aryballos-type squat lekythos with a red-figure depiction of a panther. Late 5th cent. BC.

Aryballos-type lekythos: a woman is running to the right with her head turned, looking back. (460-450 BC)

Gold earrings and clay spindle whorls, probably women's votive offerings to the Nymphs, from the cave of Pan.

With a sad air and a gentle touch of her hand, Pasimache looks into her half-opened toiletries box (pyxis) *for the lost brilliance of her life on earth. Also looking at it is the friend or relative who has come with gifts to her grave.*
The neat outline that unites the figures and delineates the female bodies dates the relief to the early decades of the 4th cent. BC.
Details on following pages.





The splendid enthroned woman was no more than a child when she entered Hades. This is indicated by her peplos, girdled high, and the bird that she is holding. Mid-4th cent. BC.

The statue of a young boy, which was transferred to Brexiza, is a type of votive offering frequently encountered in the 4th cent. BC in sanctuaries of medical gods such as Asclepius.

This scene of a woman bringing a pyxis to a dead woman resembles the gravestone of Pasimache solely in terms of its theme. The gravestone was replaced here by a monumental naiskos, relief figures by ones carved in the round, and the community of emotions by the tragic solitude of the statues (330-320 BC).

On a gravestone found in Pallene, the dead Phainarete is not being given jewellery by her maidservant, but rather a piece of folded cloth, a gift more appropriate for the dead. 4th cent. BC.

The gravestone from Kato Souli (ancient Tricorynthus) depicts the common fate of the many women who died in childbirth, who, like this anonymous dead woman, were obliged to hand their newborn child over to a maidservant. 4th cent. BC.

The magnificence, beauty, and often heroic style radiated by the gravestones of young men is the expression of the parents' intolerable pain at the loss of their son in the flower of his youth. Usually, as here, he is portrayed as an athlete leaning pensively on a pillar, with a faraway look, indifferent to the loyal dog licking his feet or to his athletic gear and games (a bird here) that his young servant is offering him. The expression on his face, which we know from other similar stelae, has been lost, together with the upper part of the slab. Circa 330 BC.

*A different picture of death can be seen on the marble vessels that adorn family tombs, on which the customary scene of greeting the dead (*dexiosis*) usually evolves into a tranquil family gathering. A fine example of this is provided by two marble Panathenaic amphorae from the family enclosure of the priest Theogenes Gelytos, from the classical cemetery at Vranas. The type of vessel alone testifies not to mourning but to pride in the son, Geles, who brought glory to his family in athletic contests. At the same time, here the typical dexiosis scene is just another moment among the many ordinary, fond encounters that bring together three generations of men, women and children beside the tomb. 350-320 BC.*

RIGHT: *The silent exchange between Geles and his father Theogenes, a priest, as indicated by his long hair, ungirdled tunic and knife, is beyond place and time.*

LEFT: *Thrasyboule, Gele's wife from the neighbouring deme of Ikarion, is trying to communicate with her mother-in-law, and the little girl leaning on her grandmother's knees is also searching for her lost loved one with a faraway look.*

ROMAN MARATHON
or
THE LAST MARATHONIAN

Herodes Atticus belonged to an epoch in which the battle of Marathon was a distant but not forgotten glory. Contrary to what happened in the Classical period, during the years of the decline, people made every effort to keep the past alive, from which alone they could expect to derive the moral strength necessary to deal with their life, which had exhausted itself in frivolous delights, leaving political life essentially void of meaning from the moment they lost their independence.

Marathon was no longer the deme of the period of the great battle. It now lived in the shadow and on the fringe of the enormous estate and buildings of Herodes Atticus, descendent of a Marathonian family whose memories went back to the 2nd century BC, to the age in which the new world order was being established in Attica and throughout Greece. Herodes was a Roman senator (his father had been one of the first Greek senators), a teacher of Greek rhetoric and friend of philhellenic emperors, the multimillionaire benefactor of many Greek (and other) cities and sanctuaries (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*. 551), in short, someone who belonged to a world different from that of his compatriots in Marathon or Athens. He divided his time between Kephisia and Marathon. The strolls and discussions under the shade of the plane trees and near the cooling waters of his elegant villa in Kephisia, where he frequently hosted his Roman friends, have not been forgotten, thanks to the "Attic nights" of Aulus Gellius. In Marathon, where his ancestral estates were located, Athenian youths would gather to attend his classes, in essence emptying the city (Philostratus, 571). He must have gone out hunting frequently there, as far away as Varnavas or Brauron, because the plains, ravines and coasts are dotted with known monuments large and small testifying to his presence: reliefs and statues of his pupils and emperors, sanctuaries, baths, hunting lodges, etc.

Some idea is provided by the recently excavated exotic Egyptian sanctuary of Isis and Osiris that he built on a man-made islet at the edge of the small Brexiza Marsh, in the Nile-like landscape of the estuaries of the stream running down from Agrieliki, a place where Herodes must have felt the vital presence of Isis, who was born "among the papyrus" and obliged to raise little Horus as she hid amid the marshes of the Delta

"…and lavishly they scattered / Demeter her sheaves, Aphrodite her roses" (Kostis Palamas, The Hymn to Athena*, VI, 20/21). Detail from the unpublished statue of Isis-Demeter from the south porch of the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods at Brexiza.*

(Herodotus, 2.156) and, wandering in a manner reminiscent of Demeter, to seek the pieces of her beloved spouse, in a papyrus felucca. And wasn't it on an island in the Nile, not unlike this one here, that her grave was indicated? (Diodorus, 1.22)

Four marble-paved corridors, starting from the four Egyptian-type gateways in the middle of the four sides of a virtually square enclosure, led to the central building. The restoration of this building is problematic and its explanation enigmatic. An underground corridor and a colonnade surround a central stepped pyramidal structure that was most likely crowned by a small temple containing one or more statues of divinities. The identity of the gods worshipped is testified by dozens of enormous earthenware lamps (diameter of up to 40 cm.) bearing impressed busts of Isis and Serapis (merging the persons of Osiris and Zeus), which were intended to light the nocturnal rituals in honour of the goddess, about which the texts inform us.

Colossal Egyptian-style statues of the divine couple Isis and Osiris flank the gateways inside and outside the four entrances to the sanctuary, where they were found lying beside their bases. Motionless, with a pillar at the back anchoring them to the ground, remote, with their eyes looking straight ahead, arms attached to their torso, with the left foot constantly forward, it was as though they wanted, through their rigid archaic stance, to maintain the idea of power untouched by time, unchanged by successive civilisations, an idea that demanded absolute submission and guaranteed serene happiness in this world and the next.

To your right is the goddess Isis-Urania, "mistress of rivers, winds and the sea", the Great Mother of nature who protected the reproduction of the earth's fruits and of human beings, Demeter and Aphrodite together. The goddess is wearing a long, ungirdled linen tunic over which is a thin, almost fitted mantle with symmetrical folds that outline her slender body, radiating simplicity and innocence, as well as the demand for mental and physical purity, while her vestigial Archaic smile suggests the promise of eternal life. Her crown, with the disk of the sun flanked by bovine horns, still retains something of her age-old zoomorphic origin, the "*boukeros parthenos*", or horned maiden Io (Aeschylus), who, pursued by Hera, sought refuge in Egypt before her cult spread from port to port throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Italy, where she distributed the gifts of Demeter and the promise of eternal life until, becoming ever less material, she was to pave the way for people's faith in the religious type of the Virgin Mary.

The pantheist character of the Great Goddess is declared by the symbols of her attributes. On the south gateway she is Isis-Demeter, with husks of wheat in her hands, the goddess who taught man to cultivate the land, but also the *thesmophoros* who taught them the laws. On the west gateway she is Isis-Aphrodite, who brought man and woman together, but an Aphrodite unrecognisable as the familiar dewy-eyed figure of the Kytheran with the soft skin, although you might guess from the bouquet of roses she is holding in her unflexed arms. They are the magic flowers to which Lucius (protagonist of Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*), and every believer, owed deliverance from the lust and magic games that metamorphosed him into an ass. More difficult is the identification of the goddess on the north gateway, who is holding indeterminate cylindrical objects, sceptres according to some, in her closed fist. Of a different nature is the gateway on the east entrance, which led to the sea though a large colonnaded courtyard. At this pre-eminent gateway of the goddess, mother of Horus-Sun, beside the base of divine statues, only the headless statue of a man was found, wearing a fringed woollen mantle, possibly some orator from Herodes' circle. However, it is possible that a fourth statue of the goddess – or perhaps of some priestess? – that was found in a small storeroom with the lamps, together with a sphinx, could also have originated from there. The different, freer stance of this figure, crowned by a diadem with a sacred cobra is characterised by the movement of the left hand that is lifting the mantle, as well as by the rendering of the mantle, which is tied at the breast in the knot characteristic of Isis.

Bust of Herodes Atticus from Brexiza, 2nd cent. AD., *Louvre Museum.*

Bust of the emperor Marcus Aurelius from Brexiza, 2nd cent. AD., Louvre Museum.

To the right of the person entering, the goddess accompanies her divine brother and spouse, the dark Osiris, whose face can be simultaneously recognised as that of Dionysus, bearer of civilisation to the human race, and of Pluto, lord of the underworld and judge of the dead. The figure follows the pattern that has become familiar in an endless number of Egyptian statues: nude, in the stance that once inspired the Greeks to create the *kouros*, but without ever becoming liberated from the bonds of the pillar and the morality of the loin cloth, or from historic references to the symbols of power, such as the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, or from the features of individuality, such as here, where on the face of the god we can see imprinted the features of Antinous, Hadrian's young favourite, who threw himself into the Nile and drowned in order to save the emperor from some obscure threat, and in whom Greece found a new god, a new Dionysus.

It may have been the landscape that inspired Herodes to establish this sanctuary, but the sole reference to it is associated with an anecdote from his life (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists*, 552-553) and specifically from his first meeting with a young giant named Agathion, nicknamed Heracles, "at the shrine of Canobus" who had been helmsman on Menelaus' flagship, had died and was buried in the Egyptian city of that name, "where the oracle of Pluto was located" (Plutarch. *Isis and Osiris*, 361 E-F). However, we should not imagine the sanctuary as some isolated and inaccessible monument in the middle of the marsh, like the tomb of Isis and Osiris at Phyle. It was part of a large complex, a romantic venue which also boasted elegant baths, in which Herodes would enjoy the delights of the Roman Badekultur by the sea after the hunt. Together with whatever else is still concealed among the bulrushes on the coast (only recently a long narrow lake has begun to come to light beside the baths, that is reminiscent of Canobus at Hadrian's villa in Tivoli), a picture is being pieced together that suggests a villa similar in variety and grace to that of Hadrian.

The large semi-circular exedra on the other side of Marathon over the ravine of Oinoe, not far from the cave of Pan, belongs to another of Herodes' baths in a landscape now dominated by the presence of a Frankish (Catalan) tower. In front of the baths, on a lower level, hidden under the plane trees and the dense vegetation, and frequently flooded, is a monumental fountain that has been hypothetically identified as the Pythion of Oinoe mentioned by a commentator of

Head of Faustina the Younger, wife of Marcus Aurelius, from the vicinity of the Tumulus, 2nd cent. AD.

Sophocles to have been the starting point for the procession to Delphi, an extremely problematic structure, in terms of both form and date, that is likewise attributed to Herodes. It is an artificial lake 13.60 x 17 metres, a type of nymphaeum surrounded on three sides by rows of pillars. There are low marble parapets with a slight curve on the upper surface (identified for this reason as "couches") beside the pillars that supported a lighter structure, perhaps a roof; between the pillars were fixed the marble slabs of the parapet behind which was the water. At the back of the lake, the taps of a monumental fountain would have been flanked by a larger- than-life-size male figure holding a vase, reclining on a luxurious couch with his lower body covered by a mantle. His stance, but especially his garments and the couch, are inappropriate for the personification of a river – which one might expect here and was so speculated by the excavator – and call to mind the type of the known "heroic reliefs", leading to its identification as the hero Marathon, about whose statue we are informed again by the story of Canobus to which reference was made above. The sensitive rendering of the body and drapery of the hero's mantle, however, raises doubts as to the Roman dating of the statue, as well as that of the entire nymphaeum. To this period certainly belongs construction of the outer enclosure wall and the stairs that led to a higher corridor behind the fountain. The association with Herodes, in the absence of any other evidence, is provided by the inscription carved on one pillar from his mother "Alkia to the Immortal Gods".

Thus did this man, with his nostalgia for classical antiquity, place the seal of his presence on the plain of Marathon, taking care to associate his every step with the monumental configuration of the landscape and the honours proper to the gods. What he could not or would not understand, i.e. that Marathon had by then ceased to exist, is revealed by the inscriptions he had carved on top of the arch, and decorated here too with statues, on both sides of the gateway into his fenced estate (today called *Madra tis Grias*, or Old Lady's Sheep-fold), between Oinoe and Vranas. A remote reference to the famous double inscription on Hadrian's Gate in Athens are these roughly incised inscriptions on the gate of "immortal (conjugal) concord" to inform the passer-by of the boundaries between the estate of Herodes and the property of his wife Regilla, in practice declaring the fact that a very large part, if not all of the glorious deme, was his private property.

Thus are his personal style and mood imprinted on all the monuments of Roman Marathon. Their neoclassical brilliance faded with the passage of time, and the landscape became shrouded in the sombre veil of the lonely millionaire's sorrow at seeing all his loved ones die, one after the other. To the laudatory inscription on the right pillar of the gate of immortal concord, which speaks of the "happiness of him who built a new city, giving it the name of his wife", the death of Regilla was to write a sad postscript: "Sorrow overcomes me as I wonder how I will live far from my beloved wife in an empty house. See how the gods have managed to mix joys with sorrows in the cup of our life!" It is possible that something similar occurred in the seaside sanctuary of Brexiza. The chthonic nature of Osiris, and the metaphor of the grave-as-harbour on the inscription "*Athenaidos Limen*" found nearby show that this sanctuary, too, if not built from the outset, may possibly have been remodelled here by Herodes into an enormous mausoleum (something of this kind was suggested by the archaeologists who excavated his villa in Cynuria) for his lost daughter or even for himself, a harbour of serenity in the bosom of Isis. The same absence of loved ones that we can see imprinted on the haunted eyes and tired features of his face tormented him now on his solitary walks through his vast estates and the hunting grounds of Marathon. Also attesting to this are all those slabs that he erected "in fields, near springs, in the shade of the plane trees" in an effort to recall faces to his mind and moments with his lost students. They were addressed to Achilleus, "I have put you in this forest so that I can see you, so that everybody can remember how great our friendship was", to the young African Memnon, using his pet name for the youth, "little topaz"; but above all to Polydeucion "who was like a son" to him. Two por-

Aerial photograph of the ruins of Herodes Atticus' buildings at Brexiza.

traits of this young man, still a child, have been found in Marathon, and even the sanctuary at Brauron, albeit silted over by the creeks of the Erasinos, retain his memory in the depiction of a *nekrodeipnon* dedicated to the Hero Polydeucion.

It could be said that Marathon condenses into a miniature the picture of Roman Attica, a land whose name was once associated with the concept of freedom, and that had now become a pleasant place for the learning and recreation ("Attica is a good school for those who enjoy conversation," Philostratus, 553) of the few, selected men who still had the privilege and opportunity, in an irreversibly altered world, of cultivating the memory of a uniquely beautiful past. There is no monument more typical of the distance that separated the Attica of the 2nd century AD from the spirit of freedom that once brightened the field of Marathon than the inscription in the Museum that describes the festive welcome accorded to Herodes when he returned to Athens in 175 AD after a long absence caused by his enemies. The repentant Athenian people were there in a body, led by Athena, with priests and priestesses first, children's choruses and groups of young

people dressed in white, followed by members of revered bodies such as the Areopagus and Boule, and finally the citizens, in order of their class, all freshly bathed and dressed in white, foreigners and slaves alike.

The monuments, reliefs, portraits and inscriptions in the Museum that we have described are like the setting for a play in which the ideal world of Herodes and his like were supplemented – in vain since it no longer had an object – by the ideology of the classical citizen-farmer represented by the people of Marathon. We see them, dressed in their agrarian clothing, holding farming implements and claiming their fields from the local tycoon. The peasants, these *agroikoi*, or rude men, as they were called by the townspeople – for whom the monuments of vanity that adorned vast expanses of land set aside for walks and hunting by their arrogant fellow townsman, meant the appropriation of their own properties more than any affront to the sacred land of their ancestors – were to express their objections by tearing down or destroying these monuments. We know this from his biographer (Philostratus, 559). It is also indicated by his effort to exorcise evil by means of lengthy curses on the same slabs, such as on those of Achilleus in Oinoe and Varnavas. "In the name of gods and heroes", it says, "whoever you may be that occupies the land, must never move any of these: and whoever dares to tear down or move the images and the jewellery on the statues, may the earth never bear fruit for him again, and the sea never receive him and may he and his entire family be wiped out. But whoever protects and honours them, according to custom, and sees to their preservation, may he and his descendants have many blessings." This did not prevent Herodes himself from having gravestones from the tumulus of Marathon carried off to his Peloponnesian villa, just a few years after Pausanias' visit in 150 AD. He might have been able to justify this act to himself by virtue of his origins in Marathon and his imaginary kinship with Miltiades and Cimon (Philostratus, 546). The indifference of present day Athenians, however, to something that was once regarded as desecration can be explained by how times have changed and the fact that intellectual circles' interest in the glorious past has become more literary than archaeological. And didn't the same traveller, when walking through Athens, notice that the images of Miltiades and Themistocles on the Prytaneum had been re-inscribed with the names of a Roman and a Thracian (Pausanias, 1.18.3)?

The empty feeling left by the international classicism of this sculpture, both the Egyptian figures of Isis and the standardised reliefs of the "good farmer" that confront the Marathon trophy from a distance of six and a half centuries, gives us a sense of the end of an era which, like ours, knew only how to appropriate but not how to honour it truly by reviving its ancient heritage.

Headless statue of a young man, probably an orator, wearing a tunic and woollen mantle, from the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods at Brexiza, 2nd cent. AD.
(UNPUBLISHED)

FOLLOWING PAGES: *Restored façade of the north porch of the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods in the Marathon Museum.*

On the statue of the Sphinx from the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods at Brexiza, the figure of the chthonic guard of the sanctuaries and tombs of ancient Egypt and archaic Greece has lost its daemonic character, as it welcomes the Roman worshippers of Isis with what is almost a smile.
(UNPUBLISHED)

Statue of Antinous-Osiris
from the western porch
of the sanctuary
of the Egyptian gods.
(UNPUBLISHED)

LEFT: *Statue of Antinous-Osiris from the western porch of the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods. National Archaeological Museum.*

Statue of Antinous-Osiris wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt from the north porch of the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods.
(UNPUBLISHED)

Statue of Isis-Demeter from the south porch of the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods.
(UNPUBLISHED)

Statue of Isis-Aphrodite from the west porch of the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods. (UNPUBLISHED)

Statue of Isis from the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods.
(UNPUBLISHED)

Large clay lamp with busts of Serapis and Isis from the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods. (UNPUBLISHED)

Statue of Horus as a falcon wearing the crown of Upper Egypt, from the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods.
(UNPUBLISHED)

The landscape of Oinoe today, dominated by the Catalan tower. To the right, under the modern pipe can be seen the traces of an exedra and the baths of Herodes. The so-called "Pythion" is on a lower level.

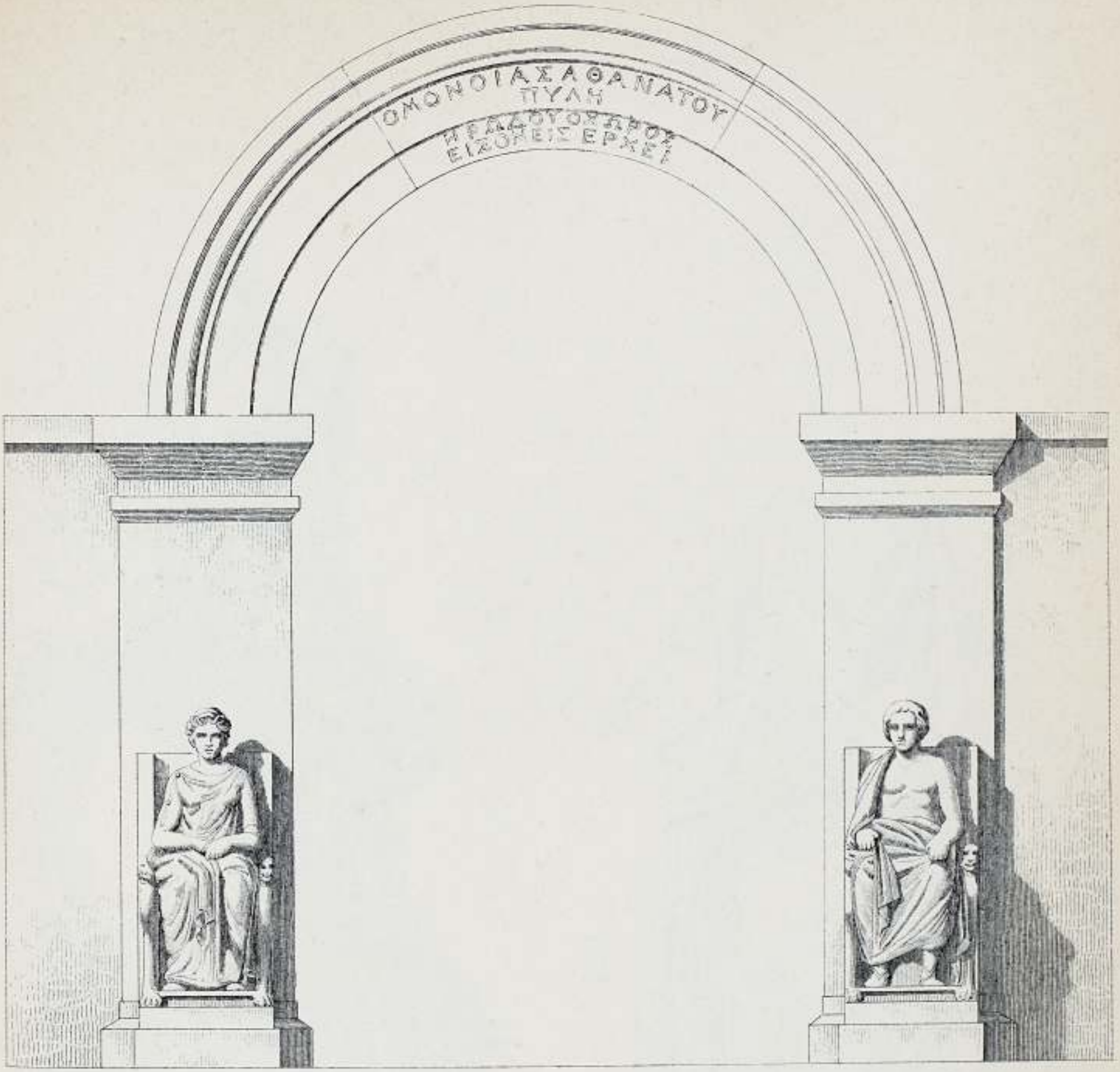
Part of the baths built by Herodes Atticus at the end of the Oinoe ravine, right over the monumental fountain called Pythion. Above is the floor of a room in the baths, and below are the pillars – made of round bricks – that supported the heated floor.

FOLLOWING PAGES: *The excavated section of the so-called Pythion at Oinoe is covered most of the year by spring waters and lush vegetation.*

Statue of a reclining male from the Pythion at Oinoe, 2nd cent. AD.

The row of "couches" (according to the interpretation of the fountain's marble parapets in front of the pillars of the interior peristyle) on which was based the identification of the site as the "sleeping chamber" of the Pythion of Oinoe, which is known from the sources as the starting point for the official Athenian procession to Delphi.

The valley's spring waters and wild vegetation have today covered with their romantic cloak the ruins of the magnificent fountain structure built by Herodes, giving the landscape a different colour, alien to its ancient monumental form.



I. PORTE PRÈS DE MARATHON.

II

III

The top of the arch on the gate to Herodes' estate that bears the inscription "Gate of immortal concord of Regilla: the entranceway."

The gate of immortal concord from Herodes' estate at Mandra tis Grias: reconstruction of the gate by LeBas (1888), which depicts the top of the arch bearing Herodes' inscription and the statues of himself and Regilla that flanked it.

The remains of the statues of Herodes and his wife Regilla that flanked the gate of concord.

Headless herm, one of the many that Herodes had erected in and around Marathon for his students, with terrible curses on any future owner of the place who would dare to move or disturb the statues (i.e. the stele) and blessings on whoever would respect them.

ΤΟΥΤΟΝΕΙΚΑΝΤΑΣΤΟΥΤΟΝΤΩΝΑΓΑΛΜΑ
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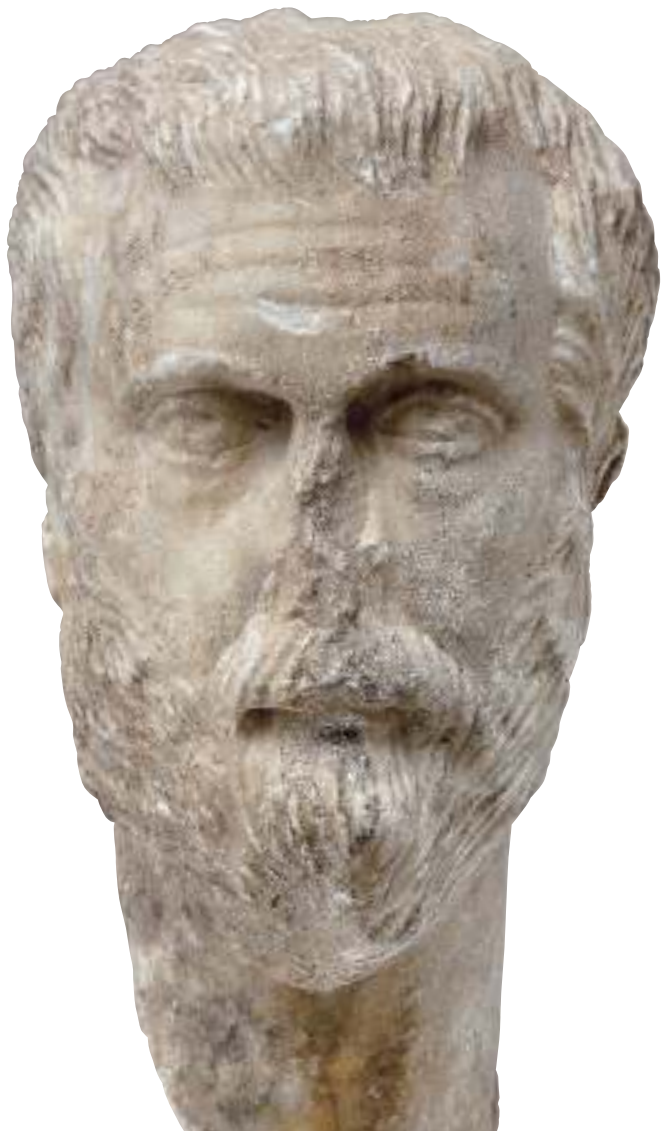
ΩΝΚΑΙΕΙΝΟΣΤΟΣΤΙΣΑΝΕΚΑΤΑΧΩΡΑΝ
ΦΥΛΑΤΤΟΙΚΑΙΤΙΜΩΡΙΑΤΑΕΙΣΘΟΤΑ
ΚΑΙΑΥΞΩΝΔΙΑΜΕΝΟΙΤΟ
ΘΑΣΕΙΝΑΙΤΟΥΤΟΚΑΙΑΥΤΟΣΗΛΙ
ΑΥΜΗΝΑΣΘΑΙΔΕΜΗΔΕΑΟΥΒΗΣΑΣΘΑ
ΜΗΔΕΜΗΠΑΤΟΚΡΟΥΣΑΝΗΣΥΝΘΡΑΥΣΑ
ΗΣΥΝΧΕΑΙΤΗΣΜΟΡΦΗΣΚΑΙΤΟΥΣΧΗ
ΜΑΤΟΣΕΙΔΕΤΙΣΟΥΤΩΣΠΟΙΗΣΕΙ
ΚΑΙΕΠΙΤΟΥΤΟΙΣΑΡΑ ΑΛΛΕΑΝΤΑ
ΤΕΕΠΙΘΗΛΑΤΑΤΩΝΜΟΡΦΩΝΑΣΙ
ΝΗΚΑΙΑΚΡΑΜΑΙΚΑΙΤΑΥΠΟΣΤΗΜΑΤΑ
ΤΑΣΒΑΣΕΙΣΟΥΣΕΠΟΙΗΘΗΣΑΝ

BELOW: *The inscription on a headless herm of the Ethiopian Memnon, one of Herodes' favourite pupils, reads MEMNON TOPADEIN (Memnon topaz) [friend of Artemis].* ABOVE*: an African head, also attributed to him, from the villa of Herodes at Lucu, 2nd cent.* AD*., Berlin Museum.*

ABOVE: *The badly damaged pictorial heads of Herodes and Polydeucion, his favourite pupil, whom he had adopted, and after whose death he worshipped as a hero. From the vicinity of the Tumulus of the Athenians.* BELOW: *Anonymous head, probably of some orator or philosopher, an old pupil of Herodes. 3rd cent.* AD.



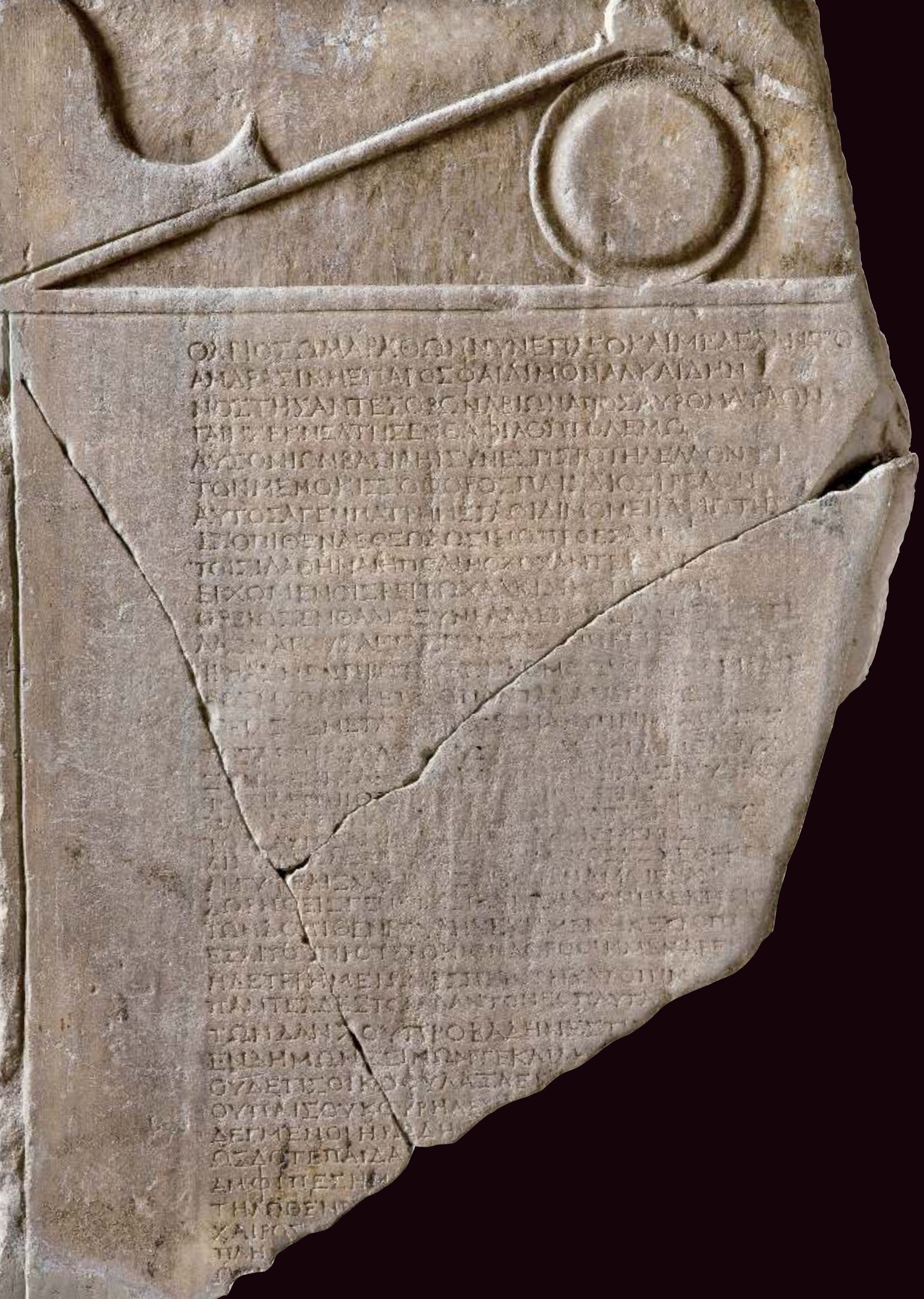
Pedimental gravestone of the characteristic Roman type, with the representation of a couple (or brother and sister) facing frontally, from among the inhabitants of Marathon who were contemporaries of Herodes. The inscription informs us of their names: "Alexandros Aithalides, son of Antigonos" and "Lenais of the Aithalides family, daughter of Antigonos". 2nd cent. AD.

On the stele erected on the grave of young Paramonos of Piraeus by his parents, the youth has already passed into the realm of heroes. He is now a statue on a pedestal, being embraced by his mother. On the inscription, it is he who speaks about the world, which he enjoyed with his companions only very briefly, before falling into a deep sleep under the soil; he is a young Theseus, a star among other stars like Castor and Pollux. Late 2nd/early 3rd cent. AD.

The gravestone of Zosas and the young Nostimos from Miletus follows the contemporary iconographic type of the bonus agricola *"good farmer", which praises the return to the virtues of agrarian life. The two men are represented in a short tunic, with high boots and a vine-grower's pruner. The grapevine held by the youth and the heifer between the two figures are allusions to the same agricultural environment. 2nd cent. AD.*

The roughly carved inscription "Eucles son of Herodes from Marathon" on part of a pedestal belongs to one of Herodes' ancestors who laid the foundations for the family's power and wealth during the two last centuries before Christ. He may have been the eponymous archon in 46/45 BC or leader of the Aiantis clan in 106/105 BC.

The inscription uses poetic language to describe the splendid welcome accorded to Herodes upon his return to Athens in 175 AD, at the end of a long period of self-exile, to which he had been driven by the constant judicial disputes with his fellow citizens. He returned as a priest of Dionysus, accompanied by the great goddesses of Eleusis. The meeting took place on the Sacred Way at the boundaries of the Thriasian Plain. All of Athens was gathered there repentantly to greet him. The procession was led by statues of Athena and Aphrodite, long-haired priests and priestesses and children's choirs chanting hymns, followed by new recruits in the white cloaks he had given them, Areopagites, members of the Boule, and the rest of the population, citizens, foreigners and slaves, all dressed in white, leaving an empty city behind them.



It is not known whether this bronze statue of a boy, with its Praxitelian stance and body, that was recovered from the sea off Marathon and is today exhibited in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, came from some classical sanctuary in the region, or whether (as has been hypothesised) it was used as a lamp-holder at one of Herodes' seaside villas.

PAGES 322-333: *Marathon, nocturnal landscape in about 1820, engraving by H.W. Williams.*

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