SCYTHIAN ARCHERS IN ANCIENT ATTIC VASE PAINTING: THEIR IDENTITY AND FUNCTION

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SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (MA) in Black Sea Cultural Studies

December 2016
Thessaloniki – Greece
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I hereby declare that the work submitted is mine and that where I have made use of another’s work, I have attributed the source(s) according to the Regulations set in the Student’s Handbook.

December 2016
Thessaloniki - Greece
Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MA in Black Sea Cultural Studies at the International Hellenic University. The present research endeavors to shed light on the enigmatic Scythian archer who enjoyed a considerably short-lived but very important place in Attic vase-painting, especially during the late archaic period. Due to the fact that to date no investigation has considered special aspects of Attic vases with the depiction of Scythian archer on it, this study seeks to look into the origin, identity and the function of archers illustrated on Attic vases of the archaic period, by investigating the iconographic significance of the image. The depictions of the so-called Scythians on Attic vases contribute to and explore profoundly the history of the relations between Athens and the population of the North Pontic region. In order to complete the research objectives the issue of the Scythian costume is also discussed. This subject in its turn advances our understanding of numerous aspects of the history on Scythians and assists in reconstructing the appearance of various peoples. Moreover, this study highlights several scenes in which the Scythian archers are portrayed. The study submits recommendations and conclusions, encapsulating the main findings that have been obtained from the research, and demonstrates how it can be extended to future research.

Keywords: archers, identity, Scythians, Attic vases

Stella Minasyan

December 2016
My humble effort I dedicate to my Parents
Acknowledgements

I never expected that I would arrive at this juncture of my life pursuing doctoral and master’s degrees concurrently. Fortunately, I survived both!

Luckily, I had many wonderful people around me who raised my spirit during this journey. As I come at last to the concluding stages of the writing process, I would like to extend my immense gratitude to my supervisor, Assistant Professor in Classical Archaeology Manolis Manoledakis, whose valuable and patient guidance, calming influence and tremendous knowledge provided focus and rigor to this work. His expertise and his helpful advice are deeply appreciated. I owe a great deal of my scholarly development to Dr. Manolis Manoledakis as it was him who sparked my interest in the fascinating world of Ancient Art and Archaeology, encouraging me to embark on an extremely stimulating and rewarding intellectual journey. Thank you for planting the seed that has now come to fruition, taking this journey with me and supporting me in my growth as a scholar.

On a personal level, I would like to give a great deal of credit for the wonderful support of my family in Armenia. To my sister, my caring mother and father, who have been behind me every step along the way toward these degrees. There were long periods of time between visits and missed events due to writing demands. I hope to make it up to them soon. Words cannot express my gratitude to my beloved Giorgos whose strength and optimism have always been a source of inspiration and strength for me. Without his patience, caring love and support this thesis would have never been brought to completion.

Lastly but certainly not least, I would like to extend my thankfulness to all my Greek friends in Thessaloniki and my IHU classmates for being there for me. Each of you kept me sane, laughing, and inspired every day. Finally, I thank God who makes all things possible. He kept me through this entire process and allowed me to reach this milestone.
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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Despite a renewed interest in scholarship about archaic warfare, hoplites, Homeric society, and other related areas, archery and their representation in art in the Archaic period has not been studied expansively for half a century. Perhaps the biggest problem facing this study is a general lack of firm archaeological evidence. Literary and historical sources are mere representations. The most abundant source of information about the practice of archery in the archaic period is art - painted vases in particular. The nature of this evidence is also problematic. There are numerous issues inherent in the interpretation of art – preservation and context. Western scholarship has focused on Attic vase painting as a primary archaeological source of information on the appearance of foreigners.

The depictions of the so-called “Scythian” archers in Attic vase painting have been considered a vivid testimony to the history of the relations between Athens and the population of the North Pontic region. Scholars have not paid adequate attention to an important question as to whether these are purely Scythians at all. The position that has the most currency in modern historical scholarship, however, is that the images represent actual Scythians.

Costume has been regarded as one of the main iconographic identifying criteria for Scythians, a collective name given to a group of nomadic peoples of Central-Asian origin, who occupied the steppe regions of Eurasia from the 7th through to the 3rd century BC. It reflects the identity and the function of an individual or a group of peoples more than most other aspects of material culture since it combines both technological achievements and aesthetic values of society. Scythian attire has not been used in a specific ethnic sense, but rather employed either to represent a wider range of Asians, or to indicate the function of archer and/or his mythical character. \(^1\) It can also be associated with their believed geographical origin in the Black Sea region.

\(^1\) Pinney, 1983, pp. 130, 137
The iconographic importance of the figure has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry. Foremost among the patterns or trends involving the images, is the Scythian’s association with archery. The vast majority of Scythians on Greek vessels are depicted as archers. Almost all (93%) of the archers on Athenian vases during this time period (c. 575 – 475 B.C.E.) are depicted as Scythians. The association between archery and Scythians in this period is indisputable, and it is not confined to material culture. If Szemerényi is correct, the word Scythian itself derives from an Old Iranian word meaning ‘shooter’ or ‘archer’.²

There is no other credible evidence indicating that Scythians existed in Athens during this time period. In fact, when they do become a physical reality in Athens - first as part of the Persian invasions of 490 and 480 B.C.E. and then later as public slaves or ‘policemen’ in or sometime after 476 B.C.E. – they cease to appear on vases altogether. The Scythian archer, who more often than not is pictured as an ally or companion of the hoplite during the archaic period, becomes the Persian (or Amazon) enemy. In sum, the enigmatic Scythian archer enjoyed a relatively brief but very important place in Attic vase painting, especially during the late archaic period.

To this end, this dissertation will attempt to provide historical evidence on archery and discuss cultural interactions between Scythians and Greeks. Moreover, it aims at discussing the problems of interpretation of Scythian archers. A final point worthy of mention in discussion of my dissertation revolves around writing. A small fraction of potentially interesting nonsense inscriptions associated with Scythians on Attic vases will be considered. These vases speak again, not only through illustrating ancient Greek relations with the cultures of the Black Sea and Caucasus region, but also by preserving the earliest written examples of the languages spoken by these “barbarians”.

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² Szemerényi, 1980, p. 2062
Each of the studies carried out in the field has both merit and limitations. It will, however, prove fruitful to look at the collective body of work in an effort to underline some of the most problematic issues raised in the scholarship.

In the following pages the available evidence is examined with a critical eye on the sources. In particular, we will consider the relevant iconography and archaeological finds, supplementing them with and contrasting them to literary sources as a method of arriving at a more comprehensive understanding of Scythian archers and their costume in particular, and ancient dress in general.

1.1 Identifying the Area of Research

The depictions of so-called ‘Scythian’ archers in Attic vase-painting have been widely used as a major source for ethnographic details pertaining to Scythians, in particular for piecing together Scythian costume and Scythian military tactics. In addition, various historical conclusions have been drawn from them regarding the nature of relations between Scythians and Greeks and the image of Scythians in Greek literature and mythology.

1.2 Need for the Study

Scholars have paid little attention to the fundamental question which ought to be resolved before any attempts are made to use the depictions on Attic vases as a source for the history of actual Scythians. In order to use the images to this end, we need to be sure that it is specifically Scythians that have been portrayed.

Precisely for this reason there is a need to distinguish between its two different aspects. Firstly, a question arises as whom the Attic painters wished to depict on their vases, whether the painters themselves and their clients saw the figures we refer to as Scythian horsemen as indeed Scythians. The second question relates to the nature of
the actual prototype for these figures as from where the Attic painters in their depic-
tions of archers they adopted those specific features.

To this end, the present dissertation indicates the need for responsible inter-
disciplinary research, and the importance of turning over the old stones.

1.3 **Significance of the Study**

Through this exploration, we hope to make substantial contribution to the field of re-
search by uncovering several findings with important implications for our understand-
ing of Scythian archers on Attic vase painting of the late archaic period and by high-
lighting important ways in which they are depicted on Attic vases. Therefore, this study
is up-to-date, practical and claims to offer benefits to the emerging research.

1.4 **Nature of the Study**

The study was undertaken in order to investigate and to reveal the origin and the iden-
tity of Scythian archers, as well as to discuss the function they play in ancient Attic
vase-painting, by revealing the problem of interpretation and by studying different
scenes and numerous ways in which the Scythian archers have been depicted on Attic
vase paintings.

1.5 **Thesis Outline**

Chapter I introduces the background of the research area, as well as the theoretical
framework and the social context of the study. It emphasizes the significance of this
research in the area and gives its purpose and scope.

Chapter II comprises a review of the literature on the subject in the area and is
divided into three subchapters. The first subchapter starts with a brief overview of lit-
erary and archaeological evidence on Scythians by reviewing their role in the history of
the region, as well as outlining the notion of the term “Scythian”. Afterwards, Greek sources on Scythians are briefly presented by making a special reference to Strabo, Hesiod, Eumelus, Mimnermus, Alcaeus, Sappho and others. The identity of the archers was highlighted with a particular focus on Cretan archers, therapontes and thetes.

Chapter III approaches the issue of the origin of archers and the introduction of their image into iconography by highlighting the iconographic importance of the figure in Athenian vase-painting. Next, historical evidence on archers and their image is provided in detail by examining substantial studies and surveys by Wernicke, Helbig, Plassart, Minns, Schoppe, Vos and many others. Recent studies by Osborne and Ivanitchik on the issue of Scythian archers have also been discussed. Furthermore, interpretation of the archers in Athenian vase-painting is provided, as well as the depictions of the figures in so-called “Scythian” clothes is analysed. Finally, the last subchapter analyses the depictions of Scythian archers on Attic vases classified by various scenes in which they are portrayed, such as in chariot and fighting scenes, Scythians with hoplites, with horsemen and alone, as well as in extispicy and mythological scenes.

Chapter IV elaborates further on the review of literature and studies the archers on Archaic Attic vases as group of objects that have often been considered a vivid testimony of contacts between the Greeks and the Scythians. Significant details are provided regarding the Scythian costume viewed as identifying criteria for Scythians. Moreover, the interpretation of the depictions of Scythians on Attic vases is outlined viewing them outside the military context. In addition, the last subchapter presents inscriptions associated with Scythians on Attic vases.

Chapter V summarizes the main findings of the study in relation to the figure of the “Scythian” archer, identifies the contributions of the study to the field of research on art, as well as any limitations encountered. In addition, it outlines the avenues for future research and gives suggestions concerning possible areas worthy of investigation.
Chapter II CULTURAL INTERACTIONS: SCYTHIANS AND GREEKS

In this chapter the particular issue of the interactions which developed between the local peoples of the north coast of the Black Sea, conventionally termed ‘Scythians’ and Greeks is raised.

The identity of the archers is discussed by first addressing the deeply entrenched view that archers on mainland Greece were foreign. The history of both the Scythian and Cretan associations is examined, proving that neither of them was likely to have served as archers on the mainland during the Archaic period. Moreover, the cases of therapeutæ and thetes are discussed, arriving at the conclusion that the latter offer the most probable candidate for the archaic archer.

2.1 The World of Scythians

There is a growing body of literature about the Scythians and Scythia, which, however, cannot always be relied upon. They have left us no historical writing of their own. The existing documentary evidence was written by foreigners, some of whom were enemies. The Scythians first appeared in the historical record in the 8th century BC.\(^3\) The difficulty of characterizing or defining what is meant by ‘Scythian’ emerges repeatedly in Herodotus’ account. In Herodotus’s path-breaking analysis, the peoples, perceived by Greeks as ‘Scythians’, emerge as complex groupings, with different lifestyles and different ‘Scythian’ tendencies (particularly in language or in dress) which might account for their being more or less than ‘Scythian’. Furthermore, even among the peoples who are considered by Herodotus to be somehow entirely Scythian, there is a hierarchy of social ranking which sets one grouping of Scythians (the Royal Scythians as he defines them) above the others. However, this pioneering attempt of Herodotus to make a distinction between the Scythians has not been supported by subsequent

\(^3\) Szemerényi, 1980, pp. 2051–93
scholars. It is also worth noting that besides the Greek historians, the subject of the Scythians has also been touched upon in Assyrian court documents and Hebrew texts.

Whereas relatively little literary evidence on Scythians is available to us, the archaeological evidence is considerable. The most valuable archaeological remains associated with the Scythian are the enormous burial mounds, called kurgans. Consequently, valuable data is provided by the excavations of these numerous burial mounds.

The Scythians were a large group of ancient Iranian Eurasian nomads who formerly occupied what is now southern Russia north of the Black Sea and were originally dwelling in large areas in the central Eurasian steppes from about the 9th century BC until about the 1st century BC before they migrated onto Pontic lands. In an archaeological context, the term ‘Scythian’ is used by modern scholars for finds perceived to display attributes of the "Scytho-Siberian" culture, usually without implying an ethnic or linguistic connotation.

Besides the Greek sources, however, the ancient Persian sources as well had their own umbrella term ‘Saka’, a word deriving from the old Iranian for ‘nomadic’ to refer to the Western Scythians of the northern Black Sea. Interestingly, it should be noted that the Greek term ‘Scythian’ also seems to have been borrowed from an old Iranian word – a word meaning ‘archer’.

Scythians appear in the Old Testament in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In the former they are described as a vast army from the North on horseback armed with bow and spear. They are cruel and merciless. Elsewhere they are mighty warriors with

4 Bonfante, 2011, p. 63

5 Davis, 1995, pp. 27–28

6 Szemerényi, 1992, p. 208

7 Ibid., p. 214-215.

quivers ‘like an open grave.’\textsuperscript{9} In Ezekiel, they are described as advancing like a cloud that covers the land.\textsuperscript{10} In both cases they are described as an instrument of destruction used by God, like a plague.

Scythians played a major role in the history of the region as ally, enemy, and agent of change. They were well known and would likely have been a very impressive fighting force. Their most important weapon was adopted by virtually every people with whom they came into contact. They would have interacted with Ionian Greek mercenaries on a number of occasions and likely with Greek traders and travelers as well.

\subsection*{2.2 Greek Sources on Scythians}

The first attempt to provide the Greek understanding of Scythians is made by the Greek author Strabo (64 B.C. – 24 A.D.) His substantial and aspiring Geography, published around the turn of the millennium, combines both broad and trivial historical and geographical details from the known world into a work meant to serve the interests of the statesmen and generals responsible for governing the world in a single empire.\textsuperscript{11} In doing so, he considered the Scythians in depth and repeatedly. They are, in fact, of considerable importance to him, not only as the primary inhabitants of the North, but also as the cornerstone in his argument that Homer was the first geographer. Strabo was well-educated, well-traveled and he was born on the Black Sea, in an area neighboring Scythian territory. Most importantly, however, Strabo had at his dis-

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{9} Jeremiah 5.16-17.
\textsuperscript{10} Ezekiel 38.16.
\textsuperscript{11} Strabo 1.1.16.
\end{flushright}
posal numerous earlier Greek sources. Therefore, he offers a knowledgeable retrospective view.

Nevertheless, despite the resources available to him in the 1st century, he depicted the Scythians very vaguely. The Scythians occupy the vast North, a territory which ranges from sunrise to sunset and is mirrored in the South by an equally vast Ethiopia. Scythia is arguably, in fact, synonymous with the North, just as the Ethiopia represents the South, India the East, and Celtica the West.

As a nomadic people, they are pastoral. They are preoccupied with justice, but have been corrupted to an extent by their contact with Greeks to the south. Moreover, they are expert horse handlers. They use a bow – a Scythian bow, he tells us, with its own unique shape to which he compares the Black Sea.

Strabo has found considerably important to mention three individual Scythians. The first one is Madys the Scythian who is recalled for driving the Cimmerians out of their territory. He notes Idanthyrus the Scythian who overwhelmed Asia all the way to Egypt. And he mentioned Anacharsis the Wise, who was by far the most famous of the three.

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12 In relating information about Scythians, Strabo cites Homer (8th B.C.E.), Hesiod (7th B.C.E.), Aeschylus (5th B.C.E.), Herodotus (5th B.C.E.), Chaerilus (5th B.C.E.), Ephorus (c. 405-330 B.C.E.), Eratosthenes (c. 285 – 194 B.C.E.), Apollodorus (c. 180-120 B.C.E.), Polyclitus (c. 3rd B.C.E.).

13 Strabo 1.1.13, 1.2.28, 2.1.17, 11.6.2.

14 Strabo 7.3.7, 7.3.8, 7.3.9, 7.4.7

15 Strabo 7.4.8.

16 Strabo 2.5.22, 11.7.4.

17 Strabo 1.3.21.

18 Strabo 15.1.6.
Scythia was known to the Greeks in the 8th century and mentioned by Hesiod and Eumelus. Homer and later Callinus mention the Kimmerians, but not the Scythians. Mimnermus makes a reference of the Scythians being at war with the Amazons. Alcaeus mentions Scythians, which seem to be a type of shoe, but in another poem indicates that he knows of the people. Sappho mentions a cryptic ‘Scythian wood.

In the 6th to early 5th c., there was still little evidence on Scythians. Ananius seems to reference geography calling upon Apollo to return to his temple or end up among the Scythians. Anacreon famously coined the phrase Σκυθεικὴν πόσιν (Scythian drinking) to describe the practice of getting drunk as a result of drinking unmixed wine. In another, much smaller fragment, he refers to the bent-bowed (ἀγκυλοτόξων) Scythians, employing the same word used by Homer to describe the Paionians. Epimenides mentions the famous Anacharsis the Scythian. Pindar men-

19 Strabo 7.3.9.

20 Eumelus 3b, 451.f., Hesiod Frag. 150.15, 151.1

21 Odyssey 11.14

22 Mimnermus Frag. 21a.

23 Alcaeus 318.1, 354.1.


25 Ananius Frag. 1.

26 Anacreon Frag. 11b

27 Anacreon Frag. 3. Iliad 2.848
tions ‘nomadic Scythians’ without further description" and Simonides mentions ‘distant Tanais of Scythia.’

Aeschylus, who fought for Xerxes in the Persian Wars, was interested like the others in Scythians’ Northern geography, their nomadism, and their bow - a back-bent Scythian bow. In a fragment he also described Scythians as well-ordered (εὔνομοι) and eaters of mare’s-milk cheese. The scope of the Archaic and Early Classical documentary evidence for Scythians hardly testifies to extensive firsthand experience with Scythians.

2.3 Why Scythians?

The importance of the foreign appearance of these Scythians on vases has been exaggerated and in some cases misused in modern examination of the subject. As Davies claims, ethnocentricity in Athens, and in Greece as a whole, may have existed to some extent but our evidence strongly suggests this negativity was largely a development of the Classical world.

Different figures of Scythians on symposium vessels do not represent real Scythians. Greeks would have been familiar with the Scythian reputation for being masters of archery – a reputation supported by every form of evidence available to

28 Pindar Frag. 105b.1.

29 Simonides 7.496.2.

30 Aeschylus Prom. 2, 414-419; Eumenides 703

31 Aeschylus Prom. 707-711.

32 Aeschylus Prom. 707-711; Choephoroe 161

33 Davis, 1995, p. 32
In the late 7th or early 6th century the ‘Scythian’ bow and arrowhead were adopted on mainland Greece. This weapon was not only technologically superior to the ‘segment’ bow commonly used in Greece, but its sigma shape was distinct, and so it was associated with the Scythian people from whom it was adopted. The available literary evidence demonstrates the ethnic association. Aeschylus carefully studied cultural differences between Greeks and ‘barbarians’ (by which he means Persians) mentions a ‘backbent Scythian bow’. Their reputation and distinctive looking weapon combined with the lack of an actual Scythian presence in Athens in an attempt to make a smart symbol allowed artists and authors a certain freedom of expression. This would change radically when Scythians became a part of Athenian reality in the early 5th century. The figures, then, whether real or imagined, should be seen as archers and like their armored hoplite companions; they were idealized or metaphorical versions of the light-armed troops who actually served as archers. The most important element of these Scythians, the importance of which has generally been ignored, is their association with the bow. It is the adoption of this revolutionary weapon at the end of the 7th or beginning of the 6th century that leads artists to select Scythians as their archer ideal. The figures are not depicted as archers because they are Scythian. They are depicted as Scythian because they are archers. From what follows is that the identity of the archers should be searched for elsewhere.

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34 Cernenko, 1983

35 Choephoroi, 161-2. Choephoroi (or Libation Bearers) is the second part of the Oresteia trilogy that won first prize at the Athenian City Dionysia in 458 B.C.E. The word παλίντον' (backbent) is a common Homeric epithet for the composite bow, but Homeric bows are not associated with Scythians.
2.3.1 Cretan Archers

It deems appropriate to study the case of Cretan archers. Despite its long and well-deserved reputation for archery, there is even less evidence that Cretan archers were involved in any significant way in Archaic warfare on the mainland. Like the Scythians, their technology was influential on mainland Greece.

In the Archaic period the suggestion that Cretans were the archers, however, has not found any support. First, given the lack of literary references during the period as far as no mention of archery is made in association with Crete. Secondly, despite the important presence of Cretan archers in Xenophon’s Anabasis where they play a vital role in several encounters – playing an important role in mountainous terrain\(^\text{36}\), plundering for bowstrings\(^\text{37}\), practicing with foreign arrows\(^\text{38}\), and covering the infantry’s retreat against enemy archers.\(^\text{39}\) However, if we accept what Snodgrass refers to as Greece’s ‘aversion to archery,’\(^\text{40}\) it is tempting to imagine a remarkable presence of Cretan archers on the mainland during the Archaic time period.

Furthermore, like the Scythian bow and arrowhead, the Cretan arrowhead spread far and wide to represent the presence of Cretan bowmen.\(^\text{41}\) Snodgrass even points to a mould for the Cretan-style arrowhead being found on Samos.\(^\text{42}\) Finally, a Classical presence of Cretan archers on the Greek mainland is hardly proof of an

\(^{36}\) Xen. Anab. 4.2.28.3.

\(^{37}\) Xen. Anab. 3.4.17.4.

\(^{38}\) Xen. Anab. 3.4.17.3.

\(^{39}\) Xen. Anab. 5.2.32.3.

\(^{40}\) Snodgrass, 1999, p. 40

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 81

\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 81
Archaic presence. As is so often the case, the simplest explanation is the correct one – archers on the mainland in the Archaic period were mainland Greeks.

2.3.2 The Identity of Greek Archers

The archaeological, art historical, and Homeric evidence indicates that archery was not originally confined to any one class. In the 8th century, a warrior might carry and even be buried with both spear and bow. Archery, with the Lokrians being the only exception, was not yet a specialty. Defining someone as an archer at this time had no connotation beyond the obvious, i.e. that the person was carrying or shooting a bow.

The Lokrians, who accompany Philoktetes to Troy, are the best example of a group of soldiers described as archers.\(^{43}\) They are listed in the catalogue of ships as ‘well-skilled in the strength of the bow in battle.’\(^{44}\) Later, as the Trojans assault the Achaean camp, the Lokrians are described as archers and slingers who do not wear heavy armor and who fire their projectiles from behind their heavy infantry unseen by the Trojans.\(^ {45}\) While the Lokrians are the only archers who fight together as a unit, Achilleus’ men, the Myrmidons, also use the bow during competition.\(^ {46}\)

On the Trojan side, the Paionians from Amydon, who are led by Pyraichmes, are the only people described as archers (‘bearing the bent-back bow’).\(^ {47}\) Unlike the

\(^{43}\) Thucydides (1.10.4) recalls that the Lokrians were armed with the bow in his ‘Archaeology.’ Pausanias (1.23.4) uses the Lokrians as an exception to his rule that archery was not a Greek custom.

\(^ {44}\) Iliad 2.720. Weaponry is among the descriptive characteristics used by Homer to define different nationalities.

\(^{45}\) Iliad 13.712-22.

\(^ {46}\) Iliad 2.773-5.

\(^ {47}\) Iliad 2.848, 10.428.
Lokrians, however, their fighting style is equivocal. They are described elsewhere as “lords of horses.”\textsuperscript{48} They are never described firing a bow and may even be seen using a spear.\textsuperscript{49}

Homer mentions individual archers four of which are Trojan and four are Greek. Paris is the most famous Trojan archer.\textsuperscript{50} Pandaros is another.\textsuperscript{51} Helenos and Dolon round out the list of named Trojan bowmen. Philoktetes is mentioned in the catalogue as an archer, but he never actually appears in battle during the Iliad, having been abandoned on the way to Troy. Odysseus’ skill with the bow is elaborated upon in detail in the Odyssey, but he fights only with a spear in the Iliad. At one point he carries a bow during his night raid with Diomedes, a sure sign that he is proficient in its use, but he uses it only to whip the stolen horses of Rhesus. Teukros, on the other hand, is routinely depicted using the bow and Meriones, who actually defeats Teukros in an archery contest during the funeral games for Patroklos, also fights with the bow, although it does not appear to be his preferred weapon.\textsuperscript{52}

In sum, there is a variety of warriors in the Iliad which can be described as archers. They span social classes, accounting for nameless Achaean and Trojan λαοί, as well as certain individual heroes who can claim elite status. Lorimer’s assessment that these are not ‘first-class heroes,’ however, is probably fair. Sarpedon is clear in his famous exhortation to Glaukos that those men who are honored before all other are honored so because they are front-fighters (προμαχοί), a term which implies bearing

\textsuperscript{48} Iliad 16.287.
\textsuperscript{49} Iliad 16.287-90, 17.353-5.
\textsuperscript{50} Iliad 8.81, 11.377, 11.507, 11.582, 13.671.
\textsuperscript{51} Iliad 4.104, 5.98.
\textsuperscript{52} Iliad 7.137-40.
spear and shield and engaging in shock warfare and duels in the front ranks of the army or of one’s adherents.\textsuperscript{53}

Therapontes

There is an implication that archers should be viewed as the \( \text{θεράποντες} \) or \( \text{έταίροι} \) of higher-ranking heroes, words that mean something akin to ‘comrades-at-arms’ and ‘companions’\textsuperscript{54} respectively. Sometimes a hero might be described as both. Meriones, for instance, is described as the \( \text{θεράπων} \) of Idomeneus, who refers to him in the same passage as “\( \text{φιλταθὸς \ έταίρων} \)”, dearest of his companions. In a study of the two terms as they are used in the Iliad, Stagakis points out that a \( \text{θεράπων} \) is also the \( \text{έταίρος} \) of his associate and that, “the evidence, unmistakably, demonstrates that the therapon relation is a personal relation.”\textsuperscript{55} He then hastens to add that the relationship is not exclusive. One person can be the \( \text{θεράπων} \) of several people.\textsuperscript{56} On can also be the \( \text{θεράπων} \) of a god. Both Diomedes and Odysseus, for instance, are referred to as the \( \text{θεράποντες} \) of Ares.\textsuperscript{57} Furthermore, one who is described as a \( \text{θεράπων} \) can have people who in turn are described as his \( \text{θεράποντες} \). Patroklos is described as the \( \text{θεράπων} \) of Achilleus, but then Automedon (himself another of Achilleus’ \( \text{θεράποντες} \)) appears as the \( \text{θεράπων} \) of Patroklos.\textsuperscript{58} Thus, given that someone who is a \( \text{θεράπων} \) can also have \( \text{θεράποντες} \), and that even those among the highest rank can be \( \text{θεράποντες} \), even if only to a god, the term will present difficulties

\textsuperscript{53} Iliad 12.310-321.

\textsuperscript{54} Iliad 13.246-50.

\textsuperscript{55} Stagakis, 1966, p. 411

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 411

\textsuperscript{57} Iliad 19.46-7.

\textsuperscript{58} Stagakis, 1966, p. 411. Iliad 23.90, 16.864, 16.279
to the scholar seeking a clear means of identifying archers with rank in the Iliad, especially as so few of the aforementioned θεράποντες ever fight with bows.

An emphasis is put on the idea of the front-fighter (πρόμαχος), mentioned by Sarpedon above, than on θεράποντες or ἑταίροι. There is an interesting passage in which Poseidon strides among the Greek front-fighters urging them to perform an unusual exchange with the result that: “The good man takes possession of the good arms and the worse arms are given to the worse man.”59 These ‘good’ weapons are defined as large shields, bronze helmets, and spears. It seems that even among the heavily armed front-fighters, there are better arms and worse ones. It is clear that the best of the front-fighters are definitely meant to fight as bronze-clad, spear-bearing, heavy-infantrymen. Elsewhere we see that all front-fighters fight this way. Even Paris is described as a front-fighter when he is dressed in bronze and wielding a spear.60

Thetes

The most likely source of Athenian archers are the thetes. There are no sources from the Archaic period specifically linking archery to the thetic class. Thetes were not obliged to fight – a circumstance that seems to have cost them certain political rights. Despite this, they were not expressly forbidden from participation in military actions and there are a number of potential motivations for fighting, patriotism and prestige among them.

In arguing against a proposal in 403 B.C.E that would have granted citizenship to repatriated Athenians only if they owned land, Lysias complains that this would deprive Athens of many hoplites, horsemen, and archers.61 This suggests that thetes served several military needs, archery included.

59 Iliad 14.383.

60 Iliad 330-38.

61 Lysias 4.3
Epigraphic evidence also makes a strong argument for the likelihood that archers were citizens and thereby likely to have been *thetes*. The so-called Themistoclean Decree describes the recruitment of archers from the citizen body, as does a mid-5th century B.C.E. decree which requires the prytanizing tribe to provide three citizen archers to guard the acropolis against thieves and runaway slaves who might seek refuge there. Archers are also frequently included on inscribed casualty lists of the Classical period where they are listed as ῥοξόται and often distinguished by adjectives from “Barbarian archers” and even “Cretan archers” who by now were being used by to supplement their native corp. Smith also points out that they are distinguished from ξένοι (whom she associates with metics), σύμμαχοι (allies), and ἔγγραφοι (whom she identifies as metics with rights, the so-called ἰσοτελεῖς).\(^{62}\)

While it is impossible to determine the certain identity of archers after the advent of hoplite arms, the evidence, such as it is, makes a strong case that archers – perhaps even all Athenian archers - volunteered or were recruited from the thetic class.

### 2.4 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter the relationships between the so-called Scythians and Greeks were presented. More specifically, the origin of Scythians was outlined and the Greek sources on Scythians were presented. Following this, the notions of therapontes and thetes were examined.

As regards to the above-mentioned, anyone in the Homeric world can be an archer should he choose to use ‘worse’ weapons and some of these same men can be ‘front-fighters’ as they elect the ‘good’ arms. The evidence does not support a systematic relegation of the archer to an assistant or secondary status at this time.

\(^{62}\) Smith, 1919, pp. 351-364; Merritt, 1952, pp. 340-380
Chapter III ARCHERS: THEIR ORIGIN AND IDENTITY

In this subsection historical evidence on archery is briefly presented so as to provide some background information for our area of study.

The purpose of this chapter is first of all to address the question of the origin of these archers by investigating the iconographic importance of the image. Moreover, some of the key ideas on interpretation of the image of the archers who appear in Athenian vase-painting are briefly summarized.

3.1 Archers: Their Origin

The evidence examined thus far suggests clearly that the archers could be of the same class of warrior as the spearman in the 8th century. In fact, it was not uncommon for the same person to fight as both archer and spearman.

Based on the extensive catalogue provided by Lissarrague and the Beazley Archive, of the entire corpus of 10,498 catalogued vases dating to between 550-500 B.C.E., an impressive 5% have depictions of Scythian archers on them. In total, there are roughly 700 surviving Athenian vases and fragments bearing images of archers dressed in Scythian attire dating from the years c. 575-475 B.C.E.

The figure of an archer dressed in Scythian garb was introduced by Athenian vase painters into their iconography sometime around 570 B.C.E. The famous François Krater is perhaps the earliest example. Here three archers participate alongside some of Greece’s most renowned heroes in the Kalydonian Boar Hunt. Apart from their use of the distinctive Scythian bow, their dress sets them apart from their peers as all of them sport tall pointed hats (bashlyks) with earflaps (Figs. 1-3). This hat was later associated with Scythians by Herodotus. For a short period of time, the bow and this hat, 63

63 Herodotus 7.64.
or some version of it, would be the only major distinguishing feature of Scythian costume.

The image endured over the following decades, appearing on symposium vessels in relatively small numbers. While the Scythian costume never became completely standardized a uniform of sorts had evolved by 540 B.C.E. (Fig. 4). In addition to the cap, which was usually pointed but, as in this case, could be bent at the top, the figures began to wear a long sleeve patterned jacket, and patterned trousers. This kind of
cloths are usually associated with Northern peoples. The distinctive sigma-shaped bow and the Scythia goryt, a peculiar case that served as both bow case and quiver, are frequent. The case could be worn hanging from the shoulder or was seen attached to a belt and hanging off the left hip. At times the figure carries an axe or short dagger (ἀκινάκησ) as well. There are numerous kinds of scenes that Scythians appear in, such as in scenes involving arming, departures, combat, and hieroscopy. They are generally not the crucial point of a piece, but are no more marginal than other non-hoplite who appear on these vessels – be they military or civilian. Possibly the most unusual aspect of the Scythian in the figure below is that he is pictured alone on the plate. Archers rarely (only 5% of the time) appear alone.

![Figure 4. Attic Red-Figure Plate](image)

The Scythian archer gains more reputation during the final quarter of the century. 86% of all of the images of the Scythian Archer in Attic Vase-Painting come from this period (Table 1). Then, by 490 B.C.E., a monumental date in the history of Greece (The Battle of Marathon) the Scythian archer has nearly disappeared.

64 It should be noted that while this becomes the most common approach to depicting Scythians, it is far from universal. Scythians wore their goryts attached to belts around their wastes.
Scholars for a long time have investigated the iconographic importance of the figure. The leading among the patterns or trends involving the images, is the Scythian’s association with archery. A great number of Scythians on Greek vessels are depicted as archers. The opposite is also true - almost all (93%) of the archers on Athenian vases during this time period (c. 575 – 475 B.C.E.) are depicted as Scythians. The association between archery and Scythians in this period is indisputable, and it is not confined to material culture. If Szemerenyi is correct, the word Scythian itself derives from an Old Iranian word meaning ‘shooter’ or ‘archer’. Furthermore, he argues that the Greek word for bow, *toxon*, is itself a Scythian loan word. Thus, the vast number of depictions, the exclusion of other archers (of typically Greek appearance), and the flawed notion that artists had probably seen Scythians to employ this imagery has led to a belief that will not go away.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that there is no other credible evidence indicating that Scythians existed in Athens during this timeframe. In fact, when they do become a physical reality in Athens, first as part of the Persian invasions of 490 and 480 B.C.E. and then later as public slaves or ‘policemen’ in or sometime after 476 B.C.E., they are no more depicted on vases altogether. The Scythian archer, who is

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66 Andocides 5.7. Aeschines 2.174.
frequently pictured as an ally or companion of the hoplite during the archaic period, becomes the Persian (or Amazon) enemy.

3.2 Archers: Historical Evidence

Over more than a century attempts have been made by different scholars to unravel the mystery of the Scythian archer. Regarding this, the scholars hold two central opinions - firstly, there are those who imagine the figures to represent actual people – either Scythians or ethnically dressed Athenian archers, and those who do not.

Originally, the debate was initiated in 1891. The German classicist Wernicke in his study of the Athenian policemen, argues that the Scythians were inspired by foreign mercenaries hired by the tyrant, Hippias, son of Peisistratos. Upon the tyrant’s demise they would have served the polis. These, according to his argument, were the earliest of the Scythian policemen, so well-known to us through the comedies of Aristophanes during the Classical period.  

Afterwards, another German classicist, Helbig, in two works concerned with the military history of Archaic Athens, agreed with Wernicke’s Peisistratid association. He envisaged the figures as real Scythians who had been recruited at Sigeion. With the fall of the Peisistratids, and access to Sigeion presumably terminated, Scythians were no longer available. From this point on, the figures represented Athenians in Scythian costume - a point which he makes by stressing what he sees as differences in the facial physiognomy of the figures. According to Helbig, the archers functioned as squires to Athenian hoplites. A mounted hoplite in particular had need of such help, as he required someone to care for his horse after dismounting to fight.  

67 Wernicke, 1891, pp. 51-75

68 Helbig, 1897, pp. 259-320

69 Helbig, 1902
A decade later, the French archaeologist Plassart, in a substantial study of archers in Athens, argued that the figures represented Athenians in costume. He considered that Scythian costume was adopted as a fashion by Athenian aristocrats who were inspired by Ionians, rather than by Scythians themselves. The dress then became widespread among these aristocrats’ hyperetai. So, while Plassart does not imagine real Scythians in Athens at that time, he too thought that the images represented a reality.

On the other hand, Minns, who published his massive survey of Scythian culture in the same year as Plassart’s article, emphasized the necessity of identifying figures dressed in the aforementioned style as Scythians. He argues that the dress, and in particular the Scythian goryt, is too variable or inaccurate to know for certain whether Scythians were meant. He points to two examples where inscribed names seem to indicate that archers from the north are meant, but warns that in the absence of such information, “It is much safer to call such figures oriental archers.”

Furthermore, Schoppa, in a study of barbarian costume, argued that the figures were a reflection of Athenian hoplite practice of employing Scythians attendants, like Helbig. Here too, they represented ethnic Scythians. In his view, they did not comprise a unit of archers within the army. Moreover, he attributed their flow in popularity to an artistic interest in their elaborate outfits.

Vos, in the first large-scale study of the issue, followed several of the earlier arguments in determining that the figures represent the presence of real Scythians in

70 Plassart, 1913, pp. 151-213

71 Hyperetai are servants who attended soldiers in battle or on campaign

72 Minns, 1913

73 Ibid., p. 56

74 Schoppa, 1933, p. 20
She argued that Scythians arrived sometime around 540-530 B.C.E., when images of them first began to gain in popularity. At this point, archers on vases began to appear regularly in barbarian costume. She saw this as an indication that vase-painters had every intention of depicting an existing costume. According to her, it was “impossible that so many different painters should have invented an identical fantastical costume at the same time.” She concluded, “There is only one possible explanation i.e. that from c. 530 on the Attic Vases the painters daily saw this costume and depicted it from nature.”

Additionally, these archers were actual Scythians, and not Greeks in Scythian costume. Like Helbig, Vos emphasized differences in facial physiognomy. She pointed to the juxtaposition of images on vase-paintings that highlight ethnicity through direct contrast with Thracians. She also noted the almost universal presence of the distinct Scythian bow. However, she supported the view that archery was not a part of Greek warfare before 480 B.C.E. To support this claim Vos uses two major documentary sources of evidence. First, she cites Pausanias (1.23.4) as evidence that Greeks, excepting Cretans, never regularly practiced archery. Then she cites Herodotus (6.112) to support her argument that the Athenians had no archers in their army by 490 B.C.E. when they fought at Marathon. The latter point is especially important in her argument as it provides her with a terminus post quem for the presence of Scythians in Athens.

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75 Vos, 1963
76 Ibid., p. 40
77 Ibid., p. 43
78 Ibid., p. 43
79 Ibid., p. 1
80 Ibid., p. 59
81 Ibid., p. 60
Eventually, Vos views them as having served as a specialized corps within the army, with no special association with the hoplite. They were not attendants. They would have been subject to the polis, as opposed to the tyrant. She concludes that they left Athens around the time that their representations began to disappear dating it to c. 500 B.C.E., but remained in the memory of vase-painters. The variations from ‘true Scythian dress,’ which she sees as more common after their departure, reflect the fact that they were no longer a part of the artists’ everyday lives. Their disappearance is attested by the Athenians’ lack of archers at Marathon, but they returned after 476 B.C.E. in a different capacity – as the policemen described by Andocides, Aeschines, Aristophanes, and others.

Welwei, in a larger study of the use of slaves in warfare, rejects Vos’s notion that Scythians would have had to have been seen to have been painted. Like Vos, he cites Herodotus’ contention that the Persians were surprised when the Athenians did not field archers at Marathon as evidence that Athens lacked them. Yet, he goes even further, pointing to a lack of evidence for archers in Archaic Athens altogether. He also notes the variation in the Scythian costume as evidence that Scythians did not exist in Athens. Thus, with no archers and no Scythians in Archaic Athens, these figures were not meant to represent reality at all. They belong to the realm of epic legend, where they do have a special association with hoplites. They serve as the escorts of Homeric warriors who appear in heroic parade.

A decade later an influential article on the subject was written by Pinney. Her argument takes a more nuanced approach to the dichotomy between fact and fiction. She writes, “This essay is devoted to the archer in Scythian garb, to explore the possibility that he belongs neither wholly to history nor to fancy, but is a hybrid creature

82 Ibid., p. 28
83 Welwei, 1974
84 Pinney, 1983, pp. 127-146
whose nature partakes of both.”

First, she supports Welwei’s view in seeing no evidence for the presence of archery in the Athenian army in the 6th c. B.C.E. She notes a ‘bewildering variety’ of images and argues that due to this, the figures’ costume can be reduced to their equipment and Scythian cap, which itself has variations. Furthermore, the costume can be divorced from its ethnic meaning and used to indicate that a figure was another type of Asian or even just an archer. These figures, in her view, represent “nomads from the north,” their costume indicating geography rather than nationality.

Nevertheless, like Welwei, Pinney places the Scythians within the world of epic: “Archers in Scythian dress belong entirely to epic legends.” But these are not just any epic legends — at least not at first. She connects the figures to a specific epic context, suggested by a line in a fragment of a poem by the 7th/6th c. B.C.E. lyric poet Alkaios of Myteline. In it he refers to Achilleus as ‘Lord of Scythia.’ These figures are the companions accompanying Achilleus in his capacity as Lord of Scythia. She sees this association as accounting for the early iconography (until around 530 B.C.E.), after which the “followers of one hero become generic squire figures.” The Scythian archer motif transfers to a variety of other epic scenes. While the figures’ attire represents some knowledge about the appearance of contemporary Scythians, they do not represent

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85 Ibid., p. 127
86 Ibid., p. 131
87 Ibid., p. 127
88 Ibid., p. 130
89 Ibid., p. 137
90 Ibid., p. 139
91 Ibid., p. 139
Their costume merely marks them as secondary characters, companions of heroes, rather than heroes.

The subject has been approached more comprehensively by Lissarrague a few years later, assembling a corpus of nearly 700 vases for examination. By far it is the most extensive catalogue to date. Furthermore, he went beyond archers to discuss depictions of cavalry and other light-armed troops, helpful here for comparative purposes. In a way, one would not be too far off in imagining a spectrum of opinions with Vos at one end, Lissarrague at the other, and Pinney somewhere in the middle. Where Vos sees the archer as an illustration of real life, and Pinney perceives an image that conflates the real and imagined, Lissarrague offers a more abstract explanation firmly rooted in ideology and the imagination. He begins by laying the foundation of his argument. Here are three of his ‘givens’ which are of particular relevance to his argument: 1. Images are bearers of meaning. 2. Iconography is tied to aristocratic ideology. 3. The principles of warfare in Archaic Athens cannot be separated from those described in epic poetry. Within this framework, Lissarrague takes a structuralist approach which ultimately sees the archer (or other non-hoplite) as a means of defining the hoplite.

The Scythian archer, in his view is viewed as an imaginary construct of the ‘other,’ which incorporates foreign attire and the bow into a symbol of the anti-hoplite. It thus serves an ideological function at the symposium, offering the hoplite elite an opportunity for self-definition. It is a process in which the hoplite defines himself negatively, that is, he defines what he is through a direct visual comparison with what he is not. His approach is quite radical in viewing the archer and hoplite as a conceptual pair. According to this argument, the hoplite cannot be perceived as such without the archer.

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92 Ibid., p. 139

93 Lissarrague, 1990
The archer here tends to be marginalized. As he states, this iconography emphasizes “the gulf dividing the two levels” (archer and hoplite), and "confers on the less noble weapon a strange appearance that enables the importance of the hoplite warrior, the citizen soldier seen as an epic hero, to be thrust into prominence."\(^{94}\)

Osborne raised the issue of Scythian Archers recently as part of an argument about the intended viewership of a set of vase-paintings. He focuses his attention on the flow in the number of images between 520-510 B.C.E. and their decline and disappearance thereafter. He sees the Scythians not as a link to the past but to the present. In contrast to Pinney, he emphasized that “the Skythian on these Athenian pots arguably guarantees the contemporaneity of the imagery as surely as black squires guarantee Memnon’s mythic status.”\(^{95}\) Their presence, particularly in the large number of departure scenes, renders these scenes non-epic. By saying so he argues that there was not much Athenian warfare between 560 and 510 B.C.E.\(^{96}\) Ultimately, he argues that the images demonstrate an Athenian need in the period between 520 and 510 B.C.E., not for an army that reflected their everyday experience, but instead for what he calls a ‘virtual army.’ According to Osborne, military imagery never reflected Athenian military reality.\(^{97}\) A point in images of this type constitutes “something of a call to arms for Athenians.”\(^{98}\) Then, after the Persian wars, a democratic army may not have been comfortable with a military imagery that incorporated Scythians.

Ivantchik even more recently addressed this issue by arguing that Scythian attire had no ethnic association at all.\(^{99}\) He argues that the rigid correlation between

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\(^{94}\) Lissarrague, 2002, p. 115

\(^{95}\) Osborne, 2004, p. 50

\(^{96}\) Ibid., p. 50

\(^{97}\) Ibid., p. 52

\(^{98}\) Ibid., p. 52

\(^{99}\) Ivantchik, 2006, p. 97
archer and Scythian costume alone raises doubt about the costume relating to ethnicity. Such figures were not meant to be Scythians or any other specific people, and were more likely to have been oriental in general. The association of costume and weapon was more important than that of costume and ethnicity. He relates the attire in the Attic iconography of the Archaic period to role and status. In many respects, his view differs from those of Pinney or Welwei. According to him, the Scythian costume was an iconographic convention symbolizing a subordinate archer character who accompanies a hero. He also sees the figures as epic in character, equating them to epic *therapontes*. There is a metaphorical connection with the present. Epic heroes are depicted as hoplites, for instance, who, in turn, represent not real people but idealized citizens. Likewise the Scythian represented not a real archer but a therapon. But for Ivantchik, the prototype for these archers was first Median and then Persian. The convention was out of use, he argues, because, after the Persian Wars, the clothing was associated with ethnic identity – Persian ethnic identity.

Vos would find little support today for her claim that Scythians would need to have been present in order to have been painted. Welwei rejected this idea. Her argument, however, provoke some important and even discomforting questions. If artists were not painting figures familiar to them, why do the figures, painted by dozens of artists, share certain important characteristics? Moreover, she poses the question why some of the details, like the Scythian bow for instance, are so true to life. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that the vase paintings themselves are the only evidence suggestive of the presence of Scythians in Athens. Thus, such an argument is

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100 Ivantchik, 2006, p. 199
101 Ibid., p. 246
102 Ibid., p. 244
103 Ibid., p. 244
104 Ibid., p. 247
circular – saying, in effect, that the images represent Scythians whose presence in Athens is attested by the images themselves.

As Cohen points out, “Virtually all vase depictions of exotically costumed male figures were once believed by modern scholars to document the presence of foreigners in Athens. Frequently, however, no foreign physiognomies, beards, hairstyles, or names distinguish male figures who look at home in exotic costume, and, recently many of these figures have been seen as Athenians.”

In the absence of definitive literary or archaeological evidence, it was difficult to prove. Yet, there are some oblique (and late) references as well as some circumstantial evidence that supports this idea. Plato, for example, mentions ‘archer equipment’ in his Laws.

The ‘Old Oligarch’ writes that the Athenians, unlike other Greeks, adopted elements of custom and dress from other Greek and non-Greek peoples.

This is supported by the work of Cohen who, though describing cavalrymen, notes a history of “cultural co-optation” from peoples both within and beyond Greece and sees ‘foreign’ dress and ‘foreign’ dress intermingled with Greek dress as a venerable Athenian custom established in the 6th century. Indeed, foreign dress or elements of it during the period is generally accepted to have been literal rather than just figurative in other contexts too – the symposium, for example.

Relating to many of the arguments above is the importance of the relationship between Scythian archer and hoplite. Most note a special relationship between the archer and hoplite, and therefore interpret the archer as a squire, companion, or attendant which strengthens an epic interpretation. For Lissarrague the two combine to

105 Cohen, 2001, pp. 243
106 Plato 833b.
107 Xenophon 2.8.
109 Ibid., pp. 244-245
form a conceptual pair, the one literally defining the other. Vos, on the other hand, sees no such relationship. Osborne, like Lissarague, envisages a conceptual model, but does not focus on a pairing of the two.

To date, no explanation has adequately accounted for the strange life of the image in Archaic Athens. According to Davis, it is tempting, given the temporal distribution of the vases, to view the phenomenon of the Scythian archer as a response to a specific historic event or series of events. This has been the cornerstone of several approaches to the problem, some of which we have examined above. These are important considerations, but relate more to the sudden increase in popularity, or the metamorphosis of a pre-existing idea in around 520 B.C.E.

3.3 Scythian Archers: Their Image

This subchapter analyzes the depictions of archers in so-called ‘Scythian’ clothes (a high sharp cap or a rounded hood, a caftan and trousers) in Attic archaic vase-painting.

Ivanchik of the Russian Academy of Sciences seeks to clarify interpretation of the archers who appear in Athenian vase-painting. He stresses that the Scythian-looking figures on Archaic vases cannot of themselves constitute evidence for such a force in sixth-century Athens. Indeed, some of these figures are certainly not meant to be Scythians. The ‘Scythian’ clothes corresponded to the character’s function, not to his ethnical identity.

According to Ivanchik, this pattern in vase-painting is dated between c. 530 and 490 BC, and then went out of use, because after the Greco-Persian wars these clothes began to be associated with ethnical identity, though not Scythian, but Persian. The real prototypes of the ‘Scythian’ archers were the archers of different ethnical groups first of Median, and later of Persian army. The ‘Scythian’ attire of the archers on the vases, therefore, has nothing to do with the real Scythians of the North Pontic area.

Scholars agreed with the assertion that Attic painters were specifically depicting Scythians. Later on they start drawing important conclusions from this fact.
Skrzhinskaya, for instance, argues that since Scythians are often depicted together with well-known mythological characters in scenes linked with well-known mythological subjects, in the Archaic period there were different myths in which Scythians were active *dramatis personae*. These variants were, allegedly, subjects in works that have not survived to the present-day, but Attic vases serve as idiosyncratic illustrations for these works.\(^\text{110}\) Frolov, on the other hand, as well as Braund and Alekseev use these depictions of the so-called Scythians on Attic vases as testimony to the history of the relations between Athens and the population of the North Pontic region.\(^\text{111}\)

The identification of the figures on the vases with actual Scythians is easily taken for granted and not requiring any detailed proof. Nevertheless, if the depictions are considered in a wider context and not in isolation as they have been studied before, then the situation appears in a rather different light. Lissarrague, who has given the best investigation of this question, compiled a complete catalogue of the depictions of archers in Attic vase-painting of the Archaic period, which contained approximately 700 vases.\(^\text{112}\) This is a very large number, as approximately 100 depictions of horsemen relating to this period are known. In the majority of cases the archers are dressed in so-called ‘Scythian’ costume; only 80 of the 700 depictions are assigned by Lissarrague to the section ‘non-Scythian archers’, which in this case means mainly hoplites with a bow or naked archers. In fact, this group should be reduced still further as argued by Ivanchik, as fifteen or so of the depictions included in it relate to c. 470 or later, when the image under discussion had already disappeared from Attic vase-painting, and a similar number date from c. 480 BC, when it was already extremely rare. Even in this small group, however, there are figures with specific elements of ‘Scythian’ costume, usually ‘Scythian’ caps. So even from these quantitative data it emerges that there existed a fairly rigid correlation between ‘Scythian’ costume and the function of an arch-

\(^{110}\) Скржинская, 1986, 84-94; Скржинская 1991, 48-54


\(^{112}\) Lissarrague, 1991, pp. 247-293
er in Attic vase-painting. This fact alone raises doubts regarding the suggestion that costume of a ‘Scythian’ type indicates the ethnic origin of a figure: otherwise, we should have to assume that Attic painters were literally obsessed by Scythian themes and ready to depict Scythians in any scene, in which warriors were deemed to have been participating, including scenes connected with epics.

Moreover, there is another fact that makes it difficult identifying archers on Attic vases with actual Scythians. As has been demonstrated in various studies of the iconography involved, battle-scenes in Attic vase-painting are definitely not illustrations of real events, nor scenes ‘drawn from every-day life’, as was often assumed in the 19th century and is still believed by certain scholars today. In most of cases the battles depicted are not those which took place during the painter’s lifetime, but battles of the heroic past or from epic. This explains many of the anachronisms found on vases. For instance, there is a total absence of depictions of a phalanx, which constituted the key element in the tactics used at the time the vase-painters were working and which are replaced by depictions of epic-style single combats. On the contrary, the heroic shields of a Boeotian type, which had long since fallen into disuse, are often depicted. Similarly, chariots are often found, which no longer played any part in the warfare of the 6th-5th centuries BC, but which had been an essential attribute of epic heroes. Depictions of actual historical events are unknown in Attic vase-painting of the Archaic period: what we find is always fighting as such, for neither the outcome nor even the identity of the combatants was important for the vase-painters. The first depictions, in which a reflection of historical events can be found, only appear at the time of the Persian wars. All suggestions that ethnic Scythians were regarded as participants in the events of the heroic era in Archaic Greek texts remain no more than unproven assumption contradicting all the available data.

Nevertheless, as Ivanchik suggested, depictions on vases are not simply illustrations of epic: vase painters might transform their fellow-citizens, warriors and hoplites, into epic heroes in order to present them in a heroic light. In Attic vase-painting there

113 Holscher, 1973, pp. 25-49
is no difference between epic scenes and possible depictions from everyday military life. In both cases the language of images and the means of depiction were identical. The images in Attic vase-painting constitute a stable system, something in the way of a graphic language, in which many details possess a well-defined meaning comprehensible for the beholder. In this way, the heroic status of a character of the archaic period was conveyed through his hoplite attire. In order to convey the image of the companions of the main hero – the heroes of second rank (the ἄραποντες of the epics), such as his armour-bearers – images of non-hoplite soldiers were used. The non-hoplite soldier, who had to be easily distinguishable from the main hero-hoplite, was usually depicted in the guise of a lightly armed archer dressed in special attire, which according to modern scholars are considered Scythian.

3.4 Scythian Archers: Their Function

That ‘Scythian’ attire indicates the function of an archer, rather than a particular ethnic group, is seen particularly clearly in those cases when it is worn by Paris – the epic archer par excellence. We know of at least two examples, when the identification of the figure in question is confirmed by an accompanying inscription: on the Madrid hydria No. 1092013 (Fig. 5) and on an amphora fragment from Florence No. 9435514 (both were the work of the same artist – the Priam Painter).
Furthermore, a figure dressed in ‘Scythian style’ or whose attire contained Scythian elements, can be identified as Paris in a number of other cases as well, although the depictions in question are not accompanied by an inscription. At the same time, in other cases, when Paris assumes the role of a main heroic persona, notably in duel-scenes, he, like the other heroes, is depicted in full hoplite attire. In such cases he is equipped with ordinary hoplite armour, not with a bow.

A similar illustration is found on hydria No. 319 in Würzburg (Fig. 6), on which the archer in ‘Scythian’ attire is depicted next to a warrior setting off to battle on a quadriga.

![Figure 6. Black-figure hydria in Würzburg](image)

The names of both those characters and all the horses were written next to the depictions, yet in the case of the second of them only three letters have survived (. . . ΤΟΣ) and reading the first is also difficult. However, it is not difficult to identify the subject thanks to the fact that the name of one of the horses on the hydria stands out perfectly clearly – APION. Obviously, on the depiction is the famous horse of Adrastus, which means that the name of his master should be read beyond any doubt next to the depiction of the warrior on the quadriga. The name of the ‘Scythian’ figure, which has survived less clearly, was read by Langlotz as ΠΙΑΠΕΝΠΛΟΣ. Beazley, however, has demonstrated convincingly that it should be read as ΠΑΡΘΕΝ(Ο)ΠΑΟΣ, i.e. the name of one of the Seven against Thebes. Beazley notes, at the same time, that the artist made a mistake here, when he gave a hero’s name to an archer. Actually, in Attic vase-painting epic heroes were usually depicted as hoplites, i.e. hoplite armour and weapons would lend a figure ‘heroic’ status.
These depictions are most instructive, considering that neither Paris, nor Parthenopaeus, as known, had any links with the Scythians or with Scythia. Their Scythian attire can only be explained with reference to their status as archers.

It should be important to note that they are regarded in this particular instance as secondary heroes, beside the fully-fledged heroes, characterized by their hoplite accoutrements. When an artist wished to underline their heroic status, these figures were depicted as hoplites, when he wished to accentuate their secondary status by comparison with the other heroes, as for example on the Würzburg vase, or even the simple function of archers (which was directly linked with that status), these figures were depicted in ‘Scythian’ attire.

In this framework the rare depiction of Heracles in ‘Scythian’ attire, over which he wears a lion-skin, is worth of discussion. This depiction has survived in a scene of an attack by satyrs against Hera on a red-figure kylix of the Brygos Painter in the British Museum (Fig. 7).

Figure 7. Red-figure kylix of the Brygos Painter in the British Museum
The goddess is protected by Hermes and Heracles. On the opposite side of the exterior of this kylix is a similar scene: satyrs are attacking Iris in the presence of Dionysus, who, however, is not contemplating the prospect of interfering. Blavatskii — and after him Frolov — explained this strange attire of Heracles with reference to the fact that he was “establishing order”: that is he was carrying out the function of a policeman, and policemen in Athens were Scythian public slaves.\textsuperscript{114} Ivanchik finds it difficult to accept this interpretation, since the introduction of the corps of Scythian policemen in Athens relates to a far later period, so that it is hardly possible to imagine such a linkage at this time between slave-policemen and Heracles.

On the other hand, Skrzhinskaya\textsuperscript{115} analyzed this depiction associating it with Herodotus’ version of the legend concerning the descent of the Pontic Scythians from Heracles. But, as Skrzhinskaya states, the image on the vase is not linked with this legend and the figures participating in the scene (satyrs, Hera, Hermes) do not play any part in it.\textsuperscript{116} Furthermore, this legend is unlikely prior to Herodotus to have been well-known outside of the North Pontic region. Thus, in the framework of this interpretation, the ‘Scythian’ attire of Heracles is not a constant attribute of his, like, for example, his lion-skin, and it is not in any way associated with the scene depicted here. Therefore, Heracles, in this unusual depiction in ‘Scythian’ attire, can be defined as an archer. Moreover, in the present depiction Heracles is portrayed together with Hermes, in comparison with whom he might be viewed as a person of lower status. These two factors taken together (the function of an archer and secondary status — with which ‘Scythian’ costume was closely associated) provide explanation for the appearance of Heracles in this guise.

\textsuperscript{114} Frolov, 1998, p. 142

\textsuperscript{115} Skrzhinskaya, 1991, p. 22

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 23
Two more depictions of Heracles in ‘Scythian’ attire support this interpretation on red-figure kylikes decorated by the same Brygos Painter. One of these is in Berlin (Fig. 8), and the other was found in 1967 during excavations in Athens.

On the kylikes a gigantomachy has been depicted, in which apart from other figures Zeus appears (in the first case) and Athena (in the second) on a chariot. Behind the chariot of the deities there is a figure of Heracles shooting an arrow from his bow; he is dressed in ‘Scythian’ costume with a lion-skin thrown over it. Thus, Heracles assumes here not just the role of an archer, but also that of the junior companion of the fighting deity, which provides an explanation for his having been depicted in ‘Scythian’ costume. This rare figure of Heracles would appear to be the Brygos Painter’s own invention.

In other scenes where Heracles is the primary figure and his exploits are depicted, he is represented in the ordinary way, while his companion may well be portrayed as a ‘Scythian’ archer, underlining his lower status. Other cases have been recorded as well in which the ‘Scythian’ archer accompanies a deity dressed and equipped as a hoplite.

The depictions of named Scythian-style archers are extremely important to any interpretation. In most cases what we have are so called “speaking” names, the mean-
ing of which is clear.\textsuperscript{117} Some are linked with the weapons carried or battle-skills: e.g. similar names \textit{Ευθύβολος} (ΕΥΘΥΒΟΛΟΣ), “straight-shooter” on red-figure amphora in Munich (Fig. 9) and on kylix in Florence, \textit{Ευθύμαχος} (ΕΥΘΥΜΑΧΟΣ), “straight-fighter” on the famous François Vase (Fig. 10) and \textit{Ευβόλος} (ΕΥΒΟΛΟΣ) “fine-shooter” on a red-figure kylix in Basel (Fig. 11).

![Figure 9. Red-figure amphora in Munich](image)

Of special interest is the scene depicted on the Munich amphora (Fig. 9). Here two ‘Scythian’ archers are depicted helping to dress a young hoplite who is portrayed fastening his armour. What stands out particularly clearly here is the image of the ‘Scythian’ archers as secondary characters making up part of the suite or armed retinue of the main hero, something in the way of the \textit{θεράποντες} in the Homeric epos. The main hero, unlike his companions or junior partners, is depicted as a hoplite. All the characters on the Munich vase, including the main one, have conventional ‘speaking’ names and clearly do not represent specific epic heroes. This is a generalized image of the hoplite-hero accompanied by two junior partners/archers.

\textsuperscript{117} Ivantchik, 2006, p. 211
The kylix in Basel is one of several on which the archer is only partially dressed in ‘Scythian style’: we find a naked youth in a ‘Scythian’ cap and with a bow, but wearing hoplite greaves and holding a shield.

Therefore, the archers depicted on Attic vases wearing ‘Scythian’ attire and whose names are found in inscriptions belong to two groups. The first consists of well-known heroic archers: Paris, Parthenopaeus and even Heracles. The second of those who bore significant names, no doubt specifically chosen in each instance. They are not part of the literary tradition and serve to fill in the background sometimes being depicted beside the well-known heroes of myth. The companions of the main heroes are given names by the vase-painters, as are their horses or dogs, whose names –
apart from rare cases such as Pegasus and Arion who were on a par with the characters of the legends – were not part of the mythological tradition.

The figure on an amphora in Florence is probably the only case in which the ‘Scythian’-dressed archer appear as the main, not second rank (Fig. 12).

![Figure 12. Black-figure amphora in Florence](image)

It depicts a scene of a warrior setting off to battle, a recurrent scene in Attic vase-painting. The composition is built up in the habitual pattern: in the centre sits an old man, in front of whom stands the warrior setting off for battle, and the central group is surrounded by secondary characters. There are dozens of such scenes on Attic vases and naturally the warrior setting off to battle is depicted dressed as a hoplite, while among the secondary characters there is often a depiction of a ‘Scythian’ archer. The vase in Florence is unique, in that while the arrangement of the composition is the usual one, the roles of the characters here have been inverted. The warrior in the centre is not a hoplite but an archer, and round the edges there are two hoplites holding ‘Boeotian’ heroic shields, who occupy a position usually set aside for ‘Scythian’ archers. Another peculiarity of this unusual depiction is that the old man in the central position is not dressed in Greek attire, as we might expect, but in ‘Scythian’ apparel, as is
the warrior standing in front of him. Moreover, on his head he is wearing not the usual ‘Scythian’ cap, but headwear reminiscent of a Persian tiara and for which there are no close parallels in the vase-painting of the Archaic period. So what we have is a mirror image of the traditional composition. The reason for this inversion is not completely clear. This is probably an attempt to depict the world upside-down in which all the traditional roles and relationships are reversed. The inverted nature of this scene is brought out by the fact that on the reverse of the vase an ordinary scene of farewell is depicted, in which the central position is occupied by a hoplite. He is surrounded by the characters usually found in a farewell scene: a ‘Scythian’ archer and a woman to the left and an old man to the right.

3.5 Prototypes for the figure of “Scythian archer”

In this subchapter the prototypes for the figure of the Scythian archer are discussed. To this end the chronology of this figure needs to be examined.

As mentioned previously, Lissarrague compiled a catalogue that includes over 600 dated depictions of ‘Scythian’ archers, based on which some reliable conclusions can be drawn about its development. The distribution of these images between decades is as follows: c. 570 BC – 2; c. 560 BC – 3; c. 550 BC – 8; c. 540 BC – 9; c. 530 BC – 28; c. 520 BC – 264; c. 510 BC – 186; c. 500 BC – 75; c. 490 BC – 25; c. 480 BC – 10; c. 470 BC – 1.

The earliest depictions of this group date from c. 570 BC. The famous François Vase dates precisely from this period. Nonetheless, similar depictions remain very rare for a long time afterwards, although their number began to grow slightly in the period of the 550s and 540s BC. In about 530 BC they began to become fashionable: there were 28 in 10 years and it is c. 520 BC that vessels with these depictions are most widespread of all, almost on a mass scale with 264 examples in 10 years. Despite the fact that a decline in numbers then followed, they still were numerous till the end of 6th century BC. Then there was a sharp drop and after 490 BC there were only isolated examples, which soon disappeared altogether.
However, it is important to highlight that the figure of the ‘Scythian’ archer as a second-rank companion of heroic hoplites did not emerge suddenly, although in the earliest depictions of ‘Scythian’ archers from c. 570 BC their role was precisely that of accompanying heroes.

The François Vase exhibits literal hunting images, including the Calydonian Boar Hunt, as well as metaphorical hunts or allusive hunting images. Here the archers are dressed in a short chiton, have a stiff pointed cap and wear a large quiver on a strap from the shoulder; they are just shooting and act as second-rank huntsmen. Two of the names, Toxamis and Kimmerois, suggest that the painter intended barbarians.

As Barringer notes, a consideration of all the hunting allusions – present in many scenes on the vase – yields new insight into the vase’s imagery and demonstrates a thematic coherence of a different kind, one based on aristocratic heroic and martial ideology. Interpreted in this way, the François Vase’s scenes do not operate as mythological complements, such as paired friezes. Instead, the hunting imagery invites the viewer to meditate on contemporary concepts of masculinity, heroism, and death.118

Two cups with Arimasps, as Vos argues, indisputably connect the barbarian archers with Scythia. For the Arimasps, who are located by the Greeks in Northern Scythia, are pictured in the same dress and equipment as the archers on the other vases. Perhaps the Arimaspeia, written by Aristeas of Prokonesos119 after his travels through Scythia in the 6th century, may have given rise to these pictures.

118 Barringer, 2013, p. 154

119 Herodotus 4.13
When considering the date of these depictions, it can be assumed that they were inspired by the first clashes between the Greeks of Asia Minor with the *hippotoxotai* of the Median or Persian army. Ivantchik accepts the possibility that in Attica this subject first appeared as a result of Ionian influence. Yet its existence in Attic vase-painting remains an ephemeral episode: it did not develop further in any way.\(^{120}\)

The Scythian archers have been depicted in numerous ways on Attic vase paintings. We have considered appropriate to classify them according to various scenes in which they were portrayed.

a) **Scythians in chariot-scenes**

The period between C. 530-490 B.C. is marked with scenes depicting hoplites and chariots on the battlefield. In spite of the fact that in the 6th century war-chariots were already out of date, the motive was so prevalent that they were still often depicted, sur-

\(^{120}\) Ivantchik, 2006, p. 235
rounded by hoplites of the painter’s own time. It is also worth pointing out that from 530 B.C. onwards Scythians, too, are incorporated in these scenes.

One of the earliest and one of the most remarkable vases of this group is the badly damaged kylix in the British Museum (Fig. 14), in the interior of which a multitude of Scythians, hoplites, and horsemen are depicted on both sides of a chariot.

Scythians, twenty in number, are mixed among the hoplites, and sometimes at their side. They all wear tights of gaily coloured material; down the sleeves and trouser-legs broad and gaily coloured bands are sewn. The painter depicts this costume as one single garment without a belt. The two Scythians standing between the chariot itself and its houres, most likely show the sheaths of daggers.

On Fig. 15 a chariot occupied by a charioteer and a hoplite is speeding towards the left. On the left a hoplite, spear in hand, is awaiting them, on the ground by his side a fallen hoplite. On the extreme right a Scythian, looking back is running away. The fallen hoplite has probably been hit by an arrow.
b) Scythians with hoplites

The great majority of the scenes with Scythians show us the archers in combination with hoplites on foot, usually surrounded by other people, at the moment of their going off to war. There are also scenes of Scythians and hoplites without accompanying people; in these cases it may be the army on the march.

One of the earliest vases of this group is the Swing painter’s amphora (Fig.16): three pairs, each consisting of a hoplite and a Scythian, are marching behind one another. The hoplites are the nearer and the Scythians are largely obscured by their great, round shields. This type of a hoplite and a Scythian as twos, both of them for the greater part hidden behind the hoplite’s shield, is exceptionally popular during the two decades 520-500 B.C, in particular in the Antimenes painter’s workshop and with the painters of the Leagros group. The Scythian costume here consists of a two-coloured tricot: front and back parts of the trousers have been made of different material. Hatching indicates that the bow has been entwined.
The scene on the amphora (Fig. 17) is very unusual. Between two hoplites a man in barbarian costume is sitting on a chair turned towards the right; a standing Scythian is facing him. This Scythian has the same equipment as his colleague on the other side of the vase with the exception, that now bodice and lower part of the chiton are made of different materials. Above the sitting man a bow and gorytos are hanging from the wall, a battle-axe is in his hand. His weapons may be typical of a Scythian, but his costume shows some oddities: he has a chequered tricot with short sleeves; there are white stripes on the bodice and the trousers, of which the lower parts are white; in addition he is wearing a sort of kilt of flowered material. The strangest item is the cap which is neither pointed nor high-crowned, but flat-topped; yet it is not the Persian tiara, for it is firm instead of soft. Moreover, the man wears a very long beard, whereas the two other barbarians of this vase wear a short beard, as is usual with Scythians on Attic vases.
c) Scythians in fighting scenes

There are many instances of Attic vases when one can easily detect the representation of continuous fighting scenes of hoplites. Fig 18, as the inscriptions indicate, shows us a battle between Diomedes and Hector over a fallen Scythian wearing a chiton and a pointed cap with neck-flap tied up; he has greaves, and a gorytos at his waist; above him the inscription “SCYTHES”.

Figure 18

On Fig.19 there is a novel feature: hoplites and Scythians in pairs are in action, the hoplites crouching behind the shields, the Scythians at their sides hooting their bows.

Figure 19
On Fig. 20 we see behind one another a pair of a hoplite and a Scythian, a couple of hoplites, and finally a single hoplite. The hoplites are all crouching behind their shields, the Scythian beside the first hoplite is shooting his arrows. He wears trousers and jacket of coloured material; the high-crowned cap has neck- and cheek-flaps of decorated material. A large gorytos is hanging at his waist.

![](image)

Figure 20

d) Scythians alone

The best pictures and equipment of the Scythians are those where they are represented alone, without hoplites, as in the tondi of cups or plates. There are a few vases, of different shape, where a Scythian is the chief figure.

On Fig. 21 the Scythian checks the straightness of his arrows; he holds two in his left hand and peers along the third one; the bow hanging from his wrist. He wears a dotted tricot with a broad belt; the gorytos has a large flap.
On Fig. 22, a pinax by Psiax, a Scythian blows the trumpet. He has the left arm akimbo and holds with his right hand the farther end of the trumpet; he is slightly bent forward. Like the flute-players he has a φορβειά around his face. His costume consists of dotted trousers with patterned bands down the sides of the legs, and a jacket of chequered material over them. He wears a cap with a long and sharp point, and with narrow cheek-flaps in addition to a broad neck-flap. The gorytos, with one ear of the bow sticking out, is hanging from the belt.
e) Scythians with horsemen

Although this is not a coherent group, Vos preferred to keep the scenes together, rather than distribute them over the other groups, as they would not belong there either. Several subgroups have been distinguished by Vos.

First, there are the vases, where the horsemen are hoplites. In the 6th century the Athenians had no cavalry of their own citizens, and horses served only as transport to convey the heavily armed hoplites to and from the battlefield. On these vases we see the Scythians, accompanying the hoplites, who now are on horseback, to the war.

Second, in most cases, however, the horsemen are not hoplites but are either naked or wear only a mantle around the shoulders. Besides them hoplites and Scythians are standing. It is possible that these horsemen are slaves, who are bringing round the hoplite’s horses, or perhaps the attendants who accompany the hoplite to the war and look after their horses.
Finally, there are a number of vases where not only the Greek but also the Scythian is on horseback, as on Fig. 23. The scene is usually the same: two horsemen, a Scythian and a Greek, facing one another with a collapsing hoplite in between.

![Figure 23](image)

There is an original scene on Fig. 23 where we see two horsemen trotting side by side; on the left one with a Thracian mantle and a Thracian alopekis, on the right a Scythian wearing a chequered tricot and a high pointed cap. Both have two spears; apparently they are going hunting, or two dogs are running along.

**f) Scythians in extispicy-scenes**

On a small number of vases the Scythian is present at an extispicy just before the departure of a hoplite. The hoplite is always standing towards the left; in front of him a nude little boy who presents the entrails. Usually it is the hoplite himself who takes the omen. This group is framed by secondary figures.

Amphora on Fig. 24 is badly damaged. The boy with entrails is in the center of the picture; facing him, on the right, a hoplite and a Scythian, behind him a woman and an old man raising his hand. The Scythian is wearing a short-sleeved tricot decorated
with chequers and horizontal zigzags; there are plain bands down the bodice and the
trousers. The gorytos is hanging from the belt and a battle-axe is in his left hand. Be-
hind the hoplite a dog is standing raising one forepaw and apparently enjoying the de-
licious smell.

![Figure 24](image)

g) Scythians in mythological scenes

There are also mythological or epic scenes in the other groups. All scenes with chari-
ots, for instance, will refer to ancient times, as in the 6th century chariots were not
used in war any more. Whether in these cases, as Vos argues, the Athenians thought of
a particular story cannot be ascertained: probably this was not the case, and the chari-
ot-scenes belonged to the painter’s regular repertoire. The same is true of the Boeoti-
an shields with which the hoplites are sometimes equipped, for the unwieldly Boeotian
shields had already long before that have been replaced by round shields: whenever
the painter gave his hoplites Boeotian shields, he will have thought of an epic scene,
but if inscriptions are lacking and the scenes do not contain recognizable figures, it
cannot be ascertained which story might be meant.

Vos in his study has brought together the scenes which are undoubtedly of an
epic or mythological character. In the former cases the painters pictured daily scenes,
into which they subsequently introduced a mythological character by drawing Boeoti-
an shields and adding names, but in this group the painter must have had in mind from
the beginning an epic scene, to which he anachronistically added Scythians of his own
day.

Of the mythological scenes which picture Scythians it is the fight of Aeneas carry-
ing Anchises from Troy, that is the most frequent. The vases nearly all date from the
last decade of the 6th century, only a few are later. The usual type shows a group of
Aeneas carrying the old Anchises on his back, and advancing towards the right in the
center, before them Creusa, and behind a Scythian archer.

Markedly barbarian features are shown by the Scythian on a fragment of a cup
at Basle (Fig. 25). Under his pointed cap with neck-flap tied up a shock of curling hair,
painted red, is jutting out. The gorytos with the arrows sticking out is hanging from a
white shoulder-strap.

![Figure 25](image)

The vase pictures representing a hoplite returning from battle carrying the body of a
friend over his shoulder, are usually interpreted as Aias returning with Achilles’ body.
Although the interpretation is never supported by inscribed names, it is very probable,
for a painter will borrow such an unpleasant subject from the epic past rather than
from actual scenes of his own day. The Boeotian shield, with which all hoplites, a few
cases excepted, are equipped, makes it fairly certain that the painter meant to repre-
sent an epic episode. It is possible that here the Scythian archer represents Teukros
equipped by the painters on the analogy of the archers of their own time.
On the vases of this group the Scythians never strayed alone into mythological scenes, but always in combination with hoplites. It is, therefore, clear, as Vos puts it, that we have here an anachronism: also in mythological scenes the painters added automatically archers to the hoplites.

3.6 Concluding Remarks

To conclude, the mysterious Scythian archer enjoyed a relatively brief but very important place in Attic vase painting, especially during the late archaic period.

Each of the studies above has both merit and limitations. It will, however, prove fruitful to look at the collective body of work in an effort to underline some of the most problematic issues raised in the scholarship.

Thus, we can draw a conclusion that the ‘Scythian’ costume was not an indication of ethnic origin for Attic vase-painters and their customers. In Attic iconography of the archaic period it merely served as an indication of status. While the main epic heroes were depicted as hoplites, the costume of the ‘Scythian’ archer showed that his status was that of a hero of secondary rank: either an epic ὀδηγός accompanying his leader and fulfilling the role of arms-bearer for him, or a young hero specifically described in the epos as an archer. In the first case most of the characters were nameless and could have been given ‘speaking’ names by the vase-painters. Costume was of course not a direct indication of a character’s social status but rather his image: for example, Patroclus, who was Achilles’ ὀδηγός, was depicted with a hoplite’s weapons, because his epic image was not inferior to those of heroes of the first rank.
Chapter IV SCYTHIAN ARCHERS ON ARCHAIC ATTIC VASES: PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION

This chapter is devoted to the study of the costume of ancient societies on the grounds that it not only helps in reconstructing the appearance of various peoples, but also opens up numerous aspects of their history.

4.1 Scythian Costume as Identity

One of the main iconographic identifying criteria for Scythians is their costume. Already in the 5th century BC, the Greek historian Herodotus describes the costume of one of the Scythian tribes in his catalogue of the Persian king Xerxes’ troops:

*The Sacae, who are Scythians, had on their tall caps, erect and stiff and tapering to a point; they wore breeches, and carried their native bows, and daggers, and axes withal, which they call “sagaris”. These were Amyrgian Scythians, but were called Sacae; for that is the Persian name for all the Scythians.*

The important detail in this description is the tall pointed hat, which Herodotus calls kyrbsasia. At another point in his narrative, he mentions that headgear, belts and girdles of Scythians were decorated with gold.

Greek vase-painting constitutes one of the most frequently used sources for the study of ancient clothing. Until quite recently, Western scholarship has focused on Attic vase-painting as a primary archaeological source of information on the appearance of foreigners. Dress in particular, along with weaponry and, less frequently, ph-
notype has been used as a criterion for identification of Scythians and other barbarian peoples known from contemporary literature.\textsuperscript{123}

According to Vos, most of the representations of what have been identified as Scythian archers on Attic vases are dated between 530 and 500 BC.\textsuperscript{124} Their typical attire includes the tall pointed cap with flaps on the sides and back, and the dress consisting of a long-sleeved top and jacket with trousers, all made of patterned material and trimmed with decorated strips along the seams (Fig. 26).

Figure 26. Scythian archer, Greek black-figure vase

Few of the archers, however, wear precisely this costume. Scholars explain some variants as being simplifications or elaborations of a decorative sort. Thus, in many cases,

\textsuperscript{123} Raeck, 1981, p. 2

\textsuperscript{124} Vos, 1963
Scythian attire has not been used in a specific ethnic sense, but rather employed either to represent a wider range of Asians, or to indicate the function of archer and/or his mythical character.\textsuperscript{125} Scythian clothing as a symbol of archery has been suggested as an explanation for its adaptation for the images of Amazons in Greek art.\textsuperscript{126} It can also be associated with their believed geographical origin in the Black Sea region.

Ancient literature suggests that thanks to clothing of foreigners Greeks could differentiate one group from the other. Nevertheless, one cannot characterize people shown on vases in different attires as Scythians or other foreigners. Iconography serves the basis for most arguments. As Miller claims, the iconography itself is, however, often inconsistent and many figures cannot be precisely categorized as ‘Scythians’.\textsuperscript{127} Descriptions by Herodotus are often used as a confirmation of their identity, yet his accounts are short and very general and should be used with caution in modern interpretations of iconography.

As noted by Raeck, the artistic conventions that played a major role in vase-painting in general and in the representation of foreigners in particular, should be taken into account.\textsuperscript{128} The appearance of barbarians on vases is based not only on historical reality, but also on artistic canons and it is difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between the two.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{125} Pinney, 1983, pp. 130,137
\textsuperscript{126} Bothmer, 1957; Vos, 1963
\textsuperscript{127} Miller, 1991, p. 61
\textsuperscript{128} Raeck, 1981, pp. 2–3
\textsuperscript{129} Raeck, 1981, p. 3; Miller, 1991, p. 63
4.2 The Significance of the Figure Outside of Military Context

Some groups of depictions on Attic vases are examined which point to the fact that ‘Scythian’ costume in some cases could have ethnic associations despite everything. This at first glance might appear to contradict the interpretation that the figure of the ‘Scythian’ archer as a second-rank companion of heroic hoplites did not emerge suddenly, although in two of the earliest depictions of ‘Scythian’ archers (c. 570 BC) their role was precisely that of accompanying heroes.

The first group depicts the capture of a silenos. This subject is well known from the written sources, according to which the Phrygian king Midas succeeded in capturing a silenos after pouring wine into the spring of water from which the latter was drinking. The subject is encountered in Attic vase-painting quite often and in rare instances the characters are depicted wearing ‘Scythian’ pointed caps (Fig. 27).

![Figure 27. Black-figure lekythos](image)

This example shows that this element of ‘Scythian’ costume had vague Asiatic connotations for the Attic vase-painters and could have pointed for example to Phrygia as the scene for the action, but did not in any way serve as an undeniable pointer to nomads from the North. In one of these depictions on a Kerch pelike the head-dress of the characters does not have a point at the top and is more reminiscent of the kind of headwear found in later depictions of Persians or that known as a “Phrygian cap”. This testifies yet again to the fact that the caps in this instance were not linked with a spe-
specific ethnic group but pointed to the East in general. Attention should also be drawn to the late date of these depictions: a London lekythos was decorated by the Sappho Painter and has been dated to c. 500-490 BC; a fragmentary krater from Basel belongs to the group Acropolis of the same date; a Kerch pelike was decorated by the Euchares Painter of the same period. A pelike acquired by the Metropolitan Museum was decorated by the Pan Painter (c. 470 BC); one of the characters on it was not just wearing a cap, his whole costume was of an Eastern type.

There is another group of depictions, in which figures are found wearing ‘Scythian’ caps. It also belongs to a non-military context, that of a symposium. There exist approximately 15 Attic vases with depictions of a symposium or komos including figures dressed in ordinary Greek clothes (or naked) but with ‘Scythian’ caps on their heads\(^{130}\) (Fig. 28). Various interpretations have been put forward for this group of depictions.

\[\text{Fig. 28. Red-figure kylix}\]

Several authors regarded them as showing actual ethnic Scythians who had taken part in symposia – for example, barbarians who had worked on Kerameikos, or Scythian

\(^{130}\) Lissarrague, 1990, pp. 141-149; Miller, 1991, pp. 59-81
mercenaries. This interpretation was based exclusively on the idea that a ‘Scythian’ cap determined beyond doubt the ethnic origin of the person wearing it.

Furthermore, there is no other detail which indicates that the characters in question are barbarian: their behaviour and clothes did not differ in any way from those of ordinary participants in a symposium. Lissarrague suggests a different, more convincing interpretation. In his opinion these depictions are linked to the expression επισκυθίζειν, σκυθίζειν, “faire le Scythe”, in the sense “drink undiluted wine”. The presence of a figure in a ‘Scythian’ cap would thus indicate that undiluted wine was being drunk. Yet, as Ivantchik argues, both interpretations leave one detail unexplained.

In all the depictions the cap is only worn by one figure (on top of it there is often to be seen a wreath in accordance with the usual practice at symposia). If the cap indicated that undiluted wine was being drunk, then it would have been more likely for all those participating in the symposium and drinking ‘Scythian-style’ to be wearing one.

For this reason another suggestion would seem preferable: that the character in ‘Scythian’ cap is the symposiarchos – βασιλεύς τοῦ συμποσίου. In Athens in the 5th century BC what was associated above all with a βασιλεύς was the Persian king: associations between a symposiarchos and the Eastern ruler are testified to in the written sources. It can thus be suggested that the ‘Scythian’ cap in this case, as in that of the previous group of depictions came complete with eastern associations and called to mind the eastern ruler, with whom the symposiarchos was identified.

Miller, however, objects to the interpretation of these depictions as indications that the figure in question is the symposiarchos. She suggests that the associations of the symposiarchos with the eastern king appear later and are not recorded in connection with the Classical period. She also points out that in Attic vase-painting the usual associations were between the symposiarchos and the Persian king. If this were so, then the cap might have been intended to indicate that the person was the symposiarchos, but not that he was drinking undiluted wine.

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132 Lissarrague, 1990, p. 148

133 Ivantchik, 2005, p. 255
attribute of a king, including eastern ones, would be a sceptre.\textsuperscript{134} In exchange she proposes an alternative interpretation: wearing a cap and the use of Persian vessel shapes testifies to the pro-Persian sympathies of some of the Athenian aristocracy, while the use of certain eastern objects (including caps) serves as a sign that the figures concerned belong to an élite.\textsuperscript{135} This explanation is possible, but certain objections to it could also be raised, as argued by Ivantchik. Firstly, it does not explain why only one person in the scenes under discussion is portrayed wearing a cap. People attending a symposium are likely to belong to one and the same circle and to share common views: for this reason it would have been logical to expect more than one of them to be wearing a cap. Secondly, the guests at the symposium were not using any other ‘eastern’ objects, such as rhyta or imitations of Persian drinking bowls (phialai), the appearance of which in Athens has been reliably recorded by archaeological data.

4.3 Inscriptions Associated with Scythians on Attic Vases

In the archaic period a number of commonly described as “nonsense” inscriptions appeared on Attic vases associated with depictions of Scythians. The scholars supposed that these inscriptions might represent meaningful sounds in foreign languages spoken in the Black Sea and Caucasus region. These inscriptions are of significance as they constitute the earliest written evidence for Caucasian languages, and shed light on questions of Greco-Scythian relations, ethnicity and iconography.

Greek inscriptions, used as signatures or labels for figures, are familiar features of ancient Athenian vase paintings. Equally familiar are depictions of non-Greek figures, such as those traditionally identified as “Scythians”. In relation to the vases studied, the term “Scythian” is used to refer to male archers wearing distinctive Eastern

\textsuperscript{134} Miller, 1991, p. 67

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., pp. 69-71
attire: a quiver; a soft or pointed cap with or without lappets; a belted, patterned tunic and soft, cuffed boots.

Some examples of nonsense inscriptions accompanying representations of Scythians on vases are discussed below.

On a red-figure amphora signed by the painter Euthymides (510–500 B.C.) a pair of archers in elements of Scythian attire defines a young Greek hoplite (Fig. 29). The Greek putting on his armor is labeled Thorykion, “Breastplate” in Greek. The Scythian archer on the right is named Euthybolos, “Straight-Shooter” in Greek. But the other archer’s name, ΧΥΧΟΞΠΙ, is unintelligible. This is an example of a non-Greek word that appears alongside Greek words on the same vase, indicating that the vase painter was literate.136

Figure 29. Athenian red-figure amphora, type A

Nonsense inscriptions on vases have often been dismissed as the result of illiteracy or boredom, but a mixture of sense and nonsense on a single vase is a more complex matter. Immerwahr has written extensively about literacy on Greek vases. Among the

136 Lissarrague, 1991, pp. 49, 110
explanations he suggests for unintelligible words are jokes, visual or acoustic illusions, meaningless decoration, copyists’ misspellings, deliberate or careless imitations of actual writing, attempts to give an appearance of literacy.\footnote{Immerwahr, 1990, p. 161} He also points out, however, that literate vase painters sometimes inscribed unknown words; his study lists vases that have a single misspelled name alongside clearly intelligible names.\footnote{Immerwahr, 2010, pp. 119–121} As Immerwahr and others have noted, in antiquity writing could have other purposes besides conveying meaning through words. Vase inscriptions, both sense and nonsense, were addressed to an audience; the words were not only read and sounded out, but they stimulated discussion among the viewers, in addition to serving as another element in the decoration of the vessel.

Steiner has argued that nonsense words with harsh ‘ch’ sounds next to images of Scythians on vases were intended as parodies, meant to insult barbarians and mock their foreign accents, evoking the sounds of “throat-clearing or retching”.\footnote{Steiner, 2007, pp. 75, 205–206, 292} Moreover, it is worth noting that repeated ch and kh sounds are in fact very common in Caucasian dialects. The kh sound, represented by Greek chi, occurs in many Scythian proper names recorded by Herodotos, and it is a feature in ancient Greek comedies mocking Scythians. As Steiner demonstrates, many inscriptions on Greek vases contain sophisticated auditory effects, rhymes, and wordplay, and were intended to be read out loud. Some of the nonsense inscriptions associated with figures in Scythian attire might simulate the sounds of foreign languages in nonsensical “double-talk,” but, they might also represent attempts to reproduce genuine words or phrases in a foreign language.\footnote{Ibid., p. 292}

One way of making sense of some nonsense inscriptions and non-Greek names associated with figures of Scythians on Greek vases is to investigate whether any of the phonemes represent, capture, or approximate the sounds of Saka-like Scythian, Indo-
Aryan, Sarmatian, Circassian, Abkhazian, Ubykh, and other languages spoken in the area broadly known to the ancient Greeks as Scythia. To test this hypothesis, a sample of “nonsensical” inscriptions and non-Greek names was analyzed to see whether the sounds might reasonably be interpreted as words or names drawn from dialects spoken today by people of the Black Sea and Caucasus region.

Of the inscriptions analyzed, a majority of those associated with Scythians produced indicative results. On a red-figure amphora by Euthymides (510–500 B.C.), described above, the non-Greek name ΧΥΧΟ΢ΠΙ, Khukhospi, appears next to a Scythian archer whose companions have the Greek names Euthybolos and Thorykion (Fig. 29). If the second part of the name, ospi, had been written aspa instead, one might see a link to asp, Scythian-Iranian “horse,” or Greek aspis, “shield”. But the phonetics of Khukhospi may instead indicate an ancient form of Abkhazian. If so, then Khukhospi would mean “Enthusiastic Shouter” or “Battle-Cry,” an appropriate nickname for a warrior.

A red-figure amphora that recalls the Euergides Painter (525–500 B.C.) shows a Greek warrior named Hippaichmos leading a horse toward a Scythian whose non-Greek name is ΢ΕΡΑΓΥΕ, Serague (Fig. 30). The same name labels a Scythian-style archer on a contemporary cup attributed to the Delos Painter. In Circassian Serague would mean “Wearing (Armed with) Dagger or Sword.” As Circassian is not a gendered language, this name could apply to either sex.

![Figure 30. Athenian red-figure amphora, type A](image-url)
A red-figure amphora attributed to the Dikaios Painter (510–500 B.C.) includes the Greek names of the gods Athena, Apollo, and Artemis on one side. On the other side, five unknown words are associated with a Greek warrior flanked by a Scythian archer, a dog, and an old man (Fig. 31). Behind the Scythian’s head appears ΚΙΣΙ (kisi); to the right of his head and shoulder, ΓΕΧΓΟΓΧ (gekhgogkh); at his feet above the dog, ΧΛΕ*.ΙΣΙ (khle[.]si); along the Greek warrior’s back, ΧΕΧΓΙΟΧΕΧΟΓΕ (khekhgiokhekhohe); and along the old man’s back, ΧΛΕΙΟΠΧΙΟ (khleiopkhio). The letter strings with many kh/g sounds are suggestive of Caucasian languages. Kisi is Circassian, meaning something like “here is his friend,” an apparent reference to the archer, whose name, Gekhgo, means “Brave Adversary” in Abkhazian. The label for the hoplite, Khekhgiokhekhohe, translates as “One Chosen from among the Brave” in Circassian, an appropriate description of a warrior. The old man’s name, Kleiopkhio, seems to identify him in Circassian as the descendant of “the daughter of a big man.” The incomplete word inscribed above the dog is unclear; perhaps it is the dog’s name.

Figure 31. Athenian red-figure amphora, type A

Finally, if these inscriptions are actual contemporary records of Northwest Caucasian languages of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., they give linguists an astonishing glimpse
into the evolution of those languages. Therefore, these vases not only illustrate ancient Greek relations with the cultures of the Black Sea and Caucasus region, but also preserve the earliest written examples of the languages spoken by these “barbarians.”

4.4 Concluding Remarks

To sum up, special attention needs to be paid to the chronology of this group of depictions. They date from between approximately 500 BC and 470 BC., the latest one dates from c. 450 BC, i.e. they date from a time when the iconographic and semantic scheme described above presupposing a functional not an ethnic role for ‘Scythian’ costume was disappearing. It was replaced by other semantic schemes, within the framework of which costume acquired ethnic significance. Also, in a number of cases the ‘caps’ depicted here differ substantially in shape from the headwear worn by the archers of the archaic period and have a more complex shape.\textsuperscript{141} It is possible that the artist attempted to convey through this more complex shape of the cap the fact that the figure was not simply an Iranian or a Persian, but specifically a king. This shows that in even the new situation there are no grounds for linking costume and ethnic Scythians.

In addition, foreign names of men depicted in Scythian attire on these vases might have come from contemporary oral or written tales that no longer survive, or perhaps they were simply the real names of Scythian archers in Athens. Although literary evidence supports the presence of individual Scythians in Greece in the late 6th and 5th centuries B.C., the foreign inscriptions discussed here cannot be taken as confirmation of historical reports of a large official force of Scythians in Athens. The ethnicity of Scythian-costumed figures on vases remains an open question.

\textsuperscript{141} Miller, 1991, p. 62
CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This concluding chapter aims at summarizing and presenting the final conclusions of the thesis in light of the findings of the present study. Furthermore, the contributions of the present study, as well as limitations of the study are discussed. Finally, the avenues for further research are outlined and suggestions are made concerning possible areas worthy of future exploration.

There has not been much research done on Scythian archers and their representation in art in the archaic period due to a general lack of literary, historical and firm archaeological evidence. Thus, the main aim of the present study was to look into the origin, identity and the function of archers illustrated on Attic vases of the archaic period, by investigating the iconographic significance of the image.

5.1 Findings of the Study

The identity of archers changed over time. Early on warriors might use a variety of weapons and the bow might be used by just anyone. Later, with the arrival of the hoplite masses, archers became light-armed specialists. The thetes rather than slaves or foreigners are the most likely candidates to have served as archers in the Archaic (and to a large degree in the Classical) period. There is no convincing reason to believe that the archers fighting in Archaic Athens or elsewhere in Greece were Scythians or Cretans.

With regard to the origin of the archers on Attic vases of the archaic period, the findings suggest that the Attic artists of that period and those who used their wares definitely did not regard as Scythians (or the representatives of any other specific ethnic group) those characters who are referred to in the modern literature as “Scythian archers” or “Scythians”. The associations brought to mind by the attire of these figures were not ethnic ones but of a different nature. Consequently, the discussions in the literature about the ethnic origins of the archer found on vases, whether Scythian, Persian or representative of some other people are worthless.
The study also sought to analyze and interpret the depictions of archers in so-called “Scythian” clothes (a high sharp cap or a rounded hood, a caftan and trousers) in Attic archaic vase-painting. These depictions, in which a reflection of historical events can be found, have been used by different scholars as testimony to the history of relations between Athens and the population of the North Pontic region.

Another important focus of the current study was the examination of the Scythian costume as identity. The sources for our understanding of Scythian attire include ancient literary references, iconographic material and archaeological remains. Each of these sources has inherent or interpretational problems, which we have to take into account when using them to reconstruct Scythian costume. By combining a variety of sources, the bias of each taken separately is reduced, thereby giving us more insight into what Scythians wore. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that it is difficult to expect any ethnographic precision in the details of the costume worn by archers on the vases of the archaic period. These costumes had a generalized nature and included only the most characteristic elements of the real prototypes, often in a very schematic way. Furthermore, the specific ethnic group of the figure in Attic vase-painting is almost impossible to determine. These archers probably belonged to one or several peoples who had served in the Persian army and were not Scythians from the Pontic region.

In addition, this study provided valuable insights on inscriptions associated with Scythians on Attic Vases. The discovery on Athenian vases of foreign names and other words intentionally and meaningfully associated with Scythian-garbed figures suggests that at least some Scythians were present in Athens and that their language was available to vase painters and their customers. If the figure of an archer on a vase is dressed like a Scythian, acts like a Scythian, and speaks like a Scythian, then it is in fact a Scythian.


5.2 Contributions of the Study

It is hoped that the present study makes important contributions to the field of research on Attic vase-painting. It presents findings with important implications for our understanding of cultural interactions which developed between the local peoples of the north coast of the Black Sea, conventionally termed “Scythians” and Greeks. The results of this study hold important practical implications for students, teachers, as well as for art researchers. It offers new information about archers identified as “Scythians” so that these issues can be more effectively addressed in pedagogical studies.

It is hoped that by investigating such important issues as the origin, identity, function and image of these archers, the present dissertation contributed greatly to subsequent study of the subject, arguing that a) the images are absolutely not meant to be real Scythians, b) they are dressed (and intended to be dressed) like Scythians because they are archers and not the other way around, c) the costume is related to the weapon – the distinctive Scythian bow, d) the costume and weapon do not depreciate the archer, but rather idealize him, e) the role, and not the dress, of the archers in their depictions commit them to lower class status.

In addition, the study contributed to raising teachers’ and researchers’ awareness of the importance of interpretation of depictions of Scythian archers on Attic vases in the archaic period. It is suggested that our findings might help teacher education programs, as these data and observations might inform the content of those courses in art.

Finally, this dissertation deemed appropriate for the need for interdisciplinary research, and the importance of turning over the old stones.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Although the findings of this study contribute to research on Attic vases in the archaic period, certain limitations should be pointed out. Due to the absence of definitive lit-
erary or archaeological evidence, the study can be considered only illustrative. However, the themes identified in the present study, and particularly the problems brought forward as regards to the origin and identity of the archers, can outline some general matters of concern on the interpretation of these figures in Attic vase-painting of the archaic period. We have to consider all the material carefully, taking into account its various limitations, since all evidence is biased and unreliable in some way.

Furthermore, the problems in distinguishing different foreigners in Attic vase-painting, if one assumes that the depictions are indeed of foreigners, show the limitations of the material for the understanding of Scythian attire.

Moreover, on the grounds that the data for the present study is too narrow to allow us to draw any definite conclusions regarding the “Scythian” archers, it remains a challenge to this field of research.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

While answering some important questions, this study introduced some new queries that need to be addressed in future research. The question of Scythian archers on Attic Vase Painting of the late archaic period deserves still more attention.

First, future studies may continue to explore the figure of the Scythian archer in Attic vase-painting. An issue worth exploring would be the study of these images in the last quarter of the 6th century when they were abundant in number (86% or 496 vases according to the Beazley archive), which may be the key to understanding the whole figure.

While not the focus of this particular study, comparison of independent reconstructions of this kind with Attic vases would probably shed further light on the question as to which ethnic costume served as a basis for the figure of the archer which emerged in Attic vase-painting of the archaic period.
5.5 Concluding Remarks

In this final chapter firstly the conclusions of the study concerning the figure of the Scythian archer were presented and summarized. Next, the contributions of the study to the field were identified. In addition, various limitations which were encountered during data collection were highlighted. Finally, the chapter provided new avenues worthy of investigation and new areas for further research.
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