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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

Department of Art History and Archaeology

Envisioning the Unseen: Sisyphos in Chthonic Landscapes

by

Elizabeth Graff Wolfson

A thesis presented to the  
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
of Washington University in  
partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts

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St. Louis, Missouri



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To my advisor, for all her patience and assistance,  
and to my parents, for all their love and support.

ἔα: ἔμπνους μὲν εἰμι καὶ δέδορχ' ἄπερ με δεῖ...ἰδού...; οὐ̄ που κατη̄λθον ἀ̄θις εἰς Ἄιδου  
πάλιν, Εὐρυσθέως δίαυλον; εἰς Ἄιδου; πόθεν; ἀλλ' οὐ̄τε Σισύφειον εἰσορῶ πέτρον  
Πλούτωνά τ', οὐδὲ σκῆπτρα Δῆμητρος κόρης. ἔκ τοι πέπληγμαι: ποῦ ποτ' ὦν ἀμηχανῶ;

Aha! I am alive and breathing; and my eyes see what they should... How now? Why am I lying here...? Surely I have not come a second time to Hades' halls, having just returned from there for Eurystheus? To Hades? From where? No, I do not see Sisyphus with his stone, or Pluto, or his queen, Demeter's child. Surely I am distraught; where am I, so helpless?<sup>1</sup>

~Euripides, *Herakles* 1089-1107

## INTRODUCTION

The ancient Greek underworld was a place of mystery and intrigue for the authors and artists who contemplated its interior. Ancient authors translate the term *Aidēs*, which designated both the realm and its ruler, as “invisible” (ἀειδής), but they also describe it as being “unseen” (ἀίδηλος), “shrouded” (σκεπόμενος), and “without color” (ἄχρωστος).<sup>2</sup> This means that it was both physically and psychologically inaccessible to the living, aside from a few heroes who ventured to its gates.<sup>3</sup> The shades that resided in Hades were, according to Homer, mindless without the enrichment of blood;<sup>4</sup> thus, in actuality, the underworld was unseen to everyone, both living and deceased. How, then, did artists undertake the task of illustrating this invisible place? Archaeologists have unearthed numerous sculpted and painted renditions of this realm, which show that the Greeks found a way to bypass the issue of its invisibility: they ignored the geographic landmarks, such as fiery rivers and fields of asphodel, used by authors to set their chthonic stories. Instead, images of the underworld were described using *living topography*, or

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<sup>1</sup> trans. Coleridge 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Krat.* 403a, 404b and *Georg.* 493c; Plutarch, *De Primo Frigido* 9 and *An Recte Dictum* 6 (ἀειδής). Sophocles, *Ajax* 608 (ἀίδηλος). Lucian, *Tim.* 21 (σκεπόμενος). Plutarch, *De Primo Frigido* 9 (ἄχρωστος).

<sup>3</sup> Odysseus (Homer, *Od.* 593-600), Theseus (Euripides, *Herak.* 610-620), Herakles (Homer, *Od.* 11.625-626; Euripides, *Herak.* 24-25), and Aeneas (Virgil, *Aen.* 6.608-625) all made a κατὰβασις, or “descent” to the underworld, while they were still living.

<sup>4</sup> *Od.* 10.535-538; 11.46-50.

the mythological characters who lived inside the realm. The most common figures include Hades, Persephone, Kerberos, Hermes, Charon, Sisypheos, and the Danaids.<sup>5</sup>

Of the group, Hades and Persephone appear most frequently, usually within the context of Persephone's abduction, when Hades forcibly took the earth goddess from the upper world in order to make her queen of the underworld.<sup>6</sup> Kerberos was represented quite often as well, usually in conjunction with Herakles' 12<sup>th</sup> labor, which required the hero to abduct the canine from the realm's entrance; Hermes sometimes assisted him.<sup>7</sup> Charon appears most frequently on white-ground lekythoi with Hermes, ferrying souls into the afterlife.<sup>8</sup> While all of these tales are associated with the underworld, they are not set within it: Persephone's abduction, for the most part, takes place outside or on the outskirts;<sup>9</sup> Kerberos' abduction takes place at the gate; and Charon's task always occurs beyond the gate. Therefore, these images will not be the focus of my study. Rather, I will discuss a subset of scenes set *inside* the underworld. The number of characters that can appear in internal underworld scenes ranges from a few to a dozen or more; this includes Hades and Persephone, but as I will argue, their potentially confusing iconographies make them ill suited to be indicators of internal underworld landscapes. Therefore, my primary concern will be what I shall call the "toilsome souls:" people who pay for the poor decisions they made in life by suffering in death. They include Sisypheos, Tityos, Tantalos, Oknos, Ixion, and

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<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the Etruscan death deity Vanth will be discussed, for she was depicted on numerous artworks found inside Etruscan tombs (see pp. 56-57).

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Vergina, King's Necropolis, Tomb 1 (Grave of Persephone); Andronikos 1994, pls. 4-9; *LIMC*, s.v. *Persephone* 213 (date: 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) (Güntner), Hades (Dahlinger, Linder, Yalouris).

<sup>7</sup> E.g. St. Louis, Wash. Univ. Mus., 3274; *ABV*<sup>2</sup> 328.7 (attributed to Long-Nose Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Kerberos* 15a (Woodford and Spier).

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Athens, Nat. Mus. 1926; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 846, 193 (attributed to Sabouroff Painter); *Para* 423; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 297; Boardman 1989, fig. 254; Oakley 2004, fig. 72.

<sup>9</sup> While most scenes of Persephone's descent and ascent take place outside the underworld, London, BM B 261 (Pl. 5), which takes place inside the underworld, depicts the moment *before* she leaves the underworld with Hermes. Thus, not every image of the goddess' abduction occurs above ground, but one can tell which ones take place below based on Sisypheos' presence (see also Pl. 6, which depicts the moment *after* she entered the underworld).



the water-carrying Danaids.<sup>10</sup> As recognizable characters with tasks that are permanently tied to the chthonic realm, they are best suited to be “scene-setters,” or indicators of the underworld landscape. Although each of these figures occurs at least once in chthonic art, Sisyphos appears most frequently;<sup>11</sup> therefore, he will be the main topic of this discussion.

Many scholars have written extensively on the underworld in art and literature, but only a handful have discussed Sisyphos in detail. John Oakley compiled a detailed catalog and bibliography for Sisyphos in his article in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, but he does little more than identify the characters within each scene.<sup>12</sup> Erika Simon commented on Sisyphos in Greek art a bit more expansively, remarking that he appears on many Athenian black-figure vases, alongside other residents of Hades, to characterize the underworld.<sup>13</sup> She also suggests that the abundance of paintings that pair Persephone and Sisyphos imply that the goddess was overseeing his punishment (Pls. 8-12).<sup>14</sup> Emily Vermeule agrees with Simon, particularly in relation to the vessels that depict Sisyphos toiling in the presence of Hades and Persephone (Pls. 5-6). Her primary argument, however, focuses on Persephone, suggesting that she was a superior ruler to Hades because she was illustrated more often.<sup>15</sup> Christine Sourvinou-Inwood composed a detailed study on the textual evidence for the myths of Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos, explaining that they were punished for disturbing the natural order of the cosmos; she does not discuss Sisyphos in art.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Kirsti Simonsuuri wrote a revisionist article on the myth of Sisyphos, arguing that he was in fact a great hero, as opposed to a transgressive denizen

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<sup>10</sup> The Danaids were not the first characters to carry water in the underworld: before their 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE appearance on Apulian red-figured pottery, winged *psychai*, or souls, and anonymous men and women appear in this role (see Chapter 2, n. 108).

<sup>11</sup> In chapter 3, I will discuss how the Danaids gradually took over Sisyphos’ scene-setting role, which had been established on the mainland, in Apulian vase painting (see pp. 70-72).

<sup>12</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* (Oakley).

<sup>13</sup> Simon 1994, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> Simon 1967, p. 277.

<sup>15</sup> Vermeule 1979, p. 37.

<sup>16</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 1986, pp. 47-52.

of the underworld; she too does not discuss his image in art.<sup>17</sup> Paola Zancani Montuoro remarks upon Sisyphos in South Italian art, specifically in relation to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE Foce del Sele relief (Pl. 26); her discussion focuses on the demon clinging to his back and how such an image may have evolved into the whip-brandishing woman seen tormenting Sisyphos on 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE Apulian vase paintings (Pls. 29, 31-32).<sup>18</sup> Finally, Wassiliki Felten has made the most fascinating comment: in her discussion of an amphora in Munich (Munich 1549, Pl. 6), she says that on Attic black-figure vases featuring a chthonic environment, Sisyphos' toilsome task is the central narrative, while Persephone and/or Hades are his stage, or backdrop. I will argue just the opposite: Hades and Persephone do not define the underworld landscape because, as I will discuss later, there are difficulties surrounding their iconographies. Rather, Sisyphos is the backdrop for the characters that accompany him, especially Hades and Persephone. In other words, Sisyphos is a scene-setter of chthonic imagery, or the defining force that renders the underworld realm a visible and recognizable place.

The tradition of "scene-setters" can be traced to Homer's description of Odysseus' descent into the underworld (*Od.* 11.567-600). As he stands at the outskirts of the realm, with nothing but a trench of blood between him and the countless, zombie-like dead that roam about inside, Odysseus distinguishes a select group of figures who stand out among the mindless hordes, referring to them by name: Orion, Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos. Orion hunts beasts he was able to subdue in life, but in death, is unable to catch. Tityos lies tied to the ground as two vultures feed on his liver, which, once consumed, grows back so that the process can be repeated. Tantalos, plagued with a parched throat and empty stomach, sits in a pool of water, from which he is unable to drink, near overhanging fruit trees he cannot reach. Lastly, Sisyphos pushes a

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<sup>17</sup> Simonsuuri 2002, pp. 259-272.

<sup>18</sup> Zancani Montuoro 1963, pp. 67-77.

monstrous stone up a steep hill, only to have it fall back down once he reaches the top. Only Tityos' crime—that he attempted to kidnap Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis—is specifically mentioned, yet all of these men toil, rather than roam senselessly about like the rest of the souls, because of the crimes they committed in life, oftentimes against gods.

Many later authors, such as Virgil (*Aen.* 6.608-625), Ovid (*Met.* 4.460-69), and Lucian (*Dialog.* 2.30.14) follow this figurative “scene-setting” tradition first found in Homer, noting the presence of a toilsome soul as their characters traverse their vision of the chthonic landscape. More importantly, artists followed this custom as well: Sisyphos appears often in 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE black-figure, red-figure, and white-ground vase paintings from the Greek mainland (Pls. 1-13, 15-21), oftentimes secondary to a larger narrative. In three instances, he is included within elaborate narratives on 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE Apulian red-figure volute kraters, but the Danaids take over his role on late Apulian vases. In 4<sup>th</sup> century Etruscan tomb paintings, and a couple of large-scale frescoes—one by Polygnotus, from Delphi, the other from the Esquiline Hill—many characters populate the underworld; together, they help define the ambiguous landscapes that they inhabit.

This thesis will consist of three chapters: the first will discuss Sisyphos in texts in order to map the evolution of his myth, explore his function in chthonic environments, and discern how he became a toilsome soul. In chapter two, I will map, both chronologically and geographically, images of Sisyphos in the underworld in order to reveal his primary function within chthonic environments. My third chapter will explore Sisyphos as a scene-setter, as well as the Apulian scene-setting tradition that evolved from this. My aim is to demonstrate that Sisyphos, as opposed to the “invisible” Hades and/or his “not-ever-present” wife Persephone,

was a scene-setter of chthonic environments, who helped make the “unseen” afterlife both visible and comprehensible to those still living.

## **CHAPTER 1: SISYPHOS IN LITERATURE**

Sisyphos was widely known throughout ancient Greece, South Italy, and Rome as the mortal who repeatedly transgressed against the divinities of the Olympian and chthonic realms. The myth, as it is known from the ancient written sources, is as follows: Sisyphos, king of Corinth, informed the river god Asopos that Zeus had kidnapped his daughter, Aegina, having caught sight of the deed from atop his citadel at Acrocorinth. Angry that his illicit courtship had been exposed, Zeus dispatched Thanatos to take Sisyphos to Hades, but Sisyphos overpowered the deity and tied him up, thereby making it impossible for mortals to die. The last straw was when he convinced Hades, or Persephone, to release him from death so that he might scold his negligent wife for neglecting his funerary rites. He then either remained in the upper world for the rest of his allotted lifespan, or was retrieved by Hermes shortly after his ruse was discovered. The Corinthian king was then sentenced to roll a stone up a steep slope forever, both as punishment for upsetting divine beings, and also to prevent him from escaping from the underworld.

Many ancient Greek and Roman poets, playwrights, philosophers, and historians, from Homer to Hyginus, have discussed Sisyphos either sparingly or in detail. The poets and playwrights often mentioned the king only as a peripheral character within a larger setting; sometimes he is not named, but simply entitled “stone-roller,” implying that this activity alone was enough to identify him clearly. Historians of myth, on the other hand, focused on the entire narrative, from Sisyphos’ first offense to his brutal punishment in Hades. The most frequently recounted moment of Sisyphos’ story is the punishment he endures in Hades. In this chapter, I will explore the most descriptive sources in chronological order, from the 8th century to Imperial Roman times, that relate Sisyphos’ offense and punishment, in order to map the evolution of his

myth, the way authors utilized him in their chthonic environments, and to establish how and why he became a toilsome soul.

The earliest extant texts that discuss the myth of Sisyphos are Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which reached something akin to their present form around 750-725 BCE.<sup>1</sup> In the *Iliad* (6.150-155, 196-197, 206), Sisyphos' great-great grandson Glaukos relates his ancestry to his Trojan opponent, Diomedes:

εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις καὶ ταῦτα δαήμεναι ὄφρ' εὐ εἰδῆς/ ἡμετέρην γενεήν, πολλοὶ δέ μιν ἄνδρες ἴασιν:/ ἔστι πόλις Ἐφύρη μυχῶ Ἄργεος ἵπποβότοιο,/ ἔνθα δὲ Σίσυφος ἔσκεν, ὁ κέρδιστος γένετ' ἀνδρῶν,/ Σίσυφος Αἰολίδης: ὁ δ' ἄρα Γλαῦκον τέκεθ' υἱόν,/ αὐτὰρ Γλαῦκος ἔτικτεν ἀμύμονα Βελλεροφόντην.../ ἢ δ' ἔτεκε τρία τέκνα δαΐφροσι Βελλεροφόντη/ Ἴασνδρόν τε καὶ Ἴππόλοχον καὶ Δαοδάμειαν.../ Ἴππόλοχος δέ μ' ἔτικτε...

My lineage? If you are really bent on knowing all...listen. Ephyra is a city on the gulf of Argos: in Ephyra, Sisyphos Aiolides, the craftiest of men, lived once upon a time and fathered Glaukos, father in turn of Prince Bellerophon... The [Lykian] king's daughter bore three children to Bellerophon: Isandros, Hippolokhos, and Laodameia... Hippolokhos it was who fathered me.<sup>2</sup>

In this passage, Sisyphos is called κέρδιστος...ἀνδρῶν, or “the craftiest of men.” This is an epithet that is repeated, in many forms, by subsequent authors, such as the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE poet Pindar (*Ol.* 13.53), who refers to him as ὦς θεόν (god-like).<sup>3</sup> His name was also adopted by

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<sup>1</sup> See *OCD*<sup>3</sup>, s.v. *Homer*.

<sup>2</sup> trans. Fitzgerald 2004. Sisyphos' lineage is not discussed again until the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, when [Apollodorus] wrote the *Library* (it is uncertain as to when the *Library* was written, but R. S. Smith and S. M. Trazaskoma suggest that the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE is the “best guess” [2007, p. xxx]).

<sup>3</sup> Hyginus (*Fab.* 201) tells a story that captures the true essence of Sisyphos' cunning:

Mercurius Autolyco, ex Chione quem procreauerat, muneri dedit ut furacissimus esset nec deprehenderetur in furto, ut quicquid surripuisset, in quamcunque effigiem uellet, transmutaretur, ex albo in nigrum uel ex nigro in album, in cornutum ex mutilo, in mutilum ex cornuto. Is cum Sisyphi pecus assidue inuolaret ne cab eo posset deprehendi, sensit eum furtum sibi facere, quod illius numerus augebatur et suus minuebatur. Qui ut eum deprehenderet, in pecorum unguis notam imposuit. Qui cum solito more inuolasset et Sisyphos ad eum uenisset, pecora sua ex unguis deprehendit quae ille inuolauerat et abduxit.

Mercury gave to Autolykos, who he begat by Chione, the gift of being such a skilful thief that he could not be caught... When he kept continually stealing from the herds of Sisyphos and couldn't be caught, Sisyphos was convinced he was stealing because Autolykos' number was increasing while his was growing smaller. In order to

historical and mythological characters known for their craftiness: for instance, Odysseus, according to another account, was the son of Sisyphos; he was given the moniker “Sisyphides” because, like his father, he was very cunning.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, according to the 4th century BCE historian and biographer Xenophon (*Hellenica* 3.8-9), the military commander Dercylidas was nicknamed “Sisyphos” because he was so resourceful. K. Simonsuuri, in her study of the myth of Sisyphos, notes that during the early classical era (ca. 490-450 BCE), his was a household name, spawning new verbs, nouns, and formations of words, such as Σισύφειος (Sisyphian), which was used by Euripides in his 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE play *Medea* (405) to describe the marriage between Jason and Creusa.<sup>5</sup> In this particular instance, Sisyphos’ name negatively implies that the marriage was based on lies and deceit. This is telling, because while some aspects of Sisyphos’ cunning were admirable, such as his ability to make Corinth a city of immense wealth and greatness by promoting commerce and navigation,<sup>6</sup> other aspects, such as his crafty transgressions against the gods, were irksome. For example, Pindar (*Ol.* 13.52-53) says that he, although god-like, was πυκνότατος παλάμαις (very shrewd in his devising). Similarly, the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE philosopher Aristotle (*Poet.* 1456a) remarks that Sisyphos, although wise, was σοφὸς μὲν μετὰ πονηρίᾳς (unscrupulous).

Sisyphos’ tendency to act deviously was a trait shared by many members of his family, who also suffered miserable fates for their imprudent decisions. For example, Hera drove

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catch him, he put a mark on the hooves of his cattle. When Autolykos had stolen in his usual way, Sisyphos came to him and identified the cattle he had stolen by their hooves, and took them away (trans. Grant 1960).

There is artistic evidence relating to this story on a late 5<sup>th</sup> century Apulian red-figure vase, indicating that this tale existed prior to Hyginus’ era (ca. 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE), although it does not occur in any extant writings of that date. (Simon 1994, p. 36; Oakley 1994, p. 782, no. 1).

<sup>4</sup> There is a tradition, existing as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, that Odysseus was the son of Sisyphos. Thus, in Ovid (*Met.* 13.21-33), Ajax compares Odysseus with his alternative father, remarking that he is *furtisque et fraude simillimus illi* (like him for his thefts and frauds). Other authors that associate Odysseus with Sisyphos include Euripides (*Cyc.* 102-103); Sophocles (*Philo.* 416-418); Hyginus (*Fab.* 201); and Plutarch (*Quaestiones* 43).

<sup>5</sup> Simonsuuri 2002, p. 265; concerning Medea’s use of the word “Sisyphian,” see Kovacs 1994, comm. on Euripides *Med.* 399-406.

<sup>6</sup> Smith 1870, s.v. *Corinthus*.

Athamas, Sisyphos' brother, mad for loving the mortal Ino instead of his divine wife, Nephele; he ultimately killed his son Learchos, whom he had conceived via Ino. His son Glaukos fed his horses human flesh to make them more aggressive; at the funeral games of Pelias, at which they were supposed to perform remarkably, he was ultimately eaten by them. His great-great grandson, also called Glaukos, gave up his golden armor for bronze on the Trojan battlefield after Zeus took his wits; he was later slain by Ajax.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Salmoneus, another of his brothers, committed the greatest misdeed: presuming he was an equal to Zeus, he ordered that sacrifices be made in his honor; he additionally attempted to create thunder.<sup>8</sup> These uncomely feats earned Salmoneus a permanent stay in the deep caverns of Tartaros.<sup>9</sup> Sisyphos suffered a similarly miserable fate: perpetually rolling a heavy rock up a steep slope. Yet as we will learn, unlike Salmoneus, whose foolishness and impiety led to his incarceration, Sisyphos was punished for misusing his cunning.

Homer's *Odyssey* (11.593-600) mentions nothing regarding Sisyphos' lineage or offense, but it describes his punishment in excruciating detail.<sup>10</sup> During his *katabasis*, Odysseus, who stands at the outskirts of the underworld with nothing but a trench of blood between him and countless roaming souls, distinguishes a select group of toiling figures among the mindless

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<sup>7</sup> Concerning Athamas see [Apollodorus] 3.4.3, Pausanias 2.1.3, Hyginus, *Fab.* 2, and Philostratus the Elder, *Images* 2.16; his wife, Ino, killed their other son, Melicertes, after whom Sisyphos founded the Isthmian games. Regarding Sisyphos' son Glaukos, see Pausanias 6.20.19, Hyginus *Fab.* 250, Strabo *Geog.* 9.2.25, and Virgil *Georgics* 3.266-268; and for Sisyphos' great-great grandson Glaukos, see Homer *Il.* 6.234-236. Additionally, Bellerophon, his grandson, and two of his children, Isandros and Laodameia, suffered miserable fates after invoking the gods' anger (see Homer, *Il.* 6.200-205).

<sup>8</sup> See Virgil, *Aen.* 6.585; Hyginus, *Fab.* 60; [Apollodorus] 1.9.7; and Lucian, *Timon* 2.

<sup>9</sup> See [Apollodorus] 1.9.7; Lucian, *Tim.* 2; Virgil, *Aen.* 6.585; and Hyginus, *Fab.* 61.

<sup>10</sup> Heubec and Hoekstra (1989, 593-600, p. 113) believe his crime was omitted from the *Odyssey* because it was so well known to Greek audiences that to repeat it would have been unnecessary.



hordes: the hunter Orion, the giant Tityos, the Phrygian king Tantalos,<sup>11</sup> and the Corinthian king

Sisyphos:

καὶ μὴν Σίσυφον εἰσεῖδον κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα/ λᾶαν βαστάζοντα πελώριον  
ἀμφοτέρησιν./ ἦ τοι ὁ μὲν σκηριπτόμενος χερσίν τε ποσίν τε/ λᾶαν ἄνω ὤθεσκε  
ποτὶ λόφον· ἀλλ' ὅτε μέλλοι/ ἄκρον ὑπερβαλέειν, τότε' ἀποστρέψασκε κραταίης·/  
αὐτίς ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λᾶας ἀναιδής./ αὐτὰρ ὁ γ' ἄψ ὤσασκε  
τιταινόμενος, κατὰ δ' ἰδρώς/ ἔρρεεν ἐκ μελέων, κονίη δ' ἐκ κρατὸς ὀρώρει.

Then Sisyphos in torment I beheld being roustabout to a tremendous boulder. Leaning with both arms braced and legs driving, he heaved it toward a height, and almost over, but then a Power spun him round and sent the cruel boulder bounding again to the plain. Whereon the man bent down again to toil, dripping sweat, and the dust rose overhead.<sup>12</sup>

This description, which makes visible a tiny fraction of the underworld landscape, is revealed to us from the mouth of Odysseus, who is telling his post-Troy adventures to king Alcinous of Phaeacia. The phrase κέρδιστος ἀνδρῶν again comes to mind, for Sisyphos must have done something terrible to deserve such a punishment. The late 7th century poet Alcaeos is the first to reveal a possible reason (Loeb-Page 38a): he “mastered death.”<sup>13</sup>

πῶνε[...] Μελάνιππ' ἄμ' ἔμοι. τι[...].[  
ὅταμε[...]διννάεντ' Ἀχέροντα μεγ[  
ζάβαι[ς ἀ]ελίω κόθαρρον φάος [  
ὄψεσθ', ἀλλ' ἄγι μὴ μεγάλων ἐπ[  
καὶ γὰρ Σισυφος Αἰολιδαις Βασιλευς [  
ἀνδρων πλεῖστα νοησάμενος [  
ἀλλὰ καὶ πολυίδρις ἔων ὑπὰ κᾶρι [  
διννάεντ' Ἀχέροντ' ἐπέραισε, μ[

<sup>11</sup> Tantalos is also said to have been the king of Lydia, Sipylus, Paphlagonia, Argos, and Corinth (see Hyginus, *Fab.* 124, and Diodorus Siculus 4.74.1).

<sup>12</sup> trans. Fitzgerald 1998. According to Athorp, who does a close reading of Aristarchus' critical commentary on Homer's epics, lines 565-627 are very likely a Hellenistic interpolation; yet he admits that there are no surviving manuscripts of the *Odyssey* that do not contain them (1980, pp. 61-62). Conversely, Huebec and Hoekstra believe the placement of these lines is guaranteed by the structure of book 11 because its two main sections, which list the heroes and heroines of the underworld, sensibly correspond to one another; they do not insinuate whether the text is Hellenistic in date (see 568-627, p. 111). Although many scholars, whom Athorp lists in his study, believe this portion of the text was not originally part of book 11, this conclusion assumes the fleeting existence of manuscripts that were missing lines 565-627, and furthermore adds to the endless inconsistencies of Homeric scholarship. Even if such manuscripts did exist, artistic evidence at least confirms that its origin occurred no earlier than 575-550 BCE, or the approximate timeframe of the Foce del Sele metopes, which will be discussed in chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> Alcaeos was probably born between 625-620 BCE (*OCD*<sup>3</sup>, s.v. *Alcaeus* [1]).

α]ὔτω(ι) μόχθον ἔχην Κρονίδαις Βα[  
μελαίνας χθόνος. ἀλλ' ἄγι μὴ τα[  
...]. ταβάσομεν αἴ ποτα κᾶλλοτα.[  
...]ην ὅττινα τῶνδε πάθην τα[  
...ἄνε]μος βορίαις ἐπι [

Drink and get drunk with me, Melinippos. Why do you suppose that when you have crossed great Acheron's eddying stream you will see the sun's pure light again? But come, do not aim at things so great: for even king Sisyphos, Aiolos' son, who excelled all men in wit, thought he had mastered death; but clever though he was, at fate's command a second time he crossed the eddies of Acheron, and Zeus, the king, the son of Kronos, contrived a labor for him to undergo beneath the black earth. But come, put such hopes aside; now, if ever, while youth is ours, we must accept whatever these things god gives us to experience...<sup>14</sup>

This tradition briefly and vaguely alludes to three ideas relating to Sisyphos: he was incredibly cunning, he used his astuteness to escape from the underworld, and he toils for his insolence. The “death” that Melinippos' companion speaks of could be either Thanatos or Hades; it also may refer to both chthonic entities, for as we will see in later traditions beginning with Pherecydes of Athens (3F119), Sisyphos manipulates both Thanatos and Hades. Furthermore, the last line is very telling: “...we must accept whatever these things god gives us to experience.” In other words, people must accept their fate or else they will end up like Sisyphos, who does not rest, but rather toils for all eternity.

Later, in the mid-6th century BCE, the poet Theognis (*Elegy* 699-706) expands upon this story, claiming that Sisyphos convinced the goddess Persephone to release him from Hades:

πλήθει δ' ἀνθρώπων ἀρετὴ μία γίνεται ἥδε/ πλουτεῖν: τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὐδὲν ἄρ' ἦν  
ὄφελος,/ οὐδ' εἰ σωφροσύνην μὲν ἔχοις Ῥαδαμάνθους αὐτοῦ,/ πλείονα δ' εἰδείης  
Σισύφου Αἰολίδεω,/ ὅς τε καὶ ἐξ' Αἴδεω πολυῖδρείησιν ἀνήλθεν,/ πείσας

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<sup>14</sup> trans. Miller 1996.

Περσεπόνην αἰμυλοῖσι λόγοις, / ἢ τε βροτοῖς παρέχει λήθην βλάπτουσα νόοιο, / ἄλλος δ' οὐ πω τις τοῦτό γ' ἐπεφράσατο...

To the more part of men this is the one virtue, to be rich; all else, it would seem, is nothing worth, not [if] you had the wisdom of great Rhadamanthos, and were more knowing than Aeolus' son Sisyphos, whose wheedling words persuaded Persephone, who gave men forgetfulness by doing despite to their wits, so that through his wilinesses he returned even from Hades, a thing which had been contrived [by] none other...<sup>15</sup>

This is the only extant literary tradition to name Persephone as the victim of Sisyphos' cunning; in previous (Alcaeus Fr. 38a) and subsequent (Pherecydes 3F119, [Apollodorus] 1.9.3, and Pausanias 2.5.1) traditions, Hades and/or Thanatos is the target. In Attic vase painting, however, Persephone is represented more frequently than both the “unseen” Hades and Thanatos. Erika Simon believes these vessels, which portray Persephone “overseeing” Sisyphos' punishment, are related to Theognis' account (see Pls. 8-12); she also says the images of Sisyphos toiling in the presence of Kerberos and Hades functioned in a similar way: like Persephone, they were keeping an eye on him (see Pls. 14-17).<sup>16</sup>

The playwright Aeschylus, who lived ca. 525/4-456/5 BCE, wrote two satyr plays called *Sisyphos the Runaway* and *Sisyphos the Stone-roller*, but both—if they were in fact two plays—are now lost.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the next existing account of Sisyphos' myth comes from Pherecydes of Athens (FrGHist 3F119), a 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE compiler of Greek mythology.<sup>18</sup> Up to this point, Sisyphos' only attested offense was tricking a chthonic deity to escape from Hades; Pherecydes expands the story to include two additional transgressions:

Διὸς τὴν Ἀσωποῦ θυγατέρα Αἴγιναν ἀπὸ Φλιούντος εἰς Οἰνώνην διὰ τῆς Κορίνθου μεταβιβάσαντος, Σίσυφος ζητοῦντι τῷ Ἀσωπῷ τὴν ἀρπαγὴν ἐπιδεικνύει τέχνηι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐπεσπάσατο εἰς ὀργὴν καθ' ἑαυτοῦ τὸν Δία. ἐπιπέμπει οὖν αὐτῷ τὸν θάνατον. ὁ δὲ Σίσυφος αἰσθόμενος τὴν ἔφοδον δεμοῖς καρτεροῖς ἀποδεσμεῖ τὸν θάνατον. διὰ τοῦτο σὺν συνέβαινεν οὐδένα τῶν

<sup>15</sup> trans. Edmonds 1931, rev. by author.

<sup>16</sup> Simon 1967, p. 277.

<sup>17</sup> Two titles were preserved, but some think they may refer to a single play (*OCD*<sup>3</sup>, s.v. *Aeschylus*).

<sup>18</sup> *OCD*<sup>3</sup>, s.v. *Pherecydes* (2).

ἀνθρώπων ἀποθνήσκειν, ἕως λύει τὸν θάνατον ὁ Ἄρης καὶ αὐτῶι τὸν Σισυφὸν παραδιδῶσιν. πρὶν ἢ δὲ ἀποθανεῖν τὸν Σισυφὸν ἐντέλλεται τῇ γυναικὶ Μερόπῃ τὰ νενομισμένα μὴ πέμπειν εἰς Ἄιδου. καὶ μετὰ χρόνον οὐκ ἀποδιδούσης τῶι Σισύφῳι τῆς γυναικὸς ὁ Ἄιδης πυθόμενος μεθήσιν αὐτὸν ὡς τῇ γυναικὶ μεμφόμενον. ὁ δὲ εἰς Κόρινθον ἀφιχόμενος οὐκέτι ὀπισθῶ ἄγει, πρὶν ἢ γηραιὸν (ἀποθανεῖν διὸ αὐτὸν) ἀποθανόντα κυλινδεῖν ἠνάγκασεν ὁ Ἄιδης λίθον πρὸς τὸ μὴ πάλιν ἀποδρᾶναι.

When Zeus was carrying Aegina, the daughter of Asopos, over from Philus to Oinoine by way of Corinth, Sisyphos, employing cunning, revealed the abduction to Asopos, who was looking for her, and because of this, he made Zeus angry at him. Therefore, he [Zeus] sent Thanatos after him. But Sisyphos, having perceived the approach, put Thanatos in strong chains. Because of this, it happened that no one among men died, until Ares released Thanatos and handed Sisyphos over to him. But before Sisyphos died, he commanded his wife Merope not to send the customary offerings to Hades. And after a while, Hades, having learned that his wife was not rendering what was due for Sisyphos, released him, on the grounds that he put the blame on his wife. Having arrived in Corinth, he did not go back until he died as an old man. On this account, after he died, Hades forced him to roll a stone so that he wouldn't run away again.<sup>19</sup>

According to this account, Sisyphos committed three offenses, the combination of which resulted in his permanent toil: he informed on Zeus, enchained Thanatos, and tricked Hades. The initial misdeed seems hardly malicious: after witnessing Aegina's abduction from atop his fortress of Acrocorinth, he reported the event to her father Asopos, who had been frantically searching for her. While the river god received Sisyphos' actions kindly,<sup>20</sup> Zeus did not: he sent Thanatos to take him to Hades. The Corinthian king, refusing to indulge his chthonic pursuer, bound him with chains, a feat that resulted in the brief termination of human deaths.<sup>21</sup>

His final misdeed was the most cunning: before his death, he commanded his wife Merope to neglect his funeral rites, which were essentially offerings to the god Hades. Thus,

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<sup>19</sup> Author's translation. Additionally, see Aeschylus (Smyth 1926, fr. 90, 121-127; comm. on 276) and Critias (Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* 9.54: according to Frazer, Euripides wrote the play cited by Sextus Empiricus [see 1921, comm. on 1.9.3]). Sourvinou-Inwood thinks Pherecydes may have been following Aeschylus' tradition, or vice versa (1986, p. 50).

<sup>20</sup> Pausanias (2.5.1) notes that Asopos dedicated a spring to Sisyphos atop the Acrocorinth to thank him for his assistance.

<sup>21</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood suggests that Sisyphos' decision to bind Thanatos was actually an act of cunning: as Death is inescapable, Sisyphos chose to disarm him rather than persuade him, as the task would have certainly proven futile (1986, p. 63).

after his death, Sisyphos used this as an excuse for leaving the Underworld, beseeching the chthonic god to send him to the upper world to scold his wife for her negligence. Hades granted the request on the condition that Sisyphos return once his task was complete. The cunning trickster misleadingly agreed, remaining in the upper world until he died of old age.<sup>22</sup> The scholiast on Pindar (*Ol.* 1.91), however, tells this part of the story a little differently:

Σίσυφος δὲ πέτρον μέγιστον εἰς ἀνάντη τόπον βία κομίζων καὶ ὅποτε εἰς ἄκρον ἔλθη τοῦ τόπου, ἀπολισθαίνοντα τὸν λίθον αὐθις ἀνάγων, καὶ τοῦτο πάσχων διὰ τὴν ἀπάτην, ἣν ἠπάτησε Πλούτωνα· ὅποτε γὰρ τέθνηε, παρήγγειλε τῇ γυναικὶ μὴ θάψαι αὐτόν· τῆς δὲ οὕτω πεποιηκυίας κατελθὼν αὐτὸς κατηγορεῖ πρὸς Πλούτωνα ὡς ἀμελησάσης αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸν αἰτήσας ἀνελθεῖν καὶ κολάσαι αὐτήν, ἐπεὶ ἀνήλθε, μὴ βουλόμενος αὐθις εἰς ἄδου παραγενέσθαι, ὑφ' Ἑρμοῦ καταχθεῖς ἄχων οὕτω κεχόλασται.<sup>23</sup>

Sisyphos carries a very big stone up a steep place with force, and, when he comes to the highest point, the stone slips away, and he brings it up again, suffering this on account of the trick with which he deceived Pluto. For when he died, he ordered his wife not to honor him with funeral rites; and when she had acted thusly, going down [to the Underworld], he made a charge of negligence against her before Pluto, begging that he might return and chastise her. When he went up, he did not want to return again to Hades, but having been led back down unwillingly by Hermes, he has been punished thusly.<sup>24</sup>

According to this account, which expands upon Pindar's phrase "among the three" (μετὰ τριῶν),<sup>25</sup> Sisyphos did not die of old age, but was returned to the underworld by Hermes, Olympia's resident ψυχοπομπός or "guide of souls," whom Hades sent to retrieve him.<sup>26</sup> In both circumstances, after his eventual second "death," Sisyphos received his eternal punishment: ceaselessly rolling a rock up a hill. Pherecydes' assertion that Sisyphos committed three

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<sup>22</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood believes this means that Hades must have returned Sisyphos' soul to his body, for he could not have maintained a life above ground if he were merely a shade (1986, p. 50).

<sup>23</sup> J. and E. Abel 1891. Boeckh (1811), who associates this story with *Ol.* 1.97, dates the passage to the Byzantine era.

<sup>24</sup> Author's translation. There are two potential 5<sup>th</sup> century vase paintings of Hermes retrieving Sisyphos from the upper world (Chapter 2, n. 55), which, if correctly classified, would indicate that this tradition existed prior to the Pindar scholia.

<sup>25</sup> This phrase refers to the penitents (Tityos, Sisyphos, and Ixion) who toil in the underworld with Tantalos, whose story Pindar tells in detail (*Ol.* 1.60-100).

<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Eustathius (comm. on *Il.* p. 631 [p. 268 in van der Valk 1976]) relates that Sisyphos was returned by Hermes.

transgressions is not repeated in any subsequent, extant work; in later sources, informing on Zeus is his only crime. This is why Christine Sourvinou-Inwood believes his first two offenses are interpolations to a hypothetical, original tale; his final offense—escaping from Hades—was likely his original sin.<sup>27</sup>

Sisyphos' story does not comprehensively resume until the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, when Virgil (ca. 70-19 BCE) wrote the *Aeneid* and Ovid (ca. 43 BCE-17 CE) wrote his *Metamorphoses* (4.460-69), both of which describe Sisyphos as a minor element in a larger environment.<sup>28</sup> These poems were directed towards an entirely different audience than the stories that had come before: the Roman elite. First, in Virgil's *Aeneid* (6.608-625), we learn of Sisyphos' fate from the mouth of the prophetess Sybil, who describes the setting of the underworld, from fiery rivers to the bloody robe of Tisiphone, in immense detail to her traveling companion, Aeneas. As she and the hero pass a dungeon emitting the sounds of dragging chains, groans, clanking iron, and cracking whips, Aeneas curiously inquires after its inhabitants. The Sybil recites a list of the wrongdoings committed by the people incarcerated there, such as coveting riches and beating family members. Towards the end of her speech, she says:

Hic.../ inclusi poenam exspectant. Ne quaere doceri/ quam poenam, aut quae forma viros/  
fortunave mersit./ Saxum ingens volvunt alii, radiisque rotarum/ districti pendent; sedet,  
aeternumque sedebit/ infelix Theseus; Phlegyasque miserrimus omnis/ admonet, et/  
magna testatur voce per umbras:/ "Discite iustitiam moniti, et non temnere divos."

All these are hemmed in here, awaiting punishment. Best not inquire what punishment, what form of suffering at their last end overwhelms them. Some heave a great boulder, or revolve, Spread-eagled, hung on wheel-spokes. Theseus cleaves to his chair and cleaves to it forever. Phlegyas in his misery teaches all souls his lesson, thundering out amid the gloom: 'Be warned and study justice, not to scorn the immortal gods.'<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Sourvinou Inwood 1986, p. 48

<sup>28</sup> *OCD*<sup>3</sup>, s.v. *Virgil, Ovid*.

<sup>29</sup> trans. Fitzgerald 1983. Phlegyas was a Lapith king whose daughter, Coronis, conceived Asklepios with the god Apollo, who loved her. Unfortunately, she additionally chose to consort with another man out of wedlock, which resulted in her destruction on a pyre (see Pindar, *Py.* 3.10-45). Phlegyas, for burning down Apollo's temple in response to this horrific event (see Servius on Virgil *Aen.* 6.618), was given the following punishment in the

Here, Sisyphos' punishment is mentioned, but his name is left out; the connection between him and stone-rolling must have been obvious. Furthermore, his misdeed, although not explicitly mentioned, appears to be implied in Phlegyas' eerie warning. Like Ixion, Tanatalos, Tityos, and Phlegyas himself,<sup>30</sup> Sisyphos angered a divine being, and, as we have learned, overstepped his boundaries by dodging death in both its corporeal and situational forms.

In Ovid's account (*Met.* 4.464-469), which he composed in the years before his exile in 8 CE, Juno visits the underworld to give the Furies a command: destroy the house of Cadmos. While descending, she catches sight of Sisyphos *aut petis aut urges rediturum saxum*, or "forever roll[ing] the great stone uphill." The sight of Sisyphos angers Juno because he reminds her of his brother Athamas, whom she despised for marrying Ino:

Quos omnes acie postquam Saturnia torva/  
vidit et ante omnes Ixiona, rursus ab illo/  
Sisyphon adspiciens, "cur hic e fratribus" inquit/  
"perpetuas patitur poenas, Athamanta  
superbum/ regia dives habet, qui me cum coniuge semper/  
sprevit?"

And Juno glowers at them, first Ixion, then Sisyphos, and asking: "Why does this one, this brother, only suffer endless torment while Athamas dwells arrogant in his palace with his queen Ino, scornful of my godhead?"<sup>31</sup>

There is no indication of what Sisyphos has done to deserve torment,<sup>32</sup> but it is implied that he, like his brother Athamas, was responsible for scorning a god.<sup>33</sup> This is why Juno does not understand why Athamas is not toiling with Sisyphos: both offended the gods, so both deserved to be punished.

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underworld: he is pinned under a large rock, starving with hunger while surrounded by dirty banquet dishes; he is supposed to feel hungry and sick at the same time.

<sup>30</sup> Ixion attempted to seduce Hera at Zeus' table (see Pindar, *Pyth* 2.35-50); Tantalos attempted to serve his son, Pelops, as food to the gods and/or stole nectar and ambrosia from their table (see [Apollodorus] E.2, Hyginus, *Fab.* 82-83); Tityos attempted to abduct Leto (Hyginus *Fab.* 55); and Phlegyas burned down Apollo's temple (see fn. 29).

<sup>31</sup> trans. Humphries 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Some approximately contemporary sources that also omit Sisyphos' punishment are Horace (ca. 65-8 BCE) *Odes* 2.14 and *Epode* 17; Seneca (ca. 4 BCE—after 65 CE) *Apoc.* 14-15; Josephus (ca. 37—after 97 CE) *The Jewish War* 2.154; and Lucian (ca. 120 CE—end of the century) *Dial.* A.14. For dates see *OCD*<sup>3</sup>, s.v. *Horace, Lucius Annaeus, Seneca (2), Josephus (Flavius Iosephus), and Lucian.*

<sup>33</sup> Sisyphos offended Zeus, Thanatos, and Hades, while Athamas aggravated Nephele (his first wife) and Juno.

While Ovid used Sisyphos as a peripheral character to underscore Juno's scorn for Athamas, and Virgil employed him to explain what was happening within Tisiphone's iron fortress, other authors of the Roman period preferred to focus on the Corinthian king's life.<sup>34</sup> This is most apparent when we consider the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century CE accounts of [Apollodorus], Pausanias, and Hyginus: all these authors wrote about one of Sisyphos' offenses (*i.e.* informing on Zeus) and at least mentioned that he was punished, but they were clearly more concerned with his life and lineage. This could be because these authors were not writing isolated stories, but rather collecting information; in other words, they were more concerned with completing the picture, as Pherecydes does, than with elaborating on a single part, as Homer does.

The first account is found in the *Library*, a compendium of Greek myth attributed to [Apollodorus] (but written by an unknown author); it was probably composed in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.<sup>35</sup> This account of the myth of Sisyphos includes genealogy, an offence, and the punishment.<sup>36</sup> The author tells the story in two separate parts, the first concerning the life of Sisyphos (1.9.3):

Σίσυφος δὲ ὁ Αἰόλου κτίσας Ἐφύραν τὴν νῦν λεγομένην Κόρινθον γαμῆι Μερόπην τὴν Ἄτλαντος, ἐξ αὐτῶν παῖς γίνεταί Γλαῦκος, ᾧ παῖς Βελλεροφόντης ἐξ Εὐρυμέδης ἐγεννήθη, ὃς ἔκτεινε τὴν πυρίτνου Χίμαιραν. κολάζεται δὲ Σίσυφος ἐν Ἄιδου πέτρον ταῖς χερσὶ τῆ κεφαλῇ κυλίων, καὶ τοῦτον ὑπερβάλλειν θέλων: οὗτος δὲ ὠθούμενος ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ὠθεῖται πάλιν εἰς τοῦπίσω. τίνει δὲ ταύτην τὴν δίκην διὰ τὴν Ἀσωποῦ θυγατέρα Αἰγίναν: ἀρπάσαντα γὰρ αὐτὴν κρύφα Δία Ἀσωπῶ μηνῦσαι ζητοῦντι λέγεται.

Sisyphos, son of Aeolus, founded the city of Ephyra (which is now called Corinth) and married Merope, daughter of Atlas. They had a son, Glaucus, who with Eurymede had a son, Bellerophontes, who killed the fire-breathing Chimaira. Sisyphos is punished in Hades' realm by rolling a boulder with his hands and head, wanting to force it over the top. But when the stone is about to be forced over by him, it forces its way back down

<sup>34</sup> Simon 1994, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> The date of the text is uncertain, but R. S. Smith and S. M. Trzaskoma place him in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE (see 2007, p. xxx).

<sup>36</sup> Another section tells that he founded the Isthmian games in honor of his nephew, Melicertes (the son of Ino and Athamas) (see 3.4.3).



again. He pays the penalty because of Asopos' daughter Aigina. For, when Asopos was looking for her, it is said, Sisyphos revealed to him that Zeus had secretly taken her away.<sup>37</sup>

The second section concerns the river god Asopos (3.12.6); Sisyphos is mentioned here not as an informant, but rather as a witness to Aegina's abduction:

τούτῳ Μετώπῃ γημαμένη... δύο μὲν παῖδας ἐγέννησεν, Ἴσμηνὸν καὶ Πελάγοντα, εἴκοσι δὲ θυγατέρας ὧν μὲν μίαν Αἴγιναν ἤρπασε Ζεὺς. ταύτην Ἄσωπὸς ζητῶν ἦκεν εἰς Κόρινθον, καὶ μανθάνει Σισύφον τὸν ἤρπακότα εἶναι Δία.

Metope, herself a daughter of the river Ladon, [Asopus] married and bore two sons, Ismenus and Pelagon, and twenty daughters, of whom one, Aegina, was carried off by Zeus. In search of her, Asopus came to Corinth, and learned from Sisyphos that the ravisher was Zeus.<sup>38</sup>

This text thus provides an amalgamation and elaboration of familiar information first indicated by Homer and Pherecydes. In book 1, we are introduced to Sisyphos: he was the son of Aeolos, the king of Thessaly and founder of the Aeolian Greeks, and Enarete, the daughter of Deimachos, a companion of Herakles.<sup>39</sup> Sisyphos was wed to Merope, a daughter of Atlas and one of the seven Pleiades.<sup>40</sup> They bore many children, who vary according to tradition, but [Apollodorus] mentions only Glaukos, who was killed by his horses at the funeral games of Pelias,<sup>41</sup> and his grandson Bellerophon, the slayer of the Chimera. Only one of Sisyphos' offenses is mentioned: informing Asopos that Zeus took his daughter, Aegina. This part of the story is elaborated in book 3, which relates Asopos' genealogy, his rendezvous with Sisyphos, and his futile attempt to retrieve his daughter from the clutches of Zeus.

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<sup>37</sup> trans. Smith and Trazkoma 2007.

<sup>38</sup> trans. Smith and Trazkoma 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Another tradition (Servius on Virgil, *Aen.* 2.79) relates that he was the son of Autolykos, the son of Hermes and father of Antikleia. Concerning Aeolus' lineage, see [Apollodorus] 1.7.3, and Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 4.67.2-7.

<sup>40</sup> Purportedly ashamed to be the only one among her sisters to marry a mortal, she often hid herself in the night sky (see Frazer 1921, comm. on *Library* 3.10.1). As a Pleiad, she was associated with the rainy and sailing seasons (Simonsuuri 2002, p. 268).

<sup>41</sup> See fn. 7.

The Greek traveler Pausanias, who wrote his *Description of Greece* in the mid-late 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, wholly follows Apollodorus' tradition regarding Sisyphos' death, but he provides more details on the king's life (2.5.1).<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, while he mentions one of Sisyphos' offenses—informing on Zeus—he does not describe his punishment, only that he endures one:

ἀνελθοῦσι δὲ εἰς τὸν Ἀκροκόρινθον ναός ἐστιν Ἀφροδίτης... τὴν δὲ πηγὴν, ἣ ἐστὶν ὀπισθεν τοῦ ναοῦ, δῶρον μὲν Ἀσωποῦ λέγουσιν εἶναι, δοθῆναι δὲ Σισύφῳ: τοῦτον γὰρ εἰδότες, ὡς εἶη Ζεὺς ἠρπαῶς Αἴγιναν θυγατέρα Ἀσωποῦ, μὴ πρότερον φάναι ζητοῦντι μηνύσειν πρὶν ἢ οἱ καὶ ἐν Ἀκροκόρινθῳ γένοιτο ὕδωρ: δόντος δὲ Ἀσωποῦ μηνύει τε οὕτως καὶ ἀντὶ τοῦ μηνύματος δίκην—ὅτῳ πιστὰ—ἐν Ἄιδου δίδωσιν.

On the summit of the Acrocorinthus is a temple of Aphrodite... The spring, which is behind the temple, they say was the gift of Asopus to Sisyphos. The latter knew, so runs the legend, that Zeus had ravished Aegina, the daughter of Asopus, but refused to give information to the seeker before he had a spring given him on the Acrocorinthus. When Asopus granted this request Sisyphos turned informer, and on this account he receives – if anyone believes the story – punishment in Hades.<sup>43</sup>

It is evident that Pausanias does not believe in the myth of Sisyphos when he says “...if anyone believes the story.” This could be why he does not bother relating the punishment: it is either too ludicrous or irrelevant to the greater purpose of his text, which is to document the topography, architecture, and history of ancient Greece.

The latest ancient source for the myth of Sisyphos is Hyginus, a 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE Roman mythographer.<sup>44</sup> Unlike those who came before, Hyginus adds a completely new offense to the Corinthian king's repertoire: disrespecting his family (*Fab.* 60-61):

Sisyphos et Salmoneus Aeoli filii inter se inimici fuere. Sisyphos petiit ab Apolline quomodo posset interficere inimicum, id est fratrem; cui responsum fuit, si ex compressu Tyronis Salmonei fratris filiae procreasset liberos, fore ultores. Quod cum Sisyphos

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<sup>42</sup> Concerning Melicertes, Sisyphos' children, his acquisition of the Corinthian kingdom, and his grave, see 2.2.2, 2.3.11, and 2.4.3.

<sup>43</sup> trans. Jones and Omerod 1918.

<sup>44</sup> The author and date of the *Fabulae* are difficult to pin down because the text was edited and expanded over time. According to a reference by a school teacher named Pseudo-Dositheus (ca. 207 CE), Hyginus was “world-famous” at the time; thus, the work's *terminus ante quem* can be no later than the last quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE (Smith and Trzaskoma 2007, p. xliii).

fecisset, duo sunt filii nati, quos Tyro mater eorum sorte audita necavit. At Sisyphos ut rescit...qui nunc dicitur saxum propter impietatem aduersus montem ad inferos ceruicibus uoluere, quod cum ad summum uerticem perduxerit, rursus deorsum post se reuoluatur.

Sisyphos and Salmoneus, the sons of Aeolus, were bitter enemies. Sisyphos asked Apollo how he could kill his enemy (that is, his brother), and the oracle given was that the children he fathered by sleeping with his brother's daughter, Tyro, would take revenge on his brother. Sisyphos slept with her, and two sons were born. When their mother, Tyro, got wind of the oracle, she killed them. As for Sisyphos, when he learned...who, because of his ungodly actions, now is said to roll a boulder up a mountain on his shoulders in the underworld, only to have it roll back down past him when he reaches the top... Salmoneus, Aeolus' son and Sisyphos' brother, tried to imitate the thunder and lightning of Jupiter by sitting in a chariot and throwing burning torches at the people and the citizens. Because of this, he was struck down by Jupiter's thunderbolt.<sup>45</sup>

In this case, Salmoneus is guilty of insulting the gods, while Sisyphos is simply impious towards his own family. Hyginus does not explain what Salmoneus suffers in Tartaros; perhaps residing in the realm itself was punishment enough. Conversely, Sisyphos, who offended his family rather than a divine figure, seems less culpable than he was in the Greek traditions. Now, in Virgil (*Aen.* 6.608-609), the Sybil says that those who "held brothers hateful, beat their parents, [and] cheated poor men dependent on them" (*quibus inuisi fratres, dum vita manebat/ pulsatusve parens, et fraus innexa clienti*) are among the penalized in the underworld.<sup>46</sup> Hyginus, who was writing more than a century later, would have recognized impiety towards one's family as a transgression worthy of eternal suffering. Yet to attach such a story to Sisyphos' myth defeats the entire purpose of his existence: to emphasize the futility of crossing the gods. Then again, this myth is like a double-edged sword: while Sisyphos should not have overstepped his bounds, Zeus should not have either; he did this by sending Thanatos.

A number of scholars, such as Sourvinou-Inwood and Simonsuuri, have attempted to explicate the meaning below the surface of this story; and although their accounts are highly

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<sup>45</sup> trans. Smith and Trzaskoma 2007.

<sup>46</sup> trans. Fitzgerald 1983.

speculative, they are worth mentioning. Sisyphos' most frequently cited offense—informing Asopos of his daughter's whereabouts—includes not only a mortal who upsets a god, but also a god who upsets a mortal. Sourvinou-Inwood explains it as follows: after Sisyphos informed on Zeus, the god attempted to rob the king of his life by dispatching Thanatos. Angry that he was going to die unjustly, Sisyphos upset the cosmic order by escaping the corporeal (Thanatos) and situational (the underworld) versions of death so he could live the remainder of his life as planned. When he dies, he must roll the stone to prevent further upset. The moral, as Sourvinou-Inwood states, is as follows:

Life and death are under the control of the gods, and not of men; for men to attempt to control death is wrong and whoever does it will be severely punished. However, the gods must exercise that control wisely; if they do not they may also disturb cosmic order—though only temporarily.<sup>47</sup>

Additionally, Simonsuuri refers to Solomon Reinach's archaeological study on Sisyphos, which concludes that the king was a real person who built the geological feature known as the Acrocorinth. He argues that Sisyphos' punishment is a metaphor for bringing materials up to the Acrocorinth's peak, thus relating to his profession as a builder: the rolling motion reflects the frustrating notion of being unable to complete what he had once succeeded in doing, for the Acrocorinth's very existence allowed him to spy on the gods.<sup>48</sup> Simonsuuri, however, interprets the Corinthian king's transgression in a different way:

Sisyphos' quest was for knowledge that relates to freedom, and more specifically the freedom to reverse the natural order, to transgress the limits, and he was granted that knowledge—however, his story ended...in Hades.<sup>49</sup>

Sisyphos desired something he could not have, and as a result of his attempt to obtain it, he was severely punished. A third opinion is proposed by L. Albinus, who believes the Sisyphos myth

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<sup>47</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 1986, p. 49-50.

<sup>48</sup> Reinach 1904, p. 169-171.

<sup>49</sup> Simonsuuri 2002, p. 273-274.

emphasizes the victory of the Olympian over chthonic and mortal forces, thus demonstrating the control the Olympians had over the rest of the universe.<sup>50</sup>

Zeus may have overstepped his bounds by not allowing Sisyphos to make amends for reporting him to Asopos, but the myth of Sisyphos was not created for the gods, but rather the mortals of Greece and later Rome; in other words, it was a mortal's responsibility to not overstep his bounds when it came to matters of the divine. Lucretius explains the consequence of this well in his poem, *On the Nature of Things* (3.995-1002):

Sisyphus in vita quoque nobis ante oculos est,/ qui petere a populo fasces saevasque  
securas/ imbibit et semper victus tristisque recedit./ nam petere imperium, quod inanest  
nec datur umquam,/ atque in eo semper durum sufferre laborem,/ hoc est adverso  
nixantem trudere monte/ saxum, quod tamen e summo iam vertice rusum/ volvitur et  
plani raptim petit aequora campi.

And Sisyphos is in our life, as well, right before our eyes, a man who chooses to solicit people for the fasces and savage axes and always comes back defeated and depressed. Seeking power, which is unfulfilling and never granted, and always toiling in pursuit of it— this is straining to push uphill a stone which, with gathering speed, still comes rolling down once more from the summit and keeps on going to the level surface of the plain.<sup>51</sup>

This is the reason ancient audiences were so well versed in the myth of Sisyphos, and why so many other myths—those of Tantalos, Tityos, Ixion, Phlegyas, Askalaphos—<sup>52</sup>sing a similar tune: there is a natural order to things, and it was important to not disrupt it.

In the Greek world, Sisyphos was engrained in the fabric of the underworld to the extent of permanence: for many heroes, death came at the very end of a long, adventurous life, but Sisyphos died in the beginning of his story, spending the rest of it in Hades. This is emphasized especially in Euripides' *Herakles* (1089-1090, 1101-1105), when the hero wakes up after murdering his family, but does not remember what he has done:

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<sup>50</sup> Albinus 2000, p. 78.

<sup>51</sup> trans. Johnston 2002.

<sup>52</sup> See [Apollodorus] 1.5.3; *Hymn to Demeter* 286-7.

ἔα:/ ἔμπνους μὲν εἶμι καὶ δέδορχ' ἄπερ με δεῖ/... οὐ̄ που κατη̄λθον αὐ̄θις εἰς Ἄιδου  
πάλιν,/ Εὐρύσθέως δίαυλον; εἰς Ἄιδου; πόθεν;/ ἀλλ' οὐ̄τε Σισύφειον εἰσορῶ  
πέτρον/ Πλούτωνά τ', οὐ̄δὲ σκῆπτρα Δῆμητρος κόρης./ ἔκ τοι πέπληγμαι: ποῦ  
ποτ' ὦν ἀμηχανῶ;

Aha! I am alive and breathing; and my eyes see what they should... Surely I have not come a second time to Hades' halls, having just returned from there for Eurystheus? To Hades? From where? No, I do not see Sisyphos with his stone, or Pluto, or his queen, Demeter's child. Surely I am distraught; where am I, so helpless?<sup>53</sup>

Like the chthonic gods, Sisyphos is associated with the underworld in the same sense that Zeus is associated with Olympos, or Penelope with Ithaca: if Herakles cannot see Sisyphos rolling his stone, he must not be in Hades. This idea will be emphasized in the next chapter, where I will analyze a series of artworks that take place within the interior region of the underworld, or in a place where the interior is visible, such as at the gate. My aim is to show that, like authors, artists used Sisyphos in their work as a chthonic staple, one Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman audiences would have undoubtedly recognized, to facilitate a viewer's understanding of a chthonic setting.

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<sup>53</sup> trans. Coleridge 1938.

## CHAPTER 2: SISYPHOS IN ART

Like playwrights, mythographers, and philosophers, Greek and Roman artists included Sisyphos in their creations. Subjects include Sisyphos receiving Melikertes; the saga of Laertes, Autolykos and/or Antikleia; Hermes fetching Sisyphos from the upper world; and Sisyphos rolling his stone in the Underworld. Of the 45 images that form the basis of this chapter, 10 depict scenes from his life, while 35 portray him as a toiling shade.<sup>1</sup> Sisyphos was more common as a chthonic figure in the Archaic Period (ca. 530-500 BCE), but events from his life appeared more often during the Classical and Hellenistic eras (ca. 470-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE).<sup>2</sup> Exceptions include Polygnotos' lost fresco from the Lesche of the Cnidians at Delphi (ca. 460 BCE), three Apulian red-figure vases (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), two Etruscan tomb paintings (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), and the Odyssey Frescoes (ca. 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, his environment varies according to region: in Attica, he toils in the presence of Persephone, Hades, Kerberos, Herakles, and Charon. In Apulia and Etruia, a demon of various manifestations torments him. As with my survey of the textual evidence, my aim here is to map, both chronologically and geographically, the visual representations of the Underworld that include Sisyphos in order to elucidate his primary function within chthonic environments.

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<sup>1</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos I* (Oakley), pp. 781-787.

<sup>2</sup> Simon 1994, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> The original is lost, but we have a Roman copy, ca. 50-40 BCE.

## **SISYPHOS ON THE GREEK MAINLAND (BLACK FIGURE, CA. 565-470 BCE)**

The figure of Sisyphos is portrayed more frequently in Archaic Attic and Laconian vase painting than in any other region or time. Black-figure dominates the group, but there are a few pertinent white-ground and red-figured vessels as well. Sisyphos' chthonic endeavor appears most frequently on neck-amphorae, but it may also be found on volute-kraters, cups, lekythoi, a pelike, and a *phormiskos*. At least half of these vessels, particularly the ones excavated in Etruria and Apulia, were discovered in graves; this is fitting if we consider their subjects: Sisyphos with Persephone, Hades, Kerberos, Charon, and/or Herakles. These characters describe the Underworld landscape, the place where all souls eventually come to rest; Sisyphos, as an exception to this rule, is a strong chthonic indicator, distinguishable because of the toilsome task he performs.

The oldest vase painting of a male stone-roller appears on a Laconian black-figure cup in Kassel (ca. 565-550 BCE).<sup>4</sup> The cup is highly fragmentary, but enough of the scene is preserved to make out two important features: a man rolling a stone and a pyramidal structure that doubles as his cliff (Pl. 1).<sup>5</sup> He is probably Sisyphos. This image is strange because the slope he climbs is the wall of a pyramidal structure. Erika Simon asserts that on Attic vases, Sisyphos' "mountain" can double as Hades palace/gate by means of implied columns; she cites as evidence the Kleophrades Painter's amphora (Pl. 16), where Sisyphos' stone and cliff overlap with one of the columns of a gate-like structure that includes columnar support.<sup>6</sup> She states that the combination cliff/palace/gate is indicative of Laconian vase paintings that refer to Egyptian, pyramidal motifs;

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<sup>4</sup> There is another cup fragment, from the Gravisca excavations in Tarquinia, that Oakley (*LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.37b) claims represents a scene similar to Kassel S 49b. Francesca Boitani (1981, pl. 60, 2), who published the sherd, simply identifies the image as a nude figure. As the Gravisca sherd is too fragmentary to discern its iconographic content clearly, it will not be considered in this study.

<sup>5</sup> Kassel, Staatl. Mus. S 49b; Stibbe 1972, p. 134, fig. 60, 280-81 no. 210; Pipili 1987, p. 36, fig. 50; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.37a (Oakley) (provenance: Samos).

<sup>6</sup> Simon 1994, p. 34.



this design may have been common on the vessels the Spartans shipped to Naucratis, a Greek colony in Egypt.<sup>7</sup> Although Sisyphos is the only character in this image, the presence of the columned structure indicates that there is more to this scene than a simple stone-roller motif: it is a glimpse inside the Underworld.

Most of the Attic black-figure representations of Sisyphos' punishment are found on neck-amphorae, where he is most often paired with the goddess Persephone. The earliest, dating to ca. 530/520 BCE, is a black-figure amphora in Munich by the Swing Painter (Pl. 2):<sup>8</sup> it depicts Sisyphos moving to the right, easily identifiable from the white egg-shaped rock that he holds. A woman follows him, lifting her garment in her left hand. On the far left, a warrior walks to the left. Beazley identifies the woman as Persephone, the warrior as Ajax, and the stone-carrier as Sisyphos.<sup>9</sup> Persephone's only attribute is the *anakalypsis* gesture she performs, which indicates that she is a bride. The warrior's identity is less certain: he clenches his fists, as if angry and wears a helmet with a plume and a spotted pelt, or a *nebris*, around his waist. Ajax, in Homer's *Odyssey* (9.543), wanders the Underworld landscape silently and angrily, which could be why Beazley associates the aloof warrior with him.<sup>10</sup> Konrad Schauenberg is unsure about this identification: while he agrees that the figure represents the shade of a deceased warrior, he does not try to assign an identity to him. What he finds most significant is that a non-penitent shade was rendered in a chthonic environment, for such a thing does not occur very often on images of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.<sup>11</sup> This leads me to suspect that the warrior does not represent a shade, but rather the god Ares. If we consider that Sisyphos carries his rock, which does not conform to his usual epithet of "stone-roller," he may be walking towards his place of

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<sup>7</sup> Boardman 1998, pp. 185, p. 213.

<sup>8</sup> Munich, Antikenslg. 1494; *ABV* 308, 81 (attribution); *Para* 133; *CVA* 7, pls. 360, 361.1-2 (prescribed date); *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.5 (Oakley) (provenance: Vulci), *Aias* 1.145 (Touchefeu-Meynier).

<sup>9</sup> Beazley 1932, p. 15, no. 46.

<sup>10</sup> *CVA* Munich 7, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> Schauenberg 1953, pp. 50-52.

punishment. Persephone accompanies him, while the warrior appears to be leaving the scene. According to Pherecydes (3 F119), it was Ares who returned Sisyphos to Thanatos, or Death, and this identification might be entertained for the warrior, with Persephone standing in for Thanatos. Overall, this scene partially conforms to two previously extant stories, those preserved by Theognis (699-718) and Alcaeus (Loeb-Page 38a), with which the Swing Painter perhaps took personal liberties.

A second amphora, by the Bucci Painter, is also in Munich and dates from 530-525 BCE (Pl. 3A-B).<sup>12</sup> It features two chthonic scenes: on side A, Herakles abducts Kerberos, while on side b, Sisyphos toils alongside four *psychai*, or souls, who hover around a giant *pithos*.<sup>13</sup> The moment appears to be just subsequent to that on Munich 1494 (Pl. 2), where Sisyphos holds his rock, for here, he rolls it. The winged *psychai*, or *amyeoi*,<sup>14</sup> climb a large pithos into which they pour water.<sup>15</sup> Wilhem Roscher identifies these creatures as Danaids, or the fifty daughters of Danaos, punished in Hades for the murder of their husbands, but this is unlikely because the Danaids do not take on the water-carrying role in Greek art until the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>16</sup> Though this amphora highlights toil and ineffectuality, the tasks performed by Sisyphos and the *psychai* are symptomatic of the chthonic environment that is visible from the realm's gate, represented on side A, where Herakles stares down Kerberos. In effect, side B is the background landscape of side A.

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<sup>12</sup> Munich, Antikenslg. 1493; *CVA* Munich 7, pl. 355, 356.1 (date); *ABV* 316, 7 (attribution); *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup>, 85; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.6 (Oakley) (provenance: Vulci), *Amyeoi* 2 (Kossatz-Deissman).

<sup>13</sup> Felten (1975, p. 23) wonders if there is a connection between this image and the Eleusinian Mysteries, or the rites one performed to become “initiated;” souls of the “uninitiated” are called *ameytoi* (*LIMC*, s.v. *Amyeoi* [Kossatz-Deissman]). These winged creatures are also called *eidola*, the Greek word for “abstract concepts,” like the soul (Pfeifer 1989, pp. 11-14, 34-46).

<sup>14</sup> Kossatz-Deissman 1981, pp. 736-738.

<sup>15</sup> *CVA* Munich 7, p. 59; Felten 1975, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> Roscher, *Myth. Lex.* 1.1, 950; *LIMC*, s.v. *Danaids* (Keuls), pp. 337-341.

The next amphora, in London, belongs to the Leagros Group and dates to ca. 510 BCE (Pl. 4).<sup>17</sup> Persephone stands in the center, holding stalks of grain and looking down at a balding old man who slumps against the vessel's left side, leaning on a staff or scepter for support; he must be Hades. Hermes stands between them, raising his arm and looking upwards. On the far right, Sisyphos rolls his stone along a slope that curves with the amphora's body; this is the first and only time a vessel's roundness was utilized in this manner. He wears a conical cap on his head and a mantle over his left shoulder. Hermes' presence could imply two things: the scene may accord with the account of the Scholiast on Pindar (*Ol.* 1.97), where Hermes is tasked with returning Sisyphos to the Underworld; Hades' head could be lowered because he feels foolish for being outsmarted by a mortal. This scenario is unlikely because it assigns Hades the role of scene-setter, even though his ambiguous iconography makes him an unsuitable chthonic indicator. It is more likely that Hermes has come to retrieve Persephone, who is due to return to the company of her mother; Hades lowers his head because he feels dejected about this.<sup>18</sup> In this scenario, Sisyphos, who rolls his stone unnoticed, is the secondary scene-setter, while Hermes, Persephone, and Hades form the main plotline.

A fourth amphora, again in Munich, dates from 510-500 BCE; it has been attributed to the Acheloos Painter (Pl. 5A-B).<sup>19</sup> This vase features a similar image on both sides: an elderly Hades, again seated in a slouched position and holding a scepter, and Persephone, who holds a bundle of grain, flank Sisyphos as he "balances" his stone.<sup>20</sup> The major differences are as follows: on side A, Persephone holds the grain in her left hand, while on side B it is in her right.

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<sup>17</sup> London, BM B 261; *CVA* British Museum 4, pl. 64; *ABV* 373, 176 (attribution); *Para* 163; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.10 (Oakley) (prescribed date), *Hades* 148 (Dahlinger, Linder, Yalouris), *Hermes* 587 (Siebert).

<sup>18</sup> *CVA* British Museum 4, p. 9, pl. 64, no. 3a-b.

<sup>19</sup> Munich, Antikenslg. 1549; *CVA* Munich 9, pl. 15 (prescribed date); *ABV* 383, 12 (attribution); *Para* 168; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.11 (Oakley); *Hades* 121 (Dahlinger, Linder, Yalouris).

<sup>20</sup> K. Junker believes Sisyphos simply "balances" his stone in attic vase paintings because he does not appear to apply any effort to his task (see. 1993, p. 53). One could also think of the stone as starting to fall (*CVA* Munich 9, p. 24).

Conversely, Hades holds the staff in his right hand on side A, but switches it to his left on side B; furthermore, his other hand, hidden on side A, reemerges from his cloak on side B. Finally, while the pair appears to be the same size on side A, Hades looks much smaller than Persephone on side B, as if the painter were trying to make him recede further into space. The only difference regarding Sisyphos is the shape of his cliff. This vase begins a new visual convention, quite distinct from the one featured on Munich 1493 and 1494 (Pls. 2-3): Sisyphos is the sole penitent present, and Hades and/or Persephone, whose dark dispositions mirror that of his toil, always accompany him.<sup>21</sup>

This scene could be retrospective of two different traditions: the first relates to Sisyphos tricking a chthonian god. As I stated in chapter 1, Simon believes this vase painting, and others like it, portray Sisyphos under guard: Persephone and Hades are watching him to make sure he does not flee again.<sup>22</sup> Emily Vermeule refers to them as “Archons, magistrates, or judges,” ensuring that Sisyphos continues to toil.<sup>23</sup> This seems unlikely, given that, according to Pherecydes (FrGHist 3F1 19), the purpose of the punishment was to keep Sisyphos in place; in other words, he did not need supervision because the task itself was keeping him stationary. Furthermore, the post of “lookout” seems more suited for a chthonic underling, like one of the Erinyes. Wassiliki Felten has a different opinion: that Hades and Persephone are a stage onto which the action, presumably Sisyphos’ toilsome task, unfolds. In fact, she finds that most Underworld scenes with Sisyphos forego a larger narrative in order to focus on the moment of his toilsome task.<sup>24</sup> While this is a clever thought, Sisyphos, although front and center, is not the subject of this scene. Rather, the story relates to Persephone’s abduction by Hades, the reason

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<sup>21</sup> CVA Munich 9, p. 24.

<sup>22</sup> Simon 1967, p. 277.

<sup>23</sup> Vermeule 1979, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Felten 1975, pp. 30-31.

being that the goddess appears to be mourning.<sup>25</sup> Some of her stalks of grain are wilting, and she holds, or perhaps clenches, her hand beneath her cloak; both are indications of grief. The moment could refer to Persephone's initial abduction or one of her many subsequent returns, but either way, she has been torn from her mother, and is thus bereaved. In conjunction with this gloomy tone, Hades, elderly and frail, sits passively in her presence, as if aware of her suffering, but unable—or unwilling—to alleviate it. Sisyphos toils in the center, embodying the penitentiary aspect of the Underworld,<sup>26</sup> and, in this way, helps to set the scene that unfolds in Hades and Persephone's gestures. An early 5<sup>th</sup> century white-ground lekythos, in Bucarest, could feature a similar scenario (Pl. 6A-B):<sup>27</sup> on the left, two robed figures face Sisyphos rolling his stone. The hasty execution of this image makes it difficult to identify the standing characters, but since Sisyphos rolls his stone nearby, they probably represent Hades and Persephone.

Five Attic black-figure vases depict Persephone alone with Sisyphos. On two of them, amphorae dating to ca. 520-510 BCE, the goddess sits inside a columned Doric structure, presumably her palace or the gate of the Underworld, facing the king as he toils. In the first, assigned to the Leagros Group, she does not look at him, but gazes instead at the ears of grain and white flowers she holds in her hands (Pl. 7).<sup>28</sup> In the second, attributed to the Nikoxenos Painter, she holds a staff/scepter in her left hand while reaching towards Sisyphos with her right, her head lowered slightly (Pl. 8).<sup>29</sup> In both images, Sisyphos wears a mantle over his shoulder and balances his bulbous stone upon a narrow rocky protrusion;<sup>30</sup> wavy vines indicate an outdoor

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<sup>25</sup> *CVA* Munich 9, pp. 24-25.

<sup>26</sup> Schefold 1992, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> Bucarest, Hist. Mus. 03331; *CVA* Bucarest 1, pl. 29.9-10; *Para* 279 (manner of the Haimon Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.19 (Oakley) (prescribed date).

<sup>28</sup> Leiden, Rijksmus. PC 49; *CVA* Leiden 1, pls. 33, 51.11 (prescribed date); *ABV* 371, 153 (attribution); *Para*, 163; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.9 (Oakley) (provenance: Vulci).

<sup>29</sup> Berlin, Staatl. Mus. F 1844; *ABV* 392, 2 (attribution); *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.8 (Oakley) (prescribed date; provenance: Vulci).

<sup>30</sup> See fn. 20.

setting. The other three vessels, dating to ca. 510 BCE, are devoid of a palace-like structure or gate. The first, an amphora attributed to the Acheloos painter, shows Persephone holding ears of corn with both hands while Sisyphos attempts to roll his stone up a slope (Pl. 9).<sup>31</sup> The second, an amphora in Paris, features a similar scene, except Persephone does not hold any stalks; instead, she reaches out with both hands towards Sisyphos (Pl. 10).<sup>32</sup> The final vase, a pelike in Bologna, is badly damaged, but it appears to show a scene, on both sides, which is identical to the aforementioned (Pl. 11A-B).<sup>33</sup>

These five images are reminiscent of Theognis' poem (699-718), which is why Simon presumes they show Persephone "overseeing" Sisyphos' punishment.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Anneliese Peschlow-Bindokat finds that the Persephone-Sisyphos scene demonstrates the relentless power of the goddess and her role as "the punitive Underworld ruler" (der strafenden Unterweltsherrin).<sup>35</sup> She says the ears of grain, symbolic of wealth and good fortune, are, in chthonic contexts, indicative of this role: with her occupied hand, she performs a blessing, while with her empty hand, which reaches out towards Sisyphos, she punishes. Peschlow-Bindokat's claim is founded on the fact that Hades is hardly ever present in such images, and when he is, he is old and passive; yet this is because Hades is an invisible being, not because he is an inadequate ruler. Vermeule seems to agree, but she argues on behalf of both Hades and Persephone: she says the wheat sheaves, held by the goddess, designate the chthonic rulers' strength and munificence

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<sup>31</sup> Naples, Mus. Naz. 81166 (H 2490); *ABV* 383, 11 (attribution); *Para* 168; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.12 (Oakley) (prescribed date; provenance: Etruria).

<sup>32</sup> Paris, Louvre F 382; *ABV* 483 (it is akin to Doubleens); *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 483; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.14 (Oakley) (prescribed date).

<sup>33</sup> Bologna, Mus. Civ. VF 47; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.13 (Oakley) (prescribed date, provenance: Bologna). This is the only time the Sisyphos myth is featured on a pelike. Aside from a few lekythoi, Sisyphos' punishment was most commonly depicted on neck-amphorae, where the round shape may have been considered an ideal surface for the stone-rolling scenario. The pelike is similar in shape to the amphora, making it a sensible replacement. Lekythoi, on the other hand, had multiple funerary uses, meaning their function, rather than their form, was the important factor.

<sup>34</sup> Simon 1967, p. 277.

<sup>35</sup> Peschlow-Bindokat 1972, p. 76.

as “overseers of law.”<sup>36</sup> Although this interpretation is far-fetched, her assertion that these images are a description of the Underworld seems quite right: the artists of these vessels utilized visible characters, like Sisyphos and Persephone, to populate their Underworld landscape, perhaps to tell Theognis’ story, but certainly to make it a visible, discernible place.

An entirely different vessel-shape, a fragmented *phormiskos* in Tübingen (ca. 500 BCE), depicts a very atypical Sisyphos-scene: on one side, a man climbs a cliff, while, on the same or the opposite side of the vessel, a man steers a boat alongside a winged, bird-like creature (Pl. 12A-B).<sup>37</sup> The oarsman has been identified as either Odysseus or Charon, and the cliff-climber as either Polyphemos or Sisyphos. Odette Touchefeu-Meynier relates the scene to the *Odyssey*: Odysseus sails away from Polyphemos, who hurls rocks at him atop his cave; Athena, she says, stands behind the Cyclops.<sup>38</sup> What makes this interpretation unlikely is the presence of the winged creature, which, in this circumstance, would have to be a siren. It is unlikely, however, that the Cyclops and the siren sagas would appear on the same vessel because they appear in two separate moments of the *Odyssey*.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the winged figure is far too large to be a simple bird.<sup>40</sup> Berthold Fellmann tries to circumvent this problem with the following explanation: the black and white stripe down the center of the fragment separates the two scenes to make it clear that that each stands on its own.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, Heide Mommsen describes the scene as follows: Sisyphos rolls his boulder up a slope; Persephone, reduced to a partial foot and piece of mantle, stands behind him; and Charon transports a soul, depicted as a winged *psyche*, in his boat.<sup>42</sup> In addition to the fact that *phormiskoi* are generally painted with scenes related to the cult of the

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<sup>36</sup> Vermeule 1979, p. 37.

<sup>37</sup> Tübingen, Univ. Mus. S101507a; CVA Tübingen 3, pl. 22.6-7; Mommsen 1982, p. 208, fig. 2; LIMC, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.15 (Oakley) (prescribed date). Reconstruction drawings from Mommsen 1982, figs. 1-2.

<sup>38</sup> Touchefeu-Meynier 1968, pp. 60, 147.

<sup>39</sup> Polyphemos: *Od.* 9.215; Sirens: *Od.* 12.153.

<sup>40</sup> CVA Tübingen 7, p. 32

<sup>41</sup> Fellmann, 1972, pp. 54, 119.

<sup>42</sup> Mommsen 1982, pp. 208-210.

dead,<sup>43</sup> there are multiple iconographic indications that support Mommsen's interpretation. First, there is a similar black-figure painting on a stand in Frankfurt (Pl. 13):<sup>44</sup> Charon steers his boat, which is surrounded by winged *psychai*, or souls. Second, the oarsman on Tübingen S101507a (Pl. 12) has white hair, which fits better with the image of the elderly Charon rather than the heroic Odysseus. Third, the man in the boat is not tied to anything, while Odysseus normally is bound to the mast of his ship when sirens are present.<sup>45</sup> Finally, Mommsen points out that the iconography of the cliff-climber is very similar to that of other Sisyphos images: he holds out his arms and climbs, one foot in front of the other, up a curved slope as if pushing a massive boulder.<sup>46</sup> Thus, this fragment most likely shows a chthonic scene of Charon on the River Acheron outside the Underworld and Sisyphos rolling his boulder within. As Persephone personifies the realm of Hades,<sup>47</sup> Sisyphos makes clear its identity.

Four additional Attic black-figure vases pair Persephone and Sisyphos with the chthonic canine Kerberos, who, like Charon, is indicative of the chthonic realm's outskirts. On the first, an amphora by the Nikoxenos Painter in Orvieto (ca. 520-510 BCE), Persephone sits inside her porch/palace, holding a scepter and stalks of grain (Pl. 14A-B).<sup>48</sup> Kerberos, portrayed with two heads and a lion's mane, stands before her in the center of the image, his left head turned towards her while his right looks at Sisyphos, who balances his stone on a knobby pillar. In the second, a white-ground lekythos in Münster (ca. 500-490 BCE), a beardless Sisyphos painstakingly pushes

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<sup>43</sup> Additionally, suspended *phormiskoi*, which would hang from a piercing on their handle, were represented on white ground lekythoi (Pl. 12D) (Mommsen 1982, p. 205).

<sup>44</sup> Frankfurt, Lieb. 560; CVA Frankfurt 2, pls. 46.4-6; LIMC, s.v. *Charon* 1.1 (Sourvinou-Inwood).

<sup>45</sup> For examples, see: 1) London, BM E440, 1843.11-3.31; CVA British Museum 3, pl. 20.1A-D; ARV<sup>2</sup> 289.1, 1642; *Para* 355; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 210; LIMC, s.v. *Odysseus* 155 (Touchefeu-Meynier). 2) Berlin, Antikenslg. 1993.216; LIMC, s.v. *Odysseus* 152 (Touchefeu-Meynier); or: Berlin V.I. 4532.

<sup>46</sup> Mommsen 1982, p. 208.

<sup>47</sup> Mommsen 1982, p. 209.

<sup>48</sup> Orvieto, Mus. Faina 2805; ABV 392, 1 (attribution); *Para* 172; LIMC, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.7 (Oakley) (prescribed date; provenance: Orvieto).



his stone up a vertical slope, his mouth open as if grunting (Pl. 15).<sup>49</sup> Kerberos stands to his right while Persephone sits in her columned enclosure on the far right, facing Kerberos, and raising her arm as if to convey an order. She could be communicating with Kerberos, who looks at her with one head and at Sisyphos with the other. Max Wegner notes that the leythos has no exact parallel, but it comes close in composition to the Orvieto amphora (Pl. 14).<sup>50</sup> He does not have much to say regarding the iconography other than the following: he thinks that Persephone is holding a vine, the same ones generally used to indicate an outdoor setting. This withered vine, he believes, relates to the fact that she cannot return to the upper world.<sup>51</sup> If any deity should *hold* a vine, however, it is the god Dionysos; Persephone's allotted plants are usually ears of corn, stalks of grain, or white flowers. Furthermore, she is likely raising her arm in protest of the abduction, rather than clutching the vine meandering past her palace window.

Kerberos also appears on an amphora by the Kleophrades Painter, ca. 510-500 BCE (Pl. 16);<sup>52</sup> it pairs Hermes with Sisyphos, recalling the account of Pindar's scholiast (*Ol.* 1.97). Although the scene is similar to that on the London amphora (Pl. 4), there are differences: first, Sisyphos turns his head to look back at Hermes, who gestures towards him as if to say "Get to work!" Second, Kerberos, depicted as a two-headed canine with a multi-colored lion's mane, is situated between the god and the toiling shade. Finally, Hermes, who stands inside a two-columned structure that appears to frame Sisyphos, seems to be leaving the scene, for his feet point away from the toiling king. Erika Kunze-Götte refers to this building as Hades' palace, remarking that Hermes stands inside while Sisyphos stands outside, in the harsh environment of the Underworld; she further notes that Kerberos, who stands on the threshold of the colonnade,

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<sup>49</sup> Münster, Private Collection; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.17 (Oakley) (prescribed date, provenance: Selinus), *Kerberos* 24 (Woodford and Spier).

<sup>50</sup> Wegner 1977, p. 303.

<sup>51</sup> Wegner 1977, p. 304.

<sup>52</sup> St. Louis, Private Collection; *ABV* 405, 19; *ARV*<sup>2</sup>, 192; *Para* 176; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup>, 105; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.16 (Oakley) (prescribed date, provenance: Cervetri).

functions here as the guardian of Hades' gate.<sup>53</sup> Conversely, Felten suggests it is the Underworld's gate, as indicated by the presence of Kerberos. To account for Sisyphos' presence, he says that the stone-roller is leading our gaze "deeper inside" (noch tiefer hinein),<sup>54</sup> *i.e.* he is viewable from beyond the gate. While I agree with this interpretation, I question his conclusion that Hermes is removing Kerberos from the Underworld. More likely, this is the story told in the Pindar scholia (*Ol.* 1.91), where Hermes, the ψυχοπομπός (guide of souls), has retrieved and returned the naughty soul of Sisyphos to the Underworld.

The final Attic black-figure vase that pairs Kerberos with Sisyphos is a lekythos in San Antonio (ca. 500-490 BCE) (Pl. 17A-B).<sup>55</sup> The scene is quite different from the aforementioned, for instead of Hermes, it includes Herakles, and instead of Persephone, it includes Hades, who looks on helplessly as the dog is led away; Sisyphos rolls his stone off to the right. John Oakley places this scene at the "entrance to the Underworld," perhaps because Herakles abducted Kerberos from his designated post, or the netherworld's gate.<sup>56</sup> This brings up two puzzling questions that relate to all the Kerberos images. First, should Kerberos stand next to a building, said building should represent the gate at the entrance to the Underworld. But Kerberos also accompanies a Persephone (Pls. 14-15) seated inside a palace-like structure that seems to indicate an interior setting, *i.e.* the Underworld's interior. Possibly, the palace and gate are conceptually same: Hades house *is* the Underworld, therefore it could function as both a palace and a realm; after all, vase painters did not need to be literal about their representations of this invisible place.

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<sup>53</sup>Kunze-Götte 1992, p. 65.

<sup>54</sup>Felten 1975, p. 31.

<sup>55</sup>San Antonio Mus. of Art 91-80G; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.18 (Oakley) (prescribed date).

<sup>56</sup>*LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.18 (Oakley).

The constant in all of these scenes is Sisyphos, whom Kerberos appears to be watching. This raises the second question: why is Sisyphos, a resident of the Underworld, depicted in the same space as Kerberos, the realm's gatekeeper? Homer's *Odyssey* (11.567-600) may offer a partial answer:<sup>57</sup> Odysseus caught sight of Minos, Orion, Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos, all of whom were stationed inside the Underworld, from behind his trench of blood on the realm's outskirts. These vase paintings have visually manifested this idea: from the gate, where Hades, Kerberos, and Herakles stand, one can see into the Underworld's interior, which is marked by Sisyphos rolling his stone. In this way, he functions as backdrop to the narrative that unfolds in the foreground.

#### **SISYPHOS ON THE GREEK MAINLAND (OTHER MEDIA, CA. 500-430 BCE)**

In addition to these 16 black-figure vessels, there is an assortment of other works from the mainland that include Sisyphos: three additional vases of varied grounds—two Attic red-figure cups and one Attic white-ground lekythos—and a lost fresco by Polygnotus of Thasos. The vases all depict Sisyphos toiling alone,<sup>58</sup> while the fresco depicts him in a vast Underworld landscape, surrounded by various chthonic entities, deceased heroes and heroines, and katabasis-goers, or mortals who visited the Underworld while still alive; examples include Odysseus, Theseus, Peirithoos, and Herakles.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Buitron and Cohen 1992, p. 99.

<sup>58</sup> Two additional red-figure vessels depict a man with a stone, but one (a column-*krater*) references a satyr play (Warsaw, Nat. Mus. 200452; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 243; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 202 (manner of Myson); *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.36 [Oakley]), and the other (a cup) is an unlikely attribution given to a fragmented man carrying a stone amidst training athletes (Mus. Nat. Villa Giulia XXXX0.1115 and Heidelberg, Univ. 46 and 47; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 134 (recalls Group of London E 33); *Para* 17; Zancani Montuoro 1964, pl. 14b; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.38 [Oakley]). There are also two 5<sup>th</sup> century red-figure vessels, a hydria (Athens, Nat. Mus. 16351; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 263, 42 (Syriskos Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.41 [Oakley]) and a lekythos (Athens, Goulandris Mus. SP 62; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.43 [Oakley], *Hermes* 470 [Siefert]), that may depict Hermes leading Sisyphos to the Underworld. Yet even if this classification is correct, these scenes do not take place *in* or *near* the Underworld, but rather in the upper world, as indicated by the absence of a stone and slope. Thus, these four images are not relevant to this discussion.

<sup>59</sup> Homer *Od.* 11 (Odysseus); Homer *Il.* 11.617 (Herakles); [Apollodorus] *Lib.* 2.5.12 (Theseus and Peirithoos).

The first red-figure cup, in Paris, is by Epiktetos and dates from 510-500 BCE (Pl. 18).<sup>60</sup> Inside the cup's center, a bearded man who is surely Sisyphos struggles to roll his rock along the curve of the tondo, which doubles as his slope. Much of the image is missing, but Sisyphos' wide stance and bulging back muscles indicate that his legs are strongly bent and his arms are pushing upward in an attempt to move the stone.<sup>61</sup> The other cup, in Athens, is attributed to the Pithos Painter and dates to 510 BCE (Pl. 19).<sup>62</sup> Here, a beardless man, wearing a headband, braces one leg on the base of a rock, the other on the bottom of the tondo as he attempts to push a large boulder upwards. Sourvinou-Inwood finds that Theseus is the one represented here because Attic vases, starting in 510 BCE, depicted Theseus performing the labors he endured in the Thebaid.<sup>63</sup> John Beazley and Paola Zancani Montuoro, however, identify this laboring youth as Sisyphos.<sup>64</sup> This latter theory has much to recommend it, for while there are other vase paintings of Theseus holding up or moving a rock, the rock is always long and cylindrical in shape, nearly the hero's height, and he either pushes against it or attempts to lift it up;<sup>65</sup> in other words, Theseus was a *stone-lifter*, not a *stone-roller*. Although the Pithos Painter's character is not Theseus, there are still two problems with interpreting him as Sisyphos. First, the figure is beardless, and Sisyphos was usually portrayed as a bearded, mature man. There are, however, other occurrences of a

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<sup>60</sup> Paris, Louvre G 16; CVA Louvre 3, pl. 11 (a barely visible inscription, carved in red letters around the figure of Sisyphos, reads ΗΙΠΠΙΑΡΟΣ ΚΑΛΟ); ARV<sup>2</sup> 71, 13 (also attributes this vessel to the Euergides Painter); *Para* 328; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 167; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.20 (Oakley).

<sup>61</sup> CVA Louvre 3, p. 7.

<sup>62</sup> Athens, Nat. Mus. 18722; ARV 117, 1; ARV<sup>2</sup> 141, 1 (near to Pithos Painter); *Para* 335; *Beazley Addenda* 88; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 178, 141.1; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.39 (Oakley) (prescribed date; labeled as "probable depiction"); *Theseus* 22 (Niels).

<sup>63</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 1979, p. 27.

<sup>64</sup> ARV<sup>2</sup> 141, 1; *Para* 335; Zancani-Montuoro 1964, p. 60-70

<sup>65</sup> For examples, see 1) Stockholm Nat. Mus. A1701; ARV<sup>2</sup> 844, 145 (attributed to the Sabouloff Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Theseus* 17 (provenance: Sicily; date: ca. 460 BCE) (Niels). 2) Ferrar Mus. Naz. 2514; ARV<sup>2</sup> 1181, 37 (attributed to the Kadmos Painter); *Para* 460; *LIMC*, s.v. *Theseus* 18 (provenance: Spina; date: 460 BCE) (Niels). 3) Paris, Louvre G 622; ARV<sup>2</sup> 129, 10 (attributed to the Painter of London E105); *LIMC*, s.v. *Theseus* 19 (provenance: Etruria; date: 425-400 BCE) (Niels).

beardless Sisyphos on the Munich lekythos (Pl. 15) and the Karlsruhe krater (Pl. 32),<sup>66</sup> so it is not impossible that the Corinthian king should appear as a youth. The Pithos Painter was fond of depicting young men, so perhaps he edited the stone-roller motif to follow his own personal preferences.<sup>67</sup> The second issue with interpreting the youth as Sisyphos is that he wears a headband, as there are no parallels of the stone-roller wearing such an article, only youthful athletes;<sup>68</sup> kingly figures also wear headpieces, but they are always bearded, draped, and/or carry a staff.<sup>69</sup> That said, the closest parallel to the Pithos Painter's tondo is Sisyphos rolling his stone: athletes that train with circular objects either carry or balance them,<sup>70</sup> while Kings are regal figures, so, unless they are a known toilsome soul, they are never presented performing laborious tasks. The tondo cannot even be a parody of the toilsome endeavor because it is too laborious, especially if we compare it to the only other known satiric image of the stone-roller, which shows youths dancing and playing instruments alongside a beardless stone-roller.<sup>71</sup> It is impossible to know what the Pithos Painter's motivation was for creating such an enigmatic scene, but since he was not a very skilled or accurate artist,<sup>72</sup> the youth could simply represent the Pithos Painter's own convoluted vision of the toilsome soul. Therefore, this vessel will be considered as Sisyphean in this study.

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<sup>66</sup> Münster, Private Collection; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.17 (Oakley) (prescribed date, provenance: Selinus), *Kerberos* 24 (Woodford and Spier). Bad. Landesmus. B4; *CVA Karlsruhe* 2, pls. 61.5, 62, 63, 64.1-4; *RVAp* I, 431.81, pl. 160.1 (attribution: Circle of the Lycurgus Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.22 (Oakley) (prescribed date), *Ananke* 2 (Simon).

<sup>67</sup> For more examples of the Pithos Painter's messy style, see 1) Rhodes Arch. Mus., 13386; *ARV* 116.13; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 139.23; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 178; *CVA Rodi* 2, pl. 5.2; Boardman 1975, fig. 128.1. 2) Nantes, Mus. Dob., 903.692; *CVA Nantes* 1 pl. 23.5-6.

<sup>68</sup> For examples of athletes wearing headbands, see 1) Bourges Mus., D.863.3.3; *CVA Bourges* 3.1, pl. 5.3. 2) Oxford, Ashm. Mus., 1927.4076D; *CVA Oxford* 2, pl. 57.40.

<sup>69</sup> For examples of kingly figures wearing headbands, see 1) Boston, Mus. Fine Arts, 03.875; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 638.47. 2) Gela, Mus. Arch., CN38; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 666.16; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 278; *CVA Gela* 3, pl. 38.3-4.

<sup>70</sup> See fn. 68. See also Paris, Louvre G96; *ARV* 64, 95; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 94, 107; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 171.

<sup>71</sup> See fn. 58.

<sup>72</sup> See fn. 67.

The two tondos, which feature Sisyphos toiling alone, are not likely chthonic in nature; they seem to function more as clever, decorative motifs of fruitless toil.

A white-ground lekythos in Athens (ca. 430 BCE) depicts a new vision of the stone-roller: wearing a short tunic around his waist and left shoulder, a figure rushes up a slope, pushing a stone with both arms (Pl. 20A-B).<sup>73</sup> This vessel was discovered inside the grave of Eupheros in the Kerameikos with five other white-ground *lekythoi*.<sup>74</sup> Barbara Schlörb-Vierneisel identifies the figure as a “vigorous female” rushing up a slope. She describes her movement as follows: “With her left leg, the girl supports herself on a hurriedly drawn, red three-legged object. The right leg appears in three-quarter view, set far back. Dark brown hair flutters back.”<sup>75</sup> While it does look like the figure has breasts, what we are seeing could simply be the underlying sketch of the artist—ones he made before adding the paint. This is common on white-ground lekythoi, such Athens 1818, where contours of the figures’ bodies are clearly visible beneath their clothing (Pl. 21A-B).<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, it looks as if the figure is standing on the slope, not a three-legged object. Simon identifies the figure as Sisyphos,<sup>77</sup> and as the figure’s iconography matches that of the toilsome soul, this scene is likely chthonic in nature.

The last image from the Greek mainland that I will discuss is Polygnotus’ now lost monumental fresco of Homer’s *Nekyia* (ca. 460 BCE). It once adorned the walls of the *Lesche*, or hall, of the Knidians at Delphi. This painting was the first known visual work to feature Odysseus’ journey to the Underworld (*Od.* 11), although it may also acknowledge earlier works

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<sup>73</sup> Athens, Kerameikos hS 202; Schlörb-Vierneisel 1964, fig. 4a; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.21 (Oakley) (prescribed date; provenance: Athens).

<sup>74</sup> Schlörb-Vierneisel 1964, pp. 90-93.

<sup>75</sup> Schlörb-Vierneisel 1964, p. 92: “Mit dem linken Bein stützt sich das Mädchen auf einen flüchtig gezeichneten roten, dreibeinigen Gegenstand. Das rechte Bein erscheint in Dreiviertelansicht von vorn, weit zurückgestellt. Die dunelbraunen Haare flattern zurück.”

<sup>76</sup> Athens, Nat. Mus. 1818; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 998.161, 1677; *Para* 438; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 313; *FR* III, 113; Boardman 1989, 264; Oakley 1997, pl. 4, 114.

<sup>77</sup> Simon 1979 pp. 235-36; Simon 1994, p. 34.

no longer available to us,<sup>78</sup> as well as Polygnotus' own liberties. Spanning the west, south, and north walls of the Lesche, the *Nekyia* featured 69 characters from various myths. Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell has reconstructed it based on Pausanias' elaborate descriptions of the fresco (Pls. 22A-C),<sup>79</sup> but because it is only a proposed reconstruction, we cannot rely too heavily on its composition. Regardless of how exactly the fresco appeared, there is one thing we certainly know about the *Nekyia* from the Lesche: it was based on Homer's *Odyssey* 11, where Odysseus travels to the Underworld to consult the deceased seer Teiresias. While masses of Trojan and Greek souls inhabited the fresco, the few figures that are relevant to this discussion are two anonymous men being tortured, a demon called Eurynomos, Oknos, Tityos, Sisyphos, the water-carriers, and Tantalos, *i.e.* the denizens of the Underworld who do more than mindlessly float about.<sup>80</sup> Pausanias describes them in the following way:

ἐπί δὲ τοῦ Ἀχέρωντος τῆ ὄχθη μάλιστα θεᾶς ἄξιον, ὅτι ὑπὸ τοῦ Χάρωνος τὴν ναῦν ἀνὴρ οὐ δίκαιος ἐς πατέρα ἀγχόμενός ἐστιν ὑπο τοῦ πατρός... οὗτοι μὲν δὴ τιμὰς καὶ ἐς ἐμὲ ἔτι παρὰ Καταναίων ἔχουσιν, ἐν δὲ τῆ Πουλυγνώτου γραφῇ πλησίον τοῦ ἀνδρός, ὃς τῷ πατρὶ ἐλυμαίνετο καὶ δι' αὐτὸ ἐν Ἄιδου κακὰ ἀναπίμπλησι, τούτου πλησίον ἱερὰ σεσυληκῶς ἀνὴρ ὑπέσχε δίκην· γυνὴ δὲ ἡ κολάζουσα αὐτὸν φάρμακα ἄλλα τε καὶ ἐς αἰκίαν οἶδεν ἀνθρώπων.

On the bank of Acheron there is a notable group under the boat of Charon, consisting of a man who had been undutiful to his father and is now being throttled by him... Near to the man in Polygnotus' picture who maltreated his father and for this drinks his cup of woe in Hades, is a man who paid the penalty for sacrilege. The woman who is punishing him is skilled in poisonous and other drugs... (10.28.4-5).

ἔστι δὲ ἀνωτέρω τῶν κατειλεγμένων Εὐρύνομος· δαίμονα εἶναι τῶν ἐν Ἄιδου φασὶν οἱ Δελφῶν ἐξηγηταὶ τὸν Εὐρύνομον, καὶ ὡς τὰς σάρκας περιεσθίει τῶν νεκρῶν, μόνα σφίσιν ἀπολείπων τὰ ὀστέα. ἡ δὲ Ὀμήρου ποίησις ἐς Ὀδυσσεα καὶ ἡ Μινυᾶς τε καλουμένη καὶ οἱ Νόστοι—μνήμη γὰρ δὴ ἐν ταύταις καὶ Ἄιδου καὶ τῶν ἐκεῖ δειμάτων ἐστίν—ἴσασι οὐδένα Εὐρύνομον δαίμονα. τοσοῦτο μέντοι

<sup>78</sup> Buitron and Cohen 1992, p. 98.

<sup>79</sup> Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, figs. 3-5; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.25 (Oakley); Pausanias 10.31.10. Stansbury-O'Donnell's reconstruction aimed to correct and build upon a 19<sup>th</sup> century visualization of the fresco by Carl Robert and Hermann Schneck (Pl. 23). The degree to which such reconstructions can vary is implicit from a comparison of the two.

<sup>80</sup> According to Homer, the dead were hollow without blood, which is why Odysseus fed it to the souls he wished to speak with (11.97-99, 140-155).

δηλώσω, ὁποῖός τε ὁ Εὐρύνομος καὶ ἐπὶ ποίου γέγραπται τοῦ σχήματος· κυανοῦ τὴν χροάν μεταξύ ἐστὶ καὶ μέλανος, ὁποῖαι καὶ τῶν μυιῶν αἱ πρὸς τὰ κρέα εἰσὶ προσιζάνουσαι, τοὺς δὲ ὀδόντας φαίνει, καθεζομένω δὲ ὑπέστρωταὶ οἱ δέρμα γυπός

Higher up than the figures I have enumerated comes Eurynomus, said by the Delphian guides to be one of the demons in Hades, who eats off all the flesh of the corpses, leaving only their bones. But Homer's *Odyssey*, the poem called the *Minyad*, and the *Returns*, although they tell of Hades, and its horrors, know of no demon called Eurynomus. However, I will describe what he is like and his attitude in the painting. He is of a color between blue and black, like that of meat flies; he is showing his teeth and is seated, and under him is spread a vulture's skin (10.28.7).

μετὰ δὲ αὐτοὺς ἀνὴρ ἐστὶ καθήμενος, ἐπίγραμμα δὲ Ὀκνον εἶναι λέγει τὸν ἄνθρωπον: πεποίηται μὲν πλέκων σχοῖνον, παρέστηκε δὲ θήλεια ὄνος ἐπεσθίουσα τὸ πεπλεγμένον αἰεὶ τοῦ σχοινοῦ. τοῦτον εἶναι τὸν Ὀκνον φίλεργόν φασιν ἄνθρωπον, φυναῖκα δὲ ἔχειν δαπανηράν: καὶ ὅποσα συλλέξει το ἐργαζόμενος, οὐ πολὺ δὴ ὕστερον ὑπὸ ἐκείνης ἀνήλωτο.

After them is a man seated, said by the inscription to be Oknus. He is depicted as plaiting a cord, and by him stands a she-ass, eating up the cord as quickly as it is plaited. They say that this Oknus was a diligent man with an extravagant wife. Everything he earned by working was quickly spent by his wife (10.29.1).

γέγραπται δὲ καὶ Τιτυὸς οὐ κολαζόμενος ἔτι, ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ συνεχῆς τῆς τιμωρίας ἐς ἅπαν ἐξανηλωμένος, ἀμυδρὸν καὶ οὐδὲ ὀλόκληρον ἔδωλον.

Tityos too is in the picture; he is no longer being punished, but has been reduced to nothing by continuous torture, an indistinct and mutilated phantom (10.29.3).

μετὰ δὲ τὴν Καλλιστῶ καὶ ὅσαι σὺν ἐκείνῃ γυναῖκες, κρημνοῦ τε σχῆμά ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ Αἰόλου Σίσυφος ἀνώσαι πρὸς τὸν κρημνὸν βιαζόμενος τὴν πέτραν. ἐστὶ δὲ καὶ πίθος ἐν τῇ γραφῇ, πρεσβύτης δὲ ἄνθρωπος, ὁ δὲ ἔτι παῖς, καὶ γυναῖκες, νέα μὲν ὑπὸ τῇ πέτρᾳ, παρὰ δὲ τὸν πρεσβύτην εἰοικυῖα ἐκείνῳ τὴν ἡλικίαν: οἱ μὲν δὴ ἄλλοι φέρουσιν ὕδωρ, τῇ δὲ γραίᾳ κατεᾶχθαι τὴν ὑδρίαν εἰκάσεις: ὅσον δὲ ἐν τῷ ὀστράκῳ λοιπὸν ἦν τοῦ ὕδατος, ἐκχέουσα ἐστὶν αὐθις ἐς τὸν πίθον... ὑπὸ τούτῳ τῷ πίθῳ Τάνταλος καὶ ἄλλα ἔχων ἐστὶν ἀλγεινὰ ὅποσα Ὀμηρὸς ἐπ' αὐτῷ πεποίηκεν, ἐπὶ δὲ αὐτοῖς πρόσσεστίν οἱ καὶ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ ἐπηρτημένου λίθου δεῖμα.

After Callisto and the women with her is the form of a cliff, and Sisyphos, the son of Aeolus, is trying his hardest to push the rock up it. There is also in the painting a jar, and an old man, with a boy and two women. One of these, who is young, is under the rock; the other is beside the old man and of a like age to his. The others are carrying water, but you will guess that the old woman's water-jar is broken. All that remains of the water in the sherd she is pouring out again into the jar... Under this jar is Tantalus, enduring all the



pains that Homer speaks of, and in addition the terror of the stone that hangs over him (10.31.10-12).<sup>81</sup>

Although this painting is envisioning the Underworld as described by Homer, Polygnotus alters and reinvents the narrative regarding the chthonic denizens in many ways. First, he included a variety of toilsome souls that were not seen by Odysseus in the text, such as the water-carriers, Oknos, a man being poisoned, and a man being throttled by his father. Conversely, Orion, who is present in the poem, is missing from the painting. Hades and Persephone are obvious omissions as well, but then again, Odysseus did not actually see either of them; he simply *perceived* that Persephone did not want him to stay (11.633-635):

ἔμὲ δὲ χλωρὸν δέος ἦρει, / μή μοι Γοργεῖν κεφαλὴν δεινοῖο πελώρου / ἔξ' Αἴδεω  
πέμψειεν ἄγαυὴ Περσεφόνεια.

...And pale fear seized me, lest august Persephone might send forth upon me from out of the house of Hades the head of the Gorgon, that awful monster.<sup>82</sup>

The most interesting figure, however, is the demon Eurynomos, whose presence confused Pausanias, likely because Polygnotus invented him.

Four of the characters discussed above represent torture in the Underworld: Tityos, the man being throttled, the man being poisoned, and, depending on his function and purpose, the demon Eurynomos. Pausanias states that Tityos, who lies between Odysseus and Oknos in Stansbury-O'Donnell's drawing (Pl. 22A, left-center), is no longer being tortured by a bird, but appears as if a hollow shell, lifeless and unmoving.<sup>83</sup> Although his punishment was well documented in texts, Polygnotus was the first artist to represent him as a toilsome soul; he was

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<sup>81</sup> trans. Jones and Omerod, 1918.

Additionally, Stansbury-O'Donnell's reconstruction infers that Sisyphos stone is also the implement of Tantalus' fear.

<sup>82</sup> trans. Murray 1919.

<sup>83</sup> Robert's reconstruction shows a bird tearing away at Tityos' body, even though Pausanias (10.29.3) says the giant is "no longer being punished" (οὐ κολαζόμενος ἔτι). As Robert does not follow Pausanias' words as carefully as Stansbury-O'Donnell does, I will only refer Stansbury-O'Donnell's reconstruction in my descriptions.

more commonly depicted being murdered by Apollo, Artemis, and/or Zeus.<sup>84</sup> The only precedents Polygnotus would have had to work with to create Tityos' torment were images of Prometheus being assaulted by a bird as Herakles attempted to save him,<sup>85</sup> but even these are not quite the same. Tityos' comatose image was likely Polygnotus' personal vision of the harrowing myth.

The two anonymous men, located below Charon's boat (Pl. 22A, far right), were new to Greek art as well. Roman authors, such as Virgil (*Aen.* 608-613), spoke of neglectful people among the criminals of the Underworld, but Polygnotus was the first to represent them in art. These characters are quite terrifying because they show what happened to ordinary people when they abused others and/or ignored religious rites. The most frightening image on this wall, however, is the demon Eurynomos, located to the left of Charon's boat in Stansbury-O'Donnell's drawing (Pl. 22A, center-right). As there are no Greek precedents, either written and visual, that describe such a creature, Polygnotus likely created him. Pausanias' guides likely invented the corpse-eating tale, for as Eurynomos was without a back-story, ancient viewers were free to ponder his function and purpose.

The other group of characters, once located on the Lesche's south wall, all perform futile activities. They include Sisyphos, Tantalos, the water-carriers, and Oknos. As we already know, Sisyphos, who pushes his stone amongst the water-carriers in Stansbury-O'Donnell's drawing (Pl. 22B, far left), was not new to Greek art. Rather, by this point, he was almost a chthonic

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<sup>84</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Tityos* 2-31 (Vollkommer). After Polygnotus' fresco, his punishment appears only two more times in Roman art of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.

<sup>85</sup> Prometheus, the son of a Titan, tricked Zeus twice: first by sacrificing the worst parts of animal meat (the fat and bones) to keep the best parts for human consumption, and second by stealing fire after Zeus had withheld it (as punishment for his first offense). For his actions, Prometheus was tied to a mountain as a bird pecked away at his liver. Herakles, however, eventually killed the eagle and released the giant from his shackles (Hesiod, *Theog.* 521). For artistic examples, see 1) Florence, Mus. Arch. 76359; *ABV* 97.28 (attributed to the Tyrrhenian Group); *Para* 37; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 26; *LIMC* s.v. *Prometheus* 67 (Gisler). 2) Karlsruhe, Bad. Landesmus., B2591; *ABV* 97.29; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 26; *CVA* arlsruhe 1, pl.s 5.4, 6.1-2; *LIMC* s.v. *Prometheus* 69 (Gisler).

staple, having appeared in over 20 images of the Underworld over the last 100 years. Conversely, Polygnotus' portrayal of Tantalos' punishment, located just below Sisyphos in the reconstruction, was new to Greek art, for all his prior appearances, like Tityos, were strictly textual in form.<sup>86</sup> Tantalos' condition differs slightly from that of his fellow toilsome souls because he does not perform a futile task, but rather is trapped within a futile situation. Pausanias (10.31.12) states that Tantalos suffers "all the pains that Homer speaks of, and in addition the terror of the stone that hangs over him" (ἄλλα ἔχων ἐστὶν ἀλγεινὰ ὅποσα Ὅμηρος ἐπ' αὐτῷ πεποίηκεν, ἐπι δὲ αὐτοῖς πρόσσεστίν οἱ καὶ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ ἐπηρτημένου λίθου δεῖμα). The pains he suffers in Homer (*Od.* 11.582-592) involve being parched and starved while food and water are just out of reach; later authors, such as Pindar (*Ol.* 1.90, *Isthm.* 8.21), relate the boulder tradition. Not only was Polygnotus' fresco the first representation of Tantalos, but also it cleverly combined all of Tantalos' punitive traditions into a single image, something Stansbury-O'Donnell shows in his reconstruction drawing (Pl. 22B, far left): Tantalos sits in a pool of water that is directly in the path of Sisyphos' stone.

The water-carriers were not frequently represented in Greek art prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, when the Danaids assumed the role. Before Polygnotus' fresco, they appeared only twice: first, on a black-figure neck-amphora in Munich (Pl. 2),<sup>87</sup> and second, on a black-figure lekythos in Palermo (Pl. 24).<sup>88</sup> Their appearance in Polygnotus' fresco is more akin to the figures on the Palermo vessel, which depicts the water-carriers as anonymous men and women; on the Munich

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<sup>86</sup> Tantalos does not become a common chthonic figure until the Roman imperial period (ca. 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE – 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE) (*LIMC*, s.v. *Tantalos* 11-18 [Ganschow]).

<sup>87</sup> Munich, Antikenslg. 1494; *ABV* 308, 81 (attribution); *Para* 133; *CVA* 7, pls. 360, 361.1-2 (prescribed date); *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.5 (Oakley) (provenance: Vulci), *Aias* 1.145 (Touchefeu-Meynier).

<sup>88</sup> Palermo, Mus. Arch. Region., 2141; Shapiro 1993, fig. 134; Giudice 1983, pl. 14.12 (attributed to the Phanyllis Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Oknos* 1 (Felten).

amphora, they appear as androgynous, winged *psychai*. Pausanias, in his *Description* (10.31.11), has this to say about the water-carriers' toilsome endeavor in the fresco:

ἔτεκμαιρόμεθα δ' εἶναι καὶ τούτους τῶν τὰ δρώμενα Ἐλευσῖνι ἐν οὐδενὶ θεμένων λόγῳ: οἱ γὰρ ἀρχαιότεροι τῶν Ἑλλήνων τελετὴν τὴν Ἐλευσινίαν πάντων ὀπίσσω εὐσέβειαν ἦκει τουσοῦτω ἦγον ἐντιμότερον ὅσῳ καὶ θεοὺς ἐπίπροσθεν ἠρώων.

We inferred that these people too were of those who had held of no account the rites at Eleusis. For the Greeks of an earlier period looked upon the Eleusinian mysteries as being as much higher than all other religious acts as gods are higher than heroes.

The Eleusinian Mysteries were created to quell people's fears and uncertainties about death, for initiates of the cult were promised a more comfortable afterlife. It is possible, since the Mysteries were held in such high esteem, the Greeks believed that those who did not participate would lead poor afterlives. Thus, the water-carriers, or the souls of non-initiates, became a common motif used to warn people of the consequences of failing to become an initiate; this is probably how they functioned in Polygnotus' fresco.

While the water-carriers were clearly guilty of a religious transgression, it is more difficult to understand why Oknos, the king and founder of Mantua, suffers in death. Located on the north wall, separate from the other toilsome souls (Pl. 22A, center), Oknos braided a rope while an ass simultaneously ate it. What did he do to deserve this punishment? While alive, he was said to have let his wife spend all of his hard-earned money on frivolous things. Although she was responsible for overindulging, Oknos was held accountable for *allowing* her to throw away his wealth. Why, then, did Polygnotus include him amongst figures who were true transgressors of cosmic, religious, and moral order? Oknos, whose name means "hesitation," appears only once in extant Greek art, on a black-figure lekythos in Palermo (Pl. 24).<sup>89</sup> In the foreground of this vessel, Oknos sits low to the ground, presumably braiding his rope while the

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<sup>89</sup> Palermo, Mus. Arch. Region., 2141; Shapiro 1993, fig. 134; *LIMC*, s.v. *Oknos* 1 (date: ca. 500-490 BCE) (Felten).

ass kneels behind him. The scene could also represent an older tradition, as Felten suggests,<sup>90</sup> where Oknos must perpetually collect sticks of wood that have fallen from his donkey's back because it keeps bending down to graze. In the background, men and women, carrying vessels of varying shapes, rush about to fill a large pithos. Although the water-carriers and Oknos are rare in Greek art, they were often represented in Roman art, sometimes together,<sup>91</sup> likely because their punishments both constituted fruitless, never-ending toil. Oknos' visual rarity is perhaps what induced Polygnotus to paint him, as every tortured and toilsome figure in his fresco, apart from Sisyphos, was either new to or rare in Greek art. If Felten is correct about the tradition represented on the Palermo lekythos (Pl. 24), then Polygnotus not only visually rendered a rare character, but he depicted him performing a role that had never been pictured before: braiding a rope as a donkey simultaneously ate it.

Since these frescoes are no longer extant, it is difficult to know whether Polygnotus was trying to define a chthonic landscape, or simply be innovative. While Polygnotus' overall intent is uncertain, we can at least surmise his decision to infuse his work with "a vision of punishments of the Underworld."<sup>92</sup> Sisyphos, Tityos, and Tantalos' harrowing situations may have advised against disturbing cosmic order. The two anonymous men could have reminded viewers never to abuse others or the law. Finally, the water-carriers and Oknos illustrated what happened when one lived an inefficient life. Death may have been inevitable, but one did not have to spend eternity as a toilsome soul, so long as one chose to live well.

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<sup>90</sup> Felten 1975, p. 23.

<sup>91</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Oknos* 6, 8, 10 (Felten).

<sup>92</sup> Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, p. 223.

## **SISYPHOS IN SOUTH ITALY AND ETRURIA [CA. 4<sup>TH</sup>-1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY BCE]**

More than half of the Attic vessels discussed above were discovered in South Italian, Sicilian, and Etruscan cities,<sup>93</sup> yet not only was the Sisyphos myth rare in the locally produced art of these regions, but the imagery does not correspond with the mainland tradition. Here, there is an addition to the story: a demon, one of many forms and personalities, prevents Sisyphos from either completing or desisting from his task; this new element is not documented in the extant literature, so it may represent a subliterate tradition. A 6<sup>th</sup>-century BCE sandstone metope from the sanctuary of Hera at Foce del Sele provides the earliest preserved instance of this figure. On the relief, an emaciated, winged creature, equipped with claws and perhaps a beard, clings to Sisyphos' back as he toils. On Apulian red-figure pottery, and perhaps in the Odyssey Fresco as well, the demon is represented as a whip-brandishing figure. In Etruscan tomb paintings, it assumes the shape of a child-sized human with wings. In what follows, I will examine the questions of the demon's identity and purpose.

The metopes from Foce del Sele feature a puzzling collection of mythological images; their meaning, origin, and placement within the sanctuary have been a subject of debate since they were unearthed by Paola Zancani-Monutoro and Giuseppe Zanotti-Bianco in the 1930's (Pls. 25-27).<sup>94</sup> Scholars' inability to formulate a cohesive theory about the Foce del Sele reliefs is due in large part to the sanctuary's current condition: aside from 39 sandstone metopes, little more than foundations, rubble, and ash remains. The site contains three buildings (Temple I/the Treasury, Temple II, and a square building), two altars, and deposits filled with sand (Pl. 28). Votive fills dating between 580-575 BCE were discovered beneath Temple I,<sup>95</sup> indicating that it

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<sup>93</sup> See pls. 3-4, 8-9, 15-16.

<sup>94</sup> Reconstruction of metope program by van Keuren 1989, pls. 2-4.

<sup>95</sup> Zancani Montuoro 1951, p. 29, 278.

can date no earlier than 575 BCE. Temple II was built much later, in ca. 500 BCE;<sup>96</sup> the metopes were discovered amongst its foundations, likely recycled as building material. Although the metopes were discovered elsewhere in the sanctuary, the consensus is that they come from the Archaic Temple I,<sup>97</sup> although the most recent excavators of the site believed they were intended for a future *hekatompedon* that was going to be built on top of the sand deposits.<sup>98</sup>

To make matters more complicated, some scholars think that between six and eleven of the 39 metopes, which all depict girls running, date later than the rest because of what some scholars describe as, their superior execution.<sup>99</sup> The Sisyphos metope dates with the earlier metopes, which scholars have dated from 570 to 525 BCE;<sup>100</sup> G. Richter's contention that the metopes date to the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE is most convincing.<sup>101</sup> F. van Keuren, building on Richter's assessment, assigns the metopes the date of 575-550 BCE on the following bases: they cannot predate the votive fill beneath Temple I, and they cannot date after 550 BCE on the grounds of style.<sup>102</sup> This conclusion would designate the Sisyphos metope as one of the earliest extant representations of the stone-roller, if not the first:<sup>103</sup> it features a nude male

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<sup>96</sup> van Keuren 1989, p. 18-19.

<sup>97</sup> Zancani Montuoro believes Temple I was an archaic treasury (1954, p. 17). van Keuren, with whom I agree, lists three reasons why this building is a small temple: first, the building is centrally located; most sanctuaries situate treasures near or along the temnos wall. Second, the structure is situated near a set of altars, which implies it may have had a cultic function. Finally, she says the building, although incomplete, is too long and rectangular to be a treasury (1989, p. 18-19).

<sup>98</sup> Genière, Maiuri, and Donnarumna 1997, pp. 332, 337.

<sup>99</sup> Napoli 1969 (as cited by van Keuren 1989, p. 40, n. 89); Kraus 1951, pp. 83-119; Genière, Greco-Maiuri, and Donnarumna 1997, p. 342.

<sup>100</sup> The following scholars date the metopes between 570 and 550 BCE: Zancani Montuoro, Zanotti-Bianco and F. Krauss 1951, p. 278 and 1954, p. 106; M. Napoli 1969 (as cited by van Keuren 1989, p. 40, n. 89); B. Ridgway 1977, p. 239; A. J. N. W. Prag 1985, p. 12; Kunze 1950 (as cited by van Keuren 1989, p. 40, n. 92); Langlotz 1965, p. 254; Simon 1964, p. 294. Bérard (1955, p. 127) and Schefold (1992, p. 188-189) apply the date ca. 525 BCE.

<sup>101</sup> Richter 1987, pp. 28, 74.

<sup>102</sup> van Keuren 1989, p. 41, n. 11.

<sup>103</sup> The two Laconian cups (Pls. 1-2) may be older than or contemporary to the metope.

pushing a large stone up a steep slope, while a terrifying hybrid creature claws at his back (Pl. 29A-B).<sup>104</sup>

The identity of this demon has been much debated: personifications like Poine (Punishment) and Thanatos (Death), and concepts like Sisyphos' *psyche* (soul) have been suggested. The confusion is the result of the creature's strange appearance: with fluttering wings, the demon clutches at Sisyphos' back, pulling him as he struggles to climb a slope. Its body is thin and emaciated, as if its flesh were rotting. A beard extends from the creature's chin, and while the small, triangular formation between its legs could be a phallus, the creature entirely lacks a scrotum, which Sisyphos clearly has. Zancani Montuoro interprets this figure as female, but the Foce del Sele demon is probably masculine in gender for two main reasons: the demon has a beard and it lacks breasts.

Zancani Montuoro, the first to comment on the metope, explored three ideas regarding the demon. First, she suggests it could derive from the Assyrian wind god Pazuzu,<sup>105</sup> for eastern motifs had been spilling into the Greek world since the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>106</sup> A 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE bronze statue, in Paris, represents this Assyrian divinity (Pl. 30):<sup>107</sup> with the body of a man and a monstrous, mask-like head, Pazuzu has prominent ribs, butterfly-like wings, and skinny bird legs, just like the Foce del Sele demon. Second, Zancani Montuoro wonders if the demon is a physical manifestation of Sisyphos' punishment: in Homer's *Odyssey* (11.597), a κραταιός, or what she describes as "a supernatural punishing force," overcomes the king, causing him to lose control of his boulder. Although she admits that philological confusion surrounding the word

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<sup>104</sup> Paestum, Mus. Naz.; Zancani Montuoro 1964, pl. 11; Simon 1967, p. 277, fig. 1; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.26 (Oakley) (provenance: Heraion at Foce del Sele). Reconstruction drawing from Zancani Montuoro 1964, p.

<sup>105</sup> Zancani Montuoro 1963, p. 74.

<sup>106</sup> Hirayama 2010, p. 4.

<sup>107</sup> Paris MNB 467 (provenance: Mesopotamia; an inscription on the statue's back reads "I am Pazuzu, son of Hanpa, king of the evil spirits of the air which issues violently from mountains, causing much havoc").



κραταίς is quite substantial, it is possible that the artists of the Foce del Sele metope wished to represent this idea in a physical form. Why they chose an appearance akin to the Assyrian god Pazuzu is puzzling, but then again, many of the images featured at Foce del Sele are both strange and unprecedented, such as the Turtle Rider (Pl. 25, W4). The idea that Κραταίς assaults Sisyphos seems especially convincing in Etruscan tomb paintings, where a winged creature physically pushes down on his stone (Pls. 38, 40).

Finally, Zancani Montuoro speculates that this demonic creature could be an early representation of the goddess Poine, who appears on Apulian red-figure representations of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>108</sup> It should be noted, however, that Poine is not the only persona assigned to this assaultive demon on Apulian pottery: she is labeled as Ananke (Necessity) on a krater in Naples,<sup>109</sup> while on a krater in Karlsruhe,<sup>110</sup> her iconography associates her with the snake-toting Erinyes. That being said, despite the drastic differences between the Foce del Sele demon and the Apulian Poine, Zancani Montuoro thinks the two might represent the same entity.<sup>111</sup> Now, the Foce del Sele demon, although it is missing part of its genitals, is probably male: the lack of breasts and presence of a beard confirms this. Poine, on the other hand, is female, but this might not matter. The concept, rather than the physical form of the tormentor, may have been all that persisted into the 4<sup>th</sup>-century BCE; thus, the harrowing, emaciated, and masculine Foce del Sele demon could have evolved into the beautiful retaliatory goddess Poine. This transformation may have occurred because of 4<sup>th</sup> century Italian artists' desire to anthropomorphize terrifying creatures, all of which happen to be female, and/or it could represent a new interpretation of the 6<sup>th</sup>-century tradition. The change occurs most clearly in representations of the Gorgon, or

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<sup>108</sup> Zancani Montuoro 1963, p. 76.

<sup>109</sup> Naples, Mus. Naz. 81666, H3222; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.23 (Oakley).

<sup>110</sup> Karlsruhe, Bad. Landesmus. B4; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.22 (Oakley).

<sup>111</sup> Zancani Montuoro 1963, p. 74.

Medusa: a terrifying, snake-haired woman who was anthropomorphized and beautified over time. For example, on a 7<sup>th</sup>-century BCE clay metope, Medusa appears as a grinning, hideous creature with a protruding tongue, wings, and a stout, animated body (Pl. 31A).<sup>112</sup> Later, on a 5<sup>th</sup>-century BCE red-figure amphora, she has the body of a woman, the face of a monster, and snakes for hair (Pl. 31B).<sup>113</sup> Finally, on a 4<sup>th</sup>-century BCE Apulian red-figure krater, she appears as a beautiful woman with snakes in her hair (Pl. 31C).<sup>114</sup> It is not impossible to imagine Sisyphos' demon undergoing a similar transformation, albeit with fewer stages and more extreme alterations.

Van Keuren rejects Zancani Montuoro's interpretation. In her view, the demon is male and thus more likely to represent Sisyphos' own soul, for its form reminds her of winged Amyetoi, or uninitiated souls.<sup>115</sup> While the demon is male, surely the figure of Sisyphos itself represents his soul, which was brought to the Underworld after his physical death. Additionally, Amyetoi are representative of the uninitiated human souls, which, if we refer back to Munich 1493 (Pl. 2), look like winged children; they are not frightening in appearance.

Simon agrees that the demon is male, but she identifies it as Thanatos, the personification of Death.<sup>116</sup> This is an intriguing suggestion, especially if we consider Pherecydes' account of the myth (*FrGrHist* 3F119): Sisyphos beat and bound Thanatos, causing men to stop dying; Thanatos remained captive until Ares freed him and returned Sisyphos to his power. Therefore, it would be fitting if the death deity were responsible for overseeing Sisyphos' punishment.

Thanatos, however, does not appear in the art of the Greek mainland until ca. 530 BCE, after

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<sup>112</sup> Syracuse, Mus. Arch. Naz.; Benton 1954, p. 132-137, pl. 19; Schefold 1966, color pl. 2; Greco 2002, pl. 50.

<sup>113</sup> Munich, Antikenslg. 2312; CVA Munich 3, pl. 134.1; ARV 132, 10 (attribution: the Berlin Painter); ARV<sup>2</sup> 191.11, 1633; *Para* 342; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 190; Boardman 1975, 153b; Schefold 1988, p. 103, fig. 124-124; LIMC, s.v. *Gorgo* 331b (Krauskopf and Dahlinger), *Perseus* 140a-b (Jones-Roccos).

<sup>114</sup> Gotha Mus., 72; CVA Gotha 2, pl. 79; Trendall 1961, p. 34, no. 21; Cambitoglou and Trendall 1974, p. 52, no. 125.

<sup>115</sup> van Keuren 1968, pp. 225-226.

<sup>116</sup> Simon 1955, p. 276.

which time he is consistently portrayed as a man with wings, but lacking any monstrous features. Thus, it is unlikely that the Foce del Sele demon represents a conception of Thanatos.

Sisyphos' tormentor resurfaces in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, on Apulian red-figure pottery,<sup>117</sup> where it takes the form of a snake-toting, fur-clad, whip-brandishing woman. In one circumstance, she is inscribed [A]NAN[KE],<sup>118</sup> but in the others, she is presumed to be either Poine (or Poinai if more than one) or the Erinyes on the basis that she enforces punishment.<sup>119</sup> Except for Dionysiac scenes, myth was not a common subject on Apulian volute kraters.<sup>120</sup> Of the small number of chthonic scenes, Sisyphos is featured on three monumental, multi-friezed vessels, always as a secondary figure in the lower left-hand corner. In two, a fur-clad woman whips him; in the third, two chthonic deities sit nearby, but they do not interact with him. This latter scene, featured on a Middle Apulian volute krater in Karlsruhe, dates to 340 BCE and features 20 figures associated with 10 different myths, all of them appropriate to an Underworld setting (Pls. 32-33A-C).<sup>121</sup> In the center, Persephone sits in her palace while Hades stands to her left, holding a scepter. In the top register, Megara sits with the Herakleidai on the far left, and Theseus and Peirithoos converse on the right.<sup>122</sup> Below them, on the far right side of the central

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<sup>117</sup> Cambitoglou and Trendall (*RVAp* I, pp. 4, 185; *RVAp* II, pp. 445-46) separate Apulian vases into three categories: Early Apulian (ca. 430-20—370 BCE), Middle Apulian (ca. 370-60—340-30 BCE), and Late Apulian (ca. 327/6—304 BCE).

<sup>118</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Ananke* 2 (Simon).

<sup>119</sup> The Erinyes, also known as Eumenides (soothed goddesses) and Furies (furies), are the personification of curses spoken against transgressors. In literature, they often hunt criminals in order to persecute them (Aeschylus *Eum.* 499; Pindar, *Ol.* 2.45). In Greek art, they are portrayed as winged women with snakes for hair (Pl. 33A), and sometimes, to illustrate their wrath, their faces appear as if contorted and wrinkled (see Syracuse, Museo. Arch. Naz. 41621; *CVA* Syracuse, Mus. Arch. Naz. 1, p. 22.1; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1115.31; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 331 and Ruvo, Mus. Jatta J 1094; *RVAp* I 397.14; *LIMC*, s.v. *Erinyes* 8 (Sarian), *Persephone* 309 [Günter]).

<sup>120</sup> According to Trendall and Cambitoglou (*RVAp* I, pp. li-lii), the subjects on Apulian vases include Dionysos with his satyrs, maenads, and silenoi (the most frequent mythological subjects); funerary scenes; moments from daily life, such as athletics, battle, and women's activities; Eros, sometimes in the company of Aphrodite; female heads; and scenes of the Underworld

<sup>121</sup> Karlsruhe, Bad. Landesmus. B4; *CVA* Karlsruhe 2, pls. 61.5, 62, 63, 64.1-4; *RVAp* I, 431.81, pl. 160.1 (attribution: Circle of the Lycurgus Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.22 (Oakley) (prescribed date), *Ananke* 2 (Simon).

<sup>122</sup> Identifications of the figures are those of Trendall and Cambitoglou (*RVAp* I, pp. 430-431). See also *CVA* Karlsruhe 2, p. 30.

register, stand two women, one of whom carries a jar, and a young man with ears of corn in his hair: the women are likely Danaids, while the young man is Triptolemos (Pl. 33C). Across from them, to the left of the palace, Orpheus plays his lyre while two women, one of them winged and both teeming with snakes, converse; they are thought to be the Erinyes or Poinai. As only one of them has wings, they may represent two different deities, like Poine and Ananke, as opposed to part of a collective, such as the Erinyes.<sup>123</sup> The lowest register features a few of the Underworld's permanent occupants, as well as first-time visitors: on the far right, a woman holding a vase is perhaps another of the Danaids. Beside her, Hecate, dressed as a huntress, holds a torch. In the center of the lowest frieze, Herakles wrestles with a three-headed Kerberos while a youthful Hermes offers moral support. The messenger god holds his caduceus in his left hand, and his sunhat hangs from his neck by a string. Finally, in the far left corner, a beardless Sisyphos pushes against a rock formation; he totes a baldric with sword and scabbard and wears a mantle over his left arm (Pl. 33B).<sup>124</sup> Plant life lines the very bottom of this monumental scene, likely to indicate an outdoor setting.

This is the first extant scene to feature the snake-toting women in the same space as Sisyphos, though they do not interact with him. They may instead function as Tisiphone does in Virgil's *Aeneid* (6.552-556):

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<sup>123</sup> There are other instances where Ananke and the Erinyes are portrayed with wings (for examples, see: Moskow, *Push. Mus.* 117; *CVA Moscow, Push. Mus.* 4, pl. 30.1-3 (Ananke) and Syracuse, *Museo. Arch. Naz.* 41621; *CVA Syracuse, Mus. Arch. Naz.* 1, p. 22.1; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1115.31; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 331). Oakley (*LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.22) identifies the women on the Karlsruhe krater (Pl. 32) as Poinai, while Lochin (*LIMC*, s.v. *Ananke* 2) suggests they are either Erinyes or Poinai; the two are often interchangeable in Greek myth.

<sup>124</sup> Why is Sisyphos depicted as a beardless youth? The only other representation of him as a beardless, toiling shade is featured on the Attic lekythos from Münster, but there are not many similarities between the Attic and Apulian vase paintings that feature Sisyphos. Many other Apulian vase painters have shed years from other mature characters, such as **Hephaestos** (Toledo Mus., 1982.88; *CVA Toledo* 2 and 11-13, pls. 84-87.1-2; *LIMC*, s.v. *Hephaistos* 119 [Hermay and Jacquemin]), **Hades** (Naples SA11, Schauenburg 1958, fig. 11), and **Dionysos** (Harvard, Sackl. Mus., 1960.347; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1341.2 [attributed to Brussels A 3099]; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 367) by portraying them without beards. Also, the painters associated with the Lycurgus Circle, to whom Karlsruhe B4 (Pl. 32) has been attributed, did have a preference for artificiality and idealism, so perhaps it was merely the preference of the painter or patron.

Porta adversa ingens, solidoque adamante columnae,/ vis ut nulla virum, non ipsi  
exscindere bello/ caelicolae valeant; stat ferrea turris ad auras,/ Tisiphoneque sedens,  
palla succincta cruenta,/ vestibulum exsomnia servat noctesque diesque...

A massive gate with adamantine pillars faced the stream, so strong no force of men or gods in war may ever avail to crack and bring it down, and high in air an iron tower stands on which Tisiphone, her bloody robe pulled up about her, has her seat and keeps unsleeping watch over the entrance way by day and night...<sup>125</sup>

Tisiphone does not inflict any pain or torture on the dungeon's occupants, but rather watches the fort to ensure that no one attempts to flee. The concept on the krater is nearly the same: two chthonic deities sit in close proximity to Sisyphos so they can keep an eye on him. The Karlsruhe krater is also the first Apulian vessel to feature Sisyphos in combination with another known group of sufferers in Hades: the Danaids, or the fifty murderous daughters of the Argive king Danaos, condemned to carry water in cracked vessels to a perpetually leaking basin.<sup>126</sup> Their toil functioned as a metaphor for unproductiveness. As I will discuss in chapter 3, the Danaids are used more frequently in Apulian Underworld images than Sisyphos, which could indicate that they too functioned as scene setters of chthonic environments.

The second krater, in Naples, is Middle Apulian in date (ca. 340-330 BCE) and features the same amount of figures and myths (Pls. 34-35A-C).<sup>127</sup> The decorative layout is very similar to that of the Karlsruhe krater (Pl. 32), but with a few key differences: in the center, Hades and Persephone sit in their palace and face one another. In the top register, Hippodameia, Pelops, and Myrtilos are located to the right, below them, Triptolemos, Aiakos, and Rhadamanthys.<sup>128</sup> To the upper left of the palace, Megara sits with her children. Below them, Orpheus plays his lyre, and,

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<sup>125</sup> trans. Fitzgerald 1983.

<sup>126</sup> The Danaids were latecomers to the iconography of Hades. In the Archaic period, either Amyetoi or unnamed men and women performed the water-carrying task; they were all likely representative of the uninitiated, or people unversed in the Eleusinian mysteries. The Danaids took over this role in the mid-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, appearing most often on Apulian red-figure vessels. Because the Danaids sometimes hold ritual objects, like mirrors and garlands, E. Keuls maintains they are not toiling, but performing a purification ritual (1974, pp. 159-169).

<sup>127</sup> Naples, Mus. Naz. 81666, H3222; *RVAp* 1 431.82 (attributed to the Circle of the Lycurgus Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.23 (Oakley) (prescribed date; provenance: Altamura), *Ananke* 2 (Simon).

<sup>128</sup> Identifications of the figures are those of Trendall and Cambitoglou (*RVAp* I, pp. 430-31).

further left, two fur-clad women labeled [Π]OINAI converse.<sup>129</sup> Just below them, in the lowest register, Herakles and Hermes deal with Kerberos; a woman, perhaps Amphitrite, rides a hippocamp; and three Danaids huddle in the far right corner (Pl. 35B). Finally, in his designated spot, a nude Sisyphos toils. Above him, a woman perches on the cliff, holding a whip in her right hand.<sup>130</sup> A fragmentary inscription above her, as restored by Simon, reads [A]NAN[KH], identifying the figure as a personification of inevitability and necessity.<sup>131</sup> Ananke stands just below the Poinai, which could indicate that the three are meant to function as a single, punishing entity: Ananke disciplines Sisyphos because it is necessary that he suffer, while the Poinai stand guard, should the king choose to misbehave. The Naples krater is the only Apulian vessel to label the whip-brandishing goddess and the first to represent her interacting with Sisyphos.

The Underworld Painter decorated the third, Late Apulian krater, ca. 320 BCE, which is in Munich (Pls. 36-37A-B).<sup>132</sup> It depicts a scenario similar to that on Naples 81666 (Pl. 34): in the center, Hades sits in his palace, while Persephone stands beside him. In the top right, the goddess Nemesis sits beside the Dioskouroi; below them, the three chthonic judges—Rhadamanthys, Minos, and Aiakos—converse. To the left of the palace, Megara sits with her children, while Orpheus plays his lyre beside a man, woman, and child. The bottom frieze depicts Herakles abducting Kerberos while Hermes assists, Hecate holding two torches, Tantalos reaching for water (or perhaps being threatened by an overhanging rock), and Sisyphos pushing his rock while being whipped by a woman with snakes in her hair;<sup>133</sup> Oakley identifies her as

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<sup>129</sup> This goddess can function as both a singular (Poine) and plural (Poinai) entity.

<sup>130</sup> *RVAp* I, pp. 430-31

<sup>131</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Ananke* 2 (Simon).

<sup>132</sup> Munich, *Antikenslg.* 3297; *RVAp* II, pl. 194 (attributed to Underworld Painter); *RVAp Suppl.* 1, 69; *RFSIS*, fig. 209; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.24 (Oakley) (prescribed date; provenance: Canosa), *Hades* 132 (Dahlinger, Linder, Yalouris), *Poine* 3 (Lochin), *Kerberos* 31 (Woodford and Spier).

<sup>133</sup> Identifications of the figures are those of Trendall and Cambitoglou (*RVAp* II, p. 533).

either Poinai or Ananke.<sup>134</sup> While the Karlsruhe and Naples kraters depict Sisyphos in conjunction with the Danaids, the Underworld krater includes Tantalos, the Phrygian king who displeased Zeus for attempting to feed human flesh to the gods (Pl. 37B). His punishment varies, but the most common scenario entails being perpetually parched and hungry, but unable to reach food and water.<sup>135</sup> If this is the tradition being depicted on the Underworld krater, then Tantalos' punishment resembles Sisyphos' in the sense that both are futile: no matter how hard they try, Sisyphos will never complete his task and Tantalos will never reach the object of his desire.

As these three vessels are very similar, Cambitoglou and Trendall wonder if the Painters of the Lycurgus Circle, who were responsible for the Middle Apulian Karlsruhe B4 (Pl. 32) and Naples 81666 (Pl. 35), were inspired by an earlier work, perhaps a painting, which depicted the denizens of the Underworld in an elaborate, tiered composition.<sup>136</sup> The Underworld Painter, who made the Late Apulian Munich 3297 (Pl. 36), was likely, in turn, emulating the works of the Lycurgus Circle. Some changes occur between them, but the characters that consistently appear on all the kraters, and in the same locations, are Hades, Persephone, Orpheus, Megara and her children, Herakles, Kerberos, Hermes, and Sisyphos. The punitive women, although they too are present on all three kraters, alter in identity: they are Erinyes on the Karlsruhe krater, Poinai and Ananke on the Naples krater, and, on the Underworld Painter's krater, they could be any one of the three. This is not surprising since these three chthonic entities were often akin to one another in Greek myth.<sup>137</sup> In using these figures, however, the artists of the Apulian kraters were

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<sup>134</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.24 (Oakley).

<sup>135</sup> Homer *Od.* 11.583-592

<sup>136</sup> *RVAp* I, pp. 430-431.

<sup>137</sup> For example, the Poinai were sometimes referenced as the driving force sent by the gods in vengeance or retribution of something, rather than the Erinyes (see Aeschylus, *Choeph.* 936, 947 [ποιινά]; Pausanias 1.43.7 [Ποιινήν]).

claiming that the identity of Sisyphos' discipliner did not matter, so long as the discipline was administered.

If we move north to Etruria, we encounter Sisyphos again, but in a different medium: tomb frescoes. Two Etruscan tomb paintings contemporary with the Apulian kraters portray the same Sisyphean tradition, but with a differing iconography. Here, Sisyphos shoulders a large boulder,<sup>138</sup> rather than rolling it up a slope, while his tormentor is represented as a small, winged figure that hovers over, or perches on, the king's stone. The first painting is in the François Tomb in Vulci, which contains burials ranging from the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. The frescoes, which feature both Greek and Etruscan episodes,<sup>139</sup> were made between the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods, perhaps ca. 325-300 BCE. The tomb features mythological and historical figures who take part in various epic activities that mostly relate to the Trojan War. On the left side of the entrance wall, Sisyphos, labeled *SISPHE*, shoulders a large boulder and strides forward (Pl. 38A-B).<sup>140</sup> A child-like figure with wings hovers above the stone, either preventing Sisyphos from dropping it, or applying pressure to make it heavier. As I stated before, Zancani Montuoro conjectured that the creature on Sisyphos' back in the metope is a physical manifestation of a *feature* of his punishment: in Homer's *Odyssey* (11.597), a *κραταιΐς*, or "a supernatural punishing force," causes Sisyphos to lose control of his boulder. Therefore, perhaps this demon is the artist's personification of this invisible power.<sup>141</sup> This interpretation might be applied to the Etruscan version of the demon, which physically pushes down on the rock, therefore embodying the concept of a "powerful

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<sup>138</sup> In Roman art, Sisyphos shouldered his boulder as well, usually while down on one knee (see n. 130).

<sup>139</sup> Holliday 1993, p. 175. Etruscans often depicted scenes from Greek myth in their own vase paintings, frescos, and sculpted reliefs, but they would insert their own characters to make the stories more consistent with local motifs and traditions.

<sup>140</sup> Rome, Villa Albani. From the François Tomb, Vulci. Simon 1990, fig. 34; *LIMC* s.v. *Sisyphos* 28 (Oakley).

<sup>141</sup> Zancani Montuoro 1964, pp. 68-69.



force,” or a “mighty weight.” Oakley, however, identifies the winged creature as Poine,<sup>142</sup> although its appearance is more akin to representations of the winged Ananke or Erinyes.<sup>143</sup> As the Etruscans had their own version of the Erinyes, called Vanth,<sup>144</sup> she, rather than Poine or Ananke, is more likely the one hindering Sisyphos in the François Tomb fresco. As the fresco is in terrible condition, it is difficult to make a solid identification, but it is evident that the creature’s role is the same as that of the demon featured on the Foce del Sele metope: to obstruct, problematize, and/or necessitate Sisyphos’ task.

Next to the toiling soul and his “demon,” Amphiaraos, who props his foot on a nearby rock, rests his head in his hand and observes. According to one tradition, the earth swallowed Amphiaraos, a great hero of Argos, during a battle against Thebes, but he survived because Zeus transformed him into a chthonic, oracular divinity;<sup>145</sup> thus, it makes sense that he would appear in the same locale as the toilsome Sisyphos. Together, Sisyphos and Amphiaraos occupy the wall on the right side of the tomb’s entrance (Pl. 39, no. 5); it is the only chthonic scene in the tomb.

The other fresco, located in the Tomb of the Orc in Tarquinia, is in a similar state of ruin (Pl. 40A-C).<sup>146</sup> The tomb complex contains multiple tombs, but only tomb II, built ca. 325 BCE, is relevant to this discussion. Unlike the François Tomb, which depicted heroic scenes from Greek and Etruscan myth and history, the Tomb of the Orc features death, malevolence, and despair, and includes characters such as Charon, Persephone, Hades, Thanatos, Hypnos, Odysseus, Achilles, and Theseus, all of them suitable in one way or another to a chthonic

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<sup>142</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.28 (Oakley), *Amphiaraos* 50 (Krauskopf), *Poine* 6b (Lochin).

<sup>143</sup> *surpa* n. 101.

<sup>144</sup> Vanth, according to el Khatib-Boujibar (*LIMC*, s.v. *Vanth*, p. 173), was a minor deity or demon depicted on objects found in tombs; her name was discovered in an inscription on a 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE aryballos: it reads “mi malak (v)anth,” or “I dedicated (this vessel) to Vanth” (Rix I 1991, p. 126). Vanth, like the Erinyes, could also appear as a collective.

<sup>145</sup> Pindar *Ol.* 13-14, *Nem.* 15-30.

<sup>146</sup> Tomb of the Orc in Tarquinia; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.27 (Oakley), *Hades/Aita/Calu* 6 (Dahlinger, Linder, Yalouris, and Krauskopf), *Poine* 6b (Lochin); Steingraber 1986, pp. 329-331 (reconstruction; the tomb has two additional names: the Tomb of the Ogre and the Tomb of Murina).

setting.<sup>147</sup> The scene that includes Sisyphos is located on the right wall. It probably resembled the scene featured on the Kleophrades Painter's amphora (Pl. 16),<sup>148</sup> where Sisyphos is led to his place of punishment. Although most of his body is missing, we know the figure on the right is Sisyphos because of the inscription "Tupi Sispes" just above him;<sup>149</sup> no other inscription on this section of wall remains. At the left, a man holding a shaft in his right hand leads him forward: Torelli argues that he is Typhon, while Oakley wonders if he is Hermes.<sup>150</sup> Steingraber's suggestion, however, that the figure is Charon, is the most convincing, as the oarsman is often depicted holding a hammer, probably to be recognized in the shaft held in the figure's right hand.<sup>151</sup> Most of this fresco is damaged and missing, but Steingraber's reconstruction assumes Sisyphos once carried his stone (Pl. 33B). If this is correct, perhaps he is being led to the cliff where his punishment will commence; Charon, as the ferryman of the Underworld, could play the role of escort. Above Sisyphos, there is a fragment of a wing, which could belong to the same creature featured in the François Tomb; Oakley wonders if it is Poiné,<sup>152</sup> but it is more likely a winged Vanth, especially since she and Charon often appear together in Etruscan Underworld scenes.<sup>153</sup>

Sisyphos appears only a few times in extant Etruscan art. Yet the fact that his toilsome task, accompanied by the winged creature, appears at all implies that the Etruscans were certainly aware of the earlier visual traditions of Apulian and Attic origin. The Etruscans were very fond of Greek myth: they would copy the stories represented on imported vases, depict

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<sup>147</sup> Ridgway and Ridgway, eds. 1986, pp. 328-329.

<sup>148</sup> St. Louis, Private Collection; *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.16 (Oakley).

<sup>149</sup> According to the *CIE* 5373 (Sittig 1936, p. 217), the word "Tupi" is equivalent to the Latin words *aerumna* (toil) and *poena* (punishment). Thus, the inscription can be translated as "the punishment/toil of Sisyphos."

<sup>150</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.27 (Oakley). Torelli (1983, p. 13) argues the shaft-holding figure is Typhon, the son of Typhoeus, because he thinks the word "tupi" is based on his Greek name "Τύφων," which means "whirlwind," or "typhoon."

<sup>151</sup> Steingraber 1986, p. 325.

<sup>152</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.27 (Oakley).

<sup>153</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Vanth* (el Khatib-Boujibar).

unusual moments from myth that were not favored by Greek audiences, and they would insert their own characters, like the death demon Vanth, into Greek stories.<sup>154</sup> The paintings in the François and Orc tombs thus combine features seen on both Apulian and Attic pottery: the presence of the winged creature is strictly South Italian, while Sisyphos carrying his stone could have been adopted from early Attic vase paintings discovered in Etruria (Pls. 2, 16), where the king carried his stone as opposed to rolling it. Etruscan tomb paintings contain a rich variety of chthonic, Olympian, heroic, and historical motifs, but Sisyphos is the only one of the toilsome souls to appear within them.

If we move south, into Rome, and later, into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, there is another fresco that features Sisyphos in the Underworld landscape. The *Odyssey Frescoes*, a series of Late-Hellenistic wall paintings discovered along the Via Graziosa on the Esquiline Hill, depict events from Homer's *Odyssey*. Panels 8 and 9 portray the events of book 11, Odysseus' journey to the Underworld (Pls. 41-43A-B).<sup>155</sup> The original paintings, possibly dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, are no longer extant; what we have is a Roman copy, ca. 50-40 BCE, now augmented by 19<sup>th</sup>-century restorations.<sup>156</sup> The copies were made for the cryptoporticus, or a covered gallery, of a house, perhaps one with a vaulted ceiling, but Peter von Blanckenhagen believes the original, likely executed in South Italy or Sicily, was painted for a public building, and that the wall

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<sup>154</sup> Osborne 2001, p. 288. Another painting in the François Tomb depicts two of these Etruscan tendencies: in one fresco, Achilles sacrifices Trojan youths (Christofani 1985, fig. 203; Buranelli 1987, figs. 3, 7; *LIMC*, s.v. *Vanth* 3 (el Khatib-Boujibar), *Achilles* 87 (Kossatz-Deissman); *Charon* I.34 [Sourvinou-Inwood]). This is not only a new and different representation of the Trojan War story (the Greeks did not care to visualize human sacrifice) but Vanth, an Etruscan figure, has been included.

<sup>155</sup> Vatican, Bibl., from a house on the Esquiline in Rome; Blanckenhagen 1963, pl. 50-51.1; Mazzoleni 2004, pls. 182-184. In addition to this fresco, there are five Roman objects—one marble altar and four sarcophagi—that portray Sisyphos toiling among his fellow toilsome souls (*LIMC*, s.v. *Sisyphos* 1.30-34 [Oakley]). They do not add much to my discussion, except to say that the motif of the stone-roller continued into the Roman period, and that, by this time, he was always just one among a group, which usually consisted of Tityos, Tantalos, Ixion, Oknos, and the Danaids. Therefore, I will not discuss them further here.

<sup>156</sup> Blanckenhagen 1963, pp. 127. Though many of the panels are heavily altered because of an imprudent restoration attempt, Blanckenhagen believes that panel 9 was not too much affected by this.

featuring it was situated behind a colonnade.<sup>157</sup> In other words, while artist of the 1<sup>st</sup>-century composition added columns to separate each scene, the original would have appeared as a continuous frieze behind a physical row of columns.

The only parts of this frieze that are relevant to the present discussion are panels 8 and 9: panel 8 depicts the exterior and gateway of the Underworld, where Odysseus waits to speak with Teiresias. On the far left, his ship sits on the water; it may represent the moment before Odysseus and his men come to shore. Towards the center right of panel 8, the hero stands inside the arched gate, grasping his sword and resting his foot on a rock; Teiresias stands in front of him, holding a staff. In the foreground, a man leans against the gateway; Blanckenhagen thinks he may be Elpenor,<sup>158</sup> or perhaps, since he is missing from panel 9, he is Tantalos.

Panel 9 shows the inside of the Underworld, where Tityos, Sisyphos, the Danaides, and possibly Orion toil. If we recall the passage that describes the Underworld's toilsome souls (*Od.* 11.572-600), Orion, Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos are present, but the Danaids are not:

τὸν δὲ μετ' Ὀρίωνα πελώριον εἰσενόησα/ θῆρας ὁμοῦ εἰλεῦντα κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν  
λειμώνα,/ τοὺς αὐτὸς κατέπεπφεν ἐν οἰπόλοισιν ὄρεσσι/ χερσὶν ἔχων ῥόπαλον  
παγχάλκεον, αἶέν ἀαγές/

καὶ Τιτυὸν εἶδον, Γαίης ἔρικυδέος υἱόν, κείμενον ἐν δαπέδῳ: ὁ δ' ἐπ' ἑννέα κεῖτο  
πέλεθρα,/ γῦπε δέ μιν ἐκάτερθε παρημένῳ ἦπαρ ἔκειρον,/ δέρτρον ἔσω δύνοντες, ὁ  
δ' οὐκ ἀπαμύνετο χερσί:/ Λητῶ γὰρ ἔλκησε, Διὸς κυδρὴν παράκοιτιν,/ Πυθῶδ'  
ἐρχομένην διὰ καλλιχόρου Πανοπήος/

καὶ μὴν Τάνταλον εἰσεῖδον κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα/ ἔστεῶτ' ἐν λιμνῇ: ἡ δὲ  
προσέπλαζε γενεΐῳ/ στεῦτο δὲ διψάων, πιέειν δ' οὐκ εἶχεν ἐλέσθαι:/ ὄσσάκι γὰρ  
κύψει ὁ γέρων πιέειν μενεαίνων,/ τοσσάχ' ὕδωρ ἀπολέσκειτ' ἀναβροχέν, ἀμφὶ δὲ  
ποσσὶ/ γαῖα μέλαινα φάνεσκε, καταζήνασκε δὲ δαίμων/ δένδρεα δ' ὑψιπέτηλα  
κατὰ κρῆθεν χέε καρπόν,/ ὄγχναι καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι/ συκέαι τε  
γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθόωσαι:/ τῶν ὀπὸτ' ἰθύσει ὁ γέρων ἐπὶ χερσὶ μάσασθαι,  
τάς δ' ἄνεμος ρίπτασκε ποτὶ νέφεα σκιόεντα.

<sup>157</sup> Blanckenhagen 1963, p. 129.

<sup>158</sup> Blanckenhagen 1963, p. 109.

καὶ μὴν Σίσυφον εἰσεῖδον κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα/ λᾶαν βαστάζοντα πελώριον  
ἀμφοτέρησιν./ ἦ τοι ὁ μὲν σκηριπτόμενος χερσίν τε/ ποσίν τε λᾶαν ἄνω ὤθεσκε  
ποτὶ λόφον· ἀλλ' ὅτε μέλλοι/ ἄκρον ὑπερβαλέειν, τότε' ἀποστρέψασκε κραταιίς·/  
αἴτις ἔπειτα πέδονδε κυλίνδετο λᾶας ἀναιδής./ αὐτὰρ ὅ γ' ἄψ ὤσασκε  
τιταινόμενος, κατὰ δ' ἰδρώς/ ἔρρεεν ἐκ μελέων, κονίη δ' ἐκ κρατὸς ὀρώρει.

And then I glimpsed Orion, the huge hunter, gripping his club, studded with bronze,  
unbreakable, with wild beasts he had overpowered in life on lonely mountainsides, now  
brought to bay on fields of asphodel.

And I saw Tityus, the son of Gaia, lying abandoned over nine square rods of plain,  
vultures hunched above him, left and right, rifling his belly, stabbed into the liver, and he  
could never push them off. This hulk had once committed rape of Zeus' mistress, Leto, in  
her glory, when she crossed the open grass of Panopeus toward Pytho.

Then I saw Tantalus put to the torture: in a cool pond he stood, lapped round by water  
clear to the chin, and being [thirsty] he burned to slake his dry [throat] with drink, though  
drink he would not ever again. For when the old man put his lips down to the sheet of  
water, it vanished round his feet, gulped underground, and black mud baked there in a  
wind from hell. Boughs, too, dropped low about him, big with fruit, pear trees,  
pomegranates, brilliant apples, luscious figs, and olives ripe and dark; but if he stretched  
his hand for one, the wind under the dark sky tossed the bough beyond him.

Then Sisyphos in torment I beheld being roustabout to a tremendous boulder. Leaning  
with both arms braced and legs driving, he heaved it toward a height, and almost over,  
but then a Power spun him round and sent the cruel boulder bounding again to the plain.  
Whereon the man bent down again to toil, dripping sweat, and the dust rose overhead.

The painting does not match the text perfectly, but it comes close. The huge figure sprawled  
beneath a cliff expresses the size of Tityos as described by Homer; a vulture even pecks at where  
his liver would be. Above him, Sisyphos rolls a white stone up a slope; the strain of the task is  
clearly represented in the way he braces his legs against the ground as he attempts to rush  
forward (Pl. 43A). There are also deviations from Homer's text, which does not describe the  
Danaids: in the foreground of the painting, four women crowd around a large, rectangular basin  
into which they pour out the contents of their jars (Pl. 43B).

The two remaining figures are more difficult to interpret in this painting: the form  
cowering on a hill beside the cliff and the figure running past Sisyphos. Zancani Montuoro

remarks that the figure on the hill could be one of the Danaids, who has set herself apart from her sisters (Pl. 43B).<sup>159</sup> Although this makes little sense, considering the toilsome souls do not ever pause to rest,<sup>160</sup> the figure is veiled, draped in the same blue clothing as the other Danaids, and holds an amphora; therefore, she is likely one of the water-carriers. Blanckenhagen has identified the running figure near the top of the cliff, holding a straight object in his right hand a noose in his left, as Orion (Pl. 43A);<sup>161</sup> in favor of his argument, these objects could be a *lagobolon*, or a curved stick used to hunt rabbits, and a snare. Although Orion was never represented as a toilsome soul before,<sup>162</sup> Homer does mention him in his *Odyssey*.

Conversely, Zancani Montuoro argues on three counts that the runner must be closely related to Sisyphos: first, this figure is placed very close to the toiling king, suggesting that the two are part of a single group rather than two independent figures. Second, the weapon held by the runner is in direct line with Sisyphos' rock; and instead of looking left, towards the unfolding landscape, the figure faces frontally, towards the stone-roller. There is a slight distance between them, but every figure in the composition is strangely situated, making it difficult to discern how far back or close up they are intended to be, perhaps the result of the copyist's inability to

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<sup>159</sup> Zancani Montuoro 1963, p. 68.

<sup>160</sup> In extant literature, this happens only once, when Orpheus beseeches Hades to bring his wife back to life (Ovid *Met.* 10-40-46):

Talia dicentem nervosque ad verba moventem/  
exsanguis flebant animae: nec Tantalus undam/  
captivait refulgam, stupuitque Ixionis orbis,  
nec carpere iecur volucres, urnisque vacarunt/  
Belides, inque tuo sedisti, Sisypho, saxo.  
Tunc primum lacrimis victarum carmine fama est/  
Eumenidum maduisse genas.

And with [Orpheus'] words, the music made the pale phantoms weep: Ixion's wheel was still, Tityos' vultures left the liver, Tantalos tried no more to reach for water, and Belus' daughters rested from their urns, and Sisyphos climbed on his rock to listen. This was the first time ever in all the world that the Furies wept.

This is clearly not what is happening in panel 9 of the *Odyssey* frescoes, as Orpheus is not present. Perhaps she is pausing to fill her pithos, although it is difficult to tell whether she sits on a hill or near a pool.

<sup>161</sup> Blanckenhagen 1963, p. 109.

<sup>162</sup> Orion was portrayed most often as a constellation, which he became after his death (*LIMC* s.v. *Orion* 7-15 [Lochin]).

transcribe exactly what he saw in the original. Finally, she claims that the fragmentary inscription, located above the runner's head, reads NAN.<sup>163</sup> Montuoro restores this word as ἐναντία, the Greek word for “contrary” or “against.” She suggests the word may relate to Poinē (Retaliation), who appears on Apulian pottery in a similar stance, but she ultimately concludes that the painting requires further cleaning before a solid conclusion can be made.<sup>164</sup> Another interesting guess was proposed by Baumeister, who rebuilt the word as Ἀνάγκη (Necessity), yet he suggested this name *despite* the fact that the figure appears to be masculine,<sup>165</sup> especially when we compare it to the Danaids in the foreground. The difficulty with both of these interpretations is that the inscription does not seem to read NAN, but rather ΥΙΝΩ or ΠΙΝΩ, which makes little sense, but does not allow for a reading of either Orion or Ananke (Necessity). Perhaps the figure is a new manifestation of Sisyphos' demon, for, as with the Apulian red-figure vases, the identity of the demon was irrelevant; the *idea* of it was what mattered.

Although panels 8 and 9 depict a continuous moment, they are visually different. Blanckenhagen notes that the rocks in panel 8 are darker than those in 9, while the river, which is clearly visible in 8, is blocked by rocks in 9. Furthermore, panel 9 “is less distinct in establishing measurable distances and less informative with respect to the depth of the setting.” It thus is difficult to estimate how far back Tityos lies, or how far forward the Danaids are in the foreground. These changes in the landscape, combined with the toilsome souls, can only indicate one thing: a change in setting. The viewer has crossed through the gate, past where Odysseus converses with Teiresias, and entered the Underworld, where the landscape is hazy, there is no escape in any direction, and the souls of Tityos, Sisyphos, and the Danaids are forever

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<sup>163</sup> Zancani Montuoro 1963, pp. 70-71.

<sup>164</sup> Zancani Montuoro 1963, p. 77.

<sup>165</sup> Baumeister, as cited in Zancani Montuoro 1963, p. 71.

tormented. As with Polygnotos' Nekyia, these characters have merged with the ambiguous, chthonic landscape to make it more comprehensible.

Assuming that the running figure in Odyssey panel 9 is Ananke/Poine, we may ask why Sisyphos' demon changes form over the centuries, and why, in Apulian and Etruscan art, its identity is so difficult to pin down. In the case of the Foce del Sele demon, scholars may not be able to ascribe a specific identity because, as S. I. Johnston notes in her discussion of child-eating demons:

Demons are clay with which people mold images of their fears and anxieties; in order to express the fears and anxieties of the moment effectively, that clay must remain malleable. It is not until those who stand outside of a community begin to make lists of its demons (*i.e.* demonologies) for their own purposes that any real consistency of traits and imagery is obtained, and it is an artificial consistency born from a scholar's desire to organize...<sup>166</sup>

While we cannot name the creature that clings to Sisyphos' back, or associate it with the winged deities featured in later Italian art, its *role* is consistent across the board: to prevent Sisyphos from completing his task, or escaping the realm. While this is less clear in the Etruscan tomb frescoes, it is evident in the Apulian vase paintings, which feature snake-toting, fur-clad, and winged women, whether identified as the Erinyes (the avengers of natural order), Poinai (the goddess(es) of retaliation), or Ananke (the goddess of necessity and inevitability), who either watch over or whip Sisyphos as he toils. The answer is irrelevant, since they all perform the same duty: ensuring Sisyphos' continuing toil.

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<sup>166</sup> Johnston 2001, p. 371. She further notes: "...some consistency of description will emerge over the long run. Some traits symbolize some anxieties better than others; thus, those traits are called into use more frequently than others when that particular anxiety is expressed." There are no similarities between the Sele relief and 4<sup>th</sup> century representations of Poine, but it does share wings and a beard with Thanatos. In addition to varying iconography, demons often consist of both human and animal features; sometimes they are even bisexual. If we look closely at the Foce del Sele demon, it has no phallus, no scrotum, and possibly a bearded chin, meaning that it may represent both the male and female simultaneously (see Johnston 2001, pp. 373-375).



## CONCLUSIONS

Stansbury-O'Donnell states, in relation to Polygnotus' Nekyia, "[t]hese scenes of punishment establish the Underworld as a place of active torment."<sup>167</sup> This is not their only purpose: unlike Charon, who comes and goes, or Odysseus, who is only visiting, Sisyphos and his fellow toilsome souls are part of the Underworld's landscape, a living landscape that interacts with them, preventing both escape and relief. While Sisyphos, Tantalos, Tityos, Ixion, Oknos, and the water-carriers are palpably associated with the Underworld in their toilsome forms, Sisyphos appears most often in his deceased persona, implying that Greek audiences were better acquainted with him visually than the others.<sup>168</sup> Accordingly, in many of these images, he functions as a chthonic indicator that helps set the scene of an otherwise invisible place; the addition of other toilsome souls, or chthonic divinities, works to establish this idea more firmly.

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<sup>167</sup> Stansbury-O'Donnell 1990, p. 217.

<sup>168</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Tantalos* (Ganschow), *Tityos* (Vollkommer), *Ixion* (Lochin), *Danaids* (Keuls). Although the Danaids were represented as toilsome souls almost as frequently as Sisyphos, it is difficult to know if they functioned in the same way, because, in many instances, they held ritual objects (See Pl. 45, fn. 126). Furthermore, they were not always associated with the water-carriers; this tradition began in Apulia and eventually spread to Rome.

### **CHAPTER 3: SISYPHOS THE “SCENE-SETTER”**

Between the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE and the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, Greek and Roman audiences were acquainted with the stone-roller Sisypheus, who toiled in the Underworld for upsetting divine beings of both Olympian and Chthonian origin. The ancients' familiarity with Sisypheus is informed by the abbreviated and sometime anonymous way authors describe him in texts, *i.e.* as the “stone-roller,” and the frequency with which he is used in visual renditions of the Underworld. In both text and image, Sisypheus functioned in a similar way: as part of the Underworld landscape. Tityos, Tantalos, the water-carriers, Oknos, and Ixion operated in this manner as well, but mostly in textual renditions of the Underworld; in art, Sisypheus was the most prevalent, especially in Attic vase paintings of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, where he toiled among other chthonic figures, like Persephone, to clarify what, I believe, would otherwise be an ambiguous setting. In the red-figure tondos, and perhaps Polygnotus' painting, which did not use Sisypheus to identify a chthonic landscape, he symbolized futile toil. In South Italian and Etruscan art, ca. 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Sisypheus is always a peripheral character, simultaneously lost within a larger composition, and emphasized by the added presence of a demonic figure, whose sole purpose was to keep him situated. The Danaids eventually took over this role in Apulian art, while in Etruscan art, the death entity Vanth may have served that purpose. Finally, in the paintings from the Esquiline Hill, where Sisypheus labors alongside his fellow toilsome souls, the group as a whole, rather than just Sisypheus alone, functions as a chthonic indicator.

Although Sisypheus functioned as a frequent scene-setter in vase paintings from the Greek mainland, his inclusion was rare in Apulian and Etruscan art. In Etruria, the toilsome souls did

not often factor into chthonic art; Sisyphos' two appearances are the sole instances,<sup>1</sup> and in only one of those cases, in the François Tomb, does he seem to function as a scene-setter. The Etruscans' Underworld instead featured a wide-variety of deities and demons, such as Persephone, Geryoneus, Tuchulcha, and Vanth;<sup>2</sup> the death entity Vanth was used most often. In Apulian art, Sisyphos appears only three times; instead, the Danaids, or the water-carrying daughters of Danaos, were the frequenters of Apulia's Underworld scenes. I suggest that Apulian artists were inspired by the previously established convention from the mainland, which depicted Sisyphos in a larger Underworld setting, at first mimicking, then later editing it to include the characters of their choosing: the water-carrying Danaids. The tradition began, however, with Sisyphos.

Sisyphos' toilsome image was prevalent in Greek vase paintings of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, mostly a secondary character within a larger storyline, such as Herakles' abduction of Kerberos (Pls. 15, 17). One text in particular not only captures this idea, but it also explains exactly how Sisyphos functions in an Underworld setting: as a chthonic indicator. The text is Euripides' 5<sup>th</sup>-century play *Herakles*, or *Hercules Furens*, a tragedy that relates how the Theban hero came to murder his wife and children.<sup>3</sup> Principally, the goddess Hera despised Herakles because he was the son of Zeus and a mortal woman, Alcmena; thus, she sent Madness after him. Madness made Herakles think he was pursuing Eurystheus, the imposer of his 12

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<sup>1</sup> Sisyphos is thought to toil on an Etruscan scarab, except there are iconographic dissimilarities between the scarab's motif and other Sisyphos images: the cliff has stairs and the stone is square (*LIMC Sisyphos* 45 [Oakley]). Ixion appears tied to a wheel on an Etruscan mirror and a scarab, but Lochin does not interpret these scenes as "chthonic," but rather in the moments before/during his sentencing (*LIMC*, s.v. *Ixion* 16-17 [Lochin]). Additionally, Tantalos' name is uncertainly applied to an Etruscan scarab that depicts a man stretching out his hands towards water (*LIMC*, s.v. *Tantalos* 24 [Ganshow]). Finally, Tityos appears on an Etruscan amphora and bronze tripod, but in relation to his abduction of Leto and subsequent murder by Apollo and Artemis (*LIMC*, s.v. *Tityos* 26-27 [Vollkommer]).

<sup>2</sup> See p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Euripides states that Herakles completed his labors *before* he murdered his family; other sources, such as [Apollodorus] (*Lib.* 2.4.12) proclaim this deed was the *reason* the hero was forced to endure them in the first place.

labors, but he was actually hunting his own wife and children; he ultimately slaughtered them all. When he emerged from his murderous frenzy, Herakles not only could not recall what he had done, but he had no idea where he was. To identify his location, he remarked upon his surroundings (1089-1107). The first thing he established was that he was not in the Underworld, for he did not “...see Sisyphos with his stone, or Pluto, or his queen, Demeter's child” (οὐτε Σισύφειον εἴσορῶ πέτρον Πλούτωνά τ', οὐδὲ σκῆπτρα Δήμητρος κόρης).<sup>4</sup> Other Underworld-journeymen, like Odysseus (Homer *Od.* 593-600), Aeneas (Virgil *Aen.* 6.608-625), Juno (Ovid *Met.* 4.460-69), and Menippus (Lucian, *Dialog.* 2.30.14),<sup>5</sup> all caught sight of Sisyphos while inside the realm, indicating that he was a staple of that environment. Thus, for Herakles, Sisyphos' absence, as well as Hades' and Persephone's, was confirmation that he was *not* in the Underworld.

Interestingly, the characters most-often included in internal Underworld scenes on 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century Greek vases were also Sisyphos, Persephone, and sometimes Hades; in other words, as in Euripides *Herakles*, these figures were the defining markers of the chthonic landscape for the late Archaic and Classical audience. The question, then, when confronting an image where Sisyphos is present, is which characters tell the story and which define the setting? Felten suggests that on these Attic black-figure vessels (Pls. 2, 4-11, 14-17), the tale of Sisyphos is the main narrative, while the accompanying divinities set his scene.<sup>6</sup> Though divinities can be side characters on images of heroic endeavors, such as Herakles' abduction of Kerberos,<sup>7</sup> it seems unlikely that Hades and Persephone would function as a stage for Sisyphos' toilsome endeavor,

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<sup>4</sup> trans. Coleridge 1938.

<sup>5</sup> Menippus was a son of Megareus, a son of Poseidon, who fought with Nisus, the king of Megara, against Minos, the king of Crete (Pausanias 1.39.5 and 1.42.1).

<sup>6</sup> Felten 1975, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> St. Louis, Wash. Univ. Mus., 3274; *ABV*<sup>2</sup> 328.7 (attributed to Long-Nose Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Kerberos* 15a (Woodford and Spier). In this image, Hermes helps Herakles tame the canine so that he can remove him from the Underworld.

especially since they are more important than he is. Furthermore, certain aspects of the iconography of Persephone and Hades make them unsuitable as indicators of the Underworld environment. Rather, Sisyphos was the true scene-setter within these images, or a background figure that helped to describe a larger narrative.

As I stated before, Sisyphos appears on Attic black-figure pottery with Hades, Persephone, Kerberos, Charon, and Hermes, but only the latter three have clear iconographies.<sup>8</sup> Persephone's identity is suggested by the bundles of grain or white flowers that she holds in her hands (Pls. 4-5, 7, 9, and 14). Yet these attributes, which she sometimes holds while seated in a palace-like structure (Pls. 7-8, 14-15), were not indicative of her role as goddess of the Underworld, but rather her upper world function as a goddess of grain and springtime. Without other indications, such as Sisyphos rolling his stone, she could be mistaken for Demeter. As she was portrayed in both upper and lower world settings, artists could not simply rely on Persephone to define a chthonic landscape.

Herakles also mentions Hades, whose very name implies invisibility, in his frantic attempt to discover whether he is dead. Yet the god of the chthonic realm does not appear often in either textual or visual renditions of the Underworld. In texts, such as Homer's *Odyssey* (11.633-635), Persephone was perceived, either mentally or visually, more often than Hades.<sup>9</sup> In Greek art, Hades appears more commonly in the context of the abduction of Persephone or Kerberos; in all other narratives, he is either rare or absent.<sup>10</sup> When he does appear, his iconography is relatively consistent: a nicely dressed, mature, bearded man, sometimes holding a

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<sup>8</sup> The elderly Charon rides in a boat (Pl. 13), Hermes has winged shoes and a kerykeion (Pl. 16), and Kerberos is a large dog with two or three heads (Pls. 14-17).

<sup>9</sup> In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus leaves the Underworld because he fears Persephone's wrath; he does not actually see her, but senses, based on the aggressive movements of the shades, that it is time for him to leave (for a more in-depth study of Persephone as ruler of the dead, see Peschlow-Bindokat 1972, pp. 75-77).

<sup>10</sup> *LIMC*, s.v. *Hades* (Dahlinger, Linder, and Yalouris).

staff or scepter. Although Hades' facade appearance is consistent, it is also ambiguous: unlike Zeus' with his thunderbolt, Hermes with his shoes and caduceus, and Poseidon with his trident, Hades does not have a defining attribute to assist viewers with his identification. This near anonymity could be the result of confusion as to how one was supposed to depict, or even describe, an invisible being. This disqualifies him to as an unambiguous indicator of a chthonic environment.

While some scenes tell specific stories, such as Persephone in the aftermath of her abduction from the upper world (Pl. 5) and Hermes returning Persephone to the upper world (Pl. 4), in every circumstance, Sisyphos functions solely as a marker of the chthonic landscape. In scenes with Hades and/or Persephone, he toils off to the side, ignored by his company because his status is equivalent to the vines that surround him (Pls. 4-5); he is simply part of the background. In images where he toils "next to" Hermes, Kerberos, Charon, and/or Herakles at the gate (Pls. 12, 14-17), the arrangement appears to represent two different areas in the Underworld: the interior and exterior. This is what happens in Homer's *Odyssey*, when Odysseus catches sight of various souls inside the Underworld, even though he is stationed behind a trench on the realm's outskirts (11.567-600). In our images, these characters are at the gate, while Sisyphos is *inside*, for, as with the scenes of Hades and/or Persephone, the Corinthian king is a background image, or he is part of Underworld's interior landscape.

Sisyphos did not always function as a scene-setter in chthonic vase paintings. On the red-figure tondos that contained only Sisyphos and his stone, he simply embodied the motif of futility (Pls. 18-19).<sup>11</sup> On the Epiktetos cup (Pl. 18), his slope is the tondo, which removes even the possibility that he will complete his task because there is no summit to the slope; it simply

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<sup>11</sup> According to Oakley (*LIMC*, s.v. *Sisphos 1*, p. 786), contemporary cups showing youths carrying stones may have been parodies of the Sisyphian motif. For an example, see Paris, Louvre G96; *ARV* 64.95; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 94.107, 1625; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 171.

loops around forever. On the Pithos Painter's cup (Pl. 19), there is a small hill, but its slope eventually combines with the tondo; thus, the hill almost seems to function as an obstacle over which Sisyphos must roll his stone every time he makes a complete revolution. While every Sisyphos image embodies futility because he will never complete or escape his task, this is usually a sub-theme to his main function as a chthonic scene setter. On these cups, however, there is no chthonic landscape; the empty, vast, and endless tondo is the setting, which leaves the stone-roller's pointless efforts as the sole theme. This would have been an intriguing motif for drinkers to see peek out from beneath their wine, for, as they rotated the cup in their hands, Sisyphos would appear to have moved.

What of Polygnotus' lost fresco? In his visual adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey* 11, Polygnotus aimed to be unique and innovative by representing characters that were rarely manifested, such as Oknos; never before visualized, such as Tityos and Tantalos; and of his own invention, such as the demon Eurynomos. Furthermore, the *Nekyia* was the first extant artwork to portray all of these chthonic characters in an Underworld setting; the closest parallel is the *Odyssey* Frescoes (Pls. 41-43A-C), which are quite different in comparison. Without the actual paintings, it is difficult to know what Polygnotus' precise motivations were, but, from what Pausanias tell us, it seems he was more concerned with establishing new ways to represent figural narratives, especially regarding torture and toil, than with describing a chthonic landscape.

In two other vase paintings, where Sisyphos toils alone (Pls. 1, 20), there appears to be more to the story: on the Laconian cup (Pl. 1), his cliff doubles as a structure. Thus, his presence indicates that it is either the gate of the Underworld or Hades palace. Even though there is little more than a cliff and a stone on the lekythos (Pl. 20), Sisyphos could be describing a chthonic

setting, or, at the very least, the futility of death, because the vessel was found inside a grave.<sup>12</sup> These images indicate that Sisyphos' iconic, stone-rolling action was enough to describe a chthonic environment without the inclusion of Persephone, Kerberos, Hades, or Charon; he was qualified to set the scene on his own.

A hundred years later, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Sisyphos reappeared in South Italian and Etruscan art. The artists of these regions, however, edited the Attic visual tradition to include a "demonic" figure, which exacerbated Sisyphos' toilsome task and prevented him from escaping. Although this creature varied in identity and form, its function remained constant from its first appearance on the 6<sup>th</sup>-century BCE Foce del Sele relief. This tradition, which does not occur in any Greek plays or histories, often appeared in large, visual narratives, where Sisyphos' task was secondary to the main plotline(s). In these scenes, he was never the only chthonic denizen: in Apulian vase painting, Tantalos and the Danaids toiled with him (Pls. 33C, 35B, 37B), while Tityos, Tantalos, and the Danaids accompanied him in the Odyssey Frescoes (Pl. 42). In Etruscan tomb paintings (Pls. 33, 35), Sisyphos appears among a variety of chthonic figures of both Greek and Etruscan origin, such as Vanth and Charon. While Sisyphos' toilsome image did not often appear in these regions, the framework of the toilsome scene-setter began with him, later expanding to include the Danaids on Apulian vases. Vanth's frequent inclusion in Etruscan tomb art may not have been influenced by the Sisyphean scene-setter, but she probably functions in a similar way.

In Apulian vase painting, Sisyphos' location is peripheral, but he is always in the same location: the lower left corner of the lowest frieze. The Danaids appear on Karlsruhe B4 (Pl. 32) and Naples 81666 (Pl. 34), but their location and bodily position varies; Tantalos appears only on Munich 3297. The iconographic inconsistencies of the Danaids and the infrequency of Tantalos

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<sup>12</sup> Vierneisel-Schlörb 1964, pp. 90-93.



make them less memorable occupants on these three Apulian volute kraters than Sisyphos, who appears in the same location and position on all three vessels: the lower, left hand corner, pushing upwards on a protruding rock. Furthermore, the sadistic women that torture him almost work to emphasize his position within the larger landscape. Sisyphos may not have lasted long in Apulian art, but he may have inspired Apulia's alternative tradition, which utilized the water-carrying Danaids as setters of chthonic scenes. This seems especially likely if we consider that many of the Attic vases portraying the toilsome king were found in various Italian cities, making them readily available for comparison.<sup>13</sup>

How did this new tradition come about? In the Middle Apulian era, Sisyphos rolled his stone on red-figure pottery for a brief period of time (Pls. 33B, 35C, 37A); in two of these circumstances (Pls. 33C, 35B), he was accompanied by the Danaids. In every instance, Sisyphos' location and position were consistent: he appeared in the lower, left-hand corner and pushed upward, towards the left, against a rocky outcropping. In the two cases that include the Danaids, the women vary in number and position: for example, on Karlsruhe B4 (Pl. 33C), there are two, in two different registers, and they stand, while on Naples 81666 (Pl. 35B), although they are together, one figure sits while two stand. Eventually, in the Late Apulian era, the water-carriers found their niche in the bottom register of a series of multi-friezed, chthonic vase paintings [Pl. 45].<sup>14</sup> These Late Apulian Underworld scenes all featured a similar overall composition: Hades and Persephone centrally enthroned, surrounded by various chthonic denizens, like Herakles'

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<sup>13</sup> See Pls. 2-3, 7-8, 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> Urbana, Univ. of Ill. World Heritage Mus., 82.6.1; *RVAp Suppl.* I 152, 23a (attributed to the Baltimore Painter); Schauenburg 1984, pl. 103.1; *LIMC*, s.v. *Hades* 134 (Dahlinger, Linder, Yalouris), *Danaids* 15 (date: 320 BCE = Late Apulian) (Keuls). For other examples, see 1) St. Petersburg, Ermitage 1716; *RVAp* II 864, 19 (attributed to the Baltimore Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Hades* 131 (Dahlinger, Linder, Yalouris), *Danaids* 13 (date: 330-320 BCE = Late Apulian) (Keuls). 2) Leningrad, Hermitage 1717; *RVAp* 11 930, 117 (attributed to the Louvre Painter); Schauenburg 1958, pp. 63-64; *LIMC*, s.v. *Hades* 150 (date: 310 BCE = Late Apulian) (Dahlinger, Linder, Yalouris), *Danaids* 18 (Keuls). 3) Private Collection; Schauenburg 1984, pls. 114-115 (attributed to the White Saccos Painter); *LIMC*, s.v. *Hades* 126 (date: 320 BCE = Late Apulian) (Dahlinger, Linder, Yalouris).

family and the Erinyes, while the Danaids carry water below.<sup>15</sup> Since the Danaids were used so frequently and consistently in this way, August Winkler suggested that a painter of chthonic landscapes “added the Danaids for the immediate identification of the Underworld” (zur näheren Kennzeichnung der Unterwelt hinzugesetzt);<sup>16</sup> in other words, the Danaids were included to make chthonic scenes recognizable. Many scholars, like Eva Keuls, were quick to disregard this theory, remarking that it offered no additional meaning to the overall scenes.<sup>17</sup> Yet Winkler’s position is attractive, and I argue not only that the Danaids set the scene in Apulian vase paintings, but also that this convention grew out of a tradition that began on the Greek mainland, which featured Sisyphos toiling within a larger chthonic narrative.

As Hades is present in all of these Apulian scenes, it is hard to say whether Sisyphos and the Danaids are working to make the realm “visible.” Yet as we have just established, Hades’ ambiguous appearance does not allow him to be a scene-setter; in fact, these vase paintings are recognized as chthonic *not* because Hades is present, but because other characters of the Underworld, like the water-carriers, and stories, like Herakles abducting Kerberos, surround him and Persephone. Therefore, Sisyphos and the Danaids’ repeated inclusion in Apulian chthonic imagery, as well as their evident interaction with their surrounding environment—something only they seem to do—<sup>18</sup>imply that their presence was deemed necessary to characterize the chthonic landscape. It is as if these scenes would not be complete without them.

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<sup>15</sup> Keuls (1974, pp. 104, 159) does not think Danaus’ daughters are toiling in these scenes, but rather are performing a ritual to purify themselves of their legendary crime: murdering their husbands. She suggests this because the women hold objects as they perform their task, including hand mirrors (a reference to their disembodied spirits), rectangular chests (an object used during initiation ceremonies), and rattles (a reference to the mystery rites). Even if she is correct, this does not change the fundamental nature of their setting: the Underworld, where they interact and bond with the landscape, scooping up water to pour into a large pithos.

<sup>16</sup> Winkler 1888, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> Keuls 1974, p. 95.

<sup>18</sup> The other denizens within the scene float ambiguously in space; only Sisyphos and the Danaids actually interact with their surroundings.

A later tradition, perhaps based on Homer's texts, is portrayed in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE frescos from the Esquiline Hill.<sup>19</sup> In one panel, Odysseus converses with Tiresias, while the toilsome souls Sisyphos, Tityos, Tantalos, and the Danaids endure their punishments in the following panel (Pls. 35a-b). The figure running along the hillside was thought to be Orion for a variety of reasons,<sup>20</sup> but it could also be another manifestation of the demon that torments Sisyphos; without a clear view of the inscription, however, one cannot conclude either way. The Esquiline frescoes are similar to Polygnotus' *Nekyia* (Pl 22) in that they include multiple toilsome souls in the same setting, but the Odyssey frescoes contain an element never before seen in any previous chthonic images: an actual landscape, complete with rocky outcroppings, grass, dirt, and perhaps even a pond.<sup>21</sup> The landscape itself, however, does nothing to define the realm; in fact, the further one goes inside the Underworld, to where the denizens toil, the more ambiguous the environment becomes. For example, in the panel with Odysseus, the sea's horizon line disappears behind the column separating it from the next panel; it does not reemerge on the other side of the cliff, located in the panel with the Underworld denizens (Pls. 41-42). Perhaps the change was supposed to indicate the difference between the interior and exterior of the Underworld, but if this is the case, it is a very subtle nuance. The characters that inhabit each region establish the difference between interior and exterior much more clearly: outside, Odysseus confronts a horde of souls from behind his trench, while inside, Sisyphos, Tityos,

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<sup>19</sup> According to Blanckenhagen (1963, p. 129), they are likely based on a continuous 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE Hellenistic fresco executed in either South Italy or Sicily

<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 33-34.

<sup>21</sup> Many of the frescos featured in this series contain physical landscapes, rocky outcroppings, and bodies of water; some are even similar to the scene featured in panel 8, for example, panel 2, which shows Odysseus arriving in the land of the Laestrygonians (Pl. 44) (Vatican, Bibl., from a house on the Esquiline in Rome; Blanckenhagen 1963, pl. 44; Mazzoleni 2004, pls. 178-179). In the left foreground, a figure sits beside a large rock-formation, which is similar to the Elpinor/Tantalos figure that leans against the Underworld gate. Beside this rock, a cave curves upward into a halo of shrubbery; its shape, together with the rock in the foreground, is similar in form to the Underworld gate. Finally, a body of water, complete with a boat, is situated on the far left of the Laestrygonia scene, just like the boat on the shores of the Underworld.

Tantalos, and the Danaids toil for their transgressions. Again, the characters are responsible for the establishment of setting, not the landscape itself, even though it is present in the Esquiline Paintings.

In Northern Italy, the Etruscans were creating chthonic landscapes of their own. Etruscan tomb paintings are similar to the Apulian vases in that they depict larger narratives that include the secondary figure of Sisyphos toiling, as well as a small, winged creature that hinders his efforts. Yet it is more difficult to interpret the Corinthian king as a scene-setter in these paintings because there are only two of them and both are very fragmentary. What do we know, then? The François Tomb fresco is full of epic heroes, people who were buried inside the tomb, and two denizens of the Underworld: Sisyphos and Amphiaraos. These two men are isolated on the left side of the tomb's entrance (if one stood inside, facing outward), so it is possible that they were meant to establish a chthonic setting within that particular part of the fresco (Pl. 39, no. 5). The rest of the room, however, is filled with moments that take place outside the Underworld, such as a scene from the Trojan War, where Achilles sacrifices Trojan men.<sup>22</sup> Conversely, in the Tomb of the Orc, the frescoes are filled with chthonic entities, like Kerberos, Persephone, Hades, snakes, Charon, and Thanatos, as well as some Etruscan demons, like Geryoneus, a three-headed man, and Tuchulcha, a bird-headed, winged creature with snakes for hair.<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to classify Sisyphos as a scene-setter in an environment that is filled with other denizens of the Underworld; it is more probable that he functions as a chthonic indicator in the François Tomb, where he is cordoned off with Amphiaraos.

Sisyphos, as well as the other toilsome souls, may be an infrequent resident of the Etruscan Underworld because the Etruscans had their own marker of chthonic landscapes: the

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<sup>22</sup> Christofani 1985, fig. 203; Buranelli 1987, figs. 3, 7; *LIMC*, s.v. *Vanth* 3 (el Khatib-Boujibar), Achilles 87 (author); Charon I.34 [Sourvinou-Inwood].

<sup>23</sup> Steingraber 1986, pp. 329-330.

death entity Vanth. Whether a deity or demon,<sup>24</sup> she, unlike Hades, was not invisible, as she was frequently included in Underworld scenes found within tombs. As Vanth's form is the equivalent of a woman with wings, she is probably the creature that assaults Sisyphos as he carries his rock, considering Poine (Retaliation) and Ananke (Necessity) do not appear in any other Etruscan artworks. Thus, like the Danaids on Apulian vases, and Sisyphos in the art on the Greek mainland, Vanth, as a resident or, at the very least, a frequenter, of the Underworld, may have been the Etruscans' scene-setter of chthonic landscapes. This may have also been inspired by the earlier tradition from the mainland, for as I stated before, at least half of the Sisyphos vases were discovered in Italy, and two in particular, which show Sisyphos carrying his stone in the same manner as in the tomb paintings, were found in Etruria (Pls. 2, 16).

If we recall the *Odyssey* (11.593-600), Homer describes the Underworld through the mouth of Odysseus, who is telling his story to the Phaeacian king. Sourvinou-Inwood suggests that Homer tells this portion of his story in the hero's words, rather than his own, to prevent himself from making a false claim: knowing what Hades, an invisible realm, looked like.<sup>25</sup> Since Hades, both the god and the realm, was physically and psychologically imperceptible to the living and as Persephone had both Olympian and chthonic functions, artists needed a mediator to help establish a visible Underworld. On the Greek mainland, this was Sisyphos, who rolled his stone while larger narratives took place in the same vicinity. In Apulian art, the Danaids, or the water-carriers of the Underworld, were the chosen scene-setters, for like Sisyphos, their task required them to interact with the landscape, thus becoming a part of it. In Etruria, Vanth may have filled this role, for she was a frequenter of chthonic tomb frescoes. Sisyphos, however, was

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<sup>24</sup> Vanth, according to el Khatib-Boujibar, was a minor deity or a demon depicted on objects found in tombs; her name was discovered in an inscription on a 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE aryballos: it reads "mi malak (v)anth," or "I dedicated (this vessel) to Vanth" (*LIMC*, s.v. *Vanth*, p. 173 [el Khatib-Boujibar]; Rix I 1991, p. 126).

<sup>25</sup> Sourvinou-Inwood 1986, p. 15.

the origin of this scene-setting tradition, for his iconography was well recognized in both text and image, he was a permanent resident of Hades, and he interacted with his chthonic environment, perpetually rolling a stone up a steep slope. He was the perfect candidate for a “scene-setter,” or an indicator that helped establish a chthonic landscape.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- ABV* Beazley, J. D., 1956. *Attic Black-Figure Vase Painters*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- ARV* Beazley, J. D., 1942. *Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Oxford.
- ARV*<sup>2</sup> Beazley, J. D., 1956. *Attic Black-Figure Vase Painters*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> Carpenter, T. H., T. Mannack, and M. Mendonca, 1989. *Beazley Addenda*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Oxford.
- CIE* Bartolomeo, N. and E. Sittig, eds. 1936. *Corpus Inscriptionum Etruscarum*, Vol. 2, Sect. 1, Fasc. 3 (5327-5606). Leipzig: Barth.
- CVA* *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* (Corpus of Ancient Vases).
- LIMC* Ackermann, H. C. and J. R. Gisler, eds. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Zürich-München: Artemis.
- OCD*<sup>3</sup> Hornblower, S. and A. Spawforth, 2012. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Rev. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Online. Oxford University Press.
- Para* Beazley, J. D., 1971. *Paralipomena: Additions to Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters and to Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- RFSIS* Trendall, A. D., 1989. *Red-Figured Vases of South Italy and Sicily: a Handbook*. New York: Thames and Hudson.
- RVAp I* Cambitoglou, A. and A. D. Trendall, 1978. *The Red-Figured Vases of Apulia, Vol. 1*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- RVAp II* Cambitoglou, A. and A. D. Trendall, 1982. *The Red-Figured Vases of Apulia, Vol. 2*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- RVAp Suppl. 1* Cambitoglou, A. and A. D. Trendall, 1983. *First Supplement to the Red-Figured Vases of Apulia*. London: Institute of Classical Studies.

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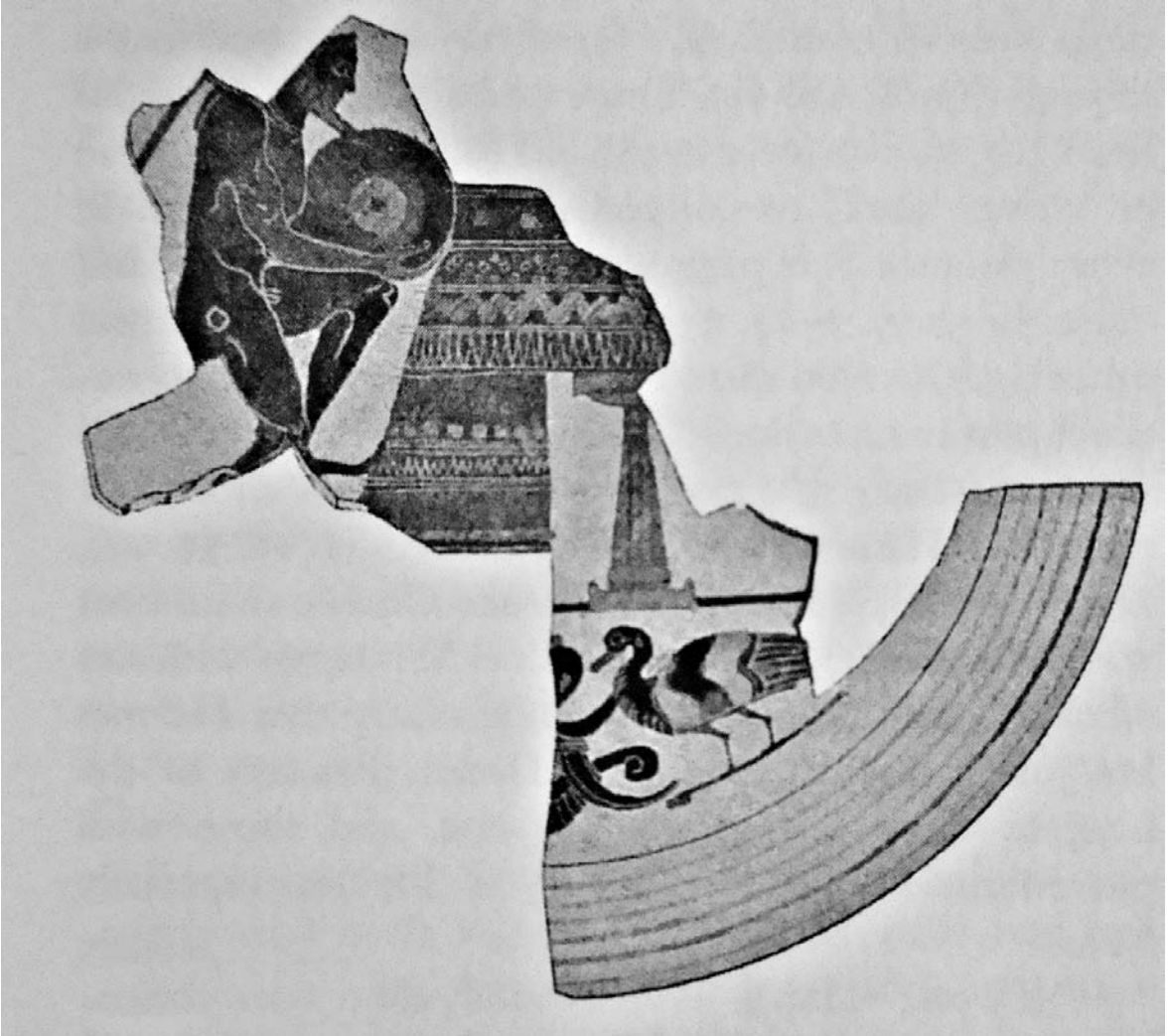
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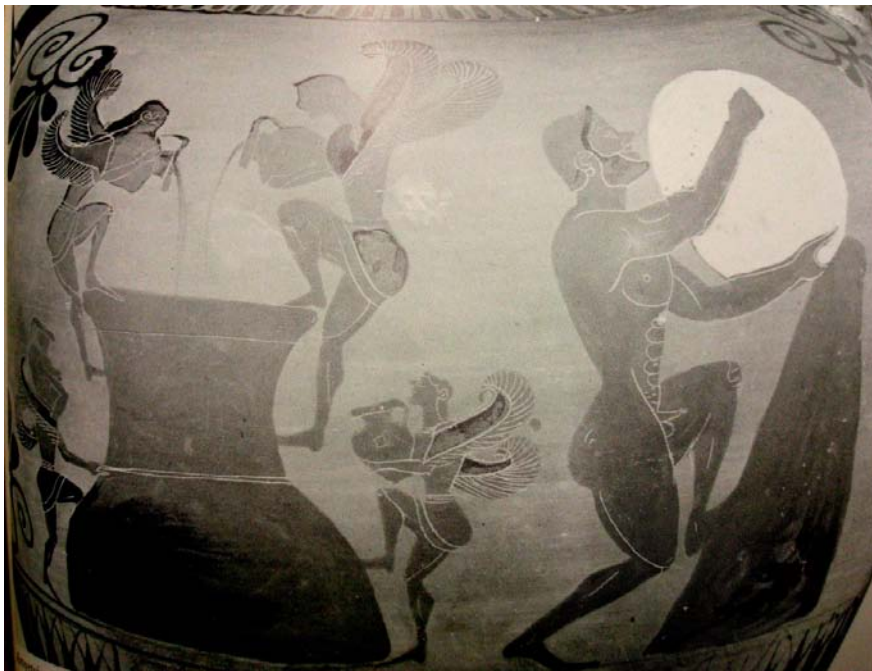
Kassel, Staatl. Mus. S 49b. Sisyphos rolling his stone up the side of a palace/gate-like structure.



Munich, Antikenslg. 1494. Sisyphos carries a stone to the right, Persephone escorts him, and a warrior (Ares) walks to the left.



A



B

Munich, Antikenslg. 1493. (A) Herakles abducts Kerberos.  
(B) Sisyphos and winged *psychai* toil.





London, BM B 261. Sisyphos rolls his stone next to Persephone, Hermes, and Hades



A

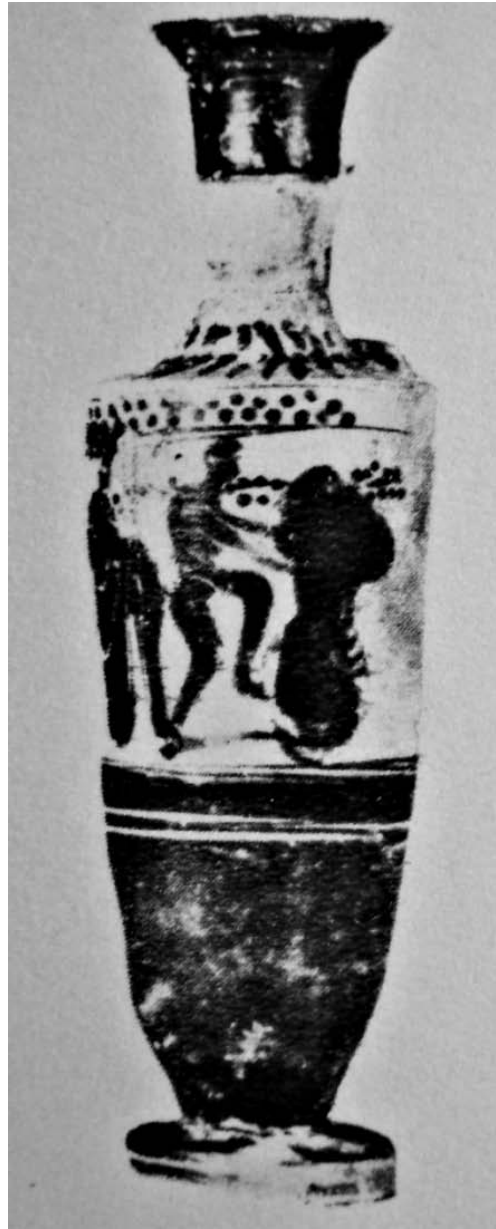


B

Munich, Antikenslg. 1549. Sisyphos rolls his stone between Hades and Persephone.



A



B

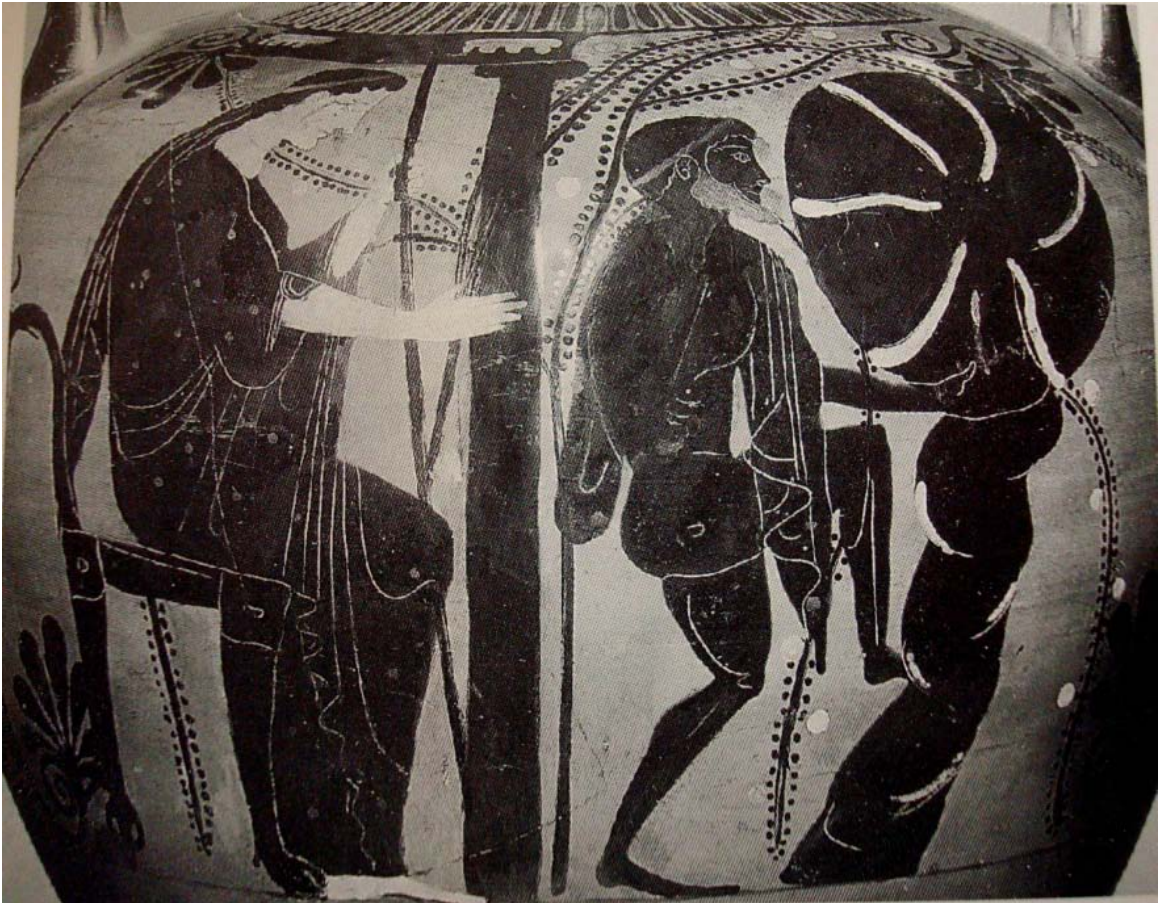
Bucarest, Hist. Mus. 03331. Sisyphos rolls his stone next to Hades and Persephone.





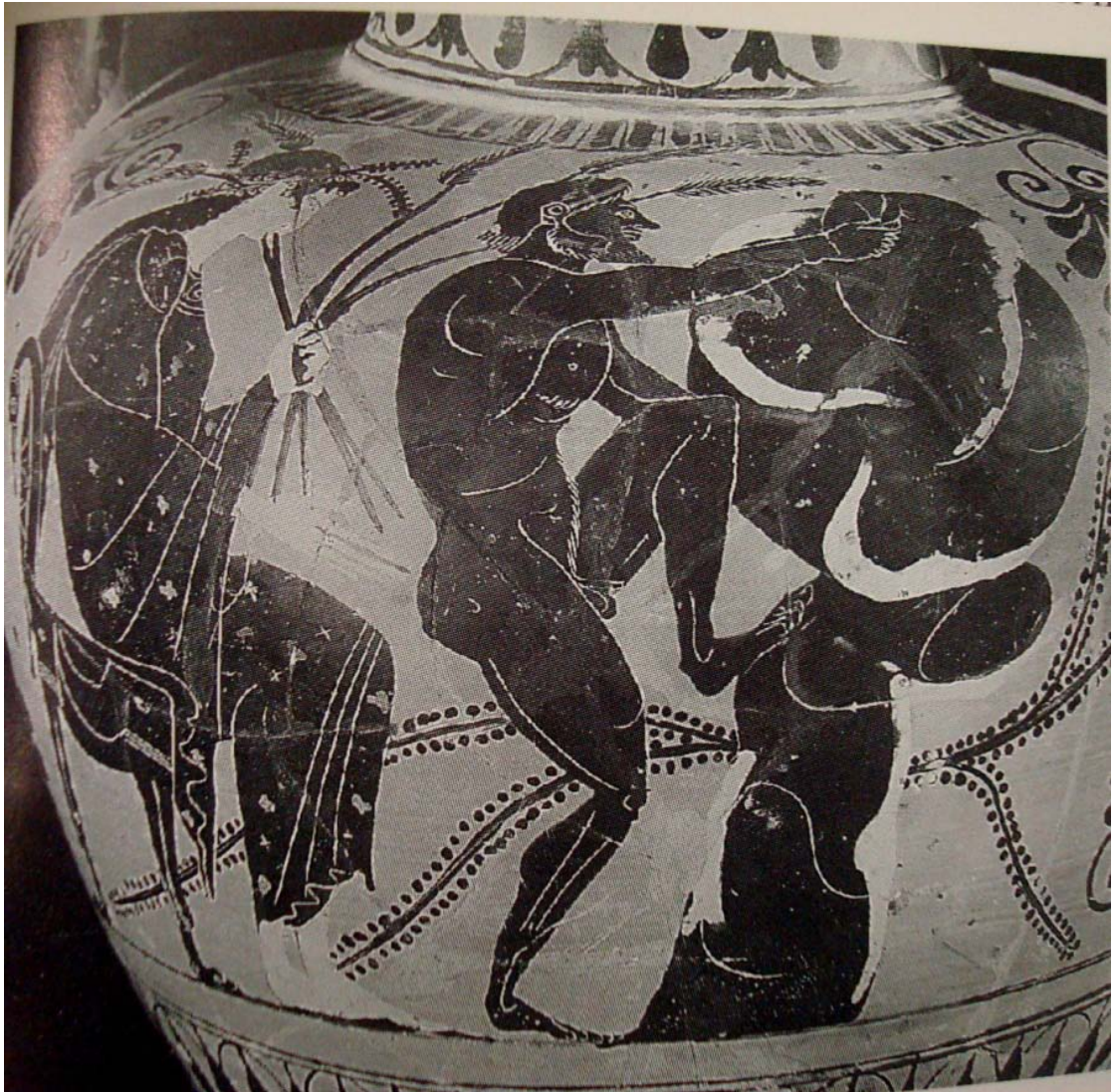
Leiden, Rijksmus. PC 49. Sisyphos rolls his stone next to a seated Persephone.



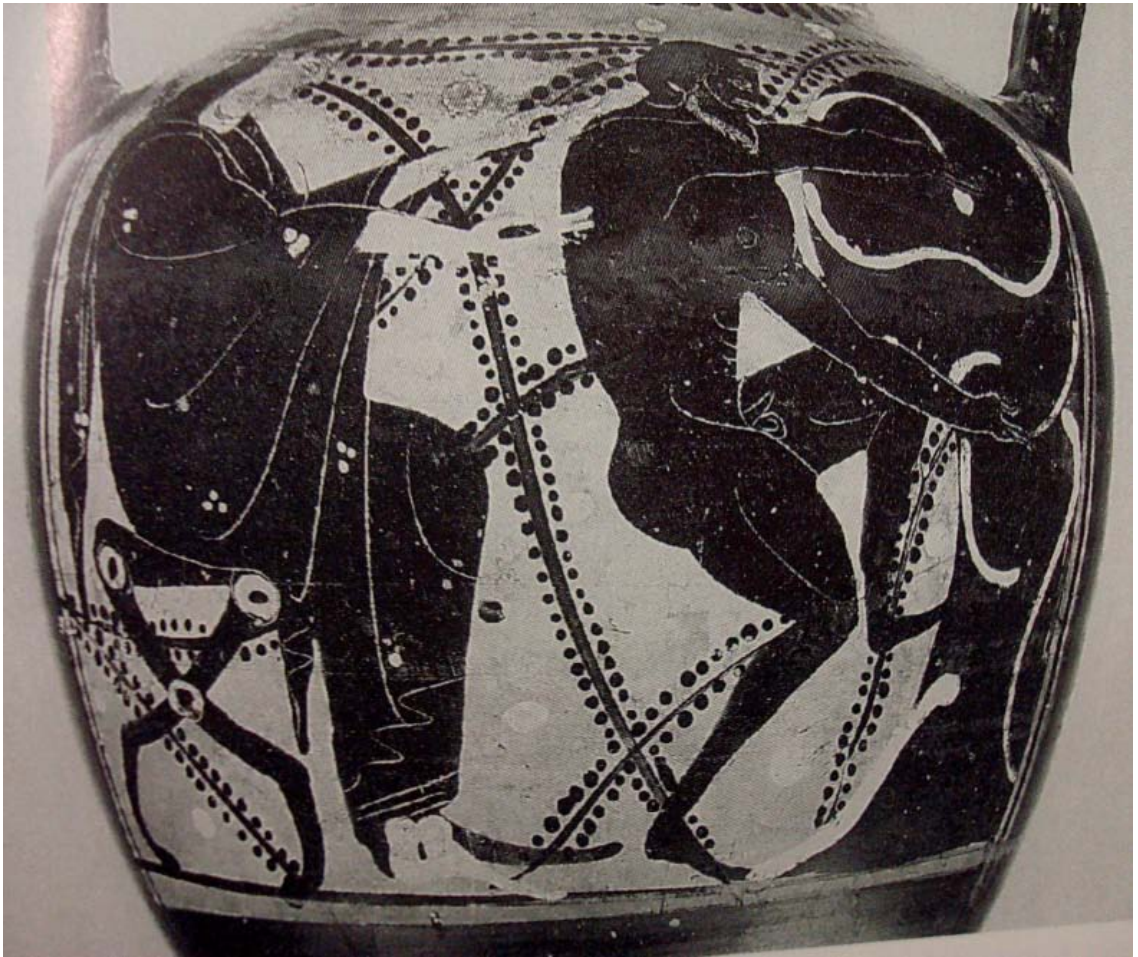


Berlin, Staatl. Mus. F 1844. Sisyphos rolls his stone next to a seated Persephone.





Naples, Mus. Naz. 81166. Sisyphos rolls his stone next to a seated Persephone.

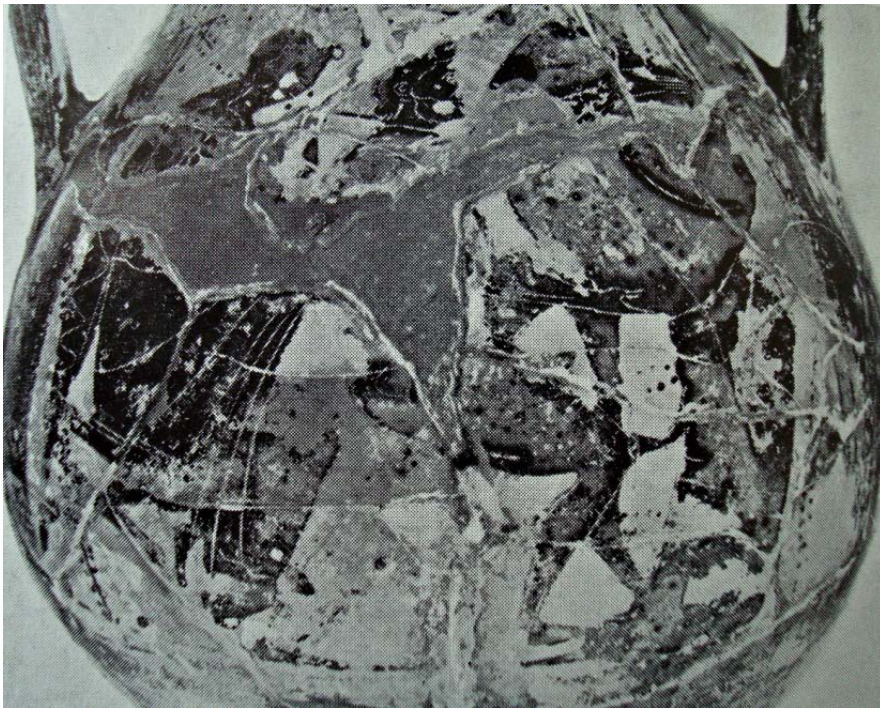


Paris, Louvre F 382. Sisyphos rolls his stone next to a seated Persephone.



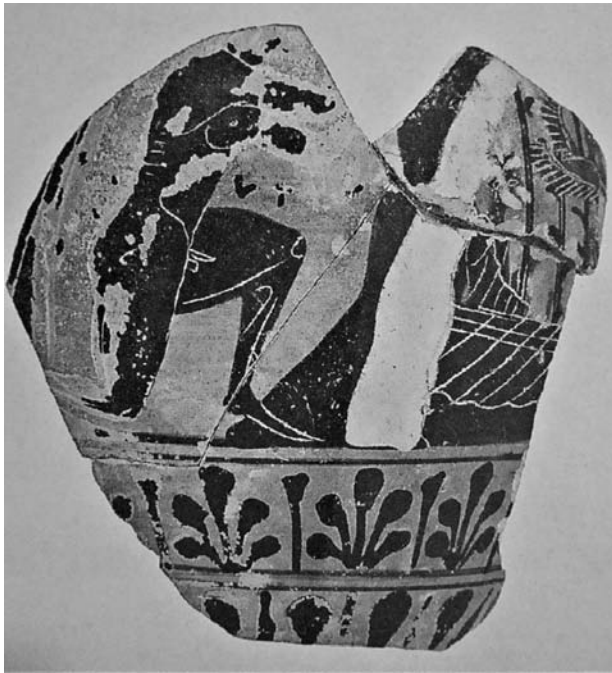


A

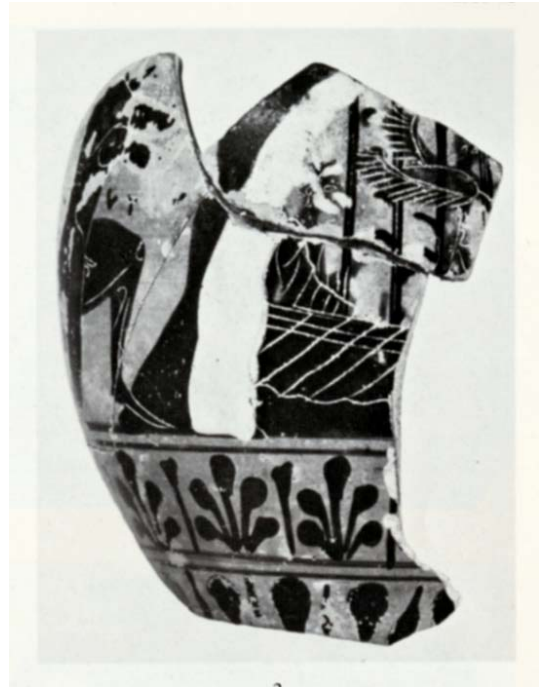


B

Bologna, Mus. Civ. VF 47. Sisyphos rolls his stone next to a seated Persephone.



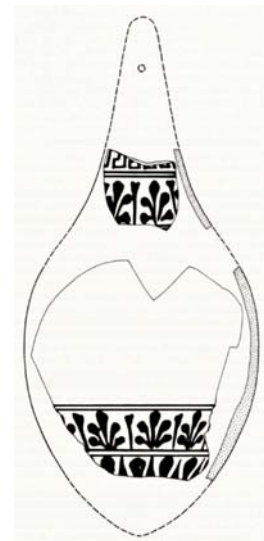
A



B



C



D

Tübingen, Univ. Mus. S101507a. (A-B) Sisyphos rolls his stone up a slope while Charon steers his ship. (C) Reconstruction of (A). (D) Reconstruction of phormiskos.





Frankfurt, Lieb. 560. Charon steers his ship alongside winged *psychai*.



A

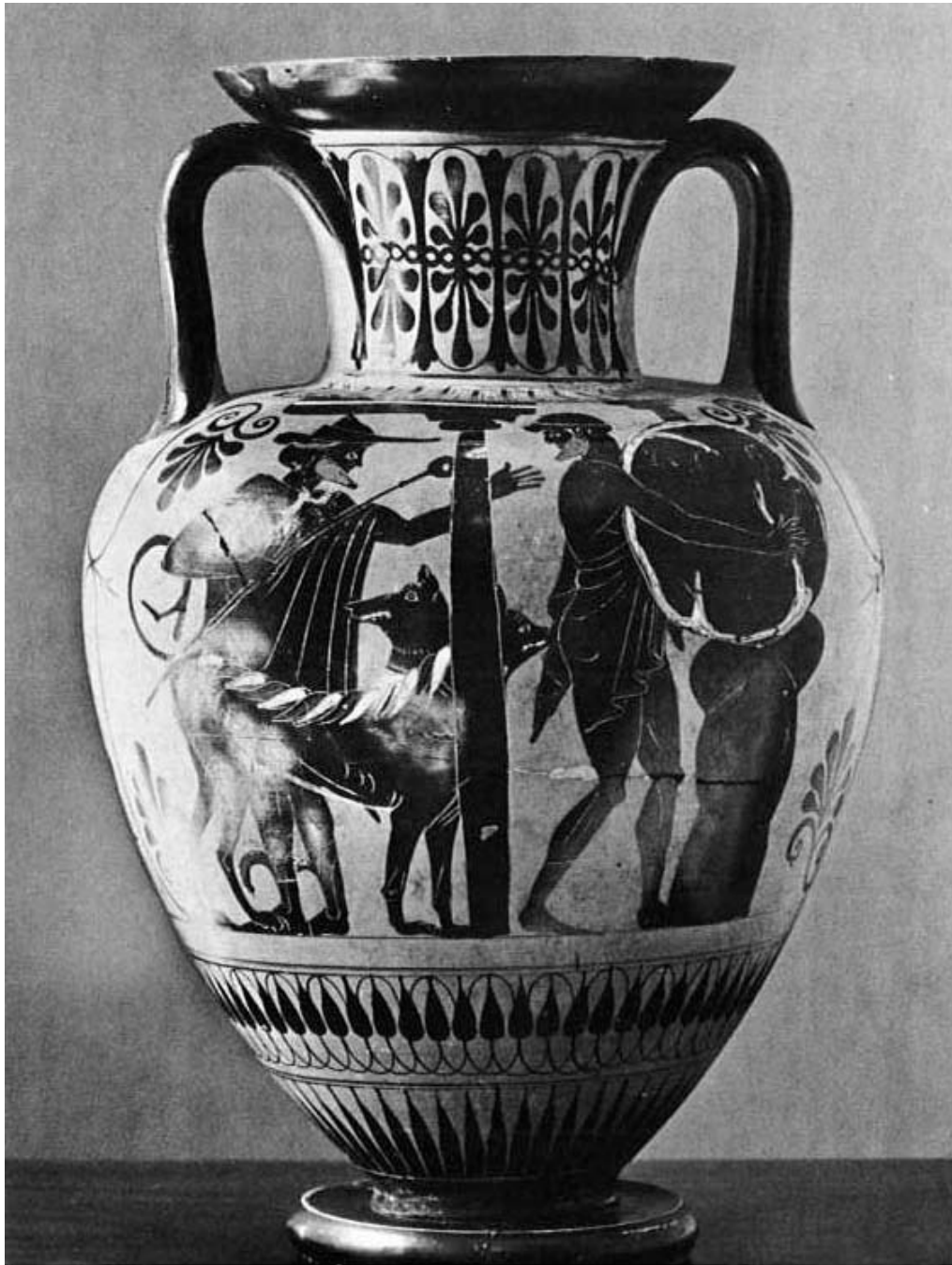


B

Orvieto, Mus. Faina 2805. Kerberos stands between Sisyphos and Persephone.

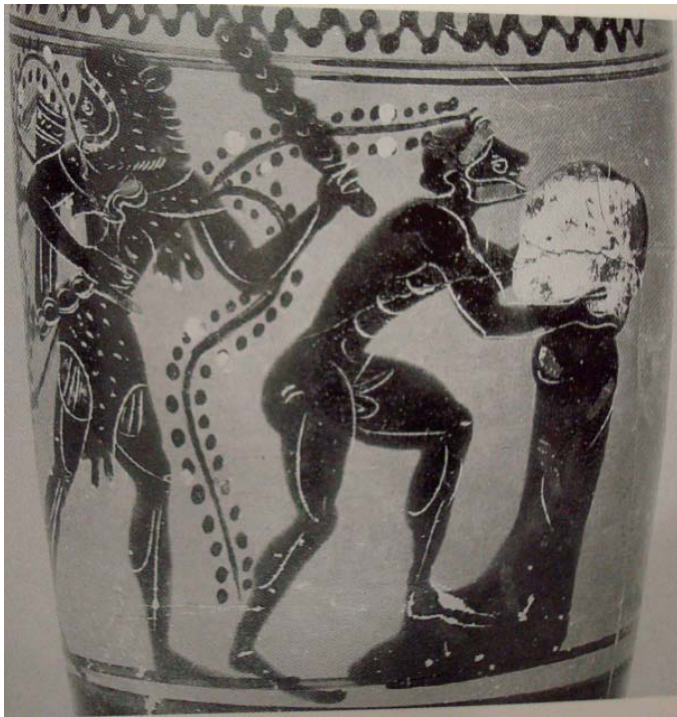


Münster, Private Collection. Kerberos stands between Sisyphos and Persephone.



St. Louis, Private Collection. Sisyphos balances his stone to the right of Hermes and Kerberos.





A



B

San Antonio Mus. of Art 91-80G. (A) Sisyphos rolls his stone next to Herakles. (B) Hades stands beside Kerberos.



Paris, Louvre G 16. Sisyphos rolls a stone around a cup's tondo.



Athens, Nat. Mus. 18722. Sisyphos rolls a stone around a cup's tondo.



A



B

Athens, Kerameikos. (A) Sisyphos rolls a stone up a slope. (B) Drawing of (A).





A



B

Athens, Nat. Mus. 1818. (A) Woman. (B) Warrior.





Reconstruction of Polygnotus' *Nekyia*, showing the Underworld.



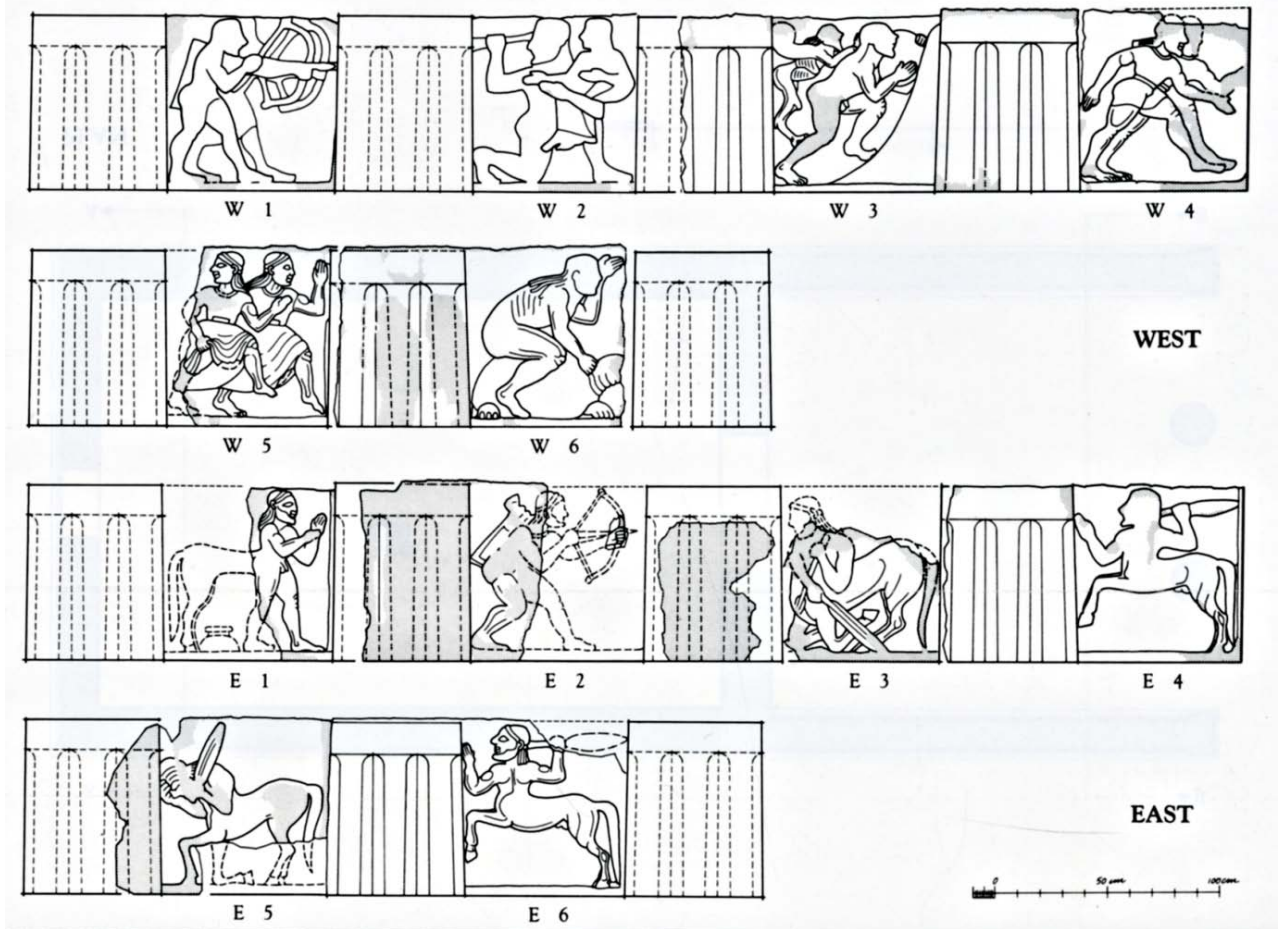
A



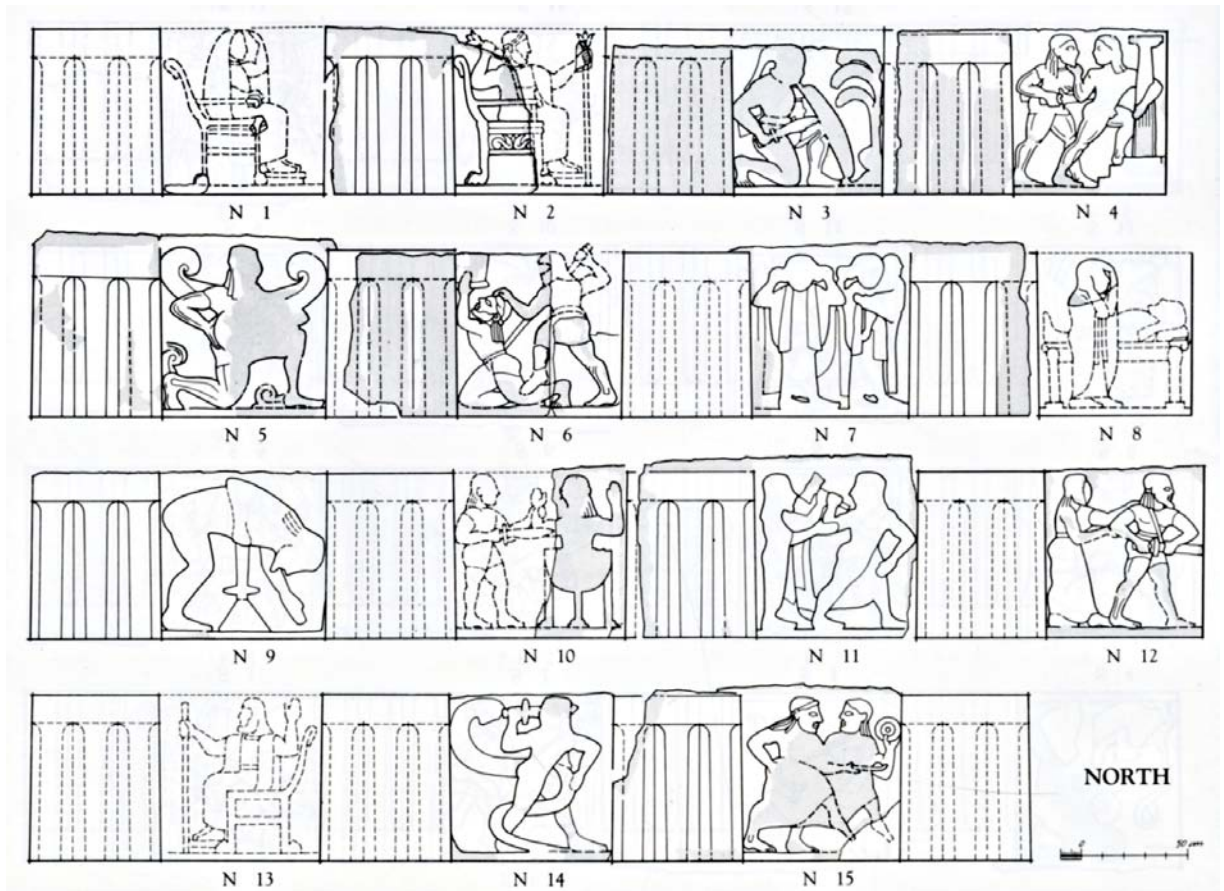
B

Palermo, Mus. Arch. Region., 2141. Oknos picks up wood while water-carriers fill a pithos.

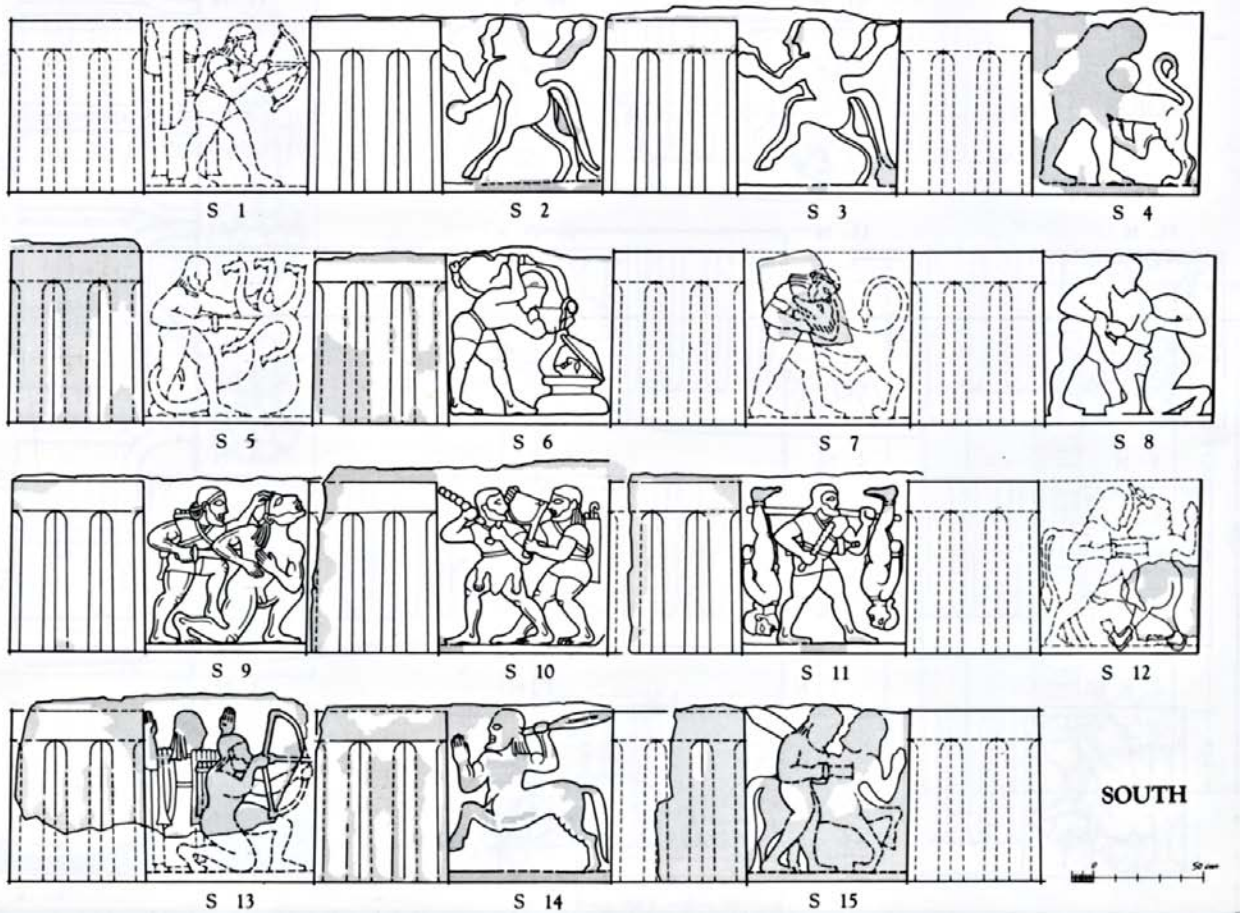




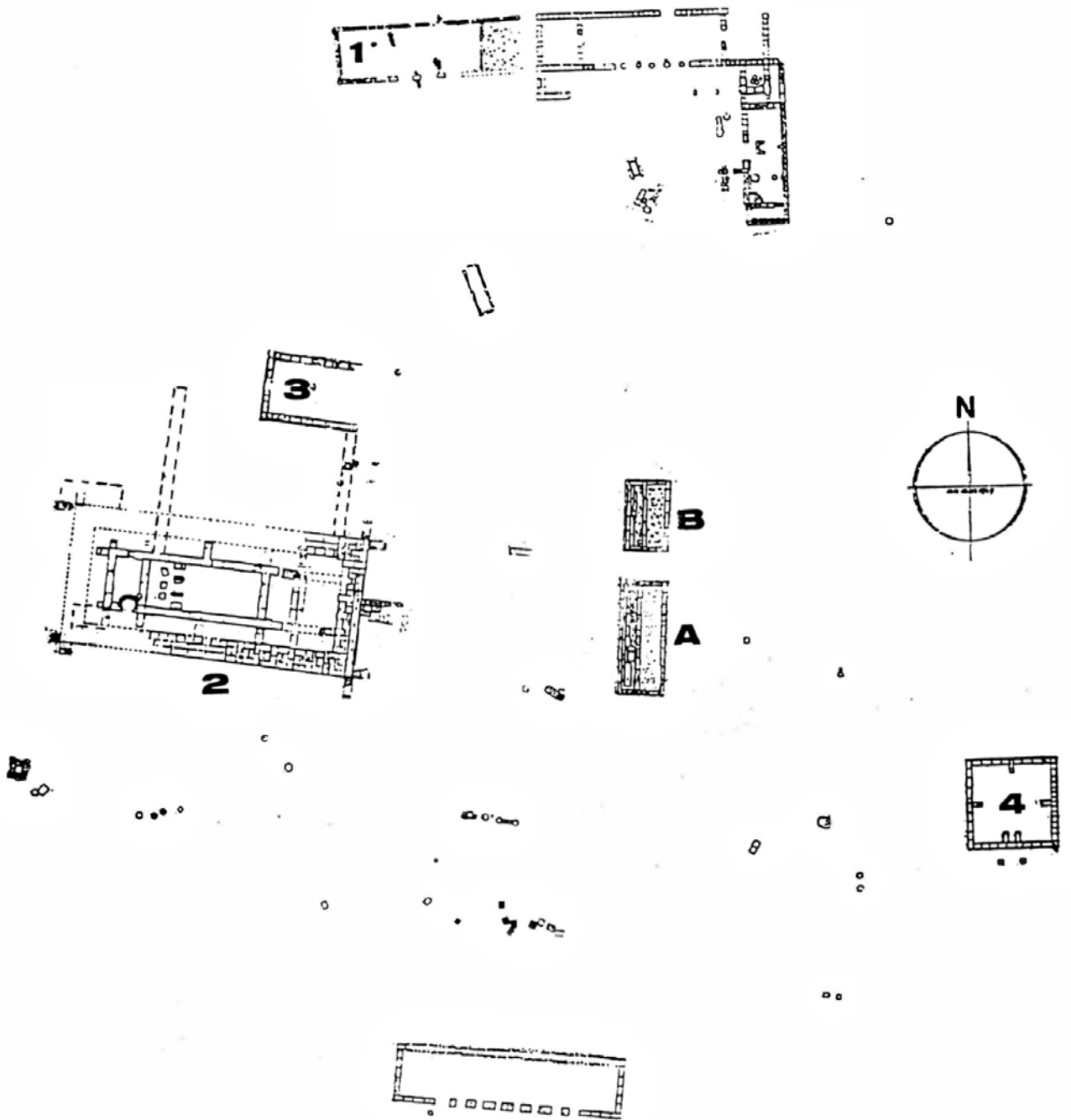
Reconstruction of east and west friezes of Temple I at Foce del Sele, by van Keuren.



Reconstruction of north frieze of Temple I at Foce del Sele, by van Keuren.



Reconstruction of south frieze of Temple I at Foce del Sele, by van Keuren.

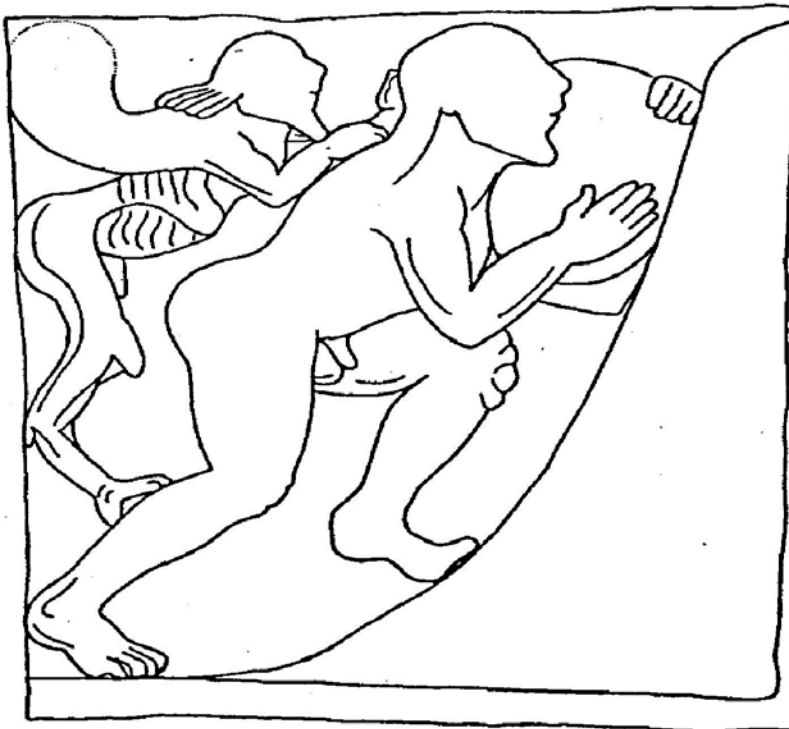


Map of the Sanctuary of Hera at Foce del Sele, by Genière, Greco-Maiuri, and Donnarumna.





A



B

Paestum, Mus. Naz. (A) Sisyphos rolls a stone with a demon on his back. (B) Drawing of (A).



Paris MNB 467. Bronze sculpture of the Assyrian wind god Pazuzu



A



B



C

(A) Syracuse, Mus. Arch. Naz. Gorgon. (B) Munich, Antikenslg. 2312. Winged, apotropaic gorgon. (C) Gotha Mus., 72. Athena reflects Medusa's head, Perseus looks on





Karlsruhe, Bad. Landesmus. B4. Underworld scene.





A

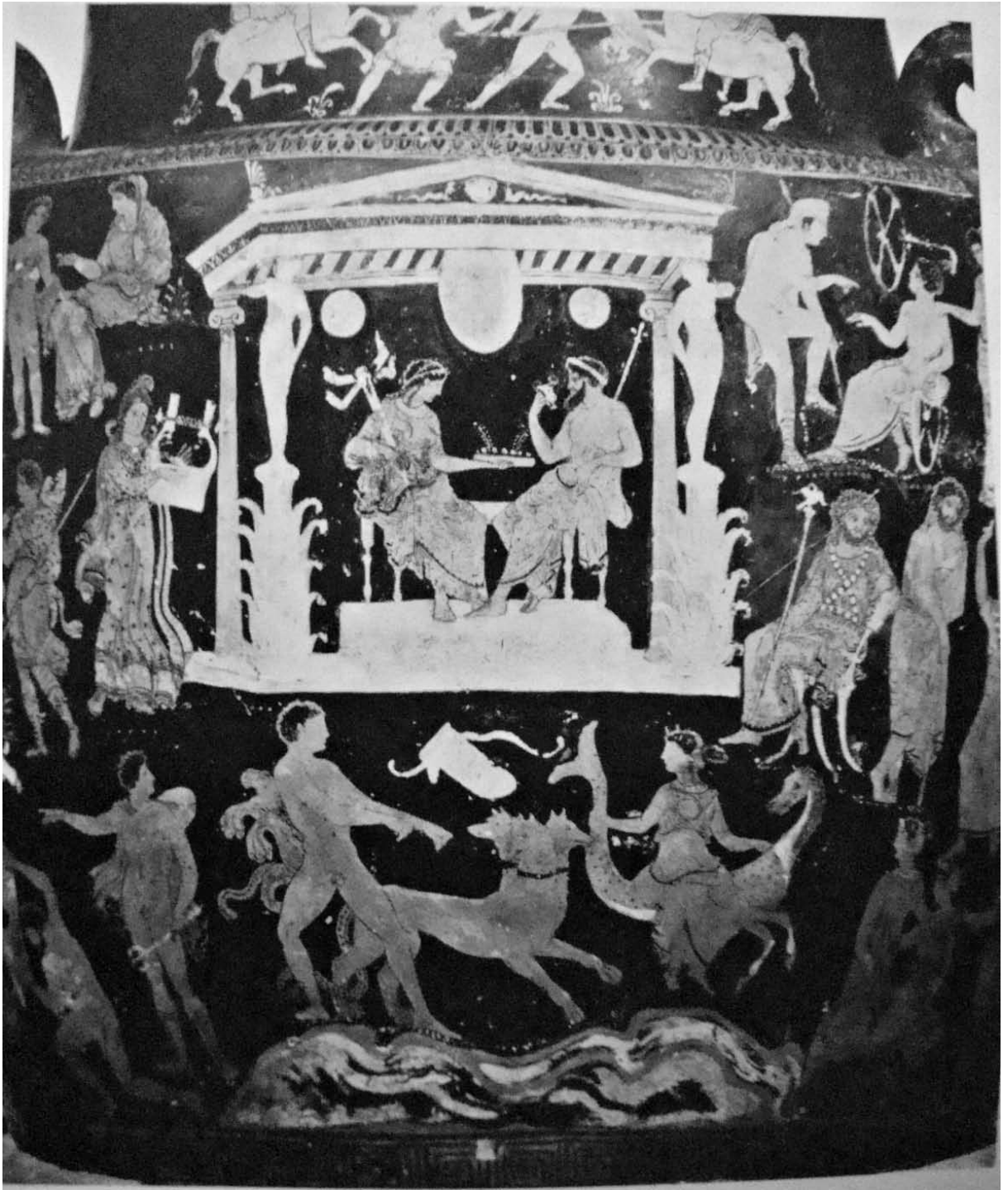


B



C

Details of Pl. 32 showing (A) Erinyes/Poinai/Ananke, (B) Sisyphos, and (C) the Danaids.



Naples, Mus. Naz. 81666. Underworld scene.





A



B



C

Details of Pl. 34 showing (A) two Poinai and Ananke, (B) the Danaids, and (C) Sisyphos.





Munich, Antikenslg. 3297. Underworld scene.



A



B

Details of Pl. 36 showing (A) Sisyphos and Poine/Ananke and (B) Tantalos.



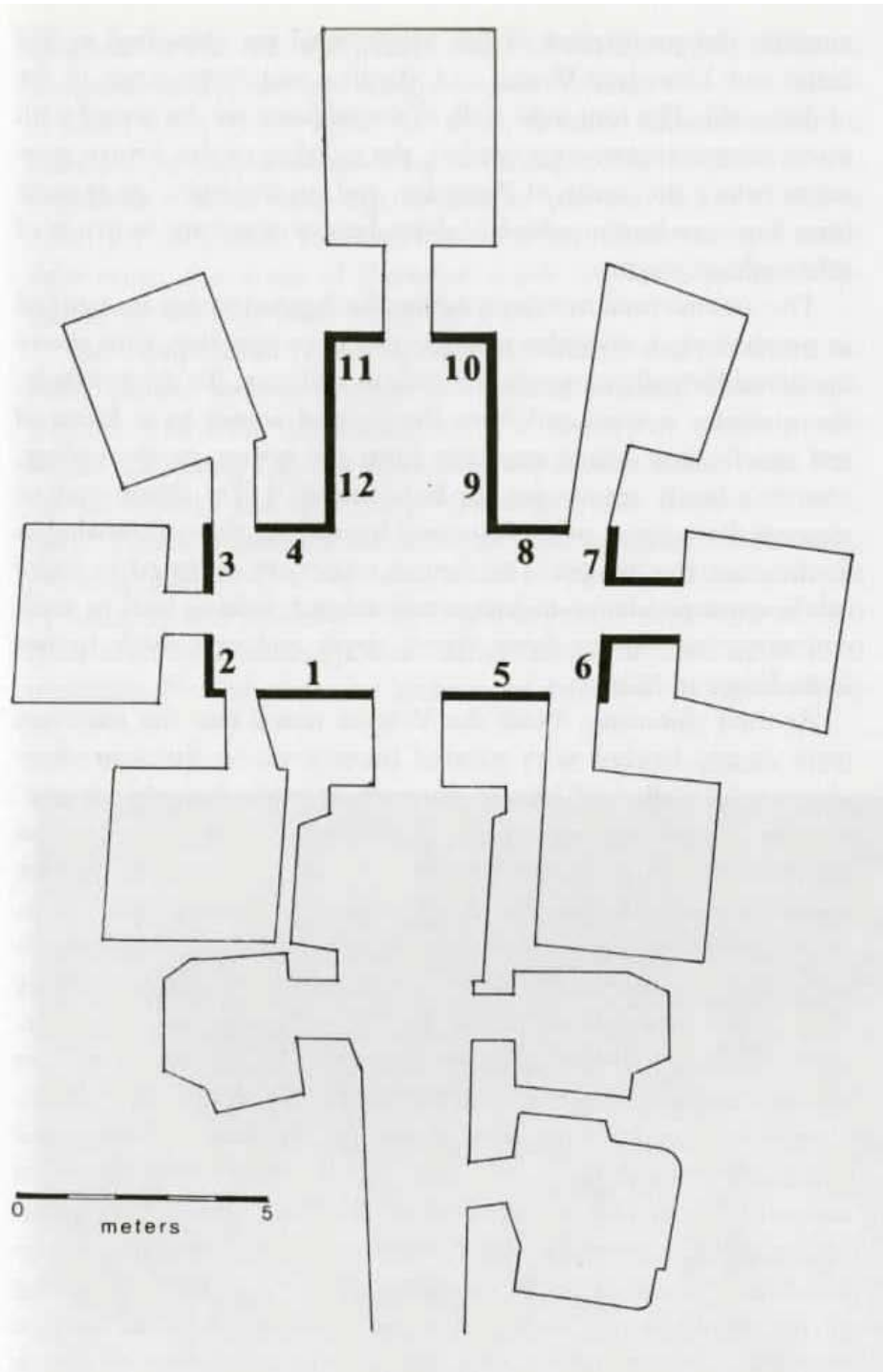


A



B

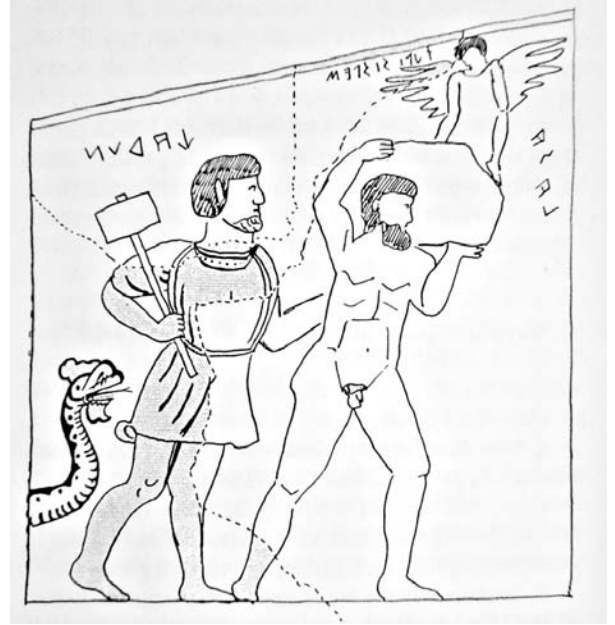
Rome, Villa Albani. (A) Sisyphos lifts a stone, Vanth impedes him, and Amphiaraus looks on. (B) Reconstruction of (A).



Plan of the François Tomb and its paintings.



A



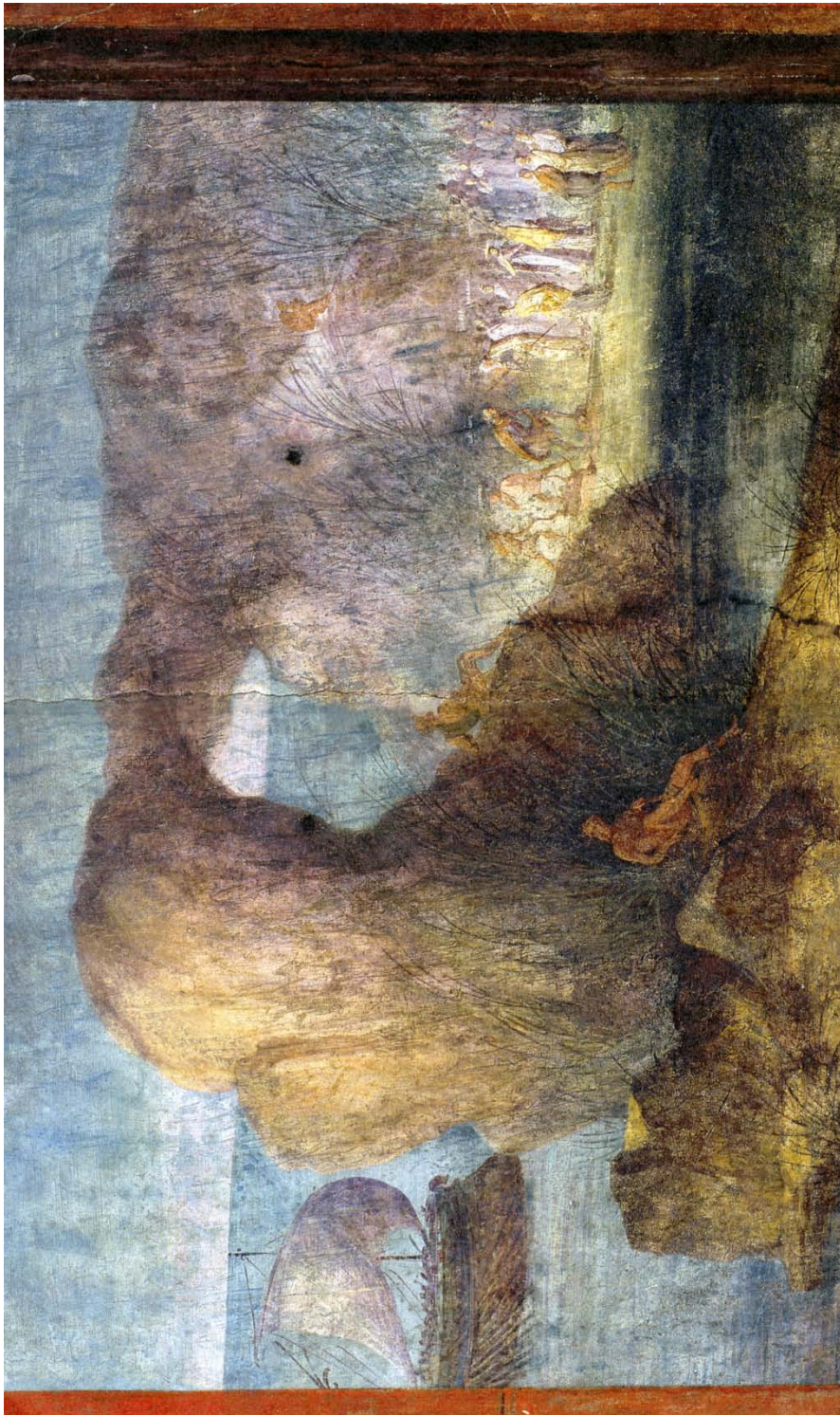
B



C

Tomb of the Orc in Tarquinia. (A) Sisyphos carries his stone, Vanth impedes him, and Charon accompanies him.. (B) Reconstruction of (A). (C) Drawing of (A).





Vatican, Bibl. Odysseus on the outskirts of the underworld.



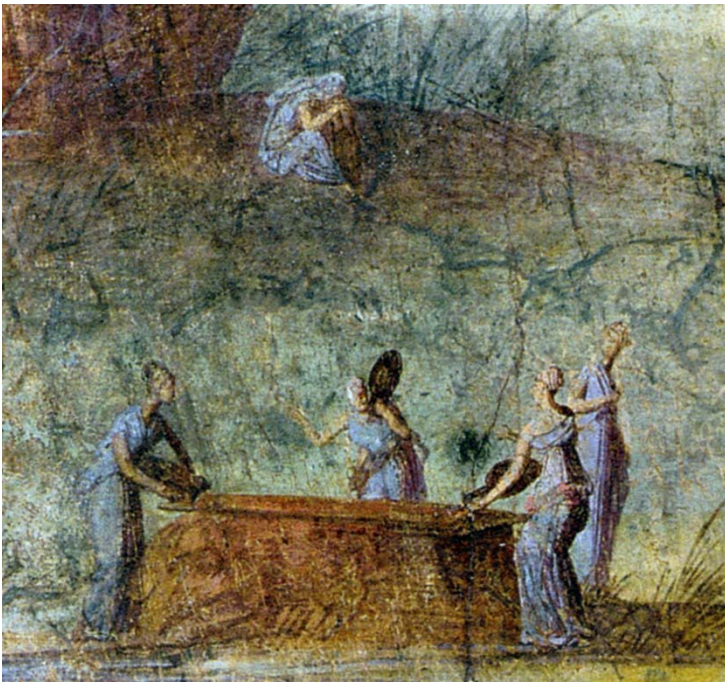


Vatican, Bibl. Tantalos, Sisyphos, and the Danaids toiling in the underworld





A



B

Details of pl. 42 showing (A) Sisyphos and (B) the Danaids.



Vatican, Bibl. Odysseus arriving at Laestrygonia.





Urbana, Univ. of Ill. World Heritage Mus., 82.6.1. Underworld scene.