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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CULT OF DIONYSUS, AND ITS DEPICTIONS
ON GREEK POTTERY

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INTRODUCTION:

Where do the secrets to the powers of Dionysus lie? What caused women of Archaic Greece to abandon their rigid domestic lifestyles, to enter the mountainous landscapes in droves, for frenzied and exhilarating excursions which left them in exhausted heaps; all in the name of Dionysus. Was Dionysus the one deity in Greek Mythology to give women a right and an occasion to use their bodies and their energies for personal expression - if even under the guise of madness or possession? The rites and cults of Dionysus survived throughout a two thousand year era; in fact, it survived from the beginning of Greek civilisation, through classical times, all the way up to the birth of Christ, and beyond. This incredible power that was generated by the god and his myth seized the imaginations of the downtrodden generations and uplifted them for a short period, to a status that was comparable to that of the god himself; Dionysus. When I say 'the downtrodden generations', I speak of women and slaves; whose lives were (by our standards) controlled, and contained little opportunity for rejoicing or pleasure.

My interest in this most fascinating of deities began during a previous study of Greek pottery. My topic was, "SEXUAL IMAGERY ON GREEK POTTERY". I had decided to write on this topic because, I found the treatment, by the Greeks of sexual imagery quite refreshing, sometimes shocking but most of all how alien to our treatment of similar subjects in this day and age. The Greeks seemed to possess a lightness to their interpretations of sex, that has long since been forgotten and smothered in endless analyses, due to sexual politics, aesthetics and other modern day concepts of Art and Design. However, whilst researching this subject I began to read about the cult of Dionysus and entered into 'The labyrinth of Dionysus' as Arthur Evans so accurately puts it in his book; 'THE GOD OF ECSTASY'. It was then that I began to discover how fundamental was this god to the

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expression of sexuality in pre-classical and classical Greece, both male and female. The rites and rituals of Dionysus were central to Greek religion though having their roots in a previous culture, but at the same time, they challenged the laws and ideals of the hierarchy; which were founded on male values, both domestically and publicly. We will see an example of the mythological consequences of this challenge in "The Bacchae". The basis for the whole of western civilisation lies in the history of the Greeks. The roots of our Art, literature, political thinking, philosophy and law are firmly planted in ancient Greece. It is when we begin to read about the progression of ancient culture that we discover where our ideals come from. However, considering that all our ideals and beliefs stem from archaic times it becomes increasingly evident to me that so too, does Western misogyny and stereotyping of sex roles. I decided to write on Dionysian practices, because of its implications for ancient women, but also because of my eagerness to find out whether these strange rituals really did take place. Much has been written on this topic, and there are indeed many questions that can be asked. In order to even attempt to answer any of these, one must consult the literature and physical evidence from classical times. In chapter one, I will discuss what kind of lives women from these times led. In chapter two, I want the reader to see the development of the cult of Dionysus through the ages, and to picture what exactly went on in the rites and rituals practised in his name. I will also, in chapter three, be drawing on 'The Bacchae' by Euripides which I think is a major contribution to the modern and ancient discussion on Dionysus. 'The Bacchae' is a powerful document which challenged Greek misogyny and the topic of the roles of the male and the female within ancient society. As an accompaniment to the central discussion of women in the cult of Dionysus, I will be using illustrations from Greek vases dating from the sixth century B.C., up to the fourth century B.C.. I shall

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also question, in chapter four, how relevant the illustrations are as documents of those times - as we all know it is not always wise to judge a civilisation by its Art alone, particularly an Art such as painted pottery, which was an extremely marketable product that was used greatly for export, as well as internally within the various states, that was ancient Greece. As a ceramist, I find the Greek pottery and its surface paintings fascinating, for many reasons. These craftsmen used their resources so well, they were indeed excellent craftsmen and they created enough work to leave us a horde of information, over two thousand years later. They have left us more evidence of classical Greece, Athens especially, than any other Craft or Art. The strength and maturity of their draughting techniques can be appreciated in the twentieth century both as Art and as Design. It was not until, during the course of my research, I had viewed collections of Greek pottery such as that of the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Paul Getty museum in Los Angeles and our own moderate collections here in Ireland that I realised fully what I felt about this group of craftsmen and their work.

Having explored some of the factors, and regarding some of the various anthropologists, philologists and genuine enthusiasts of the Greek civilisations writings, finally, I shall put forward my own possible solutions to the problems addressed. Take for example; did the women of ancient Greece use the cult of Dionysus for their own ends? Was the cult a feminine alternative i.e., more in touch with Nature, than the more masculine religious practices which revolved around power and politics? I don't plan to project a cut and dried view of how I say things were, but I will raise the points, offer my possibility and leave things open to discussion, as I am sure will happen many more times in the future as has happened in the past.

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CHAPTER ONE

WOMEN'S LIFE IN ARCHAIC
AND CLASSICAL GREECE:

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In order to discuss the topic of women's roles in the cult of Dionysus, it is necessary to give an outline of how women lived in these times. It is important to establish what kind of a place the average woman had within her own home and within the overall picture of each of the Greek states. Most of the information that has been bequeathed us by the ancients was written by men. Practically all classical literature was penned, by male citizens who had active roles within their communities and within 'the polis'; the group of citizens which governed each town, city or state. The times I will be discussing will be mainly those of archaic and classical Greece, i.e. from the eighth century B.C. up to the third century B.C..

Art and literature was dominated by men, as was law and politics. However, from among all the physical evidence it is possible to find poetry and some literature which was written by women; a small percentage perhaps, but enough, nevertheless, for us to try and create a rough picture of the life of woman in ancient Greece. Throughout the expanse of the ancient Greek world more fact has been uncovered about Athens, and its surrounding areas, than about any other Greek state or city. Because of this fact, most of my discussion will be based around Athenian culture. There are a few mentions of Sparta and other areas but, Athenian evidence has provided me with most of my argument. It is true that different attitudes and practises existed between the various states.

Many of us know that women in ancient Greece led very narrow and structured lives, by our standards. Is it fair for us to impose our ideals on the Greeks, or could it be true perhaps that the Greeks were the originators of the misogyny that still persists in Western society today. In my discussion I will be talking mainly about Western society

i.e. Europe, and Northern America, the first world. It is no secret that women's lives revolved completely around the home and the male population in ancient Greece. Women had their own quarters within the household; they were bound to those quarters, and didn't often leave them, even for the purpose of fetching water, unless accompanied by a slave. A woman's work was completely caught up with household chores; preparation of food, spinning wool and making garments and little else; tasks which can be handled with relative ease and with haste these days. They would, of course, have taken much longer in the average Greek household, for instance the corn and maize and other cereals had to be ground by hand and so on. Farming was one of the most prominent occupations, which seems obvious as people had to be self sufficient, to feed and clothe themselves. Only richer people who lived in the cities could afford to have other occupations, or more likely, had no occupation apart from artistic or literary pursuits. It is true that women had no access to education as we have today. The only education a woman received was in domestic duties, that was considered to be all the education she needed. It seems to me that people in ancient Greece were relegated to certain social groups from birth, according to sex and class. Men assumed a public position. They dealt with all public relations in the household, for instance, a man would go shopping assisted by a slave perhaps, or maybe one of his sons - any other crossing over between domestic life and public life was taken care of by the man of the household. This was the status of a freeman i.e. a citizen. His wife, on the other hand was not a citizen, she could not take part in any dealings outside the home, however, in order for her to be a free-man's wife, she would have to have a citizen as a father. Her mother would probably have come from good stock as well. As I have specified, women of this class would have been confined to the home, not to be seen by other mortals. Slaves, on the other hand, were different.

Slave men normally worked in the fields, or were busied with other such manual tasks. Slave women worked domestically, but unlike their free-women seniors, they were able to walk the streets or be seen out of doors, particularly if their work required it. In fact, the higher a woman's status, the less public freedom she had. It was also acceptable for a slave woman to bear a child, or children, for her free citizen owner. The child was considered illegitimate, but if male, was also considered eligible to inherit property, provided he was the only male heir and the man's wife had not already produced a legitimate male heir.

There were, of course other classes and occupations of people, but the regular family seemed to be of the above specifications. There were also prostitutes and heterai which I will discuss in more detail later on. In the large cities lower classes of family existed where women worked on the streets selling wares and husbands probably did the manufacturing of the wares.

There were three main states in classical Greece; Attica, Sparta and Ionia - this is how H. D. F. Kitto divides Greece in his comprehensive study "The Greeks" (see fig.1) Attica, of course, refers to Athens and the surrounding areas. Sparta refers to the city of Sparta and its surrounding areas. Ionia, however, is more complex and this term refers to some of the islands south-east of Athens, it is uncertain to me how far the Ionic territory stretched, but Delos is said to be its cultural capital, and was comprised of all kinds of foreigners as well as native Greeks. Sparta was an area where free-men received extensive training in war tactics, from a very early age. The territory of Sparta existed mainly on the labour of the Helots, who were a race of slaves which were severely controlled, and did not by any means fight alongside their citizen bosses in the various armies. Sparta had a reputation for being more liberal than its rival cities as far as the role and treatment of women was concerned. A Spartan woman's primary function was still

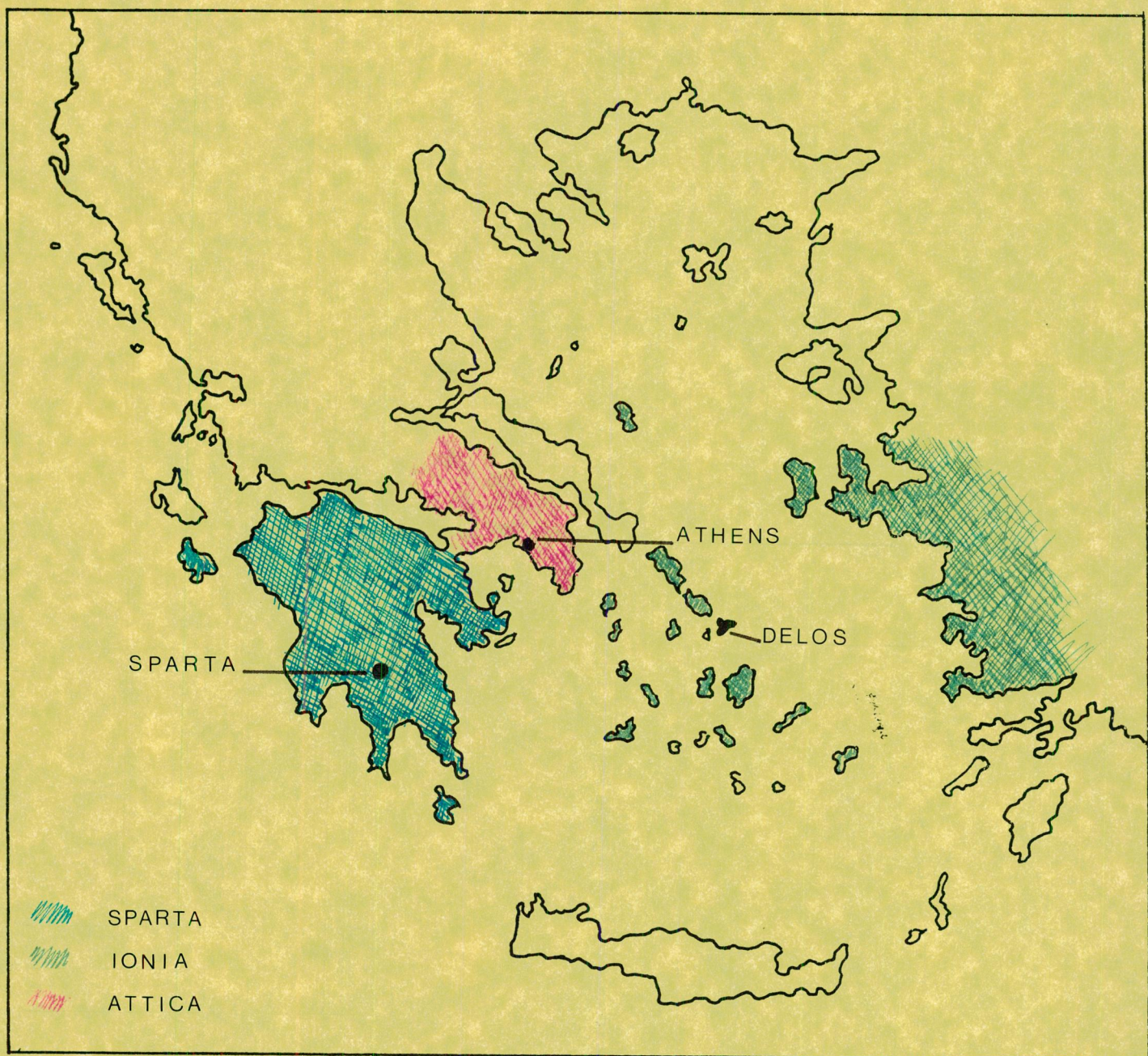


FIG. 1 - CLASSICAL GREECE...
THE THREE MAIN STATES

to be a wife and mother. For instance; Spartan women practised athletics in their youth and they were encouraged to be fit and strong, the main purpose of this was so they could bear strong and healthy warriors. I think, however, that what remains throughout Greece is this similar treatment of women as the producers of the next generation. The initiation of young girls was similar in many areas. When a girl entered puberty she spent her teenage years (though probably very few before marriage) learning to weave and bake bread, she was referred to as a virgin "arrepheros". Interestingly enough, a virgin of those times did not necessarily mean a young woman who had not had sex; but a young woman who was not yet married.

The Greek ceremony of marriage was a kind of symbolic death. When a girl married, she was passing from one stage of life to another - from puberty to wife and motherhood. She was leaving one family and joining another. She was leaving all the female soulmates she had grown up with and loved. She had also probably never met her husband previously. It was unacceptable for a person to go through life without marriage, both men and women thought so, and all married men and women were expected to produce children, though the fathers had very little to do with the raising of the offspring. That was solely the mothers' and the other women of the household's responsibility. All upper-class women had to have a dowry, if they were to be married to a respectable man. Marriages were arranged mostly; love matches were very irregular.

We may ask ourselves what kind of pleasure a woman may have got from her life? A woman's sole responsibility and goal in life was to be a loving and obedient wife for her husband, and a good responsible mother to her children. There is no doubt that many women's singular pleasure was to achieve this. Many women of antiquity would have happily died for their husbands, I'm sure. A woman of those days seemed to expect no fulfilment apart from that of her

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family. Many wives also tolerated and dismissed their husbands' frequent infidelities and took little notice of a mistress or a lover. Men were free to have sexual relations with heterai, household slaves and prostitutes, and as I have previously stated, illegitimate children were often accepted into the household and were raised by the women. Another of a woman's pleasures might have been that as a free-woman in a large household she was completely in control. The house was her domain and she held full responsibility. Women also spent most of their time involved in domestic crafts which no doubt gave them much pleasure, as for social involvement and release, there was little of this, apart from the various festivals and cult practices (those of Dionysus being one of the most important). However, I'm sure that the above was enough to keep many women happy and fulfilled, since they knew no alternative. A virtuous wife was a treasured possession, and I'm sure that the more obedient and efficient a wife was, the more respect and gratitude her husband had for her, which in turn would, no doubt, lead to a fulfilling relationship, between the couple.

I have previously mentioned 'the heterai' and the prostitute, I shall now take a closer look at their roles in Greek society. The heterai were women who, by our standards seemed to have a pretty interesting life. The word 'hetera' means companion, and this is literally her place, she was a courtesan. The Greeks often held small parties in their households called symposia. They were all-male parties (apart from the heterai) where the women of the household were on no accounts admitted - they prepared the food only. The heterai were outsiders who were brought in to entertain the men and socialise. These girls were often raised from birth to fit this role; they were educated, they could play music and dance, they were also mainly foreigners, almost imported for the purpose. The Heterai attended the social and sexual, and often intellectual needs of the citizen.

They too, most likely had to be interesting enough, but not dominating. Stimulating but submissive. Prostitutes were different, because they seemed to operate mainly from brothels, i.e. customers came to them. Brothels were more common in larger cities. The heterai travelled around to the various symposia and brought her talents, whereas the prostitute worked from the brothel and was governed by some type of pimp or madam.

What has become evident is that women had little control over their own existence, they of course could choose whether they wanted to enjoy life or whether they would just carry life as a burden, but in the end they could make no choices as to what they could do with their lives. Who are we to judge and say the the Greeks' treatment of women was wrong because, as we know, the picture was completely different in those days. Not many people were educated to read or write; so why should women be? Well, needless to say, I'm sure the average woman would have had a lot to say had she been able to write and express herself. I think it is true that woman was dominated, and was dictated to for one reason alone; simply because of her sex. She could not vote or take part in politics for the same reason. Women remained silent due to ignorance and domination, and the patriarchal order continued to exert its influence over 'the fairer sex' in the same way as it oversaw the slaves at the time, because of race and class. One of the most convincing factors which prove women to have been regarded as inferior and subordinate to her male counterparts, is the common practice in ancient Greece of infanticide, particularly of female infants. This is talked about by Eva Cantarella (Cantarella, 1987,p.43). She refers to it as 'exposure' (ektetis), when the unwanted child is placed in a container and left on the side of the road to perish.

There was one public sphere of society, fortunately, in which a woman could achieve a position of power and could actively and collectively meet with other women; this was

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within religion. A woman could quite possibly and without question become a high priestess within a cult. There were various cults within the Greek religion that were woman only affairs. There were also various cults that were of mixed membership. Cults were subordinate to the official operations of 'the polis', but they were nevertheless an integral part of Greek society. Dionysus had a lot to do with many of these cults and was therefore, quite important in the lives of many women throughout ancient Greece. Sarah B. Pomeroy reiterates my sentiments when she comments on Dionysus (Pomeroy, 1975,p.12) in relation to the other Olympian members of the Pantheon, stating that he is the one deity that does not dominate and exploit females.

ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ

CHAPTER TWO
HISTORY AND ORIGINS OF THE
CULT OF DIONYSUS:

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As I have already stated, women played a very important part in the cult of Dionysus and indeed, the cult was very important to many women in ancient Greece. I think it is fair to say that the actual cult and rites practised in the name of the god actually precede his myths. Many of the Greek myths were recorded and brought to life by the great dramatists and literary geniuses of the time. For instance; it was Euripides who popularized and brought to reality the myth of Dionysus, whereas his worship and rites had been practised centuries previously, perhaps even millennia before 'The Bacchae' was created in 405 B.C.. There is archaeological evidence to prove that Dionysian rites and worship could have been practised as early as 1600 B.C. According to Walter Burkert, (Burkert, 1985, p.31) a temple was discovered on the island of Keos, (see fig.2) from the Minoan age; in the temple were found twenty terracotta figures of women which date from the fifteenth century B.C. These figures bear more than a passing resemblance to the dancing maenads of Dionysus. The temple was in Greek times a sanctuary of Dionysus and was used as a cult site for over one thousand years. Archaeological discoveries even more startling than this which date from Neolithic times, which Burkert also relates, (Burkert, 1985, p.13) tells of a small clay mask found hung from a pillar-like stand. This object was found in Thessaly, at Achillon. The resemblance between this and similar totems used in later Dionysian worship, from classical times is uncanny. The date of the clay mask could be as early as 6000 B.C. Surely this is evidence to prove that these objects if not used in Dionysian cult practice, were used in some kind of cult practice; possibly a cult closely related, if not ancestral to that of the cult of the god whom I discuss. There are also, of course, mentions of Dionysus in the Linear B tablets, which date

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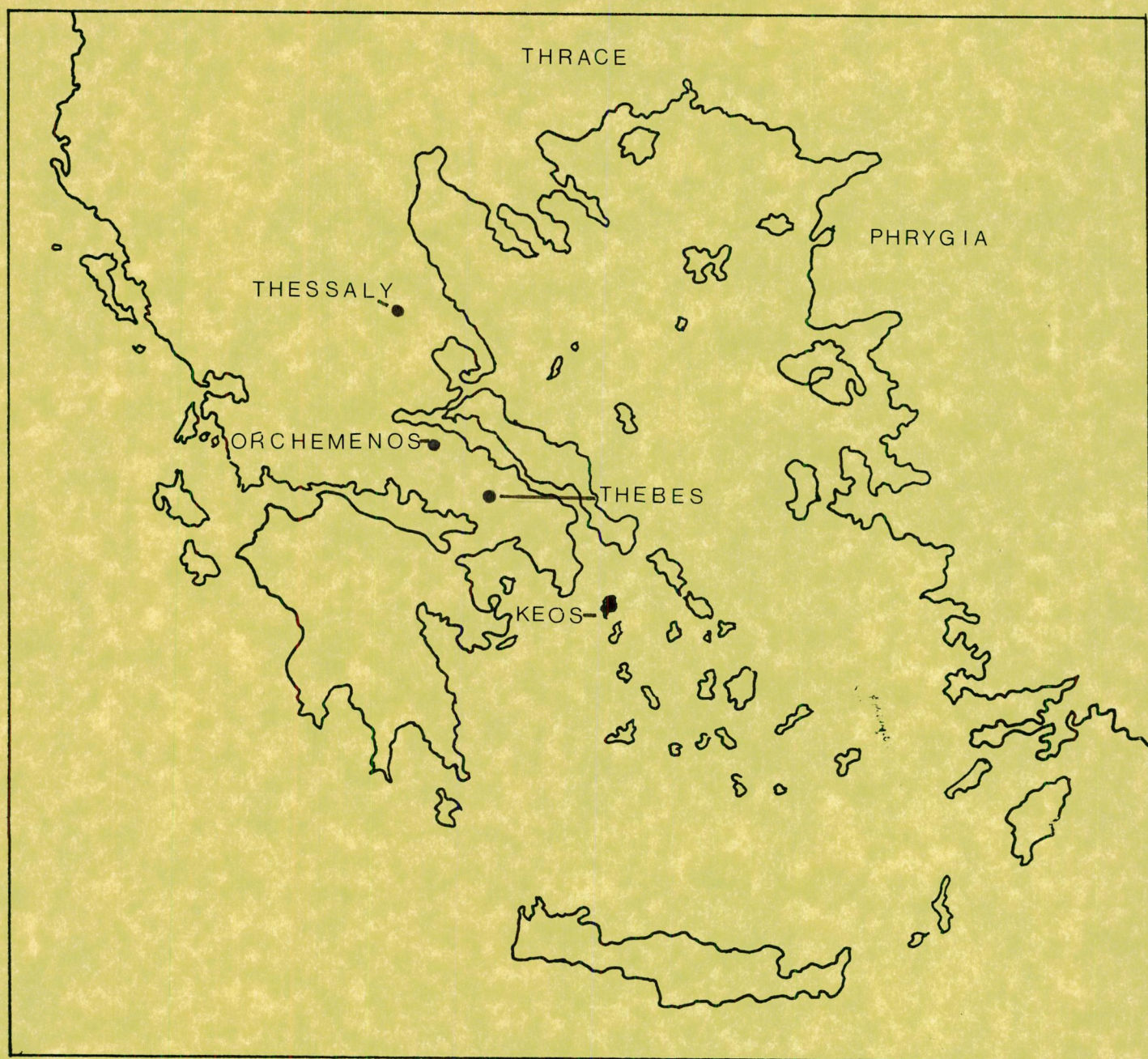


FIG. 2 - ANCHIENT GREECE...

- KEOS - EVIDENCE FROM MINOAN TIMES OF DIONYSIAN WORSHIP
- THESSALY - EVIDENCE FROM NEOLITHIC TIMES OF DIONYSIAN WORSHIP
- THRACE AND PHRYGIA, ORIGINS OF DIONYSUS
- THEBES, CENTRE OF THE MYTH OF DIONYSUS
- ORCHEMENOS, DAUGHTERS OF MINYAS, SOME OF THE ORIGINAL MAENADS ROOTS

from the Minoan/Mycenean age (14th century B.C.). The Linear B tablets are the first samples of the Greek language known to us.

The physical evidence we have at present suggests that Dionysian ritual sacrifice existed long before the myths, were recorded in the ~~in~~ literature that has been passed down to us. However, many writers on the subject have maintained that Dionysus was a foreigner, who arrived in Greece via Thrace or Phrygia; modern day Bulgaria and Turkey (fig.2). The evidence from the island of Keos suggests that Dionysus existed in Greece all along, but merely resurfaced in 1200 B.C. or thereabouts.

In the myth of Dionysus Zeus, the supreme Olympian god and therefore an immortal, had an affair with Semele, the daughter of Cadmus from Thebes, a mortal. Semele became pregnant. The wife of Zeus, Hera (a goddess in her own right) found out about Zeus' infidelities and sought to destroy the innocent Semele. Hera disguised herself as a mortal woman; she approached the young Semele and prompted her to ask the great god to reveal himself to her in all his glory and splendour. If he loved her surely he would do this? Semele was six months pregnant when Zeus revealed himself to her, because he was the supreme god of all the earth she was immediately exposed to the elements; the burning sun, the lightning - she perished, but the premature infant was saved. Zeus sewed the baby into his own thigh and carried the child for the remainder of the term. Dionysus is often referred to as the twice-born because of this. The young infant was left in a cave to be brought up by nymphs (young nurse women). It was these nymphs who followed him to the ends of the earth and assisted him in all his battles as a young god. These women dedicated themselves to him and form part of his entourage - the Thiasos - and become the maenads of his ecstatic revels. Hera came upon her husband's son when he had grown to become a young god. Realising that she had failed to kill him, she drove him insane, and his

attendants the maenads also became infected with this madness. There are many incidences in the life of Dionysus where he is torn to pieces, pursued and hounded and generally tormented, by mortals and immortals alike. However, always by his side and ready to die for him are his Thiasos of maenads. He was driven from the land many times, only to appear in another shape or form elsewhere. When driven from Greece he moved throughout Asia, India and Egypt bringing the gift of the vine with him, conquering and spreading his madness and ecstasy as he went. Dionysus has the ability (since he is a mixture of mortal and immortal, heaven and earth) to transform himself into the shape of any animal. He was known to have appeared as a bull, a snake, a lion and also as a woman. He had the ability to torment people and drive them mad by changing from one beast to another until they acknowledged his divinity and accepted his rites and rituals. The essential nature of Dionysus is duality, each aspect of his mythological character and his afflictions on his devotees have a dichotomy attached. He is both human and animal. He is male and female. He gives ecstasy and exaltation, but he also gives madness and sombreness. He is both good and bad.

Thrace is said to be the original home of Dionysian cult. The young god was raised at Nysa by nymphs. Nysa was the name of a far-off land in Greek myth, however, there were several places called Nysa. For instance, in Ethiopia a Nysa existed, there were also places called Nysa in Egypt, Arabia and Syria. The cult practised much dancing, musical jamborees /ecstatic and orgiastic rites and also human and animal sacrifice. The sacrifice on occasion became horrific and it was known that children, men and also women were butchered in the name of Dionysus. The rituals of mythic derivation had women roaming the mountains, often for days at a time supposedly following their god. They were possessed by the god and danced constantly in a state of religious ecstasy; when they heard the flutes they had to dance. The

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Conclusion

original maenads wore fawnskins and chitons, they carried thrysi in their clenched fists, they often had ivy either in their hair or on their person. Their hair, incidentally was wildly flowing and bushy instead of being tightly tied up as it normally would. Snakes were sometimes brandished by the maenads, or were placed around their foreheads. All these fundamental accessories were symbolic of the close link the women held with nature and with Dionysus as the god of the vine. The snakes were perhaps symbolic of the commonly held Greek view that the cult came from the East. The maenads were said to be dangerous: to interfere with their expeditions was enough reason for them to unleash their mania, and they would inflict their worst on the unfortunate recipient. Pentheus, among others found himself in this position and had his head torn off by his own mother Agave, who had in turn had been infected by Dionysian madness. Pentheus had tried to stop the maenads in their revels. Another who arrived at a similar fate was Orpheus, and Lycurgus also. I will discuss in more detail the fate of Pentheus later on in the text.

When a maenad was ecstatic, her state of mind was altered enough for her to see transcendental visions, experience extreme euphoria and for her muscles to pulse with with rhythm forcing her to constantly dance to the accompanying flute and drum music. Though the maenads cavorted in an ecstatic and orgiastic manner, their state of mind was never on the same level of the minds of the satyrs, who in many depictions, accompany the maenads in their revels. The satyrs were portrayed as half-bestial characters who were constantly sexually aroused; they seemed to pursue the maenads in a lascivious fashion always trying to achieve some kind of sexual gratification. A maenads' ecstasy seemed to be more of a religious and spiritual ecstasy, than a sexual arousal. The female devotees were always at one with their god, and they seemed to immerse themselves in this glory and craved satisfaction from none but him. The maenads

of the myth were daughters of Minyas at Orchemenos (see fig.3), the daughters of Cadmus (Semele's sisters), the nymphs of mount Nysa, the Argive women, the women of Thebes and indeed anyone who primarily rejected him and refused his divinity. He would drive them mad - or if male, he would drive their women mad. A respectable man's wife and mother were not advised to be seen cavorting around the hillsides, tearing apart young animals and consuming the raw flesh, if you get the picture! There are many contradicting stories within the myth and I'm sure that different stories sprung up all over the place to explain his rites and rituals. Also the differentiation probably originates from the fact that his worship was widespread throughout almost the whole of ancient Greece and indeed through the Eastern World. Different places must have had different myths about Dionysus, I'm sure our inheritance of the myth is probably a combination of various versions, and could be incomplete.

Dionysus is said to have existed in different religions under different names, for example, Bacchus in Roman civilisation, Sabazius in another culture, and so on. There were many official festivals held in honour of Dionysus. In Elis (south-west Greece) there was the Thyia (see fig.3). On the island of Andros the festival took place on the fifth of January. On Lesbos the festival was Methymna. The largest festivals were probably the Lenaea and the Anthesteria in Athens. At Delphi the principal god of worship was Apollo, however, for the four winter months Apollo is said to have left the city and Dionysus took over. Apollo represented sobriety, control and intellectuality, which one could interpret as male characteristics, Dionysus on the other hand represented hedonistic behaviour, indulgence and licentiousness which could be seen as the opposite of the Appollonian i.e. female. Many of the festivals were biennial, and some were triennial. When one considers that these festivals were mainly large public occasions, it seems that the role of the women was given less emphasis and much drama and performance

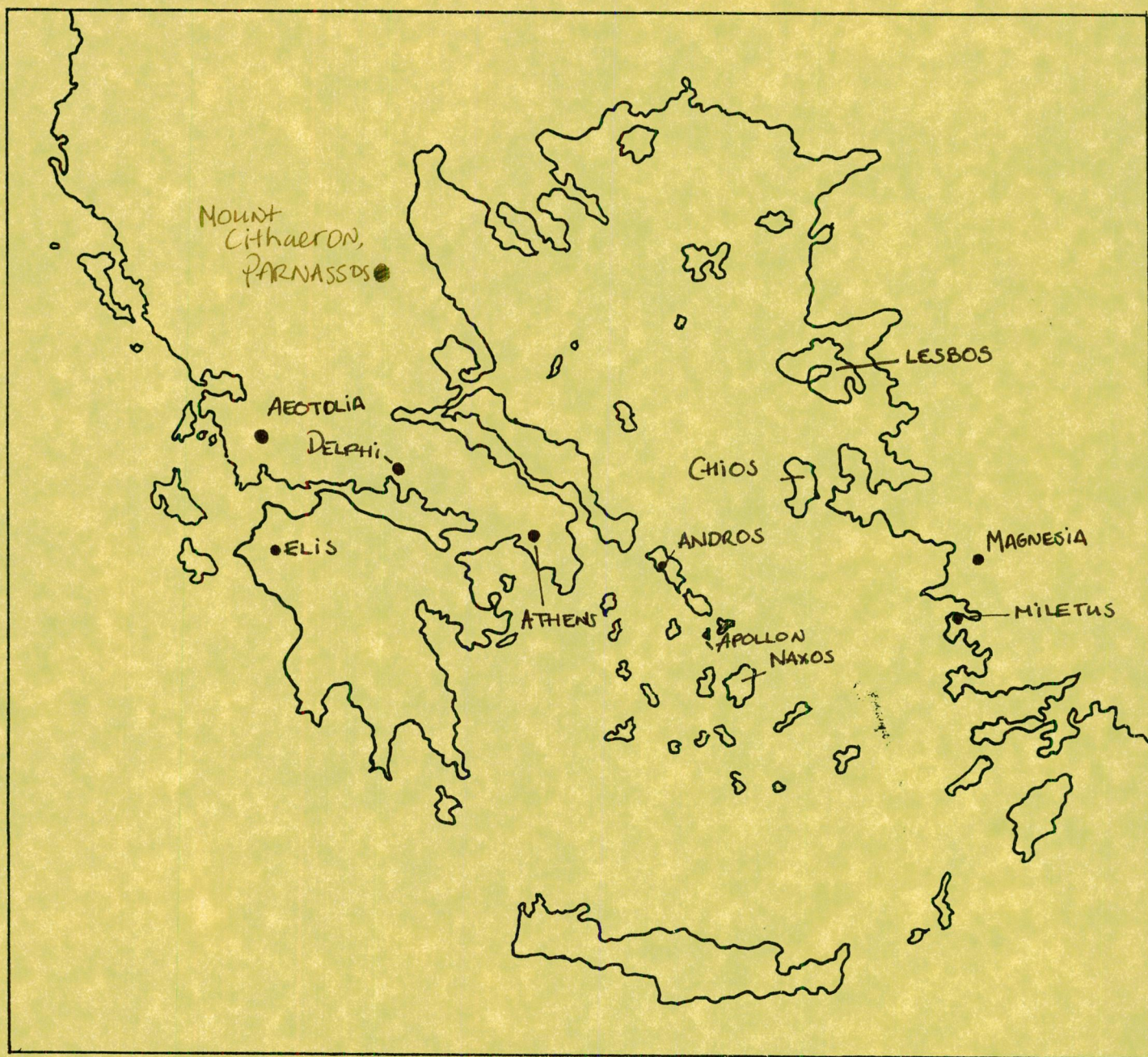


FIG. 3 - PLACES OF DIONYSIAN CULT WORSHIP, AND FESTIVALS

took place instead. Women were not allowed to act in the theatre, men dressed as women for the female characters; there is some doubt as to whether the women were admitted to some of the performances. Arthur Pickard Cambridge discusses this in his study of Dionysian dramatic festivals, he is of the opinion that any women that were admitted, were of a higher social class, they possibly had to sit at the back of the theatre, and he is doubtful as to whether they could attend both tragedies and comedies (Pickard-Cambridge, 1968, p.61). Public festivals were occasions when women were free to walk the streets and enjoy the festivities. They were permitted to drink wine and there were some performances and dances in which women were the prime protagonists, sometimes wearing leather phalluses in honour of Dionysus. These were undoubtedly some of the more rustic, and more traditional gatherings. The more advanced and modern a society was, the more they kept their women under control. In the public festivals the importance of women as Dionysus' divine and sole companions lost its weight, and they seemed to be mere attendants on the occasion.

Private revels existed however, in which women took to the mountains and lived in a purely Dionysian manner, behaving akin to their mythological predecessors. Greek maenads were afflicted by possession in a manner similar to the possession of shamans and witchdoctors and there is much literary evidence which attributes these facts. Among the ancient writers which have marvelled and recorded the activities of the notorious Bacchantes, are Diodorus, Plutarch and Pausanius. There are indeed many others. Albert Henrichs wrote on the actual 'concrete' evidence, so to speak. In his study of maenadism, he tells of actual stone carving documents which record the activities of the maenads of Magnesia, Miletus, and Physkos (see fig. 3) in the second and Third centuries B.C. These maenads, and previous protagonists of the revels danced in front of Dionysian masks which were hung on pillars and were dressed for the

occasion (see Plates 1,2 and 3). The mask was the symbolic presence of the god at the revels. On Naxos, a mask made from the wood of the grape vine and fig tree was used, the vine obviously signifying the deity's power as its inventor. Sometimes the revels took on a sombre facade - in Agrionia, human sacrifice took place. The priest of Dionysus would pursue the maenads with a sword and whoever he overtook were slain. However, at Agrionia the festival of Dionysus was also a festival of the dead. On the island of Chios, (see fig.3) a man was also torn to pieces in a Bacchic fit by the maenadic women. Often, animals were used and the women would tear these to shreds in honour of Dionysus, and as a kind of re-enactment of the time that he was torn to pieces as a child by the Titans. They would also devour the raw flesh in their frenzy, the purpose of this was to inject themselves with the power of the god. Robert Graves firmly believes that Dionysian followers consumed a spotted toadstool called flycap (*Amanita Muscaria*), which was a narcotic and propelled them into their Bacchic ecstasy (Graves, 1955, p.3) / this is a possibility, however ivy leaves mixed with wine are said to produce a similar effect. Maenads were known also to suckle the infant animals of the woods as part of their ritual. This is symbolic of their connection with the earth and with Nature. They were the wild women of the mountains and the forest and they would live this picture, if only for a few days of the year. Dionysus himself was a creature who could change into any beast he wished. He was also commemorated as a fertility figure, the fertility festivals were held in honour of his influence over the earth and, therefore the produce of it.

IV

Conclusion

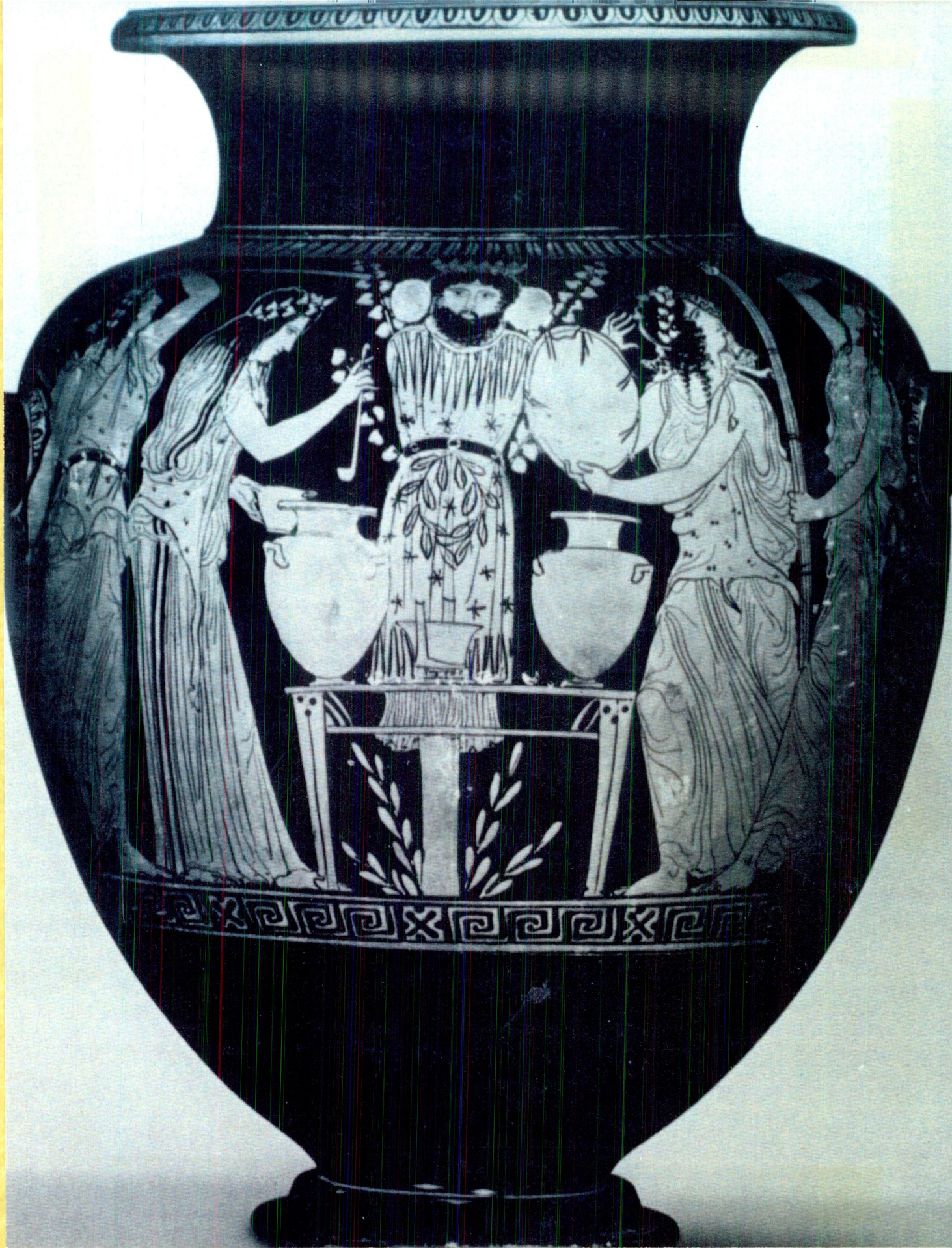


PLATE NO. 1 .. POT NO. 1.
AMPHORA PAINTED BY THE DINOS PAINTER, CIRCA 350 B.C.
MAENADS LADLING OUT WINE BEFORE A ROBED, MASKED DIONYSUS COLUMN
NATIONAL MUSEUM, NAPLES.



PLATE NO. 2.. POT NO. 1
SIDE B OF STAMNOS BY THE DINOS PAINTER
REVELING MAENADS WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND THRYSI



PLATES NO. 3..
DETAIL OF MAENADS ,NOTE LOOSE HAIR AND FAWNSKINS

EURIPIDES BACCHAE

CHAPTER THREE
EURIPIDES 'BACCHAE'
MAENADISM AND ITS
CONNOTATIONS FOR ANCIENT
WOMEN:

CHAPTER THREE:

EURIPIDES 'BACCHAE' AS A DOCUMENT OF MAENADISM IN ANCIENT GREECE; READING INTO THE PRACTICE OF MAENADISM, ITS CONNOTATIONS FOR WOMEN AND SOCIETY:

*Brandish the Thrysus, twine wool through the fawn.
Then free her to dance in the name of our god.
Free from the shuttle, free from the loom,
she waits for her leader, possessed by the god, Dionysus."*
Euripides, 'Bacchae' 110-20.

Of all the Greek drama that has survived; under fifty plays in total, Euripides wrote nineteen of these. The artist had a long productive life of playwriting, but, unfortunately was not fully appreciated in his time. Many of the plays that now exist were composed with the Peloponnesian war as a back-drop. The war spanned a period of twenty seven years in total - and the final outcome was Sparta's defeat of Athens. Euripides' plays were written and performed in Athens; and one of the reasons for the unpopularity of his plays was perhaps their emotional and political content. His message was quite possibly too strong for the citizens in those war-torn years. 'The Bacchae' was Euripides' final contribution to Greek drama, and was produced in 405 B.C. After his death, the play ironically received a first at the Great Dionysia; the dramatic festival of Athens. The play is symbolic of his anger at the patriarchal, conservative system at the time, and his loss of faith in war and its many casualties.

'The Bacchae' is a very powerful tragi-comedy which fully illustrates the struggle between the anarchy and chaos of Dionysus and all he represents and the defensive and irrational Pentheus who is the symbol of conservative 'male' values of classical society. The play is set in the city of Thebes, which is relatively central in mainland Greece (see fig.3). At the opening of the play enters Dionysus, the young god who confounds the people of Thebes because they have refused to acknowledge his birth-right. In particular

he raves about his mothers' sisters Autonoe, Ino and Agave who denied that Zeus was father to Dionysus. He has sent the women revelling to the mountains, accompanied by the Theban women where they gorge themselves on raw animals and frenziedly rush about the rocks and brambles, dancing and exclaiming in the name of Dionysus. He has used the womens' behaviour as an insult to the 'citizens' of Thebes.

*Homes abandoned they all roam the mountains,
out of their senses, deranged; every last woman
in Thebes, up there amongst the rocks, and trees,
witless and homeless, Cadmus' daughters among them."*
Euripides, 'Bacchae', 34-40.

At this time, the primary family in Thebes is that of Cadmus. He has three daughters; Ino, Autonoe and Agave. Semele (Dionysus' mother) was also one of his daughters, but as we have already learnt (in chapter two) she was blasted by a thunderbolt when Zeus revealed himself. Agave has a son called Pentheus, who has been crowned king of Thebes. The primary motive of Dionysus in the play is to bring about the downfall of this family because of their injustice to his mother, for not believing her in the naming of her lover.

The women have taken to the mountains and Cadmus and Teresias (blind servant to the family) have decided to follow suit dressed as maenads. The men decide on this because they know that the wrath of a god is not worth inviting. Pentheus, on the other hand neither believes that Dionysus is a god, nor that he has supernatural power. However, he soon finds out that to the contrary Dionysus *is* a deity, and thus an immortal is indeed capable of anything even appearing as a bull. The god uses this as a ploy to send the young Pentheus to the brink of insanity. The young irrational king of Thebes seeks to capture this strange, effeminate foreigner and having done that, attempts to lock Bacchus in a stable with the animals. Dionysus then appears as a bull to Pentheus and drives him beyond all reasonable sanity. Dionysus then raises the palace to the ground in an

earthquake and thus frees himself. Having tainted the soundness of Pentheus' mind, he cajoles the young king and tells him something and nothing about the practices of the mad women in the mountains, thus increasing his curiosity. The king of course, becomes eager to see the activities that the deranged maenads engage in. He fails to accept that their rites are purely spiritual and religiously ecstatic in nature, and believes instead that they are just a bunch of drunken women, sleeping around.

*It's always the same. The moment you allow drink
at a women's festival, corruption takes over"*
and.....

*Then off they creep to bed down with some man
in a quiet corner. Dionysus? It is the goddess
of lust they are celebrating; Aphrodite.*

Euripides, 'Bacchae', 220-225

Dionysus knows full well that the women are dangerous; they will tear apart anything in their path that moves and is not one of the Thiasos. Of course, Pentheus is eager to see them at play and his fate is spelt when he is lured to the forest, dressed as a woman, for the purpose of spying on the maenadic bunch. Dionysus places him in a vantage point which is obvious to the disturbed women. The mother of Pentheus, Agave and the ringleader in the manic activities sees the young man as a mountain lion. Thinking that he is a vicious animal, she descends on him with the other assailant women and rents his body limb from limb in the notion that she has hunted and killed a lion. Agave then returns to Thebes with the entourage and claims herself to be a great hunter, brandishing in her hands what she believes to be the head of a lion (which is, of course, the head of her own son). After she has proclaimed her greatness as a hunter and equal to the other hunters in her town - the spell is removed, she sees reality and the whole family is disgraced and destroyed in their grief. A hard lesson for the family to learn perhaps, but one Dionysus sees as necessary, as he states here:

I am Dionysus, son of Zeus and of your sister Semele.
 I came to Thebes to seek my earthly home.
 But how was I received? The city rejected me.
 My family cast me out, me, a god, they banished me
 from their mortal company.
 My mother Semele's sisters I drove mad up into the
 mountains, and they have done what I had them do.
 So all of you as exiles must seek your own redemption,
 an expiation which only time can bring.
 Pentheus, my cousin, cousin, who dared to sneer at my rites,
 I mocked in my turn and sent him Bacchios -
 mad to where his mother was waiting."
 Euripides, 'Bacchae', 1330-1337.

So here we have it, the story of 'The Bacchae', and the venting of the anger of Dionysus on the family of Cadmus. Euripides wrote his play as a dramatization of the myth of Dionysus; the outline story was always there but it took Euripides to regenerate the play and give it new relevance in classical times. One can see this play as an outspoken piece of literature which scorns the hierarchy of Athens, and states that power in the hands of a defensive irrational king can be a dangerous thing. Euripides quite possibly felt that the Peloponnesian - Athenian war was a futile exercise, whose outcome would probably spell disaster for Athens, and the play is a reflection of this. The cunning Dionysus however, represented a different kind of power. He was an effeminate god who was renowned for his female appearance, however, the female side of his nature was not irrational and refused to meet violence with more violence. When confronted with brutality and ignorance, he devised a plan, or simply used his supernatural talents to overcome irrationality and stupid behaviour.

Dionysus is often compared to a woman, both in his countenance and in his manner. He is not afraid of this, he is proud of what he is / for he respects women and is in touch with both sides of his personality both the male and the female. Pentheus, however is not, and becomes confused and disgusted when forced to acknowledge his own femaleness. As we can see when Dionysus is captured by Pentheus' troops;

his effeminacy is revealed, as is his calmness when subjected to the bawdiness of the troops....

Messenger: "He made no attempt to escape, never turned a hair. He didn't even pale, but stood there with a smile on his face and told us to bring him here."

Euripides, 'Bacchae' 435

...and Pentheus' attraction to, and rejection of Dionysus as effeminate...

*So, my friend, you are not so bad looking,
I see, not as far as a woman would judge,
which is why you come to Thebes, no doubt.
Such long hair. Not a wrestler, I think.
All down your cheeks. Very luscious.
You do have pale skin. Not much in the sun, are you,
under-cover mostly, hunting Aphrodite?*

Euripides, 'Bacchae' 453-469

After this confliction of emotions Pentheus tries to tease as much information out of Dionysus about the rites and rituals and their implications as possible. He also wants to know about the erotic nature of the god and his many mysteries. However, the young king neither understands nor respects the maenads in their revels, or the god Dionysus. In this frame of mind he is seen as a symbol of the rest of so-called democratic society. He chooses to meet this strange new cult with force and is scolded by Teresias who speaks with wise words:

*Pentheus, listen. Do not be so proud as to think
that brute force is the only source of potency
in man. It is a diseased mind that sees power only
in strength."*

Euripides, 'Bacchae', 310-312

Thus we see the struggle between law and order and anarchy and strangely enough, anarchy wins. Pentheus sees women en masse as dangerous especially when they are hell-bent on celebrating freedom and pleasure. They signify a threat to democracy and patriarchal control.

Not only was maenadic ritual and the cult of Dionysus a threat to democracy but it was also a symbol for things past; it was an old tradition that survived through many

centuries, a tradition of joy in Nature and close contact with the beasts and the earth. This cult was one which involved mainly women and its rites were perpetrated by women alone. In centuries past however, men began to integrate themselves as satyrs and also as priests of Dionysus. Many people believed in Dionysus and his mysteries; parties and public festivals were held in honour of him, celebrations of the vine and of drama, took place in his name by the public as a whole. He was a public deity, and was therefore secondary to the Olympian deities. However, women were not the main protagonists in these public occasions. His private and spiritual devotees continued to be bands of women; the ecstatic dancing parties and possessions were mainly of women. The three and four day excursions to the hills and forests were executed by women only. Seeing as this cult was also a celebration of Nature the patriarchal social order saw it as crude. In the fifth century B.C. man was trying to assert himself as independent of nature. In much philosophy and social practice at the time, the populace were seeing themselves as independent from the environment. Plato was a firm believer in these ideals, he saw the use of the intellect as more important than the use of instinct or intuition. When we consider these ideals it is no wonder that the deity Dionysus, who took all his power from the devotion of women, sacrificial animal killings and the culture of the vine, posed as a stimulating alternative to the stifling and selective intellectual religious pursuits of 'the polis'. Both E. R. Dodds and Arthur Evans believe in Dionysus' power as a god for all - a god of repressed peoples, particularly for slaves and women. As an environmental deity with a power over women/Dionysus, and his followers were often slandered by Athenian officials. For instance; Demosthenes, a public orator of the fourth century B.C. tries to undermine the ability of another public official, Aiskhines, to be part of the political party because his mother was involved in a cult, and because he had a rustic

THE
CONFIRMATION

upbringing.

Demosthenes says this of Aiskhines:

*just look at the kind of life you have had.
You have had a life like a slave and not a free-born son.
And as an adult, when your mother conducted rites,
you would read from their scriptures and help her out
with the other things - at night dressing initiates in
fawnskins,...*

He also says:

*And in the day you led those fine revellers of yours
through the streets, crowned with fennel and poplar
leaves. You would grab puffy snakes and hold them above
your head, shouting, 'Euhoi! Saboi!' and you danced to the
cry of 'Hyes, Attes, Hyes, Attes!', and old hags hailed
you as leader and chief of the dance.*

*Demosthenes 259,260.**

Demosthenes speaks with sarcasm of the women's ritual which uses the gifts of Nature in its practice. Dionysian cult practice was open to the masses, one didn't have to have money, be upper-class or indeed be male to play significant roles or even conduct rites in cults such as these.

When I undertook to write my thesis, my main objective was to prove that women in ancient Greece used maenadism as a chance to express themselves, to hold positions of respect, to mix with large groups of women and to totally immerse themselves in spirituality and physical and mental euphoria. The rituals mirrored the events that happened to Dionysus in his lifetime. Therefore, the women were his nurses and his protectors, they would tear animals to shreds as an imitation of Dionysus himself being torn apart by the Titans. They fed on the mountain beasts in order to consume the power of the god, because they sacrificed the animals as living replicas of Dionysus. Walter F. Otto however believes that these practices actually preceded the myths. He maintains that myth is merely a story, though having many significant roots, to explain the rituals that had been present for centuries. In his book, "Dionysus, Myth and Cult", he projects the concept that to create the myth one

* The source of this quote is Lefkowitz and Fant, 1982,p.273.

has to have a vibrant and mystical source i.e a god that actually does possess. It is hard to pin down physical evidence to prove which activity was the primary source the myth, or the ritual. The ritual, however thrived through centuries and centuries until it became accepted and eventually institutionalized to a certain extent. An example of this organisation can be seen in Lefkowitz and Fant's translation of womens' literature and literature concerning women in Greece and Rome. This quote is from Miletus, 275/6 B.C.:

Whenever a woman wishes to perform an initiation for Dionysus Bacchius in the city, in the countryside, or in the islands, she must pay a piece of gold to the priestess at each biennial celebration.

Lefkowitz and Fant, 1982, p. 274

I have found that many writers on this subject feel the same as I do about maenadism being utilised as a social release in times of restraint on women, indeed it has become a widely held view in anthropological discussion of antiquity. We all need to connect at some stage to something higher than ourselves. We need to feel that we are part of a universal plan. We need a little euphoria in our lives, especially if we are downtrodden or contained within a specific social bracket and haven't much hope of progressing or advancing to other states or places of being. The Greeks knew this and this is one reason for the acceptance of maenadism among the patriarchy, or at least the lack of any real objection that cults of Dionysus could have met with. As Kitto puts it in his book "The Greeks":

The Greeks knew mystical ecstasy and sought it, in cults of Dionysus, but this was one part of a definite scheme of things.

H. D. F. Kitto, 1951, p. 176

One particular Tyrant 'Pisistratus' of Athens actually did much for the city by organizing and legalising festivals of Dionysus. This was an officially large festival which was dramatic in character and encouraged nature rituals and dithyrambs and dances to Dionysus.

Mount Cithaeron at Parnassos (see fig. 3) was infamous for its maenadic processions which took place in the heart of the winter no less. One can see this as an example of the power of the possession that Dionysus exerted over his followers.

Pain and suffering could be taken away, as in other cultures where people affected by the spirit can endure almost anything. The women would conduct the rites at the peak of the mountain amid the snow and ice. When possessed they shrugged all domestic responsibilities, they could act as crazily as they wanted, there were no limits and they always had the backing of their sister maenads, thus, they were safe. Their emotions were intensely heightened. They indulged in 'omophagia', the consumption of the raw flesh (A. Henrichs, 1978, p. 148). Their manic activities were similar to those of 'The Bacchae' but they did not practise the same murder and pillage as Agave and her sisters.

This excerpt from Lefkowitz and Fant sums up the reasons for the widespread practice of Dionysian worship:

The politically repressed often turn to ecstasy as a temporary means of possessing the power they otherwise lack: orgiastic ritual, secret cults, trances, and magic provided such outlets, especially for women, who could not justify meeting together for any other purpose."

Lefkowitz and Fant, 1982, p. 273.

There were various other knock-on effects of practising in cults. Some of these could have been politically justified, for instance; Bacchic excursions, rites and rituals were like controlled revolutions as it were. In a way they could almost be seen as politically correct. The women released excess energy; libidinal, mental or otherwise away from the rest of society. They were permitted to do so, and when the rites were over they returned to their homes to resume their quiet productive lives in the womens' quarters. Ross Kraemer also echoes my sentiments in his article "Ecstasy and possession".

He states:

W

Condensation

Possession thus appears to neutralize the potentially destructive elements felt by oppressed individuals of a society by permitting them to be vented through highly institutionalized regulated forms."

R. Kraemer, 1979, p.77

Kraemer also sees Dionysian ecstasy and possession as a kind of medical ailment (see Plate no.s 4,5,6 and 7). He states that Dionysus actually inflicts his subject with the initial madness, which then materializes into a kind of ecstasy. Therefore, Dionysus is both the afflictor and the healer, because the rites and the ecstasy do actually come to an end.

In the cult of Dionysus, where the god plays the role both of the afflictor and the healer, it is perhaps not insignificant to note that Dionysus was himself considered in the myths to have been originally driven mad by Hera."

R. Kreamer, 1979, p.75

From this quote it is evident that no-one was to blame for the possession, except Hera, if anyone tried to apportion the blame, they could not point the finger at Dionysus. We can now see that Bacchic rites and cults were utilised by women as a kind of social release. They did have a detrimental function within the patriarchal society and there is one other possibility as to why they were neither interrupted nor criticised by the general populace, apart from the staunchest classic thinkers of the day, such as Demosthenes as we have already seen (page 33). Dionysus was a deity; it was unwise to comment on the practices of a god, after all we know what happened to Pentheus and so did the ancients. The Greeks lived their mythology, it was part and parcel of everyday life, there was no room for pessimism. Cadmus and Teresias in the play knew full well it was not a good idea to invite the wrath of a god.

Teresias: "It is not good for us to reason about the gods. We hold what our fathers held, and their fathers before them, from time immemorial. They did not waste time rationalizing and philosophising. Suppose someone says I look a fool at my age going off to dance with ivy in my hair. It is no shame to me. The god has decreed we should, young





PLATE NO. 5... POT NO. 2
POINTED AMPHORA BY THE KLEOPHRADES PAINTER, MUNICH
DATED BETWEEN 505 / 475 B.C. DIONYSUS WITH SATYRS AND MAENADS
ONE ECSTATIC MAENAD THROWS HER HEAD BACK IN ECSTASY WITH LIPS
PARTED. OTHER MAENADS CARRY SNAKES AND THRYSI THREATENINGLY.





*and old, and dance I shall. No half measures for this god,
and no-one is exempt."*

Euripides, 'Bacchae' 200-210

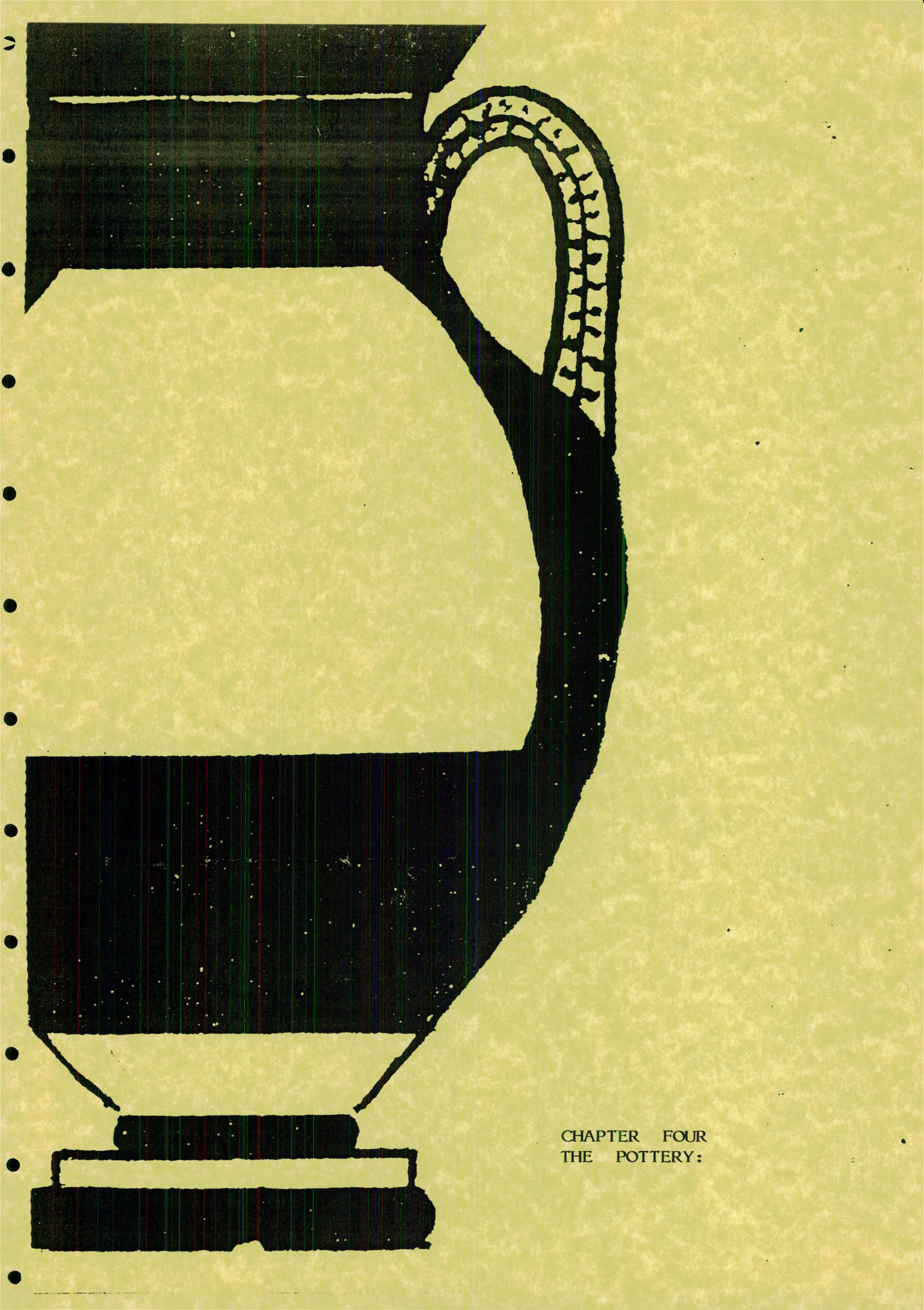
Arthur Evans also confirms the importance of the rites of Dionysus, and the necessity to respect the god and to take part wholeheartedly in his worship, not using it for individual benefit (though it no doubt did benefit individuals) but creating an overall expression of complete faith and devotion to the god.

The rites were grounded in a very ancient religious tradition with an emphatic mythological message. To disparage or impede women in these rites was a grave offense against a god and an invitation to catastrophe.

They were not viewed as a mere human diversion.

Arthur Evans, 1988, p.18

It should be clear that Dionysian cult practise had many functions within archaic and classical Greek society. It functioned as a kind of 'feminist sub-culture' as I. M. Lewis called it, (Lewis, 1971, p.80) which was extremely difficult to assemble within a social structure completely dominated by men, and where women led most of their lives confined to domesticity and its many chores. The social implications were that it acted as a type of pressure gauge, to alleviate the frustrations and angers that may cultivate within low social classes and within repressed groups, such as those of ancient Greek women, as it were. It was also a primal, environmental type of culture that reiterated humankind's connections with the earth, when authority was trying to shun its ties with nature and the beasts.



CHAPTER FOUR
THE POTTERY:

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE POTTERY;
DEPICTIONS OF MAENADS IN THE CULT OF DIONYSUS ON GREEK RED
AND BLACK FIGURE VASES.

Like ancient literature, drama and philosophy, Athens was also the centre of the ceramic industry in preclassical and classical Greece, therefore most, if not all of the vase-paintings I have used in my discussion have been taken from Athenian pots. I have used various illustrations as examples of the kind of maenadic depictions that were typical at the time. Dionysian imagery on Greek pottery had a grand era; this era spanned a period of approximately one hundred and fifty years. Within this grand age, hundreds and thousands of pots were made, and one of the most fashionable decoration subjects was that of Dionysus and his Thiasos. This is not to say that Dionysian imagery had not been utilised previous or even after this period, it had of course, but never so prolificly and with such variation of attitude, towards the maenads and the satyrs. There were many different painters who were well practised in producing depictions of this nature; among them were the Heidelberg painter, the Amasis painter (Plate no.12) and the Lydos painter - the Makron painter (Plate no.17) and the Byrgos painter (Plate no.16). The grand period of Dionysian imagery spanned from circa 600 B.C. to circa 450 B.C., I will discuss this later in detail.

Art and craft began to flourish in classical Greece, particularly in Athens and environs (Attica). The most widespread specialized trades were that of the potter and the metalsmith; both did much to improve the economy of Athens. Foreign craftsmen were encouraged to settle in Attica, they were even awarded citizenship if they did so. This was mainly owing to the fact that Attica was not selfsufficient because its soil was too thin to bear corn. Therefore, vines

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and olives were well grown and Athens needed containers for its wine and olive oil. The skill of the potter/painter grew so great that they were able to monopolise the market and the vases began to be exported all over the Mediterranean and even into Central Europe. This, of course being the reason why most Greek pottery is now in Italian and European collections and not in Greece as one might expect.

The two main techniques of vase-painting were the red and black-figure techniques. The black-figure technique of painting was discovered in Corinth around 700 B.C. (Plate no.8 and 11) All pots are thrown from wet clay on a wheel, the artist then paints the figures on the pot in silhouette. All the linear detail is incised with a small sharp tool, some other colours are often added - a red slip (liquid clay with red iron oxide) and a white slip are sometimes used. These are all applied before the pot is fired. By about 630 B.C. practically all vase-painting was produced by using this process. The red-figure technique, on the other hand, was discovered in Athens about 530 B.C. Red-figure is the opposite of black-figure. The image remains in red, or the colour of the pot; the black slip (made most likely with manganese) is painted around the figure, or pattern (Plate no.4). Any linear details are painted on as thin lines rather than incised. These fine lines were produced when a liquid black slip, of thick enough consistency to be squeezed from a nozzle was used. The result was a technique similar to one we use today - slip trailing, it was called, which resulted in fine lines which stood away from the pot, like relief. The scenes by the red-figure potters and painters were closer and had a crispness and sharpness, that left the black-figure miles behind. All the pottery was completely functional and was used to transport goods, to mix wine and foods and was used also to grace the table at symposia and large festivals etc., as well as in the home on a daily basis.

CONTRIBUTOR



PLATE NO. 8...POT NO. 3 - AMPHORA FROM U.C.D. - UNNATRIBUTED
ATTIC BLACK FIGURE TECHNIQUE, C. 535 B.C.
AN EARLY DEPICTION WITH AMICABLE SATYRS AND MAENADS IN DANCING
POSES. mEANADS HAVE NO CHARACTERISTIC CLOTHING.



PLATE NO. 9.. POT NO. 3 DETAIL



PLATE NO. 10.. POT NO.3 DETAIL



PLATE NO. 11... - POT NO. 4, FROM U.C.D. BLACK FIGURE TECHNIQUE
SATYR CARRYING OFF MAENAD, OR NYMPH- UNATTRIBUTED PIECE

My interest lies purely in illustration of true maenadic activities which seemed to become more prolific toward the end of the Dionysian imagery era, where women appear alone with Dionysus (Plate no.12 and 13), or even with a representation of the god (Plate no.17 and 1). For instance, in many paintings he appears in the form of a bearded mask set upon a pole, or pillar, or column. The totem is clothed in Dionysian garb i.e. animal skins and the like, sometimes the pillar is naked with a simple phallus. Around this totemic symbol of the god dance ecstatic maenads, with musical instruments, in various stages of excitement.

The question of the role of the potter as a historian is a difficult one. It is easy to look at the pottery and paintings produced and say that they are a record of how the Athenians acted and lived, and that they depict issues that the population held close to their hearts. But this is simply not true, we can to a certain extent use these vases as a historical record; but only when we have considered all other determining factors. Thomas H. Carpenter states at the opening of his book 'Dionysian Imagery in Archaic Greek Art':

I have tried to remember that vase-painters were neither theologians nor philosophers - not literary critics nor art historians but that they were artisans who surely intended the imagery of their pictures (when they thought about it at all) to be accesible to the potential buyers."

Carpenter, 1986, p.16

As I have stated earlier a great deal of the pottery was made for export; this must have had a major effect on the type of imagery that was used, for example; many of the images have a kind of sexual humour to them, people could no doubt enjoy and appreciate this easily enough, therefore the pots no doubt were decorated with their sale and popularity in mind i.e. the commercial factor.

Influence and schooling also, no doubt became another factor in a potter/painters style of illustration. All potters/painters were trained by older craftsmen and had to continue to work in the same workshop, when fully qualified,





PLATE NO. 13.. POT NO. 5 -
 AMPHORA PAINTED BY THE AMASIS PAINTER C. 540 B.C.
 DIONYSUS STANDS WITH HIS KANTHAROS AND TWO MAENADS APPROACH
 ARMS AROUND EACH OTHER, HOLDING A HARE BY THE EARS.
 ONE WEARS A PEPLOS AND THE OTHER HOLDS A SMALL STAG BY ITS LEGS.

While receiving initial training, a young recruit would learn the tricks of the trade lock, stock and barrel from an established member of the workforce. Therefore, the young trainee would, no doubt be trained to use certain imagery, pot certain shapes and utilise certain draughting techniques, so that he would be creating in someone else's shadow for half his career at any rate. This insured the continued use of certain acceptable popular scenes in the imagery of Dionysus, until of course, the young painter was in a position of skill, authority and confidence to introduce perhaps new interpretations of the subject matter. This factor would determine certain effects; the artists themselves may have lost touch with the originality of the subject matter. i.e. they knew the myth and its practices as they depicted them and not as they were originally told perhaps. Or indeed they may never have witnessed a cult ritual, but could have had their preconceptions and acceptable notions of what went on. Having said all of this, some of the pot paintings come incredibly close to some of the literary evidence, often from centuries previous. However, given all the factors of marketing a product such as pottery, it becomes far easier to accept the literary evidence before accepting the artistic evidence. Here we have the recurring question raising its head; can we judge a civilisation on its Art alone? Sometimes, yes, sometimes, no.

I shall discuss however, the development of Dionysian Thiasos scenes and the implications. According to Sheila McNally who has written articles on the subject, the imagery of Dionysus' devotees may be divided into parts. According to her overall picture of this period of vase-painting - the attitudes towards, and the interpretations of the Thiasos go through various stages. Originally we have Dionysus with his satyrs and maenads dancing amicably and frolicking together on vases (Plate no.s 8,9 and 10) from 580 B.C. to 550 B.C., from 550 B.C. to 500 B.C. we see satyr/maenad relationships



PLATE NO. 14... CUP NO. 6 -
DIONYSUS IS SEATED AMONG HIS FOLLOWERS, HOLDING IN ONE HAND
A KANTHAROS AND IN THE OTHER A VINE BRANCH WITH WINESKINS
HANGING FROM IT. THE GOD IS SEEN WEARING WOMAN'S CLOTHES,
THE CHITON, WITH HIS HAIR TIED UP.
A WINE VESSEL.



PLATE NO. 15... CUP NO. 6 - PAINTED BY THE BRYGOS PAINTER
C. 470, 480 B.C. RED FIGURE. A MAENAD IS BRANDISHING A THRYSSUS
OVER HER HEAD LIKE A HEAVY CLUB, SHE ALSO THRUSTS A SNAKE AT THE
SATYR WHO IS PESTERING HER, OTHER MAENADS CAN BE SEEN PERFORMING
A SPECIAL DANCE, LIKE BIRDS.

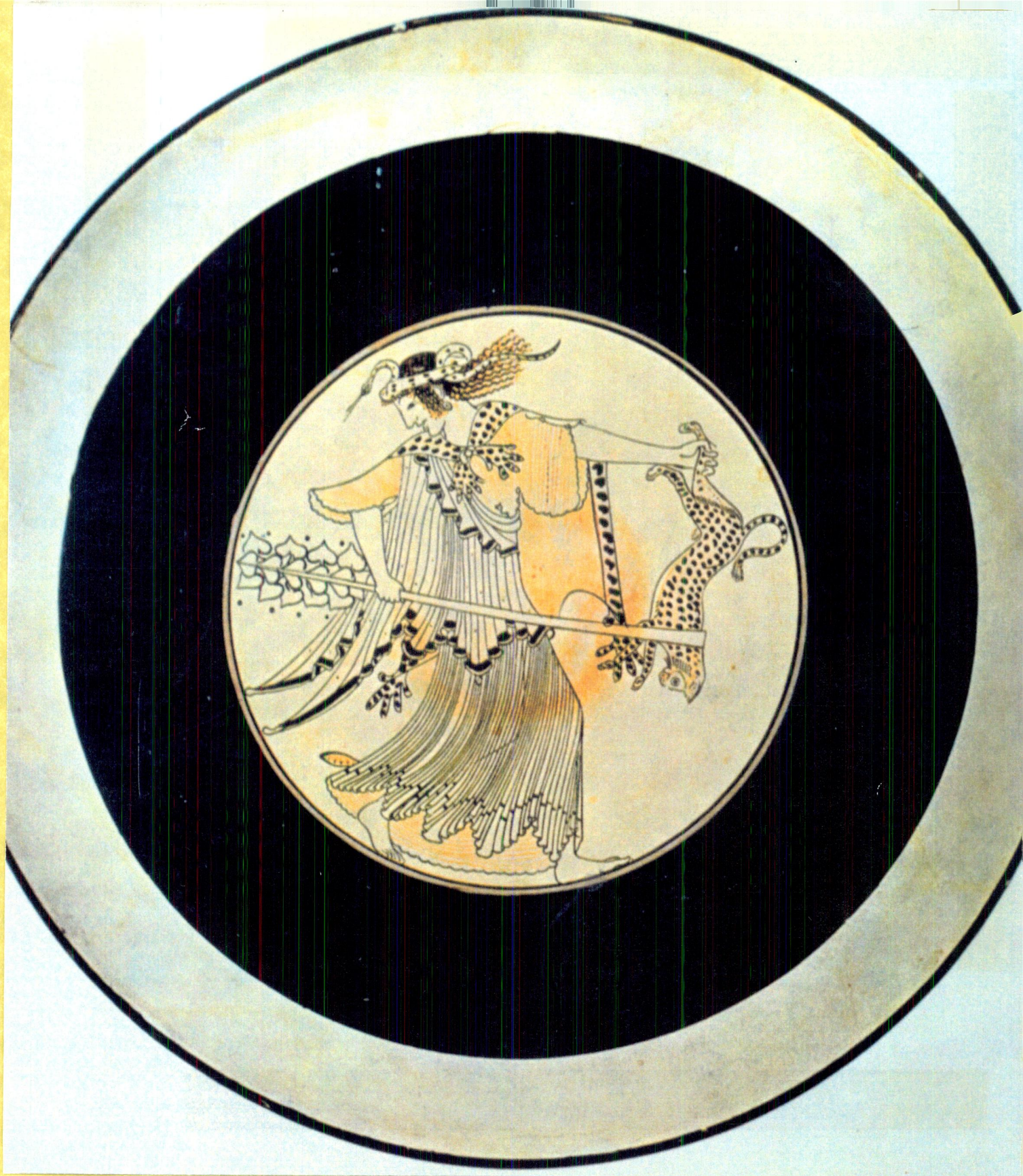


PLATE NO. 16.. CUP NO. 6

THIS IS THE INSIDE OF THE CUP ON PLATE 15 AND 14.

THIS TECHNIQUE IS CALLED 'WHITE-GROUND'.

THE MAENAD IS A TRUE CULT WORSHIPPER WITH HER SNAKE WRAPPED AROUND HER WILD HAIR, WITH A YOUNG PANTHER IN HER GRASP.

HER HEAD IS TWISTED TO THE SIDE IN A SUGGESTION THAT SHE IS FOLLOWING THE DANCE OR DEEPLY ENGROSSED IN A DANCE OF HER OWN

that are pleasant, erotic and celebratory. From 500 B.C. onwards relations between the two sexes become hostile and explosive, with lascivious satyrs trying to molest and take advantage of sleeping and alert maenads (Plate no.s 14 and 15, and 11). We see satyrs being warded off with thrusus poking in the genital area, courtesy of the 'bacchantes'. And at the end of the period we see maenads alone, having reclaimed their ritual and dancing ecstatically once again (Plate no.s 17 and 18).

This is fine as an outline of the general trend of satyr/maenad relationship depiction. But, alas as always there are continually underlying factors that influence the artists, and we cannot generalise without having seen every pot from the period. This indeed would be a daunting task, and one which Beazley took on as a life-time supply of work and research.

There is a significant development from one kind of interpretation to another that concern us here. In earlier vases from the period we see satyrs and nymphs with Dionysus. This may be the reason for the amicable relation between protagonists of earlier pots as Sheila McNally has suggested. Nymphs are immortal, mythological creatures who nurse the baby Dionysus in his infancy. They are recognised in vase-paintings as female figures with no spectacular features or accessories, they are companions of Dionysus, but their immortality suggests that their imagery is merely mythological subject matter (Plate no 8). Satyrs in a similar way are creatures, they are ithyphallic, i.e. equipped with abnormally large phalluses, constantly erect. They have snub-noses like bulls; they have long pointed ears and hoof type feet. This all suggests that satyr depictions and amicable satyr/nymph couplings on vases were purely mythological representations. A 'match made in heaven so to speak', they weren't really real. On the other hand maenads were real. The name 'maenad' is derived from the word for raving and madness. Homer refers to mad women as maenads.



PLATE NO. 17... CUP NO. 7 -

THIS RED FIGURE WINE CUP WAS PAINTED THE MAKRON PAINTER IN C. 480 B.C. THERE IS PLENTY OF ACTIVITY ON THIS CUP. WE SEE A ROBED AND MASKED DIONYSUS PILLAR. THE MAENADS PERFORM THEIR RITES AROUND THE PILLAR. THE ALTER LIKE STAND IN THE PAINTING SUGGESTS THAT THIS RITUAL IS PROBABLY BEING HELD AT A SANCTUARY.



PLATE NO. 18... CUP NO. 7 -
 THE REVERSE SIDE OF PLATE 17. THIS CUP IS FROM VULCI.
 THE MAENAD IN THE CENTRE HOLDS THE SMALL ANIMAL AS IF IT IS TO
 BE SACRIFICED ANY MOMENT, AND THE DANCE GOES ON...
 HERE THE MAENADS HAVE RECLAIMED THEIR CULT TO THEMSELVES
 AND SEEM AT ONE WITH THEIR GOD.

However, they have method in their madness as we have learned in chapter three. A maenad is recognised, as we know by wearing fawnskin, by clutching small animals in her hands (ready for consumption), by carrying a thrysus - by having snakes in her company or intertwined in her hair. The raving woman is seen in ecstatic poses, contorted - the paintings we see of these women are no doubt drawings of real cult practise (Plate no.s 17 and 18). They are not nymphs, they are mortals, therefore they reject the advances of the satyrs (Plate no.s 14 and 7). What may be confusing is the presence of so-called mythological figures (i.e. satyrs, half animal) in real depictions of cult worship. Why the hostility between the satyrs and maenads? Here I am putting forth suggestions. At this time i.e. mid sixth century B.C. the festivals of the Great Dionysia and other such Dionysian festivals were growing larger and were accepted and promoted by the various tyrants - Pisistratus, Sicyone. In the festival, satyr plays are the main format of entertainment. Men would often don large leather phalluses and masks and would conduct the plays, which were comic in nature. The satyrs which pester our ecstatic maenads are quite possibly the vase-painters introductions. The maenadic women are trying to conduct a ritual in honour of their precious lord Dionysus, they are trying to enter into a state of mystical and religious ecstasy, which cannot be easy when satyrs, even Dionysian satyrs make their advances in such a crude and desperate manner. Maybe satyrs in the cult are an invention of the artists, as I have suggested. Why not? They are not mentioned in the original myth of Dionysus; all his followers are women. This is why the maenads refuse to entertain their advances.

The various changes in the perception of the god and his Thiasos are noted by Thomas H. Carpenter, he states quite correctly:

"He seems to change from being a rather straightforward symbol of wine and its effects to being an extremely

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complicated mythic personality, and it is not unlikely that this change can be connected with the growing importance of the City Dionysia as a major festival in Athens."

Carpenter, 1986, p. 29.

Maybe the painters became aware of the widespread practice of Bacchic ritual for women or maybe the painters introduced their antagonism between the male/female followers of Dionysus, as a ploy to bring humour to their illustrations as a dramatic comic injection to maintain interest in the pottery. Sheila McNally remarks about the various animal natures and savagery of maenads - 'brandishing a thrysus over her head' (Plate 14), another maenad - 'holds a hare by its ears in a manner which makes one fear for its future' (Plate no. 12), and she talks too of the thrysus having a special power;

"It is the emblem of closeness to plant life, to growing nature."

Sheila McNally, 1972, p. 121

..these things are true, of course, because true maenads were savage creatures who established a close tie with the earth and the beasts. They are human women indulging in bestial activities, in a way. The pot painters treatment of maenads could be very similar to their behaviour, however, they could also have been a joke played on the Athenian women, mocking them for practising cult activities. The ceramic quarters could have been just as threatened by Bacchic female 'union' as the patriarchal public figures. The depictions could have been as much a conscious mimicking of women, as similar jokes today about feminists being lesbians and men-haters etc. This is a possibility, but it would vex me to think that the potters used their simply art to achieve these ends, i.e. to mimick the Athenian for cult membership.

After all this discussion I think what remains is the more than likely fact that earlier scenes are mythological, later scenes are both mythological and real and also dramatic, so we cannot pinpoint clearly held views and attitudes

CONCLUSION

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we can merely assume and put forward our own propositions. However, I would like to be optimistic about the cult and its place in society, believing that it offered many women a chance to adopt a riotous and anarchic attitude against their oppressors, however shortlived, and an opportunity to be proud of their sex and their abilities to experience the mystical ecstasy unlike their male counterparts. As for the pottery, one can enjoy the exciting portrayals and achieve some idea of the raucous revels that were held, no matter how abstract their depictions.

CONCLUSION:

To discuss my chosen topic I had to consider the place and role of women at the given time. I have done this and have reached the conclusion that no matter how one interprets the available evidence, the fact remains that women were considered subordinate to the citizens. Ancient Greek women played the role primarily of nurturers and producers of men and little else. Within this role they had little chance of personal and collective expression and indulgence.

Classical mythology provides us with the guidelines for behaviour and living that these people adhered to. As far as one can fathom, the mythology presents us with a body of gods and goddesses that were seated in the Pantheon, at Mount Olympus. The mythology was man's attempt to impose an order on the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic world. The male deities reigned all; and the female deities behaved according to this. The one god that did not dominate women or exploit them was Dionysus. He was however, not a true Olympian, he was a public god. As a public god his worship was open to all, particularly women; and indeed women of any social class or bearing, be they married, widowed, divorced, virgins or otherwise. Considering these facts, one can see how Dionysus gave women an importance they otherwise lacked. His rites, revels and worship were reason for them to celebrate him, to celebrate their sex, and to celebrate the gifts of Nature and human contact with the earth. While tracing the practice of the worship through the centuries, it is clear that Dionysian rites gathered and lost popularity many times, and struggled against 'public'(i.e. the citizenry) opinion sometimes, but the rites never died out completely.

The pottery which I have used in my discussion represent both mythological depictions and actual cult depictions, however, it unfortunately cannot be taken one hundred percent for granted as physical evidence of Dionysian

ritual, due to all the commercial and other factors involved in its production. We can on the other hand, take it as a significant indication of the popularity of the god and his Thiasos within the discussed grand period of Dionysian imagery on Red and Black Figure Atticware.

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