480 BCE

Reconsidering the Chronological Anchor of Archaic and Classical Greece

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Abstracts

Susan Rotroff (Washington University in St. Louis; via Zoom)

Not Everything Has To Be 480: Another Look at the Stoa Gutter Well

One of the results of a clear-cut historical date is that more and more physical phenomena tend to be connected with it. The known destruction of Athens by Persian forces in 480 offers the easiest and most obvious explanation for damaged buildings and concentrations of debris in the city. But these connections need to be examined and reexamined critically. The Stoa Gutter Well, at the southeast corner of the Athenian Agora, is a case in point. Its enormous fill, excavated nearly 70 years ago, has been identified from the start as Persian destruction debris and plausibly interpreted as the inventory of a pottery salesroom. But there is an apparent problem with this scenario. In the opinion of the ceramic experts who examined it at the time of discovery and then again at the time of the publication of Agora XII, some 15 years later, the pottery, though broken by the Persians, includes no figured ware dating later than 490. This paper addresses this seeming contradiction, reviewing the ways in which resolution has been attempted in the past, and suggesting ways in which it might be addressed in the future.

Kathleen Lynch (University of Cincinatti; via Zoom)

"Delayed" Persian Destruction Deposits around the Athenian Agora: How Delayed, and Why?

In T. Leslie Shear's (1993) masterful study of the Persian destruction clean-up deposits found in the excavations of the Athenian Agora, he notes that eight of the 21 closed deposits he studied contained pottery dating later than ca. 480 B.C.E. That is, these eight deposits must have remained accessible as the Athenians continued their clean-up, and thus, more "recent" pottery, produced after the Persian sack, found its way into these contexts. This paper will re-examine these eight deposits and additional destruction clean-up strata that contain pottery customarily dated to the second quarter of the fifth century B.C.E. As will be clear from other conference papers, ceramic chronologies that use 480 B.C.E. as a fixed date are less stable than we would like. The later pottery in the delayed deposits further complicates the picture, but patterns emerge that indicate a profound shift in the pottery industry post-480 B.C.E. Additionally, these delayed deposits allow us to consider aspects of human behavior as Athenian residents returned to their devastated city and confronted the challenges of rebuilding.

Floris van den Eijnde (Utrecht University) & Michael Laughy (Washington and Lee University)

Digging up Democracy: The Story of the Fifth Century Public Wells and the Development of the Athenian Agora

The archaeological material within the wells of the Athenian Agora that were closed due to the Persian destructions of Athens in 480 and 479 BCE have long played a pivotal role in determining the chronology of the Late Archaic and Early Classical periods. In 1993, T.L. Shear, Jr. published a comprehensive catalogue and assessment of 21 wells and pits from the Agora that were determined to be closed and filled with material from the Persian Destruction in the immediate aftermath of the war. This publication has since been cited as close to the final word on these deposits and is thus deemed to be crucial to chronological discussions of pottery styles—and even artistic styles more broadly.

The non-ceramic fill of the wells, however, tells a story that is at least as interesting as that told by the pottery, changing the way we think of their depositional histories and potentially impacting their use for absolute dating. A reexamination of the non-ceramic material within these wells and pits raises some important questions, not only about the wells themselves, but about methods and approaches to the archaeology of wells in general. How much do we know about the depositional practices that led to the filling of each of these wells? How should we define "destruction debris," and how might we recognize it? And does the dating of any of these wells invite circular reasoning, as pottery specialists look to the Agora deposits as an "anchor" for absolute and relative dating? We propose a new way of thinking about the depositional histories of the Agora wells that takes into account unique circumstances that led to the filling in of each individual well and seeks to explain them in the context of the broader historical development of the fifth century Athenian Agora.

Giorgia Proietti (Università degli Studi di Trento)

The long post-war: coping with trauma in post-480 Athens

This paper explores the other face of the great naval victory in 480, namely the Persian sack of Athens and the Athenians' reactions to it, and proposes to read it through the lens of social trauma. Archaeological and literary evidence concerning the Persian destruction and its aftermath shows in fact traces of dramatic and problematic aspects in the Athenian postwar period, having to do especially with the destruction of the city and the high death tolls. The paper dwells first on those aspects of material recovery from the Persian sack which clearly express the Athenian will not to forget it, and to remember it according to specific symbolic messages. The most sacred temple of Athena Polias as well as the Older Parthenon were not re-built, but were monumentalized as sacred ruins, and parts of them were incorporated, patently exhibited, into the northern side of the new Acropolis circuit wall. Second, some tragedies which were put on stage during the '70s and '60s are presented as forms of 'cultural therapy' for the traumatized civic community, in connection with the sack of the city (in the case of Phrynichus' *Sack of Miletus*), the unprecedented number of deaths in war (Aeschylus' *Persians*), and the emotional experience of the threatened community (Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*). Third, the chapter analyzes the treatment of the war dead at the civic cemetery in the Ceramicus. Here, through a strategy of de-personalization (or de-individuation), both the collective burials and the casualty lists, and the logos epitaphios were meant to deprive the fallen of their private individualities, and absorb them in a sovra-personal dimension where, instead of being lamented upon, they were collectively celebrated as civic heroes. All these communal actions, rites, attitudes, and behaviors are interpreted together as different faces of a collective response to trauma, therefore as different ways of coping with trauma, which in turn affected how the Athenians (and Herodotus) comprehensively narrated the events of 480/79.

Angelika Kellner (Universität Innsbruck)

Herodotus. The Pater Chronologiae of Archaic Greece?

In his monumental *Histories* Herodotus offers insights into the political and geographical landscape of Archaic Greece, thereby forming the basis of our modern historical understanding. In addition, Herodotus has drawn the fundamental framework for the traditional chronology of Ancient Greece. He places Homer and Hesiod roughly 400 years before his time, which in turn allows modern scholarship to define this as the beginning of the Archaic period. The end of the Archaic era is identified by using Herodotus' account of the Persian Wars. As a Panhellenic calendar system was lacking in Archaic and early Classical times, Herodotus relied upon the lineage of the Persian kings from Cyrus to Xerxes as the chronological backbone for his *Histories*. This circumstance underlines Herodotus' impressive achievement to offer a relative and absolute chronology for the related events of the ancient world. Despite this, difficulties emerge in instances, where Herodotus only offers imprecise dates for events such as the Cylonian affair or the fall of Croesus. Later authors – especially from Hellenistic times onwards – develop a concise chronology for early Greece mainly by applying Olympiad and Athenian archon dates. These chronographic dating conventions seemingly resemble our modern BC dates, but require further contextualisation. For this reason, the methodology of how later authors arrived at more precise dates than Herodotus, will be discussed. While Herodotus' and the chronographers' chronologies by and large conform, the presentation will examine cases for which Herodotus implies a lower chronology of roughly 30 to 50 years. His dates for some early Greek poets (e.g. Sappho and Alcaeus), Periander and the Cypselids as well as Solon have surprisingly not been given the appropriate attention by modern scholars so far. Specifically regarding the linchpin 480 BC for the end of the Archaic period and possible shifts in the chronological view, this issue urges further investigation. While the paper therefore addresses crucial questions belonging to an exclusively text-based chronology, it also aims to scrutinise the connections with archaeological dating methods. Hence, it presents an outlook on Herodotus' evidence for the absolute chronology of the material remains of the 6th century BC including an analysis of potential deviations from the conventional dates. Thus, the presentation will be a valuable addition to the multifaceted and interdisciplinary discussion about the chronology of late Archaic and early Classical Greece.

André Lardinois (Radboud University)

480 as Marker in Greek Literary History

No literary history is as absurd as ancient Greek literary history. It stands out from other literary histories in two different ways. First, in that it assigns literary genres to particular historical periods: epic and lyric poetry to the archaic age; drama, historiography, and rhetoric to the classical age, etc., as if no lyric or epic poetry was produced in the classical period. (It is recognized that these genres "return" in the Hellenistic period, but in a form that is often considered to be derivative and inferior.) Secondly, the transitions between the different literary periods (archaic, classical, Hellenistic, Roman) are marked not by any cultural changes or events, but by significant moments in military history (Persian wars, the conquests of Alexander, Roman conquest of Egypt). One of these dates is 480, the year around which archaic Greek literature supposedly changed into classical literature. I will argue in this paper that 480 is not a logical date to differentiate between archaic and later Greek literature (400 would be a much more logical cut-off point) and that the combination of excluding certain genres from the classical period (e.g. the lyric poetry that Pindar and Bacchylides produced in the fifth century BCE), while at the same time allowing this period to start right after the Persian wars, privileges Athenian literature and the association of classical literature with Athenian democracy.

Hans van Wees (University College London; via Zoom)

A Persian version? Ctesias' account of Xerxes' invasion

According to Ctesias' account of the Persian War (*FGrH* 688 F 13.27-31), preserved only in a summary by Photius, Xerxes' expedition was over and done with in a single year. After Thermopylae, there was a battle at Plataea, a raid on Delphi in which Mardonius died, and then the occupation of Attica and battle of Salamis, after which not only Xerxes but his entire army fled back to Sardis. The chronology of events here seems so bizarrely different from Herodotus' version that even those who have in recent decades reassessed and rehabilitated Ctesias as a source for Persian history and culture feel obliged to concede that it was a 'blatant blunder' (J.P. Stronk, *Mnemosyne* 60.1 [2007], 42). In an interesting aside, L. Llewellyn-Jones and J. Robson (*Ctesias' History of Persia* [2010] 183 n. 89) suggest that the 'mistake' may derive from Ctesias' Persian sources which may have listed the battles in geographical (north-south) order without regard for chronology. In this paper, I will argue that the odd sequence of events – while inaccurate – was not a mistake but the result of Ctesias' attempt to reconcile a Persian version of events with Herodotus' narrative. The Persian account that I am positing would have taken the form of a royal chronicle and therefore included only events of 480, the year in which Xerxes himself led the army, ending with the king's return to Sardis. Ctesias adopted this as his chronological framework and to the best of his ability fitted into it the events of 479, as recorded by Herodotus. If this hypothesis is correct, it may be possible to extract from Ctesias' strange hybrid account an outline of the official Persian version of Xerxes' campaign.

Anja Slawisch (University of Edinburgh)

Ex Occidente Nox: the Consequences of Over-Dependence on Athenian Chronologies on Archaeology in Asia Minor

The dating of archaeological objects found in or originating from Asia Minor is heavily dependent on the assumption that chronologies derived from the archaeology of Athens are unimpeachably certain. This overreliance has numerous problematic consequences; one of the most serious is the tendency for historical events in, and interpretations of archaeological evidence from, Ionia to gather into overly-simple groups, usually before or after a small range of "fixed" historical pegs (e.g. 'Ionian revolt', 'liberation of the Greek cities', the foundation of the 'Delian league') around which archaeological material from Athens has been pre-arranged. This paper will present an investigation into two case-studies from Ionia, for which rethinking our inherited *athenocentric* perspective sheds light on unwarranted bias and provide profitable new interpretative and historical avenues: (1) the first is the chronological anchors around electrum coinage from Phokaia, currently dated into the late archaic and early classical periods; (2) the second is the chronological distribution of Athenian red-figure wares from 3 cities in Asia Minor—Samos, Miletos and Ialysos—which are generally used as individual dating flags, but whose aggregate pattern of import has been too rarely been considered relevant to wider conclusions. While chronological pegs are important, we should be prepared to question them when they provide more shade than light on our historical reconstructions.

Federico Figura (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa)

Revolution or Evolution? Reassessing the Relationship between Vase and Free Painting after 480 BCE

Dealing with the transition from Archaic to Early Classical Attic vase painting, Martin Robertson described the iconographic and stylistic innovations achieved by wall painting after 480 BCE as a 'change of background' for pottery production. In relation to vase painting following the Persian Wars, John Boardman recognized 'a growing dependence on the example of major painting', especially in terms of stylistic expression. More in general, the large-scale pictorial cycles realized after 480 are believed to represent an indisputable model for the painters' generation who shaped the Early Classical style. The iconographic choices and stylistic accomplishments of painters such as the Pistoxenos, Penthesilea, and Niobid Painter are punctually traced back to developments in wall painting and to the achievements credited by literary sources to artists like Polygnotus of Thasos. Challenging this assumption, the paper aims to re-examine the direct relationship between free and vase painting after 480 BCE. In the first part, the literary sources relating to free painting dating between 550 and 450 BCE are reconsidered, so as to comprehend whether ancient authors actually identify a sharp caesura around 480. This operation helps us to bridge the gap between ancient and modern perspectives on large-scale painters. In the second section, a comparative analysis between this literary evidence and vase painting is provided. Building on the approach adopted by Dyfri Williams in the 1990s, which has not been followed up in recent literature, it is shown how many innovations attributed to Classical age free painting are actually already attested in the vascular production between the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth century. Stylistic achievements (e.g. shading, foreshortening, scene setting), iconographic choices (e.g. Amazonomachy and Centauromachy), but also technical details (e.g. change in the use of colors and contour lines) are considered in order to provide a more thorough overview as possible. As a result, the top-down model proposed by literature to describe the relationship between the two maedia is revised in favor of a new perspective that takes greater account of developments within vascular production. The value of 480 as a watershed moment in vascular production should therefore be abandoned and a model of transition between archaic and classical age, with less marked but more realistic boundaries, is proposed instead.

Gianfranco Adornato (Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa)

A Western Perspective: Pindar, the Deinomenids, and the Battle of Himera. Sources, Monuments, Chronology

This paper focuses on the significance and legacy of the Battle of Himera between the Carthaginians and the tyrants of Akragas ad Syracuse, and on the watershed of 480 in the Western Greek world in its political, architectural, and artistic manifestations. According to historical sources, the Persian invasion against Greece and the Carthaginian expedition against the Western Greek of Sicily were part of the same strategic plan, as Ephorus (*FGrHist* 70 F 186) and Diodorus (11 1, 1-2) state. Herodotus (7 166) explicitly connect the Battle of Himera with Salamis, as they occurred on the very same day; in Diodorus' narrative (11 23 1), the victory against the Carthaginians was compared to the successful event at Platea.

The first part of the paper is devoted to Pindar's *Pyth.* 1, dedicated to the Dienomenid tyrant, Hieron, for his victory in the chariot race at Delphi in 470: the ode celebrate Hieron and "the sons of Deinomenes" for their significant efforts in defeating the Carthaginians at Himera (this is the first mention of the historical event in Greek literature) and the Etruscans at Cumae in 474 and in delivering Hellas from grievous bondage. In the second section, I investigate the monuments and votive offerings connected to the aftermath of the battle and generally dated to soon after 480, in particular the so-called temples of the Victory. Since Diodorus (11 26 2) attests the construction of two temples in which they put the peace treaties, scholars have identified these sacred buildings with the temple at Himera on the very spot of the battle and the *Athenaion* in Syracuse: despite apparent similarities, the "twin temples" adopt different architectural and technical solutions. Furthermore, recent investigation of materials from the fill underneath the *Athenaion* attributes the building plan to Hieron and not to his brother Gelon and to the celebration of the battle.

In the last part, I dwell with the impact of the chronological shift of the Syracusan *Athenaion* on Greek architecture, discussing the transition from Archaic to Classical temples in Sicily and Southern Italy, and the supposed link between stylistic developments and the Persian/Carthaginians wars.

Marion Meyer (Universität Wien)

After Evacuation and Victory: A Turning Point in the Making of the Athenian State-Burial

Chronological anchors are provided by explicit dates given (and confirmed) by written sources. Absolute dating of archaeological evidence depends on convincing connections of material evidence with facts, processes, phenomena that are firmly anchored in chronology. For dates close to 480 BCE, the last events of the second Persian invasion lend themselves as points of reference. But how persuasive is the link to these historical facts in each case?
In my paper I suggest that the battle of Salamis (and not any other military encounter) is a turning point in the Athenians' practice of commemorating the war dead. The state burial, as Thucydides 2.34 describes it, was the result of a long, dynamic process, from improvised burials managed by the demos to the establishment of annual burials (for the war dead of all the campaigns of one year). I will argue that the commemoration (not necessarily the actual burial) of those who died for Athens in the battle of Salamis gave the decisive impulse for the Athenians' subsequent decision to bring the war dead home and bury them collectively along the road from the Dipylon gate to the Academy, in a site that had been a location of elite burials for a long time.

Suzanne Marchand (Louisiana State University)

Drawing the Line between History and Myth: 480 in Nineteenth-Century German Historiography

Essential to the formulation of modern, 'scientific' history writing was the drawing of the line between history and myth. This debate did not begin in the nineteenth century; indeed, already in the mid-eighteenth century, tempers flared when Voltaire in his entry for "History" in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* made the following statement, drawing his line essentially between books 4 and 5 of Herodotus' *Histories*: "When Herodotus relates the stories which he has heard, his book is no more than a novel…One must declare that history begins for us only with the enterprises of the Persians against the Greeks. Before these great events, one finds only a few vague accounts, enveloped in puerile stories." Drawing the line between history and myth at 480BCE might have suited Voltaire, but French and German classicists and especially specialists in oriental and biblical philology and history balked. The debate entered a new phase in the 1820s, when German scholars in particular sought to clarify the proper boundaries of historical inquiry. This paper will follow this debate from the 1820s through the century's end, showing just how important 480 was for the dividing up of classicists and 'orientalists' and the articulation of modern scholarly history writing.

Janric van Rookhuijzen (Utrecht University)

Wilhelm Dörpfeld and the Creation of 480 BCE as a Watershed

Wilhelm Dörpfeld (1853-1940) was during his lifetime, and is still today, considered one of the greatest classical archaeologists of all time. His contribution to the present understanding of the Acropolis of Athens consists mainly of three theories on architecture and objects attacked by the Persians in 480 BCE: the *Archaios Neos*, the Older Parthenon, and the *Perserschutt*. Despite some controversy, these theories have over the years become paradigmatic. In this paper, I investigate how these theories contributed to the creation of 480 BCE as a watershed moment in Greek archaeology.