

# ΛΕΩΝ ΕΠΙ ΛΕΩΝΙΔΗΙ<sup>1</sup>

(PLATE 4)

AS A RESULT of the reversal of Lysander's policy, and the consequent restoration of Athenian democracy in 403 B.C., good-will towards Sparta was general in Athens at the turn of the fifth century. In June, 1939, the Agora excavations produced what is perhaps a document of that brief period.

In an earlier cutting beneath the Great Drain, in the valley which lies west of the Areopagus and southwest of the Market Square, was found a fragmentary red-figured bell-krater (Pl. 4, 1).<sup>2</sup> The style is of the late fifth century; no closely related pieces have yet been suggested, nor is there anything distinctive in the Dionysiac scene depicted—a satyr and a maenad with a torch. This type of motif is common at the time. Perhaps one may best place the piece by quoting Beazley on another fragment of this period: "Near the end of the fifth century. Exaggeration of the Meidian ideal—great eye; straight forehead-nose line; nose, lips and receding chin huddled together."<sup>3</sup> The interesting feature of the vase is the inscription. Above the head of the maenad, in letters once white, but now faded, is the legend ΛΕΩΝΙΔΑΣ, with an indecipherable second line (Pl. 4, 2). The name runs in a straight line almost parallel to the upper border. No other letters followed it, for immediately after the sigma comes the tip of one of the torch-flames. The second line curves round the maenad's head, presumably to avoid over-running the flames; the second letter in it has diminished to a dot.

The inscription clearly has no connection with the scene. It does not seem likely that it refers to a contemporary Athenian. The name does indeed occur in Athens at the time, but in the Attic form, ΛΕΩΝΙΔΗΣ;<sup>4</sup> moreover if the reference were topical one would expect ΚΑΛΟΣ to follow. Nor do we know of any prominent ΛΕΩΝΙΔΑΣ of the period, whether Spartan or otherwise. The obvious suggestion is the king who fell in 480.

Although at the moment the second line is a mystery, the whole is surely complimentary.<sup>5</sup> Leonidas was one of the heroes of the Greek resistance to Persia, and, as

<sup>1</sup> As holder of the Macmillan studentship in the British School at Athens, the undersigned owes acknowledgment to the Committee of the British School for permission to publish elsewhere than in the *B.S.A.*, and would further express warm appreciation to the Field Director and staff of the Agora Excavations for the opportunities and assistance generously afforded in the study of new material.

<sup>2</sup> Inv. P 17,000; preserved height, 0.184 m.; estimated diameter at the rim, 0.262 m.

<sup>3</sup> *J.H.S.*, LIX, 1939, no. 59, pp. 23 and 28.

<sup>4</sup> *I.G.*, I<sup>2</sup>, 950, line 161. "412/1?"

<sup>5</sup> One of the few possible restorations of the second line is ΑΓΑΤΟΣ. This would presumably be the Doric form of the Epic adjective ΑΓΗΤΟΣ, "wonderful" or "admirable," or else a misspelling

one might say, canonised by his conduct at Thermopylae. Insults to his memory seem an incredible form for anti-Spartan feeling to take; one might rather expect something abusive about a contemporary. On the other hand, the vase is an unpretentious one, modest in style and without added ornament; there is in fact nothing about it to suggest a "bespoke piece." We should think of it as made to find a buyer among the general public, and so reflecting popular sentiment. Thus, if the inscription is laudatory it can most plausibly be assigned to a time of general Athenian good-will towards Sparta.

The inscription, painted on before firing, must obviously be of the same date as the vase, thus of the late fifth century. This comes very close to the period of pro-Spartan feeling mentioned at the outset. The extreme limits of this period are 403 and 395. In 403 came the re-establishment of democracy through the intervention of King Pausanias. For a few years after this Athens endeavoured to keep on good terms with Sparta, even repaying the debt which had been contracted by the Thirty. The year 395 is the date of the outbreak of the Corinthian war. We may perhaps see further manifestations of this same spirit in three other vases: two hydriai in Berlin, painted by the Kadmos painter;<sup>6</sup> the names of the mythological figures on these are in the Doric forms; and a cup in Boston,<sup>7</sup> showing Sparte alighting from her horse.

We may possibly define the chronological setting a little more closely. In 396 Timokrates of Rhodes was sent by Persia to distribute gold in Greece in order to raise up an anti-Spartan coalition (Xenophon, *Hellenica*, III, v, 1 and 2). It seems clear that at this time dislike for Sparta was stronger in Athens than in any other city. Whereas Corinth and other cities readily accepted the money on the understanding that they would go to war, Athens was sufficiently eager for war to refuse payment yet still to join the coalition. This hostility needed time to develop and one may suggest that by 397 at the latest general good-will towards Sparta was gone from Athens.

Moreover, the name Leonidas instantly calls to mind Thermopylae, the Persian attack on Greece and the Persian defeat. It seems unlikely that anyone formulating a pro-Spartan inscription would wish to recall these facts at a time when Sparta and Persia were still allies and had just brought a war to a successful conclusion. Till 400 the alliance continued, Sparta trying to keep a foot in both camps in the revolt of Cyrus. Then when Tissaphernes was given the satrapy of Cyrus in addition

of ΑΓΑΣΤΟΣ, which is the only form of the word in fifth-century literature. I know of no other vase which bears it in any form. However, the reference to an historical personage is in itself so extraordinary that we may be less inclined to boggle at a unique adjective. The Doric form might be explained as suited to a Spartan king; we can also point to certain vases of about this time on which the mythological names are Doric. See below, note 6.

<sup>6</sup> Berlin 2633 and 2634: Beazley, *A.R.V.*, p. 805, nos. 21, 22. The inscriptions on 21 figured in Gerhard, *Apulische Vasenbilder*, pl. C; those on 22 in Gerhard, *Etruskische und Kampanische Vasenbilder*, pl. C, 1-5. I am indebted to Professor Beazley for telling me of the existence of these inscriptions.

<sup>7</sup> *A.R.V.*, p. 884, no. 7.

to his own, he at once began to attack the Ionian cities (Xenophon, *Hellenica*, III, i, 3). They appealed to Sparta for protection. Before she sent an army she dispatched an embassy to Tissaphernes forbidding him to attack any Greek city (Diodorus, XIV, 35, 6). Here, at the moment of the rupture between Sparta and Persia we find Sparta again assuming the role of the defender of Greek liberty. One can hardly imagine a setting in which a reference to Leonidas would be more appropriate. And at this same time Athens twice gave Sparta active assistance; she sent a body of cavalry to join Thibron's attack on Persia in 400 (Xenophon, *Hellenica*, III, i, 4) and she joined the Spartan invasion of Elis in 399 (Xenophon, *Hellenica*, III, ii, 25).

But even when we have established that at this time active pro-Spartan feeling existed in Athens, we must still explain why anyone should choose to express it by praising Leonidas. A vase inscription referring to an historical figure is a great rarity.

We may suggest a general explanation. The choice of the person honored would be extremely tactful; there would be no bitter memories concerning him to alienate any Athenian, yet even the most violent Laconiser could find nothing at which to cavil. Moreover, the name Leonidas would remind men of the almost legendary days when Athens and Sparta were in active coöperation.

But there is also a specific reason which one might propose. According to Pausanias the bones of Leonidas were brought back to Sparta by "Pausanias, forty years after."<sup>8</sup> The text requires correction, since no Pausanias is known in the period about 440. The emendation *τέσσαρσι* has been suggested.<sup>9</sup> The removal would thus be ascribed to Pausanias the Regent. But it would appear that he was in Byzantium in 477, and at Kolonae in the Troad for at least part of 476. After his return he was under suspicion of Medizing, and under arrest for a time.<sup>10</sup> Thus even if it were chronologically possible, one may question whether he would have been permitted to bring back the bones of Leonidas. Furthermore, such a removal is at variance with the spirit which approved the Simonidean epigram on the Spartan dead at Thermopylae; for the whole point is that the dead were on the field of battle.

There is, however, another possibility, namely the king Pausanias who reigned from 408 to 394. This later dating can perhaps be supported by the passage in Herodotus<sup>11</sup> which speaks of the last stand at Thermopylae as taking place "on the knoll where the stone lion now stands *ἐπὶ Λεωνίδῃ*." Commentators<sup>12</sup> have explained this as "in honor of" and adduce examples of Homeric usage. The literal interpretation "above," "on top of," is however possible. The implication would be that in Herodotus' day the body of Leonidas was still at Thermopylae. This harmonizes

<sup>8</sup> Pausanias, III, 14, 1: τὰ [δὲ] ὄστ' αὐτοῦ Λεωνίδου τεσσαράκοντα ἔτεσιν ὕστερον ἀνελομένου ἐκ Θερμοπυλῶν τοῦ Πανσανίου.

<sup>9</sup> Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece*: critical note *ad loc.* (I, p. 576).

<sup>10</sup> On the chronological problems see Gomme, *Commentary on Thucydides*, I, p. 397 and pp. 399-400.

<sup>11</sup> Herodotus, VII, 225, 2: ὄκου νῦν ὁ λίθινος λέων ἔστηκε ἐπὶ Λεωνίδῃ.

<sup>12</sup> How and Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus*, II, p. 230.

with a possible emendation of the passage in Pausanias. A second century author would presumably have used the later system of numeration, in which  $\mu = 40$ . It is conceivable that in a second or third century manuscript an original  $\pi (= 80)$  was mis-read as  $\mu$  ( $\Gamma; \Pi$ ).<sup>13</sup> Thus the transference of the bones would be dated to 400. In this same year, as we have seen, Sparta broke with Persia, explicitly resuming her policy of the early fifth century. Indeed, it is not inconceivable that the two events were connected. This dating of the removal would go far to explain a lively interest in Leonidas at this time.

Thus within the span 403-395 we have a period which satisfies our requirements. We have evidence of general good-will and active help given by Athens to Sparta, especially in 400-399; in 400 we find Sparta once more assuming the role of avowed champion of the Greek cities against Persia; and we may also hold that this was the year of the "removal of the bones of Leonidas by Pausanias." So we may suggest that our vase and its inscription belong to the years 400 to 397, and in view of the coincidence in date of three elements of our evidence it does not seem unreasonable to put the vase nearer to 400 than to 397.

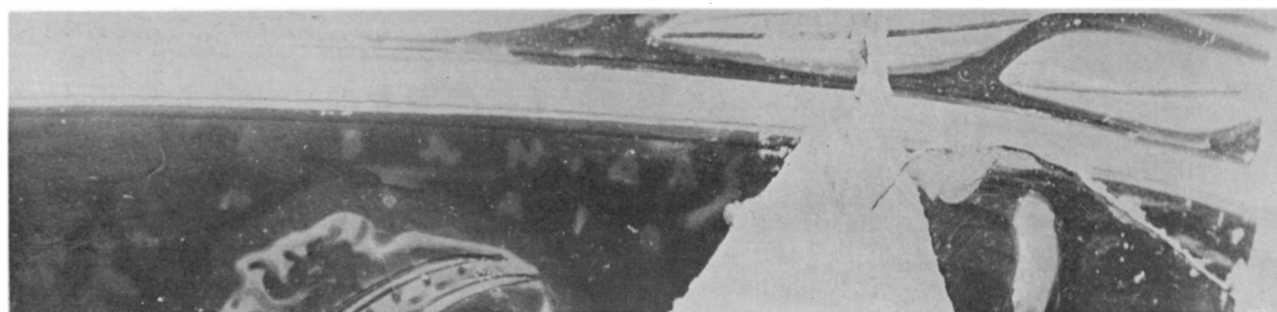
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<sup>13</sup> I am indebted for the suggestion of this emendation to Mr. C. H. Roberts.



1. Red-figured Bell-krater



2. Detail: Inscription on Red-figured Bell-krater  
(scale 2 : 1)

PETER E. CORBETT: ΛΕΩΝ ΕΙΠΙ ΛΕΩΝΙΑΗΙ