

# ICONOGRAPHY AND THE DYNAMICS OF PATRONAGE

## A SARCOPHAGUS FROM THE FAMILY OF HERODES ATTICUS

### ABSTRACT

A sarcophagus from the estate of Herodes Atticus in Kephisia commemorates the intimate connections of the family with the city of Sparta, the Battle of Marathon, and the cult statue of Nemesis at Rhamnous. The iconographic allusions to Marathon also reflect the priorities of the Second Sophistic, an intellectual movement that appealed to the past to establish cultural and political superiority. The unusual and meaningful decorative program suggests that the family commissioned this sarcophagus. The earlier view that the more unusual Attic sarcophagi were prefabricated, but that their themes simply proved unpopular, should be modified in light of this study.

### INTRODUCTION

In September of 1866, during the construction of a house in the Kephisia suburb of Athens, workers discovered a marble burial chamber, roughly square in plan.<sup>1</sup> Robbers had long since plundered the chamber, removing the deceased and most of the portable possessions. In 1866, the significant remaining artifacts included four carved marble sarcophagi and only a handful of small objects.<sup>2</sup> Otto Benndorf, who wrote the first complete description of the chamber and its contents, was also the first to suggest

1. I thank the University of Michigan for support that allowed me to undertake preliminary research in Athens for this article; and the College of the Holy Cross both for funds to purchase photographs and for a leave of absence that allowed me to continue my work. I am grateful to Elaine Gazda, Mark Landon, Kenneth Lapatin, and Miranda Marvin for their comments on early drafts of this article and for their graciously offered insights and criticisms; and to Thomas Martin

and Neel Smith for discussing with me some of the ideas presented here. Photographs were kindly provided by Jan Sanders; the British Museum; the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome; the Greek Archaeological Service; and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Permission to reproduce drawings was generously granted by Marina Belozerskaya (Fig. 15) and the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens (Fig. 16).

2. All four sarcophagi, including the so-called Leda sarcophagus considered in

this study, still stand in the tomb today. Cramped space in the tomb makes it difficult to provide a complete photographic record. I therefore refer in many instances to the line drawings of the Leda sarcophagus produced by Robert (1890, pl. III and p. 9), which have been used in most subsequent scholarship (Figs. 1 and 5 here, respectively). Benndorf (1868, p. 40) mentions that a green glass vessel (*Gefäß*) without handles and a possible bronze mirror were also found in the tomb.

that the structure belonged to the family of the famous 2nd-century A.C. sophist-millionaire, Herodes Atticus. At the time of Benndorf's writing, the evidence to support this attribution was meager. Philostratus and Aulus Gellius both indicate that Herodes owned a villa in Kephisia (Philostr. *VS* 2.562; Aul. Gell. 1.2.1–2), but these testimonia and a few additional artifacts only placed Herodes in the general neighborhood. Since then, however, a number of archaeological discoveries, including portraits and inscriptions, have confirmed not only Herodes' presence in Kephisia but, more specifically, his ownership of land in the immediate neighborhood of the tomb.<sup>3</sup>

An inscription found built into the nearby Church of Hagia Paraskevi identifies this tomb with the family. It records the recent loss of an unnamed infant child of Herodes. The text of the inscription indicates that other children of his had already died:

Ἡρώδης, οἱ τήνδε κόμην, οὐ πάντα ἐνιαυτὸν  
οὔτε κόμην θρέψας οὔτε σὲ παῖδα φίλον  
μηγὶ τρίτῳ κείρας, ὑπὸ κεύθει θήκατο γαίης,  
Ἡρώδης δεύσας ἄκρα κόμης δάκρυσι·  
σῆμ' ἔτυμον παίδων ψυχαῖς τρισίν, ὥς ποτε σῶμα  
δέχεσθ' ἐν θήκαις ὑμετέροιο πατρός.

Herodes set in the depths of the earth this his lock of hair,  
Having dampened the tips of the hair with his tears,  
When for less than the cycle of a year  
He had neither grown his hair nor reared you, dear son,  
For he cut this lock in the third month.  
May it be a true token to you three children's souls  
That you will someday receive among the coffins the body of your  
father.<sup>4</sup>

Jennifer Tobin notes that the block on which this inscription was found is similar in thickness and treatment to the blocks from the dromos of the Kephisia tomb.<sup>5</sup> This observation supports the identification of the structure as the resting place for several of Herodes' children.

The four sarcophagi in the Kephisia tomb date to the Antonine period and are therefore consistent with Herodes' dates.<sup>6</sup> One sarcophagus has no figural decoration, while common sepulchral motifs adorn two others: garlands on one, and Erotes on the other. The fourth box, known as the Leda sarcophagus, depicts a theme that is unusual on sarcophagi, the family of Helen of Troy (Fig. 1). This particular coffin presents a rare opportunity to examine the dynamics of art patronage in the 2nd century, precisely because it has been convincingly attributed to a "private" (i.e., non-imperial) but famous family.

Guntram Koch suggests that this sarcophagus, like many, was prefabricated. Because the theme is unusual, however, he also conjectures that its decorative program was a market failure, and that this and other anomalous themes were quickly eliminated from the funerary repertoire when they proved unpopular.<sup>7</sup> The iconography of this coffin, however, alludes

Figure 1 (*opposite*). Drawing of the Leda sarcophagus from Kephisia. Front (top), left and right sides (center), back (bottom). Robert 1890, pl. III

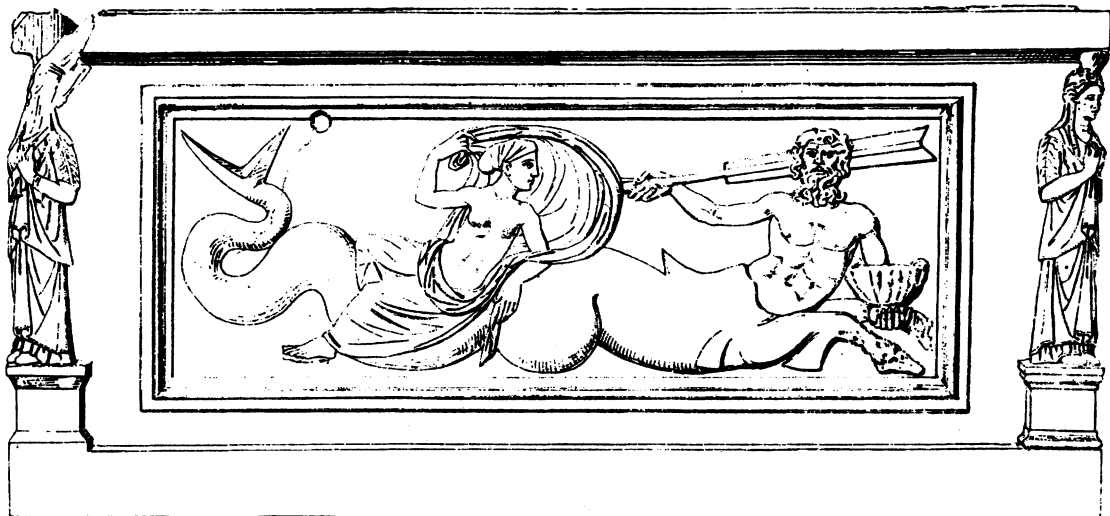
3. Tobin (1997, pp. 211–239, fig. 42) has thoroughly documented the archaeological evidence for Herodes' presence in Kephisia.

4. *SEG* XXVI 290 (= Ameling 1983, II, pp. 143–146, no. 140). See Tobin 1997, p. 225, where this translation is credited to M. B. Richardson.

5. Tobin 1997, p. 225.

6. Benndorf 1868, p. 40; Tschira 1948–1949, col. 86.

7. Koch and Sichtermann 1982, pp. 460–461, where Koch also cites (ns. 28–30, 32) other examples of anomalous pieces from this period: a Dionysiac sarcophagus near the Hephaisteion in Athens; one with centaurs in the National Museum (NM 1184); one with Erotes in Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki Museum 1248); and two cinerary urns, one in Athens and one in Patras.





**Figure 2.** Right side of sarcophagus, showing detail of Eros. The gabled lid does not belong to the sarcophagus. Photo author, reproduced with permission of the Greek Archaeological Service

to specific connections that the family of Herodes enjoyed both with the city of Sparta and with the deme of Marathon. In this case, the sarcophagus was clearly not prefabricated, but commissioned, and its decorative program was part of a self-conscious mythmaking that celebrated family identity.<sup>8</sup> The decoration may, more specifically, commemorate the coffin's occupants—Herodes' daughter, Elpinike, whose very name is an allusion to Marathon; and perhaps her husband, L. Vibullius Hipparchus, about whom we know little, but who is likely to have been a kinsman of Herodes.

### THE LEDA SARCOPHAGUS

The Leda sarcophagus is of the kline type, with its original lid in the form of one or, more probably, two figures reclining on a couch. The pitched-roof lid that rests on the box at present (Fig. 2) does not, therefore, belong to it, but to one of the other sarcophagi in the tomb. That this is a kline sarcophagus is clear from a long, narrow rectangle set into the right side of the upper molding on the front (Fig. 1, upper right; Fig. 3, upper left). A corresponding inset probably appeared on the left side of the molding,

8. Similarly, Ewald (1999, esp. pp. 79, 129–130), in a study of intellectual activities as represented on sarcophagi, suggests that unusual iconographies reflect the particular interests of the deceased.

**Figure 3. Caryatid on right front corner of sarcophagus and detail of inset rectangle (upper left).** Photo author, reproduced with permission of the Greek Archaeological Service



but damage to the stone in this area has destroyed any trace of it. Such rectangular insets often decorated the frames of ancient couches, and thus it is not surprising to find them represented on kline sarcophagi and kline monuments (e.g., Fig. 4).<sup>9</sup> These insets appear especially frequently on the earliest Attic kline sarcophagi, supporting an early date for the example from Kephisia.<sup>10</sup>

On the left end of the box in question, Leda is depicted struggling with a swan (Fig. 1). She is nude, in profile, and faces left. She wears a “melon hairstyle” (*melonenfrisur*), and the bun in back sits high on the crown of her head. She clutches a cloth with her right hand, apparently in an attempt to cover herself. She bends slightly at the knees, perhaps with the effort of struggling against the swan, and raises her left heel off the ground. Her right leg is not visible; we are presumably to think of it as obscured by the left leg. With one arm Leda holds the swan off, but his sinuous neck writhes toward her mouth in an attempted kiss. The swan is enormous, with a torso slightly larger than Leda’s own. He is shown in midair, with his wings fully outspread, the left wing extending behind Leda as if to embrace her. He has the talons of a bird of prey rather than webbed feet, and with them he clutches the cloth. These talons, presumably

9. Robert 1890, p. 9; Wrede 1977, p. 428. For examples of such insets on bronze couch frames, see Richter 1966, p. 106, as well as fig. 530 (a couch from Boscoreale, now in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, inv. 890J) and fig. 532 (a couch from Pompeii, now in the National Museum, Naples, inv. 78614).

10. Wiegartz 1975, p. 188.



those of an eagle, serve as a reminder that this is no ordinary swan, but Zeus himself.

On the right side of the sarcophagus, Eros strings his bow (Figs. 1–2). He is clearly a thematic companion to Leda and the swan.<sup>11</sup> His bow and wings, the outlines of which are still apparent, were removed with a chisel or some similar implement, possibly because they were gilded or otherwise completed in metal. The tomb robbers, at any rate, appear to have removed metal attachments from the sarcophagus and damaged it in other ways.<sup>12</sup>

On the front of the box stand the Dioskouroi, flanking their sister, Helen. She and her brother Polydeukes were, of course, the offspring of Leda's union with Zeus and so, taken together, the front and sides form a coherent program related to the royal house of Sparta. The Dioskouroi are nude, except for the chlamys that each wears pinned at the shoulder. The left arm of the left figure hangs down, grasping the hilt of a short sword, while he raises his right arm, which is bent at the elbow. A hollow in his right hand indicates that he once held a metal spear. He rests his weight on his right leg and his head turns to the proper left, that is, toward the center of the composition, where Helen stands. His twin on the right side of the composition is almost a mirror image. The only divergence from strict, bilateral symmetry is the fact that both Dioskouroi wear the chlamys pinned at the right shoulder. Helen wears a sleeved chiton and a himation loosely draped around her shoulders, crossing in front and then wrapped

**Figure 4. Kline monument showing inset rectangles (below mattress at head and foot). Rome, Museo Nazionale delle Terme, NM 72879. Courtesy Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, neg. 80.2707**

11. Indeed, several known versions of Leda struggling with the swan depict Eros either encouraging or physically helping the swan: Wiegartz 1983, pp. 173–174.

12. For removal of the spears from the hands of the Dioskouroi, see below.

around her left arm. In her left hand she holds a fruit, possibly an apple or a pomegranate. Her posture is generally frontal but her head inclines very slightly to the left.

The front and sides of this sarcophagus have been interpreted as depictions in relief of individual Classical sculptures in the round, or as having been strongly influenced by such sculptures.<sup>13</sup> This impression derives, in part, from the formal character of the decoration. There is no indication of architectural or landscape setting on the front or sides; the background is blank. The individual figures line up on a frontal plane and stand isolated from one another. They do not make eye contact or acknowledge one another's presence in any way. Iconographic analysis of the antecedents for these figures (see below, pp. 471–483) demonstrates that most do not, in fact, reproduce sculptures in the round, although they certainly appear to do so to modern eyes.

Sketchy, roughly carved figures of a Triton and Nereid decorate the back (Fig. 1). The Nereid rides on the tail of the Triton, and the two together occupy most of the representational field. As a result, these figures do not have the statuesque quality of those on the other three sides. The Triton, whose snaky tail spreads out over almost the entire length of the relief, holds a skyphos in his left hand and an oar in his right. The seminude Nereid grasps a garment that billows over her head in an arc. The entire composition is surrounded by a simple, rectangular molding that resembles a modern picture frame. This is an odd scene, which seems to have little to do thematically with the rest of the decorative program. It is not, however, uncommon to find apparently incongruous themes on the backs of Attic sarcophagi.<sup>14</sup>

Marine *thiasoi* often appear on the mattresses of Attic kline lids, and probably allude to the afterlife.<sup>15</sup> Nereids, in particular, served in ancient art as escorts through the liminal phases of life, including the passage from this world to the next.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the location of this marine *thiasos*, on the body of the coffin itself, is unusual in the Attic repertoire.

Caryatids stand at the four corners of the sarcophagus (Figs. 1–3). Their garments, particularly the stacked folds of the himatia, are standard on archaizing sculpture of the Roman period.<sup>17</sup> These figures stand with their feet together, one hand hanging at the side and the other resting across the breast. (Two of the caryatids have their right arms bent while the other two bend their left arms.) Their hair is parted in the middle and corkscrew locks fall to their shoulders. Their *kalathoi* touch the upper molding and emphasize the figures' function as architectonic supports. The socles or statue bases that project at each of the four corners act in the same way.

13. Benndorf 1868, p. 38: "zum Theil noch nachweisbare Reproduktionen von einzelnen Statuen sind"; Robert 1890, p. 10: "sollen wohl gerade als Copien berühmter Werke wirken." Tobin (1997, p. 223) rightly states the nature of the relationship more tentatively, characterizing the figures on the

sarcophagus as "strongly influenced by freestanding sculpture."

14. Koch and Sichtermann 1982, pp. 376–377. Brilliant (1984, p. 126), writing of sarcophagi in general, posits that the rear relief often "fluctuated between an implied dependency on the front and an apparent autonomy."

15. For marine *thiasoi* on the lids of kline sarcophagi, see Koch and Sichtermann 1982, p. 422.

16. Barringer (1995) analyzes this iconography in detail and dates it back to the Archaic and Classical periods.

17. Fullerton 1990; Zagdoun 1989, *passim*.



Figure 5. Drawing of a marble torso of a female, found in the Kephisia tomb. Robert 1890, p. 9

When the workers cleared the tomb in 1866, they discovered the marble torso of a reclining figure, now missing.<sup>18</sup> This figure was clearly part of the original lid. Carl Robert described the torso as representing a female, and illustrated it in his publication of the piece (Fig. 5).<sup>19</sup> He also suggested that the coffin was large enough to hold a married couple.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, early in the development of the Attic kline sarcophagus, when this piece was apparently produced, portraits of reclining married couples were standard lid decoration, at least on sarcophagi intended for adults; other compositions—for example, an individual reclining alone, or a pair of women—were exceptional.<sup>21</sup> The evidence suggests, therefore, that one woman or, more probably, a married couple, occupied the Kephisia sarcophagus.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE CITY OF SPARTA AND THE FAMILY OF HERODES

The history and aspirations of Herodes' family provide the best explanation for the decorative program of the three finished sides. In particular, this program commemorates the family's association both with the city of Sparta and with the deme and Battle of Marathon. Although Herodes' ties to Marathon have long been known, the close association of this Athenian family with Sparta has only been fully recognized in recent years. A series of articles by Antony Spawforth has now demonstrated the existence of this significant relationship, attested largely in inscriptions.<sup>22</sup> Some of the evidence is as follows: an inscription from Sparta records the erection in that city of a statue in honor of Herodes' grandfather, who was apparently a benefactor of two brothers from Sparta.<sup>23</sup> In addition, Herodes' father was almost certainly a citizen of Sparta; at any rate, he seems rather unusually to have enrolled as a Spartan ephebe. Near the end of his life, sometime in the mid-130s, he even occupied the eponymous patronate of Sparta, the highest magistracy of the city at that time; and just before he died, the city appointed him to serve as Kytherodikes, governor of the island of Kythera, which Hadrian had granted as a gift to the city.<sup>24</sup> Herodes himself apparently enrolled as a Spartan ephebe, and Spawforth has even suggested that one Claudia Tisamenis, who was commemorated in Sparta by a statuary group that included her husband and son, was his sister. If so,

18. We do not have any specific information as to where the torso was found. Benndorf (1868, p. 39) states explicitly only that it was discovered during the clearing of the tomb. There is no evidence for Tobin's statement (1997, p. 224) that the torso was found in the sarcophagus itself. Benndorf argues for the association of torso and sarcophagus on the basis of technical features, such as the inset rectangle mentioned above.

19. Robert 1890, p. 9.

20. Robert 1890, pp. 9–10, where he also reports the dimensions of the sarcophagus: L. 2.27 m (front) and 2.33 m (back); H. 1.12 m; W. 0.94 m (left end) and 0.89 m (right end).

21. In some cases the male figure of a couple has been chiseled away and the female transformed into a male. This fact is of interest because, as Wrede (1977, p. 428) points out, it indicates that the production of Attic kline sarcophagus lids was geared toward the representation of married couples. Married couples were the rule only for Attic sarcophagi; other sarcophagi are more varied in this respect. See Goette 1993, p. 108; Koch and Sichtermann 1982, pp. 371–373. For a discussion of the date when the kline sarcophagus was introduced to Attica, see below, pp. 484–487.

22. Spawforth 1978, 1985, and esp. 1980.

23. *IG V i 516*.

24. *IG V i 380*. He appears to have died before he could serve his term; Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, pp. 109–111.

it seems especially significant that her parents named her after Spartan family friends, and that she eventually married a Spartan.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the epigraphic evidence cited by Spawforth, the very name of Herodes' foster child, Polydeukion or Polydeukes, may serve as further evidence of a connection between the family and the city of Sparta. A number of scholars believe that Polydeukion was not just a foster child but a blood relative of Herodes (see below, Fig. 17). While the precise nature of this kinship has not yet been firmly established, the supposition appears to be supported both by the boy's "nomen," Vibullius, which he shared with Herodes, and by two inscriptions that pair the name of Herodes' mother, Vibullia Alkia, with Polydeukion's.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the many inscriptions and monuments that Herodes erected on various family estates suggest that this relationship was more significant than the philanthropy through which Herodes supported other youths.<sup>27</sup>

Polydeukion, also called Polydeukes, shares his name with one of the Dioskouroi. There is significant, compelling evidence to suggest that, in the 2nd century A.C., such divine and heroic names often functioned as claims of descent. Thus the stemma of the Spartan aristocrat Eurycles includes the name Rhadamanthys because his family intermarried with Cretan aristocrats; and Tyndares, the Spartan priest of the Dioskouroi, may have claimed descent from the gods whom he served.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, another foster child of Herodes, Memnon, offers a striking parallel.<sup>29</sup> Memnon has long been associated with a portrait of a young African found on Herodes' estate at Loukou.<sup>30</sup> His name would appear to allude to his origins, since he shares it with the Ethiopian prince reputed to have fought in the Trojan War.<sup>31</sup>

25. The evidence for Herodes' tenure as a Spartan ephebe is *IG V i 45* (= Ameling 1983, II, p. 98, no. 70), in which a certain Korinthas identifies himself as a "fellow ephebe of Herodes Atticus" (συνέφηβος Ἀττικῶ τοῦ Ἡρώδου). Spawforth (1980, pp. 208–210) once believed that this referred to Herodes' son. Ameling (1983, II, pp. 98–100), however, has argued that the dates would only allow for this figure to be the sophist himself, and Spawforth (Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, pp. 167, 261, n. 10) has since come to agree with this position. As for the reconstruction of the identity of Claudia Tisamenis, Spawforth (1980, p. 213) points out that Tisamenus is an attested Spartan name, but not an attested Athenian name. The family's penchant for naming girls with the feminizing *-is* ending is seen in the example of Herodes' daughter, Athenais. Claudia Tisamenis is not mentioned by

Herodes' biographer, Philostratus.

26. Scholars who believe that Polydeukion was kinsman of Herodes include Graindor (1930, pp. 116–117); Gazda (1980, pp. 3–4); Ameling (1983, I, p. 114); Meyer (1985, p. 393); and Tobin (1997, p. 99). The two inscriptions in which both Polydeukion and Vibullia Alkia are mentioned are *IG II<sup>2</sup> 3972* and *IG II<sup>2</sup> 3973* (Ameling 1983, II, p. 171, nos. 174 and 175, respectively). Herodes' full name is rendered as L. Vibullius Hipparchus Tiberius Claudius Atticus Herodes in *IG II<sup>2</sup> 3603* (= Ameling 1983, II, p. 109, no. 89); see also Ameling 1983, II, p. 105, no. 76. Most of the other inscriptions that mention his name abbreviate it greatly (see Ameling 1983, II, pp. 236–237). Only one other even mentions the "nomen," Vibullius, which came to him from his mother's side of the family (Ameling 1983, II, p. 123, no. 103).

27. Meyer (1985, p. 393) cites some

twenty-five known portraits of Polydeukion, and contrasts these with the single preserved portrait of another foster child, Memnon, which is discussed below. There are, as yet, no securely identified representations of a third foster child, named Achilles. Polydeukion is "the most frequently represented youth of the 2nd century C.E. who was not in some way connected with the Roman imperial house" (Gazda 1980, p. 2). Meyer (p. 393) cites thirteen inscriptions that mention Polydeukion, but only one concerning Memnon and two, or possibly three, concerning Achilles.

28. Spawforth 1985, pp. 197, 200–201.

29. The foster children of Herodes are mentioned by name in Philostr. *VS* 2.558.

30. Graindor 1915; Blümel 1933, pp. 30–31, pl. 45.

31. Gantz 1993, pp. 36–37, 622–624.

Among aristocrats of the 2nd century, claims of descent from the immortals, whether or not nomenclature reflected those claims, seem generally to have been “based on local mythologies.”<sup>32</sup> Though such claims appear already among the Roman aristocracy of the Late Republic, their widespread use was an example of the much broader tendency during the Second Sophistic to consolidate cultural and political authority through appeals to the past.<sup>33</sup> Under such circumstances, a claim of descent from a god or hero of particular local importance implied local prominence. Once again, Herodes’ own family provides examples. The Roman-born Regilla, Herodes’ wife, is praised as the descendant of Anchises and Aphrodite because she belonged to the Roman aristocracy.<sup>34</sup> Herodes, on the other hand, claimed descent from Kekrops, Theseus, Keryx, and Herse, on the one hand, and Miltiades and Cimon, on the other, all of whom are associated in myth or history with Athens or with the family deme, Marathon (Philostr. *VS* 2.546–547).<sup>35</sup> Regilla and Herodes, in other words, claimed heroic and divine ancestors associated with their local origins—Regilla from the ancestors of Rome, Herodes from the mythological nobility of Athens as well as from some of its greatest generals.<sup>36</sup> Thus the name of Herodes’ maternal kinsman, Polydeukion, which evokes an association specifically with the Dioskouroi, more generally points to the geographic home of the twin gods, the city of Sparta.<sup>37</sup>

The evidence, therefore, points to a remarkable and unusually close relationship for a family of Athenian origin to have had with the city of Sparta, even in the international climate of the 2nd century. While foreigners were commonly enrolled for ephebic training at Athens during the Principate, Herodes and his father are the only known foreigners to have enrolled as ephebes at Sparta.<sup>38</sup> At least two different explanations have been offered for the remarkably close association of this Athenian aristocratic family with Sparta. Walter Ameling suggests that the relationship was essentially economic in origin—that it was only natural for one of the wealthiest families of Roman Greece to take an interest in one of the

32. Spawforth 1985, p. 193.

33. The most famous example of Late Republican and Early Imperial appeal to divine and heroic ancestry is the Julian claim of descent from Venus and Aeneas (Zanker 1988, pp. 195–215). For Second Sophistic appeals to the past as a strategy for establishing cultural and political superiority, see Alcock 1993, pp. 163–164; Swain 1996, pp. 65–100.

34. *IG* XIV 1389, lines 3–4 (= Ameling 1983, II, pp. 153–160, no. 146).

35. For the mythological figures, see Gantz 1993, pp. 233–239.

36. Evidence of this practice outside Herodes’ family includes a number of inscriptions from the area around Sparta in which citizens claim descent

from the Dioskouroi. These include *IG* V i 463, 471, 529, 530, 537, 559, 562, 971, 1172, 1174, and 1399. One need not necessarily have come from Sparta to have claimed descent from the Dioskouroi, but claims of divine descent are connected with local mythology often enough that “intermarriages can sometimes be inferred from the evidence for the transfer of these pedigrees from family to family and city to city” (Spawforth 1985, p. 193). This is why, when the family of the dynast Eurycles claims descent from the Cretan hero Rhadamanthys, this claim can be taken as an indication that someone in this family married a member of the Cretan aristocracy: see above, p. 469.

37. Polydeukion’s connections with

the Dioskouroi and Sparta may also be the subject of a relief in the Athens National Museum, NM 1450 (Rhom-iopoulou 1997, p. 92 with bibliography). On it, Polydeukion is depicted in “heroic nudity” and with his horse, as if he were one of the Dioskouroi. This basic formula may be found on other funerary reliefs of the period (e.g., Athens NM 1775, Rhomiopoulou 1997, p. 102), but the sculptor of NM 1450 appears to have emphasized the allusion to the Dioskouroi by depicting, on a pillar in the background, an amphora with a conical lid, a type that Sanders (1992; 1993) has associated specifically with Spartan cult and art.

38. Spawforth 1980, p. 204.

wealthiest and most powerful cities of the time, and that, furthermore, the family's possession of nearby land implied a vested interest in the region.<sup>39</sup> Spawforth and Tobin, on the other hand, suggest that the connection was political and sentimental in origin, and specifically that it may have stemmed from the period when Domitian condemned Tiberius Claudius Hipparchus, Herodes' grandfather, on charges of tyranny, presumably over his fellow Athenians (Philostr. *VS* 2.547; Suet. *Vesp.* 13). We know that, on this occasion, Hipparchus lost his property; he may well have also lost his life. Whatever his fate, the members of his family probably became temporary exiles from Athens, either by their own choice or because of a formal, imperial decision.<sup>40</sup> This exile may have provided the occasion for Herodes' father to forge the strong ties with the city that resulted later in his appointment to the two important magistracies mentioned above (p. 468). Whatever the reasons for the family's close association with a city that was not their home, that association is precisely the sort of biographical detail that an aristocrat of the Imperial period might have wanted to commemorate with a commissioned work of art.

## ICONOGRAPHIC ANTECEDENTS

### SPARTAN RELIEFS

The family of Helen was unusual subject matter for a sarcophagus of the Imperial period. Mythological sarcophagi of the Roman Empire tended to employ one of a few traditional themes, including the stories of Orestes, Alcestis, Meleager, Adonis, and Selene with Endymion. In Attica, the range of available themes was even narrower than elsewhere in the Empire.<sup>41</sup> It is not always easy to understand why certain myths were more popular than others, but the reasons must have had to do with workshop repertoire; they may also have had to do with generally recognized sepulchral symbolism.<sup>42</sup> Most patrons apparently purchased prefabricated sarcophagi

39. Ameling 1983, I, p. 29. Ameling is referring to the family estate near the Monastery of Loukou in the Thyreatis, though Spawforth (1980, p. 210) believes that land ownership in this area is more likely to have created ties with Argos than with Sparta. Recent excavations on the site under the direction of Theodoros Spyropoulos have produced a great deal of new architecture and sculpture. Although most of this material is not yet published, brief discussions of some of the sculptures appear in Spyropoulos 1993; Datsouli-Stavridis 1993; and Tobin 1997.

40. Spawforth 1980, pp. 204–205; Tobin 1997, pp. 15–16, 323–324. Tobin

(p. 16) suggests that Tiberius Claudius Hipparchus was put to death since there is no evidence of activity on his part after his condemnation, which took place around A.D. 92–93. *IG V i* 516, which honors him by name, would seem to indicate that the family had some association with Sparta even before his disgrace, though events in the aftermath of the condemnation still serve as a plausible explanation for the enduring strength of that association.

41. The sculptors of Attica favored some of the themes that were common in Rome, like the stories of Hippolytus and Meleager; however, they did not make use of many other themes that were popular in Rome (Koch and Sichter-

termann 1982, p. 376). For an overview of some of the most popular mythological scenes on sarcophagi, see Turcan 1978; Sichtermann and Koch 1979; and Koortbojian 1995.

42. The scholarship on whether and to what extent such themes may be connected to the life of the deceased is vast. Scholars who consider the topic at length include Cumont (1942); Nock (1946); Turcan (1978); and Koortbojian (1995). For overviews, see Koch and Sichtermann 1982, pp. 583–617; Kleiner 1988. Because I am concerned in the present study with a unique decorative program, I have raised issues of interpretation that are related, but not identical, to those central to scholarship on common themes.



**Figure 6. Document relief from Sparta depicting the Dioskouroi and Helen. Sparta Museum 201.** Photo J. Sanders, reproduced with permission of the Greek Archaeological Service

adorned with one of a handful of themes readily available from a particular workshop. The depiction of Helen's family, however, does not belong to the stock repertoire. The unparalleled appearance of this theme on the Kephisia sarcophagus requires some explanation.<sup>43</sup>

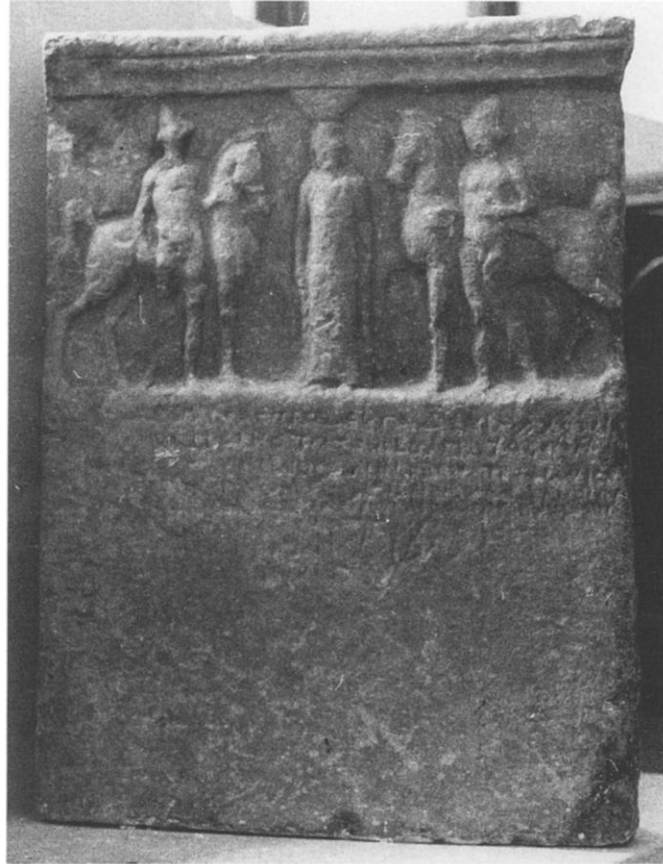
Earlier analyses of the Kephisia sarcophagus—those that suggest that it depicts, or is strongly influenced by, individual Classical sculptures in the round—do not offer a thematic interpretation of its program. Yet most of the figures represented cannot, in fact, be associated with actual, known sculptures in the round. The identifiable iconographic antecedents suggest that a thematic interpretation is the correct one, and that the family of Herodes used the sarcophagus to construct and maintain a particular legendary and historical identity.

The front of the Kephisia sarcophagus, with its depiction of the Dioskouroi and Helen (Fig. 1), is particularly interesting in this respect. Because of the manner in which a sarcophagus is configured, the viewer experiences its various fields—front, sides, back, and lid—sequentially. This sequential viewing usually gives thematic priority to the front register, often providing it with an immediate, autonomous meaning, one which the ends of the box might or might not amplify.<sup>44</sup> The clear antecedents for the front register, in this instance, are not individual sculptures in the round, but relief sculptures on which all three figures appear in precisely this arrangement, with Helen in the center and the Dioskouroi on either side.<sup>45</sup>

43. The Leda and Eros types each appear individually on a few other sarcophagi (Wiegartz 1983). It is the family as a whole that is unusual as a theme in funerary art.

44. Brilliant 1984, p. 125.

45. Examples in Chapouthier 1935. The earliest surviving figural representations of the Dioskouroi flanking a female figure appear to date to the end of the 2nd century B.C. (Chapouthier 1935, pp. 97–98).



**Figure 7. Document relief from Sparta depicting the Dioskouroi and Helen. Sparta Museum 202.** Photo J. Sanders, reproduced with permission of the Greek Archaeological Service

46. SM 201, SM 202, and SM 203. Tod and Wace 1906, pp. 33–34, 158; Sanders 1992, p. 205.

47. These reliefs are dated on the basis of their inscriptions, since they and other Dioskouroi reliefs from the Sparta Museum are often crudely carved and difficult to date based on stylistic criteria. Sanders (1993, pp. 218–219) acknowledges this difficulty, but suggests that some of the other Dioskouroi reliefs in the museum may date to as late as the 2nd or 3rd century A.C.

48. Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, pp. 194–195.

49. For coin devices, see Grunauer-von Hoerschelmann 1978, p. 5. For administration of the cults and claims of descent from the Dioskouroi, see Cartledge and Spawforth 1989, p. 162; Sanders 1993, p. 219.

50. For example, a number of reliefs from Pisidia depict the trio; see Metzger 1952, pp. 22–27, pl. III.

Three document reliefs of the Early Principate now in the Sparta Museum, two of which are illustrated here, offer the closest extant comparanda (Figs. 6–7).<sup>46</sup> The texts of these document reliefs list members of οἱ Σιτηθέντες, participants in an annual feast associated with the twin gods.<sup>47</sup> The reliefs that appear above the inscriptions depict the Dioskouroi in heraldic symmetry, as they also appear on the Kephisia sarcophagus. On the Spartan reliefs, an archaizing female figure wearing a *kalathos* stands between them.

The theme of Helen's family, which is so unusual on sarcophagi, or indeed, in any 2nd-century Athenian context, was a familiar one in Sparta, the mythological home of the Dioskouroi. During the Empire, the twin gods were honored at several different sanctuaries around the city, including at Phobaeum, where, perhaps in the 2nd or 1st century B.C., Helen came to share the cult with them.<sup>48</sup> For several centuries, beginning in the Hellenistic period, the Dioskouroi and their attributes were also favorite devices on Spartan coins and reliefs, and during the Roman Empire, Spartan families of the highest political standing participated in the administration of their cult. Several even claimed descent from the heroes.<sup>49</sup>

Other places in the Mediterranean world did produce reliefs of the Dioskouroi flanking their sister (Fig. 8).<sup>50</sup> On those examples, Helen does not generally appear as an archaizing caryatid with a *kalathos*, as on the reliefs from Sparta. Fernand Chapouthier has suggested that such



**Figure 8. Relief from Telmessos depicting the Dioskouroi and Helen.** Kunsthistorisches Museum inv. I 702. Courtesy Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, neg. I 6969

iconography was particularly popular in southern Asia Minor because many cities in that area traced their origins to Spartan colonization or Spartan ancestors.<sup>51</sup> This interpretation, if true, would be entirely in keeping with the common Second Sophistic practice of, in Simon Swain's words, "cities reasserting or recreating the roles of founders and civic myths."<sup>52</sup> It would also illustrate Swain's recent contention that "the primacy of Athens, Sparta, and Argos in the Greek heritage was particularly important in the demonstration of . . . Greekness."<sup>53</sup>

On each of the cult reliefs from Sparta itself, Helen wears archaizing, stacked folds, and her *kalathos* touches the molding above her; on one example, she clearly stands on a statue base (Fig. 6). Stylistically, these figures share much with the archaizing caryatids on the corners of the Kephisia sarcophagus. This similarity lends a meaningful ambiguity to the overall decorative program of the latter. On the one hand, we understand the female figure on the front to be Helen because of her position between the Dioskouroi. On the other, the style of the corner caryatids and their association with the rest of the program require us to understand them as depictions—or, more precisely, as statues—of Helen, like those on the Spartan document reliefs.

The ambiguity of Helen's role as central figure and corner caryatid unites two very different sculptural traditions, the Spartan cult reliefs and the kline sarcophagus, into one, eclectic composition. Herms, caryatids, and other support figures often appear at the corners of Attic kline sarcophagi. Since the kline sarcophagus is, by its very nature, styled as a funerary couch, corner support figures are analogous to the legs on a genuine couch. The type and style of the support figures on kline sarcophagi can vary

51. Chapouthier (1935, pp. 100, 232) further argues that the female figure on these reliefs is a syncretism of Helen and a local divinity.

52. Swain 1996, p. 73. See also Alcock 1993, pp. 163–164.

53. Swain 1996, p. 75.

greatly, which surely indicates that the specific stylistic parallels between the Kephisia caryatids and the Spartan Helen-caryatids are significant. By depicting Helen and the Dioskouroi in their customary alignment on the front of the box, but removing the archaizing, caryatid version of Helen to the four corners, the artist is able to evoke Spartan cult without abandoning a decorative motif common to many kline sarcophagi.

There may be another reason for the dual representation of Helen on this sarcophagus. The artist has moved the Helen-statues, but not *removed* them, providing a crucial, conceptual clarification for the viewer. When the subject of sculptural representation is, itself, a sculpture, the artist must indicate somehow that this is the case. Otherwise, the viewer may misinterpret the subject as an actual person or divinity. The front of the Kephisia sarcophagus presents an inversion of this dynamic. Since the Spartan reliefs are its primary referent, a knowledgeable viewer might easily have assumed that the central figure on the sarcophagus was also a statue. The archaizing caryatids at the corners create the necessary visual context to contradict this assumption. Their very presence, as well as the stylistic contrast they offer, indicates to the viewer that the woman on the front is a “real” (albeit idealized) woman.

The transformation of the central figure from statue (on the Spartan reliefs) to woman (on the front of the sarcophagus) may be motivated by the desire to convey a more intimate tribute to the deceased. If any figure on this box represents the deceased, it is likely to be the woman in this position, front and center. To place her in the role of Helen, while carefully distinguishing her from recognizable representations of the Spartan statue, sets a personal tone that, to some extent, balances the multivalent allusions to family history with a particular commemoration of the deceased.

### THE CONNECTION WITH MARATHON

The figure on the left end of the sarcophagus, Leda, is no more a depiction of a famous sculpture in the round than are Helen and the Dioskouroi. While she does give this general impression—she seems to have the proportions of a Late Classical female figure such as the Knidian Aphrodite—in fact, the motif of Leda locked in a vicious struggle with a swan does not appear until the Hellenistic period. A handful of Hellenistic reliefs, including one from Argos (Fig. 9) and one from Brauron, are sufficiently similar to one another to be considered replicas of the same model, and are arguably the earliest-known depictions of the theme.<sup>54</sup> Classical representations of Leda and the swan, including the replica type that scholars attribute to Timotheos (Fig. 10), differ greatly from these Hellenistic struggles, since they depict Leda simply holding or embracing the creature. Indeed, Classical vase paintings depicting mythological rape tend to emphasize pursuit; they depict physical contact less often, and consummation almost never.<sup>55</sup>

Hellenistic reliefs such as those from Brauron and Argos represent a widespread type that can be seen in different media for centuries following its first appearance.<sup>56</sup> As on the Kephisia sarcophagus, the enormous swan depicted in these examples appears on the left, his naked victim on the right. There are, however, significant differences between these putative

54. The relief from Brauron is in the Athens National Museum (NM 1499); that from Argos is in the British Museum (BM 2199). The prototype of all of these reliefs may have been a relief or painting, since there are no known sculptures in the round that reproduce this type. Wiegartz (1983, pp. 171–174, fig. 2) cites one version that appears to be a sculpture in the round, and then argues convincingly that it is in fact a table foot whose composition is derived from one of the many relief versions.

55. Shapiro 1992, pp. 61, 64–65.

56. Wiegartz 1983. For an itemization of gem representations, see Dierichs 1990, pp. 46–47.



**Figure 9. Relief of Leda and the swan, from Argos. British Museum 2199.** Courtesy British Museum, neg. PS 215697

prototypes and the Kephisia version. The proportions of the Leda from Argos are less classicizing in overall conception than those of the delicate Kephisia figure. The torso of the Argos figure is longer and her buttocks and thighs are more prominent, features that combine to make her seem heavier and less classically restrained than the Leda depicted on the Kephisia sarcophagus. Moreover, the reliefs from Brauron and Argos display a brutality that is well beyond that seen on the Kephisia sarcophagus.<sup>57</sup> On the former, Leda and the swan are closely locked. She does not have the strength to hold the swan away from her, as she does on the sarcophagus. The swan's talons clutch at her thigh and he uses his sinuous neck to gain access to her, but instead of trying to kiss her, he pins the back of her neck with his beak and pushes it down, forcing her to bend forward (Fig. 9). In response to this violent attack, Leda's left arm strains downward as she fights vainly to keep herself covered.

By contrast, the relative restraint exemplified by the figures on the sarcophagus betrays a sensibility that was common in mythological representations of rape during the Roman Empire. A number of Imperial paintings, sculptures, and coins depicting figures such as Apollo and Daphne or Herakles and Auge demonstrate this phenomenon.<sup>58</sup> The classicism of style and calm demeanor of such scenes tend to direct the viewer's attention away from the brutal act of rape itself in order to promote some other message.<sup>59</sup> The decoration of the Kephisia sarcophagus similarly promotes an alternative reading, one that establishes family identity by evoking a legendary past. Its program is therefore less about the encounter of Leda with the swan than about the offspring, both legendary and historical, of her union with Zeus.<sup>60</sup>

57. Wiegartz 1983, p. 172.

58. Lacroix 1956, pp. 22–23.

59. So also Kampen 1988, pp. 15–16, for a discussion of the Rape of the Sabine Women on the frieze of the Basilica Aemilia. Kampen argues that the stylistic classicism of this monument lends authority to the frieze's message, which encourages Roman women to view Sabine women as *exempla* because of their important role as social mediators.

60. For the employment of legends about rape to fashion identity—in this case cultural rather than familial—see Joshel 1992.

**Figure 10. Leda and the swan.**  
 Replica of a type commonly attributed to Timotheos. Capitoline Museum 302. Courtesy Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, neg. 75.2228



61. Replica lists appear in Döhl 1968, pp. 10–13, 49–50, 62–63; and in *LIMC* III.1, 1986, p. 881, s.v. Eros (A. Hermay, H. Cassimatis, and R. Vollkomer).

62. Moreno (1995), in particular, attributes both Eros types to Lysippos: the more famous type (e.g., Fig. 12) and the chubby type that is reproduced on the Kephisia sarcophagus. He assigns the chubby Eros to Lysippos on the basis of perceived similarities with the so-called Lateran Poseidon sculptures. Bartman (1992, pp. 108–146), however, throws into question the very existence of a single prototype for the many, and apparently quite varied, Roman statuettes traditionally called “Lateran Poseidon.” Döhl (1968, pp. 49–50), while acknowledging that the chubby Eros could be a Late Hellenistic creation, prefers to date the prototype to the Early Empire, in part because of its eclecticism of style.

A Hellenistic composition, then, inspired the representation of Leda on the Kephisia sarcophagus. But the sarcophagus reinterprets the Hellenistic composition by muting the violence of the scene, and providing Leda with more classicizing bodily proportions. In other words, this figure does not simply “copy” a famous, lost sculpture, as earlier scholarship suggested, but reinterprets its predecessors in a typically Roman, eclectic manner—one that combines classicizing proportions with Hellenistic iconography.

The Eros on the right side of the Leda sarcophagus (Fig. 2) holds the top of his bow with his right hand while his left hand grasps the middle. Unlike the other figures on the sarcophagus, he does reproduce a widespread replica type, known so far from seven sculptures, two reliefs, and a gem (see, e.g., Fig. 11).<sup>61</sup> He is a chubby, long-haired baby who leans forward with both legs bent at the knees, and his right leg advanced; he looks away from, rather than toward, his bow. These features are in distinct contrast to those of the Eros type traditionally attributed to Lysippos (Fig. 12), though some scholars have attributed both types to that artist.<sup>62</sup>

Only one of the five figures on the front and sides of the Kephisia sarcophagus can, therefore, be identified with a known sculptural type. Nevertheless, the figures appear to the viewer to reproduce sculptures in



the round. As noted earlier, this impression results from the manner of their representation: the figures stand at a distance from one another, disengaged. The fact that there is little depth to the composition, and no landscape or architectural setting, enhances the impression further. Yet, to 2nd-century eyes, these formal characteristics need not have suggested sculptures in the round; other reliefs from this period are characterized by precisely these formal qualities and do not explicitly replicate sculptures in the round. A famous example is the Province series from the Hadrianeum in the Campus Martius. These personifications of the provinces (Fig. 13), like the figures on the Kephisia sarcophagus, adhere to a coherent thematic program, but each individual figure stands apart from the others, surrounded by a blank, undecorated background that enhances her statuesque isolation.

As Richard Brilliant has pointed out, the ends of a sarcophagus often “extend the implication of the front frieze but at a second order of importance.”<sup>63</sup> In this case, the ends take up a theme first presented on the front register and, together with the kline lid, transform it into an explicit allusion to a different sort of monument, the Classical cult-stature base. The blank background, spatial distance, and lack of engagement between figures, while unusual for sarcophagus decoration at any period, is comparable to what we know of cult-stature bases from the Classical period, including, for example, the Mantinea Base attributed to the workshop of Praxiteles (Fig. 14), or the base of the cult statue of Nemesis at Rhamnous (Fig. 15). The impression of a cult-stature base would have been enhanced

**Figure 11** (*left*). Eros. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Venice, inv. 170. Courtesy Soprintendenza Archeologica per il Veneto

**Figure 12** (*right*). Eros of the type attributed to Lysippos. Capitoline Museum 410. Courtesy Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, neg. 79.1577

63. Brilliant 1984, p. 138; he is describing an Achilles sarcophagus in the Capitoline Museum.



**Figure 13. Province relief, Hadrianeum.** Courtesy Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome, neg. 845

by the fact that the Kephisia sarcophagus supported a sculpture in the round, the reclining figure of the deceased, in a position analogous to that of a cult statue on its base.<sup>64</sup>

Neither of these points is sufficient in itself to demonstrate the allusion to a cult-statue base, but the subject matter—the miraculous conception and the family of Helen of Troy—also seems to support the reading: miraculous births and family connections were popular themes on such bases during the Classical period.<sup>65</sup> Since the Kephisia sarcophagus was produced very early in the history of Attic kline sarcophagi, and the type would still have been unfamiliar in the area around Athens, a viewer from Attica may have been less likely than a Roman to place this work readily into its “correct” typological context, that of the kline sarcophagus, and therefore more likely to perceive an allusion, based on these formal and thematic parallels, to a Classical cult-statue base.

64. The reclining position seen in the female torso from the Kephisia tomb is not common among cult statues; it is, however, consonant with traditional Greek depictions of the heroized dead, and, in Attica at this time, might have been read as an advertisement of the semidivine status of the sarcophagus’s occupant. A relief in the Brauron Museum (Gazda 1980, p. 4) provides an interesting comparison: it depicts Herodes’ foster child

Polydeukion in a reclining position analogous to that of a kline portrait. Herodes is known to have heroized Polydeukion, even instituting games in his honor, and this relief represents the boy as a hero, reclining on a couch as at a banquet. We know that Herodes also heroized at least one of the women in his family, his wife Regilla. A memorial inscription found on the family land outside Rome indicates that Herodes constructed a resting place for her that

was “neither temple nor tomb”: *IG XIV 1389*, line 43 (= Ameling 1983, II, pp. 153–160, no. 146). It seems possible, therefore, to understand the female figure that once reclined on top of the Kephisia lid as a heroine, whose semidivine status would have been reinforced by the resemblance of her sarcophagus to a cult statue base.

65. Ridgway 1981, p. 173; Lapatin 1992, p. 113, n. 20.



**Figure 14. Part of the Mantinea Base, Athens, National Museum.**

Courtesy Alinari 24305

It should come as no surprise that a sculpture from the family of Herodes Atticus alludes, in style and content, to the bases of cult statues from the Classical period. Herodes was one of the most famous figures of the Second Sophistic, the classicizing literary, linguistic, and rhetorical movement that was so popular during his lifetime. Philostratus tells of Herodes' devotion to ancient rhetorical models, and in particular of his special fondness for speaking in the style of the 5th-century oligarch Critias (Philostr. *VS* 2.1.34–35). The classicism and intellectual activity associated with this period were not, however, limited to literary and rhetorical style. Rather, as Jas Elsner notes, the movement was “a deep antiquarian examination of the arts, rituals and myths of the canonical Greek past” that applied to all realms of elite, public life.<sup>66</sup>

Both the style and content of the visual arts during the Second Sophistic reflected these antiquarian and intellectual values.<sup>67</sup> Herodes himself commissioned other sculptures that might be deemed antiquarian or classicizing. His portraits, for example, like those of so many intellectuals of the period, alluded generally to Late Classical images of important

66. Elsner 1998, p. 169. For the various manifestations of antiquarianism in the Second Sophistic, see Bowie 1974; Alcock 1993, pp. 163–164, 189–198; Alcock 1994; Anderson 1993; Zanker 1995, pp. 247–256; Swain 1996.

67. Elsner (1998, p. 181), in an analysis of the Spada reliefs, concludes: “Thus the Spada relief of Bellerophon brings to mind Polyclitus' Doryphorus, for example, while Diomedes in the relief of the theft of the Palladium is a copy of a statue-type attributed to the

Greek sculptor Kresilas. But the finished panels are a fundamentally Roman, Second Sophistic, product—a creative transformation of the given models into idealizing antiquarian compositions with a romantic mood.”

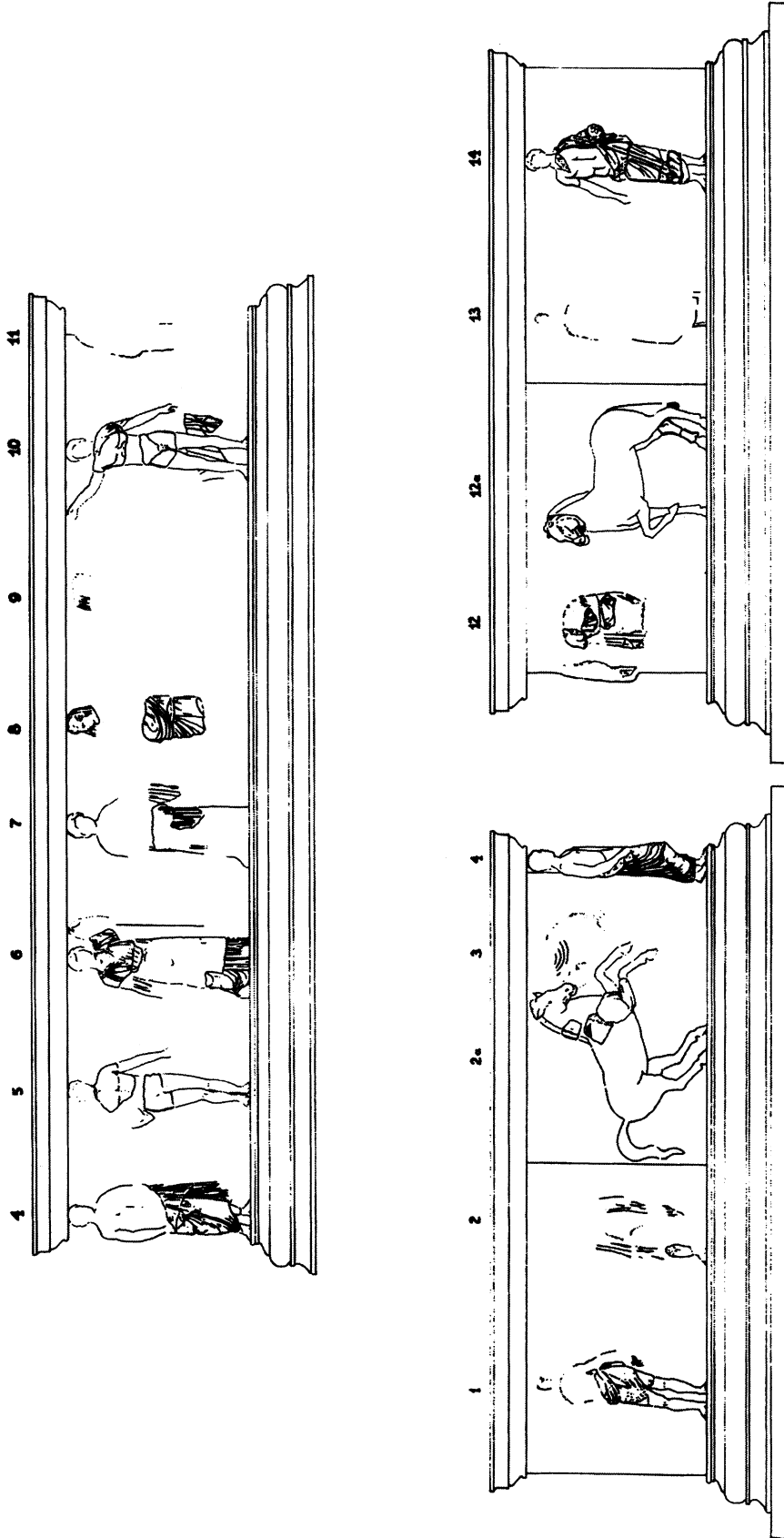


Figure 15. Reconstruction of the base of the statue of Nemesis at Rhamnous. Drawing M. Belozerskaya, in Lapatin 1992, p. 109, fig. 1.

individuals.<sup>68</sup> We also know of two cult statues commissioned by Herodes in ivory and gold, an uncommon choice of material, and one that will surely have reminded Athenian viewers of the great chryselephantine statues of the Classical period.<sup>69</sup>

One parallel between the Kephisia sarcophagus and the base of the cult statue of Nemesis at Rhamnous (Fig. 15) is particularly noteworthy: both depict the same subject, the family of Helen of Troy, disposed around three sides of a four-sided monument.<sup>70</sup> On the front of the Nemesis base, four female figures stand in the center, flanked by two male figures on either side. Kenneth Lapatin has identified three of these figures convincingly as Helen, Leda, and Nemesis, while traces of *piloi* testify to the presence of the Dioskouroi. Pausanias (1.33.7–8) also indicates that Tyndareus “and his children” were represented on the Nemesis base.<sup>71</sup>

Shared subject matter is not, of itself, necessarily significant, especially if one monument is not a literal copy of the other. In the present case, however, other evidence would seem to suggest that this subject matter is meaningful, and that the sarcophagus may allude, deliberately and explicitly, to the Nemesis base. The similarities of style, for example, and the very rarity of the subject matter support this hypothesis.

Perhaps most important, however, is the historical and mythological association between the cult statue of Nemesis and Herodes’ family deme, Marathon. According to Pausanias, the cult statue at Rhamnous was erected as a result of the Battle of Marathon, the very battle that was fought and won by Herodes’ ancestor, Miltiades (Paus. 1.33.2–3; see also *Anth. Pal.* 16.221, 222, 263 for anecdotal variants).<sup>72</sup> The story was that the Persians transported a block of Parian marble with them to Greece in 490 B.C., with the intention of using it for a victory monument, but the wrath of Nemesis fell upon them at Marathon, and the marble was used instead by Pheidias to create the cult statue of Nemesis.

This 2nd-century version and its variants in the *Palatine Anthology* differ significantly from the story related by Pliny (*HN* 36.17), in which the sculptor is Agorakritos, and the Battle of Marathon plays no role. The later version may, therefore, represent a typically Second Sophistic reworking of the past, according to which a tradition or legend is “recovered” and subsequently employed to establish aristocratic or civic identity and cultural superiority.<sup>73</sup> It also exemplifies a *topos* of Second Sophistic literature, and of Pausanias in particular, the identity of image and divinity.<sup>74</sup> The marble comes to Greece because of an act of hubris, but falls into Greek possession because of an act of Nemesis. The very material therefore symbolizes both the goddess and the abstract idea for which she stands. This marble was Nemesis even before the sculptor undertook to transform it into her image.

By the 2nd century, then, the cult statue of Nemesis served both as a trophy to Miltiades’ victory, and as a symbol of the just punishment imposed by the goddess on the Persians. For this reason, Herodes and his kin must have honored the cult and its statue greatly, a hypothesis that finds support in an inscription from Rhamnous indicating that Herodes was active in that sanctuary on more than one occasion.<sup>75</sup>

Naturally, the Kephisia sarcophagus does not simply copy the Nemesis

68. Zanker (1995, pp. 220–221, 243–244) emphasizes the intellectual qualities of Herodes’ portraits; Smith (1998, pp. 78–79) suggests that they borrow some of the syntax of the famous portrait of Demosthenes. For the desirability of representing oneself as an intellectual during this period, see Ewald 1999.

69. On the chryselephantine statues commissioned by Herodes, see Lapatin 2001, pp. 127–128. I thank Professor Lapatin for allowing me to see parts of his manuscript while the book was still in press.

70. See Lapatin 1992, pp. 113–114.

71. See Lapatin 1992. Lapatin makes use of Pausanias’s description, but also notes some of the problems associated with it.

72. For the family claim of descent from Miltiades, see above, p. 470.

Although Herodes owned estates all over Greece and even in Italy, Marathon was the family deme, the putative location of the family’s origins. The considerable architectural remains of the estate at Marathon are discussed in Tobin 1997, pp. 241–283.

73. For parallels, see Swain 1996, pp. 65–100.

74. Elsner 1996.

75. *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 3969 (= Ameling 1983, II, pp. 169–170, no. 173), which also indicates that Polydeukion was present during these activities.

base. There were, for example, fourteen figures represented on the base, but only five on the sarcophagus (or nine, if one includes the corner caryatids).<sup>76</sup> More troubling, perhaps, is an iconographic difference that has some bearing on the interpretation of the Kephisia piece. On the sarcophagus, Leda mates with the Zeus-swan, and is therefore the natural mother of Helen and the Dioskouroi; Nemesis does not appear at all. On the Rhamnous base, by contrast, Pausanias indicates that Leda was merely a nurse and adoptive mother, while Nemesis was Helen's natural mother (Paus. 1.33.7).

Far from being problematic, however, such a discrepancy may be a deliberate strategy of self-conscious mythmaking on the part of Herodes' family. Graham Anderson, writing of literary imitation during this period, has observed that, in addition to the more obvious sorts of literary imitation practiced at the time (including stylistic imitation of a particular Classical author's style and pastiches of several works of literature), "sometimes a classical framework will serve to evoke the ethos of an author when the imitator is obviously setting himself at variance with his original in some significant way"; other scholars have identified analogous transformations in the visual arts.<sup>77</sup> If we apply this strategy to an interpretation of the Kephisia sarcophagus, we may see that it evokes the ethos of the cult statue at Rhamnous, but sets itself at variance through a significant departure from the iconography of the "original." This difference—that Leda, on the sarcophagus, is undeniably the true mother of Helen—directs the viewer's thoughts back to Leda's home, Sparta, and to the Spartan votive reliefs that inspired the front register. In other words, it is precisely the iconographic discrepancy that serves to combine the two very different civic references into one, possibly as a symbolic reflection of the marriage of the deceased.

Taken as a whole, the decorative program of the Kephisia sarcophagus is a distillation of several iconographic and typological antecedents, including not only the kline sarcophagus and the hero relief, but also (and most importantly) Spartan cult reliefs and the cult statue of Nemesis at Rhamnous. The combination of these last two types accords with a general tendency during this period to employ art, especially art associated with cult, in the establishment of one or more cultural identities.<sup>78</sup> The result is an eclectic and multivalent creation of a sort that is common in sculptural production of the Roman Empire.

76. The job of reconstructing this monument fell to Georgios Despinis and Vasileios Petrakos: Petrakos 1981; 1986. An identification of the various figures is suggested by Lapatin (1992).

77. Anderson 1993, p. 72. For several analogous case studies in the visual arts of the Roman Empire, see Gazda, forthcoming.

78. Elsner (1997, p. 196) argues that "the icons of pagan polytheism in the east were used during and after the 2nd

century A.D. . . . as a prime means for ethnic and religious self-assertion." Smith (1998, pp. 70–78) discusses several well-known monuments from this period that negotiate the dual (Greek and Roman) identity of the aristocrat from the Greek East. He even interprets one of these, the Monument of Philopappos, as a display of the honorand's triple identity—as Macedonian king, Athenian archon, and Roman consul.

## DATE OF THE SARCOPHAGUS AND IDENTITY OF THE DECEASED

A relative chronology was established by Arnold Tschira for the four coffins found in the Kephisia tomb. He concluded, on the basis of the size of each box, the available space, and the wear marks on the floor, that the garland sarcophagus (1) was placed in the tomb first, the Eros sarcophagus (2) second, and the undecorated sarcophagus (3) third (Fig. 16). The Leda sarcophagus (4) was, according to his reckoning, almost certainly the last of the four to be moved into the tomb.<sup>79</sup>

If it is a fairly straightforward matter to establish the relative chronology of the four sarcophagi in the tomb, it has proven somewhat more difficult to establish reliable absolute dates. Most scholars agree that the tomb and its contents date firmly to the 2nd century A.C., but detailed arguments have failed to secure a more precise date. Because both the style and themes depicted on the Leda sarcophagus are unusual, Koch has suggested that it belonged to an early “experimental” phase in the development of Attic sarcophagi, which he dates to approximately A.D. 170–180. While most Attic sarcophagi appear to have been produced by a narrowly defined circle of sculptors, he argues, a few were produced during this decade by other, less successful workshops. A number of themes and motifs appeared during this period that did not, ultimately, prove to be popular and so underwent a sort of “natural selection” and disappeared from the repertoire.<sup>80</sup> Koch places the Kephisia example in this experimental phase, and suggests an even more precise date for it, about 180, on the grounds that this is when Wiegartz dates the arrival of the kline sarcophagus in Attica.<sup>81</sup>

The Kephisia sarcophagus was undoubtedly produced very early in the Attic kline series, as its rectangular inset implies.<sup>82</sup> Attendant cultural circumstances also suggest that this coffin was one of the first examples of its type to appear in Greece. Kline sarcophagi were produced both in Rome and in Asia Minor before they arrived in Attica, so it would not be at all surprising to discover that they were introduced from one of these areas by a family or families with the cosmopolitan lifestyle and connections that were *de rigueur* among the intellectual elite of the 2nd century.<sup>83</sup> The wealthy and prestigious family of Herodes could plausibly have been among the first in Attica to employ this new type.

79. Tschira 1948–1949, col. 86; see also Tobin 1997, pp. 222–228. Benndorf (1868, p. 36) originally suggested that the Leda sarcophagus was the third to be placed in the tomb, and that the undecorated sarcophagus went in last. This order was presumably based on the fact that the undecorated sarcophagus was found closest to the door, and the Leda sarcophagus stood behind it. Tschira’s argument, based as it is on the wear marks on the floor, seems

more plausible than Benndorf’s hypothesis, and has also been accepted by Tobin. The inscription discussed above, p. 462, seems to support Tschira, since it suggests that the undecorated sarcophagus, the one that probably held the infant, was placed in the tomb at a time when only three children were buried there.

80. See above, p. 462 and n. 7.

81. Koch and Sichtermann 1982, pp. 371, 415, 422, 460–461; Wiegartz

1975, pp. 187–188, 219; Wiegartz 1977, p. 386.

82. See above, p. 465 and n. 10.

83. For the early appearance of the kline in Roman funerary art, see Koch and Sichtermann 1982, pp. 58–61 (kline monuments) and pp. 66–67 (kline sarcophagi). For the expectation that a sophist of this period would be well-traveled and function as a “cultural traveller and cultural ambassador,” see Anderson 1993, pp. 28–30.

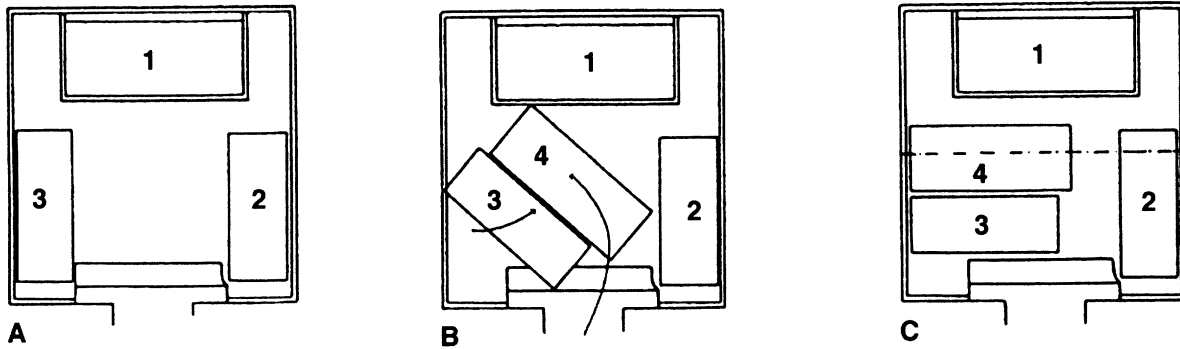


Figure 16. Reconstruction of the order and manner in which sarcophagi were installed in the Kephisia tomb. Number 4 is the Leda sarcophagus. After Tschira 1948–1949, cols. 87–88, fig. 2, courtesy Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Athens

Wiegartz, however, offers a very specific date for the introduction of Attic kline sarcophagi, A.D. 180, virtually without argument.<sup>84</sup> He does assert in a footnote—but again without argument or appeal to monuments of fixed date—that the introduction of the kline lid in Attica occurred “somewhat later” than in Asia Minor, where the first examples date to around A.D. 165–170.<sup>85</sup> He offers no compelling evidence for this date, nor does he explain why the first Attic examples had to be produced a full decade or more after those from Asia Minor. The arguments offered thus far can therefore only safely secure a date for the Kephisia sarcophagus between 170 and 180.

Another approach to dating the sarcophagus might be to identify its occupants. Tobin has assigned all four coffins in the Kephisia tomb to children of Herodes, in part because of the inscription discussed above that mentions three children who clearly predeceased him. She assigns the undecorated box, the third to be interred, to the infant mentioned in that inscription, speculating that since Regilla was eight months pregnant at the time she died, her unborn child might have lived beyond her death and then been interred at Kephisia. She then assigns the other two coffins to Herodes’ children Regillus and Athenais, who died in the late 150s. Tobin acknowledges a potential problem with the attribution to Athenais: Philostratus the Elder explicitly states that she was buried elsewhere.<sup>86</sup> Finally, she hypothesizes that the Leda sarcophagus might have belonged to Herodes’ daughter, Elpinike, who died before her father. A funerary inscription does suggest that the family buried her in Kephisia; and Elpinike died after several other siblings, which corresponds well with Tschira’s relative chronology for the four coffins in the tomb.<sup>87</sup>

84. Wiegartz 1975, pp. 188, 219. He repeats the assertion in Wiegartz 1977, p. 386, again without argument, only citing his previous publication. Koch (in Koch and Sichtermann 1982, p. 371, n. 37) then reasserts the date, also without argument, citing both of Wiegartz’s earlier publications.

85. Wiegartz 1975, p. 188, n. 161. The traditional date for the introduc-

tion of the kline lid into the workshops of Asia Minor is based on the stylistic evidence of one of the earliest examples, the Melfi sarcophagus, now in the Museo Nazionale del Melfese. The portrait lid has been dated to about 170 based on its resemblance to likenesses of Faustina the Younger. See Kleiner 1992, p. 306 with bibliography.

86. Philostr. *VS* 2.558. He writes

that she was buried in the city by the Athenians, who also decreed that the day of her death should be taken out of the calendar as a consolation to her father.

87. For a discussion of the inscription, which was found in Kephisia, see Tobin 1997, p. 228. For the text, see *IG II<sup>2</sup> 12568/9* (= Ameling 1983, II, p. 140, no. 136).

Specific attributions of these four coffins are problematic for two reasons. First, we cannot be sure how many children were born to Herodes and his wife, Regilla. Philostratus, for example, in spite of the wealth of detail he provides about the family, does not mention a boy who was born to the couple early in their marriage while they were still in Rome, nor is this infant mentioned in the large corpus of inscriptions associated with Herodes. We only know of his existence because of a letter written by Marcus Aurelius to his old teacher, Fronto, requesting that the latter make an effort to console Herodes on the boy's death (Fronto *Ep.* 1.6.10).<sup>88</sup> A second complication is that Herodes raised an unspecified number of foster children. We know both from inscriptions and from Philostratus that he treated some of these children "as his own." Indeed, his foster child Polydeukion received better treatment in life than Herodes' own son, Atticus Bradua. This being the case, we cannot entirely rule out the possibility that one or more of Herodes' foster children may rest in the Kephisia tomb.

If it proves impossible to assign all four coffins to known personalities, however, the Leda sarcophagus may prove to be an exception. The now-missing female torso from the lid suggests that the deceased reached adulthood; therefore, historical and epigraphic sources probably name her. The fact that early Attic kline sarcophagi tended to contain and represent married couples also narrows the field of possibilities: there is only one couple in Herodes' family who might claim both a hereditary interest in the Spartan Dioskouroi and the right to a burial place in Kephisia along with Herodes' children: his daughter Elpinike and her husband, Lucius Vibullius Hipparchus.<sup>89</sup> If these are indeed the coffin's two occupants, then the family must have commissioned the sarcophagus at the time of Elpinike's death.

Elpinike of course had an undisputed right to a place in the family tomb at Kephisia. Both the female torso that was found in excavation and the iconographic program of the box itself argue strongly in favor of identifying her as the deceased. This is all the more true because her very name, Elpinike, is an explicit reference to the family connections with Marathon: it was the name of Miltiades' daughter. The name "Elpinike" was an unusual one in 2nd-century Athens, and thus it would be difficult to misconstrue the reference, which functioned, like the names of Polydeukion and Memnon, as a recognizable allusion to family origins, in this case specifically to the Battle of Marathon and to the general who won that battle.<sup>90</sup> It should not be at all surprising, then, that Herodes buried his daughter in a coffin whose decorative program and style alluded, at least in part, to the cult statue of Nemesis, who played such an important role in the very same battle.

The death of Elpinike has recently been assigned to the mid-160s, which on the surface does not seem to sit entirely well with the traditional dating of the Kephisia sarcophagus to about A.D. 170–180. However, the secure *termini* for Elpinike's death derive from the fact that she outlived her mother, who died around 160, but not her father, who died in the late 170s. Scholars have offered two arguments for a date around 165, neither of which is conclusive. Tobin believes that she might have died during the

88. The failure of our other sources to mention the infant or his passing is all the more astonishing because the emperor's letter makes it clear that Herodes took the death hard (*id Herodes non aequo fert animo*).

89. Lucius Vibullius Hipparchus is identified as Elpinike's husband in *IG II<sup>2</sup> 12568/9* (= Ameling 1983, II, p. 140, no. 136).

90. Her full name was Appia Annia Regilla Agrippina Elpinike Atria Polla (Ameling 1983, II, pp. 139–140, nos. 134, 135, and 136 [= *IG II<sup>2</sup> 12568/9*]), though Philostratus refers to her simply as Elpinike.

plague that struck around 165, which is indeed a possibility, but there is no other evidence to support or refute it. Ameling claims that Philostratus dates Elpinike's death to before the deaths of Herodes' three most famous foster children, Polydeukion, Memnon, and Achilles. There is, however, no indication in Philostratus's text of the chronological relationship between her death and theirs. It is true that he discusses Elpinike's death earlier, but only a few lines earlier, and in any case this does not prove that her death occurred first. In fact, Philostratus does not provide any clues that might help us determine when any of these young people might have died.<sup>91</sup> Thus, as far as the surviving evidence is concerned, Elpinike might very well have died as late as the mid-170s.

It is possible that the Kephisia sarcophagus dates to around A.D. 170–175, five or ten years earlier than the date suggested by Wiegartz for the introduction of the kline sarcophagus into Attica. This revision would correspond more closely to a plausible date for Elpinike's death. If Elpinike was indeed buried in the Kephisia sarcophagus, its date might serve as one of the best fixed chronological points for the introduction of the kline sarcophagus into Attica, since Elpinike's death, though not pinpointed to the year, can at least be dated to within a range of years.

That Elpinike shared this resting place with her husband is an attractive idea for several reasons. As noted earlier, it was common for married couples to share early Attic kline sarcophagi. Moreover, although we know very little about Lucius Vibullius Hipparchus—his existence and activity are only attested in a few inscriptions—Ameling makes the provocative suggestion that because he shared a “nomen” with Herodes' foster child Vibullius Polydeukion, he might have been Polydeukion's brother. This, if true, would make both Lucius Vibullius Hipparchus and Polydeukion sons of Herodes' cousin, Publius Aelius Vibullius Rufus, Athenian archon of 143/4 (Fig. 17).<sup>92</sup> If Ameling's supposition is correct, or if Hipparchus and Polydeukion were otherwise as closely related as their names suggest, the allusion to Spartan votive reliefs on the front register of the coffin would

91. The date of Polydeukion's death has been a matter of heated dispute, with suggestions ranging from 146/7 to the early 170s. Polydeukion's portraiture suggests that he must have been at least in his mid-teens at the time he died, and Tobin points out that Herodes' association with the boy appears to have been a long-standing one. She therefore argues that a date of death around 147 does not seem to correspond to the career dates of Herodes. Indeed, one might add that such a date implies that Herodes was caring for Polydeukion while traveling all over the Mediterranean world from Asia Minor (where he served as Corrector of the Free Cities in the

mid-130s) to Athens (late 130s) to Rome (where he became *consul ordinarius* in 143 and remained for several years); and, rather improbably, it would suggest that he had started to raise Polydeukion as a foster child years before he was married with children of his own. We do know that Herodes had pupils (*ὀμιληταί*) while he was in Asia Minor, since Philostratus (*VS* 2.568) says that he sent them to Pergamon to hear Aristocles speak; but this is a far cry from raising foster children (*τρόφιμοι*). For a summary of the recent debate over Polydeukion's date of death, see Tobin 1997, pp. 231–234. Essential contributions to the debate include Follet 1977;

Meyer 1985; 1989; Ameling 1988.

92. Ameling 1983, I, p. 170; II, pp. 147, 169–170. The Vibullii were a family whose name is perhaps most readily associated with the city of Corinth, but they appear also to have had both Athenian and Spartan associations. Spawforth (1978, p. 258, n. 68) suggests that one of the most famous members from the Corinthian branch, Lucius Vibullius Pius, may have been a brother (or perhaps cousin) of Herodes' maternal grandfather, Lucius Vibullius Rufus. The Vibullius name would, therefore, have been passed on to Herodes by his mother, Vibullia Alkia (see above, n. 26).



be even more meaningful.<sup>93</sup> Hipparchus would have been able to make the same claim of descent from the Dioskouroi that is posited above for Polydeukion, and we might therefore understand the Kephisia sarcophagus as figuratively “marrying” Spartan iconography with allusions to the cult of Nemesis at Rhamnous, in a symbolic reflection of the literal marriage of Elpinike and Lucius Vibullius Hipparchus.<sup>94</sup>

There is a third reason to believe that this was not only the repository of Elpinike’s remains. L. Vibullius Hipparchus valued his relationship with Herodes so much that he later “inserted” himself into another, much more public, family monument, the nymphaeum at Olympia. Almost half a century after Herodes commissioned this building, with portraits of his immediate family in the niches, Hipparchus had the complex renovated, at which time he reinscribed statue bases with his own name and with that of his daughter by Elpinike, Athenais.<sup>95</sup> It would be fitting, then, if the man who had so publicly and proudly inserted himself into the family monument at Olympia had also been laid to rest with that same family.

## CONCLUSIONS

The unusual iconography of the Kephisia sarcophagus appears to commemorate the intimate connection that Herodes’ family enjoyed with the city of Sparta, as well as with the deme of Marathon, the Battle of Marathon, and the cult statue of Nemesis at Rhamnous. The sarcophagus achieves these allusions by means of an eclectic synthesis of models, and is, in this respect, typical of sculptural production during the Roman Empire.

Context and iconography, moreover, support Tobin’s attribution of the Kephisia tomb to the family of Herodes Atticus. They also provide evidence in favor of a suggestion that she makes in passing, that this was the resting place of Herodes’ eldest daughter, Elpinike. The female portrait from the kline lid, the approximate date of the sarcophagus, and the epigraphic evidence that Herodes laid his daughter to rest in Kephisia all suggest that this was the repository for her remains. In addition, the stylistic and thematic allusions to the cult statue of Nemesis point to the same historical event as does Elpinike’s name, the Battle of Marathon, one of the defining events in the history of Herodes’ family. This convergence of iconography and nomenclature would seem to offer still more evidence for the identity of the deceased. It is also possible, though not beyond

93. Polydeukion himself cannot have been buried in the Kephisia sarcophagus: the female torso provides the most compelling evidence against any such supposition. There is no evidence that Polydeukion married before he died; indeed, he may have been too young to do so.

94. Indeed, Polydeukion’s activity with Herodes at Rhamnous (above,

n. 75) suggests that, before the young man’s death, Herodes had already formulated some idea of the goddess’s value as a symbol of the unification of two branches of the family. It even seems possible, in view of both Polydeukion’s privileged position and his activity at Rhamnous, that Herodes originally planned for Polydeukion to marry Elpinike, but that his untimely death

made this impossible. It is tempting to think that it was only after Polydeukion’s death that Herodes turned to the young man’s brother in search of a marriage partner for his daughter.

95. Athenais, who was presumably named after her aunt, is clearly identified on her base at Olympia as “daughter of Vibullius Hipparchus.” See Bol 1984, pp. 101–102, 134–141.

doubt, that Elpinike shared this resting place with her husband, Lucius Vibullius Hipparchus.

Perhaps more important than the attribution of this sarcophagus to specific historical figures, though, is the realization that a particular family history can explain its decorative program. This understanding necessarily modifies our view of the “experimental phase” in Attic sarcophagi as it was identified by Koch. Koch noted correctly that, if sarcophagi are prefabricated, then we must find an explanation for anomalous decorative programs. His explanation was that certain subsidiary workshops, not associated with the main circle of Attic producers, offered for sale themes that proved to be unpopular. According to this scenario, these workshops were driven out of the market within a decade, and their unpopular motifs were not to be found again on Attic sarcophagi.

The example of the Kephisia sarcophagus suggests, however, that the weak point of Koch’s explanation is the presumption that all sarcophagi were prefabricated. In this instance, the unusual iconography appears to result from the fact that the work was commissioned. The patron, Herodes, must have collaborated closely with the workshop on a design that would commemorate those legends and alliances that were especially significant to the family. The entire point, it would seem, was to produce a unique piece—a work of art that would represent this family and no other. This observation, in turn, suggests the possibility that other anomalous Attic sarcophagi and cinerary urns from this decade were special commissions, rather than market failures.

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