

*Art and Identity in Dark Age Greece, 1100–700 BCE.* By SUSAN LANGDON. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xviii + 388. Cloth, \$90.00. ISBN 978-0-521-51321-0.

Susan Langdon (L.) divides her study into seven sections: an introduction, five chapters and an epilogue. The book contains an extensive bibliography and a useful index, but endnotes make switching between the text and the notes cumbersome.

In the introduction L. clearly defines the scope of her study, which is not just another survey of Geometric art; rather, “the goal of this discussion is to bring into focus the interplay of style, content, function, and the sources from which artistic themes were constructed” (p. 16). Furthermore, she limits her discussion as a means of identifying the function “of visual representation in constructing a gendered society in the Early Iron Age” (p. 16). Social change in Iron Age Greece, as evidenced by its art, “...consciously or unconsciously maneuvered through stages of maturation” for both males and females (p. 293). This is most prevalent in the rituals associated with maturation, marriage and the establishment of the *oikos*. L. does not limit her discussion to the art but also draws upon the Homeric and Hesiodic corpora.

L. begins each chapter with one work of art that exemplifies her point. Chapter 1 defines the premises and methods used in the subsequent chapters to identify the gender rituals depicted in art. The focal point here is the abduction-by-ship scene on the London loutirion (BM 18999.2-19.1), which demonstrates the connection between the nuptial ritual and abduction. This vase illustrates “three iconographic elements” in Geometric abduction scenes: the male grasps the woman’s wrist; “the man’s foot-on-board, head-turned-back body stance;” and a contrast between the man’s active and the woman’s passive role.

In Chapter 2 L. examines the maturation rites preparing boys for adulthood. Her focal points are finds from Tiryns, primarily two head-enveloping clay gorgon masks and a decorated terracotta shield that depicts a Greek warrior slaying an Amazon. In the section “Trial by Amazon” L. examines the combat scene in terms of the rituals associated with the maturation of a youth. After discussing several mythic heroes who fought Amazons, she concludes, “Amazons ... are fearsome enough for heroes to build their reputation on” (p. 69). While there have been attempts to identify the shield-figure with various mythic heroes, “the name of the Amazon-slaying hero on the Tiryns shield remains a question” (p. 80). The hero is a generic

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figure who does not depict any particular individual. On the reverse is a representation of a centaur, carrying a branch and surrounded by deer; L. identifies him as Cheiron, the civilizing centaur who raised and taught several heroes. The two scenes should thus be linked to the maturation rituals for boys. The gorgon masks found with the shield were also used in the maturation ritual, perhaps to terrorize the boys: "Terror and humiliation are standard aspects of maturity rites, and masks are particularly associated with aggression" (p. 74). In support of her conclusion, L. draws upon other artifacts that appear linked to maturation rites.

In Chapter 3 L. examines the "virtuous maiden" as a social type, considering burial practices and the depiction of women in Geometric art. Beginning in the Protogeometric period and continuing throughout the Iron Age, a set of "gender-specific grave-goods" are found, mostly with female burials. These offerings consist of terracotta dolls, models of boots and chests, spiral hair ornaments and other pottery types that also may be linked to maidens. L. concludes that the boots and chests are both related to nuptial iconography. During the early Iron Age the richest graves were those of adult women; but after the Middle Geometric period the richest graves are of maidens. "Such evidence suggests special treatment for the girl or young woman who (we assume) did not live to be married, but received symbolic equipment to mark and complete her status" (p. 140). Starting in the Late Geometric period artists move away from the world of funerals and "gendered mourning" into the realm of festival and dancing scenes. Females become more voluptuous and now have long hair, wear belts (a common image of fertility), carry branches or wreaths and dance in a group of maidens or a mixed gender group; they are often shown near snakes (another symbol of fertility) and often in the countryside. The maidens are grouped together, with the emphasis of the scene on the community of young girls, not the individual; this is in contrast to the abduction scene, where the emphasis is on the single maiden. Therefore, "the iconographic attributes of the dancer and the abductee—hair, belt, branch, flower, wreath, snake; beauty, vulnerability, desirability—demonstrate her fertility and her willing participation in the protocols of bridal preparation" (p. 173).

In Chapter 4 L. continues her examination of the maiden in art, in particular in "narrative situations, invariably involving abduction" (p. 17). A kantharos in Copenhagen (NM 727) depicting "man-eating lions, Dipylon warriors, acrobatic male and female dancers, musi-

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cians, swordsmen, and boxers," united by the concept of a contest, leads into the world of abduction and marriage. On the far left of one scene is a couple who are linked by the image of conquest; he clasps both her hands, while she holds a branch, as do the female dancers on the far right. She has been separated from the other dancers. This scene introduces a new image: abduction from the dance. Therefore, "if beauty and dance are the essence of the maiden, then abduction is the defining image of the bride" (p. 201). The image on the Copenhagen kantharos is not unique, and there are several other representations of similar scenes on vases, seal impressions and gold bands. Objects depicting abduction scenes were used in rituals in which they viewed by both men and women, and L. argues that abduction scenes capture the tension created by the shift in relationship and loyalty of the maiden.

In Chapter 5 the maiden and the youth are relocated "from the realm of myth into the 'reality' of the Iron Age oikos" (p. 17). An Attic stand in the Munich Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek (8936) is decorated with a series of scenes; the central one depicts two men facing each other, jointly holding a staff; behind each of them is a woman. The female on the left grasps the arm of the man, wears a belt and holds a branch, symbols of a maiden. The one on the right is smaller and does not wear a belt. Three other scenes portray a hunter with his prey, two warriors dueling over the fallen body of a third, and a duel between an armed warrior and an unshielded "Siamese twin." L. argues that the Munich stand was produced for a specific event, most likely the celebration of a nuptial agreement or wedding. The imagery portrays a man's life as a series of events leading to marriage. L. believes that much Late Geometric art represents the domestication of the male. Hunting scenes no longer depict the lion-hunt; the prey becomes foxes, deer or rabbits. Geometric themes now focus on "domesticated violence": ritualized contests that include dueling, boxing, dancing, running and musical performances. In conclusion, "the Munich stand provides a significant juxtaposition with the London abduction krater" (p. 291). The art developed a new iconography depicting marriage as a union with a dependent, passive maiden as a new social type.

In the Epilogue L. pulls together the themes discussed and notes that viewing material culture through a social lens provides important insights into art, society and religion. In Geometric society, boys were raised in accordance with a heroic model, while the representation of maidens reveals the importance of marriage. Therefore, "the

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emphasis in this study has been on the utility of Geometric art for ordering and unifying communities while recognizing that social boundaries were very much in flux" (p. 296).

As a whole, this work is well argued and documented; if there is any criticism, it is that L. may at times overstretch the boundaries of her discussion, bringing in artifacts that only tendentiously apply to her discussion. She is aware of this, however, and early on defends her work: "It is better to risk overstating the case than to leave the impression that such readings apply only to a few select objects" (p. 18). This study will become a standard reference for any future investigation of the Geometric period.

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