Archery and Alterity:
Understanding the Perception of Steppe Pastoralism through Representations of the ‘Scythian’
Bow in Greek Art

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I’d like to think of this as a beginning—rather than an ending—of a moment in time. This thesis, although over 70 pages of text, is far from finished, and represents everything I would like to continue in life; with my career, my inspirations, and my ideas. I owe countless gratitude to my mentors, family, friends, and colleagues who have guided me through this process; the struggle would not have been worthwhile without your support.

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And to Abuela, whose words, “tranquila, quieta,” I made my mantra.
Abstract

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A thesis presented to the Graduate Program in Ancient Greek and Roman Studies

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
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This thesis aims to guide the conversation away from attempting to identify a figure—specifically, an archer—on a vase, and instead to focus on the meaning of the figure on the larger conversation of ethnography, alterity, and the globalization of the ancient world. I investigate the Greek perception of mobile pastoralism of the Eurasian steppe through the lens of the ‘Scythian’ composite bow in Greek art and references to pastoralist archers in Greek literature. While Scythians and other pastoralist tribes were known for wearing dress peculiar to the east, carrying axes, and especially depending on horses for their livelihoods, I suggest that their specific version of the composite bow is the most effective representation of the global and technological effect of pastoralism and can offer further insight into the operation of alterity with respect to mobile pastoralism. The symbolic relationship between the external other and Greek identity was complex: mobile pastoralism, for the Greeks, inhabited an area between reality and myth, barbarism and civilization, proximity and distance, familiarity and exoticism.
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“…τὸν δὲ λέγουσι πρόστατον εἰπεῖν” ἐπεάν ἀνδρωθέντας ἰδὴ τοὺς παιδας, τάδε ποιεῖσα οὐκ ἀνάμαρτάνοις: τὸν μὲν ἄν ὄρας αὐτῶν τὸ μὲν τὸ ἄνακτον ὡδὲ διατεινόμενον καὶ τοῦτον πάντα ἐντέλλομενον, τοὺς μὲν δὲ τήρας τῆς ὀικήτορα ποιεῖσα: ὄς δὲ ἄν τούτων τῶν ἔργων τῶν ἐντέλλομαι εἰπεῖται, ἐκπεμπε ἐκ τῆς χώρης…”

“They say that he replied, “When you see that the boys have reached manhood, you will not go wrong if you follow these instructions. Have the one you see drawing his bow and girding himself with his belt (as I shall show you) become an inhabitant of this land; but those who fall short of this requirement should be sent away from this land.”¹

(Herodotus, *Histories*, 4.9.4-5)

The mobile pastoralists inhabiting the Eurasian steppe during the first millennium B.C.E. such as the Scythians, the Cimmerians, the Massagetai, the Sauromatians, and many other larger and smaller tribes, still remain a question to scholars in many ways. They did not have their own form of writing, and most had ‘travelling cities’ made of wood and wagons rather than of stone and permanent foundations. What is left to scholars and archaeologists now to piece together is material culture—mostly in the form of burial mounds—and clues in the writings and material culture of the neighboring civilizations. Although these steppe pastoralists appear to have inhabited areas far from other civilizations, they remained an integral part of the history of the Mediterranean world, the Near East, Central Asia, and East Asia due to trade, warfare, and their ability to cover vast expanses of land. Often, however, they are treated as separate from these disciplines and left in the margins.

¹ Translation by Andrea L. Purvis, 2009. Herodotus, *Histories* (4.9.4-5). Excerpted from the version of the Scythian origin story as related by the Hellenes who settled in the Pontic region, this quote indicates the importance of the bow to Scythian culture. According to this account, Herakles came to the land of Scythia driving the cattle of Geryon. He stopped in the land to rest, and woke the next morning to find his horses missing. During his search, he encountered a viper-woman in the caves of Hylaia who promised to return his horses if he slept with her. She subsequently gave birth to three sons: Agathyrsos, Gelonos, and Scythes. Unsure whether she should send the children to him when they are grown or to have them settle in the land of Scythia, Hercules tells her to instruct the sons to complete the task mentioned. Scythes, the youngest son, succeeds and becomes the first ruler of the Scythian peoples.
This thesis is not a study of the intricacies of pastoralist steppe culture but a study of the perception of steppe pastoralists in the eyes of some ancient Greeks, namely, writers and artists (specifically vase painters) whose works survive. In doing so, I hope to present steppe pastoralism as it related to the Mediterranean world; to no longer separate one from the other but link the two types of cultures through the lens of the ancient Greek imagination. In order to do this however, the focus must become even sharper, since, for many Greeks, eastern cultures became agglomerated into one. The way to differentiate the mobile pastoralist from the other easterner, therefore, is to find a metonym for the Greek perception of steppe pastoralism; an object that represents the Greek figment of the cultural imagination. Common identifiers used for eastern figures in material culture are patterned trousers and tunics, soft boots, pointed caps, and foreign words to accompany the figures, but the most effective metonym, as I argue in this thesis, is the ‘Scythian’ composite bow. The bow is a bellicose object by nature and therefore is limited as a metonym for understanding mobile pastoralism itself. Examining the bow as a metonym for mobile pastoralism as it is manifested in the imagination of certain Greeks, however, offers information through connection.

Our understanding of most Greek’s perception of Eurasian mobile and semi-mobile pastoralist steppe cultures directly correlates with the study of the development of ethnography. Over the past two decades, most cultural historians have accepted the structuralist approach towards such issues, emphasizing the culturally derived identity of the ‘self’ in direct contrast with

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2 The term ‘Eurasian steppe pastoralist’ encompasses those who inhabited the lands bordering the North Pontic shores, central Russia and Siberia, Transoxiana, past the Altai mountains, and throughout the Mongolian steppe. In all likelihood, however, the mobile pastoralists of the first millennium B.C.E. mentioned in this thesis by Greek writers would have inhabited the lands until the Altai mountains. Despite all these areas being called the ‘steppe,’ climates and landscape differed, resulting in some pastoralists becoming more mobile or sedentary than others.

3 I note some Greeks, and not all Greeks, as the Greek world for much of the first millennium B.C.E. consisted of poleis that ascribed to their own gods, customs, and dialects. The manifestation of a Greek collective identity is still debated by Classical scholars today, as I discuss in the first chapter of this thesis.
the ‘other’ as the system of hidden cognitive meaning. Such an approach, in turn, has reframed representations of pastoralism as a tool for Greek self-identification. The development of ethnography, however, is far more complex than the result of a reaction to another culture or a desire for distinction—it is created from centuries of human interaction with others through material culture, conflict, oral histories, and literature. Just so, the representation of pastoralist culture is not limited to its obvious appearances in art and direct references in literature. Pastoralist influence appears in weaponry, in the employment of specific fighting tactics by other cultures, and through the outsider depictions of culturally significant mythological figures and their encounters with nomadic tribes and ventures beyond the known world.

The Scythians and other mobile pastoralists who inhabited the Eurasian steppe during the first millennium B.C.E., moreover, were not simply foils for mythical heroes or merely tools for Greek self-identification. As early as the seventh century B.C.E., Greeks had settled along the Black sea and were interacting—whether in pursuit of trade or for other reasons—with eastern pastoralist cultures, and the Assyrians had already encountered mobile pastoralists by the ninth century, possibly earlier. What remains to scholars today is far more in-line with those scholars currently redefining ethnography, that the Scythians and other pastoralist steppe cultures occupied the line between mythology and realism in ancient Greek perception, one that transcended geographic and temporal borders. In order to investigate this middle ground, this thesis focuses not on the main ‘ethnic’ figure of the nomadic pastoralist but instead on his or her weapon, exploring the status of eastern pastoralists in the Greek imagination and then examining one

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4 Skinner 2016, 21
5 See Kawami 1991
6 See Phillips 1972
7 See Skinner 2016, Stuurman 2008
element that was most closely associated with the mobile pastoralists—the ‘Scythian’ composite bow.

Shaped like a cupid’s bow or the Greek sigma,\(^8\) the ‘Scythian’ bow’s presence in Greek vase painting began to embody the mythological associations of these steppe tribes, the true and threatening military prowess of those who were able to wield these bows, and the status of these mobile pastoralists in comparison to the Greeks, specifically during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E., although the art and literature of the time handled material that occurred before it was documented. Artistic depictions of the Scythian bow are most telling of these associations, not due to its function as a metonym, but due to the contexts in which it appears. In order to understand the importance of the bow, however, one must first appreciate the political and literary climate of the period, since these bows appear in art just before the Persian wars, which is a moment that is important to the development of ethnography, geography, anthropology, and is closely followed by drama and further historiography.\(^9\) One must also remove oneself from modern associations of race, xenophobia, nationality, and ethnicity to analyze the Greek perception of mobile pastoralism during the middle of the first millennium.

While this thesis focuses on the perception pastoralism, the pastoralist identity is dependent on the collective identity belonging to most eastern groups of ethnographic interest to the Greeks, since specificity of an ethnicity would have depended on the scholar or the artist’s origins and passion. Along these lines, it is difficult to identify a Scythian or a nomadic figure as separate from a representation of a Persian or other Asiatic figure due to the generic nature of the patterns. While most representations on Greek vases that have been identified as Scythian date between 550 and

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\(^8\) Most likely the four-stroke sigma, as noted by Agathon
\(^9\) Some argue that this is moment is the beginning of the development of ethnography, but Skinner 2016 disagrees. This topic is discussed in the next chapter.
500 B.C.E., it is also possible that similar figures wearing oriental dress are Persian, Thracian, or even Amazonian; essentially representative of anything eastern.\(^{10}\)

While differentiations between ethnicity exist in historical contexts to some extent, they are far less apparent in artistic renderings.\(^{11}\) Nevertheless, it is unarguable that representation of eastern non-Greeks contain elements also associated with Scythians including but not limited to patterned trousers, pointed caps, and most significantly, the ‘Scythian’ bow.\(^{12}\) Deadly to the point of inspiring new defense tactics, a bow of this type was adopted by other eastern cultures. The presence of this particular bow in art, thus, evokes both the particular fighting style of nomadic peoples known to the Greeks and, in general, a sense of alterity. In this paper, I provide an examination of the bow’s structural composition, development and global effect, its mention in historic contexts, and its representation in art and literature, all of which contribute to understanding the status of the eastern pastoralists in the Greek mind as more than simply the polarized ‘other’.

**Methodology**

“...The relationship to the Other is twofold...A stranger is someone who, from one angle, is very distant and who, from another angle, is very close.”\(^{13}\)

This study is in part about the representation of “the other” by the Greeks regarding pastoralists inhabiting Central Eurasia close to and beyond the Black Sea during the sixth and fifth century, although the imagery that appears on vases dating to this time period could be influenced by events that occurred as early as the ninth century. The “other” in these depictions may have

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\(^{10}\) After the Persian War, it appears that Scythians and other less identifiable eastern figures were not depicted on vases as often, and it becomes slightly easier to identify a Persian warrior.

\(^{11}\) Gleba 2008, 15. For example, Herodotus differentiates between Persians and Scythians, and between Royal Scythians and their neighboring tribes, a factor that is more difficult to ascertain in artistic contexts (Herodotus, 4).


\(^{13}\) Baudrillard et al. 2008, 26
been representative of one of multiple historical peoples that are collapsed into a common representative category, or, more likely, a symbol for many pastoralist groups, some who were more familiar to Greek colonies and Athens, while others were largely mythological. In doing so, I join other scholars who have redefined ancient ethnography and reassess how alterity was perceived. This thesis does not address the extent to which the Greeks interacted with the semi-mobile and mobile pastoralists on the Eurasian steppe. Nor is it a debate as to whether a figure depicted on a vase is a Scythian, an Amazon, or a Persian. Instead, it is a discussion of the impact of a specific weapon that is deeply intertwined with the mobile pastoralist and its function as a metonym for the larger cultural metaphors that the pastoralist represented for the Ancient Greeks.

Before discussing the reasoning for the composite bow as a metonym, I introduce some theoretical frameworks of alterity that inform this approach and how ‘representation’ plays into the multidimensional metaphorical structuring of the boundaries between the Greek and pastoralist world.

As Elias Koulakiotis 2011 states, it is common “that one’s perceptions of others mirror one’s perceptions of oneself. These perceptions do not remain unchanged within a society; they vary and thereby reflect political and social as well as economic and ecological changes and increases in knowledge.” Defining ancient Greek identity solely based on a reaction to its eastern neighbors, however, would be playing too easily into an orientalist mindset, as Edward Said famously defined the western trend to gain “in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.” As this thesis demonstrates, Greek identity and their interaction with the rest of their known world was far more nuanced across the boundaries of time and space.

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14 See Basilov 1989; Phillips 1972; Vlassopoulos 2013; Hellmuth 2014; Martin 2017; Yamauchi 1983
15 Koulakiotis 2011, 163
16 Said 1979, 3
Many scholars fall into the trap of categorizing the ‘Greeks’ during the Archaic through the Hellenistic ages as one complete and constant civilization. The Greeks of each era, however, were composed of cities and settlements where the customs and beliefs varied from one location to another. For example, self-identifying as Greek was far less important than identifying with one’s *polis*, that is, until most of these Greek-speaking communities came under threat of the Persians. This can also be deeply misleading, however, because as Kostas Vlassopoulos argues, this notion “presupposes that each period had a single way of constructing Greek identity and its relationship to the Barbarians,” which is barely credible due to the complex composition of the Greek world.

In such false polarities, we oversimplify both the Greeks and the cultures against whom they are compared. For example, the term ‘Scythian’ is still debated due to various definitions in ancient and modern literature, and the existence of a “common Scythian culture binding together tribes from the Danube to the Altai” over many centuries is not realistic. Location, trade, technological innovation and artistic preference all indicate against a completely unified Scythian culture, but this does not mean that the Scythians and their mobile-pastoralist neighbors did not

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17 In fact, this discussion raises the more complex debate regarding Greek identity during the first millennium B.C.E. Edith Hall addresses this topic (E. Hall 1989), suggesting that a collective Greek identity that formed around the time of a necessary anti-Persian military alliance can be found through the analysis of the use of the word ‘*barbaros*’. While there appeared to be growing Panhellenism during the archaic period due to religious centers and language, identity remained more powerful by city (Hall, 9). The word ‘*barbaros*’, which does not appear in mainland Greek literature before the Persian wars, then appears ten times in Aeschylus’ *Persae* (Hall, 57).

18 E. Hall 1989, 9. Although this point is arguable as well; as I discuss in later chapters, Greek identity, specifically, likely began to take a more concrete form with the creation of genealogies in the sixth century (see J. Hall, 1997; Skinner 2016; Mitchell 2007)

19 Vlassopoulos 2013, 36. Considering that from the eighth century onwards, the Greek world consisted of settlements in the Aegean, the Mediterranean, Egypt to the Black Sea, from Thrace to South France, and that by the classical period there were over 1000 settlements identifying as Greek but with their own diverse ideologies, interpretations of religion, economies, and cultures, it is misleading to categories all these communities into one.

20 See Chapter 2


22 Ibid.
share some elements of their culture. Rather, there were variations depending on the tribe; a fact noted by Herodotus in his overview of the lands north of Scythia (4.17–22). Instead of focusing merely on polarity as many contemporary scholars have done—albeit with an increasing focus on the xenophobic nature of this debate—I suggest that is preferable to isolate and analyze specific instances that contain far more complexity.

Alterity in the Greek world during the first millennium especially was defined by language, spatial marginality, and lastly, by politics, customs, and other differences that would have set other cultures apart from the Greek collective mindset as it was defined by Herodotus.\footnote{Herodotus 8.144} The image of the mobile pastoralist and the metaphors with which they became associated in the Greek mind, however, are not easily traced; nor should they be. As Lakoff and Johnson state, “when metaphors are coherent but not consistent, we should not expect them to form consistent images.”\footnote{Lakoff; Johnson 1980, 94} These representations of mobile pastoralists can be found in many myths, epics, dramas, histories, comedies, and, in varying contexts, on Attic vases—but not necessarily with the same connotations and meanings.

Due to the larger scope of ethnography mentioned above and similarities of dress, weaponry, and associations with the east, however, it is difficult to separate the mobile pastoralists from other eastern figures in Attic art. I suggest that the ‘Scythian’ bow—also referred to in this paper as the composite bow or a recurve bow—functions as the most effective metonym for the influence of mobile pastoralism on the Greek mind. I suggest the Scythian composite bow, and not the Phrygian cap or patterned trousers, because the Scythian composite bow was a weapon that could not be adjusted for creative effect, whereas clothing could be designed according to the creativity of the artist, and other weaponry such as swords and spears were commonly used by
most cultures by this time and do not represent the technological advancement of mobile pastoralists in the same way as the Scythian bow.\textsuperscript{25} A metonym, as extensively discussed by Lakoff and Johnson, “has primarily a referential function,” allowing an “entity to stand for another.”\textsuperscript{26} The entity, in this case, is the composite bow, standing in for the mobile pastoralist and the connotations that accompany mobile pastoralism.

I explore this argument in three different chapters. In the first chapter, I analyze several examples where Scythians and mobile pastoralists are mentioned in Greek literature. I examine alterity where it is expressed in literature; the development of ethnography and its importance to our understanding of the Greek perspective on mobile pastoralism; and then analyze the various depictions of mobile pastoralism in later literature such as tragedy and comedy. I explore these texts not from an angle to understand ancient Greek identity, but in order to examine the complex portrayals of mobile pastoralists and the concept of the eastern ‘foreigner’ from Homeric epic through Aristophanes. Through this analysis I show that the redefinition and reanalysis of ethnography inspired by scholars such as Skinner and Stuurman directly aid in our reassessment of the Greek perspective of the ‘other’ with specific regard to mobile pastoralists, allowing the shift of focus away from Greek ethnic identity to a focus on cultural richness and interconnectivity.

In the second chapter, I discuss the history, the construction, and the technological development of the Scythian bow in order to understand its local and global effect. My argument regarding the bow’s appearance in Attic art relies heavily on the notion that, even if the figure is not a Scythian or specifically a mobile pastoralist, the broader cultural meaning remains due to the presence of the bow. The precise presence of the bow, and not the attire, results from the development and the global spread of the bow and the correlating creation of the shot from

\textsuperscript{25} See Shishlina 1997
\textsuperscript{26} Lakoff; Johnson 1980, 36
horseback, which later became known as the ‘Parthian shot’. My basic premise is that understanding the bow from an archaeological perspective can offer insight into what the bow came to signify in Greek art.

The third and final chapter examines the different types of archers on vases: archers with only quivers to mark their status; archers on foot, unthreatening, holding a cupid’s bow; archers on foot in action; and archers on horseback. Each stance of the archer varies slightly and therefore differs in meaning, and every archer is identified either by a quiver or a bow, whether they are characters in myth, defined as Amazons, or clearly Scythians. I offer a typology and explication of this iconography. The positioning of the bow, I suggest, along with how it is held, whether it is strung or not, whether the arrows are notched or in the quiver (or at all in the scene), all contribute to the overall power dynamic and representation of the mobile pastoralist.

This thesis aims to join the growing discussion led by Classicists and historians addressing a more globalized world in which our understanding of identity—and its articulation—has become even more complex. Although I use mostly ancient Greek sources and I examine the outsider perspective of mobile pastoralism, I stress that the main subjects of this thesis are the identities of mobile pastoralists, not those of the Greeks. I hope that, with this new angle on a discussed but often marginalized topic, I am able to add to expanding interests and demands of the ancient world.

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27 Never solely by his or her dress, as many archers have been identified in several studies. (See Ivantchik 2006; Mayor 2014)
Chapter 1

*Through Fact and Fiction: Understanding Perceptions of Pastoralism through Literature*

This thesis investigates the perception of steppe pastoralism as it was presented by some ancient Greeks through the metonym of the Scythian composite bow, and in doing so, suggests that the Scythian bow is the most effective metonym for presenting this argument. Before examining the bow in an archaeological and artistic context, however, it is crucial to establish a baseline for the Greek perception of steppe pastoralism as it existed in literature. In doing so, I set an ethnographic context for this study by investigating pastoralism in literature, and I employ many methodologies to analyze the literature that I use to analyze the Attic vases and therefore contextualize this study even further.

Studying pastoralist cultures of the first millennium B.C.E. through literature can be both a rewarding and frustrating process for the modern scholar due to its ethnographic nature. The literature was exclusively written from an outsider’s perspective and is therefore far more revealing about the culture of origin rather than about the subject of the ethnographic research. The difficulty lies, as well, in separating history from what, in the modern era, is considered less ‘grounded’ literature such as epic, myth, and dramatic texts. But ancient ethnography as it is defined in modernity was not discriminating between genres.\(^28\) Furthermore, myth and epic are not

\(^{28}\) Skinner 2016, 6. To directly quote James Clifford ethnography is a collection of “diverse ways of thinking and writing about a culture.” Clifford 1988, 9 in Skinner 2016, 6. I also consider history a component of ethnography in this thesis, although scholars such as Felix Jacoby differentiated between the two.
completely unreliable sources, since they reveal historical beliefs, social values, and were relied upon by historians, ethnographers, philosophers, orators, and geographers as a foundation for their own work. In order to fully understand the Greek perception of pastoralism through art, therefore, we must first reassess and break down the ethnographic value of the extant literary sources that mention pastoralism, and then use this as a base to analyze the ethnographic value of the material culture, as I examine in the following two chapters.

Several matters must be addressed when organizing the extant literature by ancient writers. First, since the ancient Greek perception of Scythians and mobile pastoralists functions in both the larger context of the perception of eastern foreigners and to the smaller, more specific context of Greek regard for pastoralism, locating the point of separation between pastoralists and general foreigners is difficult. For example, as most literature was written during or after conflict with the Persians, Classicists have often assumed that most references to a ‘barbarian’ in the east refer to the Persians. While this is often the case, we must not forget that pastoralist influence, not just Persian, can also appear between the lines; in battle cries, in a word used to refer to a character, or in the mention of the method with which a bow is strung.29

The second issue lies in differentiating between the fantastic and the real and the extent to which it is necessary to do so. As I explore in this chapter, early literary and artistic references collapse distinctions between historical and mythical peoples and their histories, as well as between what scholars now might recognize as ethnically or culturally distinct groups.30 At the same time, while valuable information about representation and cultural beliefs can be gathered from mythological associations with the steppe and lands beyond Scythia, there is indeed a

29 See Balfour 1921
30 See J. Hall 1997, in which J. Hall seeks to differentiate between the various ethnic groups of ancient Greece. The debate regarding ethnicity as well as the attempt to link mythological peoples to those proven to exist by archaeological findings still continues today. See Mayor 2014; Bolton 1962.
difference. For example, the Amazons as they are represented in epic are very clearly not the same peoples as the Amazons who marry into Scythic tribes as they are mentioned in Herodotus. While this blurring of boundaries can pose a complication for a scholar looking for information about a particular culture, it is quite helpful for understanding the Greek perception regarding their neighbors inhabiting these ‘contact zones’. For example, the fictional Arimaspians, the one-eyed pastoralist tribe first mentioned in an account attributed to Aristeas of Proconnesus, are described as savage and shaggy-haired. At the same time, however, they are also portrayed as wealthy equestrian peoples and are said to be charming.31

Since the known extant Assyrian, Greek, Roman, and Chinese literary sources containing information about mobile pastoralists of Central Asia have been collected and analyzed by many scholars, an extensive discussion of these would be redundant.32 The majority of these contemporary works however, do not separate Scythians and other Eurasian mobile pastoralists from other eastern ‘foreigners’ in their analyses and instead focus heavily on the Greek search for identity through the definition of alterity of the barbarian. This chapter, therefore, focuses primarily on presenting a few examples, specifically in reference to the Pontic area and mobile pastoralism in literature, that illustrate the Greek perception regarding pastoralism, not only eastern barbarianism as a whole. Despite the obstacles that are due in part to the fewer mentions and in part to the real and metaphorical shifting borders in these literary works, this chapter seeks the differences between mobile pastoralists and other eastern civilizations in the Greek mind and the

31 Aristeas Fr. 5.3. See also Skinner 2016, 65 – 66
32 Rostovtzeff also notes most of the ancient sources that mention Scythians, Cimmerians, and other related tribes as well. Furthermore, several groundbreaking contemporary works on the Greek perception of barbarians through the analysis of literature already exist. Helen Bacon’s examination of Greek drama and Edith Hall’s later work, Inventing the Barbarian, both examine the definition of alterity through tragedy, while Timothy Long examines the definition of the barbarian through comedy. Most recently, Kostas Vlassopoulos has examined Greek and foreign (heavily Persian) relations from a historical angle, while Sier Stuurman (2008) looks further east and compares Herodotus’ writings to those of the Chinese historian Sima Qian in order to study these writings from an anthropological angle.
significance of those differences. Second, this chapter focuses on understanding alterity within literature not merely as a device for Greek self-identification but as an initial step to perceiving the world on a more globalized scale, through an anthropological and ethnographic lens.

**Altering and Identity in Literature**

Many publications such as Lynette Mitchell’s *Panhellenism and the Barbarian*, Jonathan Hall’s *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, and other scholarship, have focused on Greek identity as it is defined by the ‘other’. Most of these studies also assume the notion that a collective Greek identity was formed around the sixth century, when the Greeks began to create genealogies, and that ethnography was a direct response to the Persian War. While the desire to define oneself in contrast to others should not be dismissed, neither should the theory that there were other inspirations to a fascination with the ‘other’ be ignored.

As stated above, we cannot analyze the ethnographic value of the literary or the material culture without reassessing ethnography along the lines of Skinner 2016 and Stuurman 2008. Skinner stresses the importance of opening up the discussion about defining ethnic identity—Greek or otherwise—further than prose and viewing the process as a “whole range of groups and individuals actively participating in ethnographic activity.” Although the literature is written from the point of view of the Greeks, the ethnographic value is a result of the ‘give and take’ that is bound to occur in a world governed by trade an intercultural connectivity. In Stuurman’s

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33 Mitchell 2007 argues that the Greeks did not become communities until the sixth century, while J. Hall 1997, which investigates Hellenism from the perspective of ethnicity and ethnic groups (as a social rather than biological phenomenon), bases his discussion on the origin of genealogies appearing in Hesiod and Homer. J. Hall also agrees with scholars who believe that the Persian War of 480 – 479 BC was decisive in the formation of Greek identity against an enemy and “acted as a catalyst for the invention of the barbarian” (J. Hall 1997, 44).

34 Skinner 2016, 29
comparison of Herodotus and Sima Qian, he notes the significance in that historiographers both “investigate the functionality of other cultures as interlocking systems, and inquire how the others ‘look back’ at the civilized ‘center.’ Even when these ethnographies contain negative judgments and stereotypical representations, they present us with the first step toward an appraisal of the rationality of foreign ways.”

Stuurman suggests that these areas on the periphery should be studied as zones of ‘creative interaction’, not merely of prejudices and simple, two-sided alterity—as is the theme of this thesis. In order to break down the complexity of alterity in literature, it can be divided into four main categories: borders, language, politics, and customs.

**Borders**

Spatial alterity, or alterity as it is defined by spatial or geographic location, is the most obvious physical manifestation of otherness. It allows for a divide in the physical world and between the worlds of reality and myth and provides writers with the ability to define the ‘other’ according to distance. Hecataeus, a 6th century logographer and a student of Anaximander, appears to be one of the first responsible for articulating the creation of borders in the physical world in Greek culture. He considered the earth to be made up of a circular disc surrounded by the ocean, and divided into the two equally sized continents of Europe and Asia. The border between the two continents according to Herodotus (4.36), was an east-west line running between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and divided the world into quadrants with a north-south line from the Danube to the Nile. A similar geography is established in Aeschylus’ *The Persians* within the first two lines of the play, when the council of Persians have gone to Hellas (1-2), and is later paralleled in lines 130 – 132, when the chorus sings of the bridging of both continents:

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35 Stuurman, Siep 2008, 3
“τὸν ἀμφίξεντον ἐξαμείνας / ἀμφοτέρας ἄλλον / πρῶνα κοινὸν αἱας” (They have crossed the headland, projecting into the sea and common to either continent, through which both shores are bridged).37

In Aristeas of Proconnesus’ Arimaspea, Aristeas claims to have travelled beyond the Scyths to a high mountain range covered in darkness and snow. After having established the theoretical border between the world known to the ancient Greeks, he is then able to create tales that, while they may be questions, cannot be investigated. He mentions that the land of the Issedonians is rich in gold, guarded by griffs, and that they, also an equestrian pastoralist tribe, drove the Scythians south.38 In Homer’s Iliad the Trojans are separated by the sea, as are the Scythians. In Herodotus’ Histories, the Scythians are separated from Darius by long stretches of unknown territory that he is not able to master.39 Spatial alterity, however, does not only appear in literature, but can appear in art as well through the positioning of the eastern figure, as I discuss in the third chapter.

Language

Language was, and remains, a point of clear difference and fascination between various cultural and ethnic groups. Other than visual art, language is the easiest way to cause associations in the human mind, whether to recall a myth, a location, or a cultural group.40 Ancient Greek artists would use words in their artistic depictions to convey a sense of foreignness,41 and pronunciation or accents are often the subjects of jokes in comedic contexts.42 In the Classical period, language was essential to Greek ethnic and cultural identity, as demonstrated by Herodotus’ belief that the

37 Trans. by Smyth, 1926
38 Bolton 1962, 74
39 Herodotus, 4.129 – 130
40 See Lakoff and Johnson 1980
41 See Chapter 3; Mayor et al. 2014
42 For example, the Spartan women in Aristophanes’ Lysistrata speak with accents, and the Scythian policeman in Aristophanes’ Women at the Thesmophoria is clearly differentiated from the Athenians.
language of the Greeks was a key element to their unity, or a method with which others could be set apart. Through language, alterity was further defined. Although language barriers are not particularly apparent in Herodotus’ accounts of various pastoralist tribes, the use of language to define the other can manifest in different ways—such as the manner in which they are referred to by Greeks.

The earliest usage of the word barbarian is in the genitive, “βαρβαροφώνων” (Iliad 2.867), meaning ‘of uncouth speech’ implying that the usage was linguistic in nature in order to describe the strange speech of the Carians. It is only employed once, however, and has not yet taken on the more negative connotations it will inherit later, such as with its usage in Euripides’ tragedies. In fact, Homeric epic does not seem to be overly concerned with a collective cultural and ethnic identity. The Hellenes are divided into kingdoms and tribes held together by family ties or a pact, as are the Trojans. The diversity of the speech among the Trojan allies, however, is noted in Book Two of the Iliad, when Iris warns Hector that there are many different tongues being spoken (Iliad, 2.802 – 804). As Ross argues, this is an indication of the lack of cohesiveness among the Trojans. And if this does not necessarily set the Trojans apart, the Iliad certainly brands the Trojan allies as foreigners. While these allies are not necessarily mobile pastoralists, it is implied that they come from lands that are unfamiliar to the listeners and the readers of the epic. The cacophony indicates the strangeness and the distance.

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43 Herodotus, 8.144
44 Carteledge 1995, 77 – 78. J. Hall 2000 mentions a different argument about the word—that βαρβαρος could be a loan word from the Sumerian word ‘barbaru’, meaning ‘strange’ or ‘foreign’. In fact, the Iliad is the only instance prior to the Archaic period when the word is used in a linguistic sense. It is possible, therefore, that βαρβαροφώνων means not those who spoke a different language, but those who did not speak Greek well (J. Hall 2000, 111 – 112).
45 Ross 2005, 306
46 We know that the Phrygians were one of Troy’s allies during the Trojan war
47 Ross 2005, 313
The extent to which languages played a role in the ancient world is unknown—inhabitants of trade cities would have likely been more familiar with other languages than their own. In the world of history and the sharing of literature, it appears that research was limited to a certain extent by Greek reluctance to learn foreign languages.\textsuperscript{48} Although the lack of eastern-Greek translated texts does not mean that there was a lack of Eastern-Greek influence, Momigliano 1979 does indicate some form of a language barrier. As Momigliano notes, Greek ethnographic research was not concerned with non-Hellenic tongues and contributed little to linguistic research. “Whatever acquaintance it had with foreign texts was secondhand and garbled,”\textsuperscript{49} and that this, in turn, fed into the idea of Greek identity. This point of view contributes to the notion that the main benefit of early ethnography was for defining a Greek identity, rather than due to a curiosity about the ‘other’. At the same time, Herodotus’ \textit{Histories} and other similar works would have necessitated information from those who did speak multiple languages and who did interact with other ethnic and cultural groups. Therefore, despite the lack of multi-lingual Greek literature, an outlook such as Momigliano’s plays into an older form of approaching ancient ethnography—with too much focus on the Greek angle. Alterity as it applies to language applies not only to a language barrier, but to the language used by one cultural group about the other, such as in epithets, jokes, names, and slurs.\textsuperscript{50}

\textit{Politics and Customs}

This final category is the broadest and most complex factor with regards to alterity and is covered both in this chapter and in others. Ethnicity and cultural identity were defined along different terms and are still debated today, and language and borders blurred as soon as more

\textsuperscript{48} Although Ctesias presumably knew Persian in order to write the \textit{Persica}
\textsuperscript{49} Momigliano 1978, 4
\textsuperscript{50} See Skinner 2016 for an analysis of epithets and their importance to our understanding of ethnography.
colonies settled further east and cultures began to mix; therefore, both these categories are difficult to define. Customs, however, are detailed in histories, depicted in art, and create a dividing line for those wishing to find one.

Herodotus writes painstakingly about the customs of various tribes and establishing the politics of different powers, as did historians who followed—these details were what defined him as a historian and an ethnographer. Even the Iliad, which, as mentioned above, could be considered a reckoning between the Greek and the Barbarian, does not note political distinctions between Trojans and Greeks. Rather, divisions remain very much tribal or individual. Instead, Herodotus defines alterity through royalty, painting a picture of otherness, as Gray states, “from the point of view of the subject...as well as from the point of view of the audience, and he thus offers not just an implicit democratic—Greek/monarchic-barbarian polarity, but an explicit barbarian-master/barbarian-subject polarity.”51 Barbarians and royals are inseparable in the Greek mind, as they share similarities in their excess and emotions due to the political structure.52

Although not all the following examples are contemporary, the influences they had on one another are clear. By analyzing a few excerpts from each of these works I suggest that these mobile pastoralists were not merely identified for the purpose of Greek self-definition, nor were they representative of an inferior race, a polarized ‘other’, or an enemy as dangerous as the Persians. They existed within, next to, on the periphery, and in the mythological realm and reality of the Greek world, just as the Greeks existed within their own.

51 Gray 1995: 201
52 Gray 1995: 201. Although Spartan royalty as detailed in Plutarch’s On Sparta are in a separate category from eastern royals as they are depicted in Plutarch’s Life of Alexander, Herodotus’ Histories, etc.
Myth, Epic, and History

Mythology, epic, and history merge together in Greek ethnographic texts; any interest in foreign peoples falls under the umbrella of ethnography. Through this collapse of genres, the Greeks were able to link themselves to their myths and their lands as well as those of others. For example, the Hyperboreans, most likely a mythological pastoralist group who dwelled outside the realm of the ancient Greeks, are first mentioned in Hesiod as being “well-horsed,” and therefore similar to the steppe pastoralists. At the same time, they are connected to Greek mythology by being considered a group that is dear to Apollo. The Amazons, whose mythological status scholars debate even now, are a similar group that appears in epic such as the Iliad, but are mentioned in Herodotus as interacting with Scythic tribes. There are many cases that take place in the lands beyond the margins such as this, where a person or a group of people walk between the worlds of mythology and the real. Such characters are indicative of a Greek interest in ethnography, in questioning the steppes and designating its inhabitants to both worlds.

The time constraint of this thesis (sixth to fifth century) is somewhat limiting for the textual evidence available and therefore must be stretched to a certain extent. In addition, while there are texts that directly engage with information regarding mobile pastoralism, one must also seek information within texts that are less transparent with regards to their subjects. The Hyperboreans, for example, are only mentioned in fragments of Hesiod. Aristeas of Proconesus, whose work only remains in fragments and in mentions by other texts such as Herodotus’ Histories, mentions another steppe dwelling peoples beyond Scythia. Mobile pastoralists such as the Cimmerians,

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53 Hesiod, Fragment 98 20 - 24
54 Skinner 2016, 63 – 64
55 Herodotus 4.110 – 116
56 Such as Anacharsis the Scythian, for example.
57 Aristeas mentions the Issedonians, another mythical group that is discussed below.
Scythians, and other, smaller tribes, are mentioned by historians such as Herodotus, Strabo, Diodorus, and later, Pliny. They appear in other Homeric epic, in mythology such as the story of Jason and the Argonauts, Herakles’ journeys, and in the stories regarding Amazons. Although the *Iliad* does not mention mobile pastoralists specifically, its engagement with foreignness and identity creates a base for interacting with Greek ethnographic interest and cultural identities.

The discussion has often surrounded Scythians specifically due to the fact that the term ‘Scythian’ itself is used frequently in Greek sources, likely because of the Scythian kingdom that emerged in the sixth century B.C.E. in Transcaucasia.\(^{58}\) In this thesis, however, I purposely shift the conversion to all pastoralists (mobile to sedentary) of the Eurasian steppe in order for the discussion to encompass pastoralists from Eastern Europe to South Siberia. The earliest non-Greek historical sources are eighth century Assyrian accounts that describe the invasions of the ‘Gimmirai,’ or Cimmerians, from the Caucasus.\(^{59}\) State documents dateable to the 670s B.C.E. link to the beginning of the Scythian (the tribe referred to in Herodotus) expansion into Transcaucasia and Asia Minor.\(^{60}\) The earliest Chinese sources, the *Shiji* by Shima Qian, date the appearance of equestrian pastoralists, or the *Saka*, to the mid-fifth century B.C.E. I mention these historical, mythological, and epic sources in order to establish the diverse range of literature that indicates an ethnographic interest by the sedentary neighboring cultures in their pastoralist neighbors. Although I do not offer an intricate analysis of each of these sources, I discuss a few instances in which mobile pastoralism is addressed for the sake of viewing these sources with a different ethnographic approach as well as establishing a baseline for the larger discussion at hand: the perception of

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58 Khazanov 2015, 34  
59 Christian, 1998: 123  
60 Murzin 2005, 34
mobile pastoralism. This, in turn, allows for a deeper understanding of the cultural climate when discussing the impact of the metonym of the Scythian composite bow in art.

The original model for Herodotus and many other historiographers and poets was epic poetry, and they did not hesitate to reference the authority of the poets in their work. The Cimmerians and Jason and the Argonauts’ voyage on the Argo through the Euxine appear in the Odyssey. Hesiod mentions the Ister (known today as the Danube) and a Phasis river, although it is debated whether Hesiod would have known these exact locations. Some argue that Odysseus himself was representative of Greek ethnographic imagination in order to explore the known world, but figures such as Herakles, who spent most of his time outside the Greek world, and the Iliad, which details genealogies and examines the different customs between islands and kingdoms, are more representative of this imagination.

Herodotus mentions Aristeas’ Arimaspeia, a lost poem about a mythical group of one-eyed men who stole gold from the land of the griffins (Herodotus, Histories, 3.116; 4.13; 27). Herodotus’ recounting of Aristeas’ writings about the Arimaspi perfectly encapsulates the ease with which Herodotus moved between myth and reality in his writing: first, he relates Aristeas’ tale of one eyed men and griffins—material that belongs in epic. He then links them to the Scythians by stating how the Arimaspians pushed out the Issedonians, who forced out the Scythians, who forced out the Cimmerians. Just as the Greeks effortlessly tie themselves to their myth as their history, Aristeas and Herodotus tie the Scythians to myth and therefore find ways to relate them to the Greek world. While it is undeniable that Homeric epic featured in ancient Greek

62 Skinner 2016, 52 – 53
63 See Chapter 3
64 Gordon, Arimaspi, Brill’s New Pauly
historical texts, and that certainly, much of the information we possess regarding battles, certain customs, and knowledge of myth comes from epic, myth itself was constantly changing depending on the location, culture, or time period and did not solely depend on the Homeric texts. Herodotus himself mentions three different versions of the Scythian origin myth, as well as several other beliefs that Scythians recount about themselves—which only scrapes the surface of the influence upon their myths and customs among those who coexisted in settlements on the Pontic shores. These small snapshots offered by Herodotus, Hesiod, and Aristeas indicate the much larger ethnographic scope that mythology offers, as well as the fluidity cultural interest that it implies. As I demonstrate in the third chapter of this thesis, mythology and epic were forms of storytelling that allowed for cultures and realities to merge into each other and illustrate the approach toward cultural alterity.

Mythology and Homeric epic do not seem to function as merely sources, however, but as measures of identity as well. By analyzing early forms of argumentation, one can also glean information regarding the Greek approach toward cultural alterity and the steps toward ethnographic interest. For example, Strabo, who writes several centuries after Herodotus, is clearly influenced and concerned by both Homer and Herodotus’ writings relating to Asia Minor, regarding the nomadic peoples of the Homeric period as very different from his contemporaries. He implements several of the theories discussed above in order to refute the seeming lack of global awareness in the Homeric texts put forward by Poseidonius. First, he argues that the Greeks at the time could not have been unaware of those living on the east coast of the Black Sea, since they

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65 In fact, viewed from a Greek-barbarian perspective in the fifth century, it could be argued that the *Iliad* was a story of “Greco-barbarian military confrontation” and the *Odyssey* was an epic of “Greek self-fashioning. (Cartledge 1995, 77 – 78).

66 Herodotus, 4.5 – 7. He presents this in a relatively unbiased fashion as well.
referred to the area as “Ἄξενος,” meaning, “inhospitable,” suggesting that the Scythians were the inspiration for this name, due to their violent treatment of strangers and lack of ξενια.

Strabo further supports his global argument by stating that in Homer, the people beyond Thrace are referred to as “Ἰππηµολγοί,” or “Hippemolgoi,” as a direct reference to people who were directly reliant on their horses, or “Γαλακτοφάγους,” or “dairy eaters” as a direct reference to their being known as eaters of cheese just as they are in Strabo’s period. Strabo’s points in this particular section are revealing in his attachment to the Homeric text and its legitimacy as well as his unbiased statements regarding the Scythian tribes and the assumption that those that currently exist are at least related to those that existed during the Homeric period. His points also indicate a more analytical ethnographic interest, meaning, that he is both analyzing the perception of pastoralism in the Homeric texts as well as creating a link between this text and his own. In the process, he attempts to legitimize both.

Strabo’s supporting statement linking his own time period to the Homeric is the most telling as to his perception of mobile pastoralism as a whole:

…For we regard the Scythians the most straightforward of men and the least prone to mischief, as also far more frugal and independent of others than we are. And yet our mode of life has spread its change for the worse to almost all peoples, introducing amongst them luxury and sensual pleasures…So then, much wickedness of this sort has fallen on the barbarian peoples also, on the Nomads as well as the rest…(Strabo 7.3.7.301)

Strabo has confirmed the alterity of the Scythian and therefore the pastoralist of Central Eurasia in his perception by simultaneously establishing their higher and lower status in comparison to Greek culture. He implies that, due to their straightforwardness, they are more susceptible to negative

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67 Strabo 7.3.7.1. Definition found in Middel Liddel
influences, and therefore became baser than the Greeks themselves due to Greek influence. His ethnographic interest places the Scythians in the realm of myth through using temporal and spatial alterity. However, they are held on a pedestal in comparison to their past selves. One cannot say, therefore, that Strabo merely perceived the Scythians in complete contempt, rather, as a people who belonged in the world of myth and of Homer, as well as to his own contemporary world. They function as a link for Strabo across geography and time, as well as across epic and reality. Strabo’s ethnographic and historiographic method does not differ greatly from that of Herodotus; they both seek to investigate their own world by connecting it to the past and the world of myth. This is similar to the methodology of the artists in their own demonstration, as I discuss in the last chapter of this thesis. By inserting the Scythian bow into their art, they connect their eastern archers of the past and mythological world to the present.\(^69\)

Others, such as Libanius of Antioch, while influenced by his predecessors, has completely removed himself from the ‘other’. Although Libanius of Antioch lived several centuries after most of the texts with which this thesis interacts, his panegyrical works can reveal the sophistic opinion about cultural alterity which were influenced by their predecessors, as well as the influence of one’s upbringing upon one’s outlook when pursuing ethnographic interests. Libanius’ perception of foreigners especially relied on how they were represented in classical historiography; the sophists’ opinion of barbarians in general resembled the Herodotean view of Greek kinship and likeness of religion (8.144).\(^70\) More importantly, Libanius lived in Antioch, a town under constant threat of a Persian invasion. His opinions of cultural alterity therefore, are far more skewed by the

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\(^69\) This link is further supported by Strabo’s mention of Ephorus’ fourth book of his history, *Europe*, in which he mentions that both negative and positive facts should be discussed about other cultures in order that they are understood (Strabo 7.3.9.302).\(^69\) Again, Strabo seeks to establish truth in the Homeric text, as well as, while not an unbiased opinion, one that places the “savage” with the “just,” linking these pastoralists with the Homeric poets and mythology and therefore elevating them to an incomparable space.

\(^70\) Quiroga Puertas 2014, 56
Persian threat and the more cohesive identity of the Roman empire. Libanius devotes long paragraphs to discussing the Persians’ fault, how they were the embodiment of cowardice and revenge (59.117 – 118).

While Herodotus may have influenced scholars living near the Pontic coast and Asia Minor such as Strabo, Ctesias, and Posidonius, it is increasingly unlikely that Herodotus traveled to all the locations around the Black Sea that he discusses in *Histories*. It appears instead that Herodotus’ source of Scythian royal history, as scholars seem to agree, a Carian named Tymnes, who had been the Olbian agent of the Scythian king Ariapeithes (d. 475 – 460), most likely would have also told Herodotus about Anacharsis the Scythian (44.76 – 4.77), who, Wheeler argues, is almost certainly a mythological figure. Whether Herodotus saw these tribes and visited these geographical locations himself or not, Herodotus is careful to recount the separate pastoralist tribes, differentiate between customs—whether they are true or hearsay—and remain somewhat unbiased. The far reaches of Herodotus’ known world are interesting to him and his readers for several reasons: Persia’s inability to conquer it, its undeniable link to the mythological world, and the near-ness of the alterity. It is curious that many early Greek historians came from Asia or the Aegean islands, and causes one to wonder whether “contacts with Oriental nations and life under the Persian rulers gave an impulse to Greek historiography.” Cartledge argues that Herodotus created the *Histories* in order to create his own ‘counter-myth’ for Greeks to live by, one that did not completely abhor the barbarian. These steps toward an ‘anthropological turn’ that were inspired by epic but were

71 Although it should be noted that Libanius lived in a Greek colony and remained staunchly against the rise of Christianity.
72 Quiroga Puertas 2014, 57
74 Stuurman 2008, 12
75 Momigliano 1978, 3
76 Cartledge 1995, 77
77 See Stuurman 2008
written after the Persian wars, separated the mobile pastoralist from the Persian in literature, setting them apart from the enemy, and placed them in a completely separate space within the Greek mind. Theater, however, functioned slightly differently.

**Foreign Drama in Tragedy and Comedy**

The blending of genres contributes to the ethnographic richness of a source. Just as the historians, ethnographers, and geographers pulled from epic and myth, so too did playwrights. I would like to begin the discussion of theater, however, by countering the argument that many scholars such as Vivienne Gray support, namely, that tragedy places “barbarians on either side of the cardinal virtues, excessively foolish, for example, or excessively cunning.” Hall’s *Inventing the Barbarian* argues similarly, that the contrast between the Greek and the barbarian in tragedy was created in a specific historical context in the early fifth century B.C.E., partially as a response to the Persian wars. While this may be so, there are other foreigners from the east who are not Persian, and very clearly so, as shown below. Due to the many lost works, it is impossible to form a complete picture of the depiction of mobile pastoralism in Greek drama. For example, it is known that Aeschylus wrote a play entitled *Scythae*, but it is not known what subject matter the play dealt with—perhaps we are missing an extremely important key to the equation, or it is a play that deals delicately with a tense situation. As mentioned above, due to the several scholarly works that have analyzed the subject of the foreigner in Greek tragedy and comedy, this section is not a collection of every possible mention of a Scythian or other pastoralist person. Rather, I mention a few examples that demonstrate the nuanced relationship between Greeks and their steppe-dwelling neighbors.

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78 Gray 1995: 201
79 E. Hall 1989, 1 – 2
This nuance that I examine in these scenes is demonstrated on Attic vases, as I discuss in the last chapter of this thesis. Aeschylus’ *Suppliant*, although set in a different region of the world than the one around which this thesis is focused, contains a curious description towards the beginning of the play regarding the women. Pelasgus, upon first seeing the Danaids, does not believe they are Argives, and lists off the various types of foreign women they could possibly be (277 – 290). While he does not mention Scythic tribes specifically, his mention of ‘camels that ride like horses’ and ‘man-shunning, meat-eating Amazons’ is a close reference. The commentary spans throughout the known world in this particular Argive’s perception, all due to the Danaid’s skin tone. It appears, therefore, that there was some sort of awareness with regards to physical appearance, as commentary about the darker skin of the Egyptians does appear again in *The Suppliants*. Mention of the countries further east does not happen again in this play, however.

Bacon notes that barbarians and their customs do not appear to be regarded as “intrinsically inferior” in Aeschylus’ tragedies. “Darius [in Suppliants] has all the “Greek” virtues. Cassandra [in Agamemnon] is morally superior to Clytemnestra.” While these foreigners are not pastoralists, they are not Persian either. They are mythological, inhabiting an untouchable realm where stakes are far higher for the characters and they are able to remain in a different plane from the viewers, and they are foreign solely due to their spatial alterity. Not so in Euripides, who uses the meaning of barbarian at times to mean moral inferiority and to mean savagery and cruelty. But a slightly subtler sign of Euripides’ attitude towards foreignness lies not in his portrayal of the characters, but of their

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80 Pelasgus: What you say, strangers, is unbelievable for me to hear, that this group of yours is of Argive descent. You bear more resemblance to the women of Libya—certainly not to those of this country. The Nile, too, might nurture such a crop; and a similar stamp is struck upon the dies of Cyprian womanhood by male artificers. I hear, too, that there are nomad women in India, near neighbours to the Ethiopians, who saddle their way across country on camels that run like horses; and then the man-shunning, meat-eating Amazons—if you were equipped with bows, I’d be very inclined to guess that you were them. If you explain to me, I may understand better how your birth and descent can be Argive.

81 Bacon 1961, 24 – 26
82 Bacon 1961, 12
83 Bacon 1961, 12
possessions; a topic particularly relevant to this thesis.

As Bacon points out, Euripides’ is quite skilled at describing objects of art and architecture. For example, in Euripides’ *Ion*, his description of the tapestries in the temple at Delphi are quite detailed (*Ion* 1143 – 62) and, while they depict foreign motifs, do not contain any particularly foreign images. Curiously, his description of the temple of Artemis in the Tauric temple is extremely similar despite its location in the barbarian world. Only one mention of some form of foreignness exists (*Ion* 72 – 75), in which two characters discuss human blood and hair on the altar. This pattern—Euripides’ tendency to create a foreign atmosphere by mentioning a few facts rather than describe an area indicate, to Helen Bacon, a lack of concern and knowledge for a foreign environment. While this may be true, due to other evidence for Euripides’ perception of foreigners as a whole, this trend could also be due to his lack of knowledge, an explanation that would also fit for the slight lack of specificity when differentiating between foreign peoples. The ethnographic interest demonstrated by this example is of a divergent vein than what we have seen so far; Euripides does not demonstrate an interest in any form of accuracy, nor of a desire to link their two worlds. Rather, he seeks to create a sense of strangeness through the presence of objects. These objects in this particular scene become metonyms for foreignness, like the Scythian bow becomes a metonym for mobile pastoralism in Greek art.

Greek comedy is able to tackle alterity and the human experience in a completely different manner from tragedy. First, while comedy does interact with myth and epic to a certain extent, it is usually placed (at least initially) in a realistic context before the writer turns each scene into a satire of itself. Comedy also has the ability to work far more intimately with contemporary subjects, and therefore allows us a far easier search for pastoralists than tragedy. As Timothy Long states,

“The barbarian world is not so important here for being non-Greek as it is for its distance.

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84 Bacon 1961, 129 -
The specific attribution of non-Greek nationality to a mythological figure is frequently only an echo of the origin of that figure. Mythology gave the note of the distant place where all is possible...Part of the humor of comedy is to add the trappings of the genuine, ethnological, foreign country to what is only a world of the imagination."85

Comedy parodies tragedy in its language, usage of religion, mythology, and thematic elements. Most importantly to this thesis, as mentioned above, comedy used ethnology and geography in order to cause further comedic chaos; the audience would be able to relate to the scene that was unfolding and understand the satire. This is especially demonstrated in Aristophanes Thesmophoreazusae, in the scenes leading up to and following the arrest of Mnesilochus. The setting has already been set off balance due to the power dynamic having been given to the women during the festival in which women have left their homes in order to conduct their rituals without their men present.86 The second dimension of the exotic in this particular scene is the presence of the Scythian archer, who comes with the Marshal in order to arrest Mnesilochus (929). The Scythian archer’s authority, combined with the fact that Mnesilochus is dressed in women’s clothing and that women have the upper hand all serve as reminders that the balance has been uprooted in this scene.

The dialogue with the archer provides a comedic element through language, due to the archer’s accent as well as his attempt at playing a figure with authority (1002 - 1005).87 In doing so, the archer’s presence refutes the argument that the Scythian merely functions as an ‘other’ in the Greek mind, even this comedic setting. Although Aristophanes is writing after the Persian wars and

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85 Long 1989, 50
86 The scene is further flipped by Mnesilochus’ attempt at acting in his recalling of Euripides’ recent tragedy, Helen, a play that already reimagines the setting of an old epic, when he insists that he is in Egypt and stands before the house of Proteus. When Euripides asks where they are, Mnesilochus answers, “Αἴγυπτον” (877), while Critylla insists that they are in Greece. Within these few lines, Euripides’ Helen is parodied, and the borders between mythology and realism, and the east and west, are broken. Long further suggests that Aristophanes uses this scene to hone in on the point that the tragedian usage of the foreign world and the exotic is merely dramatic superficiality. Critylla, here, remains the voice of reason, reminding the speakers of the scene that they are in a fantasy world where one’s imagination cannot save them from the law, just as Helen and Menelaus in Euripides Helen are no grander for being in Egypt (Long 1989, 52 – 53).
87 “Kinsman: Archer, I beseech you— / Archer: Don’ you be seechin’ me! / Kinsman: Loosen the clamp! / Archer: No, but I’ll do this!”
writes in an Athens possessing an anti-Persian sentiment, the enmity has not completely taken over all foreigners. In fact, this scene both confirms the existence of the Scythian police force that enforces the democracy—as Lissarrague states, paradoxically so—and that these Scythian archers were their own entity of barbarian.\textsuperscript{88}

The comedic setting allows for the juxtaposition of the exotic and the familiar in the following scene to play against each other. The characters are and are not inhabiting the world of myth, while the exotic and the familiar interact as if it is a common event. When Euripides enters as Perseus (1098), claiming that Mnesilochus is a maiden, “ὦ παρθέν᾿, οἰκτίρω σε κρεμαμένην ὀρόν” (1110), the Archer becomes the voice of reason, informing the audience that Mnesilochus is an old man: “οὐ παρτέν᾿ ἐστίν, ἀλλ᾿ ἀμαρτωλὴ γέρων καὶ κλέπτο καὶ πανοῦργο” (1111 – 1112). What follows (1113 – 1127) is an exchange of foul language, one of witty remarks from Euripides’ in an attempt to bring the archer into his imaginings, and the archer’s refusal to go along with his fantasies. Euripides laments,

\begin{quote}
Ah me, what action, what clever logic now?
All wit is lost upon this savage lout.
For work a novel ruse upon a clod
And you have worked in vain. I must apply
A different stratagem, one suitable for him.\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

Euripides’ take on the archer is a savage and a stupid man, but the entire ploy that the two of them are trying to pull off keeps failing. While the dig at the Scythian archer clearly must have received laughs, the folly of Euripides and his friend is also one that cannot be missed. The true punch of the scene, however, occurs when the Scythian, loses both his authority and his dignity as

\textsuperscript{88} « Aristophane tire de leur accent et leur grec approximatif bon nombre d’effets comiques, ce qui nous confirme leur origine étrangère. La cité confie donc, paradoxalement, à d’authentiques barbares un rôle actif dans le fonctionnement de sa démocratie » (Lissarrague 1990, 126)

\textsuperscript{89} Aristophanes, \textit{Thesmophoreazusae (1128 – 1132)}
a character when he is tricked by Euripides out of his bow and solicits sex from a chorus girl in league with Euripides (1170 – 1220). Not only does the Scythian archer become the character who caves into the base needs, but the true punchline arrives when Euripides runs off with the symbol of the Scythian’s power, and as Aristophanes repeatedly uses for puns, quiver (or shaft for his arrows): “ὅρτως δὲ <ςύ> συβήνη τ’στιν καταβήνησι γάρ, οἱμοι, τί δράσι; ποί τό γράδι’; Ἀρταμουξία.” Aristophanes plays with the multiple layers of the importance and relationship with the Scythian in Athens at the time, de-weaponing him as the true triumph—something far more important than just satirical ridicule. Like Euripides in his plays (not as the character in this play), Aristophanes focuses on an object as a metonym for mobile pastoralism. He experiments much more with the other forms of ethnographic interest that can be found in other forms of literature discussed above: spatial alterity, mythology vs. reality, and language, but the emphasis of power lies in the composite bow, as I discuss in detail in the next two chapters.

Studying ancient Greek literature as it was understood at the time, can help us understand those who are the subjects of its writings. If we try to separate epic from drama, and these from history, we would miss crucial pieces to understanding how Greeks truly perceived mobile pastoralists. These few examples highlighted within this chapter demonstrate the aspects of ethnography and alterity that are needed in order to understand the importance of the Scythian bow in Attic vase painting.

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90 Aristophanes, *Thesmophorian Women*, Translation by Henderson, Jeffrey: (Justly is it called a shaft case: I fucked mine away and got shafted! Oh my, what am I gonna do? Where’d that old lady get to? Artamuxia!)
Chapter 2

Τοξα
The Reality that Gave Rise to the Perception

Before examining depictions of the Scythian bow (also known as the composite or recurve bow), an analysis of the construction of the bow and of its use in the historic record is crucial to understanding the representation of the Scythian bow in art. Furthermore, detailing the technological development as it affected surrounding cultures can offer further insight into the globalization and effect of the compound bow’s development into what it came to signify in Greek art.

Archaeological evidence indicates that there was a change in the nature of pastoralism towards the end of the second millennium B.C.E. into one of increased mobility. It is also possible that the change occurred later, and that the development of the nomadic cattle breeding economy in the eighth to sixth centuries B.C.E.—in which a succession of grazing grounds was required for pasturing cattle—also caused the adoption of a more nomadic lifestyle and an increase in cattle breeding for which horses became more important with regards to mobility. Whether this change occurred in the second or first millennium B.C.E., the result was a spread of artistic, technological, and military changes throughout the steppe. Complex horse harnesses were created, riding techniques were improved, and the Scythian bow that could be shot from horseback was

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91 Christian 1998: 124
92 Christian 1998: 124
developed.\textsuperscript{93} Preceded only by the slingshot and the spear, archery is one of the oldest methods for hunting and combat in the ancient world, dating as far back as the Paleolithic era.\textsuperscript{94} Archery and military nomadism especially contributed to how pastoralist tribes lived on the steppe and how their alterity was perceived by their sedentary neighbors, not only Greek, but Assyrian, Persian, and later—Chinese and Roman.\textsuperscript{95}

Although archery was utilized by most ancient cultures, associations within myth and language are telling. According to one of the three legends recorded by Herodotus, Scythes, the youngest son of Heracles and the viper-woman of Scythia, introduced archery to the steppe nomads (\textit{Histories}, 4.8 – 4.10).\textsuperscript{96} The Greeks referred to them as Scythians, ‘Σκύθης’ a term taken from the Scythian ‘skudat’, from the original Proto-Indo-European ‘skud’, meaning “to propel” or ‘to shoot’ and the Northern Iranian term, ‘skuda’, meaning archer.\textsuperscript{97} The names of figures in eastern dress on Greek vases, whether strictly Scythian or not, are named with references to archery as well. For example, the black-figure François Vase (ca. 570 B.C.E.) depicting the Calydonian Boar hunt (\textit{Figure 13}) contains three archers wearing pointed caps and holding composite bows, one of whom is named Toxamis (Τοξαμις), a hybrid name composed of a Greek prefix, the root for ‘arrow’: τοξ-, and an Iranian suffix.\textsuperscript{98}

The development of the early composite bow is thought to be due to the increase of equestrian transport and mounted combat during the third millennium B.C.E. in Asia—an element of pastoralism that is reflected in Greek mythology as well, as many Greek names for Amazons

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. 125
\textsuperscript{94} See McEwen et al. The earliest evidence for archery could be projectile points found in sites in the south of France and the north of Spain belonging to Solutrean and Perigordian cultures (76)
\textsuperscript{95} Stuurman 2008, 25
\textsuperscript{96} See quote above Introduction. It should be noted, however, that this version was told by Greeks living by the Black Sea; the Scyths most likely had a completely different version.
\textsuperscript{97} Beckwith 2009, 61
\textsuperscript{98} Mayor et al. 2014, 456
incorporate the word ‘ιππε’ or ‘ιππ’ (horse), such as Xanthippe (Ξανθιππε), ‘Palomino’ and Hipponike (‘Ιππονικε), ‘Horse Victory’, highlighting the importance of and dependence on equestrian skills.\(^9\)

Archaeological record, however, suggests that the composite bow was invented simultaneously by several cultures during the third millennium B.C.E., namely, in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the steppes of northern Asia.\(^{10}\) One of the earliest surviving examples of the weapon is the western angular bow, the predecessor to the Scythian bow, which held sway in Western Eurasia until the late seventh century B.C.E., when the Scythians allied with King Medes and the Babylonians to attack the Assyrian Empire.\(^{11}\)

The angular bow formed a shallow triangle when strung and a semi-circle when drawn (Figure 1). Representations of this bow type appear in Mesopotamian seals, Egyptian tomb paintings, and on Assyrian reliefs such as on the relief from the northwest palace at Nimrud, indicating that this bow was being used from around 2,400 B.C.E. to around 600 B.C.E. In comparison to the self-bow, which is constructed solely from wood, “the combination of extended draw length and short limbs let the composite bow to shoot an arrow faster and farther” when using an angular bow.\(^{12}\) Examples of this bow are rare, possibly due to the fact that they took an estimated five to ten years to construct,\(^{13}\) but their existence and provenience could offer insight into differences between the Scythian bow and other similar weapons.

For example, an Egyptian composite angular bow in the Brooklyn museum, while it cannot be ascribed to a specific period more precisely than between the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) and 26\(^{\text{th}}\) dynasties due to the

\(^{9}\) Mayor, 2014, 456  
\(^{10}\) McEwen, et al. 1991, 80  
\(^{11}\) Ibid. 81  
\(^{12}\) Ibid. 80  
\(^{13}\) McLeod 1958, 400
lack of information from the excavation, does indicate that it was obtained from an Asiatic region (possibly the Hittites). Instead, it raises the question whether mentions of early composite bows, such as those of epic, are recurve, like Scythian bows, or angular.\textsuperscript{104}

Figure 1: Types of bows. Image via McEwen et al. 1991.

The simple structure of a bow is composed of a stave held tense by a string. While materials vary, bows can be split into three main types: simple bows, consisting of one wooden stave; reinforced bows consisting of a stave reinforced by bark and sinew; and composite bows, consisting of various types of wood, bone, horn, and sinew.\textsuperscript{105} Eastern peoples concentrated on the combination of materials more than the architecture of the limbs, not due to a lack of wood as a resource, as scholars used to believe,\textsuperscript{106} but likely to enhance precision and efficiency. Bows reinforced with sinew allowed for a much stronger tension and a longer range, allowing archers to utilize the weapon from horseback. Composite bows utilized not only sinew but also horn, which

\textsuperscript{104} See McLeod 1958
\textsuperscript{105} Shishlina 1997, 54. See also McEwen et al. 1991 and Balfour 1890
\textsuperscript{106} McEwen et al. 1991, 80
let the bow to return to its original shape with ease. This enabled archers to keep the bow strung for longer periods of time, which already made it superior to the basic bow-type.107

The ‘Scythian’ bow, as it was called by the Greeks, or Scythicus arcus, as it was called by the Romans, was flexible, about 127 centimeters long—as indicated by a Pazyryk site—and shaped like a cupid’s bow. It had a set-back handle, reflexed limbs that ended in re-curved ends, and a draw length between 45 and 76 centimeters.108 Much of the information that exists regarding its structure relies on artistic representations, excavated bow cases and quivers, arrowheads, arrow shafts, and reconstructions.109 Thought to have been originally developed by the Cimmerians in the ninth century B.C.E., it was later introduced to the ancient Greeks by the Scythians and made it as far as northern France to be used until the medieval era. Findings in the Yanghai cemetery in Xinjiang of multiple Scythian bows dating between 1000 and 400 BCE serve as further proof of the connections between steppe pastoralists.110

A discovery at Mari, however, calls this chronology into question. A small slab dating to the late phase of the Early-Dynastic period with an unusual war scene indicates the possibility that Scythian bows existed even before the ninth century, and far more toward the west than would have been expected. One soldier, wearing typical Sumerian helmet and a sheepskin dress, holds a shield and a spear, while a smaller figure wearing a Sumerian helmet and ‘Mari’ dress draws a bow resembling those of the Scythian type.111 There is no further depiction of this bow in art until the Assyrian reliefs in the seventh century, but it does indicate the possible existence of trade from

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107 McEwen et al. 1991, 81
108 Ibid. 81 - 82
109 For further discussion regarding composite bow reconstruction and use, see Reisinger, 2010.
110 Karpowicz 2010, 2
111 Yadin 1972, 89–94.
the east even before the arrival of the Scythians to the Black Sea. Further development of the bow does not seem to have occurred until around the second century C.E.

An analysis of the arrowheads is crucial to understanding the bow type since they demonstrate further development and, due to their material composition, are more susceptible to archaeological analysis for understanding the global spread of the weapon. Bronze, trilobate arrowheads featuring a socketed hafting method are associated with the Scythian bow type.\textsuperscript{112} These types of arrowheads are a later blend of two other, larger, two-edged type arrowheads that have also been found in Transcaucasia. These arrows appear solely in a small number of Iron Age graves, and seem to have not been popular with other cultures residing in Transcaucasia, a finding that supports the theory that these smaller arrowhead types were primarily for the lighter bows used by mounted archers. Solid, triangular heads were best for piercing leather and scale armor, while wider arrowhead points would have been suited for cutting through flesh. In many finds such as in Mosul and Maritzyn, however, it seems that these two types of arrowheads were used simultaneously.\textsuperscript{113}

Greek literary sources record encounters between the Scythians and Greeks and archaeological findings indicate trade along the Black Sea.\textsuperscript{114} And these encounters can be additionally supported by Hellmuth’s analysis of the varying types of Scythian arrowheads found in Eastern Middle Europe, the Mediterranean area, Greece, Turkey, and the Near East.\textsuperscript{115} Arrowheads from the ‘Classical Scythian’ period, which Hellmuth defines as the sixth century B.C.E. onwards, are especially different from the earlier phases of arrows. While three-winged arrowheads with an inner shaft are prevalent, arrowheads with an outer shaft can still be found but

\textsuperscript{112} Reisinger 2010, 42
\textsuperscript{113} Sulimirski 1954, 310 – 311
\textsuperscript{114} Christian 1998, 139
\textsuperscript{115} Hellmuth 2014, 2
have changed in proportion, featuring shorter sockets and a lighter, slenderer shape with missing barbs. These arrowheads align with the type used for the Scythian bow, and were possibly invented in order to counter the improvement of armor and adding to the efficiency of the fighting technique.

It is apparent that the combination of archery and equestrian skill—linked to their lifestyle, environment, and landscape—made these mobile pastoralists truly fearsome. As Herodotus states:

They [the Scythians] have discovered how to prevent any attacker from escaping them and how to make it impossible for anyone to overtake them against their will. For instead of establishing towns or walls, they are all mounted archers who carry their homes along with them and derive their sustenance not from cultivated fields but from their herds.117

Pastoralists’ military tactics were directly influenced by the landscape; they depended on mobility, mastery of the bow, and efficient coordination of the tribe. The most mobile of these tribes hunted for survival and employed the use of traps, ambushes, and harassment—which they employed against Darius I in 514 B.C.E., for example.118 In addition to the flight combat method, eastern nomadic archers were able to fire several arrows per minute by holding multiple arrows drawn from the bow, a technique that is illustrated on a black-figure alabastron with rendering of an eastern archer twisting and holding several arrows in one hand (Figure 10).119 Even more impactful, however, was the ability to shoot arrows off horseback, steering with only legs and twisting backwards to shoot an enemy as they fled.

Scythian warriors kept their compound bows and arrows in a case called a gorytus, a combination of a quiver and a bow-case peculiar to Scythic culture (Figure 2).120 In addition, they carried files with which they sharpened their arrows before use. They would attach thorns to or dip

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116 Ibid. 8 – 9
118 Herodotus’ quote above refers to this event. It takes place in Book IV of Herodotus’ histories.
119 Mayor 2014, 210 - 211
120 Minns 1913, 1965, 67
the arrowheads in poisons made from snake venom and hemlock, ensuring a painful death for the enemy. While more sedentary tribes utilized military methods that were associated with the surrounding agrarian societies and did not only rely solely on archery, the pastoralists’ reliance on the horse is reflected in burial goods, technological innovations, and historical associations.

![Two Scythian Archers, Gold Figure. Found at Kul Olba. Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.](image)

Scythians or Sacae depicted in a military context demonstrate the effect of their tactics on their neighbors. An Assyrian relief from the Northwest palace in Nimrud built by Ashurbanipal II is a possible depiction of Scythian presence in the South Caucasus during the ninth-century B.C.E., as well as a representation of the weaponry and battles with which they were associated. Two Assyrian officials stand in a chariot; one figure holding the reigns, and the other aiming his bow at the enemy. The enemy horsemen wear pointed caps, wide pants, and tall boots. They hold small bows and swords and sit on square cloths secured by girths rather than on the bare backs of their horses. One mounted archer shoots backwards while his horse gallops, the deadly shooting technique discussed above.

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121 Christian 1998: 145
Sulimirski argues that the two mounted bowmen were members of an early Scythic tribe who crossed the mountains of the Caucasus and took over the eastern Transcaucasian steppe.\textsuperscript{122} Although Assyrian annals in accompaniment with the relief do not mention the Scythians, there would not have been a need to mention the identity if the tribe had just been part of an auxiliary force that fought against the Assyrians.\textsuperscript{123} Herodotus’ description of the Sacae also supports this reading of the relief:

The Scythian Sacae wore on their heads stiff turbans sticking straight up in a point. They were dressed in trousers and wielded native bows and daggers; in addition, they carried battle-axes, known as sagareis. Though these people are actually Scythians of Amyrgion, they were called Sacae because the Persians call all Scythians Sacae.\textsuperscript{124}

But while the identity of the archers as early Scythians is plausible, they do not hold Scythian, cupid-shaped bows, indicating either that the improved version of the composite bow did not exist at the time, or accuracy was not important in conveying the battle scene.

This relief not only provides evidence of a clash between cultures, but also an indicates how enemy pastoralists were depicted by one sedentary culture. Rather than utilizing the bow as an identifier, it is the stance of the archers that provides the enemy’s identity. This particular depiction would have coincided with the Scythian rise to power in the region and illustrates the difference in military methods, highlighting the reason why the Scythian bow was eventually more successful. The two Assyrian figures in the chariot represent the method of fighting they used during the ninth century; one man is able to use the weapon, while the other manages the horses. The Scythians or Sacae, however, were able to do both tasks at the same time, performing feats on horseback that were most likely impossible for those trained in agrarian societies. Although

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{122} Sulimirski 1954, 292
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid. 292, 293. For further discussion as to why this relief cannot be depicting any of the other civilizations in the area at the time, see Sulimirski, 1954. 290 – 293.
\textsuperscript{124} Herodotus 7.64.2.
\end{footnotesize}
individual equestrians appeared in the Assyrian army by the eighth century, they were only able to use spears, a much less effective weapon when battling fighters who pride themselves in speed and long-distance shooting. The Persians and the Medians were far more successful at adopting the Scythian bow, and the Scythians were eventually defeated by the Median King in the late seventh century and driven back toward the Black Sea. All this indicates that they had influenced the development of weaponry in the east.

Further indication of the bow’s global effect is demonstrated in historical accounts and the continuation of this particular technology. For example, the Massagetae, who used irrigation agriculture and settled in towns along the Syr Darya, were described by Herodotus as a Scythic mobile-pastoralist tribe (1.216), while they used slightly more agrarian military tactics in order to defeat Cyrus the Great in 529 such as spears and battle axes, bows were still a crucial weapon. They used metal armor such as iron mail coats and helmets and protected their horses with bronze breastplates. Some used bone armor, a cheaper option that was used by other steppe pastoralists as well. It is thought that wealthier Scythians also used metal armor; all this possibly in response to the existence of Scythian composite bows. The Romans called these mounted warriors cataphractarii. They, like the rest of the equestrian-minded members of the ancient world, did not use stirrups and clung to their horses using their legs, which prevented them from using heavier armor. This later became an issue when the Huns took the composite bow one step further and created the recurve bow.

Scythian weaponry and equestrian gear had a more peaceful influence on territories far beyond its reach as well. Their trade extended both to the west and the east, from Geto-Dacian and

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125 Khazanov 2015, 34 – 36, according to Herodotus.
126 This is a more violent depiction of the Scythians than many other examples, and the Scythians are not depicted as such obvious foreigners as they are in later, Archaic Greek art.
127 Christian 1998, 144 – 147
Thracian tribes of the Carpathians and the Balkans to the Ural Mountains in the east.\textsuperscript{128} Scythian merchants traded with the east, though there is not much existing, concrete knowledge of this particular trade route.\textsuperscript{129} Archery skills of the Scythians and the Sacae allowed them to form alliances with larger states, fostering trade of weaponry and other artifacts across Central Eurasia and beyond. The pastoralists of the Eurasian steppe were some of the first to begin using thicker armor and possibly the peoples who introduced equestrian armor in order to protect themselves from the force of the arrows. Later military developments such as armor and increased usage of archers linked to the existence of Scythian bows appear in the East where there was more conflict. If the Sulimirski’s argument regarding the Assyrian stele is true, equestrian Scythian archers would have been a valuable addition to an army as its auxiliary force. In the third century B.C.E., the Sarmatians developed new military tactics to combat the Scythian bow, necessitating the invention of a bow that could shoot a heavier iron tip with even more speed.\textsuperscript{130}

The effect of the Scythian bow, therefore, reached much further and with more complexity than would be initially expected. On a militaristic level, it caused the development of cavalry warfare, as well as the need for improved armor and improved weaponry in order for an opposing army to be able to hold against the Scythian or Sakae armies. As Herodotus recounts, the nomadic tribes had a completely different fighting method, relying on speed, mobility, and pure equestrian and archery skills in times of war. Rather than engage the enemy, they were able to keep their distance due to a combination of a lack of cities to protect and the efficiency of their archery.\textsuperscript{131} Whether or not the bow was introduced to eastern civilizations by mobile-pastoralist tribes, those

\textsuperscript{128} Khazanov 2015, 40. The discovery of Olbian-made mirrors in the Urals indicates the existence of this trade route. See also Skinner 2016.
\textsuperscript{129} Herodotus 4.24
\textsuperscript{130} McEwen 1991, 82
\textsuperscript{131} Herodotus IV
agrarian societies who successfully adopted the Scythian bow seemed to have continued its use until the recurve bow was developed in the far east by the Huns and the Avars.\textsuperscript{132} On a cultural level, the Scythian bow is mentioned in historical accounts and appears in artistic depictions that do not necessarily relate violent historical encounters, as shown on Attic vases before the Persian wars.

In fact, the Greeks, aside from the Cretans, did not often use any kind of bow, and the bow was mainly used to depict eastern warriors.\textsuperscript{133} The bow however, was widely used by the Parthians, as represented on Arsacid coins, and the Sarmatians, indicating that it was either already popular, or adopted for its superiority as a tool in battle.\textsuperscript{134} The findings of arrowheads of the Scythian type dating to the eighth and late seventh century in Greece indicate the existence of Greek mercenaries, as well as of the trade that existed between Greek colonies that existed on the Black Sea and the Scythian settlements. As Herodotus states, “the Scythians were more clever than any other people in making the most important discovery we know of concerning human affairs, though I do not admire them in other respects.”\textsuperscript{135} The Scythians tread the line between contempt, admiration, and complete exoticism, a complex space in the Greek mind that can be further examined in the representation of the Scythian bow in Greek art.

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\textsuperscript{132} McEwen 1991, 82
\textsuperscript{133} See Ivantchik 2006 and Mayor et al. 2014
\textsuperscript{134} McLeod 1965, 2 – 3
\textsuperscript{135} Herodotus 4.46.2-3.
\end{flushleft}
Chapter 3

The Composite Bow in Greek Art

As demonstrated in the previous two chapters, despite the existence of various bow types and the adoption of the Scythian bow by prominent eastern cultures such as the Persians by the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E., Scythians and other mobile steppe pastoralists most efficiently employed military nomadism and equestrian archery and retained the primary mythological and ethnographic associations with this specific recurve bow in the Greek mind. The composite bow, therefore, functions as the strongest metonym for the representation of mobile pastoralist steppe culture in Attic vase painting, even if the archer depicted in an image is not specifically identifiable to a specific culture or people, and even though the iconography is most likely inaccurate. Before analyzing several examples of archers in Greek art, the layers of the meaning of the archer in an artistic context must be deconstructed and separated out.

As discussed in the previous chapter, an archer could also be a term that would have been synonymous with an easterner, and was especially used in reference to mobile pastoralists. Archery as a military tactic was as not favored by the Greeks during the Archaic and Classical periods as the hoplite soldier, nor was it considered the most honorable method of combat,

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136 Unless the painters had met pastoralist or Scythian slaves, or had lived north of the Black Sea, they likely did not know exactly what their outfits and weapons looked like and were working based on hearsay.

137 τόξον translates to ‘bow’ (Liddell and Scott 1889), and τοξόται, ‘archers,’ was another name for the Scythian police force in Athens during the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.E. (Burckhardt, Leonhard (Basle) and Rhodes, Peter J. (Durham), “Toxotai”, in: Brill’s New Pauly)

138 Burckhardt, Leonhard (Basle) and Rhodes, Peter J. (Durham), “Toxotai”, in: Brill’s New Pauly
although there were peltastes, archers used as secondary to the phalanx, and mercenaries hired.\textsuperscript{139} While Myceneans appeared to rely on archery and used chariots similarly to those in the Near East, chariot warfare had phased out by the Iron Age and appears not to have been used by archers as missile platforms.\textsuperscript{140} Heroic figures such as Herakles, Odysseus, Paris and deities such as Artemis and Apollo, however, were known and exalted as archers.\textsuperscript{141} Archery was a combative role used for sport and challenges, hunting, or for support in battle, and was a method of combat favored in the east. Even so, figures in eastern dress do not appear to be holding bows or wearing quivers as often as one would assume. For example, in von Bothmer’s collection of Amazons in Greek art, the figures in eastern dress appear to be holding a variety of weapons such as spears and swords, and perform a wide range of activities that do not merely revolve around archery.\textsuperscript{142}

Figures in eastern dress have been discussed extensively and in detail with regards to their identity and the significance therein—whether Persian, Amazonian, Scythian, and so on—and their accoutrements have mostly functioned as tools used to identify figures rather than as items of independent significance. While the search for ethnic identity has contributed to the discussion about the eastern world in relation to the ancient Greeks, this thesis, as I state in previous chapters, is not such a search, but a study of pastoralist alterity in the Greek mind. I suggest, as I state above, that the conversation has neglected to focus on an equally important detail: the meaning of the bow’s presence and positioning in relation to its holder, and thus reveal far more about the Greek perspective on alterity. This lends a sense of freedom to the bow itself; even if the bow is held by someone in Greek clothing, the significance of the bow can still be analyzed. The Scythian bow

\textsuperscript{139} See Lissarrague 1990
\textsuperscript{140} Rawlings 2007, 125 – 128
\textsuperscript{141} In Book 24 of the \textit{Odyssey}, Penelope goes as far as to have the suitors attempt to string Odysseus’ bow as a task before shooting the bow. For more on Odysseus’ bow, its importance, and origins, see Balfour 1921
\textsuperscript{142} See Von Bothmer 1957. Whether every figure on each vase in the publication is an Amazon or not, most are dressed ‘exotically’ and hold weapons ranging from swords to bows. Many perform tasks revolving around horses. Even in scenes where they are depicted in combat against heroic Greek figures, they wield a variety of weapons.
became both entwined with, and independent from, the mode of dress, allowing for Greek art to convey and share a sense of the mythological status of easterners they may or may not have seen with their own eyes.\textsuperscript{143}

In order to analyze the significance of the Scythian bow in Greek art, I separate the archers’ positions into four broad categories. (1) the archer without a bow, therefore only recognized by the quiver; (2) the archer at rest and holding a composite bow; (3) the archer in action with a composite bow; and (4) the archer on horseback. The second and third categories can be subdivided into secondary and primary figures in an artistic context, and the third category can be divided into antagonistic, supportive, heroic, or mythological figures (see Table 1). The intricacy of this categorization alone is indicative of the complex nature of alterity. By dissecting several examples in each category, however, the significance of the cupid bow and how it can help us understand the Greek perspective of the ‘other’ gains clarity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Archer</th>
<th>Examples of Vases</th>
<th>Variations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Archer without bow, only with quiver</td>
<td>Figures 4, 5, (2)</td>
<td>Primary or Secondary status; rarer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Archer at rest with composite bow</td>
<td>Figures 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
<td>Secondary (on the side of the image) or primary (in the center of the viewer’s gaze) status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Archer in action with composite bow</td>
<td>Figures 10, 11, 12, 13</td>
<td>Levels of antagonism, supportive, heroic, mythological</td>
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<td>4. Archer on horseback (with bow or quiver)</td>
<td>Figures 15, 16, 17</td>
<td>Antagonistic</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Most of the representations of Scythians or other eastern figures in Greek art date to the late sixth and fifth century B.C.E. and utilize oriental clothing as a complement with or as a

\textsuperscript{143} Gleba 2008, 14
substitute for weaponry in order to represent the ‘otherness’ of the figure. Considering that Scythians were introduced to mainland Greece around this time through Greek settlements in the Pontus and the slave trade, an artist would most likely have known or heard about how these pastoralists living near the Black Sea looked, behaved, and dressed, although, as mentioned above, the artist would not have possessed completely accurate information. Curiously, however, archers thought to be Scythian disappear from Attic vases around the time period when Scythians are known to have been physically present in Athens. The eastern figures in Attic art therefore cannot be analyzed without close attention to the historical context, nor can they be expected to be exact representations of peoples that existed at the time. As mentioned in the previous chapter, they were meant to evoke a different world. But what was the most effective way to do so?

**The Controversy of Clothing**

“Σάκαι δὲ οἱ Σκύθαι περὶ μὲν τὴν κεφαλήν κυρβασίας ἐς ὀξύ ἀπῆγαγένας ὀρθὰς ἔχον πεπηγυίας, ἀναξυρίδας δὲ ἔνε δεδύκεσαν, τόξα δὲ ἐπιχώρια καὶ ἐγχειρίδια, πρὸς δὲ καὶ ἀξίνας σαγαρίς ἔχον.”

“The Scythian Sacae wore on their heads stiff turbans sticking straight up to a point. They were dressed in trousers and wielded native bows and daggers; in addition, they carried battle-axes, known as sagareis.”

(Herodotus, Histories, 7.64.2)

Based on historical and archaeological records, Scythians wore clothing that was practical for the environment they inhabited and for the lifestyle they lived. Using fur and cured leather, they made tough, warm tunics and trousers that were often embroidered in elaborate patterns, and wore soft leather boots—all elements that are depicted in Attic vase painting.

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144 cite
145 Pinney 1983, 131
146 See above footnote
147 See Rice 1957, 63 – 66. The manner of dress has been proven by archaeological excavations such as those of the Pazyryk burials.
Despite the amount of information that exists about Scythian costume, however, general eastern dress as it is depicted is not a reliable identifier for ethnicity, as noted by many scholars.\textsuperscript{148} The issue, as Askold Ivantchik 2006\textsuperscript{149} points out, is that most depictions in Attic vases dating to the sixth century B.C.E. do not represent realistic scenes, an argument that is further proven by the iconography depicted. First, the battle scenes illustrate iconography that indicates influence from an epic-style narrative and depict Boetian shields (long out of use) or chariots (a device that was not used in warfare after the sixth-fifth century B.C.E.)\textsuperscript{150} In fact, the first depictions of historically representative scenes only appear on Attic vases around the Persian wars.\textsuperscript{151} Even this distinction, however, is difficult to make, because, even though the scenes may not have been more realistic, they were also not completely restricted to the realm of heroes. Rather, they function far more within the form of early history and ethnography discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. The mythological and the real interplay and build off one another. For example, even when depicting a mythological scene, painters may have utilized contemporary weapons or ‘speaking’ names to create a sense of familiarity with the viewer.\textsuperscript{152}

With this information, it is easy to make the case that the depiction of the other with eastern dress is too complicated to be useful for a culturally historical analysis. I do not disregard costume entirely, however, when discussing the depiction of Scythians or pastoralism on vases, as the mode of dress has been one of the main identifying criterion for Scythians in scholarship.\textsuperscript{153} But to base an argument merely on eastern dress is problematic for several reasons. First, it is fairly clear that many artists compiled together outfits that were composed of several aspects by pulling from

\textsuperscript{148} See Ivantchik 2006, Gleba 2008, who have discussed depictions of Amazons, Thracians, Persians, and other eastern figures.
\textsuperscript{149} Ivantchik 2006, 199 – 200
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid. 199 – 201
\textsuperscript{151} Holscher 1973, 25 – 49 in Ivantchik 2006, 201
\textsuperscript{152} See Rawlings 2007
\textsuperscript{153} Gleba 2008, 13
various eastern cultures, and were not necessarily meant to recall one specific culture.\textsuperscript{154} Herodotus, for example, in the quote mentioned above, describes Scythian dress as distinctive by their pointed caps and trousers. While it is likely they dressed in this way, this mode of dress was not unique to Scythian culture, especially in the Greek mind, and therefore should not fall into the category of Scythians.\textsuperscript{155} Due to the inaccuracies in patterning and representation, ‘Scythian’ dress in an artistic context is not used “in a specific ethnic sense, but is rather employed either to represent a wider range of Asians, or to indicate the function of archer and/or his mythical character.”\textsuperscript{156} For example, Amazons are depicted wearing similar clothing and sometimes holding cupid-shaped bows, and it has been suggested that ‘Scythian’ or eastern clothing functions as a symbol of archery rather than of a particular civilization.

As my analysis does not depend on the specific identity of a figure and therefore does not rely on the uncertain classification offered by eastern dress, I suggest instead that a focus on the Scythian composite bow would be more fruitful for my purpose. Ivantchik 2006 argues that his analysis of archers in eastern dress have nothing to do with Scythians and the North Pontic area, but rather their status. While I agree that status factor into the analysis (as I discuss below), the presence of the composite bow or the suggestion of the bow in the form of a quiver allows for a counter argument. These archers, in fact, may not have been identified as Scythian peoples, but the influence existed. Not in the dress, but in the presence of the composite bow. The secondary rank that Ivantchik 2006 addresses is due to the associations that existed with the ethnographical associations that did exist with the North Pontic and Central Eurasian area. Whether the archer is

\textsuperscript{154} Skinner 2016, 75
\textsuperscript{155} One of the best examples of this is that the pointed cap is often referred to as the ‘Phrygian cap’, not a ‘Scythian cap’.
\textsuperscript{156} Gleba et al. 2008, 14 -16 after Pinney 1983, 130, 137. For further discussion on the meaning of ‘Scythian’ dress and existing inaccuracies, see also Ivantchik, 2006.
in a secondary or primary position, the archer’s presence brings the dimension of alterity, both spatial and metaphorical.

The existence of this bow and its archers as an extant threat to Greek colonies and neighbors, however, shifts the depiction from the purely mythological context. Furthermore, representations of archers who are depicted as allies rather than as enemies holding this bow increasingly complicates the notion that Scythians and other tribes were solely associated as a barbaric ‘other’—as many interpretations would like to presume.

**Bowless Archers with Only Quivers**

The first category, although conspicuously devoid of the actual composite bow, must be analyzed due its function as a metonym for the composite bow itself. The *gorytus*, as mentioned above, was a type of quiver peculiar to Scythians and other similar eastern cultures (*Figure 2*). Quivers, in general, are accoutrements that are synonymous with the bow; an archer would not need to carry a quiver without a bow, just as a swordsman would not need to carry a sheath without a sword (*figure 3*). A *gorytus*, however, is wider than a regular quiver because it was made to hold both the bow and the arrows, and it was held at the hip rather than across the shoulders. While it is likely that Greek archers may have used varying styles of quivers, the *gorytus* is distinctly eastern.\(^{157}\)

The foreignness of this quiver is further emphasized by artistic depictions of Artemis, a distinctly (at least in Attic painting) Greek goddess, who usually carries a quiver on her back. An example of this type of quiver, only meant to hold arrows, can be seen on the Niobid Krater (*Figure 157*). See Basilov 1989

\(^{157}\) See Basilov 1989
While the Niobid Krater dates to a later period than the other examples of Attic vases discussed in this thesis (sixth – fifth centuries B.C.E.), Artemis is depicted holding a ‘Libyan bow’ instead of a recurve bow and draws her arrows from a quiver at her back instead of a gorytus at the hip, like the one pictured in the scene depicting the departure of an archer (*Figure 9*).

![Niobid Krater, Side B. Image via Hervé Lewandowski, 1994 RMN. Musée du Louvre.](image)

Nevertheless, the difficulty in distinguishing between a Greek quiver and a gorytus meant to hold both a bow and one’s arrows remains, and therefore it cannot function as reliably as an identifier as can the ‘Scythian’ bow unless the quiver is properly placed. Instead, figures that are depicted in eastern dress with a quiver at their hip, but without the accompanying weapon, play a curious role in the iconography than the armed archer. These weaponless warriors are less threatening than those with weapons, and appear often to be in the position indicating a figure that Ivantchik has defined as “non-hoplite soldiers who had to be easily distinguishable from the main hero-hoplite” and whose mode of dress was merely to indicate their status as an archer.159 In the

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159 Ivantchik 2006, 202
two examples below, however, we find figures in central positions of the vase (*Figures 4 and 5*), indicating that alliance and harmony within an artistic representation does not need to place the archer in a secondary position.

On the black-figure olpe (*Figure 4*), the central figure wears a patterned tunic, trousers, and a pointed cap. The *gorytus* rests conspicuously at the central figure’s waist. The archer is in motion, legs apart as if to walk forward, but his face turned towards the hoplite behind him. His back elbow is pointed as if resting a hand on his waist, while his front arm is raised. The hoplite at the archer’s back walks away from the central archer, but his head too, faces the other figures. The hoplite on the archer’s left faces the other two figures. While none of the figures are armed, it is clear that the figures behind the shields are hoplites, and the eastern figure in the center is an archer due to his quiver. The scene depicted is one of motion and interaction; all three figures are aware of one another’s presence, and all of their weapons are conspicuously absent from the viewer’s eye—although suggestions of battle are not: the hoplites wear helmets and hold shields, while the archer’s *gorytus* most likely conceals a weapon inside and wears protective clothing. All three figures are at rest, but prepared for battle.

*Figure 4*: Athenian black-figure olpe, 525 – 475 B.C.E. Archer between two warriors. Image via Beazley Archive.
The depiction on the black figure amphora (Figure 4) is similar to the black-figure olpe, but depicts a scene of increased urgency. The four hoplites and the archer are walking in the same direction, and the more crowded scene implies a need for greater man-power. While weapons are not depicted in this scene either, the diagonal lines that intersect behind the figures evoke the idea of spears to the viewer. The image of a horse’s flank on one shield and the body part of a human on another imply the violence of battle more starkly as well. Furthermore, while the archer wears a pointed cap and carries a gorytus, he does not wear patterned trousers and his tunic is simpler. He is set apart from the other hoplites, yet not so starkly that he stands out from them; this is further emphasized by his positioning slightly behind two shields.

Figure 5: Athenian Black figure amphora, 550 – 500 BCE, Attributed to the manner of the Antimenes Painter. Archer between two warriors.

In both depictions, the bowless archers are flanked by several Greek hoplites and included in the central movement of the scene, indicating that, even if the archer represents a person of secondary status to a hoplite, their status does not necessarily negate from their importance. These are not the only examples of these images, nor are they the only type of positioning of a bowless archer in Attic vase painting. These are demonstrative, however, of the layering that is involved

160 See Lissarrague 1990, Ivantchik 2006; Gleba et al. 2008
when analyzing the significance of an archer’s presence on an attic vase. The hoplites and the archers are weaponless, interactive with one another, and dependent on one another to create one cohesive scene. While the presence of a quiver cannot be necessarily indicative of mobile pastoralist presence in the Greek mind, it is still representative of the eastern influence and hold value for ethnographic research. The harmony displayed in the two vases above also indicate the partnership that would have been displayed in battle between hoplites and hired archers in reality, or warriors and archers in myth, despite the fact that archery was not the favored method of combat among the Greeks.

**Archers on Foot Holding a Recurve Bow**

There is an implied danger and foreign element to the presence of the recurve bow in artistic depictions, even when there are no arrows in the scene and the bow is not held at ready. As a result, the category of the foot archer holding the recurve bow is the most difficult to define in terms of the figure’s importance and status within a scene. As mentioned above, many scholars have defined figures merely dressed in eastern clothing as ‘archers’, and these figures can be present in both mythological and more ‘ordinary’ scenes. The presence of the bow, however, is more determinative than the quiver or simply the outfit since it implies that action will—or has—taken place. The recurve bow is a particularly eastern weapon, one that was most commonly used by mobile pastoralists (and most effectively on horseback). In these particular depictions, the archer at rest with only a bow, like the archer with only a quiver, is usually not positioned in a threatening stance and appears to represent a figure of secondary status to the hoplite. This notion is further

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161 Although, as mentioned above, these ordinary scenes merely refer to a more generic depiction that lacks a specific mythological figure such as a soldier departing or a mother with a child.

162 See Hyland 2003; McEwen et al. 1991; Shishlina 1997
indicated by the lack of arrows in the scene; a detail especially noticeable by the fact that in depictions where the archer is in an active stance, the arrow is clearly notched (See figures 10; 13).\textsuperscript{163}

The archer in the departing scene depicted on the black-figure amphora (Figure 6) wears a pointed cap and a patterned tunic to recall eastern elements (other than the recurve bow) for the viewer, but does not wear leather boots or patterned trousers. He is turned away from the rest of the figures in the scene, and is only kept enclosed in the space by being partially hidden behind one of the hoplite’s round shields. One may presume that a quiver at his waist is hidden behind the shield, but is not shown to the viewer. The archer holds a recurve bow that is not strung and that faces inward, implying that, while the archer is prepared for battle, the danger is not immediate. The imagery of the archer accompanying the hoplite repeats itself on Attic vases during this time period;\textsuperscript{164} it is especially in these more peaceful scenes that the idea notion that easterners who wielded recurve bows were viewed as barbaric ‘others’ is incorrect.\textsuperscript{165}

\textit{Figure 6}: Warriors departing. Athenian black-figure amphora, 550 – 500 B.C.E. Italy, Etruria. Image via Beazley Archive.

\textsuperscript{163} See also several vases collected in Von Bothmer 1957, that depict ‘Amazons’ in Attic vase painting where the warrior is shown to be in action both as an antagonist and as an ally (eg. Pl. LV, 5; Pl. LXXX, 4).

\textsuperscript{164} See Ivantchik 2006

\textsuperscript{165} See Introduction
The scene depicted below (Figures 7, 8) contains similar elements to the departure scene (Figure 6). The difference, however, lies in the crowded element of the vase, the heightened action, and the implied mythological or heroic element that therefore slightly alters the status of the archers and affects their positioning within the scene. The departure scene itself is not abnormal; old men with staffs sit down, hoplites holding spears and shields bid them goodbye, and archers stand in a secondary stance to the hoplite. The presence of a woman is also standard for a hoplite departure scene, and the presence of the dog can be seen (Figure 6). The main differences on this vase are due to the military power that the archers possess in this scene and the presence of the horses and the chariot, which evoke an earlier time period or a world of epic when chariots were more commonly in use. Both archers wear gorytus at their hips, and one of the gorytus is even stuffed with arrows. While both archers’ bows are slightly concealed behind another figure, the viewer is able to tell that these are recurve bows; the eastern element that is further supported by the pointed caps and the presence of the horses. Furthermore, both archers are very much within the scene, standing behind the secondary characters, heavily armed.

Figure 7: Side A, Warriors and Archers Departing, Athenian black-figure amphora (ca. 550 – 500 B.C.E.), Munich, Antikensammlungen. Image via Beazley Archive.

166 Ivantchik 2006, 203 – 209
The presence of the bow can invoke a sense of mythology into a scene, a diverse skill-set among soldiers, and be portrayed either more or less threateningly depending on the placement. The balance of the Scythian bow can be examined further in an artistic context depicting a less obviously mythological scene. On a black figure amphora in Florence depicting a warrior bidding farewell before setting off to battle, the main two figures are dressed in Scythian dress, and the standing figure holds a Scythian bow and quiver (Figure 9). An old man in foreign dress sits at the center, while the warrior bids farewell and two figures stand in secondary position to the central scene. Depictions of moments such as this recur in Attic vase painting, but the warrior is usually a Greek, and archers usually stand in the secondary position.\textsuperscript{167} Ivantchik poses that this reversal of roles is “an attempt to depict the world upside-down in which all the traditional roles and relationships are reversed.”\textsuperscript{168} From the Greek perspective, role reversals weren’t only confined to epic and comedy; the entire ‘barbarian’ world—including Egypt and Persia—was one in which all things were reversed. The presence of the Scythian bow, however, recalls the barbarians to the east who chose to roam the plains rather than to build stone cities, who spent their lives on horseback.

\textsuperscript{167} Ivantchik 2006, 227
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. 227
with an abundance of horses but without the reverence the Greeks held for their steeds, who’s military tactic was to flee and exhaust the enemy using the terrain rather than stand their ground.

These are only a few examples of the archer at rest in Archaic vase paintings. They indicate, however, that regardless of whom the painter was depicting, the recurve bow was an element that very clearly evoked an image of the east in the Greek mind, and an eastern culture that was directly influenced by mobile pastoralist culture that most heavily utilized the composite or recurve bow and the *gorytus* in combat. While they could function as a threat, these depictions portray the capable eastern archer as an ally, one who is able to remain peaceful, with a bow unstrung, perhaps with arrows piled into their quivers, yet remain behind a female or elderly figure in a departure scene.

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169 For further reading, see Lissarrague 1990; Von Bothmer 1957; Ivantchik 2006. Other vase examples see: Beazley Archive vases 26, 646, 663, etc.
Archers in Action

Archers in action, as mentioned above, present the most diverse range of depictions, since they function as allies (or secondary characters to hoplites), antagonists, or alone (see figure 10). In the instances where the threat and power of the archer has been most heightened, their bow is strung and their arrow is notched, such as in the case below (Figure 10), where the archer holds a number of arrows in preparation to shoot several in rapid succession. In the instances where their power is taken away from them (see figures 11 and 12) merely a suggestion of the composite bow is necessary, and there are no arrows in sight—the bow is not even strung—removing the one skill the archer commands against an enemy.

*Figure 10*: Barbarian or ‘Amazon’ archer using the speed-shooting technique

Both images of the archer on the losing side depict the easterner falling back, their bow unstrung. On the black-figure hydria (*Figure 11*), the archer raises his bow arm in defense, his other hand either holding his *gorytus* or about to break his fall. It is as if he is being knocked from

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170 See also Von Bothmer 1957, Pl. LV, 5, in which an archer (identified as an Amazon) kneels between two riders on horseback, a quiver at her hip, pointing a recurve bow towards the sky, prepared to loosen an arrow. The horse at the archer’s back has its two front legs raised as if about to gallop, while the horse she faces stands still. The archer is proportionally too large in comparison to the horses and their riders, and commands power at the center of the scene.
his archer’s stance (*Figures 10, 13*). The archer is larger than his hoplite enemy, but is clearly no match against him, as the hoplite’s spear is about to pierce the archer and no arrows nor an axe are in sight. The archer has been stripped of any power he might have had, recalling the scene in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoreazusae* when the Scythian archer is comically stripped of his bow and therefore also stripped of his power. As the scene in the play, the scenes depicted on these vases, and other mentions such as the Greek version of the Scythian origin myth mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, the cupid-shaped composite bow was one of the main symbols of Scythian and nomadic power.

*Figure 11:* Fight between a warrior and an archer. Athenian black-figure hydria (ca. 525 – 475).

In the table at the start of the chapter (Table 1) I have placed the mythological within the category of ‘archers in action’. Although it could be a category unto itself, for the purpose of this thesis, I have not separated mythology from the more ‘realistic’ scenes for several reasons. First, like the ancient Greek historians and ethnographers, I do not separate the ‘real’ history from the myth. Instead, placing them together only enhances the information we glean from an in-depth analysis. Second, it appears that in scenes of a more mythological nature, the archer is usually in an action stance. If they are at rest, they will not be holding their weapons, as I discuss below (*Figure 14*).

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171 See Chapter 1
In the scene below, the Amazon, unlike the more eastern archer (Figure 11), wears a belted chiton and her hair is loose under a pointed cap. Whereas the other archer is about to die, the Amazon is in a position already indicative of her death: her right leg is stretched out as she tries to balance her fall, her right arm is outstretched in defense, and blood flows from wounds under her right breast and on her right thigh. In her left hand, she holds a cupid-shaped bow, also unstrung, and without any arrows in sight. Despite her more westernized dress, the presence of the ‘Scythian’ bow in this particular depiction recalls the influence of the mobile pastoralists and her eastern or more mythological origins beyond the known lands of the North Pontic area.

![Figure 12: Depiction of a warrior slaying an Amazon](image)

These varying levels of power and displays of skill in different contexts within Archaic vases indicate the complexity with which recurve bows were viewed, which is further demonstrated by the bow’s appearance in mythological scenes such as that of the warrior slaying the Amazon. While this particular scene depicts a pair of enemies, the mythological archer was also depicted as a capable ally in action. Such is the case depicted on the François Vase, a volute krater depicting the Calydonian boar hunt (Figure 13).¹⁷²

Although it is only a boar hunt and not a battle scene, many are aware of the tragedy that awaits the hunters. Nevertheless, all the figures in this scene are depicted as allies. Among the

¹⁷² See Lissarrague 1990, 137
running hunters holding spears, two figures crouch on one knee, holding composite bows, and wearing pointed caps and dress that differ from those of the others. The artist would most likely have been aware of Scythian presence and it is possible that he chose to depict them as reinforcements for the Argonauts. It is also possible, however, that the Scythian dress combined with the recurve bow is used in this painting more as a symbol for the exoticness of the Argonauts and the mythological quality of the Calydonian boar hunt rather than as an accurate depiction of members belonging to a neighboring civilization. The presence of these archers in this scene is particularly contentious. On the one hand, the names reflect an Iranian origin and therefore the existent archers of northern Eurasia. On the other hand, their presence within a mythological context provides evidence that these archers are not Scythians or any other existing pastoralist tribe, but merely archers in what would have been seen as ‘exotic’ dress.

These two scenes do not have to be understood as completely separate, however. It is possible that the artist is invoking a mythological scene using a known ethnographical context, allowing the viewer to interact more directly with the art. This is similar to the manner in which Homeric texts mentioning weapons that would not have existed, or the way Aristeas mentions the link between the mythological Arimaspi to the very real Scythic tribes. This mixture of the mythological and the real in a scene is perfectly in line with Greek perception that there is no need to separate between the two worlds; the boundaries can be blurred in art as well as in writing.

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173 Hellmuth 2014, 29
174 See Chapter 1
I have demonstrated thus far that the presence of the composite bow in a scene is able assume several functions. The bow, depending where it is placed, signifies threatening skill and power. The simple presence of the bow, even unstrung, can merely indicate the geographical origin of the figure, as in the case with the Amazonian scene (Figure 12), as well as add a mythological element to a scene. The presence of the composite bow in the image of Herakles below serves as a signifier for all three functions, as well as functioning as a metonym for Herakles’ journeys beyond the Black Sea.

An additional example of the mythological interaction between the east and west is Herakles’ relationship with the east. As mentioned in Herodotus, Herakles was deeply entwined in the Scythian origin mythology, according to one version of the story.\(^{175}\) He was known for his archery skills, and is depicted as such on the Attic vase below (Figure 14), specifically with a composite bow. Herakles is depicted in action, capturing a bull (without the help of his bow—or he has used it and now has no need), yet the scene is made peaceful by the presence of the tree and the fact that he has hung his unstrung bow and quiver on the branches, indicating that there is no danger nearby—or if there is, he is unafraid. The presence of the composite bow specifically brings

\(^{175}\) See previous chapter
to mind those of the east, who had been influenced by mobile pastoralists inhabiting Central Asia and the borders of the Black Sea. Furthermore, Herakles’ mythology does indeed take him to the farthest reaches of the world in the Greek perception, which did include the Black Sea Region, not just due to the origin myth recounted by Herodotus, but a lesser-known tale found in *scholia* in which a Scythian named Teutaros teaches Herakles how to use a Scythian bow.\(^\text{176}\) Therefore, to deny that the presence of this ‘Scythian’ bow in this particular scene would not have called to mind that part of the world would discount the importance of trade, oral history in the Greek world, and the globalization that did, in fact, exist to a certain extent.

Herakles significance, other than his mythological connection with the east itself, is his status as a hunter. In the ancient Greek world, hunters were well-known for their ability to cross boundaries and borders. In fact, in Arrian’s *Anabasis*, the *magister memorabilium* is a warrior who enjoys going hunting. Herakles himself was associated with liminality and the wild, further allowing him to spend much of his time in a space more unfamiliar to Greek writers.\(^\text{177}\) The presence of the Scythian bow in this particular scene calls to mind Herakles’ mythology and connections to mobile pastoralists, not only linking this Greek hero to them, but linking mobile pastoralists to the ancient Greeks through myth.

\(^{176}\) See Braund 2010 for detailed discussion regarding Teutaros
\(^{177}\) Koulakiotis 2011, 169 - 170
**Figure 14**: Herakles and the bull. Athenian black-figure amphora, (ca. 550 – 500), Munich, Antikensammlungen. Image via Beazley Archive 1482.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archers in Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backward shot</td>
<td>This is the most signature position of eastern, particularly nomadic archers. The backwards shot is depicted as early as Assyrian reliefs, and will later on be known as the ‘Parthian shot’. The bow is taught, and arrows are notched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing enemy</td>
<td>Enemy’s bow lacks arrows and a string, therefore its effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kneeling ally/forward shot</td>
<td>This is a simple position, likely more familiar to a Greek viewer than the twisting backwards shot.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### On Horseback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bow not in use</td>
<td>This appears to be the more likely positioning of the equestrian archer; the archer is usually battling an enemy at close quarters rather than functioning as a secondary figure to a hoplite or other warrior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bow in use</td>
<td>This is the rarest depiction of an equestrian archer. This positioning, as well, is usually antagonistic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2**

**Archers on Horseback**

“…while the horse each man has trained lies stretched out on its belly below in readiness, as does his dog. When the hunter sees an animal from the tree, he shoots his arrow at it, mounts his horse, and chases it, with the horse next to him in pursuit.” (Herodotus, *Histories*, 4.22.2)

Archers on horseback appear to be the least represented group on Attic vases despite the fact that mobile pastoralists were known for their equestrian prowess, and have most often been
identified as Amazon's by modern scholars. When equestrians are depicted with bows conspicuously present, they are antagonistic to hoplite soldiers and extremely distinct from depictions of Greek cavalrymen on Attic vases and other mediums. While it is curious that Scythians or other male eastern figures are not pictured on horseback, this difference between an Athenian cavalryman and an archer on horseback may be due to several reasons. First, as mentioned above, when archers were used in battle they were not on horseback and it seems that they played a secondary role in the lines. Second, the Greek cavalry does not seem to have used bows at all, but swords and spears. The function of the equestrian archer in Attic art, therefore, is one that is antagonistic and threatening, although most appear not to have a reliance on their bows.

The first scene on the column krater depicts a mounted Amazon on the left attacking two Greek hoplites, who are on the defensive. She wears a tunic, an eastern cap, and holds a spear in her right arm. Another horse and presumably its rider are behind her. Although her bow can be seen tucked into her quiver at her belt, she uses a spear to fight the hoplites at close quarters. Neither side seems to be subservient to the other, unlike the previous two examples of antagonistic archers (Figures 11, 12). The hoplites are taller than the horse and they too are locked in combat. The Amazon, in this scene, is an equal opponent.

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178 See Mayor 2014, von Bothmer 1957
179 See Lissarrague 1990, Chapter 8. Also note the Parthenon frieze and other instances of Greek cavalrymen.
180 Raaflaub 2013, 97
181 Lissarrague 1990, Chapter 8
In a comparative study of warfare as it is represented in Homeric epic, it is difficult to decide what information is relevant as what is not due to the changeable nature that is inherent in oral poetry. The works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Pausanias are slightly more reliable regarding our knowledge of equestrian Greece. The picture that has been painted is one that is extremely different from mobile pastoralist culture, who lived by the horse, whereas horses in Athenian culture, at least, appear to have been reserved for wealthy men. This translated to warfare as well, as the cavalry was composed of those who could afford a horse.

The Trojan wars would have been fought in the age of chariots, although some argue that the chariots were used only to transport warriors from one location to another, while others hold that Homeric chariots were mounted infantry. In the *Iliad*, the warriors would dismount to fight, rather than utilize the chariots as missile platforms or as shock weapons as they were used in the Near East. Some argue that this was due to the use of horses by wealthy military personnel during the period when the epic was written; the horse would be used to escort the warrior to battle,

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182 Rawlings 2007, 20
183 See Griffith 2006 Parts 1 and 2
184 Rawlings 2007, 28
then taken to safety by a squire. Some Greek states had raised cavalries by the eighth century, such as Sparta, the Messenians, and cavalries are mentioned by Thucydides during the Peloponnesian Wars, but they did not use bows and arrows.

The eastern archer on horseback in the image below (Figure 16) is an extreme contrast to the horsemen described above. Most likely an Amazon, she is dressed in patterned trousers and a patterned tunic, and wears a pointed cap. A shield is strapped to her back, and her gorytus and unstrung Scythian bow can be seen strapped to her waist. Again, she does not rely on her bow and arrow, but raises a spear with her right arm, prepared to attack in close quarters, perhaps because archer who is using her bow would be a figure too strange for the Greek viewer, who would have been used to the Greek cavalrymen. Her neglect of her bow removes the frightening and strange threat, already emphasized by her clothing, and allows her to be one that is more familiar. Nevertheless, the bow and the gorytus remain in the viewers direct gaze.

Figure 16: Image of archer on horseback via von Bothmer 1957.

185 Hyland 2003, 127
186 Hyland 2003, 131
A possible explanation for the conspicuous lack of eastern archers on horseback could be stated by Griffith 2006. “In the Greek mind, horse riding was essentially reserved for men. Thus the mounted Amazons and the female Scythian (Sauromatian) hunter-warriors mentioned by Herodotus (4.110-17) were especially disturbing for Greek sensibilities.”\(^{187}\) Perhaps this terrifying strangeness was most adeptly invoked through the use of an equestrian Amazonian archer, rather than a standard Scythian, Thracian, or other eastern archer on horseback. Rather than disturbing, like to propose here that, rather than mounted female warriors being ‘disturbing’, they evoked a mythological status in the Greek mind.

The last image (Figure 17), unlike the others, does depict an eastern archer actively using her cupid-shaped composite bow. She wears a patterned tunic, patterned trousers, and a pointed cap. She holds her bow behind her in her right hand, as if she has just shot the arrow in the manner of the lone archer discussed above (Figure 10). Equally different from the others, however, is that her opponent is also dressed in eastern clothing: patterned trousers, and holds a shield with a snake motif and a spear. I suggest that this ‘disturbing’ element disappears due to the Amazon’s opponent. She is allowed to use her weapon with the most effectiveness and power, facing backwards in the manner that was infamous of the Scythians and other mobile pastoralists, because she is not fighting Greek hoplite soldiers, but a ‘barbarian’ opponent. Perhaps if the Amazon depicted on the column krater (Figure 15) was using her bow rather than a spear, the hoplites would not be equal opponents in comparison to her.

\(^{187}\) Griffith 2006 Part 1, 202
Figure 17: Equestrian Amazon archer fighting an eastern figure.

Conclusion

The composite bow functions as the strongest metonym for the representation of mobile pastoralist steppe culture, not only in Attic vase painting, but in the literature, mythology, and words with which mobile pastoralists are associated. The bow signifies pastoralist culture and fighting strength. Furthermore, the composite bow serves as a symbol for the complexity of the representation of mobile pastoralism, reminding the viewer (both ancient and modern) that mobile pastoralism was not viewed with the sort of negativity that modern scholars are wonting to argue. Despite the existence of various bow types and the adoption of the Scythian bow by most eastern cultures by this period, Scythians and other mobile steppe pastoralists most efficiently employed military nomadism and equestrian archery, retaining primary mythological and ethnographic associations with this specific composite bow in Greek perception.

The examination of literary sources that mention mobile pastoralism or Scythians indicates a wide range of ethnographic interest; in their role within mythology, within the world in relation to Greek identity, or the relationship between a Scythian and his bow. This relationship is further analyzed by the examination of the technological development of the bow and the significance of
its impact throughout Eurasia. Although the origin of the composite bow is unknown, various cultures developed the bow according to their needs—a trait that still drives humanity. The introduction of this thesis, along with the two following chapters, examined the ethnographic aspects through material culture and literature in order to understand its significance on Attic vases, which, as is the theme of the previous two chapters, is varying and complex as well. The bow’s presence in art signifies an archer’s skill, strength, foreignness, mythological associations, and the connotations that are discussed throughout the thesis.

The complexity and variations with which the composite bow is depicted in Attic art during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. indicate that the ‘otherness’ of mobile pastoralism cannot be regulated to mere spatial distances or clear-cut polarities and modern definitions of ethnicity and xenophobic tendencies. Rather, Greek perceptions of their pastoralist neighbors must be studied in relation to the ethnography, geography, and historiography that was being created at the time. When Amazons could be associated with Scythian tribes and a Scythian policeman in Athens could be ridiculed even while enforcing Athenian laws in a reality where women are in charge and the men are in women’s clothing.

The lands beyond Scythia were wild, mythological, home to myths like Anacharsis the Scythian and the adventures of Herakles, but also savage and uncivilized. The Scythians themselves could outwit the Persian armies, but through what the Greeks would have considered cowardice and cunning. Archers holding Scythian bows on Greek vases are portrayed as enemies, allies, secondary characters, primary characters, mythological and realistic.

This study was necessarily limited temporally and spatially, and could be expanded in both ways. We still lack knowledge about the Bronze Age that we could learn through archaeological excavations and further analysis of non-Greek sources. An examination of the relationship between
Scythians, other mobile pastoralists, and Romans would also add to this discussion, as trade was more established and Alexander had reached as far as India. Further investigation into Chinese sources would also add to the discussion of ethnography. While Stuurman’s comparison between the Book of Han and Herodotus’ *Histories* does address this, the research could be further supported by material culture and other literature. This study is also lacking in the discussion of religion, which would have addressed Anacharsis the Scythian more directly, as well as allowed for a new outlet for an ethnographic investigation. This metonymic relationship between the mobile pastoralist and his or her bow appears to persist through both the Hellenistic and Roman periods, although it seems to shift from a Scythian focus to the Parthians and other cultures. With this in mind, I hope to further conduct an exploration of the ethnographic perception of mobile pastoralism, not only from the perception of the Ancient Greeks but of their other sedentary neighbors.
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**Figure 17**
Equestrian Amazon archer fighting an eastern figure via von Bothmer 1957.