

## GRYLUS AND EPAMINONDAS IN EUPHRANOR'S „CAVALRY BATTLE“

A very limited number of ancient Greek paintings is preserved to the present day<sup>1</sup>. Yet this theme has been much discussed on the basis of evidence provided, by Roman copies of presumed Greek originals, by contemporary vase painting which sometimes reflected the monumental works, and finally by data collected from the ancient sources. The ancient authors were particularly interested in Greek painting, and thanks to their writings we know much about the ancient Greek painters and their achievements. The abundance of these indirect sources, whatever their accuracy may be, challenges the modern scholar to search for an understanding of the composition, style, poses and other characteristics of individual painters, as well as of the development of Greek painting in general.

One of the important Greek paintings of the fourth century B. C. is „The Cavalry Battle at Mantinea“, painted by Euphranor in the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios on the Athenian Agora, most probably about 360 B. C.<sup>2</sup>. Euphranor, one of the leading artists of his time, who excelled equally in painting and sculpture, painted two other compositions in the Stoa of Zeus, — „The Twelve Gods“ and „Theseus“ —, so it is reasonable to suppose that all three were executed at about the same period<sup>3</sup>. The written evidence of this painting cycle

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<sup>1</sup> The recent miraculous discovery of several fourth century frescoes in the Royal tombs in Vergina (BCH CII, 1978, pp. 706—710) will greatly increase, when they are thoroughly studied, our knowledge of Greek classical painting.

<sup>2</sup> H. Brunn, *Geschichte der Griechischen Künstler II*<sup>2</sup>, Stuttgart 1889, pp. 122—131; C. Robert, *Euphranor*, in *R.E.* VI, 1 (1907), col. 1191—1194; E. Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen II*, München 1923, pp. 749—750; M. H. Swindler, *Ancient Painting*, New Haven 1929, pp. 278—279; A. Rumpf, *Malerei und Zeichnung der klassischen Antike*, Berlin 1953, pp. 131—132; T. Hölscher, *Griechische Historienbilder des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Würzburg 1973, pp. 116—119; M. Robertson, *A History of Greek Art*, London 1975, pp. 434—435, etc.

<sup>3</sup> See note 2. For the supposition that Euphranor's figures of Demos and Democracy, painted beside Theseus (Paus. I, 3, 3), are reflected in the relief carved above the Decree from 337/336 B. C., found on the Agora, see A. E. Raubitschek, *Demokratia*, *Hesperia* 31, 238. On the Twelve Gods supposed to be painted in one picture, M. H. Swindler, *op. cit.*, p. 279; Ch. Picard, *Manuel d'archéologie grecque*, *La Sculpture III*, 1, Paris 1948, 860, Fig. 386. Contra, R. Vasić, *Some Observations on Euphranor's „Cavalry Battle“*, *AJA* 83, 3, 1979, 345—349.

and particularly of „The Cavalry Battle“, is relatively rich. Pliny (N. H. XXXV, 128) lists all three compositions among Euphranor's pictorial works; Pausanias describes them in the Stoa of Zeus (I, 3, 3—4) and speaks of the Battle on several other occasions (VIII, 9,8; VIII, 11,6; IX, 15,5); while Plutarch also gives a description of „The Cavalry Battle“ (De Glor. Athen. 2). On the other hand excavation of the Agora uncovered the position, size and plan of the Stoa of Zeus<sup>4</sup> which is of help in determining the size of the pictures.

One can suppose on the basis of this evidence that „The Cavalry Battle“ was placed on the south wall of the Stoa and therefore measured 12 to 13 m. in length<sup>5</sup>. We can not be so certain, however, about its composition. Pausanias's statement (I, 3,4) that two horsemen in combat were represented in the picture and Plutarch's description of „the clash of conflict and the stout resistance abounding in boldness and courage and spirit“ (loc. cit., Transl. F. C. Babbitt, Loeb. ed.), suggest a battle composed of a series of single combats and not of a ranged battle where the opposing sides are easily distinguished. If so, the famous battles painted in the Stoa Poikile close by, which according to the sources were composed in this manner<sup>6</sup>, may have influenced the conception of such a composition.

The problem to be dealt with here, which does not strictly involve the composition of the painting, concerns the two main duelists who are named as Grylus and Epaminondas only by Pausanias. The question arises a) did Euphranor introduce these personages in the picture or were the names ascribed to these figures at a later date, and b) to what extent is it possible to reconstruct their poses?

„The picture represents the cavalry fight in which the best known figures are Grylus, the son of Xenophon, on the Athenian side, and Epaminondas, the Theban among the Boeotian cavalry“, says Pausanias when describing the picture in the Stoa (I, 3,4). Later, when speaking of Mantinea and its surrounding (VIII, 11,6), he says: „The Athenian story, in which the Thebans themselves concur, is that Epaminondas was wounded by Grylus, and so the scene is represented in their picture of the battle of Mantinea“. Finally in the book devoted to Boeotia (IX, 15,5) he says again: „He (Epaminondas) fell by the hand of an Athenian. In the picture of the cavalry fight in Athens this man is depicted in the act of killing Epaminondas: he was Grylus, son of Xenophon“<sup>7</sup>.

The statement that Grylus killed Epaminondas was called in question already towards the middle of the last century, when A.

<sup>4</sup> H. A. Thompson, Buildings on the west side of the Agora, *Hesperia* 6 1937, pp. 5 ff.; H. A. Thompson, The Annex to the Stoa of Zeus on the Athenian Agora, *Hesperia* 35, 1966, pp. 171—187; H. A. Thompson — R. E. Wycherley, The Athenian Agora XIV: The Agora of Athens. History, Shape and Uses of an Ancient City Center, 1972, pp. 96—103.

<sup>5</sup> R. Vasić, op. cit. 346.

<sup>6</sup> H. A. Thompson — R. E. Wycherley, op. cit., pp. 90—94.

<sup>7</sup> J. G. Frazer, Pausanias's Description of Greece I, London 1909.

Schäfer showed quite clearly that it is not historically correct<sup>8</sup>. The painting on the Agora represented a cavalry engagement between the Athenians and Boeotians at Mantinea which took place a few days before the main encounter, in which Epaminondas lost his life.<sup>9</sup> Epaminondas did not take part in this cavalry fight at all, according to the sources, but even supposing that he did, we know that he appeared alive a few days later. Grylus on the other hand played an outstanding role and was probably killed in the Cavalry battle.<sup>10</sup> Even if he survived the cavalry fight, which is difficult to believe, he could not have killed Epaminondas in the main battle because there was no clash between the Athenians and Boeotians. For these reasons, Schäfer, and others after him, concluded that Grylus was represented slaying the Boeotian cavalry commander and that Pausanias's story, without historical background, was invented in later centuries by the guides in Athens who told it to Pausanias<sup>11</sup>. Remembering that many scholars consider that the copy of this battle in Mantinea (Paus. VIII, 9,8) was executed only in the time of Hadrian to celebrate the memory of Grylus<sup>12</sup>, a supposition that the story may have been invented around this time could have some ground.

Moreover, some archaeologists<sup>13</sup> doubt the possibility that Grylus was represented on the Athenian side, presuming that ordinary citizens, whatever their services for their country were not accorded this honour. Grylus was not even a regular soldier, but a volunteer. Following this opinion the painting originally depicted the battle without featuring any particular personages: the names were added later.

From a historical point of view it is certain that Grylus did not kill Epaminondas in the cavalry encounter, and very probably not in the main battle at Mantinea either. However, it does not mean that the painting did not contain an unhistorical scene which in a general way reflected the final issue of the confrontation between the Athe-

<sup>8</sup> A. Schäfer, *Die Schlacht bei Mantinea*, Rheinisches Museum für Philologie V, 1847, pp. 45—69.

<sup>9</sup> The most reliable source is Xenophon, *Hellenica* VII, 5, 15—17. Comp. Plutarch. loc. cit.; Diodorus XV, 84—87. See J. Kromayer, *Antike Schlachtfelder* I, 1903, pp. 42—44; W. K. Pritchett, *Studies in the Ancient Greek Topography* II, Battlefields, University of California, Class. Studies 4, 1969, pp. 63—66.

<sup>10</sup> Diog. Laert., *Xenophon* II, 52—54. Xenophon's words (*Hellenica* VII, 5, 17, Loeb ed.) that „there fell brave men among them (Athenians)“ are interpreted to be the sign of Grylus's death.

<sup>11</sup> A. Schäfer, op. cit., 62—63; H. Brunn, op. cit., 124, etc.

<sup>12</sup> T. Hölscher, op. cit., 116; M. Robertson, op. cit., 435. The house in Mantinea in which Pausanias saw the copy of the battle (VIII, 9,8) was obviously built in Roman times because of its mosaic decoration and many statues and paintings depicting Hadrian's favourite Antinous. Yet, the copy could have been made earlier and transferred to this building when it was constructed. The copy was probably on wooden board of a size similar to the original. If it had been smaller, Pausanias would hardly have mentioned it.

<sup>13</sup> H. Heydemann, *Alexander der Grosse und Dareios Kodomannos auf unteritalischen Vasenbildern*, 8. Hallisches Winkelmannprogramm 1883, p. 11; T. Hölscher, op. cit., p. 118.

nians and the Boeotians. It is clear enough from Pausanias's description that Euphranor gave an outstanding place in the picture to a duel in which an Athenian horseman was represented in the act of wounding or killing a mounted Boeotian. It is further quite possible that this outstanding Athenian was from the very beginning popularly identified with Grylus, „the best and bravest of all Athenians and allies in this battle“ (Paus. VIII, 9,9). It is also possible that Euphranor himself had in mind Grylus's exploit while he was painting this outstanding figure, so that the horseman was quickly recognised as Grylus, even if his name was not written down.

How and when his opponent was identified as Epaminondas is not certain. For the moment we agree with M. Robertson, who did not seem to consider the problem definitely solved and said that „perhaps Pausanias or his guide misinterpreted the picture; or perhaps it is better to remember that it was a work of art, not of history“<sup>14</sup>.

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A closer look at Pausanias's description — to turn to the other part of the question — makes it possible to a certain extent to reconstruct the poses of the two figures which Pausanias named Grylus and Epaminondas.

Pausanias says that the two figures were the best known or the most outstanding in the painting (the word is γνωριμώτατοι), and this statement means that they were located in or near the centre of the picture. It is hard to believe that the figures chosen to represent Grylus and Epaminondas (either by a guide in Athens in Hadrian's time, or by Euphranor himself) were not the most prominent, but placed in some far corner of the composition. Considering the size of the picture which, as we mentioned, measured some 12 to 13 m. in length, as well as the probable life-sized figures, there was almost no other choice.

Pausanias does not say explicitly that Grylus and Epaminondas were both depicted on horseback, but this conclusion follows from the written evidence as a whole. It is perhaps worth mentioning that a grave-relief in Mantinea had a representation of Grylus on horseback (Paus. VIII, 9,5) and it may happen that there was some thematic connection between this representation and the figure of Grylus in Euphranor's picture. On the other hand, it is clearly stated that Grylus was depicted in the act of wounding or killing Epaminondas, which means, furthermore, that they were probably facing each other.

Bearing this in mind one can conclude with sufficient certainty: a) that two opponents were placed near the centre of the picture; b) that both of them were fighting on horses; c) that they were facing each other; and d) that one of them was represented hitting his rival who was falling from his horse.

<sup>14</sup> M. Robertson, op. cit., 435.

However, there is ground for further suppositions. Euphranor, as far as we can gather from the preserved list of his sculptures and paintings, made apart from „The Cavalry Battle“ some bigae and quadrigae (Pliny N. H. XXXIV, 78), but otherwise did not show any special interest in horses. He was mainly occupied with gods and heroes, proportions and colours in his work as a painter, sculptor and theoretician of art (Pliny N. H. XXXV, 128—129), and therefore it is reasonable to presume that in depicting his „Cavalry Battle“ he applied the standardized poses of charging horses which were in common use in the art of this time — the second quarter of the fourth century B. C.<sup>15</sup> He could have made some variations in the details of the types in use, he could even have introduced some new combinations of the already known elements, but generally taken, the poses used in the battle should be recognisable among the types of charging horses that we know from the existing artistic monuments.

A description of a cavalry battle picture, attributed by Demetrius Phalereus (De elocutione 76) to the painter Nikias, supports this to a certain extent. Nikias, perhaps Euphranor's pupil<sup>16</sup>, was recommending to painters to start working on proper themes like naval and cavalry battles, and to abandon painting birds and little flowers. This opinion, possibly influenced by Euphranor's painting<sup>17</sup>, is significant also because the description of „horses charging, rearing high and crouching low, and riders hurling javelins or being thrown“ (Dem. Phaler. loc. cit. Transl. R. Roberts, Loeb ed.) corresponds very well to the horse-and-rider poses of Euphranor's time.

Two horsemen in combat facing each other appear occasionally on contemporary reliefs<sup>18</sup> — perhaps the best pictorial source in this case —, while the motif where one of them is hitting the other occurs to my knowledge only in two variations in somewhat later art. Both of them are represented on side A of the Alexander Sarcophagus,

<sup>15</sup> Most scholars (see note 2) date Euphranor's painting cycle around 360 B. C. according to the year of the battle at Mantinea, which coincides with Pliny (XXXIV, 50; XXXV, 128) who puts Euphranor's acme in the 104th Olympiad (364—361 B.C.). Such dating is indirectly corroborated by comparing Euphranor's work with that of Parrhasios in the antique sources (Pliny N. H., XXXV, 129; Plutarch, loc. cit.) — a sign that there was no wide chronological gap between the two painters. The portraits of Philip and Alexander, executed probably about 338—336 B. C. (Ch. Picard, op. cit., pp. 854—855), were possibly among his last works. E. Ruschenbusch's attempt to date the painting cycle in the Zeus Stoa ca. 340 B.C. was refuted successfully by T. Holscher, op. cit., p. 268 note 652.

<sup>16</sup> Nikias was a pupil of Antidotus who was a pupil of Euphranor (Pliny N. H. XXXV, 130). „Combatant with a Shield“ and „Trumpeter“ by Antidotus may have been reflexions of Euphranor's „Cavalry Battle“.

<sup>17</sup> E. Pfuhl, op. cit., 752; R. Vasić, op. cit. 348.

<sup>18</sup> *The Nereid Monument*: third frieze, slab 894 (A. H. Smith, Catalogue Sculpture in British Museum, Part IV, Vol. II, 1900, p. 29; S. Reinach, Répertoire de Reliefs Grecs et Romains I, Paris 1909, p. 483, 10). *The Izraza Monument* side a (J. Borchhardt, Das Izraza — Monument von Tlos, RA 1976/1, p. 73, fig. 6—7).

depicting the battle between the Macedonians and Persians.<sup>19</sup> On the left, Alexander (figure A1) turned to the right is fighting a Persian whose horse is crouching (figure A3). On the right, a Macedonian horseman, turned to the left, identified by some as Parmenion (figure A18)<sup>20</sup>, is facing a Persian falling from the saddle of a horse which is rearing high (figure A15). The Alexander theme quite popular at the end of the fourth century, has, it is supposed, as its model the original painting of the Alexander Mosaic in Pompei, dated about 320 B. C.<sup>21</sup> There is no comparison for the other duel<sup>22</sup>. Yet, it is quite possible that the combat between Grylus and Epaminondas from the middle of the fourth century represented an earlier version of one of these cavalry duels on the Alexander Sarcophagus, dated about 310 B. C.

As a matter of fact, all four horsemen poses depicted in the two duels were well known in the Greek art of Euphranor's time. Alexander (figure A1) repeats the Dexileos theme, very popular in the first half of the fourth century, while the other Macedonian (figure A18) depicts the same pose seen from the opposite side, also in common use in this period<sup>23</sup>. The fallen horse and horseman (figure A3) appear towards the end of the fifth century and there is a supposition that the motif originates from „The Battle of Marathon“ painted in the Stoa Poikile about 460 B. C.<sup>24</sup> The smitten rider still on his horse (figure A15) is known in two variants: the horseman lying on the back of his horse, and the horseman smitten but still in the saddle. The first variant was more often in use, while the second one represented here has an analogy in the Amazonomachy on the west side of the Heraon of Trysa<sup>25</sup>. The Amazon is, however, turned to the left and not to the right.

<sup>19</sup> O. Hamdy Bey — T. Reinach, *Une nécropole royale à Sidon*, Paris 1892, Pl. 27; S. Reinach, *op. cit.*, p. 415, 3, 4; V. van Graeve, *Der Alexandersarkophag und seine Werkstatt*, *Istanbuler Forschungen* 28, Berlin 1970, pp. 50—56, Pl. 24; 25, 1; 26; 31.

<sup>20</sup> V. van Graeve, *op. cit.*, pp. 82 and 134.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62—65; T. Hölscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 189—196.

<sup>22</sup> V. van Graeve, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>23</sup> Dexileos: G. Lippold, *Die Griechische Plastik*, München 1950, p. 229, Pl. 80, 1. Three cavalry reliefs, on a base found near the Academy in Athens, G. Karo, *AA* 1931, pp. 217—219, Fig. 1—3; H. Payne, *JHS* LI, 1931, p. 186, fig. 4. The Nereid monument: first frieze, slabs 852, 855, 856, third frieze, slabs 887—892, 894, A. H. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 12—15; 27—29. The Mourning Women Sarcophagus: O. Hamdy-Bey — T. Reinach, *op. cit.*, Pl. X; S. Reinach, *op. cit.*, pp. 407—408. Comp. a recently discovered luthrophoros in the Niki street in Athens with similar motif, *BCH* XCIV, 1970, 912, Fig. 59; *Deltion* 1970, Hron. 1, pp. 78—79, Fig. 64b. Both poses one meets quite frequently on the red figure vases from the end of the fifth to the end of the fourth century B. C.

<sup>24</sup> E. Harrison, *The South Frieze of the Nike Temple and the Marathon Painting in the Painted Stoa*, *AJA* 76, 4, 1972, pp. 353—354.

<sup>25</sup> First variant: *The Nereid Monument*, first frieze, slabs 860 and 862 (A. H. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 16—17; S. Reinach, *op. cit.*, p. 473, D. F); *The Izraza Monument*, side b2 (J. Borchhardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 75—77, fig. 8—9); *The Dancing Women Sarcophagus* (P. Demargne, *Un sarcophage du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle à Xanthos: Le sarcophage*

So, with good reasons one can suppose that Grylus was depicted as a young man on a rearing horse hurling a javelin. Euphranor probably chose a rider turned to the right, like Alexander and Dexileos, because this position was more frequently used on the monuments, the features of the victorious figure were more effectively displayed, and finally because the victorious side was traditionally depicted moving from left to right which was considered to be „a favorable direction“<sup>26</sup>.

Epaminondas's pose is more difficult to determine. Still, Pausanias's description of the outstanding place and role of the two horsemen suggests that there was no fallen horse and that they were both rearing high, achieving in this way the necessary balance in the construction of the composition and giving a particular dignity and significance to the main duel in the picture. Furthermore, two cavalry men on rearing horses in combat facing each other appear at this time on the monuments, as we have mentioned and their interrelation is in general more similar to the right (figures A15 and A18), than to the left cavalry duel (figures A1 and A3) on side A of the Alexander Sarcophagus. Euphranor did not have to search far to obtain the poses required.

For these reasons I would suggest here, with all necessary reserve, that Epaminondas was represented on a rearing horse and not on a crouching one. Of the two variants depicting a smitten rider on horseback mentioned above, the second one (the horseman still in the saddle, depicted on the Alexander Sarcophagus and in Trysa) was probably represented here. This follows from Pausanias's remark (VIII, 11,5) about Epaminondas being wounded, as well as from other elements discussed above — in particular because of the necessary balance in the composition of the picture.

To show all this more clearly, I add a sketch of this scene (Fig. 1) which illustrates my idea without going into particular details concerning the two horsemen and their horses. The sketch is based on the right cavalry duel on side A of the Alexander Sarcophagus (figures A15 and A18) seen from the opposite side. Euphranor's composition, if it was done this way, was an earlier version of this duel and therefore certainly less alive and advanced in movement.

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dit des Danseuses, Melanges à K. Michalowski, Warszawa 1966, pp. 357—366, fig. 8). Second variant: *The Heroon from Trysa*, west wall, Amazonomachy, Blocks B 18, 2 (S. Reinach, op. cit., p. 453, 3; W. A. P. Childs, *Prolegomena to a Lycian Chronology*, II: *The Heroon from Trysa*, RA 1976/2, p. 293, fig. 12); *The Alexander Sarcophagus*, see note 19.

<sup>26</sup> P. de La Coste-Messelière *Au Musée de Delphes*, Paris 1936, pp. 315—319. This rule, introduced in the Archaic art, was used frequently in the classical epoch too. Euphranor, „docilis et laboriosus ante omnes“ (Pliny N. H. XXXV, 128) probably followed it when painting the central victorious figure in his battle.



Fig. 1. A suggested reconstruction of the two central horsemen in Euphranor's „Cavalry Battle“.

This is a supposition and the evidence in general, I repeat, is not conclusive. And yet, when we consider the written and pictorial sources about this picture, as well as the possible state of development of such a theme in the second quarter of the fourth century, it seems that there is some ground for supposing how the duel was depicted.

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