

THESEUS LIFTING THE ROCK AND A CUP NEAR THE PITHOS PAINTER

(PLATE XII)

IN the National Museum of Athens there is a cup—formerly part of the Empedocles collection—which Beazley has attributed to an artist near the Pithos Painter,¹ an early red figure cup-painter of the coarser wing; its approximate date would be the last decade of the sixth century. In the interior (PLATE XIIa) it bears the representation of a youth removing a big circular rock from an altar-shaped supporting feature. The scene has been interpreted by Beazley² as the punishment of Sisyphus. Zancani-Montuoro, although with some reservations, includes the cup in her catalogue of the representations of Sisyphus before the end of the archaic period.³ Her hesitation concerns the age of the stone-lifter: 'La figura della kylix Empedocles e molto simile per atteggiamento' (i.e. to the Louvre cup G 16 with Sisyphus painted by Epiktetos—to which, incidentally, she gives the wrong number G 20) 'ma la mancanza di barba e le proporzioni efebiche (l'esilità degli arti in ispecie) possono far sospettare che il personaggio mitico sia stato franteso o il suo schema adattato ad una rappresentazione del genere.' One cannot but share her hesitation. However, there is more than just the age against the interpretation of the figure as Sisyphus, and Zancani-Montuoro's statement as regards the pose might be misleading. 'Molto simile' and 'adattato' are too strong words. In both representations a male figure is expending energies on a round rock, but although a large part of the body of the Louvre Sisyphus is missing, one can easily see that both the pose of these figures and the aim of their effort are different. The Sisyphus painted by Epiktetos moves a rock forward by rolling it along the circumference of the tondo which plays the part of the slope of the hill up which Sisyphus had to roll his rock. The Empedocles youth tries to remove the rock from an altar-shaped support. The scene in the Louvre cup corresponds to what we know about Sisyphus' punishment from the literary sources:

Homer, *Od.* λ 593–600

καὶ μὴν Σίσυφον εἰσεῖδον κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα,
λᾶαν βαστάζοντα πελώριον ἀμφοτέρησιν.
ἦτοι ὁ μὲν σκηριπτόμενος χερσίν τε ποσίν τε
λᾶαν ἄνω ᾗθεσκε ποτὶ λόφον· ἀλλ' ὅτε μέλλοι
ἄκρον ὑπερβαλέειν, τότε ἀποστρέψασκε κραταίς·
αὐτίς ἔπειτα πέδον δὲ κυλίνδετο λᾶας ἀναιδής.
αὐτὰρ ὁ γ' ἄψ ᾗσασκε τιταινόμενος, κατὰ δ' ἰδρῶς
ἔρρεεν ἐκ μελέων, κονίη δ' ἐκ κρατὸς ὀρώρει.

Pherecydes *FGrH* F119

ἀποθανόντα κυλινδεῖν ἠνάγκασεν ὁ "Αιδης λίθον πρὸς τὸ μὴ πάλιν ἀποδρᾶναι.

The movements of the young man in the Athens cup do not correspond to these descriptions. The interpretation of the scene as the punishment of Sisyphus shows that our explanation 'youth removing a rock from an altar-shaped support' might be contested, and the opinion held that the young man is in fact meant to be rolling the rock because in the

I am very grateful to Mr John Boardman for advice in the preparation of this article and to Dr John K. Davies, Mr George Forrest and Professor Martin Robertson for having read the draft and made helpful suggestions.

¹ *ARV*² 141 no. 1.

² *op. cit.*

³ P. Zancani-Montuoro, *Atti e Memorie della Società Magna Grecia* n.s. v (1964) 65 f.

black-figure representations of Sisyphus rolling the stone up a hill we have roughly the same pattern as in the Empedocles cup: a round rock resting on a 'support' and a man holding the rock with both hands while bracing one leg on the side of the 'support'. However, to compare the two representations would be erroneous and misleading. The Empedocles cup cannot claim to preserve the type from black-figure vase-painting, as could perhaps the representation of a youth 'playing the part of Sisyphus' in a komos-scene on a column-krater in the manner of Myson.⁴ The black-figure convention of an oblong rock for the hill is not observed in the Athens cup. The low, altar-shaped feature is something new and completely different. And although the youth holds the round rock with his two hands and braces one leg on the side of the 'support' as Sisyphus does, he nevertheless rests the weight of his body on his right leg, almost sitting on it, while Sisyphus is standing. Under these circumstances, to argue that a vague similitude of pose between a black-figure and a red-figure representation must necessarily mean similitude of action, is to ignore the differences between the two languages. Black-figure vase-painting just shows an action, or rather suggests it through formulae, it does not describe it more than is necessary to make the meaning of the scene clear, nor is it concerned with the anatomical details of the movements and their translation into painting. One must bear in mind that the representation is conditioned by the black-figure conventions; the hill, conventionally represented as an oblong rock, conditions Sisyphus' movements. When we come to the red-figure vases, we have to deal with a different idiom, one which allows the spectator to detect the actual movements translated into it. Consequently, in order to interpret the movements of the Empedocles youth we should analyse it in its own elements and its balance of forces instead of seeking a black-figure parallel.

There are two possible interpretations of the young man's pose:

1. His right leg pushes forward, his left leg supports the movement, and thus he is rolling the stone.
2. His left leg pushes backwards, his right leg supports the movement, and thus is he removing the stone from the altar-shaped supporting feature.

The first alternative is anatomically impossible, because the left leg is braced too high up on the side of the 'altar'. Had it been at a lower point, the whole leg would have absorbed the two contrary forces operating on it—one upwards from the resistance of the ground and one downwards from the movement of the body—thus acting as a support, and although in an awkward and unrealistic way, the young man could still have been rolling the rock. As it is, the knee would be driven downwards by two combined forces, one originating in the movement of the thigh and the other being the reaction of the ground and the leg to it, and the leg would break. Consequently, the only possible interpretation of the young man's pose is the second: this left leg pushes against the altar-shaped support, thus giving to the body a strong motion backwards; this motion, due to the torsion of the body, reacts to the force directed upwards which originates in the resistance of the ground to the right leg, by operating as traction in the upper part of the body, thus drawing it backwards together with the rock.

Under these circumstances it seems clear that the young man is removing the round rock from the altar-shaped support, a conclusion which explains also the position of the young man's arms around the rock, which would strike us as odd if he was rolling it.

A young man, an adolescent, removing a rock from an altar-shaped supporting feature. Who is he and why is he doing it?

There are again two alternatives:

1. That the scene is one of every-day life
2. That it is a mythological subject.

⁴ *ARV*² 243 no. 5.

In the first case the young man would be a workman or athlete. I know of four representations of young workmen or athletes lifting round objects, a big rock or two smaller stones (or lumps of clay⁵). One is depicted in the interior of the Louvre cup G 96,⁶ a second in that of the Wurzburg cup 476⁷ and two more on two early fifth century black-figure lekythoi, Cabinet des Médailles 283 and Cassel T 366.⁸ We know from inscriptions and literature that there existed, in ancient Greece, an athletic game consisting of lifting an extremely heavy rock or mass of stone.⁹ But both the vases and literary sources deal with stones and weights lifted off the ground and not removed from a supporting feature. One of the inscriptions states explicitly:¹⁰

Εὐμάστας μ' ἄηρεν ἀπὸ χθονὸς ἠὲ Κριτοβόλο(υ)

Lifting off the ground is one thing and removing from a support is another. The two feats require a different sort of effort and therefore different athletic training, as the muscles are working in a different way in each case. Consequently we are not allowed to identify every sort of rock-removing with the specific athletic exercise of lifting weights off the earth as we know it from texts and inscriptions.

If we want to interpret the Empedocles youth as a young workman, it is difficult to explain why is he removing a rock from an altar (or an altar-shaped supporting feature) or what the rock was doing on that altar in the first place. The altar must have a specific significance, and its presence is the insuperable difficulty which meets any attempt to interpret the scene as one of every-day life. This element gives a clear indication that the subject of the representation is mythological.

If we are confronted with a mythological scene depicting a young man removing a rock, we are bound to think of Theseus removing the rock under which his father Aigeus had hidden the *gnorismata*. In the case of the Empedocles cup two further details strengthen this first impression and invite a thorough analysis of the 'Theseus lifting the rock' subject in connection with the Athens cup. These two details are:

(1) *The age of the stone-lifter.* He is not a young man, he is an adolescent, like Theseus was when he performed this feat.¹¹

(2) *His hair-style.* The hair of the youth is arranged according to the same general pattern usually encountered in the representations of Theseus at this period and in exactly the same way as Theseus' hair on two vases chronologically close to the Empedocles cup:

(a) Cup, Florence 91456 made by the potter Kachrylion and belonging to the last quarter of the sixth century (*ARV*² 108 no. 27; *EAA* vii 749 fig. 861; Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung* fig. 351).

(b) Cup, Louvre G 104 by the Panaitios Painter, dated approximately to the first decade of the fifth century (*ARV*² 318 no. 1; P. E. Arias-M. Hirmer, *A History of Greek Vase-painting* pl. 134).

It is obvious that, although the hair-style of the Empedocles boy is identical to that of Theseus in these two cups, the rendering is different; it is in the usual manner of the Pithos Painter and the artists near him (*cf.* for example the Satyrs on Louvre G 90 and G 91 (E.

⁵ *ARV*² 178 no. 2.

⁶ E. Pottier, *Vases antiques du Louvre* (Paris 1897-1922) pl. 99; *ARV*² 94 no. 107; Zancani-Montuoro, *op. cit.* 66 n. 16.

⁷ E. Langlotz, *Griechische Vasen in Würzburg* (Munich 1932); *ARV*² 178 no. 2.

⁸ C. H. E. Haspels, *Attic Black-figured Lekythoi* (Paris 1936) 140 n. 2; *CVA* Bibliothèque Nationale ii pls. 79, 5 and 80, 2; *ABV* 553 no. 390; *AA* 1898, 190

n. 8. I am grateful to Professor Martin Robertson who drew my attention to these two black-figure lekythoi.

⁹ Evidence collected by Gardiner, *JHS* xxvii (1907) 1 f.

¹⁰ *IG* xii 3 no. 449

¹¹ *Plut. Thes.* 6; *Paus.* i 27.8; *Hygin. Fab.* xxxvii; *Callim. fr.* 236 Pfeiffer.

Pottier, *Vases antiques du Louvre* [Paris 1897-1922] pl. 98). This hair style is by no means confined to Theseus, but its presence on our cup is interesting, because this is not the coiffure normally adopted for young men by the Pithos Painter and the artists near him. Some examples of cups depicting young men (by painters belonging to this group) are listed here for comparison:

- (1) Athens, Agora P 2765 (*ARV*² 141 no. 68; *Hesperia* xv (1946) pl. 36. 56).
- (2) Salonica, from Vrastina Kalyvia (*ARV*² 140 no. 28; *ADelt* ix (1924-25) Suppl. 38 fig. 6b).
- (3) Salonica, from Vrastina Kalyvia (*ARV*² 141 no. 67; *ADelt* ix (1924-25) Suppl. 38 fig. 6a).
- (4) Rhodes 14115 (*ARV*² 140 no. 26; *Clara Rhodos* vi-vii (1932-33) 181).

This difference might indicate that the obscure painter of the Empedocles cup was copying a representation of 'Theseus removing the rock' from a vase by another artist, taking care to imitate the coiffure very faithfully (even though he was rendering it in its own manner) because the young hero was supposed to have been wearing his hair in a particular hair-style, called Theseus after him.¹²

An important argument in favour of the identification of the scene as a deed of Theseus is provided by the date of the cup: last decade of the sixth century. To make this statement clear, a brief summary is required of the evolution of the hero's saga and the historical conditions which transformed Theseus into the national hero of Athens.

The bibliography on the evolution of the Theseus saga is very rich.¹³ The problems involved concern:

- (1) The origins of Theseus and his original home.
- (2) His original nature.
- (3) The exact time in which he became the Athenian hero *par excellence*.

We are not deeply concerned with the first two questions here. For the third we must summarize the evidence for what can provide us with a sound criterion, the chronological distribution and the repertoire of the representations of Theseus.

It has been observed many times that the position occupied by Theseus in Attic art before the last quarter of the sixth century is very modest indeed. The pediments of the old poros buildings on the Acropolis give a place of honour to Heracles and ignore Theseus completely.¹⁴ In vase-painting his repertoire is very limited: the fight with the Minotaur seems to be the most frequently depicted episode, with one Centauromachy and the geranos

¹² Discussion relative to the Theseis in Roscher v 681 (Steuding).

¹³ U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Die griechische Heldensage* i (1925) in *Kleine Schriften* v 2.54-84; H. Herter, 'Theseus der Jonier' in *Rhein. Mus.* lxxxv (1936) 177-191 and 193-239; H. Herter, 'Theseus der Athener' in *Rhein. Mus.* lxxxviii (1939) 244-286 and 289-326; H. Herter, 'Griechische Geschichte im Spiegel der Theseussage' in *Die Antike* xvii (1941) 209-28; L. Radermacher, *Mythos und Sage bei den Griechen*² (Vienna 1950) 241 ff.; M. Nilsson, *The Mycenaean origin of Greek mythology* (Cambridge 1932) 164-168; Jacoby, *FGH* iiii Suppl. ii Notes, 344 n. 20; Jacoby, *Atthis* (Oxford 1949) 394 n. 23; Schefold, *Mus. Helv.* iii (1946) 65 ff.; Dugas, *REG* lvi (1943) 1-24; Buschor in *FR* iii 117 f.; F. Wolgensinger, *Theseus* (Zürich 1935); Bury, *History of Greece* i 213; Steuding in Roscher v 678-759; Deubner, *Das*

attische Weinenlesefest, Abhandlungen der Preussischer Akademie der Wissenschaft 1943 Philosophisch-historische Klasse no. 12 (Berlin 1944); K. Friis Johansen, *Thésée et la danse à Délos, Etude herméneutique* (Copenhagen 1945) 55 f.; Dugas-Flacelière, *Thésée, Images et récits* (Paris 1958); B. Shefton, *Hesperia* xxxi (1962) 347 and n. 74; Alfieri and Arias, *Spina, Guida al museo archeologico di Ferrara* (Florence 1960) 106; Schefold, *Myth and legend in early Greek art* (London 1966) 40; L. Ghali-Kahil, *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène dans les textes et les documents figurés* (Paris 1955) 310; W. Den Boer, *Greece and Rome* xvi (1969) 1-13; E. Ruschenbusch, *Historia* vii (1958) 408-18; Brelich, *Studi e materiali di Storia delle religioni* xxvii (1956) 136-41; E. Will, *Korinthiaka* (Paris 1955) 191-204.

¹⁴ Friis Johansen, *Thésée* 56.

dance on the François vase.¹⁵ It is possible that the olpe Berlin 1731 and the lekythos Athens 404, both by Amasis, allude to Helen's abduction.¹⁶

In the last quarter of the sixth century there is a sudden change: Theseus representations become frequent and are enriched with new episodes.¹⁷ By the end of the century five new cycles of the Theseus saga are established: Helen's abduction and the Marathon bull, and three others of which we cannot find any previous traces in art or literature:¹⁸ the deeds during the journey from Troezen to Athens, Theseus at the bottom of the sea and Theseus and the Amazons.¹⁹

It is generally accepted that this change in the popularity of Theseus took place under the influence of an epic poem²⁰ which created the classical saga definitely annexing Theseus to Athens and transforming him into the Athenian hero *par excellence*, the national hero, the model of all high virtues, the achiever of the synoecism and of a 'democratized' monarchy, the protector of the people.²¹ Until that time he was known as the victor of the Minotaur, the abductor of Ariadne and Helen, the ally and friend of Pirithous with whom he fights the Centaurs and descends to the Underworld to carry off Persephone.²²

There is much controversy over the exact date and the background of the epic which operated this amazing transformation of the legendary figure. One theory attributes this process to the influence of Pisistratus, considering his court first, and that of his sons afterwards, as the agents of the creation of a mythical prototype for Pisistratus in the person of Theseus.²³ The second theory attributes the creation of the classical Theseus saga to the opposition,²⁴ or more specifically to the Alcmaeonids in exile at Delphi and Cleisthenes in particular.²⁵

It is true that the oldest evidence for a patriotic Athenian conception of Theseus is referred to Pisistratus: according to Plutarch²⁶ Hereas from Magara said that Pisistratus had a verse dishonouring Theseus deleted from the Hesiodic poems and a new one favourable to him added in the *Odyssey*. However, as Friis Johansen points out,²⁷ it is impossible to check the truth of this statement, which, according to Herter,²⁸ is suspicious anyway, since it comes from an author notorious for his hostility to the Athenians. And it is interesting to observe that this reluctance to accept Plutarch's information at face value is expressed by two scholars who are in favour of attributing to Pisistratus the creation of the Theseus saga.

¹⁵ Friis Johansen, *op. cit.* 55.

¹⁶ Ghali-Kahil, *Les enlèvements* 310; Exekias shows Theseus as a bearded man in a himation (*fr.* in Lund *ABV* 145 no. 17; Beazley, *The development of Attic Black-figure* [Berkeley and Los Angeles 1951]; *cf.* M. Robertson, *JHS* lxxiv [1954] 230).

¹⁷ Friis Johansen, *op. cit.* 55; Herter, *Die Antike* xvii (1941) 219; *cf.* Bury i 213; Jacoby, *Atthis* 394 n. 23; Wilamowitz, *Heldensage* i 58.

¹⁸ Friis Johansen, *op. cit.* 57.

¹⁹ According to Schefold (*Mus. Helv.* iii [1946] 67), the abduction of the Amazon queen starts at c. 520 and is popular until the beginning of the fifth century. These representations, he thinks, express the Ionian spirit of the fine *Stimmungskunst* of the last but one decade of the sixth century. And, he adds, it is no coincidence that they found their monumental expression on Ionian soil, in the pediments of Eretria.

²⁰ Some scholars are in favour of more than one epic poem.

²¹ Schefold, *op. cit.* 65 ff.; Jacoby, *FGrH* iiii Suppl. Notes 344 n. 20; Jacoby, *Atthis* 394 n. 23; Alfieri and Arias, *Spina, Guida al museo archeologico di Ferrara* (Florence 1960); Dugas *REG* lvi (1943) 18; Herter,

Rhein. Mus. lxxviii (1939) 247 f.; Radermacher, *Mythos und Sage*² 261. The only scholar who disagreed with this view, without providing any argument, was Wilamowitz (*Heldensage* i 58).

²² Schefold, *op. cit.* 65; Flacelière in Dugas-Flacelière, *Thésée* 22; Jacoby, *Atthis* 394 n. 23; Dugas, *REG* lvi (1943) 18. In Homer there are four items concerning him: in *A* 265 he is mentioned together with some Lapiths; in *Γ* 144 his mother Aethra is said to be Helen's servant (although some scholars do not agree that this Aethra was the same as Theseus' mother); in *λ* 321 he is the abductor of Ariadne and in *λ* 631 there is an allusion to Theseus' and Pirithous' *katabasis*.

²³ Deubner, *Das attische Weinenlesefest* 15; Friis Johansen, *Thésée* 59; Herter, *Rhein. Mus.* lxxviii (1939) 219, 248; Bury i 213.

²⁴ Jacoby, *Atthis* 394 n. 23; Buschor, *op. cit.* 117; Flacelière in Dugas-Flacelière, *Thésée* 22; Schefold, *Myth and legend* 40.

²⁵ Schefold, *Mus. Helv.* iii (1946) 65.

²⁶ *Thes.* 20.

²⁷ *Thésée* 55.

²⁸ *Rhein. Mus.* lxxviii (1939) 264.

There are some strong arguments in favour of attributing this process to the influence of the opposition to Pisistratus and the Pisistratids. As has been pointed out several times,²⁹ the Theseus of classical saga is not and cannot be the mythical prototype of the tyrant Pisistratus as some scholars have claimed.³⁰ He cannot be anybody else's mythical prototype but Cleisthenes', since it is Cleisthenes who is the sixth century historical counterpart of the mythical synoecist of Athens. In Jacoby's words,³¹ 'If matters are put in a formula: the achiever of synoecism Theseus is not Pisistratus, but Cleisthenes'.³²

There are other arguments in favour of the Alcmaeonid hypothesis. On the basis of the frequency of Theseus representations, Buschor affirms³³ that the first decade after the Alcmaeonids' victory (i.e. 510–500) contributed to the glorification of Theseus more than any other time. Schefold³⁴ studies the Theseus image as created by the epos in those traits which are not directly referred to a projection of a sixth century Athenian political figure, and concludes that it could not have developed in any other social group but the entourage of the Alcmaeonids in exile at Delphi. Theseus the athletic fighter would not suit the sophisticated tyrants' court with its Ionian luxury and its predilection for Ionian poets. But it would not suit the aristocracy friendly to the Dorians either, because they would not find it necessary to oppose an Attic hero to Heracles. On the contrary, he concludes, this image is very suitable to the Alcmaeonids in exile at Delphi.

Schefold explains the occurrence on vase-painting of the period *c.* 520–10 of isolated episodes from the cycle of the deeds performed by Theseus during his journey from Troezen to Athens as influence exercised from Delphi.³⁵ The whole cycle of these deeds does not appear before 510 but becomes very popular after this date.

That the first years after the establishment of Cleisthenes' power should be the time when this cycle is affirmed is very significant, because these deeds not only promote young Theseus as the protector of the people and their liberator from dangerous figures, but they are also the compromise through which the Troezenian claims to this hero were met and which allowed the Athenians to annex him definitely. Herter in fact observes³⁶ that when the Athenians appropriated him, they had to remove one strong competitor for his citizenship, Troezen, and that they reached an arrangement according to which he was born and brought up in Troezen and then went to Athens to find his father. And elsewhere he points out³⁷ that the saga of his journey from Troezen to Athens is only a compromise between the claims of the two cities.

To the same area of compromise belongs the episode with which we are particularly concerned here. If Theseus had an Athenian father and had to spend his boyhood in Troezen there had to be invented a reason for him staying away from his father's city during this time; this was provided by the Pallantids and the threat they represented to the life of the young heir to the throne. Eventually, Theseus had to qualify as a man strong enough to face the danger, go to Athens and assume the responsibilities of his position. This qualification was provided by the *dokimasia* of the lifting of the rock marking his passage from boyhood to manhood. At the same time, by lifting the rock, Theseus was officially qualify-

²⁹ Schefold, *Mus. Helv.* iii (1946) 65; Flacelière *op. cit.* 22; Jacoby, *Atthis* 395.

³⁰ *cf.*, for example, Deubner, *Das attische Weinenlesefest* 15.

³¹ *Atthis* n. 29.

³² It is worth noting that in the eyes of the later Athenians Pisistratus was not the continuator but the destructor of Theseus' achievements (Isoc. *Panath.* 148; *cf.* Pausan. i 3.2). But we must take into consideration a further evolution of the figure before Isocrates' times.

³³ *FR* iii 117.

³⁴ *Mus. Helv.* iii (1946) 65.

³⁵ *op. cit.* P. Bicknell (*Historia* xix [1970] 129–31)

makes a not very convincing suggestion that the Alcmaeonids were only banished in 514/13. That they were not in exile during the whole tyranny of Pisistratus and the Pisistratids seems very likely, but I think that to suggest 514/13 as the date of their banishment is going too far. However, even if things indeed happened as Bicknell wants them to have happened, this does not affect Schefold's argument. The *Theseis* could have been written in Athens or the Alcmaeonids might have influenced an exiled community elsewhere.

³⁶ *Antike* xvii (1941) 219.

³⁷ *Rhein. Mus.* lxxxv (1936) 205.

ing as Athenian, since this allowed him to take possession of the *gnorismata* which his Athenian father had left for him.³⁸ Dugas points out,³⁹ although in a different context, that this moment 'est le point de départ de toute la carrière de Thésée'.

Under these circumstances, a representation of Theseus removing the rock in the last decade of the sixth century is more than welcome, since I have, I hope, made clear that the years immediately following Cleisthenes' triumph are those in which one would expect this subject to have made its first appearance in vase-painting. It is probably a coincidence that the earliest representation of the feat recognised hitherto belongs to the second quarter of the fifth century.

An iconographical analysis of the Empedocles cup related to the subject of Theseus lifting the rock involves: (a) a study of the way in which the Empedocles representation relates to the testimonia from various literary sources and (b) a study of the way it relates to other works of art depicting this subject.

(a) Literary sources.

Paus. i 27.8

κρηπίδας Αἰγέα ὑπὸ πέτρα καὶ ξίφος θεῖναι γνωρίσματα εἶναι τῷ παιδί, καὶ τὸν μὲν ἐς Ἀθήνας ἀποπλεῖν, Θησέα δέ, ὡς ἕκτον καὶ δέκατον ἔτος ἐγεγόνει, τὴν πέτραν ἀνώσαντα οἴχεσθαι τὴν παρακαταθήκην τὴν Αἰγέως φέροντα. τούτου δὲ εἰκῶν ἐν ἀκροπόλει πεποιήται τοῦ λόγου, χαλκοῦ πάντα ὁμοίως πλὴν τῆς πέτρας.

Paus. ii 32.7

Ἰοῦσι δὲ τὴν διὰ τῶν ὄρων ἐς Ἐρμιόνην πηγή τέ ἐστι τοῦ Ὑλλικοῦ ποταμοῦ, Ταυρίου δὲ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς καλουμένου, καὶ πέτρα Θησέως ὀνομαζομένη, μεταβαλοῦσα καὶ αὐτὴ τὸ ὄνομα ἀνελομένου Θησέως ὑπ' αὐτῇ κρηπίδας τὰς Αἰγέως καὶ ξίφος· πρότερον δὲ βωμὸς ἐκαλεῖτο Σθενίου Διός.

Plut. *Thes.* 3

ἀπέλιπε ξίφος καὶ πέδιλα κρύψας ὑπὸ πέτραν μεγάλην, ἐντὸς ἔχουσαν κοιλότητα συμμέτρως ἐμπεριλαμβάνουσαν τὰ κείμενα. φράσας δὲ πρὸς μόνην ἐκείνην, καὶ διακελευσάμενος, ἂν υἱὸς ἐξ αὐτοῦ γένηται, καὶ λαβὼν ἀνδρὸς ἡλικίαν δυνατὸς ἢ τὴν πέτραν ἀναστήσαι καὶ ὑφελεῖν τὰ καταλειφθέντα, πέμπει πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔχοντα ταῦτα μηδενὸς εἰδότης, ἀλλ' ὡς ἔνεστι μάλιστα λαμβάνοντα πάντας (ἰσχυρῶς γὰρ ἐδεδοίκει τοὺς Παλλαντίδας, ἐπιβουλεύοντας αὐτῷ καὶ διὰ τὴν ἀπαιδίαν καταφρονούντας· ἦσαν δὲ πεντήκοντα παῖδες ἐκ Πάλλαντος γεγονότες), ἀπήει.

ibid. 6

ἐπεὶ δὲ μειράκιον ὦν, ἅμα τῇ τοῦ σώματος ῥώμῃ διέφαιεν ἀλκὴν καὶ φρόνημα μετὰ νοῦ καὶ συνέσεως βέβαιοι, οὕτως αὐτὸν ἡ Αἰθρα πρὸς τὴν πέτραν προσαγαγούσα, καὶ φράσασα περὶ τῆς γενέσεως τ' ἀληθές, ἐκέλευσεν ὑφελεῖν τὰ πατρῶα σύμβολα καὶ πλεῖν εἰς Ἀθήνας. ὁ δὲ τὴν μὲν πέτραν ὑπέδου καὶ ῥαδίως ἀνέωσε, πλεῖν δὲ ἀπέγνω.

Callim. *Hecala fr.* 235 (Pfeiffer)

ἐν γάρ μιν Τροιζῆνι κολουραίῃ ὑπὸ πέτρῃ
θῆκε σὺν ἀρπίδεσσιν

³⁸ Similar stories and compromises are not unknown in Greece; cf. Hdt. iv 8–10, where, in the words of Macan in his commentary on the passage (R. W. Macan, *Herodotus. The fourth, fifth and sixth books. With introduction, notes, appendices, indices, maps* [London 1895]), 'a Heracleid lineage is provided for

the Scythic kings, and an Hellenic claim to the soil thereby established'. cf. Parthenius i. And see Radermacher, *Mythos und Sage*² 263 and Maass, *ÖJh ix* (1906) 163.

³⁹ Dugas in Dugas-Flacelière, *Thésée* 64.

Callim. *Hecala* fr. 236

εὗτ' ἂν ὁ παῖς ἀπὸ μὲν γυαλὸν λίθον ἀγκάσσασθαι
ἄρκιος ἢ χεῖρεσσιν, ἐλὼν Αἰδήμιον ἄορ
< καὶ τὰ > πέδιλα, τὰ μὴ πύσε νήχυτος εὐρώς

Diod. Sic. iv 59

Θησεὺς τοίνυν γεγωνὺς Αἰθρας τῆς Πιτθέως καὶ Ποσειδῶνος, τραφεὶς ἐν Τροιζῆνι παρὰ Πιτθεῖ τῷ μητροπάτορι, καὶ τὰ μυθολογούμενα σύμβολα ἀνηρημένος τὰ ὑπὸ Αἰγέως ὑπό τινι πέτρα τεθειμένα. κατήνησεν εἰς τὰς Ἀθήνας.

Apollod. *Bibl.* iii 16.1

Θησεὺς δὲ γεννηθεὶς ἐξ Αἰθρας Αἰγεί παῖς, ὡς ἐγένετο τέλειος, ἀπωσάμενος τὴν πέτραν τὰ πέδιλα καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν ἀναιρεῖται, καὶ πεζὸς ἠπέιγετο εἰς τὰς Ἀθήνας.

Hyg. *Fab.* xxxvii

Neptunus et Aegeus Pandionis filius in fano Minervae cum Aethra Pitthei filia una nocte concubuerunt. Neptunus quod ex ea natum esset Aegeo concessit. is autem postquam a Troezen Athenas redibat, ensem suum sub lapide posuit et praecepit Athrae ut tunc eum ad se mitteret cum posset eum lapidem allevare et gladium patris (tol)lere; ibi fore indicium cognitionis filii. itaque postea Aethra peperit These(um), qui ad puberem aetatem cum pervenisset, mater praecepta Aegei indicat ei la(pi)demque ostendit ut ensem tolleret et iubet eum Athenas ad Aegeum profi(cis)ci . . .

Tzetz. *Schol. in Lyc. Alex.* 494 (Cod. Par. 2723)

κατέλιπε δὲ τὸ ξίφος αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰ ὑποδήματα τῇ Αἰθρα εἰπὼν· ἡνίκα ἐφαρμόσωσι τῷ παιδί τὰ ὑποδήματα καὶ τὸ ξίφος δυνηθῆ κομίσει τότε λαβὼν αὐτὰ ἐλθέτω εἰς Ἀθήνας.

A reasonable approach to the value of the description of the feat in these later sources is to suppose that it was influenced either by the original *Theseis* or texts connected with it and deriving from it, or by representations of the feat on various monuments, or by both.

A very interesting point in these testimonia is the mention of an altar in connection with the rock. Pausanias in fact informs us⁴⁰ that the stone lifted by Theseus was called in his day 'Theseus' stone' having changed its name after the performance of the feat. Before it was called the 'altar of Sthenios Zeus'. This statement is so odd and isolated that there remains little doubt, if any, that what Pausanias was told in Troezen was genuine folk memory. The term 'genuine folk memory' might sound ambiguous and can be misleading if not analysed. Genuine folk memory of what? In order to work out an hypothesis, one has to analyse the two elements involved in the statement: i. Zeus Sthenios; ii. The rock.

(i) *Zeus Sthenios*. According to the established opinion, the epithet Sthenios originally applied to Poseidon.⁴¹ We are not concerned with the causes for the shift of the appellation to Zeus, for which various suggestions have been made.⁴² What seems rather obvious is that Zeus Sthenios was 'the god of physical strength', as Preller-Robert put it,⁴³ or, in more moderate terms, a divine figure connected with physical strength. One can perhaps detect a tendency in this divine figure to attract and annex *happenings* implying physical strength, in Plutarch's remarks on the games of the Stheneia (*de mus.* 26): Ἀργεῖοι δὲ πρὸς τὴν τῶν

⁴⁰ ii 32. 7.

⁴¹ For the discussion see Höfer in Roscher iv 1532–1535.

⁴² Höfer 1533; Gruppe, *Griechische Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1897–1906) 1155.

⁴³ *Griechische Mythologie* (Berlin 1894) i 140.

Σθενείων τῶν καλουμένων παρ' αὐτοῖς πάλην ἐχρῶντο τῷ αὐλῶ· τὸν δὲ ἀγῶνα τοῦτον ἐπὶ Δαναῶ μὲν τὴν ἀρχὴν τεθῆναί φασιν, ὕστερον δὲ ἀνατεθῆναι Διὶ Σθενίῳ.

(ii). *The rock.*

- (1) It was also called an altar.
- (2) It was connected with Zeus Sthenios.
- (3) It was eventually annexed by the Theseus saga.
- (4) Its lifting qualified Theseus for the passage from boyhood to manhood.

If we wish to build up a working hypothesis where all these scattered elements would fit into a plausible pattern, we have to consider again the circumstances of the creation of this episode of the Theseus saga, and particularly one question which has not been considered so far: why had this *dokimasia* to be the lifting of a rock? Pausanias' statement poses two or problems connected with this: how did folk-belief operate in picking out one particular rock to be Theseus' rock, the rock that Theseus lifted? And, of course, what does it mean that this rock was previously called the altar of Sthenios Zeus'?

As regards the first question, what is most likely to have happened is that the Theseus legend in process of formation (or the poet of the *Theseis*) picked up a local Troezenian tradition of a *dokimasia* involving the lifting of a rock as part of the official passage to manhood of the Troezenian boys in the present or, most probably, in the past. (And at whatever period one believes the *dokimasia* stopped as such, it cannot be excluded that it could have survived in the form of an athletic contest, perhaps particularly connected with the age of the passage to manhood.) As a logical consequence of this process, the Troezenians would associate with Theseus and his rock-lifting the one particular rock previously associated with the *dokimasia* and the official passage to manhood of the local boys. And in this way this rock which belonged to one specific sphere of ritual activity became Theseus' stone. The problem that remains open is where does Zeus Sthenios come in and why should this rock be called his altar? The tendency of Zeus Sthenios, testified for the Argolid, to annex ritual elements involving physical strength has already been mentioned. It is not surprising that a divine figure with a similar name and similar characteristics should appropriate a rock, the lifting of which marked the acquisition of the strength of manhood,⁴⁴ only to be displaced by Theseus. A rock sacred to Zeus Sthenios could easily be mistaken for a primitive monolithic altar if its shape was roughly rectangular.⁴⁵ Such a misrepresentation would explain to a rationalizing mind better than anything the association with passage to manhood and strength attached to the rock.

If this hypothesis is correct, the stone which Theseus was supposed to have lifted was for the late sixth-century Troezenians a roughly rectangular rock previously called the 'altar of Zeus Sthenios'. What the poet of the *Theseis* and connected literary works made out of these elements is open to conjectures. But what we seem to have in the Empedocles cup is a splitting of the concept 'stone of Theseus called an altar' into an altar and the stone of Theseus resting on it. A misinterpretation of a poetic description or a private joke?⁴⁶ Whatever one wants to make of this splitting, the fact remains that it offers a very plausible explanation for the presence of the altar-shaped supporting feature.

The influence of 'hollow ceremonial altars' with a deep depression on the top⁴⁷ might have affected the iconographical expression of this division of the original concept. This depression suited one of the elements of Theseus' story, the cavity in which, according to

⁴⁴ cf. Maass, *Rhein. Mus.* lxxviii (1929) 10.

⁴⁵ On monolithic altars see C. G. Yavis, *Greek altars, origins and typology* (Saint Louis, Missouri 1949) 127 f., 131 f.

⁴⁶ Due not to the artist of the Empedocles cup

whose poor work indicates that he was incapable of such sophistication, but to the artist who painted the original of this cup (see supra p. 97).

⁴⁷ For hollow ceremonial altars see Yavis, *op. cit.* 128.

the literary testimonia, the gnorismata were hidden. In fact this cavity is, if not shown, at least suggested in the Empedocles cup by two details:

(a) The hand of the youth disappears under the rock in a way that indicates an empty space between the rock and the supporting feature.

(b) The lower part of the circumference of the rock disappears behind the upper part of the altar in a way that, again, suggests a cavity.

There is a minor point in the testimonia which might possibly suggest the existence of one or more monuments which depicted the same division, or which at least represented the rock not resting directly on the earth but being at a higher level. Plutarch⁴⁸ in describing the feat says that Theseus τὴν μὲν πέτραν ὑπέδν καὶ ῥαδίως ἀνέωσε. It is slightly surprising that he would adopt a phraseology which would not correspond very well to the representations of the rock-lifting that, judging from the monuments that have survived, we should expect to be visible in his time. Consequently, one could venture the hypothesis that, unless he was inaccurately describing our type 2,⁴⁹ which is just as possible, Plutarch might have used the term ὑπέδν because he had in mind a representation in which the rock was at a higher point than ground level, perhaps resting on a support. But this is obviously a mere suggestion since we cannot put very much weight on the wording of a later author.

(b) Representations of Theseus lifting the rock.

(i) Pottery

(1) Lekythos by the Sabouroff Painter, Stockholm G 1701, from Sicily

ARV² 844 no. 145

O. Antonsson, *Antik Konst, En Konstbok från Nationalmuseum* (Stockholm 1958) 97–99.

E. Kjellberg, *Några Grekiska Vaser i Nationalmuseum* (Stockholm 1925) fig. 2 *Nationalmusei Årbok* iv 127, 129–30.

Beazley, *AJA* xliii (1939) 618.

This was the earliest representation of the episode known hitherto. The Sabouroff Painter⁵⁰ starts his career not earlier than the late 470's and most probably in the 460's.

Adolescent Theseus pushes an oblong rock in the presence of his mother; under the rock appears part of the sword.

(2) Calyx-krater by the Dinos Painter, Oxford 1937. 983 (PLATE XIIb)

ARV² 1153 no. 13

Beazley, *AJA* xliii (1939) 618–20, pl. xi.

This belongs to the beginning of the last quarter of the fifth century.

Theseus as a naked adolescent lifts an oblong rock in the presence of an old man who, according to Beazley,⁵¹ ought to be Pitheus.

(3) Skyphos by the Kadmos Painter, Ferrara T 971, from Spina

ARV² 1187 no. 37.

P. E. Arias–N. Alfieri, *Il museo archeologico di Ferrara* (Ferrara 1955) 45 f., pl. 26.

N. Alfieri–P. E. Arias, *Spina, Guida al museo archeologico di Ferrara* (Florence 1960) 105 f., pl. xxvii.

S. Aurigemma–N. Alfieri, *Il museo nazionale archeologico di Spina in Ferrara* (Rome 1957) pl. 20b.

⁴⁸ *Thest.* 6.

⁴⁹ Inaccurately because the expressions used imply that he put part of his body under the rock (arms or shoulder for example) and from this position he lifted it easily.

⁵⁰ ARV² 837–51; Beazley, *Attische Vasenmaler des*

rotfigurigen Stils (Tübingen 1925) 262–265; Richter, *Attic red-figured Vases, A Survey*³ (New Haven 1958) 112f.; G. M. A. Richter–L. F. Hall, *Red-figured Athenian Vases in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New Haven 1936) 135 f.

⁵¹ *AJA* xliii (1939) 618.

S. Aurigemma, *Il R. Museo di Spina in Ferrara* (Ferrara 1936) 155, pl. lxxx.
 Beazley, *AJA* xliii (1939) 618.

End of the fifth century.

Adolescent Theseus lifts an oblong rock. A Nike is about to crown him.

(4) Cup, Ferrara T 128, from Spina.

S. Aurigemma, *La necropoli di Spina in Valle Treba. Scavi di Spina i* (Rome 1960–65) 54 f., pl. 35.

Mostra dell'Etruria Padana e della città di Spina (Bologna 1960) no. 950

Negrioli, *NSc* 1924, 315.

Beazley, *AJA* xliii (1939) 618.

The cup is in a bad state of preservation. Nevertheless one can see that Theseus is pushing the rock 'from underneath'. He has already raised it and now pushes its lower side, the one on which the rock was resting.

(5) Cup by the Painter of London E 105, Louvre G 622.

*ARV*² 1293 no. 10.

E. Pottier, *Vases antiques du Louvre* (Paris 1897–1922) pl. 158.

Beazley judges the identification of Theseus lifting the rock doubtful. The cup belongs to the third quarter of the fifth century.

The scene takes place on an 'éminence rocheuse' (Pottier's words). Theseus, in the presence of Aethra, pushes 'from underneath' an oblong rock.

(ii) *Sculpture*

(1) Frieze of the Heroon at Gjölbäski-Trysa.

F. Eichler, *Die Reliefs des Heroon von Gjölbäski-Trysa* (Vienna 1950) 71, pl. 33.2.

F. Eichler, *EAA* vii 1026–28 (with bibliography).

End of the fifth century.

Theseus pushes a massive, heavy rock.

(2) Third-century decree relief from the south foot of the Acropolis.

F. von Duhn, 'Griechische Reliefs, gefunden in den Ausgrabungen der archäologischen Gesellschaft am Südfuss der Akropolis' in *AZ* xxxv (1877) 171 f.

J. N. Svoronos, *Das Athener Nationalmuseum* (Athens 1937) pl. ccxvii.

Koumanoudis, *Athenaion* v (1876) 52.

F. Wiesler, *Archäologische Excursus zu Pausanias i 24.3 und i 27.8.*

Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften und der Georg-Augusts-Universität zu Göttingen (1886) 67.

Theseus pushes an oblong rock which was laid horizontally on the *gnorismata*. According to von Duhn⁵² this monument, the Albani relief (here no. 3) and the representations on gems go back to the bronze group mentioned by Pausanias,⁵³ the creation of which, according to the same scholar, should be attributed to the Severe Style period. He argues this on the basis of some Severe Style characteristics he thinks he detects in this third-century relief.

(3) Relief from Villa Albani.

Winckelmann, *Monumenti inediti* (Rome 1767–1773) no. 96.

Roscher i 201 (with illustration).

Wieseler, *op. cit.* 66 (with previous bibliography).

Theseus pushes an oblong rock standing vertically over the *gnorismata*. Various persons assist in the scene; they have been identified in various ways.

⁵² *AZ* xxxv (1877) 172.

⁵³ i 27.8.

- (4) Roman mural relief in the British Museum D 594.
Walters, *BMC D* 594 pl. xxxix.
H. von Rohden–H. Winnefeld, *Arkitektonische römische Tonreliefs der Kaiserzeit* (Berlin and Stuttgart 1911) pl. xii.
AA 1894, 176.
Hafner, *Geschichte der griechischen Kunst* (Zürich 1961) fig. 143.
Theseus pushes 'from underneath' an oblong rock laid horizontally on the *gnorismata*, in the presence of Aethra.
- (5) Roman relief from the Campana Collection.
S. Reinach, *Répertoire de Reliefs grecs et romains* (Paris 1909–1912) ii 279.3.
Campana, *Antiche opere in plastica* pl. 117.
C. T. Newton–S. Birch, *Report on the Campana Collection* (London 1856) 78 no. 265.
K. B. Stark, *AZ* xviii (1860) 123.
Wieseler, *op. cit.* 68.
Theseus pushes an oblong rock 'from underneath'.
- (6) Three copies of nos. 4 and 5.
They are mentioned by Rohden-Winnefeld 246:
i. Copy in Museo artistico e industriale in Rome.
ii. Fragment in Museo archeologico in Florence.
iii. Fragment in Berlin Antiquarium, 6681.88.
- (7) Roman base of tripod from Nablous in Istanbul.
G. Mendel, *Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romains et byzantines* (Istanbul 1914) ii no. 638, fig. on p. 387.
An illustrated Guide to the Greek, Roman and Byzantine Architectural and Sculptural Collections in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul (Istanbul 1968) 81.
- (iii) *Gems*
- (1) Etruscanizing banded agate in the Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen
P. Fossing, *The Thorvaldsen Museum, Catalogue of the antique engraved gems and cameos* (Copenhagen 1929) no. 104.
E. Zwierlein-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen in Deutschen Sammlungen Band ii. Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Antikenabteilung. Berlin* (Munich 1969) 128.
Wieseler, *op. cit.* 70 (with previous bibliography).
Theseus bends and lifts a not very big oblong rock which was laid horizontally on the *gnorismata*.
- (2) Italic carnelian in Berlin FG 387.
Furtwängler, *Beschreibung der Geschnitten Steine im Antiquarium* (Berlin 1896) pl. viii.
Wieseler, *op. cit.* 69.
Second half of the third century B.C. Representation similar to 1.
- (3) Carnelian in Leningrad, previously in France.
La Chaux and Le Blond, *Description des principales pierres gravées du Cabinet de S.A.S. Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans* (Paris 1780–84) i 89.
Theseus pushes 'from underneath' an oblong rock.
- (4) Undefined gem with a representation of the same type as 1 and 2.
Reinach, *Pierres gravées* pl. 76.66.
Wieseler, *op. cit.* 70.
Gravelle, *Recueil de pierres gravées* i pl. 66.

- (5) Roman sardonyx in Aquileia 26199.
G. Sena Chiesa, *Gemme del Museo Nazionale di Aquileia* (Padua 1966) no. 719 pl. 36.
Zwierlein-Diehl, *op. cit.* 128.
Similar to 1, 2, 4.
- (6) Brown paste in Berlin 388.
Furtwängler, *Antiquarium* no. 388 pl. viii.
Same general pattern as 1, 2, 4, 5, although with a slight difference in the details.
- (7) Violet paste with white veins in Berlin 389.
Furtwängler, *Antiquarium* no. 389.
Similar to 1, 2, 4, 5.
- (8) Brown paste with white veins in Berlin 390.
Furtwängler, *Antiquarium* no. 390.
Similar to 1, 2, 4, 5, 7.
- (9) Late Etruscan carnelian in the Thorvaldsen Museum at Copenhagen
Fossing, *op. cit.* no. 43.
Sena Chiesa, *op. cit.*, commentary on no. 719.
The human figure has the same pose as Theseus in 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, but the 'rock' looks like a bundle of sticks. Fossing does not think it is Theseus at all. Sena Chiesa classifies the representation as Theseus lifting the rock, and this does not seem unreasonable to me.
- (10) Etruscan sardonyx in Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum ix B 1353
Zazoff, *Etruskische Skarabäen* (Mainz 1968) no. 139.
Furtwängler *AG* pl. xvii, 55.
Zwierlein-Diehl, *op. cit.* 128.
Beginning of the fourth century. Inscription $\Theta E \zeta E$. Same as 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9.
- (11) Etruscan carnelian in Cabinet des Médailles.
Furtwängler, *AG* pl. xvii, 12; iii 202.
Wernicke, *AA* 1899, 201.
Bulle in Roscher iii 2855 (with previous bibliography).
Steuding in Roscher v 682.
Zazoff, *op. cit.* no. 136.
Second half of the fifth century.
The inscription identifies the figure as 'Nethunus'. He has a trident and seems to pull to himself part of a massive rock in front of which he stands. Furtwängler accepts him as a purely Etruscan representation of Poseidon. Wernicke on the contrary suggests⁵⁴ that the Etruscan gem-cutter was working from a Greek original which was depicting something completely different, namely Theseus lifting the rock, and that he created a representation of Poseidon by adding trident and inscription.

(iv) *Coins*

(1) Troezen

- F. Imhoof-Blumer and P. Gardner, *A Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias* (reprinted from *JHS* 1885, 1886, 1887) 49.
Coins of:
Commodus (*BMC* pl. Mxi).

⁵⁴ *AA* 1899 201.

Septimius Severus.

Geta.

Philippus Jun.

Theseus pushes the rock which was laid horizontally on the *gnorismata*. According to Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner⁵⁵ the identity of this type through several reigns may indicate for it an original in sculpture.

(2) Athens

Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner *op. cit.* 146 pl. DDii.

Beulé, *Les monnaies d' Athènes* (Paris 1858) 397.

Head, *BMC Attica* pl. xviii 8.

Roscher, v 681 fig. 1.

Same as 1, but rock almost in the vertical position already.

All these representations can be classified into four types:

1. Theseus lifts a not very big oblong rock which was laid horizontally on the *gnorismata*.
Gems: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
Vase-painting: most certainly no. 3; no. 2 poses a problem whether the rock was laid horizontally, but on the analogy of 3 I should think it did.
2. Theseus pushes a big oblong rock which was laid horizontally on the *gnorismata* 'from underneath' (i.e. with his hands on the lower part of the rock).
Sculpture: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7
Gems: 3
Vase-painting: 4, 5 (although the rock in 5 is slightly smaller than the rest of this type).
Coins: 1, 2
3. Theseus pushes a massive, heavy rock
Sculpture: 1
4. Theseus pushes an oblong rock which stands vertically over the *gnorismata*.
Sculpture: 3
Vase-painting: 1

In order to make clear how these four types relate to each other, we have to analyse further the criteria on which the classification is based, i.e. the shape and the position of the rock and the movements of Theseus.

A. The rock. Classification according to the shape and position.

- (i) Oblong: Types 1, 2, 4.
 - (ia) Oblong laid horizontally on the *gnorismata*.
 - (ia1) Big oblong rock laid horizontally on the *gnorismata*.
 - (ia2) Small oblong rock laid horizontally on the *gnorismata*.
 - (ib) Oblong rock standing vertically over the *gnorismata*.
- (ii) Massive, heavy rock of irregular shape.

B. The movements of Theseus (which are obviously conditioned by the position and the shape of the rock).

- (i) He lifts the rock: type 1.
- (ii) He pushes it 'from underneath': type 2.
- (iii) He pushes from the side: types 3 and 4.

The conclusion we may perhaps draw from the interconnection of the various types is the following. If we interpret the shape of the rock in type 3 as a heavier, provincial, version of the rock in type 4, then all the four types could perhaps be considered as being under the

⁵⁵ *Numismatic Commentary* 49.

influence of one basic type out of which they may have developed through individual artistic experiments on the size and the position of the rock. Whether this basic type was the Severe Style original in sculpture suggested by von Duhn, and whether this is the same as the bronze group Pausanias saw, is an open problem. It does not seem very likely that the group which Pausanias describes might have been of the Severe Style.⁵⁶ On the other hand, if the earliest representation of our catalogue, the Sabouroff lekythos, was already dependent on that original, as is indicated by the way it relates to the other monuments, the terminus ante quem *c.* 470⁵⁷ would constitute an argument in favour of an original of the Severe Style.⁵⁸ Such an original in sculpture would account for the fact that the representation on the Empedocles cup is completely different from all other representations of the subject,⁵⁹ and thus remove the last difficulty for interpreting the scene as Theseus lifting the rock. The Severe Style original is an hypothesis that cannot be proved.⁶⁰ However, it is interesting to observe that the Severe Style is just the right period for the creation of a sculptural group of this sort. And this is true not only because the subject of the effort of a youth removing a heavy rock offered to the sculptor a splendid opportunity to display his recently acquired knowledge of rendering movement, which sculptors of the period seemed to enjoy very much,⁶¹ but, what is even more important, the historical conditions were very favourable for the dedication of such a sculptural group. According to Shefton,⁶² the increase in popularity of representations of Theseus reached its peak during the active life of Cimon. And Herter is of the opinion that the zenith of the Theseus cult in Athens is to be put in 475 when Cimon transported his bones from Skyros to Athens.⁶³ This was not just an

⁵⁶ *cf.* Wieseler, *Archäologische Excursus* 72. The difference of material, bronze and stone, points rather towards a Hellenistic creation. Contrary to what Hafner seems to believe (G. Hafner, *Geschichte der griechischen Kunst* [Zürich 1961] 154), such a mixture is not characteristic of Severe style sculpture.

⁵⁷ An example of a lekythos reproducing a Severe Style sculptural group a few years after its erection is provided by a black-figure lekythos, Vienna 5247 by the Emporion Painter depicting the tyrant-slayers after the statues by Kritios and Nesiotes (S. Brunn-säker, *The Tyrant slayers of Kritios and Nesiotes* [Lund 1955] 102, 122). Obviously the tyrant-slayers were a much more popular subject.

⁵⁸ On dedications on the Acropolis in the years immediately following the Persian Wars see A. E. Raubitschek, *Dedications from the Athenian Acropolis, A Catalogue of the Inscriptions of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.* (Cambridge Mass. 1949) 459 ff., esp. 462 for public dedications.

⁵⁹ The gem no. 11 is not included in this classification because whatever its original might have been, it does not represent Theseus. However, if Wernicke is right, and the Etruscan artist was indeed inspired by a Greek representation of Theseus lifting the rock, it might hint that representations of the subject in a completely different manner existed before the middle of the fifth century.

⁶⁰ E. Paribeni has suggested (in *Bullettino della Commissione archeologica comunale di Roma* lxxiv [1951-52] 13-18) that the 'Auriga dei Conservatori' might be a copy of a Severe Style sculptural group representing Theseus removing the rock according to the pattern of our type 2. This hypothesis lacks any serious basis. No positive argument is brought in support of

it, and the author himself expresses his uneasiness about some features which could hardly fit the scene suggested, like the thick support under the right thigh; the attempt to explain it through the difficulties which arise when copying a 'bronze and marble' group into marble is not very convincing. To the lack of arguments in favour of this hypothesis may be added serious objections against it. Even if considered independently from the iconographical history of the subject of Theseus removing the rock, the Auriga cannot have much claim to the identity of Theseus. The angle of his right knee is too acute (*c.* 72° as compared to the Campana's almost 90°) and if he were to be put in the posture of our type 2, as Paribeni suggests, his body would be much too close to the ground, in a completely unrealistic position which does not correspond at all to that of the other representations to which, according to this hypothesis, it should be similar. However, Paribeni's hypothesis, which already seems improbable, becomes almost impossible if considered in relation to the iconographical history of the subject of Theseus removing the rock, because it is, I think, highly unlikely that, if a sculptural group had been created in the Severe style period, the Sabouroff Painter, in the 460's, would have ignored it and followed a completely different pattern in representing the scene.

⁶¹ Richter, *Three critical periods in Greek Sculpture* (Oxford 1951) 2.

⁶² *Hesperia* xxxi (1962) n. 74.

⁶³ *Rhein. Mus.* lxxviii (1939) 292. The transport of the bones: Plut. *Thes.* 36. The date 476/75 for this has been disputed (with arguments that seem hardly convincing to me) by Smart, *JHS* lxxxvii (1967) 136 who wants the event to have taken place in 469/68.

incidental event. It was a gesture with a specific political significance⁶⁴ and was bound to be stressed and glorified.⁶⁵ The years around 475 sealed the alliance between Cimon and the Alcmaeonids. It is in those years that he married Isodike,⁶⁶ daughter of the Alcmaeonid Eurypolemos, at a time when the importance of such an alliance must have been strongly felt, since the campaign against Themistocles was entering its final stage, which ended with the politician's ostracism in 474/3 or 471.⁶⁷

In allying himself with the Alcmaeonids and marrying one of their daughters, Cimon apparently adopted the legendary figure connected with the glory of their family in the recent past, Theseus, the mythical prototype of Cleisthenes. A legendary figure which was at the same time bound to remind the city of Marathon, where Theseus was supposed to have appeared and helped the Athenians,⁶⁸ and consequently to revive the glory of Cimon's father, Miltiades.⁶⁹ It is in this context, I think, that one should approach Cimon's gesture to transport Theseus' bones to Athens. It becomes clear then that he had every reason for giving importance to the event and for trying to complement this gesture with the dedication of monuments representing Theseus which would commemorate the recovery of the bones and at the same time contribute to the further glorification of the hero.⁷⁰

Under the circumstances, it seems to me that the years around 475 are the most likely date for the creation of a sculptural group representing Theseus lifting the rock which influenced the later representations of the subject.⁷¹ But even if we do not accept this hypothesis, it is still clear that, on the basis of the general pattern of the scene, the type could not have been invented in free-standing sculpture before the beginning of the Severe Style. And, as far as the Empedocles cup is concerned, this is what really interests us here. Since this cup is much earlier than the creation of any sculptural group which could set the type for representations of the subject, its different pattern and inspiration do not constitute an obstacle to the interpretation of the scene as Theseus lifting the rock, an interpretation which can be supported by iconographical and historical arguments.

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⁶⁴ Obviously not the romantic one suggested by Den Boer (*Greece and Rome* xvi [1969] 7) who, after discussing the internal struggles which led Theseus to his exile and death, claims: 'In 476 it was sufficiently useful for Cimon to achieve a spectacular feat: the reconciliation of the parties that had survived the war, by bringing about the return of his remains to his fatherland'. If one is to refer the statement to the war between Theseus and his opponents—and given the context it could hardly be referred to anything else—it would attribute to Cimon an unjustified political romanticism.

⁶⁵ For the honours given to Theseus' relics see Plut. *Thes.* 36.

⁶⁶ The event cannot be dated closely. See brief discussions in C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution to the end of the fifth century B.C.* (Oxford 1952) 396. For the political significance of the marriage see Swoboda in PW vi 1345; E. Meyer, *Forschungen zur Alten Geschichte* ii 48; W. G. Forrest, *The emergence of Greek Democracy, the character of Greek politics, 800–400 B.C.* (London 1966) 219.

⁶⁷ On the date of Themistocles' ostracism see W. G. Forrest, *CQ* x (1960) 221–241 and M. E. White, *JHS* lxxxiv (1964) 140–152; cf. also Lenardon, *Historia* viii (1959) 23–48.

⁶⁸ Plut. *Thes.* 35.

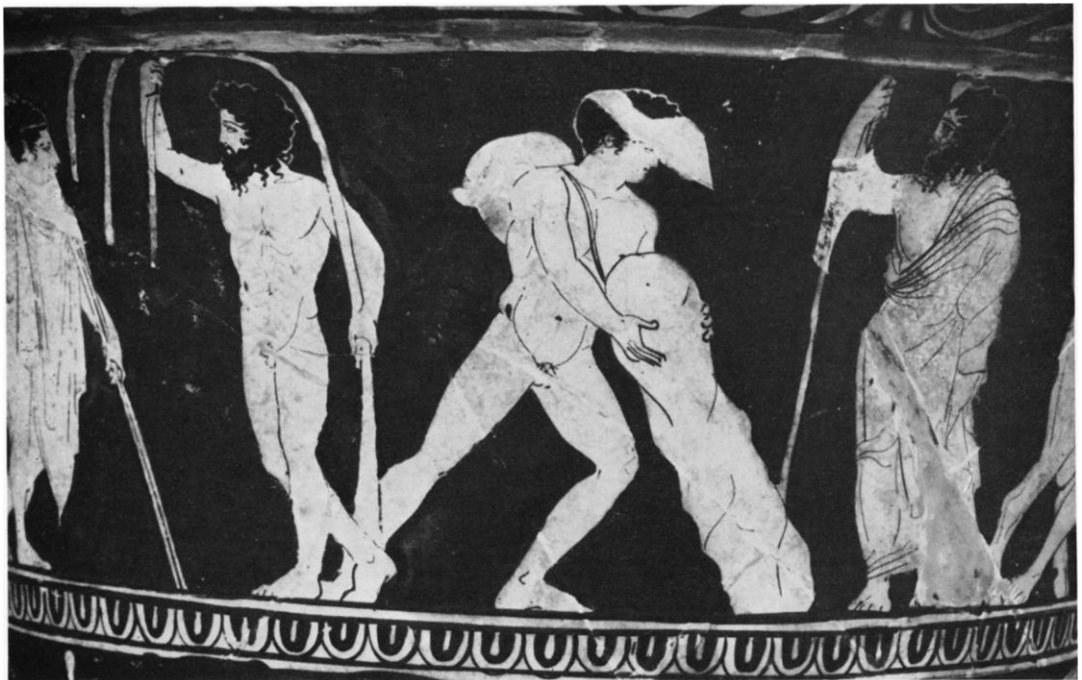
⁶⁹ A further connexion of Cimon himself with Theseus cannot be excluded. The Phylalidai were, of all Athenian families, the one most closely connected with Theseus and his cult (cf. L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* [Berlin 1932] 244 f.; PW. s.v. *Phyalos*). They belonged to the deme of Lakiadai, like Cimon. Can this be of any significance? Could it be a hint of a particular connexion of the deme of Lakiadai with the Theseus cult? Our scanty evidence does not allow us to make anything more than a speculation. (I owe this suggestion to Dr. John K. Davies.)

⁷⁰ It is accepted that the famous wall-paintings of the Theseum mentioned by Pausanias (i 17.6) were connected with the recovery of Theseus' bones (cf. C. M. Robertson, *Greek Painting* [Geneva 1959] 121).

⁷¹ Hafner (*Geschichte der griechischen Kunst* [Zürich 1961] 154) does not connect the erection of the group with the transport of the bones although he attributes a political significance to the former. He thinks that the 'friendly' scene the group depicts alludes to the friendship between Athens and Troezen. However, I do not think that the Athenians of the second quarter of the fifth century were very likely to have attached this symbolic meaning to the sculptural group, given that the function of the compromise for which this feat stood, was probably long forgotten.



(a) Athens, National Museum



(b) Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 1937. 983

THESEUS LIFTING THE ROCK AND A CUP NEAR THE PITHOS PAINTER