

on the human skeleton was still given to medical students at Alexandria in his own day. But given that human dissection was difficult, and indeed that Alexandria is the only city explicitly mentioned in our ancient sources as a place where human dissection could be carried out,²¹ it is far less difficult to believe that Erasistratus, like Herophilus, did his researches there, than that there was a second centre where such researches were carried out in the third century, namely Antioch. Both suggestions are in the nature of conjectures. But whereas the element of speculation in the Antioch thesis is considerable, there is nothing improbable in the alternative view, that Erasistratus, like so many other third-century scientists, worked for a time in Alexandria—even though direct evidence to put this beyond doubt is lacking.²²

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²¹ Apart from the passage in Galen (K II 220-1) already mentioned, cf. also Fulgentius, *Mitologiarum*, Helm, p. 9.

²² The only sound direct evidence associating Erasistratus with the Ptolemies is the statement in Caelius Aurelianus (*On Chronic Diseases* v 2 50-1, mentioned by Fraser at *RL* pp. 526 f.) that he prescribed a plaster for King Ptolemy's gout. But that report does not necessarily imply either that Erasistratus was, or that he was not, at Alexandria at the time.

Back Views of the Ancient Greek Kithara

(PLATE XIX a)

In an appendix to their article 'Lute-Players in Greek Art' (*JHS* lxxxv [1965], 62-71) R. A. Higgins and R. P. Winnington-Ingram included useful material on the shape of the kithara, with a list of representations that attempt to show the depth and shape of the back of the kithara sound-box.¹ The list includes a mid-sixth-century metope from Delphi, back views from late fifth-century to late fourth-century coins, Hellenistic terra-cottas, and a back view on a late second- or early first-century relief, Athens National Museum 1966. These more-or-less three-dimensional objects show us a characteristic of the kithara that may affect the possibilities of playing technique, one that cannot be guessed by looking at the many front-view paintings: the back of the kithara soundbox bulges out at the top, tapering toward the base; and in examples from the fifth century and later, it rises to a vertical ridge running down the centre of the back.

To this group of objects should be added one more important item from the fifth century: the back view of a kithara which is part of the Parthenon frieze of the Panathenaic procession (447-432 B.C.). On

¹ Side views of the lyre and kithara, also mentioned by Higgins and Winnington-Ingram in connexion with the Mantinea reliefs, are treated in more detail by the present author in *The Galpin Society Journal* xxvii (1974).

slab VIII of the North Frieze (now on display in the Akropolis Museum as plaque 875) two kithara players move to the left. The first player shows the front of his instrument as he looks back toward the player following, but the second player faces forward and so shows us the back of his instrument. The right half of it is partly obscured by the player's arm and the traditional long cloth that hangs from the instrument, but the important features are clear.²

The relief, though probably shallower than an accurate scale model, is deep enough to permit some indication of the ridge down the centre of the back, the angle of the two halves of the back as they rise to this ridge, and the resulting triangular addition to the shape of the base. The upper edge of the body which, in the many kithara representations of the period, normally rises gently to the centre, would not show in this example even if the edge were not broken, as the player's hand and wrist-sling would have been in the way (the horizontal line near the top seems to indicate the wrist-sling). All that remains of the instrument's ornamental arms is the base of the one held against the player's chest.

From the standpoint of playing technique, it is the depth of the soundbox at the top that is of special interest, for the player (it is generally agreed) plucked and damped the strings with his left-hand fingers. It may not have been as easy to do this as we think; for his forearm lay over the bulging back of the soundbox, and this fact must be considered in assessing the possibilities for the use of the left hand.

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² The shape of the instruments is unfortunately not at all correctly represented in the Carrey drawing of this section of the frieze. The drawing does, however, provide information about the original number of players, the directions in which they faced, and so on. See Theodore Bowie and Diether Thimme, *Carrey Drawings of the Parthenon Sculptures* (Bloomington, Ind. and London, 1971), pl. 32.

Meniskoi and the Birds*

For Chick and Weedi

(PLATE XIX b-d)

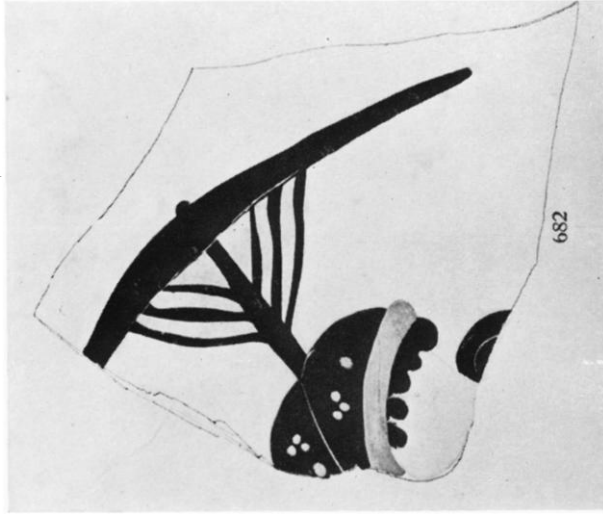
Mentior at si quid, merdis caput inquirer albis corvorum, atque in me veniat mictum atque cacatum Iulius et fragilis Peditia furque Voranus.

Horace, *Satires* I, viii, 37-9.

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(d)



682

(b)



Bartine's sunshade hat | 1890

(c)



(a) The Parthenon Frieze:
North Frieze, Slab VIII.

MENISKOI AND THE BIRDS

BACK VIEWS OF THE ANCIENT
GREEK KITHARA