



Greek Myths in Funerary Contexts of the Bosphoran Kingdom

Or: The Myth of the Niobids revisited

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veröffentlicht am 17.10.2008

Abstract

Gegenstand des Aufsatzes ist die Thematisierung des Niobidenmythos in römerzeitlichen Gräbern des Bosphoranischen Reiches. Es handelt sich bei den Darstellungen um einzelne Figuren und Figurengruppen, die als Ton- oder Gipsappliken ursprünglich an den Wänden von Holz Sarkophagen befestigt waren. Die Kombination von Holz Sarkophagen und Applikenserien mit Darstellungen fliehender und sterbender Menschen, die an den Mythos der Niobidentötung erinnern, lässt sich als lokales Phänomen für den kurzen Zeitraum vom Ende des 1. – Anfang des 2. Jh. n. Chr. fassen. Es kann gezeigt werden, dass die Verwendung des Mythos bzw. der Figuren eines Mythos im bosporanischen Grabkontext nach ganz eigenen Konventionen funktioniert und sich nicht allein auf Vorbilder aus der griechischen oder römischen Kunst beziehen lässt, wie es in der bisherigen Forschung weitestgehend gehandhabt wurde.^[1]

Introduction

The myth of the Niobids appears widely in ancient texts and images and takes a number of different forms, according to the purpose, medium and context of representation. Several authors provide us with variants of the myth, most well-known probably that of Ovid.^[2] The basic story line of the myth can be summarized as follows: two deities, Apollo and Artemis, take revenge for the disgrace done to their mother Leto. She has been provoked by the mortal Niobe, the mother of many children, who boasts about the number of her offspring in comparison to the divine Leto. Niobe's *hybris* is punished severely by Apollo and Artemis who shoot all of her children with arrows.

Famous representations of or allusions to the myth include images on Greek vases and sculpture groups.^[3] The myth can also be found on Roman marble sarcophagi of the 2nd century ^[4], although it is much less frequently represented than other mythical subjects.

In this paper another group of images, which are often associated with the myth of the Niobids, shall be introduced. They belong to sarcophagi contemporary with the 2nd century Roman ones but which originate in the Bosporan kingdom, a region outside the *Imperium Romanum*. It shall be argued that the myth of the Niobids in the Bosporan context is used in a much more abbreviated form and operates within the conventions of a local funerary tradition. This paper offers a new approach to the interpretation of Greek myths in the funerary contexts of the Bosporan kingdom.

The material under discussion

The Bosporan kingdom, which came into existence as a league of several Greek colonies and local tribes around the Cimmerian Bosphorus in the 5th century B.C., is located in the Northern Black Sea region. More precisely, it comprised the territories of the Eastern Crimean peninsula and the Taman peninsula as well as part of the neighbouring littoral. Pantikapaion (modern Kerč) on the Crimean peninsula was the capital of the Bosporan kingdom. In the period considered here, the 1st and 2nd centuries, the Bosporan kingdom was a vassal state of the Roman Empire, ruled by kings of Sarmatian origin.

The research material consists of mould-made appliquéés made of plaster or clay, which originally formed part of the decoration of wooden sarcophagi. Only fragments of these sarcophagi survive. The appliquéés, which have been found in large numbers, were painted with bright colours, traces of which still can be perceived. Heights of individual appliquéés range from 17 – 30 cm. The surface of those made from plaster differs considerably from the more detailed examples in clay which appear to be of a higher quality. A chronological determination by style, such as has previously been attempted [6], thus appears to be problematic. It is more sensible to refer to datable material from the respective tomb contexts, such as coins or glass vessels. From this external contextual evidence the appliquéés can be dated between the end of the 1st and the middle of the 2nd century. A more detailed chronology is impossible because of the lack of information about many of the tombs.[7]

Wooden sarcophagi with applied decoration already appear in tombs of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. in this region, although the earlier appliquéés are usually made of much more precious materials, such as gilded ivory. In addition, they are found in outstanding tombs only.[8] The innovative aspects of the sarcophagi of the 1st and 2nd centuries mainly consist in the material of the appliquéés as well as in the frequency with which they appear in Bosporan tombs. Although they are different from their predecessors, the use of wooden sarcophagi with applied decoration seems to constitute a local, Bosporan tradition going back to Hellenistic times.[9]

The huge number of appliqué finds suggests that lavish decoration was widespread on Bosporan sarcophagi of the 1st and 2nd centuries. Predominant motifs are theatre masks, Gorgoneia, little Erotes riding on dolphins or geese, floral ornaments and huge acroterial palmettes. Against this background the comparatively small number of human-shaped figures stands out. Most of them have been read as associated with the mythological slaughter of the Niobids. These “Niobid appliquéés”[10] will be considered here. Archaeologists so far have concentrated on a direct comparison of the Bosporan Niobids with representations of the myth in Greek and Roman art.[11] The effect that individual tomb contexts or the medium and quality of appliqué decoration may have on the mythological narrative rarely figures in these considerations, nor has critical analysis of the iconography of single appliquéés been undertaken.[12]

Typology

The appliqué^[13] can be divided into three main groups, each of them comprising several types. Some of the types occur very frequently among the material currently known, others are unique so far. Although this typology appears at first glance to be rather broadly defined, the single types are based on a number of clearly noticeable postures and gestures, which are frequently repeated and recombined.

The first group consists of single male and female figures, usually described as Niobids because of their specific, youthful iconography.^[14] Some of them indeed bear close parallels to representations of Niobids in Greek and Roman art.^[15] The male Niobids are always clean-shaven and apart from a cloak, which has often become loose, are in most cases nude. The female Niobids wear the *chiton* or *peplos*, often with a cloak on top. All of them seem to be in distress: running (“fleeing”), kneeling or standing with almost lifeless bearing. Their individual gestures add to this: (“pleadingly”) raised hands, arms limply hanging down or pointing at something from which they might run away. These motifs are well-known from Greek art in all kinds of media.

The second group includes single figures, which are usually described as the nurse and the *paidagogos* of the Niobids.^[16] In most cases, these figures are shown in a standing position, and, unlike the Niobids, do not seem to be in any obvious distress. Moreover, the calm and composed bearing of these figures is peculiar in contrast to the Niobids. The interpretation as nurse and *paidagogos* is problematic because the figures lack any specific iconography and due to the chosen medium of single appliqué cannot be related directly to the Niobids in spatial terms. The statuesque posture of these men and women is reminiscent rather of representations of Greek citizens in Hellenistic times.^[17] They can better be regarded as bystanders, perhaps assuming the role of mourners.

Excursus: A winged demon

One of these types, however, is remarkably different: the figure of a bearded man dressed in a long-sleeved robe, which reaches to his feet, and a cloak (*himation*) on top.^[18] The man is not standing, but moving to the left. With his right hand he touches his beard, a gesture which is reminiscent of the famous statue of the seer displayed in the Eastern pediment of the temple of Zeus in Olympia. The most unusual feature are the bird wings which protrude from the back of the figure. Though exceptional even among the Bosporan appliqué, this figure is usually referred to as a *paidagogos*.^[19] This assumption arises from the crucial role of the *paidagogos* in the visualization of the myth of the Niobids on Roman sarcophagi, in Greek vase painting as well as in the sculpture groups: he is never missing. However, the Bosporan type does not exhibit the specific iconographical features of a *paidagogos*. The Bosporan coroplasts were acquainted with the formal language and iconography of Greek and Roman art, a fact which is reflected in the high quality of the clay appliqué. If they had wished to depict a *paidagogos*, they could easily have manipulated Greco-Roman iconographical conventions in order to do so. Another interpretation seems to be more plausible: from the other appliqué types it is evident that the Bosporan artisans adapted certain well-known motifs from Classical art and combined them in new types with specific Bosporan features such as the entirely abstract treatment of drapery. The so-called *paidagogos* may have come into being in a similar way: his drapery is not entirely unusual for this region, as persons with long-sleeved clothes frequently feature in local art.^[20] Moreover, the fact that this figure plays an important role is emphasized by his unusual gesture and, most importantly, by his large wings. In the realm of death wings

distinguish their bearers from mortal human beings. Demons of death who lead the deceased to the underworld have them, as do (again death-related) creatures with half-human half-beast characteristics such as sirens and sphinxes. The large bird wings of the Bosporan figure are typically used for the illustration of demons such as Hypnos and Thanatos in Greek art.^[21] Combining a locally inspired costume with large wings as well as a “prophetic” gesture, the Bosporan artisans thus seem to have created a new iconographic type of a death demon rather than that of a *paidagogos*.^[22]

Finally, the third group include appliquéés which combine two figures.^[23] They share a similar structure: a lifeless figure, referred to as Niobid, is carried or held protectively by another figure. The helping partner in the pair can be either another Niobid (according to iconography) or a different personage: a bearded man dressed in a cloak or a woman with heavy drapery. As in the case of the single appliquéés an exact identification of the adult figures appears to be problematic. However, there is one crucial difference: the group appliquéés show an interaction between two figures which can be described as quite intimate. In these cases it is much more appropriate to speak of either the parents or another very close person such as a nurse or a *paidagogos*. These images do not necessarily have to be restricted to the myth of the Niobids but might also be read in a more general way.

One crucial aspect of the myth of the Niobids has not yet been mentioned. Where are the angry deities, Apollo and Artemis, and where are their deadly weapons? As far as can be seen from the analysed material neither of them figures among the Bosporan appliquéés, nor are any arrows visible. It would be possible, of course, to assume additional painted decoration on the walls of the sarcophagi which might have indicated the weapons used by the deities or even the deities themselves. But this cannot be proved with the few sarcophagi which survived. There is no information about such additional painting, and it seems rather unlikely that the deities were painted instead of sculpted as appliquéés.

Although there are some obvious discrepancies with regard to the use of perspective in the depiction of body and dress or the decorative emphasis on the drapery, in terms of style the terracotta appliquéés point to a Classical formal language. It is more difficult to make this claim for the plaster appliquéés, but this might be explained by the quality of the material. The motifs used are widespread in Greek and Roman art and are not confined to the depiction of the Niobids. We can exclude the possibility that the Bosporan appliquéés as a whole are based on *specific* monuments of Greek or Roman art which depict the myth of the Niobids. On the contrary, the Bosporan artisans display an astonishing ability to create new types *ad hoc*, as can be perceived most strikingly in the figure of the winged demon.

Burial contexts

Information about eleven burial contexts with appliquéés of the kind discussed above has been collected, ten of which can be located in the territory of ancient Pantikapaion.

In many cases the appliquéés have been found in simple earth graves with or without a covering of stone slabs. With a few exceptions, they contained single burials. Those tombs for which measurements have been recorded only provide a minimum of space, thus making it virtually impossible to step into them after the burial.

Both women and men were buried in the tombs under investigation. An exclusively gender-specific function of the myth of the Niobids in Bosporan tombs must therefore be doubted.^[24]

The range of grave goods is quite broad and displays typical features which are

reflected in contemporary tombs.^[25] According to the record of finds, the deceased frequently had been decorated with ornaments such as earrings, which apparently were reserved for women, finger rings and wreaths made of paper-thin golden leaves. Widespread grave goods include glass vessels, especially *unguentaria* which served as containers for precious liquids such as oil and perfume, and pottery. In addition, a variety of objects made of bronze (keys, strigils, etc) have been found. Although some of the objects might at first glance appear gender-specific, knives can be found in both male and female burials. The grave goods were arranged around the sarcophagus or put in wall niches. There are indications for specific burial activities, such as the direction in which the head of the deceased was pointed (predominantly towards the East). Some of the tombs were prepared with additional bedding made of natural materials. This suggests that the burial itself was an important, carefully performed part of the funeral rites. On the other hand, in most cases the measurements and construction of the tombs would not have allowed post-burial activities inside the tombs. This is again supported by the fact that in two cases the relevant burials had been covered by a secondary burial. Unfortunately, we have no reliable information about post-burial activities outside the tombs. However, there are a great number of Bosporan grave stelai recorded for this time, unfortunately in most cases without context.^[26]

5. Reconstruction and contextualization

The overall appearance of sarcophagi with Niobid and related appliquéés has been reconstructed according to the drawings of a tomb which was excavated in the necropolis on Mount Mithridates in 1874. The tomb at that time contained a well-preserved wooden sarcophagus.^[27] Due to the appliquéés which have been found alongside, archaeologists refer to it as the “Niobid sarcophagus from Pantikapaion”.

The drawings show a wooden sarcophagus with walls structured by half and three-quarter columns as well as other parts which strongly recall the architecture of a Greek temple. On all sides of the sarcophagus, the space between the columns above the lattice is filled with appliquéés. One of the appliquéés is shown *in situ*; the others are indicated by shadows and were drawn separately.^[28]

A similar reconstruction can be assumed for some of the other sarcophagi from tombs which contained Niobid appliquéés because of corresponding finds (parts of columns or capitals etc). However, we must be cautious about assuming that this was a standard design. During the first two centuries different types of sarcophagi were in use in Pantikapaian tombs, among them ones without columns.^[29]

Our knowledge about the decorative scheme of the sarcophagi is even more fragmentary. For some of the graves the exact position of the appliquéés on the floor in relation to the mortal remains has been recorded during excavation. In these cases it is possible to suggest the order in which the appliquéés were originally attached to the sarcophagus. In one tomb the excavators found two identical sets of appliquéés of seven different types, each set consisting of three female and three male Niobids as well as one “winged demon” (the so-called *paidagogos*).^[30] In total, there are six female and six male Niobids which would correspond to the numbers of Niobe’s children referred to in some of the literary sources. The two sets were attached to the long sides of the sarcophagus with an attempt at symmetry. Only general statements about the appliquéés in the other tombs can be made: the total number of Niobids and related figures varies between the tombs; the same is true for the choice of material (plaster / clay) and types. In some of the tombs the same type has been found twice or even three times, whereas others contained only single types. These distinctions point to varying principles of sarcophagus decoration, indicating a degree of flexibility in the use and perception of the appliquéés.

Reconstructions of the original sarcophagus decoration therefore remain vague and have to be treated with great caution. In addition, it is necessary to bear in mind that in many cases the Niobids were found together with more standardized and decorative elements.

In order to put the Bosporan appliquéés and their mythological implications in a wider context we can compare them with the few roughly contemporary Roman sarcophagi which take the myth of the Niobids as a central theme.^[31] On the marble sarcophagi from Rome the myth is usually restricted to the carved front side including the lid; the back side of the sarcophagi was not carved. For one sarcophagus the original placement in the tomb can be reconstructed, which indicates that only the carved front side was visible. Additionally, the tomb was visited after the burial.^[32] In contrast, the Bosporan sarcophagus in the drawing of 1874 is furnished with single appliquéés which were attached to the spaces between the columns on *all* sides. All sides of the Bosporan sarcophagi were equally important and could be viewed most easily (and – in the majority of known contexts – only) during the funeral. Moreover, as noted above, many of the tombs could not be entered after the burial. It seems very likely that the sarcophagi lose their importance after burial, a fact which is further supported by the ephemeral character of the material chosen for the Bosporan sarcophagi.

Both the wooden Bosporan sarcophagi and the marble sarcophagi from Rome share death and flight as a central idea. However, the Roman sarcophagi tell a *narrative* of death with clear indications of a mythological scene, depicting the arrows, the gods (on the lid or at the sides of the main panel), the nurse, the *paidagogos* and the parents. Among the Niobids, which can be identified by context, several ways of dying are dramatically represented. The chosen medium of carved panels creates a contextual frame with a background and interacting figures, thus allowing us to perceive the image as a narrative.

On the Bosporan sarcophagi the myth is indicated on an abstract level only. The display of separate appliquéés naturally lacks the uniting character of a carved marble panel. Interaction between single figures is expressed only in the appliquéés which contain a group of two. Apart from the so-called Niobids themselves, who are shown dying or fleeing in a manner comparable to the Niobids on the Roman sarcophagi, a specific link to the myth of the Niobids is disputable. There are no arrows or deities, and the adult figures cannot satisfactorily be identified as parents, nurse or *paidagogos*: most of the features typical to the “conventional” representation of the myth are missing. Furthermore, in some tombs more than one appliqué depicting the same scene has been found. This indicates that the decorative scheme of the sarcophagus was organised around a series of repeated motifs, usually those of death and flight, and points to a non-narrative reading of such scenes.

6. Conclusions

In this paper an element of sarcophagus decoration from Bosporan tomb contexts has been discussed, which is conventionally described as a representation of the myth of the Niobids. It has been shown that the myth is not fully narrated, but merely alluded to. Aspects of the myth which are important in Greek and Roman representations do not figure in the Bosporan sarcophagus decoration: as far as can be seen, the contextual frame of the story has been omitted, leaving isolated figures which communicate the death-related ideas of suffering, flight and mourning. These figures may be read as protagonists of a myth, but also as those of real life.

Moreover, most of the tombs under investigation could not be entered again after the burial. The sarcophagi themselves were made from ephemeral materials. These two

considerations, along with the care with which the deceased were buried, point to the fact that the viewing of the Bosporan wooden sarcophagi, including their decoration, was normally restricted to the moment before the final closing of the tomb. A “long-term viewing” of the images, as in the case of the marble sarcophagi from Rome, obviously was not intended.

The Niobid appliquéés of the Bosporan sarcophagi are a local phenomenon very much restricted in time and place. However, they demonstrate a way of adopting Greek mythology according to a local “taste” which can be found in a similar form, although in different mythological contexts, in other Bosporan tombs.

In the 1st and 2nd centuries simple earth graves were numerous in the necropoleis of Pantikapaion. Nonetheless, other types of tombs existed too. Some of the burials with Niobid appliquéés and a greater number of approximately contemporary burials were found in chamber tombs, which were often decorated with wall paintings. Some of the wall paintings have Greek myths or mythological figures as their subject, next to scenes which seem to be connected to local daily life.^[33]

A very prominent example of these “mythological” images was found in the so-called Tomb of Demeter, a tomb in the Pantikapaian necropolis on Mount Mithridates. The vault chamber tomb dates to the 1st century. It was decorated with wall paintings, the most noteworthy of which is a depiction of the rape of Persephone by Pluto.^[34] The mythological narrative here is very much reduced, but a name inscription above the head of Pluto leaves no doubt as to the myth in question. Pluto is shown as a bearded giant who embraces a tiny, somewhat doll-like Persephone in front of him. Both are standing on a chariot which is drawn by four horses and depicted in an odd perspective. The rendering of the drapery, the bodies and the chariot appears to be more decorative than descriptive. A cupid floats above the heads of the horses with a whip in one hand and the reins in the other. This scene differs considerably from depictions of the myth on Roman sarcophagi.^[35] Comparable with the Niobid appliquéés, the expressiveness and visual importance of Pluto is eye-catching: the narrative qualities of the myth thus become secondary to the huge figure of the lord of the underworld.

Comparison with other mythological images in Bosporan tombs contextualises a reading of the Bosporan wooden sarcophagi with Niobid appliquéés. The images under discussion have to be considered in their local, Bosporan context with its own tradition of burial customs as well as a specific iconography and a taste for certain topics.

Footnotes

- 1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Spring School in Erfurt, March 2008. A more detailed article will be published later, probably in 2009. It is based on the author’s Magister thesis, „Der Niobidenmythos als Thema römischer Sarkophage im Bosporanischen Reich“, University of Leipzig, May 2004. Thanks go both to the organizers of the Spring School who provided the opportunity to present this paper, and to “Archaeologie Online” for subsequently publishing it. I would also like to express my thanks to U. Sternbach, M. C. Fuchsle and F. Köhler, who read through the draft and made useful suggestions. For the finishing touch to the English text I want to thank R. Harman. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:1\)](#)
- 2 *Ov. Met.* 6, 146–312. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:2\)](#)

- 3 Well-known examples are the name vase of the Niobid painter: M. Denoyelle, *Le cratère des Niobides* (Paris 1997); the group of Niobe and her children which was brought to the Uffizi in the 18th century (so-called Florentine Niobids): W. Geominy, *Die Florentiner Niobiden* (Diss. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn 1982). Roman mythological sarcophagi with the subject of the Niobids: K. Fittschen, *Der Tod der Kreusa und der Niobiden. Überlegungen zur Deutung griechischer Mythen auf römischen Sarkophagen*, in: *StlFilCl* 10, 1992, 1046–1059; P. Zanker – B. C. Ewald, *Mit Mythen leben. Die Bilderwelt der römischen Sarkophage* (München 2004) 76–80. 355–359. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:3\)](#)
- 4 If not stated otherwise, all dates are A. D. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:4\)](#)
- 5 For a detailed discussion on the question of why obviously death-related topics such as the myth of the Niobids played only a minor role on Roman sarcophagi, cf. P. Zanker – B. C. Ewald, *Mit Mythen leben. Die Bilderwelt der römischen Sarkophage* (München 2004) 110–115. 255–256. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:5\)](#)
- 6 To the late Classical and Hellenistic period: L. Stephani, in: *CRPétersbourg 1863* (St.-Pétersbourg 1864) 166; C. Watzinger, *Griechische Holzarkophage aus der Zeit Alexanders des Grossen* (Leipzig 1905). [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:6\)](#)
- 7 Most of the Niobid appliquéés are kept in museums without archaeological passport: cf. the collections of the Antikensammlung in Berlin, Louvre, Archaeological Museum in Odessa, National Museum in Warsaw etc. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:7\)](#)
- 8 Such as the well-known sarcophagus with gilded wooden carvings from Gorgippia / Anapa, which is dated to the 3rd century B. C.: V. F. Gajdukevič, *Das Bosporanische Reich* ²(Berlin 1971) 294 fig. 87–88. For another sarcophagus with gilded ivory inlays and painted decoration from the Zmejnyj kurgan, Juz-Oba (4th century B. C.): V. F. Gajdukevič, *Das Bosporanische Reich* ²(Berlin 1971) 295 fig. 89. Both sarcophagi are kept in the Hermitage. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:8\)](#)
- 9 Wooden sarcophagi with applied decoration have also been found in Egypt. However, these belong to the Hellenistic period, the measurements of the appliquéés are much smaller, and there are other differences. The range of motifs is not comparable to the Bosporan variety. Cf. K. Parlasca, *Zur griechischen Grabkunst Ägyptens in hellenistischer Zeit*, in: U. Höckmann – D. Kreikenbom (ed.), *Naukratis: Die Beziehungen zu Ostgriechenland, Ägypten und Zypern in archaischer Zeit. Akten der Table Ronde in Mainz, 25.-27. November 1999* (Möhnesee 2001) 175–182 pl. 24–28. Apart from Egypt, terracotta appliquéés as part of sarcophagus decoration are recorded for the 4th century B. C. necropolis of Taranto. They are bigger in size than the Egyptian appliquéés, but show a similar range of motifs and are gilded. Cf. R. Lullies, *Vergoldete Terrakotta-Appliken aus Tarent*, *RM Erg. 7* (Heidelberg 1962). [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:9\)](#)
- 10 For practical reasons this term will be used throughout the essay, although I argue for an ambiguous perception of the identity of the figures. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:10\)](#)
- 11 Cf. W. Geominy, *Die Florentiner Niobiden* (Diss. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn 1982) 302; H. Schulze, *Ammen und Pädagogen. Sklavinnen und Sklaven als Erzieher in der antiken Kunst und Gesellschaft* (Mainz am Rhein 1998) 84–85 with fn. 565; T. Harten, *Paidagogos. Der Pädagoge in der griechischen Kunst* (Kiel 1999) 361. Harten and Geominy suggest that the style of the Bosporan appliquéés combines elements of several earlier Greek representations of the Niobids. Pinelli and Wasowicz [P. Pinelli – A. Wasowicz, *Musée du Louvre. Catalogue des bois et stucs grecs et romains provenant de Kertch* (Paris 1986) 66–83] consistently assume that the “Florentine Niobids” functioned as models. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:11\)](#)

- 12 Cf. W. Geominy, *Die Florentiner Niobiden* (Diss. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn 1982) 302; H. Schulze, *Ammen und Pädagogen. Sklavinnen und Sklaven als Erzieher in der antiken Kunst und Gesellschaft* (Mainz am Rhein 1998) 84–85 with fn. 565; T. Harten, *Paidagogos. Der Pädagoge in der griechischen Kunst* (Kiel 1999) 361. Harten and Geominy suggest that the style of the Bosporan appliqués combines elements of several earlier Greek representations of the Niobids. Pinelli and Wasowicz [P. Pinelli – A. Wasowicz, *Musée du Louvre. Catalogue des bois et stucs grecs et romains provenant de Kertch* (Paris 1986) 66–83] consistently assume that the “Florentine Niobids” functioned as models. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:12\)](#)
- 13 The first publication providing a typology of the Bosporan appliqués is S. A. Žebelev, *Drevnosti južnoj Rossii. Pantikapejskie Niobidy, Materialy po Archeologii Rossii* 24 (S.-Peterburg 1901). [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:13\)](#)
- 14 S. A. Žebelev, *Drevnosti južnoj Rossii. Pantikapejskie Niobidy, Materialy po Archeologii Rossii* 24 (S.-Peterburg 1901) no. 5–19 fig. 5–17 pl. 1–2. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:14\)](#)
- 15 Such as the Bosporan appliqué type of a kneeling Niobid, which resembles the statue of the so-called Narkissos in Florence [Galleria dei Uffizi no. 299; G. A. Mansuelli, *Galleria degli Uffizi I* (Roma 1958) 120 no. 81 fig. 83] as well as one of the Niobids in the neo-attic “Relief Campana” in St. Petersburg, Hermitage no. A 434 (C. Vogelpohl, *Die Niobiden vom Thron des Zeus in Olympia*, in: *Jdl* 95, 1980, 199. 203 fig. 2. 6). [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:15\)](#)
- 16 S. A. Žebelev, *Drevnosti južnoj Rossii. Pantikapejskie Niobidy, Materialy po Archeologii Rossii* 24 (S.-Peterburg 1901) no. 20–23 fig. 18–21 pl. 3. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:16\)](#)
- 17 This type can also be met on Bosporan grave stelai of the 1st century. G. v. Kieseritzky – C. Watzinger, *Griechische Grabreliefs aus Südrussland* (Berlin 1909). Comparable are the mourning women on a sarcophagus from Sidon (the so-called Klagefrauensarkophag), though this is dated to the 4th century B.C.: R. Fleischer, *Der Klagefrauensarkophag aus Sidon*, *IstForsch* 34 (Tübingen 1983). [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:17\)](#)
- 18 S. A. Žebelev, *Drevnosti južnoj Rossii. Pantikapejskie Niobidy, Materialy po Archeologii Rossii* 24 (S.-Peterburg 1901) 12–14 no. 20 d pl. 3; P. Pinelli – A. Wasowicz, *Musée du Louvre. Catalogue des bois et stucs grecs et romains provenant de Kertch* (Paris 1986) 81–82 no. 21; J. Machowska, *Gipsschmuck auf den Holzsarkophagen aus Pantikapaion*, in: K. M. Ciałowicz - J. A. Ostrowski (ed.), *Les civilisations du bassin méditerranéen. Hommages à Joachim Śliwa* (Cracovie 2000) 261–270 fig. 5. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:18\)](#)
- 19 Interpretation as paidagogos: One of the earliest accounts of this interpretation is found in K. B. Stark, *Niobe und die Niobiden in ihrer literarischen, künstlerischen und mythologischen Bedeutung* (Leipzig 1863) 203–205 pl. 5–7. Most of the later publications accept Stark’s interpretation without question. A variant can be found in Geominy’s monograph; he ascribes prophetic abilities to the paidagogos: W. Geominy, *Die Florentiner Niobiden* (Diss. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn 1982) 315. On the other hand, Schulze convincingly questions the identification of the Bosporan appliqué with a paidagogos: H. Schulze, *Ammen und Pädagogen. Sklavinnen und Sklaven als Erzieher in der antiken Kunst und Gesellschaft* (Mainz am Rhein 1998) 88. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:19\)](#)
- 20 Cf. to the wall paintings in Bosporan chamber tombs of that time: A. Wasowicz, *Les coutumes funéraires du Bosphore à l’époque de Mithridate VI Eupator et de ses successeurs*, in: *RA* 1, 1990, 61–84. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:20\)](#)
- 21 Cf. E. Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Pottery* (Berkeley 1979) 149–151 fig. 2–4; 153 fig. 6; 159 fig. 12. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:21\)](#)
- 22 I would like to thank J. Mylonopoulos who drew my attention to this convincing interpretation. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:22\)](#)
- 23 S. A. Žebelev, *Drevnosti južnoj Rossii. Pantikapejskie Niobidy, Materialy po Archeologii Rossii* 24 (S.-Peterburg 1901) no. 1–4 fig. 1–4. [↪ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:23\)](#)

- 24 A gender-specific function has been proposed by Pinelli and Wasowicz: P. Pinelli – A. Wasowicz, Musée du Louvre. Catalogue des bois et stucs grecs et romains provenant de Kertch (Paris 1986) 29; P. Pinelli, A propos d'un décor de sarcophage provenant de Kertch, in: RLouvre 37, 1987, 275–276. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:24\)](#)
- 25 For a typical range of grave goods in Bosporan tombs during the first two centuries, cf.: M. Rostowzew, Skythien und der Bosphorus I. Kritische Übersicht der schriftlichen und archäologischen Quellen (Berlin 1931) 200–201. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:25\)](#)
- 26 G. v. Kieseritzky – C. Watzinger, Griechische Grabreliefs aus Südrussland (Berlin 1909). [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:26\)](#)
- 27 L. Stephani, Erklärung einiger im Jahre 1874 im südlichen Russland gefundener Kunstwerke, in: CRPétersbourg 1875 (St.-Pétersbourg 1876) title; pl. 1. Today, the sarcophagus and the appliqués are missing. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:27\)](#)
- 28 Publication of this tomb and its contents: CRPétersbourg 1874 (St.-Pétersbourg 1875) III. IX–X; L. Stephani, Erklärung einiger im Jahre 1874 im südlichen Russland gefundener Kunstwerke, in: CRPétersbourg 1875 (St.-Pétersbourg 1876) 5–91 pl. 1, 1–20. 2, 1. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:28\)](#)
- 29 C. Watzinger, Griechische Holz Sarkophage aus der Zeit Alexanders des Grossen (Leipzig 1905); N. I. Sokol'skij, Antičnye derevjannye sarkofagi severnogo Pričernomor'ja (Moskva 1969). [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:29\)](#)
- 30 Otčet Imperatorskoj Archeologičeskoj Kommissii 1902 (Petrograd 1903) 50–51 no. 485 fig. 80. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:30\)](#)
- 31 Cf. fn. 3. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:31\)](#)
- 32 R. Bielfeldt, Orest im Medusengrab, RM 110, 2003, 136–150. I would like to thank K. Meinecke for informing me of this reference. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:32\)](#)
- 33 Cf. fn. 19. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:33\)](#)
- 34 A. Barbet, Rostovtseff et la peinture antique de la mer Noire, CRAI 1999, 40 fig. 9. 10; R. Lindner, Der Raub der Persephone in der antiken Kunst, Beiträge zur Archäologie 16 (Würzburg 1984) 56–57. 105 ff no. 44–46 pl. 17, 1; T. A. S. Tinkoff-Utechin, Ancient painting from South Russia. The rape of Persephone, in: BICS 26, 1979, 13–26. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:34\)](#)
- 35 P. Zanker – B. C. Ewald, Mit Mythen leben. Die Bilderwelt der römischen Sarkophage (München 2004) 91–94. 367–372. [↩ \(/tagungsberichte/tombs-as-places-of-cult-and-imagination/greek-myths-in-funerary-contexts-of-the-bosporan-kingdom/#fnref:35\)](#)