THE MAENADS: MORE THAN GREECE’S GOOD-TIME GIRLS: AN
EXAMINATION IN ATHENIAN IMAGE, TEXT AND HISTORICAL
EVIDENCE

A Thesis in
Art History
by
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is the only work to date that examines the evidence for maenadism from evidence on vases, on inscriptions and within tragedy and from historical writers in one dissertation. This dissertation deals with the assertion that the alteration of maenadism in its various forms occurs over time and can be perceived in literary and material form. In addition, the change of attitude toward maenadism (as demonstrated on vases and in literature) in antiquity (especially from the Classical age into the Hellenistic age) demonstrates a heightened sense of ancient “urgency” in acknowledging the “over-domestication” of women and subsequently a heightened danger of “maddened” women to the polis in general. In observing current concerns regarding, 1) mythological connections with “evidence” of maenad ritual as interpreted from ancient literature (both epic and tragedy as well as from ancient historians), as they relate thereto, and 2) the historical validity of maenadism (and interpretations thereof) from inscription evidence, one is confronted with yet a third element: the continuity and/or change of these elements as they relate to each other over time and sometimes space. In so approaching maenadism, it is asserted that a more comprehensive yet broader understanding of maenadism can be reached.

The above issues will be approached with the ultimate notion in mind that mythical maenadism, a historical mechanism of Greek intellects and artists, perpetuated, or echoed a sense of “warning” to the polis to guard one’s precious instincts (the balance between the wild self and the civilized self) and to “adhere” specifically to the dangerous condition of the over-domestication (as an effect of an overly patriarchal legal system) of women within the polis. In “mythical ritual,” as for example, in the Bacchae by Euripides, the urgency of the warning seems to have reached its highest point during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The “maenadic metaphor” is also to be found in the dramatic works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

Evidence from inscriptions supports the existence of “real maenad” activity in the third and second centuries BCE. This dissertation highlights the high status of the maenads as tragic figures, as time honored, and as important to the Athenians. There is an
increase seen in “real” (material) evidence of maenadism that coincides with the decrease in the marginality of women’s appearance in public spheres into the Hellenistic age. From inscriptions describing the penalties to be paid for not attending meetings, and for not joining the dance on the hill, more than social status is indicated. It seems that a particular economic status of the well-born and presumably citizen women who participated in maenadism in ancient Greece was required. This is contrary to the images we have of wild women, free and unrestricted, that is seen on vases, but is truer to the image of the ancient Greek historians who implied that maenads were well-respected citizen women who were socially sanctioned to perform the important rites of Dionysos.

In so far as this dissertation represents a serious attempt to compile the extant scholarship surrounding the concept of maenadism (as well as to assert my theory on the ancient message of the dangers of over-domestication), it should be noted that my theoretical hypothesis is based on evidence that is only available materially. Of course, I do not presume to generalize the hypothesized trend as having been purposeful by Homer, the tragedians, ancient historians, the Greek population, or the authors who have wrestled with the meaning of the maenad in myth, ritual and history in modern times.

Status was important, and marriage was a major cause of inquiry by the tragedians. Historians often described matrons and maidens in terms of distinct differences regarding their duties to the god. In tragedy, events surrounding marriage (or lack thereof) were events that “caused” the maenadic metaphor to occur. In the case of Andromache, for example, it is the “undoing” of the ritual of marriage and the negation of her role as wife which brings on madness, as well as maenadic behavior, and causes her to abandon her domestic space. This dissertation highlights the principal maenadic episodes and maenadic behavior in tragedy, but also demonstrates the reason for female frenzied behavior as exemplified in tragedy, specifically in Antigone’s behavior in Euripides’ Phoenician Women as she calls herself a “maenad of the dead” (Phoenician Women, 1485-92). In this case, as well as in Sophocles’ Antigone, the act of a “wedding in reverse” is not recalled as in Andromache, rather it is enacted in a bridal-funereal journey to meet her dead kin. Many tragic female characters are compared to maenads in a relationship of the act of acting like a maenad (maenadism), thus resulting in
negations of/to marriage, in what is determined as *imagined* by the Greeks from myth through tragedy.

In these pages, I attempt to untangle the paradigm of tragic women’s participation in the real as opposed to mythological maenadic metaphor. The trend that the boundary between real and imagined or mythological maenadism becomes more blurred over time becomes clear in my examination of Attic black and red figure vases from the Early Classical period into the Hellenistic period. I attempt to re-direct (in my method) the current scholarly trends in Art History and the Classics that merely support ancient texts with matching images on vases. This is a superficial modern scholarly construct of ancient society. To be more plain, we must acknowledge that vase painters did more with images than just illustrate plays and the writings of historians (or provide illustrative accompaniment to existing modern theories regarding significant queries into antiquity such as gender relations). Their role in Greek culture is far more complex and refuses to be “boxed” into categories of modern convenience.

Quantitative, as well as qualitative, study of a control group of vases provided me with a good sample of various ancient vases with images of maenads. The collection of vases in the British Museum is one of the best in the world and I was fortunate to have been able to perform original research there. I observed and recorded data for 177 images of maenads on vases out of over 6000 vases all together. The images were studied, categorized and the data was made into graphs and charts. The important information was shape and function, period, style and other characters present. Patterns emerged, and alongside the trends that emerged in the study of maenads in inscriptions and maenadic behavior in tragedy, even more issues arose. The general trend for vases follows that of the tragedies; that over time, Dionysus becomes less important to the image and function of the image of the maenad on the vase. However, more important than these, are the observations that emerged by examining the trends in all fields, and in particular, the separate development that occurred around approximately 460-470 BCE in regards to the issue of violent maenads on vases and comparing it to that issue in tragedy.

To summarize my findings: there are more amphorae (wine shapes) of the older black figure period which have maenads accompanied by Dionysus, featured on “heroic
vases” (vases with heroic scenes), and show Dionysus as a zoanon figure (plank-like and made of wood). I perceive this effort to transmit the message of the maenad as something that was socially sanctioned in the role as servants to the god until around 490-470 BCE. Possibly this phenomenon made maenads more “mythological” as opposed to “real”. With time, however, more images of maenads appear on hydria and “other” (non-wine or specifically water shapes) shapes more frequently and the images of the maenads increasingly seem to resemble regular women. This is observed as they have fewer and fewer maenad “features” such as the thyrsus, snakes, deer, cubs, torches, etc. than the older vase images and happens more frequently after 460 BCE.

My dissertation owes much to the theories by Seaford and Schlesier with regards to maenadism and tragedy. It challenges and celebrates the works of scholars such as Albert Henrichs, E. R. Dodds and A. Rapp on maenadism (mainly from epigraphs and ancient historians). Finally, it demonstrates a unique and original method of quantifying images of maenads on ancient Greek vases.
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For this most valuable opportunity, I also would like to sincerely thank the Penn State Department of Art History, the Louise D. Purcell Memorial Endowment and the Babcock Galleries Endowed Fund. I thank the Department of Art History of the Pennsylvania State University for generous support, making possible my first sojourn in Greece. This research brought a taste of the elusive of Dionysian Greece to my dissertation and made believable the practical challenges faced by ancient pilgrim maenads.

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Prologue

Pilgrimage to Mt. Parnassos Peak

This chapter, in particular, is dedicated to both Dr. Elizabeth Walters and Dr. Elizabeth Smith. To Dr. Elizabeth Walters, I owe much gratitude for the generous gift of her time to help me write a proposal that would earn me a grant from Penn State, making my first sojourn to Greece possible. To Dr. Smith, I owe the gratitude for the inspiration of the idea to make a historical pilgrimage come to life in the present day and re-create it as best as I could, as it had been done in ancient days. Dr. Smith’s discussions with me while taking her medieval art and architecture class regarding Conrad Rudolf’s contemporary pilgrimage of medieval pilgrimage churches ignited both passion for my trip and an appreciation of this approach to research! ¹

In May, 2005, I became a maenad pilgrim and attempted to validate Pausanias’ account of the ancient biennial march by women of Athens and surrounding areas to Delphi and up the slopes of Mt. Parnassos². Pausanias, in the second century BCE reported that:

The Thyiads are Attic women, who with the Delphian women go to Parnassus every other year and celebrate orgies in honor of Dionysus. It is the custom of these Thyiads to hold dances at places, including Panopeus, along the road from Athens. The epithet Homer applies to Panopeus is thought to refer to the dance of the Thyiads. ³

¹ See Rudolph (1951).
² Note: spellings of Parnassus are various: Parnasos, Parnassus, Parnassos, depending on the source. In Delphi, the usual spelling is PARNASOS today. I employ the original Parnassos as it is the best Greek spelling.
³ See Pausanias, Description of Greece, Book IV.2-4.
The journey was made much more convenient for me thanks to a modern bus system which took me from the terminal in Athens to the town of Delphi. However, the actual journey by foot would have taken approximately two weeks. There is no reason to believe that the road (being quite direct, see Figure P-1) would not have been much the same as it had been in ancient times. Interestingly enough, however, not a single person that I spoke to, who was native to Greece, knew of the name **Panopeus**, neither along the road to Delphi, nor anywhere in Greece. Pausanias notes that:

*Panopeus, a city of the Phocians, if one can give the name of city to those who possess no government, offices, no gymnasium, no theatre, no market place, no water descending to a fountain, but live in bare shelters just like the mountain cabins, right on a ravine.*

My maenad pilgrimage began after my arrival at Delphi. I had only Pausanias’ account, a new and very detailed map and the aid of shopkeepers and an orthodox priest who agreed that the ancient maenad route was surely the very old (if not ancient) pathway named “**E4.**” The following map, Figure **P-2**, illustrates the pathway that still exists today as part of the **Trans-European Trail**. It joins with the main road to and from Delphi, both eastward and westward, as well as connecting to routes going north and south. Delphi was the “belly button” (**omphalos**) of the ancient world. The red lines indicate the more public and vehicle traffic roads connecting Delphi to the rest of Greece.

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4 Due to financial and time constrictions as normal obstacles to a PhD candidate, I could not make the entire pilgrimage from Athens to Delphi, as the ancient maenads would have done, on foot. I used the remainder of my time though, studying the ancient sites at Delphi and Athens, and viewed and photographed original maenad vases and other maenad monuments.

5 See Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book III, 3-IV.2

6 See Burkert (1985). 116 where the **omphalos** is described as being located over a sunken area over a “well-like” opening in the ground of ancient times.
Figure P-1: Detail map of Greece showing the most direct modern road from Athens to Delphi
Published in 2003 by “ORAMA” NAKAS THOMAS
Figure P-2: Detail of map of PARNASSOS
Trail “E4” (in yellow), currently the Trans-European Trail
Published in November, 2002, by ANAVSI
The zigzag lines in Figure P-2 represent the more remote pathways which “zigzag” up to the mountain peak. To the right (or east) of the town of Delphi are the ancient sites of the temple of Apollo and the Delphic Oracle. They are indicated on the map with Corinthian column symbols. See also Figure P-3: towards the upper portion of the black circled area, there is a circle with the number 1169. This is a “spot elevation point” and also corresponds with the impression of a holy or sacred spot at the top of the mountain (the upper yellow check mark).

Figure P-3: Detail of map of PARNASSOS and KIFI
Published in November, 2002, by ANAVASI

Figure P-4 is a view of the Parnassos Peak that overlooks the ancient temple of Apollo site. It cannot be climbed directly to the top due to the steepness. The route to the peak is long, arduous and takes approximately two days on foot.
It is important to note the proximity of the sacred sites to the site of the biennial maenad dance (as shown in Figure P-7 particularly) and that Apollo and Dionysos shared in the function of this site. As you can see in Figure Error! Reference source not found.5, the overlook has an imposing height. Indeed, I was filled with feelings of awe as I gazed over the peak. Similarly, as I looked at the twin peaks from below, I felt humbled, very “small” and somehow as if I were being watched from high above. The place has an “other-worldly” feel to it and one can understand, upon absorbing the space that ancient inhabitants were quick to realize there was capital to be gained here from that feeling. As
I learned from discussion with them, the site has a similar effect on many tourists, and I can well imagine on ancient visitors too.

Figure P-5: Remains of the ancient temple of Apollo, Archaic period
Archaeological site, Delphi, Greece
Photo Credit: Author, May, 2005
As previously mentioned, the elevation point is marked out in a circle on Figure P-3. What I had not anticipated was the obvious meeting spot, or gathering place, at the top of the pathway, directly preceding the Parnassos point lookout on the trail. Surely this spot was not used only for maenad dances, *orgia* (secret rites of Dionysos) or biennial gatherings. It is well used, and the path worn well into the mountain surface. The natural stone arrangement enhances the impact. A sense of excitement filled my mind as I imagined the women, nearly exhausted as I was, newly invigorated after their trek, as they reached the final destination, the stone-circled spot (see Figure P-6).

![Figure P-6: Proposed site of sacred maenad meeting place](Image)

Beyond the circle of stones seen here, is a flatter area more conducive to running, jumping, and/or dancing

*Photo Credit: Author, May, 2005*
Delphi was not the only place to host festivals of Dionysos. The *Great Dionysia* (or, *Katagogia* as Burkert refers to it)⁷ was introduced in Athens by Peisistratos and held at the acropolis in the sixth century BCE. The *Anthesteria* (and the *Lenaia* which preceded it) was concerned with wine-drinking and the male sphere.⁸ Noteworthy is that this festival is held largely responsible for having left so many vases that were bought and sold at the market held especially for the festival. In addition, there was a prominent role of children in this cult due to its character as a vegetation cult.⁹ The *Agrionia* (which occurred in the Dorian and Aeolic area, according to Burkert)¹⁰ included mimicking women’s uprising, madness and cannibalistic fantasies and the *Rustic Dionysia* had goat sacrifices and a phallus procession.¹¹ There were also festivals held in Attica and Athens itself. However, actual “ritual” maenadism was apparently not practiced in Attica (conversely, the vases and tragedies would indicate that it was practiced from the popularity of the subject). Athenian women did go to Delphi though (and this pilgrimage was exclusive of men), to celebrate the maenadic rites. There are no references to “madness” in the accounts of ritual maenadism as reenacted at Delphi. Rather, the accounts imply that the married women and girls “mimicked” the maenadic behavior of the mythical women. It is presumed that once they came down, they resumed their normal lives and returned two years later.¹² Burkert also reminds us that in addition to

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⁸ *Ibid* (1985). 163. Note that this festival occurred in the Ionic-Attic area. Discussion on the “Lenaiaen vases” is reserved for Chapter 5 as they were a special group of vases made especially for this festival.
¹¹ See http://www.hfac.uh.edu/mcl/classics/Dion/Rituals_Dion.html
the state festivals, there were also local, smaller groups (*orgia*) that also celebrated *trieteric* (every alternate year).\(^{13}\)

Apollo and Dionysos shared the significance of the site at Delphi. This is well attested in ancient sources, in tragedies, comedies, and on visual monuments; see Figure P-7 where Dionysos is shaking Apollo’s hand in Delphi. We know the place because of the *omphalos* beneath. In addition, the Delphi museum information card stated that the west pediment of the classical Temple of Apollo depicted Dionysos among the Thyiads wearing a characteristic *mitra* (headband of the initiates) and holding a cithera in his left hand which places him on equal terms with the god of music, Apollo, and reconciles different realms of the opposing yet complimentary deities.

Burkert notes that the maenad celebration every other year yielded sacrifice as well (usually a bull or perhaps a goat).\(^ {14}\) However, the actual *orgia*, or celebration of the festival occurred above the sacred site, on the “fringes” of civilized society. The mysterious happenings took place in the wilderness, far away (taking two days to get there). This is in stark contrast to the “city” run festivals. Another ancient source reminds us also that while Apollo was venerated during the summer and/or spring months (as was Dionysos in the other festivals), the maenad pilgrimage occurred during the frigid winter. Plutarch, in his section of the *Moralia* on the *Principle of Cold*, states:

> And at Delphi you yourself heard, in the case of those who climbed Parnassus to rescue the Thyiades when they were trapped by a fierce gale and snowstorm, that their capes were frozen so stiff and wooden that when they were opened out, they broke and split apart.\(^ {15}\)

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\(^{13}\) See Burkert (1985). 163.
\(^{15}\) Plutarch, *Moralia, de primo frigido*, 953
My trek was comparatively easy, yet I will admit I found it arduous. It took place in May, and the weather was perfect. I cannot imagine the trek during the cold and wet conditions that are typical of winter there. It is worth noting that Delphi and Amphissa are popular ski resorts today. If the maenads slept overnight, they would have bedded down at the most logical (and only relatively flat) spot along the pathway (see Figure P-8). In addition, the maenads may have encountered wild animals or other “pesky creatures” as I did. Luckily, I had orange peels to stave them off! (See Figure P-9)

Figure P-7: Red Figure Calyx-krater
5th century BCE
Photo Credit: Hermitage, Leningrad, cat # 1807
Figure P-8: Sacred (and ancient) olive grove at the halfway point on “E4”
Author’s photograph, May, 2005

Figure P-9: Upper section of “E4”
Goats followed me and sometimes blocked my path
Photo Credit: Author, May, 2005
When I arrived at the top, there were additional indications of ritual use of the clearing at the top of the hill. Over the side were pottery shards strewn and broken (Figure P-10). Euripides’ tragic drama, *The Bacchae* echoed in my mind as I stood still, imagining the great party that would have taken place some 2500+ years ago. I imagined women dancing, arms flailing, heads tilted back, reckless abandon, the sense of freedom. I imagined the scene that the chorus sings of, and that which evoked the curiosity of old Cadmus and Teiresias and harkened them to forget their age:

**Figure P-10**: Pottery shard at elevation point “1169”

Author’s photograph, May 2005
I could drum the ground all night and all day too, without being tired. What joy it is to forget one’s age! …I feel exactly the same way, bursting with youth! I’ll try it – I’ll dance with the rest.”

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Figure **P-11**: “Dancing Thyiads” limestone column from Delphi

Photo Credit: Author, Delphi Museum, 2005

See Figure **P-11**. Between lines 137 and 198, the chorus sings:

O what delight is in the mountains! …The earth flows with milk, flows with wine, flows with nectar of bees; the air is thick with a scent of Syrian myrrh. The celebrant runs entranced, whirling the torch that blazes red from fennel-wand…On, on! Run, dance, delirious, possessed! You, the beauty and grace of golden Tmolus, Sing to the rattle of thunderous drums, Sing for joy, Praise Dionysus, god of joy!…”

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Again, drums ring out in my mind. Alas, as I listened to the quiet of the mountain, I thought that I actually heard drums, or a “beat” of sorts. “No,” I recall saying to myself. “This is the trap that many researchers fall into.” “There are no drums here!” (I say with my brow furrowed, and lips pursed). But, the beat persisted. As I followed the “imaginary” beat, I came to a stream! Water “pulsed” outward from the mountain, and hit a clay pipe that thrust inside the source of the water, in perfect rhythmic beats. (Figure P-12).

Figure P-12: Natural Stream from the top of Mt. Parnassos
Photo Credit: Author
Chapter 1
Introduction

The Maenad: Symbolic of Female Madness, or Socially Sanctioned Wild Woman Archetype? An Examination of the Changes in Athenian Image, Text and Historical Evidence.

It is unclear who coined the term maenadism. One of the most noted and influential scholars of Greek religion, Walter Burkert, does not use the term when discussing females honoring Dionysos, the festivals honoring Dionysos that have maenad ritual reenactments, the visual iconography of maenads, or even the historical reference to maenads by ancient historians and tragedians, although he does mention “Bacchic frenzy” and mania in connection with the cult.1 In contrast, more recent scholars such as Seaford and Schlesier use the term freely in the above stated contexts, but do not use the term to generalize all instances of maenad behavior.2 In his study of Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina, Albert Henrichs examines the phenomenon of maenadism as it pertains to the historical study of maenadic cult and ritual, and admits that there is a lack of objective criteria to differentiate between the phenomenon of “inspired” (by

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1 See Burkert (1985). 110 on “frenzy”; individual as induced by the Dionysos or institutionalized group or collective frenzy; and 110 on mania; 165, 166, 173, 290 specifically on maenads, but discussion is not restricted to these sections, as the topic overlaps with Dionysus, particular festivals, satyrs and other topics too.

2 See Seaford (1993) and Schlesier (1993)* The scholars here engage in an academically challenging discussion on tragic figures adopting the metaphor (Seaford) of a maenad or becoming a maenad model (Schlesier). It is not the purpose to engage the reader in that complexity, but where there is relevance to my objectives, the scholar will rightfully be credited. For intents and purposes here, I will use the “maenad metaphor” to describe regular women who become maenad-like.
myth) maenadism, such as we see in *The Bacchae*, and the actual practice of maenadism as it was conducted in any given period or place.\(^3\) In the 1940s, Dodds, in his study of *Maenadism in the Bacchae* uses the term to refer again to the practice of maenad-type ritual, reenactment of myth or any other physical manifestation of the will of Dionysos.\(^4\) In the 1870s, A. Rapp does not use the term in *Die Manade im griechischen Cultus, in der Kunst und Poesie*.\(^5\)

The current edition Oxford Classical Dictionary asserts that maenadism was integrated into the social codes of the ancient city and should not be seen as an expression of rebellion. But this tending to separate the social and religious aspect is a modern trend, and not an ancient one.\(^6\) Therefore, the term should be understood to refer to both mythical or real behavior, as well as the phenomenon of rituals involving professional or titled maenads that occurred in maenad-type contexts, which were induced by Dionysos, but socially sanctioned by the ancient Greek Poleis as well. Maenadism should also be understood to mean the object and concerns of the modern study of these phenomena. This is not to say that any person who “acted” like a maenad is considered to have participated in maenadism. That said, figures from tragedy that adopted maenadic behavior and even women who were honored on ancient inscriptions as participating in rituals of Dionysos should be considered for inclusion in the study of maenadism as a field of inquiry. The term “maenadic metaphor” may help to clarify the issue here,

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\(^3\) Henrichs (1978). 122.
\(^4\) Dodds (1940) 156-176.
\(^5\) Rapp (1872). 1-22 and 562-611.
especially in the following chapter, where I discuss tragic female figures that for many reasons (temporarily or permanently) behaved like maenads.

The image of the maenad, especially as it appears on Attic black figure and red figure vases, provides an important measure of cultural conceptions of women in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. Not only do the vases provide images of actual or imagined participation in the cult, by members of the entourage of the wine god Dionysos, but they also release, from the boundaries of accepted behavior, the restrictions upheld for Athenian women, and social mores valued and encoded for them by the community of the men. The increasing popularity of the maenads on Attic vases during the archaic and classical periods parallels the emergence of “maenadism” as a significant phenomenon in contemporary culture, developed by Greece, in exceptional women such as Cassandra, Medea, and others from contemporary Greek poets.

To discuss the plausible boundaries of actual versus mythological maenad activity is not the focus of my doctoral research, although the issue is valid and worthy in its own right. My thesis is engaged in addressing the observable changes in image and text regarding maenadism, and to assess the broader issues of Athenian perceptions and attitudes with regard to women and the supposedly aberrant practice of maenadism. The images on Attic vases and the roles of the maenad-like women in Greek tragedy, offer considerable insight into the state of contemporary Athenian society. In this study, I will re-evaluate former perceptions such as the view of scholars in the past two centuries that the Athenians nurtured a phobia or ambivalence towards women “empowered.” The vases were used in daily life, were left in tombs, and a few were retrieved from specific contexts in the Agora and the Acropolis of Athens. My study of vases is intended to draw
out evidence from the Athenians depicting their own society and showing their emphasis on myth and religion. Even on the simplest level, the content of these figured scenes, including the depiction of action and emphasis on particular figures in relation to various and species of vase, yields important evidence revealing a measure of the popularity of the cult, the decades of being favored and shown on vases, as well as the quality and variety of major changes. When compared and cross-evaluated with the content and changing emphasis in Greek tragedy of the fifth century BCE, this visual data gains cultural context. We shall also consider the major events of the period, as these were years of war, political upheaval and finally humiliation of Athens by Sparta in 404 BCE.7

Six important inscriptions from the end of the fifth century BCE to the second century CE attest to actual ritual practice and myth concerning maenadism. Each one is distinct and each will be examined in an attempt to determine for whom the text was intended, where it was found, when it was inscribed, and in what context it was inscribed.8 Most of the texts are slightly later in date than the literary and artistic evidence of maenadism, but most of them are a bit earlier than the historical reports that survive. The inscriptions offer us evidence of actual women in the cult of Dionysos as well as funerary texts. They speak of the reality of the cult in ancient Greece over time.

Any effort to interpret the literary and inscription evidence of actual, ritual and mythological maenadism is challenging, to say the least, due to the large quantity of the material evidence. However, the appearance of Dionysiac frenzy is most frequent in Attic

7 The major political events will be further discussed within Chapter 4 on literature and Chapter 5 on vases.
tragedy (more so than on images of maenads on vases). More specifically, comparisons of activities of female characters to various maenad behaviors can be found in both main and secondary characters (as well as in the chorus) of the extant tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and particularly Euripides. Cited in order of time, the following tragedies contain especially useful references to Dionysiac frenzy and make comparisons of female characters to maenads based on their abnormal behavior: Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes* (467 BCE), *Agamemnon, Libation Bearers*, and *Eumenides* (458 BCE); Sophocles’ *Antigone* (441 BCE), *Women of Trachis* (430 BCE); and Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (428 BCE), *Andromache* (425 BCE), *Hecuba* (424 BCE), *Herakles* (416 BCE), *Trojan Women* (415 BCE), *Ion* (413 BCE), *Phoenician Women* (410 BCE) and *The Bacchae* (415 BCE).9

In addition to the images, literature and inscriptions that attest maenadism in its various forms in ancient Greece, Pausanias (in his *Description of Greece*, Book X, IV. 2-4, from approximately 120-180 CE) left a recording of the biannual maenad procession from Delphi to the peaks of Mt. Parnassos. In May, 2005, I became a “pilgrim” and followed a path that was quite possibly used by ancient Greeks and the traveling women, including maenads. This path leads from the town of Delphi, ascending Mt. Parnassos, ends at its peak and overlooks the ancient sanctuary and temple of Apollo.10 In the process, I attempted to reconstruct the journey as it may have been performed by the

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9 See Loeb Classical Library Editions, although other tragedies will be discussed in Chapter 2 and 3.
10 More photographs are shown in Chapter 5.
maenads that Pausanias mentioned. Locating the path was made possible by consulting various maps, and with the added guidance provided by local merchants and orthodox priests. The terrain was arduous and the sacred site evoked feelings of awe (refer back to Fig P-5). The transmission of “place and time” was most valuable to me. But more significantly, my travels in Greece permitted me to make fresh observations, make fresh documentation, and take photographs from the Agora, Acropolis, Athens National Museum and Delphi Museum.

**Topic and Method of Research:**

The subject of the maenad has attracted increasing interest in recent years. But despite this welcome development, scholarship with regards to women’s madness, women in ritual and women in art have mainly been treated, for the most part, as separate fields of inquiry. A comprehensive and interdisciplinary study of the maenads is necessary in relation to all these themes to broaden our understanding of the role of women in ancient Greek art, literature and society.

Especially vital to this study is the interplay between the imagery on Attic vase paintings and the sues provided by contemporary texts that reference maenads in ancient Athens. What I propose here, however, is more than the usual "matching up" of image to text. In the process of my research, I examined large numbers of vase paintings to

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11 Further discussion, actual maps and additional photographs concerning the actual pilgrimage will be discussed in Chapter 6, the addendum to the dissertation.

12 Although my method and mandate to integrate vase painting, drama and inscriptional evidence to interpret maenadism and its place within ancient Greek civilization is original, there have been 3 recent publications regarding women, ritual space and maenadism which attest a heightened interest in the topic. See Guettel Cole (2004), *Landskapes, Gender, and Ritual Space: The Ancient Greek Experience*; Goff (2004), *Citizen Bacchae: Women’s Ritual Practice in Ancient Greece*; Fahlbusch (2004), *Die Frauen im Gefolge des Dionysos*. 
determine changes in scenes on various types of vases, and changes in figures portrayed in view of the vase function (wine, water or votive). My areas of focus will be: the image of the maenad on vases (Attic black figure and red figure, from the archaic to the classical period, sixth and fifth centuries BCE); the use of maenadic metaphors and models in ancient epic poetry and tragedy from the eighth to the fifth centuries BCE (Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides); and historical evidence of maenads (ritual and mythological) from later authors (Diodorus of Sicily, Plutarch and Pausanias) and inscriptional evidence. Throughout this dissertation I will employ both a qualitative and a quantitative methodology to observe and measure the changes.

My approach is original in many respects, especially to the extent that I have employed a database of systematization in my examination of the images of maenads on Attic vases. There are some 6,915 vases in the Fascicules of the Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum, British Museum. I have systematically examined the volumes of the Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum and personally observed (and photographed) many of the vases with images of maenads on them in the museum stores of the British Museum,¹³ as well as in Glasgow, Oxford and Edinburgh. These vases provide the foundation for my visual analysis of the image of the maenad on vases, ranging from celebrated masterworks to the numerous humble vases with repetitive and quickly rendered figures. My primary research was conducted at the British Museum, London, where I was granted permission to make observations in person, as well as photograph and record statistics on the vases in

¹³ Special thank you, to Lucilla Burn, who gave me special permission and spent time with me despite her busy schedule and publication of her book, The British Museum Book of Greek and Roman Art (1992).
the permanent collection. I also studied other pieces in the Glasgow Museum, the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Ashmolean Museum.

Tables and charts, as well as pie graphs, have been organized to make my data base workable and give visual form to the general trends that pertain to how (images of) maenads were and still can be perceived. I chose the vases in these collections because they contain a rich sampling of Attic vases and are representative of some of the very best and varied collections in the world. A significant amount of time was devoted to the categorization of the function and original content of the vases. For example, the function of the amphora was to contain wine as opposed to the hydria whose function was to carry water. The data suggest that, at this time, there were more images of maenads on wine vessels than on other types. Pie graphs and detailed charts demonstrate the breakdown of the percentage of maenads on various wine shapes and conclusions are backed by the observations found within the data. What does the distribution of images tell us about the social interaction between the predominantly male consumer of these vases and the images of wild (or “uncivilized”) women, or the maenads that adorn them? I hope to address these types of questions using quantifiable evidence which can give more strength to a single observation. The rigor involved in collecting and organizing the data allowed my observations to be made with confidence to provide statistical support for my interpretations, and guided my inquiry as to how observed changes on vases might be connected to themes represented in literature and supported further by inscriptive evidence.

14 This data has been reorganized into the pie graphs and more reader-friendly charts.
15 This is an important summary and illustration to which I will return in Chapter 4 specifically.
Additionally, the data have been organized to include the category of major versus secondary characters, and whether the maenad is alone or shown with other significant figures. Tragedians also employed mythological figures (Dionysos and others) to link these women to specific Dionysiac themes. It is important to emphasize where similarities between the mediums can be identified and to identify how comparable characters function on the vases as compared to those in tragic literature. It is possible to track changes in representation over time thanks to the dating of the vases by artist, style and vase shape. This primary data also measures change in maenad iconography and reveals the content and emphasis of the scenes to be discussed in Chapter 4. My data contain 6,788 vases, of which 177 have images of maenads on them.

Maenads on vases increase in both number and prominence from the early archaic period to the end of the classical period, (specifically at the beginning of the sixth to the end of the fifth century BCE). Their popularity is not only quantitative, but qualitative. According to my research and data collection, maenads appear more often as the primary subject on the Attic red figure wares than on the earlier black figure wares. These illustrations of trends pertaining to images of maenads on vases present an historical conundrum since they conflict with current assumptions regarding what the image of the maenad meant to ancient Greek society. A particularly puzzling observation is that the wine vessels, which bear the majority of maenad images, were primarily

\[16\] Chapter 4 uses the pie graph showing the percentage of maenads with Dionysos and percentage of maenads alone as the information pertains to particular discussion on the topic.
associated with men’s spheres of social activity.\textsuperscript{17} According to the French school of thought, wine was in principle forbidden to women, and the water receptacle seemed to provide a more appropriate instrument for feminine activity.\textsuperscript{18} One contemporary scholar has proposed that maenads were featured on wine vases with clear connections to ritual Dionysiac spheres.\textsuperscript{19} In the British Museum, an exhibit entitled “Women of Ancient Greece” included \textit{hydriae} (water vases) with images of women at the fountain, wedding vases \textit{(lutrophoroi)} with bridal preparation scenes, and smaller vessels with representations of women at their toilette. The selection gave the impression, which seems to be contradicted by the evidence I have assembled, that regular women were associated with water vases, and that in the case of wine vases, they were only represented in relation to themes associated with Dionysos. According to my research, however, this is simply not the only case and the above assumptions are not founded, or, at least they are not conclusive over time.

My data suggests that in the later periods (especially red figure vases of the late 5\textsuperscript{th} century BCE), images of single or groups of only maenads (without Dionysos or satyrs) were in fact provided. In fact, according to my data 52.94 percent of the total of wine vessels (just over half) have images of maenads without Dionysos. Only 36.36 percent of maenads on wine shapes have Dionysos shown along with them. Perhaps this is indicative of an increased or altered status of the maenad in ancient Greek society, or of an increased visibility of women participating in Dionysiac ritual. Perhaps the socially

\textsuperscript{17} More will also be said about women, wine, the perception of drunken females and the circle of Dionysos in Chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{18} See Berard (1989). 122-12.
sanctioned “chaperone” (the god of wine) simply became less important! Discussion in Chapter 2 and 3 will also reveal this trend supporting a theory that the tragedians, over time, also use more maenad comparisons that do not require the god as a reason for their madness or abnormal behavior.

Developments per medium do differ. Great care must be taken in assessing the major points of congruency, as the vases do vary according to medium, of course. Most scholars use them as simple illustrations, however, we should be reminded that they were not always intended to illustrate the plays, but did serve in public or private spheres, dining, cult activities, and even in tombs. By the second quarter of the fifth century BCE, Aeschylus employs maenadic metaphors within his tragedies. In particular, his bold queen is lawless; she is “maenad-like” Clytemnestra in *The Libation Bearers*. Sophocles continues to employ “maenad metaphors” in his conception of characters such as Antigone in *Antigone*, and Iole in *The Women of Trachis*. Relative to the way in which my data is building is that Euripides, unlike his predecessors, embraces blatant maenadism with leading figures such as Medea and reveals actual forceful maenads in the *Bacchae*.

Diodorus of Sicily (c 60/59 BCE), Plutarch (c.107 CE) and Pausanias (most recent in c 174 CE), also attest maenadism in cult and myth in ancient Greece. Diodorus

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20 See Seaford (1993) and Schlessier (1993) on discussion of the “maenad metaphor” and/or the “maenad model”. The ideas presented in these articles are very significant to the development of my thesis that maenadism was being explored in various literary characters apart from just maenads.

21 Unless otherwise stated, all tragedies mentioned are the Loeb Classical Library editions.

22 It should be mentioned here that I do not assume that the term maenadic metaphor would have been used by the tragedians, rather that the concept or phenomenon is traceable in their works.

23 There are other historians who attest to maenadism of some kind, but their authority is limited as they report upon the ancient sources mentioned here. One example is Tacitus, *The Annals: Book XI. XXXI* (see Bornecque (1991). 291 Full discussion will be revealed in Chapter 4 on historical sources.
of Sicily describes the cult of Dionysos as a type of nostalgic tribute by the Greeks, Boeotians and Thracians. He reports that maidens and matrons would not only gather biennially, but that it was “lawful” for the maidens to carry the thyrsus and join in frenzied revelry, crying out “Euai”! His account makes clear that the women he mentioned “acted the part” of the real maenads of old (to him, of the historical past). In Plutarch’s *Moralia*, the author speaks of the rumors of maenads of Delphi as he illustrates the principles of cold:

And at Delphi you yourself heard, in the case of those who climbed Parnassus to rescue the Thyiades when they were trapped by a fierce gale and snowstorm, that their capes were frozen so stiff and wooden that when they were opened out, they broke and split apart.26

Contrary to the accounts of threatening maenad behavior by dramatic literature, the vases show images of respectful maenads, and Plutarch also writes of the dignity that they received within ancient Greece. In the *Bravery of Women*, Plutarch reports on the devotees of Dionysos:

As they were tired out, and sober reason had not yet returned to them, they flung themselves down in the market place, and were lying asleep, some here, some there. The wives of the men of Amphissa, fearing, because their city had been allied with the Phoenicians, and numerous soldiers of the despot were present there, that the Thyiades might be treated with indignity, all ran out to the market place, and, taking their stand round about in silence, did not go up to them while they were sleeping, but when they arose from their slumber, one devoted herself to one of the strangers and another to another, bestowing attention on them and offering them food.27

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24 See Loeb Classical Library edition (*Diodorus of Sicily*, Book IV. 2. 5-3. 3).
In Book IV. 2-4 of his *Description of Greece*, Pausanias validates accounts of the Athenian women’s participation and the place of Parnassus in the “orgies in honor of Dionysus”.28

The Thyiades are Attic women, who with the Delphian women go to Parnassus every other year…It is the custom for these Thyiades to hold dances at places, including Panopeus, along the road from Athens.29

Group activity and anonymity are suggested with maenads on black figure vases, such as those by the Lydos Painter (see Figure 1-1). His procession of large figures as boldly striding with subtlety varied dancers span the girth of the large krater (wine mixing bowl), in MMA, NY from around 550 BCE. The maenads are proud and athletic dancers, and contrasted with the bulky, hairy and indignant satyrs. The maenads are given a quiet dignity and are suitably rendered to lead a march to the Dionysian procession escorting Hephaistos (smith god) back to Mt. Olympos (home of the gods). The poised and upright torsos command the viewers respect as does the position held in the procession. Other black figure vases with maenads may seem simplistic and can be repetitive, but the popularity of certain compositions such as the maenads with Dionysos, satyrs, mules, wedding processions, youths, etc., on kylixes 30 such as this one from the British Museum, Figure 1-2, marks a period of the newly established city-wide festival, the Greater Dionysia found in Athens in 566 BCE.31

29 Ibid.
30 See Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum, fascicule 2, Great Britain, Attic Black figure cups for several examples.
31 This significant observation is credited to Dr. Elizabeth Walters.
Figure 1-1: Attic black figure column krater
Attributed to Lydos
c. 550 BCE
Photo credit: MMA, NY
Figure 1-3: Attic black figure kylix (early period)

Great Britain, fascicule 2, pl. 20-2a,b, British Museum
B 426
Photo credit: The British Museum.
In the works of master artists such as Kleophrades in the early fifth century BCE, figures betray individual response, and manic states are suggested (see Figure 1-4). The maenad’s head is tilted upwards and she seems out of touch with reality. Oftentimes the eyes of the maenad can even be perceived as rolled back in her head. Despite this, as Dr. Elizabeth Walters points out, the maenads share in Dionysos’ majesty and command the feeling of dignity. The maenads share the width of Dionysos’ drapery, height and reassured movement.

Figure 1-3: Detail of Attic red figure amphora
Attributed to the Kleophrades Painter
c. 490 BCE From Vulci
Photo credit: Antikensammlungen, Munich
While the maenads sing and dance, Dionysos is the clear leader, but he remains restrained and quiet. The later red figure images of more dignified maenads (as in Figure 1-4) seem contrasted to the earlier black figure representations where they were usually seen either repelling or fending off satyrs, as in Figure 1-5.

Figure 1-4: Attic red figure stamnos
c. 420 BCE
Photo Credit: Museo Nazionale, (2419)
From: E. Simon, *Die Griechischen Vasen*

Figure 1-5: Attic black figure pelike
c. 560 BCE
British Museum, Cat #: W 40
Photo credit: The British Museum.
The solitary maenad on the interior of the kylix (*tondo*) cup dated to approximately 490 BCE by the Brygos painter (Figure 1-6) is not simply for the participant in the festivals to note once the wine has been emptied out of the cup. Rather, the white-ground, “water-color” effect of the figured tondo is appropriate to the gods, as in a votive. No wine should fill this kylix since the maenad on white-ground would be discolored by its dark color. I will return to this masterpiece in Chapter 4, as the intensity of this maenad is remarkable. The intensity with which she is portrayed matches the wild beasts she fearlessly holds and wears on her brow (a spitting serpent).

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Figure 1-6: Attic white figure tondo
Attributed to the Brygos Painter
c. 490-480 BCE, from Vulci, Antikensammlungen, Munich, Germany cat # 2645
Photograph credit: Antikensammlungen, Munich
An Attic red figure kylix attributed to Douris as painter and to Python as potter, dated to around 470 BCE, reveals the darker side of the maenads as participants in human sacrifice (see Figure 1-7). Association of the maenads with acts of overt violence is relatively rare on Attic vase paintings, although dismembered deer can be seen with maenads in some cases. This rare scene of destructive violence (or sacrifice) is the only example known to me, although a red figure hydria in London depicts a similar scene of Dionysos (unaccompanied by maenads) tearing a fawn in half. The Douris kylix of around 470 BCE (with maenads) has body parts strewn across the exterior and a torso held by two maenads in the centre of the scene. This is probably Pentheus, king of Thebes who denied the importance of Dionysos, attempted to oust his cult, and was destroyed by its female adherents. These maenads tore him apart in a Dionysian mania, mistaking him for a lion and only later learning that he was their son and former king.

Figure 1-7: Attic red figure kylix, Attributed to Douris and painter and Python as potter, c. 480 BCE
Photo credit: The Kimball Art Museum

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32 The kylix was recently auctioned by Christies.
33 This vase was examined in the stores of the British Museum, London. It is not included in the fascicule data because it was not published there, nor was I able to make a good quality photo due to the dusty glass caused by a renovation project.
The vases we have so far considered reveal rare instances of violence (severed deer, and the man, Pentheus), and are limited to the 490-470 BCE. The throng of maenads with “gauzy dresses,” issued by the artist Makron, fills the surface of red figure cups (see Figure 1-8) from the 480’s BCE. These elegant women, albeit free of mantles and the layered dress customary for proper citizen women, lack the companions, the bestial satyrs. No “escorts,” “chaperones,” or other “leadership” figures are depicted with maenads from the mid fifth century BCE onwards. Animal skins (nebrides) on maenads, which are common attributes in the sixth and early fifth century BCE, are omitted from the later images as well. The visual impression of women in loose chitons, loosened hair, dancing poses and tilted heads suggest the freedom and free movement of the mania of Dionysiac ritual. Women serving wine and bearing branches around the cult image of Dionysos on a cup by Makron from the 480s are dutifully caring for the god.

Figure 1-8: Attic red figure kylix
Attributed to Makron, c. 480 BCE, Berlin, cat # F2290
Photo credit: Antikensammlungen, Berlin

34 There is no inscription to identify Pentheus on the kylix.
In contrast to the increasing intensity of women’s behavior and frenzied states conveyed by the poets Aeschylus and Sophocles, and the bold startling confrontation provided by Euripides (Bacchae and Medea),\(^{36}\) maenads on Attic vase paintings (from the 460-400 BCE) become increasingly “quieter.” The dignity granted by the artists to the maenads as opposed to the companion satyrs, and the difficulties inherent in attempts to separate maenads from other elegant women at festivals, suggests that “real” (for example, mortal or contemporary) women (not a vision of maenads or myth) are what we see represented on these vases. The contrast, to Euripides in particular, is reassuring; neither his extreme portrayals nor the violence enacted by his maenads (in the Bacchae)\(^ {37}\) is supported by images on contemporary vase paintings. Nor can we find with any evidence (as demonstrated in Chapter 2) an “actual” violence on inscriptions that instruct or tell of maenad duties and roles. In fact, violence of any kind by the maenads is rarely associated in any period of Attic vase painting. Scholars who regard Euripides as misogynist readily employ The Bacchae and Medea in relation to maenads, but ignore his other “more rational” testaments of assertive women.\(^ {38}\) However, Euripides employs the extreme to shock the audience and make us think and reconsider, but not to endorse or condone the violence.

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\(^{35}\) The observation is of great importance to building my argument for the dissertation and I thank Dr. Walters for this.

\(^{36}\) See Loeb Classical Library editions.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.

\(^{38}\) For other scholars who imply Euripides as misogynist, see Dodds (1963). 270-283.
Other scholars (less frequently) agree with this way of seeing and offer historical support for the claims of Euripides’ misogyny.\textsuperscript{39} Consider also Aristophanes’ comedy, \textit{Thesmophoriazusae}, in which the playwright slanders Euripides by way of the Athenian women’s plot to liquidate Euripides, reflecting, perhaps, an ancient opinion of Euripides as misogynistic.\textsuperscript{40} The tragedian reveals the worst in the women of the highest echelons not as facts, but to expose the latent and primal forces unleashed in each individual by duress, and in \textit{The Bacchae}, by the furies unleashed by Dionysos. The vases offer a contrasting interpretation: calm women as maenads who are practicing devout and diligent behaviors in festivals and ritual acts. On Attic black figure and Attic red figure vases, women as maenads provide continuity, dignity and selfless abandon and by the 460s BCE these characteristics are seen as selfless devotion to Dionysos. They represent contemporary Athenian women who are vital to the god Dionysos and his cult, just as Euripides unmasks the extreme maenads as aristocratic women possessed by irrational forces. The polar opposites speak to us of the cherished communal balance, and the devout and balanced citizen/woman as the cherished norm (see one of many such images in Figure 1-9).

\textsuperscript{39} See March (1990). 32-75. See also Gregory (1985). 23-31 on her discussion as Pentheus as voyeur and therefore taking on the metaphor for Euripides’ and/or ancient Greek society’s misogyny.

\textsuperscript{40} Aristophanes, \textit{The Thesmophoriazusae}, translated by Hadas (1962).
Possible Conclusions:

My research has considered several streams of evidence. Thus far, I have considered intellectual developments from the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides which reveal an increased focus on the leading women in several tragedies; their catalytic roles and depth of thought as complex individuals. Greek vases with painted maenads, over the course of two centuries beginning about one hundred years before the plays of Aeschylus, provide a parallel increase in attention given to women, gaining in momentum and number in the fifth century BCE. But in contrast to the
characters represented by the poets, the images become increasingly quiet and reserved by the mid fifth century BCE. The rare but effective examples of maenads as violent minions of Dionysos occur no later than 460 BCE, which is long before Euripides conceived his terrifying portrayals in *The Bacchae*. Inscriptions from much later offer no evidence that maenads were to be feared.

The preoccupation with women (bathing, washing, etc.) and feminine scenes from the 430s BCE, and love scenes by vase painters such as Meidias and Eritrea Painters, and the maenad vases of the 5th century BCE are part of a broader Athenian aversion to the challenges of the ideal, the heroic or the long favored images of heroes engaged in war. In 429 BCE, Athens suffered the plague during the Peloponnesian War and by 404 BCE had lost her independence and pride to Sparta.\(^{41}\) No vase will reveal the complexity of Euripides’ vision. Nor should we expect even a simple response to his vision. However, the trends revealed on the vases may well stem from the greater public need for continuity and reverence for cult. The inscriptions do offer evidence that women were revered and attained status over time and across space in Greece and Magna Graecia and were included among the “blessed” of Dionysos. The reliance on women in the scenes on later fifth century BCE vases in Athens does not simply represent an aversion to the realities of war, but conveys quietude, and possibly a need to find peace and solace with the women of the community. Euripides had revealed the depth of maenads in

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\(^{41}\) Full credit for these ideas is given to Dr. Elizabeth Walters. This political connection to my research and idea development is vital and I am grateful for the valuable contributions of Dr. Walters. See also Ehrenburg (1978), and Burn (1979).
ancient Greece, and unleashed their raw power while the vases retained and cherished their reality as providers of calm and reassurance; in retrospect, the last shred of hope.
Chapter 2

The Scholarship on Maenadism

What is the status of the maenad in present-day scholarship? It seems that, in a basic overview, the question of historical evidence for real maenadism has been positively answered. For example, there is sufficient epigraphic evidence of real maenad association activity which dates to the third and fourth centuries BCE. The texts examined include (in order from the earliest to the latest): the Gold Lamella from Hipponion, the Delphic Oracle from Magnesia ad Maeandrum, a record of sale of the priesthood of Dionysos from Miletus, an epitaph from Miletus, a base inscription from Torre Nova and a cult regulation from Physkos/Western Lokris.

Using Euripides’ *Bacchae* as a springboard from which to argue the historical validity of the poet’s geographical correctness and accuracy, A. Rapp systematically establishes the places of women’s “Feste,” but not necessarily in Dionysiac orgies as Euripides describes in his tragedy.42 E. R Dodds confirms the locations of biennial festivals with women who carry the *thyrsos* (a staff of fennel and topped with a pine cone) in Thebes, Opus, Melos, Pergamum, Priene, and Rhodes (*Diodorus* 4.8).43 Similarly, Pausanias is quoted to attest the festivals at Alea, (*Pausanias* 8.23.1) and Plutarch expands on the former’s description of Delphic women having been rescued

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42 Rapp (1872). 1-22.
43 Dodds (1940). 156.
from a snowstorm by a rescue party (Plutarch, *de primo frigido*, 18, 953 D). Athenian women remain elusive according to the available evidence from inscriptions of maenad associations or organized activities within that polis. Dodds alludes to the fact that the ancient writers may have been acknowledging the proposal that ritual is usually older than myth in the larger scheme.\(^{44}\)

**Inscription Evidence for Maenadism**

The following summary will examine the aforementioned six inscriptions as evidence of maenadism from the end of the fifth century BCE to the second century CE. This dissertation is primarily concerned with inscription evidence that bears directly on the ritual practice of maenadism, implying a female role as being significant in the organization of Dionysiac cult and, possibly, to the mystery cult of Dionysos as well.

In all instances, a critique by scholars has been the basis for examination as well as the original translation when it was available. I am also greatly indebted to philologists for their efforts in the difficult task of reconstructing the inscriptions, and their meticulous assessment of the specific dialects of the inscriptions, interpretations of specific contexts and/or usage of phrases as well as the similarities to historical records of maenadism. The inscriptions provide significant evidence regarding the role of women in the “real” practice of the cult of Dionysos: that a woman is always deemed (either

\(^{44}\) Dodds (1940). 156.
directly or indirectly) the primary person associated with Dionysos and his
cult/festival/mysteries.

First, I will examine the recently discussed piece of evidence for maenads, or
more specifically the evidence as it relates to the reference to *bakchos* and alludes to
initiation, the Gold Leaf from Hipponion. The other inscriptions, in order are the
Delphic oracle that addressed the Theban maenads in Magnesia (quoted in local chronicle
from Magnesia ad Maendrum), the epitaph in elegiac meter from Miletus that concerned
a female purchaser of a contract to the priesthood of Dionysos, the recordings of the sale
of the official priestess of Dionysos from Miletus, the membership list of a Dionysiac
*thiasos* from Torre Nova near Tusculum/Latium, and a cult regulation from a type of
Dionysian “college” at Physkos/Western Lokris.

These pieces of evidence clearly distinguish real maenads from mythical maenads
as mere creations of artists and poets from historical maenads that were to be found in the
writings of Diodorus, Plutarch and Pausanias (as determined by Rapp). Attempts will
be made to determine who the text concerned, who was it was intended to be read by (or
buried with); where it was discovered and to what extent the context and/or location (and
time period) does or does not bear on the recipient and/or participants of Dionysiac cult.

45 See Guettel Cole (1980). 223-238, specifically 231 on the association of the terms *bakchos* and *bakchios*.
46 For general discussion on the evidence: Henrichs (1978). 121-160. He also mentions a sixth publication
of epigraphic evidence of the Senatus consultum de Bacchanalibus in CIL I (1863). and first published by
J.Gronovius in 1692. I shall not discuss it here due to the inaccessibility of the publication. For discussion
on the Gold Leaf from Hipponion: Guettel Cole (1980), 223-238.
47 See Rapp (1872). 1-22.
48 Due to the manner by which some inscriptions were originally excavated, some details of the original
context are not known and may never have been recorded.
The main question, always, is, how does each inscription help in determining/reconstructing the role of women in the cult of Dionysos?49

**Hipponion**

This is the leaf of Remembrance for the time when one shall die. <When you reach> the well-fitted house of Hades, <you will find there> on the right hand a spring <with black water> and close to it a tall shining cypress. This is the place where the descending souls cool themselves. Take good care not to come close to this spring. Further on you will find a cold stream flowing out of the lake of Remembrance. And there are guardians standing by a stream. They will ask you with shrewd mind, what for are you searching through the darkness of the deadly Hades Answer to them, “I am the son of Heaven <Earth> and the starry sky. But I am drained dry with thirst and I am perishing. So give me quickly cold water flowing out of the lake of Remembrance.” And they will show mercy to you, a king of the Netherworld, and will give you to drink from that lake. And then you will tread on the holy path of the many, on which walk also other.50

This text acts as a “warning” to the revered initiate. The person whose body was found in the grave along with the gold lamella of Hipponion is of primary concern, since it provides instruction to the deceased woman. Presumably she is to be a “fellow initiate” to the other dead followers of Dionysos and acquire a privileged status in the underworld. It is quite small (5 cm x 3 cm), but not particularly, as compared to the other 14 lamellae published by Zuntz.51 Foti and Carratelli52 first published the text, but Guettel-Cole calls

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49 While every concern of each scholar responsible for publishing each document can not be examined detail for detail, attempts will also be made to draw attention to the particular difficulties relevant to the above concerns.

50 Translation in Marcovich (1976). 221-222* < > indicates where translator has replaced obscured words.


it “new” in relation to the other fourteen.\textsuperscript{53} Guiseppe Foti excavated the grave in 1969 at Hipponion,\textsuperscript{54} a Greek city on the toe of Italy.

The date of the inscription on the gold lamella has been determined to be circa 400 BCE.\textsuperscript{55} The other artifacts were also of importance in determining the lady’s identity. She was of modest wealth as indicated by the gold lamella, bronze fragments, and small gold ring on the third finger of her left hand. The less valuable items included some good quality glazed ceramics (two drinking cups), two oil flagons, two lamps, a water jug and hydriae (presumably for carrying water to and from the spring or well as suggested in the inscription on the lamella)\textsuperscript{56}

The gold lamella is inscribed with sixteen verses in \textit{dactylic hexameter} that are similar in style and sometimes in content with fifteen other gold tablets from Italy and Greece. The nature of its size and material is also significant in determining the role of the female initiate of Dionysos in death and perhaps life. The small gold foils were inscribed with tiny letters. The letters have not altered in color or brightness with time.\textsuperscript{57} The context of the ever-shining material bears directly on the intended purpose and role of the inscription. Is it symbolic of a light to guide a dead person into and within the realms of the underworld? Surely it intended to attract (not repel) helpful advice from other dead souls in the afterlife.

\textsuperscript{53} Guettel-Cole (1980). 223.
\textsuperscript{55} Guettel-Cole (1980). 223 asserts the new lamella as being the earliest of the 15 lamellae in total, thus to the end of the fifth century, or the beginning of the fourth century BC.
\textsuperscript{57} Zuntz (1971). 279 outlines the contrasting lead “Difixionum Tabellae with respect to the impact that the blackening of the letters may have on the ultimate viewer of the tabellae. It seemed to “ward” off possible enemies of the dead.
The description of the inhabitants of the underworld as *mystai* (initiates) and *bakchoi* (bacchants) is useful in establishing the relationship of the deceased to their final destination among the blessed. The terminology establishes the identity of the dead and the initiates as positively Dionysiac in nature, and it ensures salvation in the god’s name when faced with the powers of the underworld. Again, the presumed “fellow initiate” of Dionysos was female. The mention of a “King” (line fifteen) of the Netherworld may confuse the issue of the gender with the owner of the lamella. The inscriber could have written it in traditional fashion though. The point is not the intended gender of the deceased. Rather, it is the status of the deceased which is highlighted. The status she shall receive in the next life should be indicative of the status she received among the living. Would the dead lady become a significant member of the *thiasos* of the underworld? The intended status was certainly of high esteem. The high position of female initiates of Dionysos was well attested in historical writings by Diodorus in particular, as he describes the matrons being “as history records, they were of old the companions of the god.” The lamella and the record of status by Diodorus are only about 150 years apart in age with Diodorus writing in the first century BCE. My observations from changes in the status of the maenad on vases occurring especially on red figure vases from 400 BCE onward also correspond well with this phenomenon.

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58 See Guettel-Cole (1980). 224 for very detailed discussion of the lamella and supporting /contradicting published material on the philological concerns of the inscription and parallel historical authority as they pertain to the terms.
59 See translation by Marcovich (1976). 221-222 for “king,” and compare to Breslin (1971). 110-126: “merciful towards thee will be the Lords of the underworld.”
60 Diodorus, Book IV.2.5-3.3
61 Actual numbers and examples collaborate with this from general discussion in the Introduction, but it will also be offered in more detail in the specific chapter on vases.
Henrichs says though, that even in a place as conspicuous as fifth century Athens, the Lenaia vases merely show maenads dressed in maenad costume before an idol of Dionysos.\textsuperscript{62}

**Magnesia ad Maeandrum**

Go to the holy plain of Thebes to fetch maenads from the race of Cadmean Ino. They will bring you maenadic rites and noble customs and will establish troops of Bacchus in your city.\textsuperscript{63}

This inscription recorded a Delphic Oracle that addressed the Theban origin of maenads. The preface concerns the people of Magnesia who had found a plane-tree broken by the wind.\textsuperscript{64} Upon finding an image of Dionysos there, the answer from the oracle was to establish temples, appoint a priest and take maenads of Cadmean Ino to give the orgiastic rites, good customs and establish guilds of Bacchus in the city.\textsuperscript{65} The oracle is quoted in a local chronicle with the response consisting of twelve hexameters cut upon eighteen lines of the inscription. Henrichs asserts that it is a Roman copy of Hellenistic origin, \textsuperscript{66} and it is assumed to be legitimate mainly because of its lack of mythological elements. The inscription records the names of maenads, guilds that they founded and the place of their burial. It was recorded as a state document. It concerns Thebes directly as it is described

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\textsuperscript{62} Henrichs (1978), 153: Even though this is the only pottery showing maenads engaged in ritual, we still cannot know if they participated in Dionysiac festivals in Athens in the Classical period. See Chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{63} Translation taken from IMagn 215. in Parke and Wormell (1956). 134.

\textsuperscript{64} From IMagn (Inschrift Magnesia) 215, in Parke and Wormell (1956). 234-35.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid (1956).

as the place from which to fetch the maenads. It was also the immediate source of Dionysiac cult as propagated by Delphi. 67

The date of the actual inscription is from the first century CE as recorded by a veteran devotee of Dionysos. He described it as “ancient,” thus dating to around 200 BCE. 68 Fontenrose says that despite possible allusion to the Gallic invasion of 278 BCE, Dionysian worship was established in Magnesia long before that time. 69 In more general terms, Parke and Wormell argue for a date of the oracular response not earlier than the fifth century BCE according to the wording, and that the reference to Dionysos as youthful suits best the type usual in art (not earlier than the late fourth century BCE). 70 But Albert Henrichs asserts that the maenads were buried before 207/06 BCE. 71

The record also records three names of maenads of Ino’s family. 72 That they were brought from the “maenad stronghold,” they founded three separate thiasoi (religious societies) and were buried at public expense attest to the nature of the tale and response. 73 Without this, there would be no evidence of the practice of historical maenadism in Thebes.

While Pausanias does not describe Thebes 74 as the maenad “capitol,” the mention of the race of the mythical Ino in the inscription proves Diodorus at least partially right:

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68 Ibid (1978) and IMagn. 215. in Parke and Wormell (1956). 235
70 Parke and Wormell (1956). 135.
74 See Pausanias, Description of Greece, Book IV.3-4
that cultic maenadism mimicked mythical maenadism in terms of heritage.\textsuperscript{75} The vases included in this study of maenadism generally come from Attica (Athens and surrounding area) and aside from images of Pentheus, none of them specifically denote anything about Thebes.

Origin and naming bear much significance in this document and, as such, it is a vital record and evidence of women in the cult of Dionysos in the Hellenistic period, as well as an oracle concerning them from the late Classical period. Thought-provoking origins of the maenad leaders have been proposed, but the probability of securing a factual comparison is slim.\textsuperscript{76} Kosko did lead the \textit{thiasos} that was named after a plane-tree and was buried in an area called the Hillock of Kosko.\textsuperscript{77} Baubo led the thiasos outside the city and her burial place was called the Tabarnis.\textsuperscript{78} Thettale’s \textit{thiasos} was named after Kataibates and she was buried near the theatre.\textsuperscript{79} Does this support the theory of Theban “maenads” receiving particular reverence? Yes, I think it does. Does it answer the question of whether or not the three named maenads were considered “real” maenads in their time? That is a matter of interpretation.

**Miletus I**

This inscription concerns the female purchaser of the contract that entitled her to the priesthood of Dionysos.\textsuperscript{80} It was not a private title for sale, rather a public, sacerdotal

\textsuperscript{75} Diodorus 4.8. Euripides, \textit{Bacchae} 694 as well as Euripides, \textit{Phoenician Women} 655 mention Theban heritage of maenads.
\textsuperscript{76} See particular parallels in Henrichs (1978). 131.
\textsuperscript{77} Henrichs (1978). 124.
\textsuperscript{80} Lines are indicated according to Sokolowski (1955), 124 due to the inaccessibility of a translation of the full text.
role inherent in the title.\textsuperscript{81} The block is split into two and the inscription is also severely damaged. A part of the contract records the biennial (suggesting maenadic) payment of a fee in order to form her own thiasos and enroll others in it.\textsuperscript{82} This is one of the longer texts, and many of either parts of single words or entire phrases are missing. Sokolowski admits experiencing difficulties in its reconstruction. The date is Hellenistic and the cult of Dionysos seems to have flourished in this era.\textsuperscript{83} When coupled with the following epitaph, this holds true for the location as well. The date was established according to the name of Stephanephore Poseidippos (replaced by Stephanephore Apollon the following year), which was read on the list of eponyms at Miletus in 277/276 BC.\textsuperscript{84}

The inscription confirms the popularity of private maenad thiasoi and indicates that they had probably been established before the public ones. Although initiation rites are not described, the payment of the tax required for initiation is mentioned. The motivation for the post is that the priestess would receive a percentage of the initiation taxes collected (indicated between lines fifteen and twenty).

Lines one and two are fragmentary and contain the concept of eating of raw meat (omphagy) by the Bacchants.\textsuperscript{85} Other sources of the practice are mentioned by Euripides (Bacchae, 139; frag, 472, 12) and Plutarch (Themistocles,. 13; Moralia. 417C).\textsuperscript{86} However, Sokolowski suggests these particular rites were reserved for the high priestess.

\textsuperscript{81} Sokolowski (1955). 124 (all from this article is my own translation)
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid (1955). 123.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid (1955) 124.
\textsuperscript{85} Sokolowski (1955) mentions “la viande crue” or raw meat that is supposed present in the text (omphagy in Greek).
\textsuperscript{86} Taken from Sokolowski (1955). 124, footnote 2 for older scholarly work on the eating of raw meat. I add Detienne (1989), Henrichs (1978) in general with reference to the role of women in the ritual.
The document provides the people who wish to sacrifice, a choice between the priest to assist in the sacrifices of the women, or the priestess.\(^87\) Alternately, the priestess is authorized to assist the sacrifices of men and replaces the priest.\(^88\) Nowhere (not even in Plutarch) is the eating of raw flesh/meat by maenads stated clearly. Rather, the texts report that “something” was placed before “someone” or thrown into “something.”\(^89\) Assuming that the recipient of the raw flesh was Dionysos himself, the myth of Dionysos Zagreus\(^90\) is recalled. The term for “raw-eater” acts therefore as an epithet but no visual parallels of Dionysos actually consuming such a “feast” survive to my knowledge. Parallel iconography on vases does not show maenads eating raw flesh either, although they do offer torn animals and on a rare example (Figure 1-12) two halves of Pentheus (the son of the king of Thebes who denied the entrance of Dionysos’ cult to his kingdom) to the god.\(^91\)

**Miletus II**

Bakchai of the City say ‘farewell you holy priestess.’ This is what a good woman deserves. She led you to the mountain and carried all the sacred objects and implements, marching in procession before the whole city. Should some stranger ask for her name: Alkmeonis, daughter of Rhodes, who knew her share of the blessing.\(^92\)

This is separate epitaph, also from Miletus, which now stands in the Museum Garden, west of the Tschinili-Kiosk in Istanbul, and concerns a named priestess of

\(^87\) Sokolowski (1955). 125.
\(^88\) See Sokolowski (1955). 125 for entire sequence.
\(^89\) Wiegand (1905). 150.
\(^90\) Henrichs (1978), 152.
\(^91\) Although it is observed that a small number of vases do depict maenads engaging in “aspects” of the raw sacrifice, for example the tearing apart of small animals. See Henrichs (1978) 152.
\(^92\) For plate, see no. 2 in ZPE 4 (1969). 223-241. (Translation to English taken from Henrichs).
Dionysos. Alkmene is also known, in modern scholarship, as a maenad. She is recorded as leading local maenads to the mountain (a biennial event) and taking the lead in a public procession while carrying sacred objects during the spring every year. The latter event may have commemorated the return of Dionysos each spring. The inscription on her tombstone survives in elegiac couplets. It was found in Miletus and dates to the third or second century BCE.

This funerary poem is useful as a document that provides further evidence of a female in charge of the ritual matters concerning public reverence for Dionysos. It serves the same religious role as the inscription of the Magnesian maenads in highlighting the specific leading function that the subject filled during her life. Again, the sacred objects /implements are not identified, nor are the deeds/ritual actions apart from the procession to the mountain. The assumption that “ritual” maenadism was restricted to women is neither validated in this or in other inscriptions concerning maenads or priestesses of Dionysos. The leadership role taken by Kosko, Baubo and Thettale in the complimentary inscription, as well as Euripides’ description of the leading ladies’ identified as Semele, Ino, Autonoe and Agave may provide additional support.

The topic of sacrifice is also important to current scholars, but is not explicitly referred to in the text. A contradiction emerges when we compare the different types of evidence. Euripides describes the maenads as bloodthirsty (Euripides, The Bacchae, 93 Merkelbach (1972). 77. (the translations are all my own).
95 Merkelbach (1972). 80.
96 Ibid (1972).
97 Henrichs (1978). 148 for full discussion on the lack of evidence of the concept of eating raw meat. My impression of the translation of sacred “implements” is evocative of something utensil-like, therefore perhaps indicative of something used in ritual or imitative sacrifice.
138), but the other major literary tradition from the historical writers seems to indicate little else than a ritual imitation of the mythical action of *sparagmos* (the tearing apart of animal or sometimes even humans for sacrifice) and *omophagia* (the eating of raw flesh). Some difficulties also arise from the nature of the indirect contradiction in the text. The initiates do not call the priestess by name. But when a stranger (non-initiate) asks for her name, naturally one may know it. It seems that the mere name of the “instrument” of the god (Dionysos) was equally as holy by association to him. Taken together, these inscriptions from Miletus (in this dissertation, called I and II) are our best evidence that women did celebrate at intervals the rites of Dionysos and that the festivals excluded men.

**Torre Nova**

a) 1 masculine name: *heroes*: perhaps leader

b) 1 feminine name: *torch bearer*

c) 7 masculine names: *priests*: offering sacrifice, performing daily liturgy, directing feasts and processions.

d) 2 feminine names: *priestesses*: to which should be added Agrippinilla

e) 1 masculine name: *office of hierophant*

f) 2 masculine names: *god-bearers*

g) 1 masculine name: *minister*: acolyte who seconded the priest at sacrifices

h) 3 feminine names: *carriers of the mystic chest*

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98 For the description of the “melodious, yet tiny, tender and lean” testimony to the religion, see Merkelbach (1972), 83.
99 Between lines 1-2 and 5-6 as per Merkelbach (1972), 77.
100 Henrichs (1978). 159.
i) 3 masculine names: *holy or head neatherds*

j) 2 masculine and 4 feminine names: *bassarai* or maenads who wore the fox skin

k) 2 masculine names: perhaps *ampithales* or children employed as mediums by magicians whose parents were both living

l) 3 feminine names: *carriers of the liknon* (a basket to carry an infant)

m) 1 feminine name: *carrier of the sacred phallus*

n) 1 masculine name: *pyphoros* who brought the fire

o) 1 masculine name: *hieromnemon* or steward

p) 1 masculine name: *archineaniskos* who led and instructed adolescent members

q) 89 masculine and feminine names: *maenads* clad in the nebris, or fawn skins

r) 15 masculine names: differentiated as *bacchoi*, or maenads wearing fawn skins

s) 3 feminine names: differentiated as *bacchai*, as above

t) 15 masculine names and more than 100 names: categories of *bacchoi*, perhaps holy *neatherds*

u) 2 masculine names: *those who guarded the caves*

v) Over 40 feminine names: *bacchai*

w) 23 masculine and feminine names: *those who impose/have been silent*¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Alexander (1933). 268-269 refers to Vogliano’s (1933) reference to the cult of Isis and Kybele in Oriental parallels to the possibility that such mystai listed here may have dressed up (disguised) as members of the opposite sex.

¹⁰² For the full list with discussion on parallel translations of particular function names, see Alexander (1933) 266-269; an abstract of the main conclusion reached by Cumont (1933). 237-263 and Vogliano (1933) and from which this list is composed.
This inscription on a statue base concerns the wife of Gravius Squilla Gallicacanus who was consul in 150 AD.\textsuperscript{103} It is dedicated by the mystai of the priestess, named Agrippinilla, a member of a Roman family of Greek origin, and Theophanes of Mytilene of Lesbos was a family descendent.\textsuperscript{104} The inscription of the “sacred college” recorded specific and various categories of members of the thiasos. These are listed from highest to lowest in rank, or perhaps from most generous to the least generous donors. This Eastern Greek community was living in Rome during the Imperial era.\textsuperscript{105} The inscription dates to the middle of the second century CE, and contain specific archaisms such as the title heroes and the influence of Eleusis from the mother country which were transferred to Rome.\textsuperscript{106}

The inscription is on three sides of a marble base which measures 32 ¾ x 22 x 17 ½ inches. Sides I and II (as published) are fairly complete with the inscriptions quite clear.\textsuperscript{107} The statue (now lost) on top of the base represented Pompeia Agrippinilla, but the inscription gives twenty six titles that including ones that connected other family members.\textsuperscript{108}

The accumulated evidence is the most detailed thus far discovered with regard to a hierarchy where a woman is the recipient of the highest honor. It is a very complete list

\textsuperscript{103} Vogliano (1993). 215.
\textsuperscript{104} Cumont (1933). 232.
\textsuperscript{105} Alexander (1933). 265. See also the family tree for Agrippinilla as recreated by Vogliano (1933). 222. Note: Agrippinilla’s family can be traced back to mother Greece. The archaisms of the cult of Dionysus seem to indicate then that it was brought into Latium from her side. The political power and wealth seem to have been from the side of her husband.
\textsuperscript{106} Alexander (1933). 265. See also the family tree for Agrippinilla as recreated by Vogliano (1933). 222.
\textsuperscript{107} See illustrations in Vogliano (1933).
\textsuperscript{108} For full reproduction details, see plate I, II and III in Vogliano (1933). 216. (pl. XXVII, XXVIII and XXIX Metropolitan Museum of Art ).
of men and women involved in any of the mysteries. A parallel inscription, found at Lesbos, was dedicated to her daughter C’ethegilla.\textsuperscript{109} The highest percentage of subscribers (at least their name origins) is of Greek origin. These observations make it clear that the family had ties to an older tradition from Greece.\textsuperscript{110}

The list also reinforces our perception of the commercial/material nature of Dionysiac cult activities in this time frame and location. Although the Greek, and Roman members of all genders were listed, the dedication to Agrippinilla places her at the top of the hierarchy. The remaining details of roles and functions of specific gender titles put women as presiding over the mixed \textit{thiasos} where a presiding role was indicated (see line \textit{h, i, j} as indicated above). The fact that 40 female \textit{bacchai} are second from the bottom to only the “silent ones” may indicate their social as well as ritual status. This presumes that the hierarchy is true to the significance of the role of the \textit{bacchai}.

The major difficulty is that the inscription does not provide descriptions of the duties of members. Did the subscribers do so out of sentiment or obligation (or both)? There are no details for the context of the cult, for example, where they held meetings, where they performed rituals (or how often), nor descriptions of rites.

The titles (see \textit{c} above) attest the high standing of those in charge of the processionals and include the concept of offering sacrifice in their duties. Here in order of standing, they are male. Just below are the names of two female priestesses. At Mitilene, (and Lesbos) the popularity of Dionysos was well attested and was perceived as cruel and

\textsuperscript{109} Jacoby, n. 188. And IG XII, 2, 236-237.
\textsuperscript{110} While the scope of which would be far too large, a possible extension of study of maenads that includes how the change in maenad iconography, inscription and literature (specifically comedy) is exciting.
savage in nature. But there is nothing to indicate savage sacrifices in the subscriber’s list here.

There is no way to measure the validity of the accounts of actual ritual maenadism. Similarly, the failure to mention actual ritual behavior or even terms that imply the more “bloody” aspects of raw meat and sacrifice does not necessarily invalidate the historical occurrence of it. If this document were merely a commercial list of subscribers, there would be no reason to include such terms. The plausibility of both extremes is valid as supported by historical text and parallel inscriptions.

**Physkos/Western Lokris**

Good fortune. Regulations of the thiasos of Amandos have been ratified in two meetings: those in the association are to provide no less than fourteen obols: the association is to provide three lamps. A maenad is not to attack or abuse a maenad. Similarly a herdsman (boukolos) is not to attack or abuse a herdsman. But if someone does this. They shall pay to the association for each utterance a fine of four drachmae. And for anyone in town who does not attend a meeting, the same applies. Anyone who does not assemble on the mountain owes a fine to the association of five drachmae. If the chief maenad does not bring on the holy night…for the other 15 <maenads>, she owes a fine of five drachmae (to the association). Similarly if a herdsman does not bring…

Our last “pseudo-maenadic” inscription concerns private members of a Dionysian club at Physkos/Western Lokris. It dates to the second century AD. Similar colleges have been attested at Delphi, Elis, and Magnesia according to Sokolowski. Generically, the men are called herdsmen and the 15 women are called

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111 Cumont (1933). 232.
maenads.\textsuperscript{116} It is not sentimental or dedicatory. The limestone stele was found in Physkos/Western Lokris.\textsuperscript{117} Thus the regulation probably pertained to those community members who participated in a private thiasos. The inscription mentions the rites taking place at night, outside the city and on the mountains, but not specifically where exactly or when.

No other comparably detailed accounts of ritual maenadism or even cult activity of Dionysos have been discovered thus far for the post-Hellenic period in Greece, Latium or Southern Italy. This inscription is essential though, since it provides an economic basis for comparing the severity of “misdemeanors” by members against the association and each other. It also mentions a “chief” or head maenad. The most concrete information it provides is the account of penalties, thereby serving to highlight a necessity to maintain order. Since ten drachmae (six obols to the drachma) were roughly equivalent to a month’s subsistence for a poor peasant family,\textsuperscript{118} it would be safe to assume the chief maenad may have been of an above average financial standing. Alternately, the amounts of the penalties may simply indicate the degree of seriousness that the organization imposed on its members.

Some difficulties arise since there are parts of the text missing. ”If the chief maenad does not bring on the holy night___(blank)…” The missing word/phrase is crucial to my attempt to assess the punishable nature of her crime. The number “fifteen” is found in parallel accounts of historical maenadism as Pausanias and Plutarch mention

\textsuperscript{117} Sokolowski (1969). 318.
a similar size group of maenads which were used in the cult of Dionysos. Pausanias also claims that they organized in honor of Physcoa, the namesake of the place. Even supposing the accuracy of Pausanias’ description, we have no real evidence to measure how seriously maenads observed their duties either in Physkos or at the neighboring Delphi.

To sum up, the evidence of inscriptions provides concrete and reliable evidence for the historical reality of maenadism. The search for a woman’s particular role becomes more rewarding and involves far less “guesswork” thanks to sources like Marcovich and Zuntz. Wealth of the participant (female participant in the cult of Dionysus) is indicated because of the other grave goods found with her. Wealth of the “revered female” is also indicated on the other inscriptions in terms of the amount of association dues and fines in Lokris, and in the hierarchy of persons subscribing to a dedication in Latium. Most conclusive over time and across space in Greece and Magna Graecia is the fact that a woman was revered to have been included among the “blessed” of Dionysiac ritual. Men and women are included in each of the records of maenadism, but a woman does take precedence in all cases.

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119 See Pausanias, Description of Greece, Book VI 6, 6-7 and Plutarch, Moralia, 229 A.
120 Ibid, as above.
121 See Marcovich (1976), 221-222 and Zuntz (1971), 277-385.
The Rise in Maenad Status

Does this epigraphic evidence contradict or qualify Rapp’s assertion that mythical maenads differed from real ones in terms of “the imagination of the poets and artists?”

Just how much did the “imagined maenads” differ from the real maenads? More particularly, how is change measured in how women portrayed as maenads functioned in literature as opposed to the maenads who performed the rites in contemporary festivals? The chronology of the evidence as well as the chronology of the scholar’s views becomes especially important.

As previously mentioned, the historical evidence of epigraphs date from the third and second centuries BCE. But poets addressed the maenad as early as Homer, and as late as Euripides, but not into the latter Hellenistic period when the epigraphs mainly occur. The epic “maenad-like” behavior is treated drastically different by Homer than is the tragic maenad metaphor by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. This point will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4. Suffice it to mention for now that in the tragic authors’ works, there is a heightened interest in the maenad from an individualistic point

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122 Rapp (1872). 1. (translation is my own)
123 The chronology of the scholarly interest in maenads is very interesting in determining the evolution of a modern study, “maenadism” of course.
124 For complete list of maenad-like portrayals of epic and tragic female characters as 1) Dionysiac Bacchants or participants in Dionysiac celebration, and as 2) tragic characters compared to or identified with maenads outside of an explicitly Dionysiac context, see list taken partially from Schlesier (1993). 94, footnote 25.; 1) Clytemnestra in Aeschylus’ Libation Bearers, the chorus in Sophocles’ Trachinian Women, the feast of Bakkhis with maenads: Xouthos in Euripides’ Ion, Iocaste and Antigone as one of the maenads in Euripides’ Phoenician Women, and Agave and the chorus in Euripides’ Bacchae; 2) thiasos in Aeschylus’ Seven Against Thebes, 500 mainades (the chorus) in Aeschylus’ Eumenides, Hecube in Euripides’ Hecube, Evadne in Euripides’ Suppliant Women, Lyssa in Euripides’ Herakles, Cassandra in Euripides’ Helen, Antigone in Euripides’ Trojan Women. * I have left out men who display any maenadic behavior, as well as the list of figures who are not characters within the play, but who are compared or identified there with maenads.
of view, therefore not always necessarily in light of being dependent on Dionysos’ rites and mysteries. Finally, Albert Henrichs notices that the evidence of real maenad activities in the late first century BCE appears to fade away in the first century BCE, reflecting, perhaps a decline in “enthusiasm” of the members’ participation.  

It is likely that the study of maenadism in general follows the chronology of scholarly debate on the modern view of Dionysos, thus they are also subject to continuous differentiation and change. As Henrichs conceded, the debate on Dionysos and his place in history is far from over, and when considering that everyone with a proficiency in the field agrees to disagree, he concludes that Dionysos defies definition.  

The god invites controversy because he has no clearly defined identity. The maenad’s role is equally as provocative in terms of the failure of scholars to determine their rightful role in Greek history as well as in our interpretations of them. This assertion became the motivation of this dissertation to further an interest in defining the maenad in her historical and present scholarly context.

Why were maenads not a significant subject of scholarly interest prior to the late nineteenth century, while interest in Dionysos since the Renaissance was? Modern studies of Dionysus seem preoccupied with death and violence, to the detriment of the god’s dualistic character. Detienne and Vernant, for example concentrate on the “gorier”

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125 Henrichs (1978). 155-157. I have denoted real maenad “activities” because as the author suggests, the epiphanius (see footnote 106) records an account of pagan cult practices in Roman Egypt which may or may not have been maenads.


aspects of Dionysos’ myth and cult.\textsuperscript{128} Comparatively, Ruth Padel speculates on reasons for women’s natural association with daemonic entry/possession.\textsuperscript{129} Like Detienne, she gives high priority to women’s role in chthonian cult activities, and their roles as assigned by men. Explicitly, she refers to inner space and inner darkness, and the dangers of appeasing the chthonic divinities.\textsuperscript{130} Comparatively, Lissarrague approaches the paradigm of space, women and containers (vases) from an equally post-modern viewpoint.\textsuperscript{131} There seems also to be a recently heightened interest in the “non-ideal” characters of mythology, and in ancient Greek life in general.\textsuperscript{132} The connection is clear; where there is violence associated with Dionysus, there is violence by and amongst maenads. These women were, in part, considered the perpetuators of his will. Some ancient and contemporary writers and social commentators sought a more complex reasoning for women’s madness, for example Euripides and Richard Seaford.

The concentration of a violent side of maenads is noted to have happened after the fifth century, and the phenomenon of maenad behavior in tragedy is discussed as

\textsuperscript{128} See Detienne (1979). 62-63 for specific reasons for women’s participation in omophagy; Detienne (1989). 129-147 on the relationship of married women and their “controlled” role in public sacrifice. Vernant and Detienne are noted to be particularly interested in the violent nature of Dionysus more so than they can be attested to be “scholars of maenadism”. I note that in the co-edited edition of 1989, the index does not contain maenad.
\textsuperscript{129} Padel (1985). 3.

\textsuperscript{130} Padel (1985). 3-19. Although the association is clearly established, I am not entirely convinced of the generalization that misogynous patterns of fantasy about women was an entirely significant element of male Athenian literary structure such as tragedy.
\textsuperscript{132} See many newer publications on the general topic of women (largely considered non-citizens) The best example of the trend to observe marginal populations (not only women, but workers, foreigners, prostitutes, etc) is Cohen (2000). See also Lefkowitz (1986), Pomeroy (1975), Blundell and Williamson (1998), and Reeder (1995).
Dionysiac metaphors by Seaford and as maenad models by Schlesier. More explicit discussion regarding the construction of these two terms and how they determine the role of the maenad in tragedy will be examined within the respective texts, however, for the sake of clarity, I choose to use the maenadic metaphor to describe the behavior of mythological (within the tragedies) women that mimic the more crazed behavior of mythological maeands. Homer’s mention of maenads was more subdued, and seemingly only referred to their secondary role to the god’s power and might. It was included in the description (Homer’s *Iliad* 6 132-33) as a descriptive device in validating Dionysos’ revel scene. According to Seaford, Homer employes the Dionysiac metaphor in his account of the madwoman behavior of Andromache as well. Seen from this angle, “maenadism” is understood as providing a description of a particular type of “unusual” behavior by women in response to an extreme situation. This type of superficial regard for maenadism is comparable in Homer and in the early scholars’ attempts to merely validate ritual activities of maenads (Rapp, and to a certain degree Dodds). Contemporary scholarship and interest in the maenads would not be possible if not for the crucial work of translating the documents, tragedies and evidence by Rapp and Dodds. The tragedians’ regard for maenadic behavior is of utmost importance in the review of modern scholarship because it recognizes the complexity of the role of women as maenads in myth and literature and ritual.

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135 Rapp (1872) 1-22 (translation is my own) and Dodds (1940) 156-175.
The Rise in Urgency of a Warning

If a hypothesis that the alteration of attitude toward maenadism (as demonstrated in art and literature) in antiquity as well as post-1950 scholarship on the topic demonstrates a heightened sense of “urgency” to acknowledging the “over-domestication” of women and subsequently a heightened danger to the poleis of ancient Greece is to be validated, the chronology of the evidence for maenadism is crucial. Yes, epic maenads were addressed as “minor” accessories to a Dionysiac revel scene in epic. Similarly, sixth century black figure vases depicted maenads as minor figures in processions involving Dionysos and satyrs, while later fifth century red figure vases have images of maenads without Dionysos. In literature, madness was portrayed in women who displayed abnormal behavior, like, Antigone, Medea and Clytemnestra, and was provoked by extreme circumstances, or major duress. I will use many more examples in the next chapter on the tragedians’ use of maenadic metaphors. It seems, however, that the issue was pressed harder by Aeschylus with the inclusion of more maenad groups, and more direct parallels of Dionysian metaphors in his characters during the Classical age.

Euripides employs the tragic character of Pentheus in The Bacchae to personify the polis as a whole in refusing to acknowledge the issue of “over-domestication.”[137] His death by dismemberment may have been foreshadowing the detrimental effects of ignoring the

[137] See specifically the introduction by Vellacott (1973). 30-36. He does not specifically say that Pentheus is the personification or metaphor for the polis, but alludes to men’s injustices towards women by way of isolation. The personification/metaphor of the polis is an extension of the point.
warning of the danger of over-domestication of women and denying them the rights to Dionysos’ cult.

**Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides: Addressing Maenadism Seriously**

Other than Seaford,¹³⁸ no other literary scholar considers Homer in any significant manner in connection to the role of the maenad in epic. Neither Rapp, Dodds nor Henrichs seemed to believe that Homer’s brief mention of Dionysiac female revelers, or the “maenad-like” behavior of some of his characters would suffice in terms of validating the maenads’ existence, provenance or other historical proofs of maenadism. In terms of post 1970 scholarship, neither do any of the other authorities find Homer to provide a useful source of material on the subject, most particularly because there is absolutely no reference to the violence they were responsible for in latter tragic dramas. They prefer to concentrate their discussions around tragedy, and the maenads mentioned therein. However, in establishing his Dionysiac metaphor, Seaford does find significance in the epic portrayal of maenads.”¹³⁹

Homer mentions the first instance in terms of a reference to myth, specifically the myth of Lycurgus’ death (*The Iliad* 6.132). Then the maenads in *The Iliad, Book 6*, line 132 are further described as having been chased off the hill, throwing down their ivy staves while Dionysos flung himself into the sea.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the maenadic Andromache demonstrates madness in her behavior about 250 lines later, but as Seaford

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¹³⁸ Seaford (1993)
admits, she was driven to it by extreme circumstances, specifically the negation of the marriage ritual by the death of her husband.\textsuperscript{141} It seems to be sheer grief that makes her act out in this maddened fashion. But where is our much sought after inspiration of Dionysos in the frenzy? Regardless of the argument, Seaford does establish a concrete reason (the un-doing of the marriage) for a maenadic comparison in Homer; to link the Dionysiac metaphor to that used by the tragedians.\textsuperscript{142}

It was because of the new political unity and its contradiction to the “morals” of Homer’s powerful households that opposition as imagined by the audience may have been a logical theme for tragedy. The very real oppositions such as that between the wild natures and the civilized natures of the members of the demos (meaning all free male citizens), gender conflict and the ultimate destruction of the household\textsuperscript{143} were those which evoked the powerful opposition inherent in the god Dionysos. This explained why Dionysos was relatively absent from epic and why the Dionysiac metaphor was virtually non-existent then.

Seaford maintains that to be inclusive in the “Dionysian metaphor” (the term he applies to all characters in the contexts that involve Dionysian elements such as the place of worship or festival, or presence of the god or his entourage), a woman must experience a negation of her “proper” and prescribed role in society (that of marriage, motherhood and occupying the domestic sphere). Sometimes it was willingly, as in the case of Agave,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} Seaford (1993). 117.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Seaford (1993). 115-129. He discussed the Dionysiac metaphor as inclusive of the following: Maenadic Andromache in the \textit{Iliad}, Antigone in \textit{Phoenician Women}, Evadne in \textit{Suppliant Women}, Helen in Euripides’ \textit{Helen} (543-45), Iole in \textit{Hippolytus}, and Cassandra in Euripides’ \textit{Trachinian Women}. I am not convinced of the suggestion of Iole in Sophocles’ \textit{Trachinian Women}.
\item \textsuperscript{143} See the other oppositions to which Seaford (1994). 328-367, refers.
\end{itemize}
or sometimes it was unwillingly, as in the case of Antigone. Marcel Detienne, although not specifically addressing tragedy in the ‘Violence of Wellborn Ladies,’ addresses the general rule of the place of sacrificial practice as being restricted to wives of citizens, thus strengthening the connection of social ritual practice and the space it occupies in “controlled” society. Detienne links the duties of public sacrifice to the duties of marriage in the polis. In other words, only married women, or gunaikeis were allowed to participate in ritual omphagia (raw meat eating) As it stands, only well-born ladies (being aste or native/citizen, as well as enguete or pledged) could participate in the Thesmophoria, so it would suffice to presume only the same should apply for Dionysiac rituals. Alternately, Schlesier asserts that the essential element in the tragic paradigm of the maenad depends entirely on the use of the mask and the mask’s relationship with madness. She does not consider the aspect of marriage and its “un-doing” (a significant form of duress, especially when status depended on it) as a necessary prerequisite to the maenad model as used by tragedians, or not in those explicit terms. As I have already observed, Andromache fits the maenad model as well as the Dionysiac metaphor by way of her

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144 Detienne (1989). 129-147. See also similar (although more sympathetic to women’s feelings of worth through participation in cult) view of Zeitlin (1982). 129-57.


146 Schlesier (1993). 89-113 Noteworthy is that the author acknowledges linking of the term mainemenos by Homer (Iliad Book 6.132) to Bakkhos and Bakkheios in related epithets of the god with Dionysiac mania. In the play on the etymology and use of bakkhos and related terms, she merely links a term used by Homer to the generic term for an ecstatic female worshipper of Dionysus.
particular “rushing” movement towards the wall, as well as her violent emotion brought on by the intermingling of feelings of love and loss by the death of her husband.\textsuperscript{147}

Schlesier describes the “dizzying experience” of the tragedians purposeful tactic to transform the character into not only one who behaves like a maenad, but also one who appears in front of the audience, to have been at least temporarily transformed into a Bacchic figure.\textsuperscript{148} The aspects of death and love weigh heavy in the interpretation of the cause for maenad-like behavior.\textsuperscript{149} With this in mind, the introduction of other gods/goddesses in the influence of madness is addressed by Schlesier as well. Including Dionysos, Ares, Hera, Aphrodite and Apollo are mentioned as demonstrative of the divinities that also evoked madness. According to Schlesier, Hera provoked madness in Aesylus’ \textit{IO} and in Euripides’ \textit{Heracles}, Aphrodite induces Bacchic madness in the case of the Euripidean \textit{Phaedra}, and Apollo was the master of Cassandra’s madness in Euripides’ \textit{Trojan Women} and \textit{Electra}.\textsuperscript{150} I find the personification of maddening human emotions into deities who were employed by tragedians to take responsibility for crazed behavior convincing and logical. Dionysos and Apollo shared a sacred site in Delphi and both were venerated there.\textsuperscript{151} Both gods had the capacity to madden. The dead were also a source of inspiring the maenad model. For example, Clytemnestra in Aesylus’ \textit{Euminides} and Euripides’ \textit{Hecuba}, where Polydorus causes his mother to act in maenadic

\textsuperscript{147} I do not wish to engage the reader in the very complicated dialogue between Seaford and Schlesier regarding whether the female in the tragedy is a maenad model or metaphor, but where it is crucial that I give credit to the author, I must distinguish.
\textsuperscript{149} As do these two aspects feature in the discussion by Guettel Cole(1993). 278 in the eschatology of the golden inscriptions from Hipponion. A point I will address later in the review.
\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Ibid} (1993) see footnote 43.
\textsuperscript{151} See also discussion by Simon (1983). 89 where Dionysus and Apollo are given equal weight at the sanctuary in Delphi. Apollo was venerated in summer, and Dionysus in winter.
violence. Thus we see in this case, a longing for the beloved as a trigger for the maenadic state that leads most often to death, and sometimes the death of the afflicted woman’s mate or male children. But one element to which Seaford and Schlesier do not allude is the temporary or permanent state of madness that the maenad encounters whether this is in actual life or in celebrations. Most presumably this state was temporary as confirmed by Padel. The negation of the marriage ritual (whether in life or in death) was not the only cause of maenadic behavior.

Seaford contends that to evoke the Dionysiac metaphor, a woman must be compelled to leave her domestic space. Andromache leaped out of her house to the wall and was reprimanded by Hector as he commands her to leave the business of war to him (Homer, The Iliad 6.488-492). Naturally, in tragedy, the reason for women to leave their homes is far more complex as addressed by Euripides in the Bacchae. Women are described as being “coerced” to follow Dionysus to the outdoors by Pentheus. Wise old Teiresias asserts that all matters of self-control reside in one’s own nature (Euripides, The Bacchae 314-317). The association to the outer limits of their prescribed space to that of wilderness is noted as being particularly suited for maenad-like behavior. It is the action of exiting the household that brings on the destruction of it. Clytemnestra is disappointed at the message of the death of her son, but mentions his failed return as

153 Ibid (1993) see especially Chapters 4 and 15 on this condition.
154 See also Bremmer (1984). 283-84 on marriage as an archaic feature of maenadism.
156 Oranje, (1984). 44 while not explicit in his interpretation of the “wills” of the Bacchic women, Oranje draws attention to the god’s clever use of rhetoric in Teiresias’ attempt to make Pentheus understand.
reason to give up hope of a Bacchic celebration in the house (Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers* 698-99).

Schlesier suggests that the type of private initiation cult described by Demosthenes around 380 BCE could allude to a practice of maenadism at home. The inscription at Physkos/Western Lokris may support a domestic location for Dionysiac or maenadic rituals or festivities as well. There are no vases that I know of that show maenads in domestic settings, however, a small percentage (ten to twenty percent of the total) of domestic shape vases (hydria, pyxis, alabastron) have maenads on them. There is a five percent increase in that phenomenon from the archaic black figure period to the late Classical period. This is important, since as it may indicate an increased popularity of maenads on vases intended for women’s graves or even to be used in daily life in her home. In the forms of evidence, issues regarding domesticity abound and the evidence suggests that the maenad comparisons can be detected in the extant works of Homer (to a lesser degree) and the three major tragedians by way of the women’s deviance from marriage, deviating from their domestic spheres and womanly duties and participation in men’s rites, and in one particular case, by hosting a Bacchic celebration within her home.\(^{158}\)

\(^{158}\) Ibid (1993).
Tragic Mythical Maenadism and Evidence of Maenad Ritual

In ‘Greek Maenadism Reconsidered,’ Jan Bremmer separates mythical elements in the Bacchae from elements of historical maenadic ritual in a systematic way.\(^{159}\) He criticizes E. R. Dodds for taking the elements of the *Bacchae* at face value and for not questioning the validity of Euripides’ description, and directs his method at correcting Henrich’s assertion that elements of myth and ritual had been intertwined so as to be indistinguishable from each other in the *Bacchae*.\(^{160}\) In summary, the author establishes that Euripides took his illustrations of ritual practices (such as snake handling, among other attributes) from iconographic material instead of historical passages, thereby establishing a mythical connection to the ritual he portrays in his play. Similarly, he establishes that maenads “were presented in a realistic fashion and were immune or invulnerable to pain such as when their hair catches fire, it does not burn.”\(^{161}\) Again, Bremmer finds nowhere where fire manipulation is mentioned outside of the *Bacchae*.\(^{162}\) Maenads on vases did carry torches on occasion, though the motif is noticed more frequently on later South Italian vases rather than on Attic ones.\(^{163}\) Through a series of examples of the exaggeration of myth, it seems that the argument is plausible that myth as represented by Euripides in *The Bacchae* represents an *ideal* reality.

\(^{162}\) I did not find any other literary reference to maenads manipulating fire, but Parisinou (2000). 1 and 158 mention the “fire in the hair of maenads” as it relates to the *Bacchae* and draws attention to other torch-bearing maenads (50 and 99) and in regards to the promise of a bright, or happy afterlife.
\(^{163}\) See Trendall (1989), fig 349 as an excellent example. This is not to say examples do not exist on earlier Attic black figure or red figure vases, but I did not find any in my group.
Maenadic behavior fits well into other important female rites like the *Thesmophoria, Skira* and *Adonai*.\(^{164}\) As mentioned in the previous section, the separation of females from their domestic space provides a plausible cause for the evocation of maenadic behavior. Thus, in the *Thesmophoria* as Detienne and Bremmer point out, as well as Bremmer, the mythical maenads tore apart their children.\(^{165}\) However the ritual dramatization of eating or touching raw meat symbolically re-enacts the myth to dramatize the separation from the home.\(^{166}\) Euripides chose to exaggerate the violence of Agave and the literal tearing apart of Pentheus and also the symbolic tearing apart of her family.

Were these other tragedians expressing a kin of veiled warning regarding the over-domestication of women and the possible danger to the polis through these violent episodes? Did they take ritual “facts” and translate them into mythical possibilities, as Euripides did? It is certainly possible, but factual (inscription) evidence for maenadism provides a lot less detail regarding maenads than their “adventures” in tragedy. The evidence of inscriptions is totally distinct from the issues of women’s madness and their suffering in a socially constrained life.

The inscriptions do not merely attest to the details of maenad associations across Greece and Magna Graecia though.\(^{167}\) They demonstrate a clear purpose for citizen

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\(^{164}\) See Simon (1983). 18-22 as well as general discussion on these festivals by Burkert (1985). 227, 258 and 104-105 respectively.


\(^{166}\) *Ibid* (1983) 276, as well as Detienne (1979). 62-63 on the role of Dionysus is provoking a “taste for human flesh” as being part of a system designed to make man a wild creature and through possession have a more direct contact with the superhuman.

\(^{167}\) I do not pretend to look over the valuable contributions of Henrichs (1978). 121-160 to the historical study of maenadic cult in terms of the epigraphic records as being the ultimate test of authenticity for
women to gather and perform ritual outside of their homes and they establish a positive correlation between Dionysos and the afterlife. The correlation of death and maenadism is also represented by vase images (as vases were sometimes made with the intent to furnish a grave). The linkage between love and death can also manifest in our interpretations of the meaning of the tablets found in the graves of presumed initiates. In these cases, however, the cause of death is not accounted for, but the decreased devotion for Dionysos is rewarded. There seems at first glance to be no real connection between tragic models of maenads and the evidence from dead initiate graves. But upon further consideration, there are factors involving the status of the “voices from beyond the grave,” and these may also connect to the tragic maenad metaphor, as the tragedians vocalized it to the factors that adversely affected women’s status in ancient Greece. Tragedians highlight the problems that could and did arise from women forced or coerced into maenadic behavior (either by Dionysos or duress), while the inscriptions provide clear evidence that, for women who served the god Dionysos during life, a reward was expected, perhaps even guaranteed, in the afterlife.

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maenadic ritual as practiced in any given period or place. However, a discussion of all the aspects of historical maenadism as discussed by the author would occupy an entire review that does not take on the complexities of maenadism in epic, tragedy, or the larger social significance of the chronology of the evidence.

168 I am speaking here of the latter publications by Guettel Cole on the inscriptions intended for burial with the dead initiate. I will discuss the 5 major epigraphic records which Henrichs speaks of in chapter 3. 169 Guettel Cole (1993). 277 and (1980). 224 mentions that the gold tablets from Hipponion were intended for burial with mustai (initiates). 170 See the discussion of the choice between something bad and something good as inherent in the instructions of the tablet from Hipponion.
Chapter 3

Evidence of Maenadism in Imaginative and Historical Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the primary examples of female maenadic comparison by Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, as well as the historical writer’s accounts of maenadism. I will consider what these sources can or do tell us about historical maenadism, and the conceptualization of the maenad in Greek thought. Issues surrounding the increased occurrence and the transition from tragic maenad metaphors to actual maenads will also be addressed.\footnote{It is not the purpose here to outline every instance of maenadic comparison. It is the intent to examine and discuss aspects of the main maenad metaphors and the evolution and change to them over time. Some of the characters will overlap between the tragedians and some will bear reference to changes in visual and inscription evidence.}

Maenad Metaphors/Models in Homer

A distinction between Homer’s epic poetry and the hymns attributed to him lies in the intended audience. The poetic recitations in the latter case were reserved to honor the gods and were composed with that intent. A human audience is likely. They were probably a prelude to epic recitals and/or performances.\footnote{See discussion by Crudden (2001), xii-xxiv. While questionable attribution to Homer is noted by the author, the issue of attribution is less interesting here than the issue of the intended audience of the hymn.} The reference to maenadism in the hymns takes second place to expression of the god’s greater glory and his name is
mentioned in the opening. It is usually followed by epithets denoting the divinity’s attributes and deeds. Hymn I, To Dionysus\textsuperscript{173} describes the god’s parentage and identifies his birthplace as Nysa. It says that the biennial festival commemorates the god’s dismemberment. There is no explicit reference to maenads but the poet mentions the god’s ability to “drive women to madness” in line nineteen of the same hymn\textsuperscript{174}

Diodorus of Sicily had gathered material for his “History” in the first century BCE and embraced the period before the Trojan War in Books III – VI.\textsuperscript{175} He probably wrote them as early as 56 BCE.\textsuperscript{176} In Book IV, he mentions Nysa with reference to the attack on Dionysos and his Bacchants.\textsuperscript{177} The reason given for the Greek’s biennial festival is that it took Dionysos three years to journey from India to Thebes upon an elephant (Diodorus, Book IV 65.6-66.2). Diodorus continues to recount the myths of Dionysos and the specific attributes to the god. One example given is the narthex, or reed that formed the staff of the thyrsus. In the latter description, violent effects of drinking unmixed wine are highlighted. The revelers were described as “madmen,”\textsuperscript{178} but not as maenads. In his Book III, women were selected to be soldiers of Dionysos (the third Dionysos).\textsuperscript{179} Diodorus approaches the history of the mythical side of Dionysos. He does not imply a historical reality to maenadism, nor does he mention that the god drove

\begin{footnotes}
\item[173] Ibid (2001). 3
\item[174] Crudden (2001). 3
\item[175] See Oldfather (1953) xiv-xv
\item[176] Ibid (1953)
\item[177] See footnote 1 in Oldfather (1953) denoting material taken by Diodorus from Antimachus of Colophon, but it is unclear how much of the report he takes from the older source.
\item[178] See Oldfather (1953). Diodorus, Book IV 4.4-5.1:
\item[179] Ibid: Diodorus, Book III. 71.4-72.1:
\end{footnotes}
women to madness. He blames that on the “unmixed” wine. Euripides’ *The Bacchae* does explicitly describe Dionysos’ power to drive women out of their homes and into a “maddening trance.”

A section of Pausanias’ *Description of Greece* also refers to the biennial festival called *Sciereia* (*Book VIII, 22.9-23.3*); where in obedience to Delphi women were ritually flogged. The passage also describes the temple of Dionysos at Alea, belonging to the Argive federation. Pausanias probably wrote this description after around 174 CE. Pausanias (like Diodorus), was not concerned with the behavior of maenads or whether the rituals were ritual manifestations of previous myth. He offers no opinion as to whether or not it was the power of Dionysos that drove the women mad. Only the festival itself is described, in fact, and the historians mentioned so far who did not attempt (in the context of their writing) to validate the origins or meaning of historical maenadism. And as we have seen in the Homeric Hymns, the historians also avoid attributing maenad madness to the influence of Dionysos exactly. As we shall see, tragedians did make this claim, at least in some cases.

Homer’s *Iliad* offers lines in regard to Nysa and the maenads in *Book VI* (131). The reference that warned against making war against the gods showed the maenads in a defensive state. Homer used the passage to describe Lycurgus’ misfortunate end as he

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180 See also Berard (1993). 122; the author states that the (unmixed) wine was largely forbidden for women to drink.
181 Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 133, strophe 3. There are many other references to this effect throughout the tragedy.
182 Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, (*Book VIII, 22.9-23.3*)
183 The date of his fifth book, according to Jones (1964), *Introduction*.
184 Murray (1924) with revision by Wyatt (1999) translates “nurses” in this line. Here I have used Fitzgerald (1974)
was driven down over the cliff of Mt. Nysa by the “nurses of raging Dionysos,” in the sequence of the series of events. However, the image of maenads as soldiers is described elsewhere by Diodorus, “…and he selected women to be his soldiers, as the ancient Dionysus had done in the case of the Amazons” (Diodorus, Book III.74.1-5). In terms of the development of the polis, Homer and Diodorus refer to an early stage as they describe the relative foreign nature of Dionysos as well as giving the impression that he and his initiates were not welcomed.

Conversely, the story of Andromache does bring the cult of Dionysos closer to the audience in that it is not a recollection of myth in the present story line as is the story of Lycurgus. A few lines later in The Iliad, Book VI (388), Hector’s wife makes her way in haste, like a madwoman, to the wall. The maenad metaphor is brought about by the fact that she leaves the typical female sphere (indoors) and runs (atypical female action) outdoors. The association of maenadism and marriage presumes that a threat of (or actual) negation of the wedding ritual is to blame for maenadic behavior in females. This was supposed to cause panic, thus duress. In the case of Andromache, the panic forces her outside because she feared losing her identity as wife of Hector. This would lead to the destruction of the household. The destruction is expressed (in some tragedies) as the reversal of the marriage by way of death of one’s spouse. The premarital ritual in which girls leave their natal homes in order to prepare themselves to be tamed or “yoked” (like

185 Homer, The Iliad, Book VI (131-132).
186 Fitzgerald (1974); note: Murray, revised by Wyatt (1999) translates, “like one beside herself.”
187 See Seaford (1993). 117. Alternately, Schlesier (1993) does not denote marriage (or potential destruction of it) as being the only/main contributor to the evocation of the maenad model.
an ox to its cart) in marriage is recalled.\textsuperscript{188} Similarly, maenads are described and seen on vases as leaving their homes, resisting men and performing sacrifice.

Once Andromache faces the prospect of returning to her wild or yoked state (prior to marriage), she panicked. She feared losing the civilized status that her wedding promoted. Even Medea, who bravely embraced the end of her marriage to Jason ensured her status of “civilized woman” in the house of Athens \textbf{before} she departed after killing her children. Homer had Hector instruct Andromache to return to her house and weaving (\textit{The Iliad, Book 6: 491}). He shows a clear disdain for women acting against their socially acceptable behavior.

Andromache’s fears were confirmed and she ran through the \textit{megaron} like a maenad. The symbolism of the “undoing” of her marriage to Hector is clear enough, and was this behavior which made her comparable to a maenad and to frenzied behavior. The female poet Sappho (\textit{fragment 44}) implies \textit{makarismos} of the marriage:

\begin{quote}
Gods holy all together set out to Ilium the sweet sounding flute and cithera were mingled and sound of castanets, sweetly the maidens sang a holy song, and a marvelous echo reached the sky everywhere in the streets was vessels and bowls myrrh and casis and frankincense were mixed together. The older women cried out all the men shouted charmingly a deep sound having called Pan Apollo, the far-thrower, skilled with the lyre. They sang in praise of godlike Hektor and Andromache. (\textit{Fragment 44})\textsuperscript{189}
\end{quote}

Good intent is not realized in the long term here, however. In the \textit{Iliad}, Andromache herself speaks of the predestined failed \textit{makarismos} when she says, “Hector! Here is my desolation. Both had this in store from birth-…”(\textit{11: 479}). The failure and the maenad

\footnote{\textsuperscript{188} See Seaford (1993). 88. Noted by Seaford is that the term “yoked” is prevalent in tragedy as it pertains to women and the transition between maidenhood to womanhood.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{189} Fragment taken from Lefkowitz \& Fant (1992)}
metaphor are rare in Homer’s epic style but the distinctive link between Dionysos and the irreversible destruction of the household would become recurring themes in Attic tragedy. If Homer said anything of historical maenadic behavior, he echoed a begrudging and fearful attitude towards the unacceptable maenadic behavior when enacted by an aristocratic, well-born lady. The issues surrounding the “evolving” polis (with Athens as a model), would contemplate and address the fears and causes of female duress and atypically mad behavior and would become more clearly symbolized in tragedy.

**Greek Tragedies and Maenads**

The appearance of Dionysiac frenzy is most frequent in Attic tragedy. More specifically, comparisons of women to various maenadic behaviors (metaphoric and actual) are found in main and secondary characters (as well as in the chorus) of the extant tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and particularly Euripides. The intentions for writing about maenadic aspects differ tremendously from that of the tragedians. The historical evidence can attests aspect of the presumed mythological origin of Dionysos and his followers and to some historical descriptive evidence such as the locations of Dionysiac activity in ancient Greece. Other than the aforementioned Andromache, no maenad behavior is displayed by the female characters of Homer.

The reason for this trend is summarized as follows: The concept of a disruption of the household through various methods of the negation of marriage underlies the rare appearance of Dionysiac frenzy in Homer’s epics and is the cause of the increased appearance of it in tragedy. Seaford refers to the condition of a failed makarismos (praise

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190 Seaford (1993) and Schlesier (1993). Throughout this dissertation much is owed to their development. I find the development of maenad metaphors and attention to maenadic behavior very provocative.
or well intent) of the upcoming wedding or existing marriage as being a causal factor in the appearance of a “maenad metaphor” in tragedy. Since Homer’s epics were composed at an earlier stage in the development of the Greek polis (probably around 750 BCE), they devote little attention to the problems surrounding the issues of the household, gender roles and the evolving polis, as the nature of these institutions had not yet become fixed. Alternately, tragedy addresses a whole complex of ideas regarding the risk of the irreversible destruction of the household and permanent subversion of ritual (including marriage).

The question of the tragic paradigm of the maenad, Dionysiac features, and tragedy depends upon a relationship between the mask and tragedy as well. Although a prominent feature in tragedy is Bacchic madness, most tragedies do not contain explicitly Dionysiac themes or mythical repertoires of characters. It was, therefore, usually the maenad metaphor that displayed Bacchic madness. Sometimes the female characters wore the metaphoric mask of Dionysos in various contexts and displayed unexpected reversals in behavior. This ambiguous nature was inherent in the god, too. The disguised god presumed to work through human actions but was not present in the drama. Euripides’ The Bacchae (415 BCE) is the only tragedy that does focus on the

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193 See Seaford (1993). 145. This is a convincing reason offered by the author as to why maenads are infrequent, but it will not be the focus of the examination of the maenadic metaphors that I find convincing. As Seaford states at the end of his discussion, it may have been unfashionable to say before, but he hopes to convince the reader that there was no real place in epic to celebrate Dionysos as liberator of women from their homes. There may well have been a reason to contemplate this phenomenon in tragedy though.
195 This is especially noted in Euripides’ works. He is more direct in calling or comparing actual figures to maenads such as Cassandra, but omits the reference to Dionysian myth in other cases.
physical presence of the god. However, other characters in tragedy prior to *The Bacchae* wear the “mask” of Dionysos.

Classical vase painting shows us images of Dionysos that replace the actual god Dionysos that was shown on vases of the Archaic period. On the red figure stamnos by the Villa Giulia Painter, circa 460 BCE (see Figure 3-1), women are shown in front of the effigy of Dionysos, and a mask is shown frontally, crowded with ivy and surrounded by branches. The image suggests that maenads have come under a type of “spell” cast by the “mask“or glance of Dionysos. 197 Claude Berard, suggests that the physical presence of the god was not necessary to control women’s participation in cult activities. This seems conducive with what Seaford suggests about tragedy, that sometimes it is a metaphoric mask that the maenad or female character would wear that would evoke the maenad metaphor. Wine (which is what the historians blamed “madness” on) is clearly indicated as the maenads ladle it out into goblets. The stamnos, was also primarily associated with wine. The fact that there are few images of the mask of Dionysus and comparatively many more vases with maenads painted without Dionysos (or a mask of him), and on shapes which were not primarily associated with wine, suffests that something quite significant happened over time.198

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197 See Berard (1989). 122
198 This is a point I will return to in Chapter 4.
At times, another deity may have evoked a maenad metaphor. The contexts include the killing of kin, war and love. The metaphor is more often evoked in female characters. In some cases such as in *Seven Against Thebes* (467 BCE), a man (Eteokles) merely dismisses the maenadic behavior as normal irrational actions of the female sex as reactive to war. In essence, the metaphor is a comparison to a maenad. In one case in particular, the female maenad metaphor required no metaphor at all. Agave displays

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**actual maenadic frenzy** in context with her association with Dionysos in *The Bacchae*. She was an actual maenad in the drama. Like the other tragic metaphors of maenads though, the maddened female figure faced destruction of her household. The difference is that Agave’s overtly Dionysiac-inspired madness caused the destruction of her household while in most other cases, the destruction (or potential of it) caused the madness in the maenad metaphors.

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**Maenad Metaphors in Aeschylus**

Clytemnestra becomes a major maenad metaphor in the *Libation Bearers* (458 BCE), as Aeschylus weaves Dionysiac elements into her famous dream of Clytemnestra. The monster evoked by her guilty conscience is on one level a metaphor for her son who will kill her. But on a second, deeper level, Clytemnestra is compared to the maenads who nursed wild animals. Snakes with maenads are also well attested in Euripides and are depicted on many Attic black-figure and red-figure vases. See Figure 3-2; an early red figure amphora with Dionysos, a satyr and a maenad holding a snake.\(^{200}\) Like maenads who nurse wild animals, “she [Clytemnestra] herself offered it (the snake) her breast in return” in the dream within the play\(^{201}\) (531). Thus, we see that Clytemnestra, through the murder of her husband, is not at “ease” in the wild (as symbolized as a maenadic, or

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\(^{200}\) This is one of many and they appear in the early stages of Classical Athenian vase painting and on white figure wares as well.

\(^{201}\) *Aeschylus, Libation Bearers*, 531.
non-married state), and is profoundly disturbed. The snake turned on her and took Clytemnestra’s blood along with her milk.²⁰²

The action in antistrophe (the portion of an ode, sung by the chorus) #1 continues to develop the maenadic connection and highlights passion as a contributing factor to irrational behavior (594-601). Lines 598-600 speak of females being the easiest to be swayed by irrational passion as well as the unnatural or “perverted” union between

²⁰² Compare Euripides’ Bacchae: 659-702, where snakes lick the cheeks of the maenads who nurse wild animals. *I thank Dr. Dennis Schmidt for valuable insight on the concept of maenads as mothers.*
Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.\textsuperscript{203} Thus Clytemnestra evokes the metaphor of a maenad, not by reacting to the destruction of her household (she destroys it herself by adultery), but by wearing a mask of Dionysos to disguise her perverted desire to create a new one with her adulterous lover. There is also an element of panic in that though, and it is that which creates in her the maenad metaphor. With the omission of the \textit{makarismos} by way of her son and daughter plotting against her new household, the success of the marriage is doomed.

As previously noted, madness is sometimes brought on by other forces that work in connection with (or without) the Dionysiac mythological sphere. One such example is the madness brought on by the Erinyes in the last play of the \textit{Oresteia} (458 BCE). The opening hymn of the \textit{Eumenides} (458 BCE), by Pythia, honors Dionysos (here called \textit{Bromios}) and describes him dwelling in the region of Parnassos. Dionysos is also described as responsible for the death of Pentheus whose death is similar to that of a hunted hare (24-26).\textsuperscript{204} The Erinyes shall also pursue Orestes to avenge the death of his mother and his powerlessness is thereby likened to that of a hare.\textsuperscript{205} While it is not a direct illustration of this portion of the drama, the hare that appears on an early black figure vase in Paris (see Figure 3-2) does evoke the implication of sacrifice, victimization, and powerlessness. Indeed, the gift of a hare to Dionysos is a common

\textsuperscript{203} Aeschylus, \textit{Libation Bearers}, 594-601.
\textsuperscript{204} See also dialogue in the \textit{Bacchae} (1350-1360) where Dionysos tells Agave that he has been shamed by the killing of Pentheus.
\textsuperscript{205} Aeschylus, \textit{Eumenides}, 24-26. The association of maenads with hares, and deer is illustrated infrequently, but poignantly in rare images such as the unpublished vase: ( fig 1-13) showing Dionysos alone, tearing a fawn in half. illustrates a rare but significant side of Dionysos as violent as well.
theme on early Attic vases. This recurring juxtaposition establishes the Bacchic connection. Clytemnestra destroys Orestes’ household. Orestes then destroys her new household by matricide. The Dionysiac element of duplicity is poignant.

Figure 3-3: Attic black figure amphora
Amasis Painter, c. 530 BCE
Photo Credit: Cabinet des Medailles, Paris

The Erinyes are the forces, who by way of their perpetual virginal state and subsequent madness, most effectively evoke the maenad metaphor. They are like maenads in many ways. In the Aeneid, of around circa 30 BCE, Virgil the Roman poet depicted them

Noteworthy also is the common theme of hares as gifts to Dionysos and that the mythical maenads were outdoor huntresses. This seems odd in context with Athenian women who probably knew nothing of hunting.
tormenting the souls of the dead with whips and snakes.\textsuperscript{207} Snakes are also well attested as attributes of maenads. The Erinyes travel by night like the maenads and in “altered states” of frenzy: neither the maenads, nor the Erinyes seem to tire out.\textsuperscript{208} Between lines 65 and 84 of the \textit{Aeneid}, Apollo explains the nature of the Erinyes to Orestes as a despicable state: “Grey virgins, ancient maidens, with whom no god, nor any among men nor any beast has intercourse.”\textsuperscript{209} He warns Orestes not to give in to his fear of the perpetual chase, to make his way to the altar where he will receive a proper trial. He also indicates that he should face his guilt there. In this way, the Erinyes as maenad metaphors become the mask to Orestes’ fears. Orestes is intertwined with (but does not represent) the maenad metaphor by way of being denied a respectable household. However, he is being chased by the source of his fears (Erinyes symbolizing them), his own madness. In this delicate web, the Erinyes also wear the maenad masks that disguise him and they can alter states (both physical and mental).

In lines 341-345 of Aeschylus’ \textit{Eumenides}, the Erinyes report that they sing over their victim, maddening the brain. When they are prevented from taking justice on Orestes, the black-hearted goddesses complain that they are robbed of their honor.\textsuperscript{210} Here, like previous maenad metaphors, the Erinyes are unable to make the permanent destruction of the household right again (their intended function and that which would remove the metaphor of the maenad). Athene reprimands them. She offers them honor by ending the cycle of bloodshed that perpetually destroys households. The Erinyes

\textsuperscript{207} Virgil, \textit{Aeneid}.
\textsuperscript{208} Euripides, \textit{Bacchae}: 150-170: Cadmus reports that he could drum all day and never tire from it.
\textsuperscript{209} Aeschylus, \textit{Eumenides}, 65-84
\textsuperscript{210} \textit{Ibid}, 822.
ultimately accept honor and end the cycle of bloodshed and therefore they remove their maddening power over Orestes. This ends his role as a maenad model.

**Maenad Metaphors in Sophocles**

Antigone, like Andromache, is grief-struck and lets her headdress fall. Euripides implies the reversal of her wedding in *Phoenician Women* (410 BCE)\(^{211}\) and she is therefore comparable to Andromache. However, Sophocles has Antigone refer to her tomb as a bridal chamber thereby accomplishing the same nuptial reference. He takes it a level further. Antigone is robbed of her “due” marriage because of the destruction of her natal household through the death of her brother, Ploynices. She intends to metaphorically wed her family in Hades. Her fate is compared to that suffered by Dionysos’ enemy Lycurgus in that the rocky prison (Hades) will cure them both of their madness.\(^{212}\) The house of Thebes provides background to Andromache as a maenad metaphor.\(^{213}\) Mt. Parnassos and the hills of Nysa are recalled as well as the maenads who dance all night in honor of their lord Iacchus.\(^{214}\) Pausanias also states the association with the Attic *Thyiads* and justifies Homer’s epithet (*Odyssey*, XI.581) where “Leto went towards Pytho through lovely Panopeus.”\(^{215}\)

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\(^{211}\) Euripides, *Phoenician Women*, 1490

\(^{212}\) Sophocles, *Antigone*, 950-969

\(^{213}\) *Ibid*, 100-161.

\(^{214}\) *Ibid*, 1114-1115. See footnote in Jones (1994). #109. He equates the deity to Dionysos and says they are often used synonymously.

\(^{215}\) Panopeus is on the way to Parnassos from Athens. Ancient and modern maps attest to this.
A Bacchic state can also be produced, of course, through the direct influence of Dionysos and other divinities, namely Orpheus (or even by the dead) by evoking the powers of the underworld.\textsuperscript{216} As I mention in Chapter 2, the inscription on the gold lamella from Hipponion also supports this association. In Antigone, Creon orders Haemon to “repute this girl as an enemy and allow her to marry someone in Hades.”\textsuperscript{217} Similarly, Antigone believes that Hades owes her a bridal procession and she decides to be the bride of the river Acheron in the underworld.\textsuperscript{218} Thus Antigone’s behavior is likened to a maenad on earth by way of her defiance to male authority (by burying her brother despite contrary decree). Creon underscores her maenadic nature in lines 560-62 of Antigone as he says that Antigone has been mad since birth. However, her state of maidenhood at her death and her association with a marriage in Hades denotes the status of maenad bride to the underworld. No bridal vases, or any vase from the Archaic or Classical period depict maenads in Hades, or maenads as brides. However, maenads have been found on vases as furnishings in graves, and I would like to propose that some these were probably in the graves of important women like the lady of Hipponion.\textsuperscript{219} Like maenads in their rites of passage (or initiation rites), Antigone resists men in life and will do so in her life after death as she rejects marriage (by defying Creon) for a bridal-funereal journey to her dead family.

\textsuperscript{216} See Schlesier (1993), 100. Dionysos and the Bacchic initiates of Hades are attested elsewhere in scholarship to be relative to the underworld within the sphere of Dionysian mysteries. *See discussion in Guettel-Cole (1980). and Burkert (1977).
\textsuperscript{217} Sophocles, Antigone, 654-655
\textsuperscript{218} See Grimal (1991). 5 for the relationship of Acheron and the underworld to the Greek word for sorrow. This makes the river metaphorical for her feelings (?)
\textsuperscript{219} Interestingly, Sophocles’ Antigone was written in approximately 441 BCE, and the gold lamella from Hipponion is dated to approximately 400 BCE.
Creon’s stubborn refusal to allow Antigone to bury her brother is an affront to her family’s honor and a determining factoring destroying her household.\(^{220}\) A warning regarding the fate of Lycurgus is given by the seer Teiresias, but Creon does not heed him or learn from past misfortunes, since his obdurate nature is matched by Antigone’s in this tragedy. The result of the tragic decision is not that Creon dies (as Pentheus did), but rather that Antigone will die a perpetual untamed maiden, or “unyoked filly.”\(^{221}\) Had Creon an ounce of compassion for Antigone, or for his son Haemon who should have married her, his household may not have been destroyed by the subsequent suicide of his son and his son’s intended wife.

In the *Women of Trachis* (409 BCE), Iole’s wedding with Herakles meant the destruction of her old household as well as her new one. The households of both Iole and Antigone were ruined because of the failed *makarismos* (or “well intent” as a literal translation) but Iole’s wedding did actually happen in her life on earth. The earthly wedding, as one would expect between equal members of elite families would cause considerable duress to the other non-legitimate bride. The chorus foreshadows this threat to Deianeira: “The offspring, of the bride without a wedding in the house is a mighty Erinyes.”\(^{222}\) The threat her children becoming illegitimate is the emotional stimulator to Deianeira’s maenadic behavior. A particular technique of Sophocles is to have the chorus connect a previously known (to the ancient audience) tragic figure to the current one. The chorus here describes a Bacchic connection: Herakles, who was driven to conquer

\(^{220}\) See Burkert (1985). 192 on honorific tradition of the Athenians and a developed urban setting. Not changed from the days of Antigone.

\(^{221}\) See Seaford (1993). 121-122 on comparisons of fillies that have left the yoke, or untamed virgins.

Deianeira, comes from Thebes and defeats his adversary Achelous. Herakles’ arrows represent the strongest Dionysiac feature. Duality and opposition evoke the twist of fate and the unexpected reversal of intent which is characteristic of the god himself. Herakles’ arrows defeated the rival suitor Nessos for Deianeira’s hand, but they also become the source of his own death. The main maenad metaphor remained Deianeira.

Another connection to Dionysos is the comparison of the clotted foam produced by the discarded piece of wool to the foam of raw grape juice from Bacchus’ vine. The force that attracted the maenad metaphor was the exterior threat to the marriage, Iole. So, irrational love seems to be a power that masks one in madness. Like the clotted foam, the jealousy invoked from irrational love (the kind of love that is not reciprocated) “eats” away at and consumes the material. Love is both productive and destructive.

Sometimes Aphrodite (among other deities) can evoke the madness comparable to that of the maenads. It is love that brings on the positive “Bacchic rush” in the chorus and in Deianeira as they utter the cry of joy associated with Dionysos, “Euoi”. The anticipated return of her husband makes Deianeira delirious with joy. Dionysos is most often responsible for “delirium” and a returned husband is cause for Bacchic celebration.

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223 Ibid 500-520
224 Ibid, (695-705).
225 As Schlesier (1993) attributes love to evoke the maenad model, I would add in this case the jealousy involved in feelings of love.
227 See Euripides’ Bacchae for reference to Dionysos, god of joy (136-155) and the mention of delirious dance (70-85).
In Book V of *The Moralia*, Plutarch describes “frenzy and shouting of throngs in excitement with tumultuous tossing of heads in the air.”228 These acts may or may not be divinely inspired responses to oracles, but Plutarch does not presume to answer this. Plutarch wrote in the beginning of the second century AD and is concerned primarily in this section with the demi-gods (priests or priestesses) that perform the act in response to the oracle at Delphi.229 He is less interested than Sophocles in intense emotion (joy or sorrow) as responsible for the frenzy.

The frenzy described by Sophocles was far from ritualistic. The intense and contradictory emotions of Deianeira change the context of the cause for maenadic comparison. When Deianeira is confronted with a rival to her marriage bed, panic sets in. It causes her to lose reason and act hastily. The Dionysiac element was at first a happy occasion. Then Deianeira attempts to put a positive spell on Herakles but causes his death instead. The mask of opposition (or a façade of well intent) inadvertently causes the destruction of her household. Thus it becomes the basis for the maenad metaphor. The permanent reversal of her wedding is recalled: “Oh bridal bed, farewell now forever, since you will never again receive me to lie upon this couch.”230

Sophocles tends to justify maeandic behavior with the connection of Dionysos. On many archaic black figure vases (the earlier period of my study group) maenads appear on vases with Dionysos and satyrs. It is rare that the early vases show maenads alone, or with out the “justification” of Dionysos. See Figure 3-4 and Figure 3-5.

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Figure 3-4: Attic black figure amphora (panel type)
Circa 500 BCE
British Museum, cat # B148
Photo Credit: The British Museum

Figure 3-5: Attic black figure Oinochoe
Circa 520-500 BCE
Photo Credit: The Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Cat # 919.5.143
The tragic element of destruction is involuntary in both cases: the killing of Antigone’s kin and the threat to Deianeira’s marriage bed. War caused the death of the maenad metaphor in both examples too. Threats to their acceptable female roles as wife and mother cause the maenad metaphor to wreak havoc and destroy the balance.

Sophocles offers an interpretation of the maenad in Greek thought that is indicative of the required balance within female/male relations. He demonstrated that to disrupt the normal scheme of things (ultimate transition from girl to matron as well as the expectation of sharing a non-threatened household with her husband) can be deadly for all involved.

**Maenad Metaphors/Models in Euripides**

The characters of Euripides seem to not only evoke the maenad metaphor more frequently in the corpus of Attic tragedy, they make it clearer. In the *Women of Troy* (415 BCE), her mother describes Cassandra as the “maenad girl.” The metaphor is made clear because Apollo had left her an untamed virgin. Her status in the context of this play is even more evocative of the maenad metaphor by her direct contact with the god. She also exists in a permanent state of madness because no one believes her. She was punished for her insubordination to the god’s advances.

Cassandra panics at the prospect of creating a new household and becoming “yoked” to the man who destroyed her old one. She says: “To the ritual blessing of the wedded virgin!…Dancers, come. Loose your leaping feet, wild with wine of ecstasy!

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231 Euripides, *Women of Troy*, 171. See Kovacs (1999), 31 compared to Vellacott (1973), 95 where he translates “my frenzied child.”
Glorify my father’s happy fate!”

Cassandra tries to lead the other women of Troy in Bacchic frenzy but they do not follow. Her prophecy is the key because she knows that her taming process (or wedding) will destroy the household of her husband too. The duplicity of her fate establishes tragic connections. The union is unnatural for it does not bring forth life (as in a future child); rather it brings forth death.

In the story of Ion (413 BCE), Xuthus is well characterized as well acquainted with the maenads of Delphi. The women of Delphi and the Bacchic revelries are also attested by Pausanias (Book VIII: xii.9, xxiii.3 and Book X: iv.2-4) According to the historian, maenads were protected from any treatment of indignity by the Phoenician soldiers who were occupying their city at the time.

Xuthus also honors Dionysos later on in the poem by performing a torchlight dance and offering sacrifice. This assumes the presence of the god’s devotees, the maenads. Meanwhile, Creusa invokes the maenad metaphor by assuming that her household will be destroyed (even as it were, childless) by the introduction of alien offspring. She panics at the thought of a child who is not of her own in her house. She induces maenadic comparison for a short time until Apollo intervenes and prevents her plot to irrevocably destroy her house by murdering Ion.

Another minor maenad metaphor is Lyssa, as represented in Euripides’ Herakles. She, like the Erinyes, acts as a “mask of madness” that Herakles wears as he kills his children. She does not evoke maenadic comparison though. She IS the goddess of

\[\begin{array}{l}
\text{232 Ibid, (320-343).} \\
\text{233 Plutarch, Moralia. XIII: 249.} \\
\text{234 See Detienne (1989) and Henrichs (1978). In this passage, there is no indication of whether or not the “victims” were human or animal.}
\end{array}\]
madness. Herakles evokes a force that is represented by an actual presence of the maddening deity (female), while female tragic characters usually evoke a symbolic comparison to a maenad (usually brought on by her own emotion). When Lyssa ceases to torment him, he awakens from his maddened (Bacchic) state (1122) to find his household utterly destroyed.

Phaedra in *Hippolytus* (428 BCE), Hermione in *Andromache* (427 BCE) and Cassandra in *Hecuba* (425 BCE), are also examples of maenad metaphors and models. In all cases, there is a threat to their households. Phaedra has a desire to go to the wooded mountain to act as a huntress (*Hippolytus*: 215-222). There are obvious maenad connotations in her wish. The nurse offers the explanation that some deity is affecting her proper wits. We realize that it is Aphrodite, although she is not physically present in the section. She has struck Phaedra mad with passions directed at, yet not reciprocated by, Hippolytus.

Hermione is also maddened by jealousy and shares with Phaedra the fear of her husband’s wrath at her behavior. Both emotions are rejected and despised by men, and attributed to women as being responsible for the downfall of a marriage. In both cases the cause for madness in the women is failed *makarismos* again. Aphrodite’s meddling and the influences of “bad women” (who puff up jealous feelings) are to blame. Euripides’ works are not as multi-layered in their associations to Bacchic madness as those of Sophocles and Aeschylus. Euripides offers a filtering agent upon which to place blame for the madness. For example, jealousy as presented by the other women to

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235 Euripides, *Herakles*, 1122.
236 Euripides’ *Andromache*: 930-32.
Hermione, buffers the result of the madness. Jealously is worn as a mask (because it can be removed) to evoke maenad madness. Euripides provides a buffer, but Sophocles and Aeschylus did not lessen the impact of tragedy on the maenad metaphor. This concept is most obvious in the Bacchae, where Dionysos takes responsibility for Agave’s actions (but does not condone them).

In Hecuba (424 BCE), the titular character describes Cassandra as “possessed” (676 and 677). She just is a maenad and Apollo takes the blame. The captive women act like “hellish bacchants” towards the end of the play when they perform the revenge murder on Polymestor for killing Hecuba’s son. Alternately, Hecuba does display the normal criteria to evoke the maenad metaphor, but her women perform the deeds associated with madness.

Medea, Cassandra, and Antigone in particular, were popular figures on vases, however, there is no real correlation to the dates of specific tragedies and the popularity of particular figures, nor is there explicit reference to maenadism. Figure 3-6 is a typical scene from myth and could easily fit into the category of illustrating Euripides’ tragedy. One does see a change in the use of Medea as a visual topic, or the devices by which she is represented though. See Figure 3-7 from around 400 BCE (Euripides’ Medea is dated to around 431 BCE), and note that Medea is neither on the ground, in a domestic space, nor in the wild.

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237 Euripides, Hecuba, 676 and 677
238 Perhaps dates are coincidental, however, I do note that the figure of Medea is much more “active” than older depictions of the female tragic figure. The vase is not Attic, but the theater is well attested in Lucania.
Figure 3-6: Attic red figure hydria, Kleophrades Painter
Circa 480 BCE
Photo Credit: Museo Nationale, Naples, ARV 189.74
Photograph from Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece*

Figure 3-7: Lucanian red figure calyx-krater
Circa 400 BCE, Photo Credit: Kimbel Art Museum, Fort Worth
Photograph from Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece*
Medea is encircled, in the sky; she is “caught” between “heaven and earth” and the “human and the divine” She is not a mother anymore (her dead children below), nor is she a “passive” maiden. She is “in limbo” and Euripides as well as the vase painter, keeps her there!

In *Phoenician Women* (410 BCE) by Euripides, Antigone rejects Oedipus’ suggestion that she should join the maenads on the mountain. She says, “My service won me no thanks.” 239 This refusal to return to a permanent maenadic state is also demonstrated by Agave in Euripides’ *Bacchae*. 240 The question remains: Where will they go? Is there a state between the civilized or married woman and the untamed wild one? Perhaps Euripides is the only tragedian who alluded to this concept. Euripides’ Antigone contemplates her future, existing as a maenad among the dead when she exclaims, “I rush forth a bacchant of the dead.” 241 But Euripides offers an alternative to this miserable fate, and she does not follow through by dying. The alternative state, that is preferred, lies between the life of a regular woman (married or not) and the perpetual tragic maenad. This comparison presumes that life of a maenad model is “unnatural” (for any real length of time, beyond ritual, that is). Whatever that state may be, Euripides may have realized in his day that there must be an acceptable alternative. He realized that the pressure on women to conform to the still-enforced and rigid expectations insisted upon by an evolving polis (Athens being one that grew even more rapidly than any other) was too much for some to bear. Consider the expectation (or circumstance that dictated) to wed

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239 Euripides, *Phoenician Women*, 1757
241 Ibid, 1488-89
and produce illegitimate offspring, called *nothoi* (and with no legal accounting for legitimacy if the mother was non-Greek), for example, as in Iole’s case.\(^{242}\) Consider the increasing number of non-Greek women in Athens during the Classical age. Consider also the expectation of following an unfair law without legal recourse (Antigone), to accept additional wives into an established household (Clytemnestra), or be transferred unwillingly from a maiden home and maiden state to that of the illegal matron (Cassandra).\(^{243}\) As with Antigone’s decision, only death seemed to alleviate that pressure. Euripides offers no suggestions to solve the issues, but raises questions regarding the extreme social constraints of women as opposed to the excessively free reign of many men. To what extent did ancient expectations and “social norms” propel women into maenadic states?

The contrast between maenad figures such as Antigone and Evadne is stark. Evadne opts for suicide (like other tragic maenad metaphors thus far discussed). The typical prelude to the tragedy is present in *Suppliant Women* (423 BCE) as she runs like a maenad (crazed) from her house.\(^{244}\) She also goes through the familiar procession from bride to widow, and then to bride of the dead. She thinks her act of dying in the flames of her husband’s pyre will bring her closer to him again. This may (in her mind) reinstate her matronly status: “After leaping into the fire, joining my body in the glowing flame with my dear husband, and laying my flesh near his, I shall come to the marriage

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\(^{242}\) Just (1984). 64 for discussion and the fact that even if a man produced a child with a non-citizen, not only the child would be illegitimate, but the man may lose his civic rights!

\(^{243}\) Just (1989), 28 and 44 with reference to the way concubines and prostitutes were considered under law.

\(^{244}\) Euripides, *Suppliant Women*, 1000. As Kovacs (1998) mentions, the text here is notoriously corrupt.
chamber of Persephone!” As in many tragedies, war is the preemptive precursor to chaos and destruction, and tragedians show it to be particularly harmful to married women. Evadne deprived her sons of their remaining mother, thus the maenadic exit is not triumphant.

Antigone refused to die because of the destruction of her household. This defies the maenad metaphor. Agave demonstrates the same bravery to face the unknown. In all other instances, the maenad metaphor wears the mask of madness to justify atypical female behavior. In all cases, the maenad metaphor is either evoked or caused by intentional or unintentional destruction of the household. Failed makarismos is another common factor. However, only in the examples of Euripides (Antigone and Agave) does the maenad metaphor remove the mask of Dionysus and consciously chose neither a second marriage nor death in order to escape her state of “in-betweeness” In most cases, the maenad metaphor ends in tragedy because she could not escape it. Antigone defies by refusing to die, and Agave demonstrates bravery, too, to face the unknown.

The Bacchae addresses maenads throughout the play. The fate of Pentheus is used as a warning to heed the demand by Dionysus to honor him. The poet also uses Pentheus as a warning to avoid blaming one’s actions on the gods. He infers that all matters chaste reside in one’s own nature. Agave breaks the cycle of the tragic maenad and represents a conscious effort by Euripides to take the threatening elements out of the conceptualization of the maenad, for example madness evoked by war, passion, or fear of the destruction of the household. The tragedy was one of the last and was written while

245 Ibid, 1015-1025
the poet was exiled to Macedonia. It is also far removed in the context of the treatment of the traditional (by tragedians) maenad metaphor.

Agave murders her son. She does so proudly and believes that she has made the ultimate kill. She displays his head on a stick but shortly afterwards, she realizes the terrible nature of her crime. One would expect Dionysos to praise her deed, yet he does not. He exiles both Agave and Cadmus to “nowhere.” Dionysos, previously thought of as being the destroyer of the household, is shamed and offended at Agave’s crime and he punishes her too! In her shame, she does not return to her maenadic state. She offers the explanation that she has had her fill of mountain ecstasy,\(^{247}\) and humbly accepts her fate. She is neither wild nor tame. Again, Euripides offers no suggestion as to where she would, or should, go…he leaves that up to the audience to contemplate. It is a rhetorical question because Euripides realized that within the evolving polis, there WERE many such tragic cases of “household-less women.”

\(^{247}\) Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 1380-85
Chapter 4

The Maenads: Changes in Image over Time

Vases representing maenads on Attic vase paintings in the collections of the United Kingdom, Fascicules 1-18 offer us new, pragmatic data from number, type of vase, and their function to the more provocative: changes in the importance or self-importance of women as maenads in the cult of Dionysos in Athens in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. The contrast between the imagery of the sixth century and the rapid changes early in the fifth century BCE may reflect social changes occurring with the establishment of democracy in 511 BCE and the impact of Persian wars in 490 and 478 BCE resulting in the hegemony of Athens. Violent behavior as unleashed by Euripides Bacchais performed in Athens in 405 BCE has a lengthy precedent on Attic vases, particularly the vivid scenes datable to the 490 and 480 BCE. It is important to observe, however, in contrast to the claims of Goff, Park and Fahlbusch that there is a separate development in the imagery on Attic vases with maenads from about 460 to the late fifth century BCE, which appears to be in direct characterization of the maenad-like behavior developed by the tragic poets.

I have found that citizen maenads are important to the fifth century BCE. Citizen Bacchais as described in the title of Barbara Goff’s study of 2004 became increasingly important in the imagery of maenads on Attic vases of the second quarter to the late fifth century BCE. Goff integrates many current and past theses concerning maenads, and yet the evidence from the vases is only a brief summary, and numerical account based on T. B. L. Webster, of vases with women as well as men who honor the gods. Bacchais is
employed in the title, although her study does not focus on the maenads. Additionally, Taplin’s method of providing discussions of vases with the text from the tragedies (which is interesting and does contribute to the field) echoes Trendall and Webster’s “illustration” model. In this chapter, I will present my own findings and data based on intensive study of maenad vases in the United Kingdom. My findings show that illustrations on Attic vases from 460 BCE onwards quietly celebrate demure, citizen women. The maenadic metaphors in tragedy though, were honored often by the audience’s awareness of, and disapproval of rash behavior of certain men and women (or circumstances) pivotal to the creation of each tragic maenad metaphor. In all but two (Antigone and Agave) of the metaphors though, the disapproval of men in the plays of maenadic (atypical and maddened) behavior by women is perceived. Vitally both media explore important dualities, often polar opposites, in human nature. It is with these humble to elegant vase paintings in the United Kingdom collections that I have found maenad women also to gain a new feature, publicly acknowledged self-worth.

Maenads: the “Other” Wild Women of Greek Myth and Life

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249 Taplin (2007).
The historical maenads have been understood (especially from the perceived status from inscriptions and historical writings) to have been a select and privileged group of women, who, contrary to other wild women (such as the Amazons, gorgons, Medusa, or Sirens, for example), actually existed within the gates of civilization of the city states of Greece in antiquity. They were, therefore, **accepted** in ancient Greece. This is a notable distinction from other mythological females. Many of the maenadic metaphors from tragedy were non-Athenian characters though, and many of them non-Greek. Indeed, with all of the research resounding (quantitative and qualitative as well as comparative with other scholarship), the vases say something of the fact that they were quite special too. Maenads comprise over 50% of vases with wildish women on them. The “Wild Women” of ancient mythology comprised the category of non-goddesses or demi-goddesses, non-citizen women (wives or maidens of Greece), and not the “regular” women that would be painted on vases such as servers, slaves, prostitutes, or other human categories.  

Wild Women were the monstrous characters from myth such as Medusa or the gorgons, the foreigners such as Amazons, part animal females such as Sirens and Sphinxes. I noticed, however, that the maenads even evaded my category of Wild Women in that they were **real** (for example, from inscription evidence we see that they even had “jobs” or “positions” as *maenads in life*). Some other minor categories included (but comprise an insignificant number in the data base) were female *komasts* (*komast*  

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250 The term is one I use frequently in relation to the “other” females in ancient Greece that I became interested in BECAUSE they were not goddesses or real women. They were the “active” women who usually existed on the “fringes” of the Greek world: that is to say usually in their imaginations and myth.
means revel and the komasts were revelers who danced), or unidentifiable running
women (who could have been early renditions of maenads). Ariadne (by nature of her
marriage to Dionysos) was included in the maenad category. Where Medea or other
tragic maenad-like characters seem to have been particularly “wild” in their depiction, the
vase was observed and discussed where applicable to particular tragedies. There were
virtually none in this category though from my United Kingdom data. This is interesting
because the impression one gets when discussing tragedy as seen on vases, is that neither
previous scholars nor I, have been able to find more than an example or two of maenad
metaphors from tragedy. 251 Neither did the vase painters attempt to illustrate the maenad
metaphors of particular characters as vital subject matter. If they did use them, I believe
it was non-intentionally.

The sheer number of maenads on vases suggests that they were not rare sights in
the visual culture of the period. For example, in Figure 4-1, the table represents the total
number of “Wild Women” 252 that were hand-picked and tallied from the volumes of the
Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum (my control group which consisted of 6,788 vases). The
table further breaks down the types of Wild Women (358 vases with them in total) and
includes a separate category for maenads. There were 177 vases with images of maenads,
thereby constituting a significant percentage of Wild Women on vases: almost 50%, in
fact. Another curious observation is that a fairly large number of maenads on vases have

251 This is good because the “matching and illustrating” from text to vases method is what I wanted to
avoid since it is, in my opinion, a post modern invention to attempt to understand ancient Greek life.
252 “Wild Women” typically refer to the female figures on vases that are not categorized by being
goddesses, mortal women, or known mythological women from either Homer, comedy, or the tragedians.
been excavated and show their provenance to be Athens proper, but the main (actual and ritual) maenad cult activity occurred mainly at Delphi.

The second largest category of Wild Women is the Amazons.

Figure 4-1: Table 1: Wild Women on Vases
Fascicule 1-18: totals from the Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum, British Museum

Although they (maenadic metaphors more than actual maenads) had been portrayed as being capable of **deviant** behavior in the tragedies (but not in historical accounts, Homer’s mention of them, or in inscriptions) they were never portrayed visually monstrous, as were the Sphinxes, Sirens, or gorgons. They seem, in most

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respects to have been imagined by the artists to have been very “real,” and “true to life.” They did not have animal parts (like the satyrs) as part of their appearance, they were not imaginative “creatures” (like the sphinxes), nor did they have sexy, muscular bodies and half draped breasts, or wear masculine attire or skimpy \textit{chitons} like the ones sported by the provocative Amazons. A very few exceptions do exist, of course, as in Makron’s renditions of maenads in “gauzy” \textit{chitons} (see Figure \textbf{4-2}) where maenads are painted in such an alluring manner.\footnote{Note that Makron, in \textbf{particular}, was fond of “seductive” images of the figures on his vases. The scenes have a heavy “symposium” theme and “drinking party” themes involving abduction scenes, mischievous satyr behavior and overt sexual references.} But it should be noted that in scenes like these, the maenad defends her honor, while Amazons are typically depicted in submissive positions.

In all periods and on all vases, then, it could be said that the maenads were depicted as fairly “normal” human women. On early archaic wares, they are shown wearing animal \textit{peploi}, and carrying snakes. On Attic red figure (Classical period) vases, they often carried a \textit{thrysos}, and sometimes they were shown with animals or animal parts such as hares or a deer. Rarely, maenads were painted in their “altered state,” for example, with head tilted back, arms flailing at their sides and with eyes rolled back (see Figure \textbf{4-3}), but this seems a very late feature. The vases show this “altered” (or maenadic) state in a way, however, that contrasts the manner by which ancient literary sources described maenadic behavior (for example “rushing to the wall” as in Homer’s \textit{Iliad}, Book VI, 388; or letting headdresses fall as in Sophocles’ \textit{Antigone}.\footnote{This point will be further addressed as the changes in maenad appearance are discussed.} These descriptions offered the impression that the women have been “transported” to a frenzied state,” out of their normal minds. In literature, they exercised a sort of reckless abandon...
while the vases do not imply this on an equivocal level. Some of the vases do show the maenad as if “transfixed” (see Fig 4-3), (but not in a manic state), perhaps induced by Dionysos as in the case of Agave, in *The Bacchae*.  

256 This is a later red figure vase: the point will be made in context with various depictions over time.
In general, maenads are represented as regular women, although they had a specific iconography that changed over time. Many images are respectful though, of the wives, grandmothers, aunts or daughters of Greek citizens. It is also highly probable that the maenads on vases represented, to a large degree, the mythological worshippers of Dionysos (mythical maenads), who then evolved in Greek visual culture, to represent a degree of human worshippers (like, for example, the ones that Pausanias refers to), and perhaps at times, a degree of both.

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257 See Reeder (1995). 381. Inscription evidence also from Chapter 2 supports this.
Fear of something unknown (such as abnormal behavior of women) is often overcome by justification. In Euripides’ drama, The Bacchae, fearfulness was the initial feeling towards the maenads, as demonstrated by Pentheus. Here in his address to the nobles and people of Thebes, he reports,

Our women, it seems, have left their homes on some Pretense of Bacchic worship, and are now gadding about On the wooded mountain-slopes, dancing in honor of This upstart god Dionysus, whoever he may be….

They tell me, too, some oriental conjurer Has come from Lydia, a magician with golden hair Flowing in scented ringlets, his face flushed with wine, His eyes lit with the charm of Aphrodite; and he Entices young girls with his Bacchic mysteries…

He’s the one – the foreigner – ²⁵⁸

Were the maenads, in general terms, considered dangerous or threatening? Rothwell dismisses the unsettling (to the civilized citizen) idea that females seeking their own natures outside of their prescribed role might be a foreign one, but this was also a recurring historical conundrum for the male citizen.²⁵⁹ Perhaps the maenads were not considered “dangerous”, but the fact that they sought a “state of nature” outside of the civilizing polis that excluded them could lend them an aura of threat, of potential danger. Historically, the threat was large enough in the early archaic stages of the Greek polis that after authorities tried unsuccessfully to ban or repress this wild cult, it was then taken into

the mechanism of state cults in important centers.\textsuperscript{260} Thus, there echoes a fear felt in the beginning of the tragedy by Euripides as well:

\begin{quote}
Tell all my men who carry shields, heavy or light,
All riders on fast horses. All my archers with
Their twanging bows, to meet me there in readiness
For an onslaught on these maniacs. This is beyond
All bearing, if we must let women so defy us.\textsuperscript{261}
\end{quote}

Let us recall, however, once again, that none of the vases encountered in this study actually depict maenads in a violent manner which would require physical restraint. The earliest maenad vases are the ones that show the women in processions, but these appear to be very orderly, and take place in the presence of Dionysos. Charles Seltman further suggests that the potential ancient phenomenon of women out of control was quelled by social organization. He mentions Periander having introduced a Dionysiac festival during his reign in Corinth between 625 and 585 BCE. The Despot of Sicyon also appeased the population by replacing the cult of an old hero (Seltman does not mention which one) with that of the more popular Dionysos. Perhaps the cleverest of the statesmen to deal with the threat of Wild Women was Cleisthenes, who combined the realm of the careful god of law and order (Pythian Apollo) with that of the mystical god of abandon (Dionysos) as he officially placed the Holy Sepulchre of Dionysos beside the navel-stone of Earth and the Tripod of Pythia. In Athens, Peisistratus also instituted the \textit{Great Dionysia} when he founded the \textit{Panathenaic} games for Athens in around 566 BCE.\textsuperscript{262}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{260} See Seltman (1957). 80.  \\
\textsuperscript{262} For all of the discussion on the statesmen’s attempts to quell women’s uprising (ritual or not), see Seltman (1957). 102-103. See also Seltman (1975). 101.
\end{flushright}
Women did not compete, but some Panathenaic vases depicted maenads in their characteristic activities.\textsuperscript{263}

It may seem also, in retrospect that “justification” often accompanied action that was provoked by fear. As the opening scene of the *Bacchae* begins, Dionysos himself ascribes the fault of women’s madness to himself. Euripides thus uses the mechanism of the god to justify such a mystery and therefore becomes a catalyst of his own society’s critique. The god, driving the Theban women all mad and out of doors, justifies their behavior, saying,

\begin{quote}
And I must vindicate my mother Semele  
By manifesting myself before the human race  
As the divine son whom she bore to immortal Zeus. \textsuperscript{264}
\end{quote}

Could this “socially necessary” justification have been a determining factor in the early artists’ choice to paint maenads with their patron god instead of letting them roam the visual field without a “chaperone”? This may be a “figure,” but here, I will argue that the issue is deeper, and involves the evolution and change of vase shape and function according to alterations in the time honored (and quintessentially Greek) symposium.\textsuperscript{265}

**Form and Function**

In light of the preceding points, it is necessary to break down the vessels with regard to the imagery on them, as well as other aspects, to measure distinction between public and private function. We can then more accurately determine just how many were

\begin{footnotes}
\item[263] See discussion on Amphora later in this chapter.
\item[265] This idea will be discussed further in the section discussing amphorae.
\end{footnotes}
used for public functions and how many for private functions. The following pie graph illustrates the main points and summarizes all fascicule data:

Figure 4-4: Wine versus Water and Other

Approximately 77% of the vases with maenads on them were apparently made for use with wine. This usage refers, of course to the life usage, or presumed intended use in the making of the vase. Of that percentage, amphorae make up almost 46% of the total. And other wine shapes include: the oinochoe, krater, jugs, pelike, psykter, stamnos,

While the intended market, the potter’s commissions and “second-hand trade” in Athens is important dialogue on vases in general, the themes that Webster (1972) uses does not enrich this study, it merely gives alternate views and possibilities for the vases. Most of the maenad vases do not have clear find spots.
Chalice, olpe, rhyton and dinos. Cups were various and made up 23% of the remaining wine vessels: cotyle, kantharos, skyphos, eye cup, little master cup, band cup, mastoid cup, and approximately 38% of the cups were kylixes. The remaining 23% of water and other vases are broken down further so that 8% were used for water (hydria, kalpis) and the other 15% had either votive (ones found in the sample were: the lekythos, araballos, alabastron, askos and epichysis) and/or toilette uses (the lekane, small plate, pyxis, situla, and prochoos, or stamp of a vase.

When the data were further broken down according to period and style, another very general picture emerged. As we see in Figure 4-5, almost double the water and other shapes are found in the Athenian Red figure category of the latest period (around and after 470). With these basic trends in mind, an examination of the ways that the image of the maenad changed on the various vase shapes may enliven the discussion with regards to how change in the maenad image in general was manifested over time.

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267 When used as an example, the specific shape will be explained.
268 See Lamb, Fascicule 6 (1930).
Figure 4-5: Table: Wine vs. Water vs. Other, by Style (in Chronological Order)
Maenads on Wine Vases

The earliest maenads are recognizable by items held in their hands, such as the *thyrsos* or fennel staff with ivy vines and leaves that they carried (although this is more of a later trend), and by their dress. It seemed to be that a heavy *peplos* was fashion in Archaic Greece, as is seen from comparable representations of other women. But maenads’ dresses had short sleeves (a notable difference from mid fifth century maenads for sure) and had an animal skin (*nebris*) draped over one or both shoulders. These attributes distinguished them from “ordinary” dancers or just women, as does their presence with the god and satyrs. The Column Krater by the Lydos Painter from around 550 BCE (refer to Figure 1-1) is unusual because of its size, but the scene of entwined dancing maenads is exemplary of the honorific scenes that were popular in the archaic period. This is one of the first vases where women, wine and song are presented together, but the themes are presented in an entirely mythological guise. Based on the subject and size of the piece, this krater would be a *symposium* piece by the subject and by the sheer size of the krater from which the wine would be ladled. No fewer than 27 satyrs and maenads are shown in a frieze that continues around the entire vase. The maenads have black painted skin like the satyrs, unlike later (slightly later) black figure vases where women are differentiated as their skin was painted white. They all dance in the same direction, but one satyr turns and faces the viewer. The piece is typically archaic in that the painter shows the figures in frontal view and there is no trace of perspective of foreshortening. The composition is enlivened by the use of red glaze which lends an even more celebratory atmosphere to the scene. The drinking party was a quintessentially Greek, particularly Athenian feature of society.
The Lydos vase is the earliest Attic black figure vase that I have observed which shows a procession scene but does not show maenads as static worshippers or as part of a rigid procession. But, they do occupy the entire space, and this vase is unique in the archaic period to represent this on such a grand scale.

Many such images abound of the Dionysos, satyr and maenad entourage, especially in the early period of Attic black figure vase painting. Dr. Elizabeth Walters, in a discussion with me, observed a level of “contact” (or lack thereof) that the maenads had with one another and with the other figures, on these early types of vases. It seems the “procession” is fairly formal and the maenads seem unable to be cognizant of one another. The Lydos krater from the 550’s BCE depicts a typical procession, and while the maenads overlap with the satyrs, they do not interact with each other. The early black figure amphora (see Figure 4-6) is a fairly typical example of the previously mentioned “type.” It is a “Nikosthenic” type and attests to the imitation of Master painters and the significance of Master painters in the subject matter and type. The palm ray extending from the foot of the vase is a typical decorative motif of the period, and as is the Lotus pattern around the shoulder. The “frieze”-like treatment of the Dionysian figures participating in procession or revelry is common to early works. The mouth is atypically widened and the handles are also thinned out and stylized as the Nikothenes type. The composition is a common one in the early stages of vase painting, and the figures appear rather like “stock” figures. This particular vase\textsuperscript{269} is very similar to ones from the largest

\textsuperscript{269} The tendency to make assumptions based only on the “Master Painter’s” vases is a common trend. This dissertation attempts to validate significant observations using quantitative studies that include comparison to lesser and good quality (and sometimes imitative of Masters) vases.
groups of the study of maenads on vases. Referring to graph 2, (Figure 4-7), one can see that the majority of Attic black figure vases have Dionysos included with the maenads in the composition.

Figure 4-6: Attic black figure amphora (early period, circa 530)
The British Museum, London, fascicule 5, cat # B297
Photograph courtesy of the British Museum.
Figure 4-7: Graph 2: % With/Without Dionysos 1

More importantly, most of the compositions have satyrs accompanying them. In particular, fascicule 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, and 16 show a distinctly higher percentage of vases with maenads and Dionysos. It is not until the later period that a significant number of vases (and more red figure vases) have images of maenads without Dionysos on them. The image is befitting of the “bespoken” types that had the symposium as its intended use: the Dionysian procession, in a frieze decorated with ivy sprigs, or grape vines and
the figures are not individualized, but retain something of a “canon” in the way that the figures were represented.

This stylistic trend on his examples is an older one, as indicated by the sphinx (on the shoulder) and the ray pattern on the base by the foot of the vase. In fascicule 5, there were no less than thirty two of the “palm-ray” type of amphora and they all featured a similar scene of Dionysiac “procession” rather than “revelry”. The dates for these vases are between the mid to late periods and some of the names of the painters do include Exekias, Nikosthenes, and an Amasis painter vase.

That master painters do contribute maenad paintings is significant, in that it reflects the consumer’s perceived value of the cult of Dionysos, and that special attention was given to his rituals and traditions in Athens. The were even exported, for example we know this to be true of the Nolan Amphorae. That many of the vases of the so-called Masters are imitated (for example, in Fascicule 5, there are vases “in the style” of Amasis, “from the School of Exekias” and “Nikosthenic”) is even more important to understand the value of these symposium wares and the role of the maenad on them.

Very good quality amphora are also found in Fascicule 4, from around 540-530 BCE. A popular mythological scene of Herakles and the Stymphalian Birds on one side and two maenads facing each other, enveloped in a large embroidered cloak that acts like a curtain can be seen in Figure 4-8. The scene is similar to the usual Dionysian

\[\text{\footnotesize Data collection and sequential observations which was performed for all fascicules in the Great Britain collection were made into more easily comprehended pies and graphs. I acknowledge that the original data are cumbersome for the reader and therefore I will provide them upon request, but otherwise, the data are included in the easier to read charts.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize (Walters 1929), Fascicule 5 British Museum.}\]
procession, except it is in a panel and not around the vase (either as a main frieze or on the shoulder). The maenads are also tall, dignified and very static. They do converse with each other and they virtually ignore the satyrs. They wear a spotted *himation*.

**Fig 4-8**, a, and b., Black Figure Amphora 540-530 BCE
Fascicule 4 cat # B163
Photo credit: The British Museum, the online Beazley Archive
A large group of this type of amphora is contained in the British Museum collections and can therefore be assumed to have been a popular type of vase in their time of production in Athens. In the same Fascicule, very good quality amphorae “in the style of” Amasis are of particular interest. One side shows a group of soldiers and Troilos on horseback, and side B shows a Dionysian welcoming scene (presumably to Olympus). Dionysian spheres and maenads, that appear on the vases, were common themes to place with major scenes or designs in panels and they do fit well onto the fashionable egg-shaped amphora body.

In Fascicule 14, we have another series of good quality amphorae that were collected by the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and published by John Boardman in 1975. These date from circa 520-500 and 490 BCE. One particularly elegant example is a Nikosthenic vase from Caere where maenads adorn the handles, while satyrs and youths occupy the body. Many examples abound of amphorae with a heroic scene on one side and maenads and Dionysos on the other side. These are obvious “association” vases where the symposium attendants would identify or associate their status with that of the hero, and perhaps even feel “favored” among the gods, or at least within a Dionysian sphere. The type is appropriate to make a military hero feel special, too. Again, exceptions do exist, and one of these is a representation of a maenad riding a bull. On one side she wears a wreath and there are grape vines surrounding her, while on the other

272 See Walters (1927), Fascicule 4, plate 25 a and b.
273 See Boardman (1975), Fascicule 14, plate 30-2,3,4,5.
she holds a fillet. I shall return to another striking example of this exception at the end of this chapter, but consider for a moment, an alternate market for vases.

A few of the good quality amphorae share the “procession” motif with Olympians such as Apollo, Hephaestus, or Athene as well. In her comprehensive breakdown of the “themes” of vases with images of maenads, Gerlinde Fahlbusch categorizes the vases with various criteria such as (but not limited to) either “dancing scenes” (with or without Dionysus), “lying down scenes” (with or without Dionysos), and even “sitting down” dancing scenes with Dionysos. This is the category that Gerlinde Fahlbusch uses, and that which corresponds well with my data. It places the “procession” scenes (or, what the author calls “dancing scenes”) between approximately 570-460.

My evidence shows something else too: that large number of Late Attic black and very early red figure vases with maenads were of distinctive styles, were used by Master painters and their imitators, and had distinctive characters on the same vase. For example 8 vases in fascicule 4 were wine vases and of the “affected style” (where angular- type figures proceed around the upper portion of the vase), “Panathenaic style” and the so-called early red figure “Nolan-Amphora”. In “Standard case E” of the British Museum Stores, the style of the “affected” amphora have a uniform arrangement of lotus buds and other arrangements, and were thought to have had an Ionic influence. Panathenaic vases held oleo oil, and were given as gifts/prizes in the Panathenaic festivals in Athens. They were usually of good quality, and the “authentic” (because there were fakes) vases bear a seal on the bottom. “Nolan” denotes the place in Naples and the famous Kleophrades

Ibid, plate 16-1,2.

painter is widely published for his Nolan amphora. What is different and significant is that other vases (an observation from the original observations of each fascicule) included more “heroic” figures from mythology. For example, maenads were on the opposite side of scenes of Hera, Herakles Nessos, Deianeira, Athene (on the Panathenaic vases), Ajax and “regular women.” These subjects were popular around the late black figure period (around the 530 to the 520 BCE) and into the earliest Attic red figure period.

Heroic vases ceased to be produced in any serious numbers after about 520 BCE, and following the Persian wars, when the consumer demand for vases changed drastically. The “bespoken” (ordered in advance) nature of symposium ware would have changed too. Perhaps it did not disappear as is the impression we are left with, however, when considering maenad vases and the increased status of maenads in all other media. Great Britain, fascicule 7, from the collections of the British Museum in London, also contains 6 Nolan amphorae with heroes and warriors along with maenads. The phenomenon seems a relatively short lived one, but parallel visions of maenads as heroic do survive in Diodorus’ accounts: “…distributed to the women, instead of thyrsi, lances whose tips of iron were covered with ivy leaves.”

Euripides’ Herakles contains maeandic metaphors too, in the hero (temporarily maddening him) as well as in the irrational behavior of his illegitimate wife. Maenads not only attended important events such as the Return of Hephaestus, they adorned the vases of significant mythological and heroic figures as well. The above mentioned shapes are all wine, of course. As time

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276 Diodorus, Book III.65. 3–6.
277 Euripides, Herakles.
transpires though, the heroic vases make way for less serious characters such as satyrs, actors, and regular women, Aphrodite, Pan and logically Artemis.\textsuperscript{278}

M. W. Edwards notes also, that during this early Archaic period of vase painting (between around 530 and 480 BCE), the maenads are always depicted clothed (they also bear the \textit{nebris} or fawnskin and carried \textit{thyrsoi} or snakes which distinguished them from earlier nymphs),\textsuperscript{279} while the satyrs are usually shown as naked during this time.\textsuperscript{280} Even Euripides describes the iconography of the maenads as seen on many of the early vase paintings (especially black figure wares), and explains why they exist and what they do:

So when the Fates had made them ripe  
For birth, Zeus bore the bull-horned god  
And wreathed his head with wreaths of writhing snakes  
Which is why maenads catch  
Wild snakes, nurse them, and twine them round their hair.\textsuperscript{281}

Snakes, as in the black figure, were common (and continued into all periods and styles apart from South Italian wares), but Edwards notes that \textbf{drinking vessels} were absent from depictions on vases, except in the case of sacrifices to the god.\textsuperscript{282} (See Figure 4-9) However, the drinking vessels comprised three quarters of the \textbf{total} (all periods, all styles) Attic material concerning maenads! My evidence provides us with important proof that the images of maenads were extremely important to the symposia and to the symposium ware.

\textsuperscript{278} These characters feature prominent in latter red figure vases found in Great Britain, f\'ascicule 6. They are all hydria.  
\textsuperscript{279} I would add the category of \textit{komasts}. The dancing women may have been maenads.  
\textsuperscript{280} See Edwards (1960). 78 and 80.  
\textsuperscript{281} Euripides, \textit{The Bacchae} (trans. P. Vellacott 1973) 193.  
\textsuperscript{282} Edwards (1960). 83.
This latter point is of extreme interest because, according to my data and research as well as other observations, this is the type of vase (the Athenian black figure in particular) and the approximate time frame where virtually 100% of the images on maenads were on amphora, or drinking vessels! (Refer to Figure 4-10). Again, it is curious that during this time frame of later archaic period, statesmen regulated festivals to Dionysos, and maenads appear as “stock figures” on vases and the overall impression is
that the vases were made for and intended to be used in a male, public sphere. Variations
do occur, however, and as noticed in the above example (a later black figure vase of a
delicate and graceful painting style), the maenad is well dressed, poised and attentive to
the god. She wears a spotty chiton, but it is elegant and she gives no other clue of her
status. Edwards made the interesting observation that had been unknown to me that
notices that more maenads actually wore the *paradalis* during this period than the *nebris*.

She has no snakes in her hair or around her wrists, she neither carries a *thyrsos* or
wears an ivy wreath upon her head.

The beginning of the *Bacchae* is when Euripides uses Pentheus’ fears to address
the maenads and the purpose of their existence. It is well documented that during this
period, male devotees would not be involved in the “actual” maenad cult (for example,
the one which made pilgrimage to Delphi), therefore perceptions of “women on their own
terms” would remain outside the personal, observational experience of vase painters.
Thus, like Euripides, vase painters acted as catalysts of their own society’s values. These
vases were probably used in a group or mixed setting and, as such, they acted within the
boundaries of acceptable roles of females within a social setting.

The early depictions of maenads on vases did not challenge the male setting (if
the setting is to be understood as having been a strictly male sphere) From all of the
tragedians’ demonstrative characters such as Creon, Pentheus, and many others, it is safe
to assume there were strict division of social spaces and appropriate settings for males
and females, if a symposium held in the usual way, would have been intended for the

283 Edwards (1960). 60 notice that more maenads actually wore the *paradalis* during this period than the *nebris*. 
exclusive use of men. There is not much in terms of iconography that would challenge this notion until the beginning of the 5th century BCE.\textsuperscript{284}

\textbf{Figure 4-10:} Graph showing \textbf{wine} versus \textbf{water} and \textbf{other} shape by period

Edwards agrees that on later Attic vases, the character of scenes becomes freer. Although I disagree of his implication that female figures in these cases (in general, or on Dionysian scenes) appear immodestly: “women may be naked or wear a chiton reaching to the buttocks.”\textsuperscript{285} My data does not support these generalizations. In Fahlbusch catalogue, one easily observes the change in the way that maenads were painted on vases

happening later, for example in around 500-430 BCE. These are depictions of maenads in more active roles of their presence with the god. Categories such as “dancing women”, “riding women”, and “ecstatic women”, imply a more privileged or active position. Could this reflect an altered position within society as well, as on Dionysian vases? There remains still a sort of “reluctance though, on the part of vase painters to address the maenad on her own. In the Bacchae, Pentheus openly begrudges those who carelessly drop their inhibitions, and especially women who do so. May this indication reflect a changing, yet still stubborn attitude regarding expectations of what good and upstanding Attic women should and/or should not do? .

Amidst these groups of worshippers, they tell me, stand Bowls full of wine; and our women go creeping off This way and that to lonely places and give themselves To lecherous men. They are maenad priestesses, if you Please²⁸⁶

There are no comparable images of maenads to be found within the Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum,²⁸⁷ (although erotic images of men engaged in sexual activity with heraitai, flute girls and youths abound). Maenads do not appear in the context of vase painting at least, to be in any way promiscuous. My data do support the observation that maenads become active, but not necessarily aggressive at this time. Roger Just highlights the twin concern of women’s insatiable and uncontrollable sexual appetite and natural

²⁸⁷ See CVA; volumes 1-18 of the British Museum. Upon request, my detailed observation charts as seen in the appendix 2 for fascicule 5 are available. AS previously mentioned, they are far too lengthy and cumbersome to be included here. Additionally, I have not found a single image in either primary or secondary sources which portray maenad(s) in such a way as Pentheus describes; either drunken, or engaged in promiscuous behavior.
inclination towards drunkenness and asserts that the issues lend better to comedies.\textsuperscript{288}

The issue does lend itself well to observations of material evidence concerning wine, women and sex. Undisputed is that women were strictly forbidden wine. Jan Bremmer and Fritz Graf reiterate that impression although neither can give primary reference to law.\textsuperscript{289} My evidence concurs: no maenads on vases are drunk or “tipsy” from wine.

**New Findings in the Fifth Century**

John Boardman makes reference to the Dionysian revel scenes that Makron and other painters prefer to paint on kylix cups in particular, and that they begin to outnumber the Trojan cycle images by about 480 BCE.\textsuperscript{290} This trend seems to hold true in a “control group” such as mine as well. In my analysis of wine, water and other vase shapes, it is in the late Archaic red figure period that all the shapes with maenads on them were wine shapes (see Figure 4-12 above). Again, the way in which the maenads were depicted seems to have made an alteration in comparison to the periods before and after it. Edwards agrees with Boardman that this time period (the late archaic period, and in particular the time period of the transition from black to red figure wares) reveals the starkest of changes in maenad attributes, the ways of depicting them, and with regard to which characters were included in the scenes.

\textsuperscript{290} See Boardman (1975). 132-140.
My data will show a slower transition from “respectable” maenads depicting traditional scenes of honor to the god, to more self-confidence in the image of the maenad as a single figure. More maenads were painted on water and votive shapes at the end of the Classical period occur in my data too.

In stark contrast to the repulsive picture of immorality, the gentle herdsman tries to persuade Pentheus that the maenads were worthy of serious contemplation in their own element (the wild, or outdoors). He points out that these women of the wild were not always acting “out of control.” The duality within their innate nature allowed (and perhaps favored) a certain calmness and peace. These qualities were desirable in women. He reports:

But modestly, not- as you told us – drunk with wine
Or flute music, seeking the solitary woods
For the pursuit of love.

... They were a sight to marvel at
For modest comeliness: First they let their hair fall free
Over their shoulders; some tied fastenings
Of fawnskins they had loosened. Round the dappled fur
curled snakes that licked their cheeks. Some would
Have in their arms
A young gazelle, or wild wolf-cubs, to which they gave
Their own white milk.

They are described as completely “normal looking” Figure 4-11, and were recorded as such in historical writings as well. In fact, Plutarch in the *Bravery of Women*, makes them appear to be the most normal female members of society by the

291 Discussion on the formal “trance-like” or “altered state” of the maenads as induced by group emotion, cult behavior and ritual involving delirious dances to the god Dionysus will be discussed herein as well.
293 Plutarch, *Moralia*, XIII.
fact that he describes them as wives who were treated with respect and dignity.

Figure 4-11: Attic black figure hydria
Late 6th century BCE
British Museum, London. Cat # B306
Photo credit: The British Museum

In the early black figure examples, most images of maenads reveal a ritual function whereby they are shown as “servers” to the god, sometimes dancing, always fully clothed and usually repelling the advances of “lecherous men,” the satyrs. Examples abound in the early black figure period as well as the archaic red figure period, of this
type of image. See Figure 4-12 and Figure 4-13. These vases just do not support the parallel literary image of “women out of control.”

Figure 4-12: Attic black figure amphora
Late 6\textsuperscript{th} century BCE
British Museum, cat # B270
Photo credit: The British Museum
As they were tired out and reason had not yet returned to them, they flung themselves down on the marketplace, and were lying asleep, some here, some there. The wives of the men of Amphissa, fearing, because their city had been allied with the Phoenicians, and numerous soldiers of the despots were present there, that the Thyads might be treated with indignity, (Figure 4-14) all ran out to the market place, and taking their stand round...
about in silence, did not go up to them while they were sleeping, but when they arose from their slumber, one devoted herself to one of the strangers, and another to another, bestowing attention on them and offering them food.\textsuperscript{294}

This passage by Plutarch was probably written in Delphi\textsuperscript{295} after 107 CE. Thus, the point that later descriptions, later dramas, AND later images on vases portray maenads as “comely” and prominent members of society must be made clear here.

\textsuperscript{294} Plutarch, \textit{Moralia, Book XIII}, p. 249.
\textsuperscript{295} \textit{Ibid}, see Introduction by Helmbold.
Nowhere in the pictures on vases do we encounter women’s loss of self control in a sexual or any other sense. Rather, time and time again, we see scenes of ithyphallic satyrs being cast aside, or repulsed by maenads. See Figure 4-15 for an example of more assertive and aggressive scenes (in the fifth century BCE) in which the maenad is absolutely in control of defending herself against the pesky satyrs. The vases are still of the majority of wine shapes. Perhaps the images were intended as mere comical illustrations of the sexually uninhibited nature of mankind, appropriate on the vessels that served the mechanism by which humans were allowed to do so and in an appropriate setting such as at a gathering or drinking party. It is clear though that the less assertive chasing scenes, in which satyrs playfully tease maenads, were gradually replaced by repelling scenes where the maenad became the aggressor. Were they not merely protecting themselves but also protecting and defending their cult from the corruption of male members? One can and will not know the answer, but trends seen in large numbers of multiple streams of evidence may propel the query.

**Popular Cup Subjects:**

Drinking cups comprised 23 % of the wine vessels showing maenads and the Fascicules do contain many examples of the type with maenads and satyrs as “generic” symposium stock. However, many other cups are special shapes like the eye cup from the Fitzwilliam (Figure 4-16), where one could imagine the cup becoming a “mask” to the drinker when held up to the lips. One can get a sense of the size of these cups in relation to the amphorae. Eye cups were less popular, and more specialized, than the *skyphos* (like
a coffee mug with two nubs as handles) cups, or even kylixes (without the eye motif). My data show large quantities of cups with similar scenes as the amphorae and that the subject matter follows a similar trend. For example, soldiers, maenads, satyrs and hoplites would go well at a symposium and adorn the table of the attendants who were not the “leaders”, but have the same psychological effect: to make the drinker feel special.

Fascicule 12 has many very excellent examples (in almost perfect condition) of the type (Archaic black figure kylixes) from the mid 550s. Important cups such as the “mastoid” cups also show Dionysian scenes of the god, satyrs and maenads from the early fifth century BCE. The main points of congruency are not exactly the same as amphorae due to the size and ultimate price a cup would fetch. Thus, not as much energy would go into a painted cup as into a larger vessel for an important person. The topic of cups will be revisited further below.

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296 See Boardman and Robertson (1976), Fascicule 12 from Castle Ashby.
Figure 4-16 Eye Cup, Photo credit: Fitzwilliam, Photograph of the author, May, 1998
With regards to the evolution of maenad models in tragedies as well, it appears that aggressive women did receive more attention over time; certainly more than in epic, and with more fervor in latter dramas than in the very early ones. It is an odd (as compared to my findings) observation that the “lecherous temperament of satyrs remains unchanged, but the red figure maenads never respond as they did on black figure work”\footnote{See Edwards (1960). 82.}
The fifth century BCE is a period of changing trends, but also of synthesis and reestablishment of tradition. It is only well into the Classical period that vase painting would hint at the respectable position of the maenads too. This may be justified by the achieved level of technical prowess in this period as opposed to earlier styles. The vases provide us with many touching images. In Figure 4-17 the kylix cup depicts two maenads conversing with one another. The exterior of the cup is decorated with mere youths and women. The women are modestly dressed, calm, and hold their emblem of status within the community, the thyrsos. Could they have been travelling pilgrims? The shape is a drinking vessel, but it does not indicate a typically male sphere, as did some of the earlier black figure vases in which maenads were “servers’ to Dionysos, or providing the entertainment of an abduction scene. Social constraints denied Athenian women other than hetairai (hired “entertainment” or prostitutes) the right to attend symposia and the previous period does suggest the bowl-like kylix was only employed by men. However, is this perhaps material evidence which may speak of the honor of the women in society? The changes are clear. The later red figure image is not on a large space, nor would it have been as expensive to make. These are women on their own terms, conversing without the god or any other mythological character or prop. Fascicule 3 has several of this type from around 480-470 BCE. Might this indicate not just a change in attitude towards the maenad as a real being, but even perhaps indicative of an association of maenads that these types of cups would be made for?

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298 See Beazley (1927), Fascicule 3, Ashmolean Museum.
The maenads retain a degree of their iconographic distinction, but it is minimized in relation to other kinds of figures. Their role is clearly significant in its own right. They do not serve as “props” for scenes of drinking parties, nor do they offer mere entertainment as “enlevement” scenes.299 Although one maenad to the right of the

299 Edwards (1960). 82 uses this term to describe a motif common to the black figure vases showing maenads being chased by satyrs.
The xoanon (plank-like statue of a deity on Figure 4-18) tilts her head back in a display of Bacchic ecstasy, and others dance gracefully around the vase, the figure to the left of the xoanon figure of Dionysos uses a ladle to dip wine from the stamnos and the act is clearly ritualistic. The scene appears to represent one of many scenes of the ritual that celebrated the release of women’s spirited impulses through the agency of wine. It is one of a series of so-called “Lenaia” vases. The festival of the Lenaios was celebrated in the end of January, and there may be evidence that the site of worship may have been located in the Agora (Athens), near the Stoa Basileios. The images of the festival included the procession of maenads and the scenes were also painted by Makron (see Figure 4-19), the Berlin Painter, and in Naples by the Dinos Painter.

My data does not contain specifically Lenaia vases, as they were rare, and as such, probably only assigned to the Masters. The festival and its popularity on vases from the 5th century echo another trend from the stores of the British Collections: that women, in particular, gained status within the community to act in ritual for the god Dionysos. Burkert asserts that although social roles were fixed, the “individual” gains independence through particular cult and that particularly the cult of Dionysos acted as a vehicle to separate private groups from the polis. As the examples by the Masters show, the maenads clearly gained independence from their place among the mythological figures in the community. On Makron’s kylix, we see a previously unperceived level of freedom and independence. There are cult attendants, dancers, music makers, all maenads.

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and all for the benefit of Dionysos in statue form. The maenads all face the statue of the god, but they seem to be less bound to the cult figure than ever before, and exemplify a look of joy at their purpose.

Figure 4-18: Attic red figure stamnos

Circa 420 BCE
Neapal, cat # 2419
Photograph from Simon, *Die Griechischen Vasen*
Water and Votive

The fifth century also shows the most change in terms of themes on Athenian vases (from images of festivals and assertive and protective images to calm maenads conversing with each other) in terms of their function. The very late red figure period shows an increased number of water and votive shapes with maenads. Referring again to
Figure 4-5, we see more “domestic” shapes and from Figure 4-8 we see more maenads without Dionysos at all. There are a significant number of hydria in the early black figure period that have similar subjects as the amphorae did. However, these have maenads, usually on the neck of the vase, in procession, and much like the type of the Lydos krater. A few smaller *kalpis* shapes do show maenads without the heroic scenes though. Plate 97 # 5 of Fascicule 8, shows a maenad flanked by two satyrs and framed as if in a heroic scene. The vase is particularly good quality and she is elegant, tall, and poised. Ivy sprigs create an attractive composition. The woman is similar to the elegant citizen women gathering, conversing, with other well dressed and dignified women at the fountain.

The gradual changes thus far discussed, raise a valid question regarding what maenad image was painted upon which vase shape (or what function it had in ancient Greek society). Many of the maenads alone (without Dionysos or satyrs) are shown on domestic type vases such as the *hydria, lekythos* or on *pyxis, alabastron, lekane and araballos*. I would suggest that these forms may have been used to adorn smaller gifts to furnish graves of women, or perhaps given as tokens of a particular woman’s role in her community. Perhaps a gift such as Figure 4-20 would have been given to a maenad pilgrim to commemorate her service to the community. The observation that these smaller, less grandiose vases gained popularity is most important. They are closer in date of course to the tragedies and inscription evidence, but the scenes on them resonate something more subtle.

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303 See Walters (1931), Fascicule 8, British Museum.
304 *Ibid*, plate 90-1,2
Literature may give us more insight. In the *Bacchae*, the herdsman continues his description of the women who have left their looms to join in revelry in the mountains. Suddenly, his recollection resounds of fear. Again, we (the audience) are thrown into the Bacchic frenzy brought on in the play by signs of a threat to their rights. The women fear that they have been discovered and that their rights have been threatened. The herdsman reports:

Now Agaue as she danced passed close to me; and I
At once leapt out from hiding, bent on capturing her.
But she called out, Oh my swift-footed hounds, these
Men
Are hunting us. Come follow me! Each one of you
Arm herself with the holy thyrsus, and follow me!
Those possessed women. But our cattle were there,
Cropping
The fresh cut grass; and the women attacked them, with
Their bare hands.
Others seized on our cows and tore them limb from limb;
And rags of flesh hung from pine-branches, dripping blood.  

On vases too; as calmly as we see her in one image, another image of the maenad
jabs at the viewer’s fear. While rare, images of destructive and murderous maenads are
seen on later period vases (refer to Figure 1-6 and Figure 1-7). Euripides deliberately
chooses to play on the concept of the socially accepted stability of maternal instinct in
choosing Agave to be the one to punish her son for causing “panic” or duress in the form
of a threat to their Bacchic rights. The setting is also appropriate in the drama, as well as
in the place where women would, and did, let go of their inhibitions and connect with
their wilder side. In the wild, as opposed to the civilized place that women inhabited in
the polis, nothing should be what it is expected socially. In the Bacchae in particular,
nothing is as it should be, and the shock of the mother’s actions reinforce this. Dionysos
could have easily committed the murder of Pentheus himself. But, Euripides gives this
deed over to a cherished mother in the tragedy. In proper context within the tragedy, this
mother represents an innate dual nature at its most extreme. She is most gentle within her
socially ascribed role of wife and mother. But in the wild, her most elemental instincts to
protect herself take over. Euripides uses her to underline the impact of a delicate balance
thrown fiercely out of synch. On later vases, as in the latest tragedy involving maenads
(as opposed to the earlier dramas), the duress that the women experience does not stem

from a failed *makarismos* (“well-intent” of marriage), or the negation of marriage that causes the wife to panic, it is the duress caused by a definite threat to her freedom to be wild within the wild setting that causes the maenad to panic and act violently.

On the previously mentioned vases, the maenads display much more aggressive behavior. Scholars, we have seen, have argued about the real or imagined role that maenads had in either the sacrifice or the eating of raw flesh. This is obviously an important aspect of maenadism, but evidence of aggression is more visually stimulating. The Brygos Painter paints the maenad in fluid brush strokes, and has her occupy the space in a strong diagonal with her thyrsos crossing her body. She bears the emblems of her role, the dead panther, and the regalia of a spitting serpent as a crown. Is this a maenad priestess? Since wine would stain the white paint of the vessel, we may assume it was not intended for use in daily life. It may have been commissioned as a gift for the burial of a maenad of high ranking. As military heroes were buried with vases depicting Herakles, or Theseus, could a woman have hoped for a similar “heroic” or idealized status in Hades? Could this also have been a gift for a maenad queen like Agave?

An aura of Duality is also made clear on the fifth century images. My observations from the data are significant in so as far as they demonstrate the way that maenads had gained a significant status both in the minds of the ancient Greeks, and with regard to the gradual adaptation of the motif of maenad as stock figure. The progression of stock figures on “Dionysiac revel wares” to images of maenads performing ritual to the god, and to images of maenads as occupying their own space, is obvious from my data. As previously mentioned, maenads were not shown in any discernable state of inebriation (as
were the satyrs). Additionally, alcohol was, in principle forbidden to women at least, and their consumption of the beverage was publically controlled.\footnote{150}

The warning to acknowledge Dionysos and his power to allow (or compel) all of humanity (male and female) to experience their dual natures (wild and civilized) is re-articulated in the final moral of the drama. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Agave has nowhere to go after taking her maenadism to its extreme. She is ousted from civilized society. This was the tragedy. However, perhaps when compiling all of the evidence, a different ending may emerge, or at least the possibility that ancient Greek society could have accepted its own fault in denying women their due right to participate in the mysteries of the dual nature of mankind. In the \textit{Bacchae}, Dionysos says,

\begin{quote}
I who pronounce these fates am Dionysus, begotten \\
Not by a mortal father, but by Zeus. If you \\
Had chosen wisdom, when you would not, you would \\
Have lived \\
In wealth and safety, having the son of Zeus your friend. \footnote{307}
\end{quote}

Is it so strange that the images of a society would use the images of the tragic lives of women to transmit this message? It is not my expectation that the reader should accept, or even presume, that the visual mythology of the triumph of the wild women (respectable citizen women of ancient Greece) within a society whose rules tended to suppress her wilder instincts, should have been mediated intentionally by the painters of vases. However, the evidence for the survival of the concept of the wild women has echoed through time in virtually every manner of cultural artifact.

\footnote{306}{Berard, (1989), see specifically the chapter on “Wine and the Divine”.}
\footnote{307}{Euripides, \textit{The Bacchae} (trans. P. Vellacott 1973) 242.}
Since the beginning of Archaic vase painting (tragedies and ancient authorities too), the catalysts of society would contemplate the relationship of the concept of women’s dual natures and society’s expectations of them. In particular, craftsmen were quick to catch on to the anatomical parallel of design in vases. A *kylix* cup, for example has two sides; an interior and an exterior. Humans also have an external and internal self. The concept of private versus public personalities (an inner and outer self) is illustrated well with the widely utilized themes of Dionysos and his function within society as well as in the metaphoric connection of an inner and outer space for images on a vase.

In comparing an older Archaic version of an eye cup (Figure 4-21) to that of a later Classical version (Figure 4-22), one can see the visual manifestation of the effects of a mediated reflection on the phenomenon of dual states within one whole. On the black figure version, the exterior is decorated with Dionysos and satyrs, vines, jugs, and the ray motif. The painted eyes on the base are especially prominent, and they provide the viewer a means through which to metaphorically view the other members of the group. To these characters, the drinker is associated with the other fun-lovers and “good-time” guys. Indeed, the vase may appear to be a mask from the outsider’s perspective. The eyes are reciprocal; they see the individual as his own eyes are hidden from view as he drinks. The interior reveals similar figures, and as the contents depletes itself, a rather primitive frontal view of a man is revealed. Is this the face of Dionysos, or the user of the cup? The drinker thus associates himself with the personality at the bottom of the cup.
In looking at the newer, red figure cup (Figure 4-22), the concept of “identifying with the figure” can be felt as well. On the exterior, the cup is decorated with more anatomically correct, more expressive contour drawings of Dionysiac figures, as well as with swirling wines, jugs, and stylized lotus palmettes. The interior is another matter. With the newer technique of creating figures seen through a lustrous black glaze, a reflection on the surface is more pronounced as the liquid (deep purple wine) inside...
would also appear darker. The image inside is female though. Up until now, the drinker has been called “he.” Considering the feminine subject, however, perhaps an association member (such as one from Miletos) of the maenad cult can here be imagined. The image is framed, and she stands on an unnatural ground line. She holds a *thyrsos* and a tilted pouring jug. Perhaps she is representative of one of the women servers at a male gathering. Maybe she is “hired” entertainment, dressed up as a maenad as on other cups of roughly the same period. Considering these points, the puzzling thing is that she is metaphorically surrounded by an all male audience. Or is she? Perhaps the best way to make sense of this is to project oneself into the act of drinking.

As you drink, others see you as one of the group; part of the gang. Your cup is full and as you sip, you see your own reflection staring back at you. You drink some more and an image begins to emerge. It is a woman and you see that she is not just any typical “gal.” She is special. She is wild and free to join your party. If you are a man, maybe you ask yourself what right she has to join your carefully protected sphere within a masculine constructed world. Regardless of your sex, however, it suddenly becomes clear to you as you lick the last drops from your lips. Your mind is more open, unrestrained (from the effect of the wine?); she represents the delicate, yet vital balance within your world. She is the “other.” You are confronted with the wild within the setting of the civilized tame.
Figure 4-22: Red figure kylix cup

Circa 460 BCE
From Vulci
In the manner of Douris
Photo credit: The British Museum, cat # E55
Author’s photograph, May, 1998
As previously mentioned, the popularity of the unaccompanied maenad is well attested in the later fifth century and is validated by my data. So is the increased number of “female” or domestic shapes. A *lutrophorus* is typically used for grave furnishing for an elite person. It is included in maenad shapes. My data from Fascicule 18, show *lekythoi* that contained oil and was another typically female vase shape.

The image on an Attic white ground Alabastron (Figure 4-23), is a small piece that deserves more attention in the study of maenadism. Not only have plays, inscriptions and vase data from a large collection demonstrated that the maenad gained popularity, over time, but also respect and honor within her community and in the Greek world as a whole. As we examine the small alabastron that would have been buried with possibly a woman who did participate in maenadic ritual or cult in her life, we must imagine the image “in the round.” That is, one side is a regular woman with a *phiale*, and on the other side is a maenad with sprigs. They are elegant, poised, and dignified. But how do we know who is to contemplate whom? If the owner turns it clockwise, the wild woman faces her civilized counterpart. But if one turns it counterclockwise, the citizen woman is confronted with her wild and innate (?) nature within. Which way would one turn the delicate object though? It does not matter, but the woman holds the *phiale* (libation vessel) out to the maenad.
Figure 4-23 Attic White Ground Alabastron 5th century BCE
Woman with Phiale and Maenad with Sprigs
British Museum, B 668
Photograph courtesy of the British Museum.
Appendix 1:

Form and Function: Various Shapes:
(refer also to Sparkes and Talcott, 1958)

Wine Shapes:
Various Shapes:

Amphora (approximately 37% of total wine shapes)

Other Wine Shapes:

Oinochoe (wine jug with delicate curved handles)
Krater (large, wine vessels used to dip from)
Jugs (from which to pour wine)
Pelike (a small jug for pouring wine, similar to the amphora)
Psykter (wine cooler)
Stamnos (used to store liquid, usually wine, more “squat” than the amphora)
Chalice (decorative and ornate drinking utensil, perhaps more ceremonial than practical)
Olpe (convivial jug with handle, for pouring wine)
Dinos (large bowl with rounded lip)

Cups (approximately 23% of total wine shapes):

Calyx Krater (long body, large deep bowl used for special occasions, with handles at the base))
Cotyle (regular shaped cup)
Kantharos (cup with two extended handles)
Skyphos (two handled deep wine cup, wide mouth)
Kyathos (dipper, but classified as cup because of its function)
Eye Cup (deep shallow kylix cup with eyes painted on the bottom)
Little Master Cup (rounded, shallow bowl with tall stand)
Mastoid Cup (small cups with straight extended handles)
Kylix Cup (approximately 38% of the 23% of cups) (large, shallow drinking cups with raised body from the foot)

Water Shapes:

Hydria
Some jugs overlap with wine function

Oil Shapes (Toilette and/or Votive):

Lekythos (small, narrow cylindrical vase for storing oil)
Araballos (small spherical or rounded oil flask perhaps used for perfume)

Alabastron (usually held perfumed oil and had a stand but no base)

Askos (oil flask with two spouts)

Epichysis (shaped like a pyxis with a long, ornate spout)

Lekane (low bowls with handles and a lid and may have had a toilette use for example, powder)

Plate (decorative or functional)

Pyxis (decorative container for personal objects)

Situla (ovoid shape)

Prochoos, (stamp of vase)
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