

*Beyond the Reach of Travelers: Landscape on the Lekythos of Xenophantos*

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A well-known red-figure squat lekythos in St. Petersburg, signed by Xenophantos, provides an unparalleled subject in the Greek visual tradition: a multi-quarry hunt performed by Persians. This lekythos is further distinct in its inclusion of landscape features and of griffins as prey, a mixture of mythical and realistic elements has posed problems with interpretation. Although this scene has been linked to the historical hunts of Persian royalty, M. Miller has argued more recently that these Persians are conflated with the mythical Arimasps, effectively “mythicizing” the hunters. My paper offers a new reading of this scene that focuses on the unusual combination of landscape elements – a palm tree, tripods, acanthus columns, and laurels. These features, I argue, link the location of the hunt to spaces sacred to Apollo, namely, his sanctuaries at Delphi and Delos. The griffins, however, remove the scene from the familiar Apolline sanctuaries of Hellas to spaces imagined to exist on the edges of the earth, a place beyond the experience of ordinary travelers. My paper deals not with familiar destinations, but with the conception of these most distant places, the journey to which, literary sources indicate, is achieved only by the most exceptional Greeks and by divine beings (Hdt. 4.16). Ultimately, I will argue, the lekythos offers a commentary on the expanse of the Persian Empire, including these hunters among the few who are special enough to access this space, which falls outside the boundaries of the world known through the travels of Greeks themselves.