Angela Bellia, *Images of Music in Magna Graecia: the Case of the "Tomb of the Diver" at Poseidonia (V century BCE)*, «Music in Art», XXXIX/1–2, 2014, pp. 33-41. POSTPRINT

IMAGES OF MUSIC IN MAGNA GRAECIA: THE CASE OF THE 'TOMB OF THE DIVER' AT POSEIDONIA (V CENTURY BCE)

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Notwithstanding local political divisions, Magna Graecia was a vigorous and multiform cultural entity marked by religious, ethical and artistic practices that are noticeably reflected in the musical history of the region. My contribution will discuss music as an element of *élite* identity and as a factor of strong cultural cohesion in Southern Italy during the Greek age.¹ Musical iconography in tomb paintings is a privileged field of research. The musical funerary images offer significant examples, the most famous of which is the 'Tomb of the Diver', dating to about 480 BCE, found in 1968 by Mario Napoli in a locality called 'Tempa del Prete', situated a few kilometers outside the walls of Poseidonia.² The Greek *polis*³ was founded about 600 BCE by Greek colonists from *Sybaris*.⁴ Having various borders, Poseidonia assumed the role of mediator between the local Enotrian people, the "Sybaritian Empire", and the rich and powerful Etruscan cities situated to the North (FIG. 1).⁵

The 'Tomb of the Diver' presents some questions, not only about the interpretation of the depicted scene on the inner surface of the roof-slab used to close the sarcophagus, but also about the symbolic elements represented. On the inner surface of the roof-slab, there is a scene with a nude young man diving from a building of stones blocks into a stretch of water; the scene could be the representation of the moment of passage of the soul of the deceased from the world of living to the afterlife (FIG. 2).

On the four walls of the tomb, a symposium is represented, in which ten people, lying on the *klinai*, are taking part (FIG. 3). On the short west wall, there is the deceased. He is represented as a nude young man, wearing only an aflutter cloak, with a little female *aulos*⁶ player walking in front of him. She wears a transparent dress and her short stature underlines her marginal role compared to the other figures in the representation. Behind them a male figure wears an aflutter cloak and holds a stick. The young deceased man is walkingwhile holding his left hand raised as a greeting (FIG. 4).

On the long wall a male figure replies to his greeting by raising his cup of wine to welcome him. His left hand pats the *kline* to invite the 'newcomer' to sit next to him. The two men, lying on the following *kline*, also welcome him. Greeting the young man, the figure on the right throws out the last drop of wine. He is playing the *kottabos*; the purpose of the game was to throw the last drops of wine at a small plate poised to drop onto a

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¹ See Bellia 2014.

² NAPOLI 1970, pp. 109-111; PONTRANDOLFO 1990, pp. 351-354; PONTRANDOLFO 1996a, pp. 456-470.

³ For the foundation of Poseidonia, see LA TORRE 2011, pp. 53-54; TORELLI 2011, pp. 64-66.

⁴ Sybaris was founded in 720 BCE by Achaeans and people from Argolis, the Troezenians. See LA TORRE 2011, pp. 50-51.

⁵ LA TORRE 2011, pp. 84-90.

⁶ For this instrument, cfr. BAINES 1995, pp. 235-237; SACHS 1996, pp. 156-159; SACHS-HORNBOSTEL 2002, pp. 460-461; WEST 2007, pp. 129-164.

metal disc placed under it in order to obtain a sound.⁷ The other man, lying on the same *kline*, is inviting the cupbearer to serve wine to the 'new companion' (FIG. 5). There is a couple of male lovers focused on exchanging amorous displays; they do not follow the scene around them. One of them is holding a stringed musical instrumentthat has an unusual form; a tortoise shell is the sound box of the musical instrument; there are two curved and connected arms; the strings are fixed, not to the crossbar, but to the arms (FIG. 6).⁸ Is it the representation of the form of an Italic stringed instrument?

On the short east wall, there is a large *krater* on a table (FIG. 7).⁹ The representation of the symposium continues in the lively scenes of the following wall.

At the centre there are two young men, lying on the *klinai*, talking. On the their left there is a male *aulos* player and a male singer with his eyes turned upward and head thrown back in the typical pose brought on by the effects of wine and ecstasy. They turn their back on the young deceased and on the arriving procession. On the right of the two men at the centre there is a *barbitos*¹⁰ player with his eyes turned upward. He doesn't have the *plektron* in his left hand, but an egg, symbol of rebirth (FIG. 8).

The 'Tomb of the Diver' is considered "anomalous" for the liminar location of the 'Tempa del Prete' necropolis and for the differences with the other tombs of the time.¹¹ The figured scenes on the walls and roof of the 'Tomb of the Diver' have no parallel in any Greek city, in particular in the West, but the practice was well known in Etruria, and there were Etruscans living in Campania, on the borders of Poseidonia.¹² However, the 'Tomb of the Diver' is very different to the Etruscan tombs; on one hand because they were accessible from outside by family members of the deceased for conducting periodic rites, on the other hand because 'Tomb of the Diver' was a sarcophagus decorated 'only for the deceased'.¹³

The burial goods of the 'Tomb of the Diver', which included a valuable black Attic *lekythos* for the funerary rites, also contained a metal bar and some fragments of a turtle shell used for the sound box of a *lyre* or *barbitos*.¹⁴ The stringed musical instrument found in the 'Tomb of the Diver' may suggest a relationship between reality and the musical images painted in the tomb.¹⁵ The presence of the *lyra* or *barbitos* reveals the close link between the instrument and the funerary sphere. The *lyra* or *barbitos* seems to be a clear reference to a retrospective representation of the deceased, of his sex life and also of his socio-political role.¹⁶ On the one hand, the presence of the musical instrument may refer to a pattern of

⁷ The game of *kottabos* has been seen in the *symposium* scenes of Attic ceramics since the VI century BCE. Literary sources agree it was imported from Greek Sicily. The *kottabos* was a bronze object, similar to a candelabrum. It had a base, a long stem and two thin disks. The bigger one is stuck half way down the stem, the smaller one is stuck on the top. The player, man or woman, lying on the *kline*, had to throw the wine left in the bottom of his cup and try to hit the highest disk. *Kottabos* was similar to divination because every successful throw meant success in love. Before throwing, the player declared in a loud voice to whom he dedicated his throw, the person who was object of his desire, sometimes the female musicians or the young *aulos* players. If the lower disk was hit, it made a sound that indicated the target had been hit and the amorous encounter would be successful. See LISSARRAGUE 1989, pp. 95-101.

⁸ For the ancient string musical instruments, see WEST 2007, pp. 81-128.

⁹ See ROBINSON 2011, pp. 52-53.

¹⁰ For this instrument, see WEST 2007, pp. 84-85.

¹¹ Greco 1982, p. 56.

¹² CERCHIAI-D'AGOSTINO 2004, pp. 254-267.

¹³ Cfr. PONTRANDOLFO 1995, pp. 185-186; PONTRANDOLFO 1996b, p. 39.

¹⁴ The bad state of preservation of the turtle shell does not permit one to discern if the stringed musical instrument was a *lyra* or *barbitos*. See BELLIA 2012a, pp. 54-60.

¹⁵ BOTTINI 1992, p. 87.

¹⁶ BESCHI 1991, pp. 39-59.

behaviour produced by the osmosis between colonial Greece¹⁷ and the heads of the Italic communities of Magna Grecia,¹⁸ on the other, the presence of the musical instrument may refer to elements of the *paideia* and Greek funerary ritual. The stringed musical instrument could characterize the *status* of the buried, to praise his *areté* and his cultural background; in fact, musical education, using in particular the *lyra*, and gymnastics were fundamental elements of the Greek *paideia*.¹⁹ The presence of the *lyra* or *barbitos* in the 'Tomb of Diver' could be the "integrazione culturale del defunto, forse eminente esponente di un gruppo, per compensare una sua non-integrazione politica (cultural integration of the deceased, perhaps an eminent representative of a group, to compensate for his non-political integration)"²⁰ and proof that its owner had a high level of cultural education in a learned and refined world; in this case, music may have been a language of the intercultural dialogue between the Greeks and Italic people at Poseidonia.

Aristoxenus²¹ offers a special reference to the 'traditional' musical performance during the symposiums at Poseidonia. For Aristoxenus, in the western Greek *polis*, music, social life and politics are connected; the 'traditional' musical performances at Poseidonia commemorated the ethnic origin and the foundation of the *polis* in a special rite during which the Greek citizens at Poseidonia strengthened their social and political ties as well as their Greek identity. In addition, although the model of the symposium, as a sign of social distinction, belongs to the Etruscan *elites* and to the indigenous world of Magna Graecia,²² the figurative theme of the 'Tomb of the Diver' may suggest ties to all of those values that made the Greek citizen noble and to the "esaltazione edonistica dell'esistenza terrena di *mousikos anēr* del defunto (hedonistic glorification of the earthly existence of the deceased *mousikos anēr*)".²³ He seems to share with the other participants at the symposium the 'pleasure of the wine'²⁴ and the "abbandono causato dalla musica e dall'eros (abandonment caused by the music and Eros)",²⁵ however, in the afterlife.

To the stringed musical instrument found in the 'Tomb of the Diver', ancient historians of religion have attributed a symbolic value connected with the affirmation of religious circles in the western Greek colonies²⁶ from the VI century BCE.²⁷ According their afterlife beliefs, particularly those concerned with personal salvation, stringed musical instruments were indispensable in raising the soul of the faithful²⁸ to overcome death.²⁹

There are two other tortoise shells, used for the sound box of stringed musical instruments, found at Poseidonia. The combination of a tortoise shell with a small iron handle is in the grave T. 341 'in località S. Venera' at Poseidonia, dating to the V century BCE; it belonged to a man (FIG. 9).³⁰ The handles seem to correspond with the two pairs of holes in the end of the turtle shell that shows evidence of contact with the iron. They have the form of hooks _____ with the central part consisting of a horizontal bar; to which

¹⁷ TORELLI 2011, p. 131; ROBINSON 2011, pp. 52-79.

¹⁸ PONTRANDOLFO 1998, p. 183.

¹⁹ BESCHI 2003, pp. 5-6.

²⁰ Greco 1982, p. 56.

²¹ ARISTOSSENO, fr. 124 Werhli in ATENEO, I Deipnosofisti, XIV, 632a. See MERIANI 2003, pp. 15-48.

²² Pontrandolfo 1998, p. 183.

²³ D'AGOSTINO 1982, p. 49.

²⁴ PONTRANDOLFO 1996a, pp. 38-39.

²⁵ CERCHIAI 1987, p. 114.

²⁶ HOLLOWAY 2006, pp. 365-388. See also BURKERT 2003, pp. 523-536.

²⁷ LA TORRE 2011, pp. 130-131; TORELLI 2011, pp. 94-98.

²⁸ Cfr. Otto 2003, pp. 176-177; Bottini 2005, p. 141; Carter 2008, p. 252; Torelli 2011, p. 131.

²⁹ BURKERT 1972, pp. 350-368.

³⁰ BELLIA 2012a, pp. 53-55.

the strings were connected, and the two opposite sharp ends are suitable for insertion into the turtle shell (FIG. 10).

Another part of a tortoise carapace – undoubtedly a *lyre* resonator – was retrieved from the small cemetery at 'Tempa del Prete',³¹ 1.5km to the south of the ruins of Poseidonia, in the grave T. 21. The date given to the grave T. 21 burial is about 480 BCE (FIG. 11).³² From the same grave, a well preserved *aulos* was retrieved (FIG. 12).³³

The association of the *lyra* and *aulos* in the funerary realm is documented by archaeological finds at Poseidonia and in other parts in Southern Italy and in the Greek world.³⁴ In the written sources, the combination of the *lyra* and *aulos* is connected with the idea of happiness and symposiums in the afterlife. Beginning with the Homeric poems, music and songs are linked with the idea of happiness and the symposiums of the gods.³⁵ The most complete representation of musical happiness is expressed in the X *Pythian* by Pindar. Pindar describes the existential condition of the Hyperborean people, whose life is always made happy by music. The association of music with the serenity of the symposium is the culmination of their happiness. During the symposium the girls dance, while the sounds of the *lyrai* and *auloi* echo throughout.³⁶ Music and song, the musical *diatriabai*, and the hedonistic dimension of the souls in the hereafter are thus associated with the happiness of the symposium.

Aristophanes makes special reference to the happiness expressed by song, accompanied by the *aulos* and clapping, as well as by dancing in processions. The euphoric Bacchic dance described by Aristophanes recalls the elements of *komos* after the symposium. In the second book of *Storie vere*, Lucian of Samosata³⁷ describes his trip to the Elysium. This is a place of happiness where music is one of the distinctive features. The participants in the symposium are lying on a beautiful green lawn on the Island of the Blessed, *locus amoenus* inside a *locus amoenus*, the *pedion elysion*. There is the music of nature and birds, like the music of *auloi* sung by the winds, as well as the music of men produced by the *aulos* and *lyra*. Hand-clapping accompanies the songs and voices of the symposium of the Blessed.³⁸

At Poseidonia, a liminar Greek *polis* opens to cross-cultural contact. The presence and the images of musical instruments in the 'Tomb of the Diver' could also be linked to this imagery, connected by the idea that music and banquets, which in ancient times were earthly pleasures, also represent the joys of the afterlife.³⁹

³¹ For a description of the 'Tempa del Prete' cemetery see GRECO 1982, pp. 54-56; CIPRIANI 2002, pp. 373-374.

³² LEPORE 2010, pp. 448-449, note 34.

³³ BELLIA 2012a, pp. 98-99; PSAROUDAKĒS 2014, c.s.

³⁴ BELLIA 2012a, pp. 103-104; BELLIA 2012b, pp. 121-139.

³⁵ COLESANTI 1999, pp. 41-76.

³⁶ PINDARO, Pitiche, X, 37-40.

³⁷ LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA, Storie vere 2, 5.

³⁸ CAMEROTTO 2005, pp. 110-111; 118-120; 127.

³⁹ BISCONTI 1998, p. 40; FELLETTI MAJ 1953, p. 60. See also DELATTE 1913, p. 329.

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FIG. 1. Map of Italy Greek colonization (CARTER 2008, p. 44, fig. 1.1)



FIG. 2. The Diver of the roof-slab (NAPOLI 1970, fig. 4)

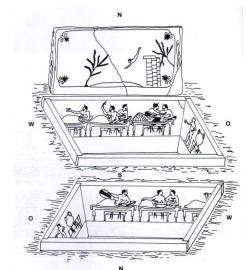


FIG. 3. Tomb of the Diver (NAPOLI 1970, p. 97, fig. 30)

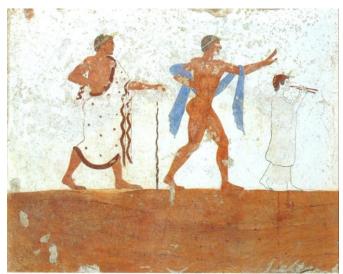


FIG. 4. The short west wall (NAPOLI 1970, fig. 3)



FIG. 5. The long wall (NAPOLI 1970, fig. 1)



FIG. 6. The 'unusual' stringed musical instrument on the long wall (NAPOLI 1970, fig. 32)



FIG. 7. The short east wall (NAPOLI 1970, fig. 33)



FIG. 8. The long wall (NAPOLI 1970, fig. 2)



FIG. 9. The Grave T. 341 at Poseidonia (CIPRIANI 1989, p. 87, fig. 10)



FIG. 10. The tortoise shell found in the Grave T. 341 at Poseidonia (BELLIA 2012, p. 53, fig. 56)



FIG. 11. The tortoise shell found in the Grave T. 21 at Poseidonia (BELLIAa 2012, p. 55, fig. 58)

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FIG. 12. The aulos found in the Grave T. 21 at Poseidonia (PSAROUDAKES 2014, p. 129, fig. 13)

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