

Göteborgs universitet  
Institutionen för arkeologi och antikens kultur

## SATYRS IN ETRURIA

### A STUDY OF A THEME ON ETRUSCAN BLACK-FIGURE VASES

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#### *Abstract*

The basis for the present investigation is formed by 181 Etruscan black-figure vases with satyr motifs from the Archaic period in Etruria, about 550-480 BC. The vases in the catalogue are sorted into seven categories according to the motif on the vases: satyrs in identifiable myths, satyrs in the presence of Dionysos, satyrs with female companions, satyrs in procession and dance, satyrs in the company of various figures, single satyrs, and satyr-like figures. In the chapters following the catalogue, the vase-painters, the function of the vases and the shapes of the vases are treated. A chapter on iconography deals with the image of the satyrs as well as the contexts in which they appear. In the last chapter various aspects of the satyrs are discussed: the roles of the satyrs, the humorous image of the satyrs, satyrs in myths, satyrs in cultic and religious contexts and, finally, satyr performance - an embryo of satyr-play.

Many of the scenes show satyrs transgressing the limits of accepted behaviour. As a symbol of inversion of order, the satyr reflects the rules of the life and culture of the Etruscans and their values. Satyrs in comic, surprising situations indicate the Etruscans' sense of humour. The Etruscan painters got their inspiration from Greek art when illustrating myths and narratives, often with a light-hearted approach of their own. The Etruscans were known to be devoted to religious rites and satyrs appear in such scenes too. The festivity on the London amphora B 64 has been discussed in the literature. Some scholars argue for a Dionysiac festivity, others for a funeral allusion. Regardless of what kind of festivity is represented, it is clear that this vase shows men in satyr disguise. Moreover, satyrs appear on some vases in sacrifice scenes and it is suggested here that satyrs dancing and gambolling around a wine vessel are performing a cultic dance in honour of Dionysos. During the last part of the period, the art of performance and the figures in visible satyr disguise show the way to the coming satyr-play.

*Key words:* Etruria, Etruscans, Etruscan pottery, black-figure vases, satyrs, Dionysos, myth, performance, inversion of order, humour, sacrifice, cult, dance, procession, rites of passage