

By the hair of his chinny-chin-chin

Claude Pouzadoux – This is the story of a success, that of the young king Alexander the Great of Macedonia, who became king at twenty and who became the representative of the Greek world. It's about the victory of Alexander the Great against Darius Codoman, the last of the great kings of Persia. The impact of this victory in South Italy is immediate, unexpected, surprising even. That's why this is also the story of a connection between southern Italy and Magna Graecia that is in fact part Greek part Italian but which considers itself part of Greece, that is to say the western part of Greece...So, this is a connection between Magna Graecia and Asia, or rather the extension of the kingdom of Alexander the Great into Asia and thus a connection between painters, key players of these victories, of this new world that is forming... That means that this is also the story of an aura, the aura of Greek culture. This is embodied by the figure of a horseman and the victory of this bearded horseman is declared in the guise of a pursuit. The Great King, his adversary, is uncatchable. And Alexander the Great can never quite get hold of him. It is therefore a story of lost opportunity, or rather of several lost opportunities, because in Issos in 333 BC, just as in Gaugameles in 331, Alexander doesn't manage to confront his adversary who refuses to give combat. This infernal pursuit lasts three years and on the shores of the Caspian Sea culminates lamentably in the death of the Great King, killed by the satrap of Bactriani, Bessos.

Now the images presented to us by these vases and fragments don't tell of this end. They depict instead the promise of victory, the chronicle of a victory foreseen. What they really recount is the story of a historic turning point, because it is a transfer of sovereignty... that of the last king of the Achemenidean Empire to the new king of Asia, Alexander the Great. It is this promise that painters of southern Italy, maybe of Tarente, have depicted on prestige vases, volute scroll craters. And amphora that are intended for the Italian aristocracy of Daunie, north of the Pouilles, of Peucecie, the central region, and that we find in their tombs but that may have been given to them when alive and that represent this historic moment.

There is an obvious enigma: why this bearded horseman when Alexander has always been depicted without a beard? Well, that's what happens when images travel, it's a matter of how images are received by their target audience and in southern Italy, it's a particular public that is being addressed And it's a public who live in a different reality! Who have maybe heard talk of Alexander the Great but who live with another Alexander, Alexander the Molosse, Alexander's uncle, who has managed to appropriate the propaganda of his nephew by comparing himself and his own victory over the local populations to that of Alexander the Great against the Persians and their last achemenide

king...It's one of the explanations that can be given for the presence of hair on the chin of this horseman, which is represented.

03min 27sec