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IN THE REALM OF THE SCHEME. THE LIMITS OF INTERPRETATION OF ARCHAIC GREEK VISUAL CULTURE. THE CASE OF A BLACK-FIGURE LEKYTHOS FROM KRAKOW[1]

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to examine the possibilities of interpretation using readings of pictorial schemes on Archaic Greek vases on the example of a black-figure lekythos from the collection of the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. The current interpretation of the scene on the vase describes it as setting out for the hunt. It is argued here that this scene represents warriors setting out for war, in line with the first interpretation of this piece made by Piotr Bieńkowski. Furthermore, it is argued that since the readings could always be plural, the creator of the vase made deliberate attempts to limit interpretation, however, the vase can still retain its interpretational freedom if put in a viewing context that stimulates unorthodox readings.*

Keywords: *Greek vase painting; warfare in ancient Greece; hunting in ancient Greece; Greek vases from the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow*

Among Archaic Greek black-figure vases in the possession of the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, one lekythos particularly stands out (Pls. 1 and 2: 1). One of the gifts from

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prince Władysław Czartoryski, this vessel of unknown provenience was attributed to the hand which was given the name of the Gela Painter and dated to about 505–500 BC (inv. no. 345=Cracow 345; Bieńkowski 1917, 4, figs. 2–3; Bulas 1935, pl. 7: 6a–b [Pologne 80]; Haspels 1936, 207.47; Bernhard 1976, no. 342, fig. 75; Schnapp 1997, 245–246, no. 171, fig. 171: drawing; Barringer 2001, 213, n. 47, 51; Papuci-Władyka 2007, 206–207, pl. 36; Papuci-Władyka 2012, pls. 43–45 [Pologne 505]; *BADB* 14006). It bears a very unusual decoration on the frontal part of the body. It shows two riders and one youth in what appears to be the action of setting out, as a very brief description by Emilie Haspels (1936, 207.47) informs us. On what exactly these characters are setting out will be the subject of this short essay. The *communis opinio* is that the scene depicts the setting out for a hunt; it will be argued not only that this is not the case here, but first and foremost that the interpretation of this vase faces one of the most disturbing problems that a scholar dealing with Greek iconography can encounter: vagueness of the scheme.

Let's start the discussion with a detailed description of the scene. Starting from the right end (unusually, as vase description goes from left to right, but here we will start from the front of the procession), we find a bearded horseman turned right, wearing a Thracian himation called *zeira*, and a *petasos* hat. In his right hand he holds a pair of spears, and on his right shoulder there hangs a large shield (Papuci-Władyka 2012, 76–77). The shield has a distinctive rim and is decorated with two large white dots constituting a blazon, a feature common for large, round shields of the hoplites, also known as Argive shields (for blazons on shields see Ducrey 1985, 51; Snodgrass 1999, 55; Sekunda 2000, 10, 46; van Wees 2004, 53–54). Under the horse a dog stands, also facing right, just as all the figures on this vase. Behind the horseman we can see a beardless youth on foot, also wearing a *petasos* hat and a dotted cloak which hangs over his shoulders and body. He also carries a pair of spears and his left hand is raised in a gesture. Behind him, the pair of horseman and dog is repeated, with minor changes to the stance and the decoration of the *zeira*. Finally, behind them, the scene is closed by a Doric column.

The interpretation of this scene as a departure for a hunt was established before the war (Bulas 1935, 40) and afterward it was repeated unchallenged in other publications (Schnapp 1997, 245–246, no. 171; Barringer 2001, 213, n. 47, 51). It was significantly reinforced by Alain Schnapp (1997, 245–246, no. 172), who paired this vase with another lekythos by the Gela Painter, from a private collection (Basel, Market, Münzen und Medaillen

AG SN, private; Beazley 1956, 700.16BIS; Beazley 1971, 215; Carpenter *et al*. 1989, 119) which shows a return from the hunt (Pl. 2: 2).[2] However, although it may seem clear why this scene is identified as a hunting scene, in reality, this is caused by very different, often contradictory criteria. The image on Cracow 345 has its own syntagma,[3] a set of signs that allow the viewer to read it and assign meaning to it. This syntagma is one of the many variations possible on the paradigmatic axis which collects all the possible variations within the imagery (Barthes 1977, 51; Bérard 1983, 5–12; Morgan 1985, 5–19; Barthes 1986, 58–88; Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 9–13; Chandler 2007, 84–86; Miścicki 2015, 113–116); operating along these lines, with knowledge of the system and the rules of creating images, one should be able to understand what the picture is about. Rewriting the decoration of the lekythos as a set of signs would not be very different from our previous description, only this time the focus would be on the relations between the signs and not the signs themselves (Barthes 1977, 37, n. 1). The syntagma of this scene consist of two horsemen paired with dogs separated by a youth on foot. But the signs had been modified. Let's take a look at the scheme of the horseman: it's a horseman with a Thracian cloak, a *petasos* hat, a pair of spears, and a shield. This set of signs has its meaning and one may ask why it should mean 'hunt' instead of 'warfare'. In other words, why should this scene depict going on a hunt instead of for a war? To answer this question we should first properly understand with what particular type of departure scheme we are dealing here, and how warfare and hunting are depicted on vases, by what schemes they are conveyed.

The main problem is that the domains of hunt and war are closely related to one another (Durand and Schnapp 1989, 61; Schnapp 1997, 242–244; Barringer 2001, 7–8; Lissarrague 2001, 93), but most importantly, the participants of said activities could interchange costumes, which makes reading the departure scene very problematic. For instance, François Lissarrague (2001, 93) writing about images of horsemen, despite keeping the two possibilities very close, suggested that the presence of dogs in

[2] This lekythos will be referred to as Basel-private in this essay.

[3] Syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations can be described as chains of signs: a syntagma is a set of 'this and this and this', whereas the paradigmatic axis is defined around 'this or that or that'. The syntagma is created by adding and deleting signs from the image, while the paradigmatic relation is based on substitution and transposition of signs. The basic test for the analysis of these relations is known as the commutation test in which the signs are changed according to those four transformations and the changed scheme is contrasted with the original to assess whether the change was significant. The full description of the theory behind this method can be found in the cited literature.

a scene evokes the hunt, giving as an example the departure on the hydria Louvre CA4716 (Pl. 3: 1), attributed to the Leagros Group (Paris, Musée du Louvre CA4716; Schnapp 1997, 244, no. 169; Lissarrague 2001, 92, fig. 72; *BADB* 3018). However, Schnapp (1997, 242–244, nos. 167–170, 221–222), in interpreting this and other pieces which show horsemen departing, had convincingly argued that it is not the case. First and foremost, he did not make a clear distinction between riders going for warfare and for hunting, as he viewed both activities as interchangeable, evoking values of the elite. Secondly, he believed, after Cook (1997, 244), that the scheme of a dog does not evoke the hunt, but is connected to the scheme of the horse; it is its artistic extension. Citing a few pieces which depict horsemen departing, he made a different, modest claim, that it is the Thracian garment that brings the depicted riders closer to hunting than warfare.

These claims are confusing at best. Firstly, the dog would more plausibly signify domestic surroundings. Although they are depicted along with horses, dogs accompany footmen as well. Most importantly, they are often depicted in scenes of departure of warriors (on foot), usually being the closest figures to the warrior in such scene (see 1. Munich, Antikensammlungen 1520; Beazley 1956, 278.33; Kunze-Götte 1973, Taf. 421: 1–2 [Germany 1839]; *BADB* 320195; 2. Berlin, Antikensammlung F1857; Beazley 1956, 370.135; Mommsen 2013, Taf. 49 [Germany 4605]; *BADB* 302130; 3. Los Angeles, County Museum 36.11.1; Beazley 1956, 273.113; Packard and Clement 1977, pl. 6: 1–4 [USA 846]; *BADB* 320124; 4. Horseman departing for war with dog by his side: New York, Metropolitan Museum 41.85; Beazley 1956, 283.13, 391.1; von Bothmer 1963, pl. 21: 1–2 [USA 553]; *BADB* 320258). Of course, the animal is used in hunting, but the images connecting a dog to warriors are very frequent. Furthermore, sometimes dogs are the only figures other than warriors in the scenes. They could evoke a military encampment, or could be a minimal signifying unit for a domestic space.[4] The scheme of a dog is too versatile to evoke hunting alone. Schnapp's suggestion that the Thracian garment should be connected with hunting is not closely based on the sources. Although hunters are depicted wearing the chlamys and *petasoi*, they do not wear the *zeira*; mounted hunters are usually very scantily clad. Although in the last quarter of the 6th century BC, an oriental costume appears in hunting scenes, it is not the Thracian one. Although I would leave open the possibility that the Thracian garment

[4] This could explain why they are often depicted crowding the scene with horsemen: they are the best possible indicator of setting out from home that could be painted in a limited space.

could signify a hunt, the fact remains that the Thracian cloak, or the Thracian costume, features mostly in warfare scenes. Here, cavalry very similar to the riders on Cracow 345 are engaged in all kinds of activities, from departure to actual combat. It seems that the opposite is more plausible: the less the riders wear, the more they have in common with hunting scenes.

If it is not the Thracian cloak or the presence of dogs, then what could distinguish the riders on this lekythos as hunters? The most obvious explanation would be that they do not represent a typical warrior scheme. If we put their costumes on an axis in which one end would be gear proper for war, and the other would be gear for hunting, we would find that hunting is done in light garments and warfare in armour, therefore the figures departing with light equipment will be closer to hunting. However, this could hold true if we were dealing with a departure on foot, if, for instance, we had only our beardless youth footman represented. The present state of discourse concerning Greek warfare somehow vindicates such light-armed warriors (van Wees 2004, 61–76); however, it would be unusual to depict them departing alone, as they were still mostly insignificant for vase painters. If the scene depicted only light footmen, we could say it evoked hunting, but the riders are not 'light' in the same sense. They represent typical warfare attire, and, what makes this piece truly outstanding, it is actually somewhat atypical attire, as they are carrying shields. In fact, the very first interpretation of this vase by Piotr Bieńkowski (1917, 4–7) corresponded perfectly with that view. Even though Bieńkowski (1917, 6) follows Furtwangler and Helbig with the identification of such riders as mercenary Thessalians, from the presence of the shields he correctly concludes that they are meant to be used from horseback, and that this is a depiction of heavy cavalry with a foot squire.

Presently, the image of a warrior on horseback and with a shield is strongly connected with the so-called mounted hoplites – warriors who rode to battle on horses and then dismounted to fight on foot (Helbig 1902, 157–264; Greenhalgh 1973, 75–78, 96–98, 103–106; Anderson 1975, 175–187; van Wees 2004, 57–60). Therefore, usually when this scheme is presented, it is interpreted as such. Recently, some scholars have expressed different opinions; e.g., José Johannes Brouwers (2007, 305–319; 2010, 109–110) made a claim that the Argive shield was designed for riding on horseback, as it had a double-grip which allowed one to hold the reins, and a round rim so as not to injure the animal. Riders with their shield hanged on the shoulder or back were believed to be rare instances. Although scholars acknowledge their presence (Greenhalgh 1973, 131–132, A94–A96; Anderson 1975, 185),

they remain highly sceptical about the possibility of using shields while mounted. There are, however, images (Pl. 3: 2) that clearly show a cavalryman fighting from horseback with his Argive shield (see 1. Paris, Musee du Louvre F72; Plaoutine 1938, pl. 80: 1–7 [France 621]; Greenhalgh 1973, 121, fig. 64; *BADB* 7966; 2. Paris, Musée du Louvre MNC672; Pottier 1926, pls. 29: 4–5, 30: 1 [France 195–196]; *BADB* 10772), and another (Brussels, Musees Royaux R300; Mayence and Verhoogen 1949, pl. 23: 2a–2c [Belgium 117]; Beazley 1956, 288.9; *BADB* 320312) which shows a horseman fighting with a shield probably hanging on his back (or perhaps he put his forearm through the grip). Scenes showing horsemen with shields departing were not the most popular scheme, yet they do feature on several pieces, aside from the aforementioned Louvre CA4716 (see 1. Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano 383; *BADB* 9032803; 2. Altenburg, Staatliches Lindenau – Museum 217; *BADB* 350460; 3. Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale RC3454; *BADB* 13882; 4. Syracuse, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 21956; *BADB* 301846; 5. London, British Museum 1836,0224.125; *BADB* 200728).

It would seem that the scheme of horsemen with shields signifies departing for war, but things are not as straightforward as this. Judith Barringer (2001, 21) has put great emphasis on how the hoplite equipment is introduced in the hunting imagery of the last quarter of the 6th century BC. She believes that this was done to reinforce the metaphor that hunting is like warfare. One of the features introduced was of course the shield. However, she does not cite numerous representations of this phenomenon from the Archaic period,[5] only three, to be precise. Two of them are boar-hunting scenes, and since the scheme is connected to the Calydonian boar hunt, the presence of shields (and in one instance the full panoply, only without helmets) could have been used to emphasize the ferocity of that animal (see 1. Villa Giulia 74981; *BADB* 9028861; Barringer 2001, 26, fig. 15; 2. Munich, Antikensammlungen 1386; Beazley 1956, 306.39; Barringer 2001, 28, figs. 16–17; *BADB* 301519). It should be noted that Barringer (2001, 21, 213, n. 48) calls the horsemen wearing armour ‘mounted hoplites’, although in none of the instances to which she refers are the warriors equipped with shields; these are: Villa Giulia 74981 and Athens, National Museum 14858. There are heavy cavalrymen on those vases, but they are without any shields. Only one, much earlier vase with a representation of a Calydonian boar hunt has a row of mounted hunters with shields depicted chasing the beast at the very end of the hunting party (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 34.212; Beazley 1956, 87.18; True 1978, pls. 64: 1–4, 65: 1 [USA 898–899]; Schnapp

[5] Plus one from the 4th century BC.

1997, 290, no. 238; *BADB* 300807). However, it seems logical that this scheme is used to render the tension of this event. The third representation cited by Barringer (2001, 22, figs. 11–12) is a depiction of a shield in a deer hunting scene, where youths are using chlamydes like shields and one of them has an actual shield (Paris, Musée du Louvre G22; *BADB* 201376). The two other ones which she cites are more problematic, as one of them is none other than our lekythos Cracow 345 (Barringer 2001, 213, n. 47, 51). The last one is non-Athenian (Barringer 2001, 231, n. 124), and I believe it does not depict hunting at all. It is a terracotta cima frieze of *c*. 540–525 BC from Thasos (and also another rendering of this scheme found in Thasos; see Picard 1941, 56–68, figs. 1, 5, 8). It depicts Thracian horsemen galloping with raised shields and spears in an attack position and below the dogs are chasing hares. Charles Picard (1941, 56–68, figs. 1, 5, 8) was puzzled why shields were needed to hunt hares, but the horsemen are not actually interested in the game. Their eyes and spears are not facing downward but upward, toward the invisible foe. The dogs chasing hares could be viewed as a metaphor for warfare; it is actually best suited for referring to a swift and deadly cavalry chase. Barringer (2001, 43) herself postulated that her analogy should go both ways, that we should have representations where warfare is like hunting, but concluded that: 'There are no extant battle scenes marked with hunting peculiarities'. A scene very close to those from Thasos can be found on Athenian vases. For instance, Tubingen S/10 1298 (Beazley 1956, 81.5; *BADB* 300758) depicts a dog chasing a hare under heavy cavalrymen; the two animals are separated, as they are depicted under the horses on opposite sides of the vase.

So, if the depictions of shields in hunting scenes are rare, and they are frequent in scenes of warfare, then we could infer that the horsemen on Cracow 345 are in fact closer to being warriors. This is yet a hypothetical claim, as the scene on this vase was connected with other, unquestionable representations of hunting based on their syntagmatic and paradigmatic similarities. Schnapp also wanted to add a lekythos from Vienna to the sequence of hunting, although, from my understanding, he perceived the connections between this set of three vases not to be as strong as those between the two pieces by the Gela Painter. In truth, Vienna 194 shows hunters who could easily be connected with Basel-private, as it also shows two hunters on foot. The Basel-private lekythos depicts a return from the hunt, where two huntsmen arrive on foot at the Doric column similar to the one on Cracow 345. They are carrying hares, but Schnapp (1997, 245–246) is not fazed but such small prey, as it is simply a symbolic rendering of returning

home with game. In other words, the game carried here is conventional, as is the fact that hunting is often depicted on horseback and hunters always return on foot (Schnapp 1997, 245). However, Schnapp does not stop at these generic similarities and he claims that the hunter with a stick on Basel-private is strikingly similar to the footman on Cracow 345. I would claim the opposite. We could omit the details, like the fact that one wears a *petasos* and the other does not, or that one has a stick, whereas the other does not; the fundamental difference is that on Cracow 345 the footman is a youth, and on Basel-private he is a bearded man. These two do not interchange in a syntagama of Greek vases without changing its meaning.

Furthermore, one might ponder the differences within the syntagmas of said scenes regarding these figures. If we look at the whole scene on Cracow 345 (Pl. 2: 1), it may seem that the youth is in the centre of it. That is not the case here for two reasons. First, all figures are moving in one direction, so there is not a centre of the scene per se, as there would have been had one of the horsemen turned toward the youth. Secondly, and more decisively, in the viewing context of the pot only a part of the scene can be seen at once. Although the figure of the youth is painted directly opposite the handle, it is not the primary viewing context, as the vase would be held in the right hand, thereby the centre-right surface of the scene would be visible first (see Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 73–74, esp. fig. 30). When holding the vase in its natural position, we can see the frame with the first horseman and the youth following him, exactly like on similar lekythos (Pl. 4: 1). The scene visible when holding Basel-private in such position can be seen in Pl. 3: 2, and there the man who, according to Schnapp, corresponds to the youth is leading the group of hunters, so if we compare the syntagmas, his equivalent would be the first rider, and not the youth. What is really similar about them is the way their figures are painted: the artisan used one figure-scheme and made some minor adjustments in composition, but these changed the meaning of the scheme, which tells us more about how the image is constructed. The painter is adding and removing pieces along the syntagmatic axis based on pre-configured pictorial templates. Other scenes painted by the Gela Painter seem to confirm the scheme theory. Schemes of setting out are constructed as such, like on the lekythos from a private collection (Pl. 4: 1), where this artisan painted two horsemen almost exactly like on the Cracow 345, but between them stands not a youth, but a bearded man in a Phrygian cap; also, the dogs and the column are missing (London, Market, Bonhams; *BADB* 9029282). And to render the subject of warriors setting out, the Gela Painter also used another template, of two warriors leading horses,

like on the oinochoe from Villa Giulia (Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia 47466; Beazley 1956, 475.28; *BADB* 303360) and on another vase from a private collection (Paris, Market; Beazley 1971, 215; *BADB* 340825), where heavy-armed warriors lead one horse each. This scheme was used also in another image of two bearded males leading horses with two spears (Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina T737; Beazley 474.20; *BADB* 303352). As they do not possess any features connected with warfare, could it be that it is a depiction of setting out for a hunt? I believe that it could, as it cannot be read in such a way that would exclude the possibility of hunting. But, is it not a case similar to the lekythos Cracow 345? Perhaps the painter put dogs in this picture deliberately, to evoke the hunt in that particular scheme? This notion could be tempting, but the most obvious explanation is a different one: that he put shields on the back of the horsemen to specifically *not* evoke a hunt.

If we set Cracow 345 with another piece Cleveland 29.134 (Cleveland, Museum of Art 29.134; Boulter 1971, pl. 18: 1–3 [USA 698]; *BADB* 760) from the Leagros group, the similarities would again be striking. Here we have what is believed to be a return of a warrior (Pl. 4: 2); the hero is leading a horse, and his retainer is flanking the scene on foot. Both have wreaths on their heads and are greeted by sitting men. The warrior leading the horse wears light attire, carries two spears and is un-armoured, except for the Argive shield slung on his back. That scene shows greater similarities with Cracow 345, as the key features are preserved, while Basel-private really has only the Doric column, which could be just a technical feature used by the Gela Painter to render a domestic or urban environment. And a brief look at the works of this artisan seems to confirm this hypothesis.[6]

The pairing of Cracow 345 and Cleveland 29.134 will result in a coherent warfare set, but the combination proposed by Schnapp still holds. Remarkably, looking at those two vases we could still be imagining a hunting sequence. This is happening because the syntagma of the scene is not closed and defined as structuralists would think, but open and dependent on the viewing context (Miścicki 2015, 116–118). Context is the most important

[6] Some of the lekythoi with columns depicted, attributed to the Gela Painter, that have subjects unconnected to the aforementioned pieces include: 1. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 99.526; Haspels 1936, 209.81, pl. 24: 4; *BADB* 2930 (merchants selling oil); 2. Agrigento, Museo Archeologico Regionale C845; Haspels 1936, 210.117; *BADB* 15723 (Dionysos); 3. Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe 1899.96; Haspels 1936, 210.100; Beazley 1971, 214.100; *BADB* 340803 (Maenads dancing).

factor, and putting two images close to each other is enough to establish a link between them (cf. Marconi 2004, 30–40). In some cases, the schemes of the scenes with their plural meanings could be prone to very different readings. However, in other cases, the painters had arranged the signs on the vase so that the person who already knows their meaning could have his interpreting possibilities severely limited. The 5th century scenes depicting the departure of warriors could serve as an example, as they present very precise rendering of different parts of *ephebia* which limits the interpretation (Matheson 2009, 396–403) Interestingly, Cracow 345 could also undergo such a reduction.

Nevertheless, it should be asked whether this distinction is meaningful, given the strong connection between warfare and hunting in the imagery. For Schnapp, the setting out for war could be substituted for setting out for a hunt, and Barringer had shown how these activities are close. Yet, although these subjects are similar, they evoke something different. The bulk of warrior scenes is agonistic, in the sense that equal warriors are pitted against each other; the way in which hunting is depicted could be either fighting monsters (terrible beast like the Calydonian boar), or catching and slaughtering game. Barringer (2001, 21) even cites one lekythos were heavy cavalrymen are mauling a deer as a hunt resembling warfare. That scene has its almost exact analogies in depictions of warfare, where two cavalrymen are mauling a fallen hoplite (see Munich, Antikensammlungen 1500; Kunze-Götte 1982, Taf. 30 [Germany 2327]; *BADB* 7640; cf. above Paris, Musée du Louvre MNC672).[7] Hunting is like warfare, but not like every kind of warfare, only its particular, most brutal and terrifying aspects. This distinction is further elaborated by the inclusion of the hoplite armour in the hunting scene, as it serves a completely different role than it would in war. This case is very similar to the depictions of pursuits interpreted by Christianne Sourvinou-Inwood (1991, 29–51), where the spear in the chase cannot be exchanged with a sword; they are not equivalent. Here, in warfare, armour is a source of pride, identity (Lissarrague 1989, 51; Lissarrague 2010, 194–196); it could even be viewed as a second skin of the warrior, or it could be said that a warrior is not a warrior without armour. Even the scheme of the so-called 'heroic nudity' consists of a naked man, but with a helmet and greaves, a shield and a spear (Hurwit 2007, 45–52). In hunting scenes, elements of equipment serve to emphasise the danger of the hunt. The equivalent of 'armour' in hunting scenes is 'non-armour', that is why one of the most

[7] Which is in itself a variation on the scheme of two horsemen fighting with each other over the lying hoplite, who is being trampled.

popular schemes is a man shielding himself with a chlamys to signify that non-armour elements are being used as armour.

Given the differences between those two subjects, let's return to our lekythos and inspect the scene looking for syntagmatic features that will limit the interpretation. How to look for such features? The answer is: via a commutation test (Barthes 2005, 37; Chandler 2007, 88–90). The viewer must read the signs, and then change them one by one and see how the meaning will change. First of all, the signs must reflect reality in such way that putting them within the image should be conceivable for the viewers: to put simply – things have to work properly. When we see a rider with a shield, two options are possible: he could either use it on horseback, or dismount. For warfare imagery, as we have concluded, both options are possible. As for hunting, it would be very puzzling to envisage huntsmen using shields from horseback, not only because hunters are shown without shields and only hurling javelins, but because it is illogical: the horse protects the rider from animals, so they could not attack the man himself, they could not even reach the shield, therefore it seems useless. True, the hunters on the solitary Calydonian boar hunt scene are mounted and have shields, but they are at the rear of the chase, and furthest apart from the animal. They could very well dismount for the actual hunt. However, their rendering signifies that they are not to be viewed as the most noble members of the hunt, quite the contrary: the mixing of two protective devices, a horse and a shield, should evoke further fear of the boar in the viewer's mind. Maybe the horsemen on the lekythos could dismount for the hunt? It would work if the image was taken out of context, but given its signs operate within the frames of Greek imagery, this is not the case. The horsemen on the lekythos are heroes, the most important figures in the scene, as sitting on horse is valued higher than being a youth on foot. If they were destined for dismounting for the hunt, their shields would demote them, for in the hunt less is more, and the shield-less youth would seem to be more dominant, therefore turning around the meaning of their positions on the vase. Even if we stuck to the reading where shields do not demote the members of the hunting party, they certainly do not promote them, and dismounting for a figure dressed as the epitome of a rider – the Thracian horseman – would seem very odd.

To sum up, the lekythos from the Institute of Archaeology of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow has it base-reading set as a departure of warriors, although since they are depicted in versatile attire, it could be viewed as a hunting party. To specify the reading, certain measures were

taken by the painter, as the riders were equipped with shields, making interpreting them as hunters difficult. Since the space for rendering a scene on a lekythos is constrained by the form of the vase, simple solutions are preferred. Here, the pictorial template is definitely that of departure for war. However, since the scheme is still composed of very few signs, and most of them have multiple meanings, open interpretations are still possible and welcomed.

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Pl. 1. Athenian lekythos, Cracow 345.
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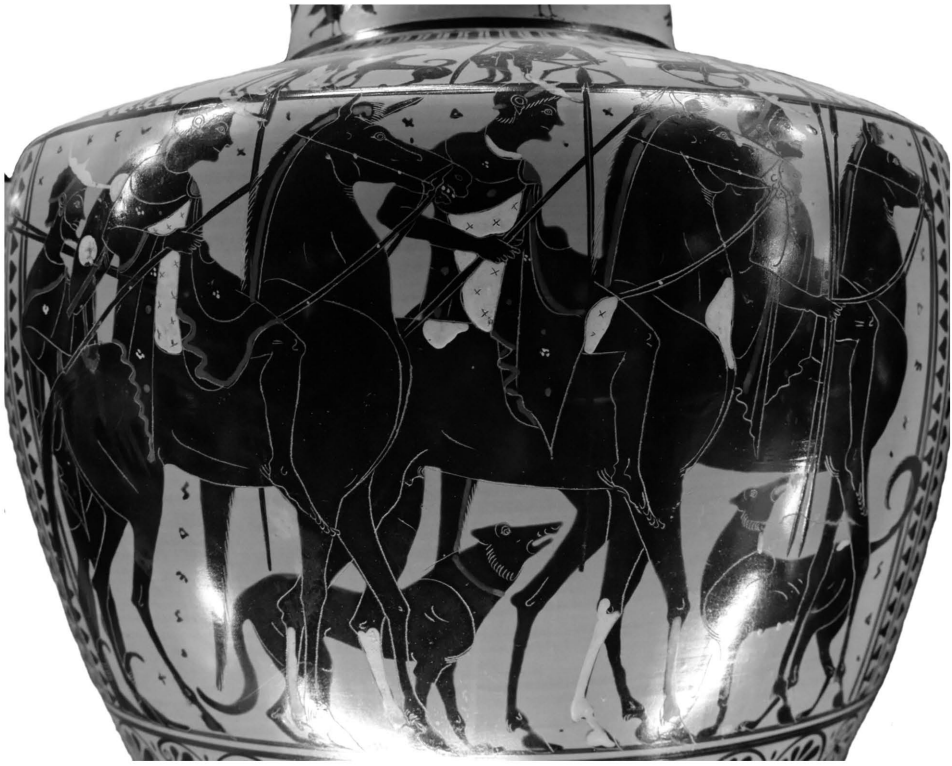
Pl. 2. 1 – Athenian Lekythos, Cracow 345. Drawing after Bieńkowski 1917, fig. 3. Reprinted by permission from the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences;
2 – Athenian lekythos from private collection, previously in Basel.
Drawing by the author



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Pl. 3. 1 – Athenian hydria, Louvre CA4716. Photo by Marie-Lan Nguyen. Photo in Public Domain; 2 – Athenian Little Master Band Cup. Louvre F72. Photo by Marie-Lan Nguyen. Photo in Public Domain

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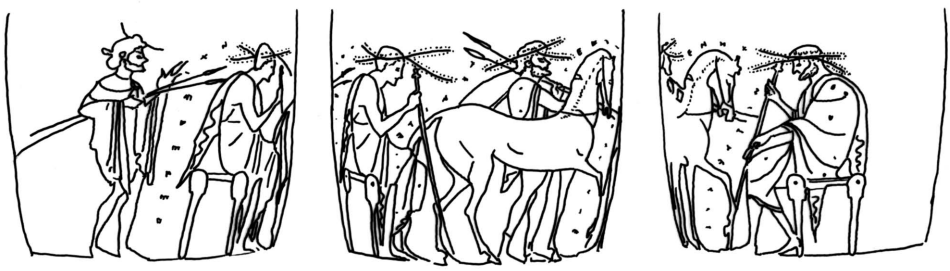

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Pl. 4. 1 – Athenian lekythos, from private collection. Drawing by the author;
2 – Athenian Lekythos, Cleveland 29.134. Drawing by the author