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WHITE-GROUND LEKYTHOI
IN THE PRINCESS CZARTORYSKI
MUSEUM IN KRAKOW

Abstract: *In the collection of the Princes Czartoryski Museum there are three white-ground lekythoi originating from purchases made by Prince Władysław Czartoryski and Professor Marian Sokołowski. The article contains the results of chemical tests and an iconographic analysis of the scenes decorating these vases, leading to the confirmation that two of them were subject to thorough reconstruction of the layer of paint in 19th-century Athens.*

Keywords: *White-ground lekythoi; Greek vase painting; Painter of Munich 2335; 19th-century museum collection; chemical analysis of pigments*

The group of Greek vases kept at the Princes Czartoryski Museum includes three white-ground lekythoi, of which only one, decorated by the Painter of Munich 2335 about 430 BC (Pl. 1), was part of the acquisitions made by Prince Władysław Czartoryski (Bieńkowski 1919, 27–28, fig. 16, tab. 2; Bulas 1935, 16, pl. 13: 8; Beazley 1936, 66, pl. 28: 1; Beazley 1963, 1168, no. 127; Kurtz 1975, 56, n. 12; Sourvinou-Inwood 1986, 221, no. 12; Oakley 2004, 108, 117). Its provenance is not known, though it can be supposed it was bought in Paris, at an auction or on the antiquarian market. It was brought to Krakow only after the Prince's death in 1894. Its neck, handle and part of the shoulders had probably been glued, and repainted in this area, by then. The painting decoration of the vase is only locally preserved. In the remaining parts, we can see a barely visible contour

drawn with a delicate, precise line on a white background of the ground, locally yellowish at present. The composition of the scene consists of two groups of two figures. On the left-hand side, we can see Hermes with one foot resting on a stone. With his right hand, he lifts the folds of a chlamys, pinned at his shoulder; on his feet he is wearing high yellow boots on which, just like on his *pilos*, small wings are visible. Behind him stands a woman, shown in the right profile, wearing a long, finely pleated chiton and a red himation, partially covering her dark hair, done up. Her arms are bent at the breast; in her hands she holds a necklace with an oval pendant – part of her forearm and hand with the necklace, as well as the painterly elaboration of the robe covering her bust are of later reconstruction; originally, the woman might have held the edge of a cloak, an alabastron or a fillet. Both figures are almost completely devoid of a painting layer and are now almost invisible. Hermes has led the woman to Charon, who stands on the bow of a yellow boat. His left hand rests on an oar, and the right one on the edge of the boat. He wears a short red chiton – *exomis* – and a dark red leather cap. In the boat sits a dark-haired woman wearing a red himation. In a melancholic gesture, she inclines her head and props up her chin with her left hand. On both sides of the scene brown streaks depict cane growing by the water of Acheron. The ornamental decoration of the lekythos is composed of an egg-and-dart ornament circling the lower part of the neck, three red palmettes connected with a tendril on their stems, and a meander between double lines, framing the upper edge of the body. Aside from the above-mentioned reconstructions, the whole decoration, including the paint layer and the sketch of the figure, leave no doubt as to its authenticity.

Although Charon appears on almost 100 white-ground lekythoi, the Painter of Munich 2335 painted him in five of his works (Oakley 2004, 108, list 11: 11–15). The standard composition consists of two figures: Charon, standing in a boat, and a deceased woman holding objects like an *exaleiptron* and a small box, an alabastron (two lekythoi in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens 1946 and 1927, cf. Beazley 1963, 1168, nos. 129, 130; *BADB* 215481; *BADB* 215482) or fruit, as on the lekythos in the Mormino Fondazione 795 in Palermo (Genière 1971, pl. (2237) 7: 3–4; *BADB* 2699). The manner of representing Charon combines two areas of iconography. On the one hand, his appearance corresponds to representations of craftsmen belonging to the lower class of the society, especially fishermen wearing a short chiton, an *exomis* and a rustic *pilos* (Sourvinou-Inwood 1986, 221–223; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 327–353; Pipili 2000, 176–178), while striking a dignified pose, similar to the one on the lekythos from

the Mormimo Fondazione in Palermo 795 (Genière 1971, pl. 7: 3–4; Oakley 2004, 108, no. 15; *BADB* 2699) and another one from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York 09.221.44 (Beazley 1963, 1168, no. 128; Oakley 2004, 108, no. 12, fig. 76; *BADB* 215480). The iconographic models for the painter were probably contemporary to him: well-known sculptures of gods and athletes standing in contrapposto, also repeated in the representations of figures of dead warriors in vase painting, as on the white-ground lekythos by Thanatos Painter c. 440 BC from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston 00.359 (Beazley 1963, 1229, no. 23; *BADB* 216364); about a dozen years later, Alcamenes created his statue of Hephaestus, represented in a craftsman's outfit analogous to Charon's, standing in the temple at Colonus Agoraios (Harrison 1977, 137–150). An explicit repetition of the representation of Demeter from the Parthenon frieze (Neils 2001, 107, fig. 77) can be found in the pose of the woman sitting in the boat, resting her head in a gesture of grief, mourning and expectation, replicated many times on white-ground lekythoi in the representations of the dead sitting by stelai on sepulchral reliefs (cf. Beazley 1963, 1385, no. 17, 1385, no. 19, 1386, no. 33; *BADB* 217839; *BADB* 217833; *BADB* 217858) and in the form of terracotta figures (Huber 2001, nos. 179, 213, 222, 225, 228, 243, 254).

The scene on the lekythos from Krakow is more complex than the widespread composition featuring Charon with a deceased woman, and includes also the figure of Hermes with another woman. Hermes is usually shown on white-ground lekythoi in a standing pose, guiding shades or sitting on a rock (Oakley 2004, 137–141). According to the Classical period concept, his task was to guide souls to Charon's boat (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 304–321). On the Krakow lekythos, he takes a rest, with a foot resting on the shore, like Dionysus on the calyx-krater by the same painter, Painter of Munich 2335, in the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia C430 (Beazley 1963, 1165, no. 75; *BADB* 215427) – in this case, however, the stylistic quality of the drawing is remarkably lower. Women's poses analogous to the representation of the standing woman, bearing various attributes in their hands, can be found on several other lekythoi decorated by this painter or his followers: lekythos from the Metropolitan Museum in New York GR608 features a woman standing by a stele and holding a fillet in her outstretched hands (Beazley 1963, 1169, no. 140; *BADB* 215515), a similar scene is to be found on a worse preserved lekythos from Edinburgh, the National Museum of Scotland, 1908.176 (Beazley 1963, 1170, no. 3; *BADB* 215525) and on a vessel from the Museum für Kunstwerk in Frankfurt 04 (Beazley 1963, 1170; *BADB* 215526). All these examples refer to the scene

of visiting a tomb to make offerings. However, analogous poses of women in the context of meeting with Charon appear on lekythoi contemporary to the Painter of Munich 2335, like the Bird Painter, who is credited with the lekythos from the collection of Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz 21 with a scene involving Charon standing on a boat, a woman in a robe with her head covered and bent down, with an alabastron and a fruit basket in her hands, and a young child, preserved in fragments (Böhr 1993, Taf. 23: 5–8, Abb. 4; *BADB* 10215). Considering the aforementioned two-figured compositions depicting Charon with the souls holding objects associated with earthly life and evoking the social status of the deceased (Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 323–335), we can assume that the woman on the Krakow lekythos is another soul who was brought by Hermes. Her appearance is much different than that of a servant accompanying the woman, as for example on the lekythos of Quadrate Painter from Musée Royaux in Brussels A903 (Sourvinou-Inwood 1986, 214, no. 25; *BADB* 216482). The simultaneous presence of two deceased is not common on white-ground lekythoi (type 2c, cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 323). However, the concept of a group crossing the Acheron has found its reflection in the oldest scenes showing the journey of Charon with a soul, namely on the black-figured eschar inv. no. 560 dated to *c.* 500 BC, from Liebieghaus in Frankfurt: here the souls were portrayed as winged eidola, coming to Charon's boat and sailing with him (Sourvinou-Inwood 1986, 212, no. 1; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 336–337; *BADB* 4966). Also worth considering is the hypothesis that in this image the painter introduced some elements of narration to enrich already established compositional schemes. Since the presence of Hermes and Charon corresponds to a two-stage journey to Hades, the female figure may be recognized as the representation of the same soul brought to the boat by Hermes, and then shown taking the next step in her journey, now assisted by Charon. This kind of sequence of events had already been depicted in vase painting, for example in the cycles illustrating the deeds of the heroes Hercules and Theseus, and in Homeric stories (Froning 1988, 177–199).

The two other lekythoi in the Princes Czartoryski collection were bought by art history Professor Marian Sokołowski, who held the position of museum director from 1884 to 1911. Sokołowski stayed in Athens during the expedition to Pamphylia and Pisidia undertaken in 1884 by Karol Lanckoroński (Sokołowski 1889, 47–52). He reportedly purchased eight pieces for the museum collection, including Greek vases, fragments of sculptures, and a terracotta figurine for a total amount of 862 fr, received from Prince Czartoryski. Did he buy them from one antiquities dealer? Two

white-ground lekythoi, reportedly coming from Lambros (Bieńkowski 1919, 20), did not get to the museum until 1912, after the death of Sokołowski, just like the third lekythos purchased for the collection of the Cabinet of Archaeology at the Jagiellonian University (Papuci-Władyka 2012, 139–142, pls. 81–83). The first lekythos (Bieńkowski 1919, 26–27, no. 16; Bieńkowski 1922, 12 n. 1; inv. no. MNK XI-1255, Pl. 2: 1–2) is adorned on the shoulders with three partially preserved palmettes outlined with a black and red contour, connected by a tendril. Along the top of the body runs a stopped meander interrupted by saltire squares; the lower edge of the scene is encircled by a brown line. The contour drawing is made with red-hued paint. In the middle of the representation there is a tomb stele with schematically marked fillets hung on it. From the left-hand side a woman dressed in a long chiton and a himation approaches the monument. Her right arm is covered with a coat, while the left arm is stretched ahead of her. The woman on the right-hand side stands facing the stele. She is wearing a brown himation, reaching down to her knees and revealing part of the torso. She holds it with her left – dropped – hand while touching her face with her right hand. On the side part of the vessel there is a crack along which losses in the paint layer are visible.

The other – intact – lekythos from Sokołowski is painted in a similar manner (Bieńkowski 1919, 24–26, no. 15; Bieńkowski 1922, 12 note 1; inv. no. MNK XI-1256, Pl. 2: 3): the shoulders are adorned with five palmettes connected by scrollwork, painted in black and red; the body is encircled at the upper edge by a meander stripe, disconnected below the handle. A short line constitutes the base of the representation – in the middle, there is a tomb stele with streaks depicting ribbons; on both sides, symmetrically shown, two women are walking away and turning towards the monument. They are dressed in long, voluminous, softly plying chitons. Their long, wavy hair falls loosely over their shoulders. The representation is framed by three tall canes, schematically depicted with brown paint.

An observation of all the three lekythoi in the collection reveals considerable differences in the state of preservation of both the representations and the original colour. On Czartoryski's lekythos the unfired paint layer has a matte, powdery texture and drops off easily, which is the cause of the poor preservation of the representations. On the other hand, the two Sokołowski lekythoi, remarkable because of the original form of the vessel itself, are distinguished by certain stylistic elements of drawing and technical characteristics which raise the suspicion of significant interference by 19th-century craftsmen because of their current appearance. In order to

compare the composition of the paints used in the decoration of the vessels, an analysis of the elemental composition of both paint and ground layers was carried out with an X-ray fluorescence spectrometer.¹ The pigments used in the pictorial decorations on the white-ground lekythoi were essentially common and cheap materials. The lekythos by the Painter of Munich 2335 (Pl. 1: 2) is primed with a ground containing kaolinite clay (Si, S, K, Ca, Ti, Mn, Fe – most likely loam, dolomite, gypsum, quartzite), the red parts contain pigment obtained from red ochre (Al, Si, S, K, Ca, Ti, Mn, Fe, Cu, Zn), and the yellow ones from yellow ochre (Si, S, K, Ca, Ti, Mn, Fe, Cu, Zn). The black contours and fillings are covered with paint containing black organic pigments (Al, Si, S, K, Ca, Ti, Mn, Fe, Cu, Zn) which, however, do not originate from burnt bone. These findings coincide with analyses carried out in relation to lekythoi in other museums (Wehgartner 1988, 640–651) and the data preserved in ancient sources (Theophr. *De Lapidibus*; Katsaros and Bassiakos 2002, 201–209).

Tests of Sokołowski's lekythoi have provided other data. In the first case (Pl. 2: 2) the walls of the vessel were primed with a white ground containing lead (Ca, Pb), onto which black paint made on the base of an unidentified organic black pigment was applied. The red colour contains cinnabar pigment with the addition of ferric pigment, as testified by traces of ochre (Ca, Mn, Fe, Hg, Pb). In addition, the presence of chalk was found, which might be a trace of the original primer applied onto the lekythos (Ca, Mn, Fe, Hg, Pb). The brown areas of the meander were painted with colour containing ochre (K, Ca, Ti, Mn, Fe, Pb). UV light shows a visible uniform surface of repainted decoration of the vessel, besides the fragment of more than half of the shoulders on the right-hand side of the neck and along the crack in the body, where there are losses of pictorial layer (cf. Vak 2013, 52–55). On the second lekythos the tested areas were two points from the palmette decoration on the shoulders, painted on a ground containing lead white; organic ingredients (Ca, Mn, Fe, Pb) were used for black, yet bone black was not found – the colour was probably obtained from charred wood or stems, and the red leaf was painted with paint containing cinnabar pigment (Ca, Mn, Fe, Hg, Pb). Although cinnabar was used as a pigment in antiquity, its bright red hue on the Krakow vases differs in intensity and purity from the contemporary appearance of ancient cinnabar, which darkens when

¹ An examination with the ARTAX 400 device from Bruker AXS equipped with an SDD detector cooled with the Peltier system, with the polycapillary optics system and a polycapillary Rh lamp as an excitation source, was carried out in 2015 in the Laboratory of Non-Destructive Analysis and Testing of Historic Objects of the National Museum in Krakow by Eng. Anna Klisińska-Kopacz, Sc.D.

exposed to light (Wehgartner 1988, 642; Wehgartner 2002, 93). Therefore, the composition of the ground and red paint differ from the composition used in ancient technique. Also, the paint surface is unusually firm, smooth and shiny, and the original ground is visible in many points where it chipped off, particularly at the crack on the body of the lekythos inv. no. MNK XI-1255. The style of the decoration also clearly indicates that the entire white-ground surface was repainted before introducing the items on the antiquarian market. On both lekythoi, arms and hands are disproportionate, large and incompatible with anatomy; the dance poses of the women with loose hair on the second vase are more reminiscent of representations of bacchantes than mourning Athenian women. To an inexperienced buyer, this type of repainted semi-counterfeit was indistinguishable from original white-ground lekythoi. On small, uncovered parts of the body there are no traces of its original decoration. The inspiration for the restoration of unpreserved scenes was probably provided by original vases with popular scenes of visits to the grave (Oakley 2004, 145–214). Several lekythoi by Tymbos Painter from *c.* 460 BC, e.g. in the collection of Ruprecht-Karls-Universität in Heidelberg, from Spink Auction House in London, and Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, Basel Z344 (Beazley 1963, 755 no. 36, 755 no. 37; 755 no. 37bis; *BADB* 209313; *BADB* 209314; *BADB* 209315) showed women walking away from a tomb, with their heads turned backwards and with outstretched arms; similar figures were painted on the Krakow lekythoi with greater dynamism and freedom, which lets us assume that this type of scene became the inspiration for a 19th-century restorer. The form of the stele finial is more reminiscent of the acanthus-ornamented anthemion such as on the lekythos from the Musées Royaux in Brussels A904 (Nakayama 1982, 279, tab. 1: E; Beazley 1963, 1246 no. 1; *BADB* 216782) appearing in representations from 440–430 BC on.

An analogous style of drawing can be found on restored and repainted lekythoi acquired from the antiquarian market and kept in the collection of the Archaeological Museum of Rhodes (Iacopi 1934, pl. 2[500]1: 3) and at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (Trinkl 2011, 128–129, pl. 82: 1–8; Kammerer *et al.* 2013, 191–192, inv. no. IV 3218). The latter was acquired in 1915 from Ludwig Hans Fischer (1848–1915), a Viennese painter specialising in oriental themes.² Fischer travelled in various countries of the Mediterranean. He also accompanied Lanckoroński at the turn of the years 1888–1889 in his trip around the world, reaching as far as India.

² Retrieved from <http://www.szaal.at/cms/index.php/kuenstler/art-classics/f/14-kuenstler/art-classics/f/98-fischer-hand-ludwig-biografie> (status as of Nov. 19th, 2015).

Previously, however, he had gone to Greece, as evidenced by the book by Rosa von Gerold with his illustrations *Ein Ausflug nach Athen und Corfu* (Vienna 1885). The Viennese salon of this author of several travel books was visited by many professors and artists, including Count Karol Lanckoroński and Ludwig Fischer himself. Their trip to Athens in 1883 preceded Sokołowski's visit to the Greek capital by a year. There is a high probability that the lekythoi from Krakow and Vienna come from the same source, i.e. from a well-known art dealer, Jean Paul Lambros (Bates 1910, 96), son of the first Athenian dealer in antiquities, Pavlos Lambros (Galanakis and Skaltsa 2012, 630 n. 50). Rosa von Gerold describes a visit to Lambros – besides archaeology professor Athanasios Rhousopoulos (1823–1898), mistakenly recorded by von Gerold as Rossopoulos, the most important antiquity collector and antiquarian in Athens – where the Viennese travellers were led by Baron B. Blum – in the following way: *‘So gingen wir zu Lambros und trafen da einen ebenfalls ganz feinen artigen Sohn des Hauser, der uns Wunderbares schauen liess an Vasen, Bronzen und ganz besonders an Tanagra-Figürchen, die ja seit einigen Jahren die Schoosskinder aller Sammler und Museen geworden. Es sind dies bekanntlich kleine, künstlerisch modellierte, fein und reizend ausgeführte Thonfigürchen welche Genrescenen und Frauen in allerei poetischen und häuslichen Beschäftigungen darstellen. Sie waren ursprünglich mit einem zarten Hauch von Farbe decorirt, die Haare röthlich, golden der Schmuck, mattblau, mattrosa die Gewänder, jetzt aber weisen sie nur wenig Spuren davon auf. Ob sie die Nipptische der lebenden schönen Griechinnen zierten, oder blos den todten in die Gräber mitgegeben wurden, ist ungewiss. Man fand sie bisher nur in solchen, hauptsächlich in Tanagra, einer kleinen Stadt in Böotien. Da muss diese Kunstindustrie besonders geblüht haben, denn als man vor zwei Jahren einen Reihe von Gräbern dort öffneten, standen die anmuthigen, so gebrechlichen Dinger in Menge neben den verwesten Leichen; man fand Hunderte davon, die gleich in alle Museen der Grossstädte wanderten. Auch in Wien im Antikencabinet sind gegen dreissig der allerzierlichsten aufgestellt. Herr Lambros hatte einen ganzen Schrank voll zu verkaufen, alle unnachahmlich schön! Z. B. eine Venus in der Muschel ruhend (sie kostete 4000 Francs!), eine Europa auf dem Stiere, auch zu diesem Preise, und eine weibliche Figur zu 3000 Francs, die na und mich so entzückte, dass wir uns gar nicht von ihrem Anblick losreissen konnten. Sie stellte eine athenische Dame vor in reicher faltiger Gewandung, mit zierlich geknotetem Haar; mit dem feinsten, lieblichsten Gesichtchen und entblössten, wunderbar modellirten Armen. Sie sitzt, stützt die rechte Hand leicht auf, blickt mit graziöser Kopfwendung nach der*

Seite, und hält in der Linken hoch erhoben einen blattartigen Fächer. Man kann nichts Entzückenderes sehen, als dies Miniaturfigürchen – ein grosser Künstler muss es modelliert haben!’ (von Gerold 1885, 151–152). It is not mentioned in the description that the visit to Lambros ended up with the purchase of any item. The description of the Tanagra figurines which so enchanted Rosa von Gerold dominates the entire report. We learn of white-ground lekythoi from another fragment of the book, describing the collection exhibited in the new building of the Technical University as *‘die seltensten und werthvollsten, welche nur in Attika gemacht wurden und von denen nur wenige ganz erhalten sind. Es sind dies die schlanken hohen Thongefässe mit dünnem Halse mit einem einzigen Henkel, und mit farbigen Bildern auf weissem Grunde. Man fand sie zumeist in Gräbern, sie wurden Todten mitgegeben und die Bilder, die sie schmückten, beziehen sich darauf, sind Abschiedsscenen oder stellen Götter der Unterwelt dar.’* (von Gerold 1885, 136). The vessel with a representation of two women at the sepulchral stele became part of the decoration of this chapter’s initial, designed by Ludwig Fischer. At the time the drawing was created the lekythos already belonged to Fischer; this is precisely the vessel which would be purchased for the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Taking into account the vivid description of the visit to the antiquary shop of Lambros that Rosa von Gerold included in her travel diary, we can presume that the Viennese vessel was purchased directly from that art dealer. The fact that Lambros was selling white-ground lekythoi is confirmed by some acquisitions from the collections of other museums, such as two vessels from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston – a lekythos by the Painter of London E342, 95.47, (Beazley 1963, 670 no. 17; *BADB* 207863), and another by the Painter of Athens 1943, 95.63, both purchased in 1895 (Beazley 1963, 1082 no. 3; *BADB* 214534).

The charm of historic polychrome objects made them desirable pieces in collections of antiquities, but also tempted merchants to commission reconstructions to improve their appearance. The goal was maximum earnings for the findings, a large stream of which was coming in from amateur excavations, carried out in accordance with, but often against, the first Greek archaeological law of 1834, which allowed the circulation of antiquities found on private land (Galanakis and Skaltsa 2012, 638–643). In practice, the way of obtaining the object was irrelevant. Souvenirs from travel – like Fischer’s lekythos – or consciously acquired valuable ancient objects – like Sokołowski’s lekythoi – did not always prove to be original, as evidenced by the numerous counterfeits or semi-counterfeits which can be found in museum collections (Gorzelay 2012, 213–221).

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Pl. 1. 1 – Lekythos inv. no. MNK 1251 by the Munich painter 2335;
2 – Analysed points. Photos by M. Studnicki



Pl. 2. 1 – Lekythos inv. no. MNK XI-1255; 2 – Analysed points;
3 – Lekythos inv. no. MNK XI-1256. Photos by M. Studnicki