

# **Attic pottery of the Archaic and Classical period (Spring Semester)**

**A very short introduction  
to ancient Greek pottery  
and iconography**

**Prof. Eurydice Kefalidou**

# CERAMIC = the first artificial material!

Ceramics are hard, brittle, heat-resistant, and corrosion-resistant objects made by mixing, shaping and then firing various types of clay at a high temperature.

Ceramic clay is an inorganic and nonmetallic material which is almost always mixed with other inorganic (like grinded quartz) or organic materials (like straw).

**The word ceramic comes from the Ancient Greek word κεραμικός (keramikós), meaning "of or for pottery" which derives from κέραμος (kéramos) = 'potter's clay, tile, potte**

**The earliest known mentions of the root ceramic is in Mycenaean Greek terracota tablets written in Linear B syllabic script**

- (a) ke-ra-me-we (kerameis) = workers of ceramic,
- (b) Ke-ra-me-ja (Kerameia) = a woman's name that appears only once on Knossos tablet Ap 639 ....  
but she was probably a textile worker!



Detail from a Linear B tablet Ap 639 from Knossos recording women textile workers and their children, around 1375-1350 BC. / Ashmolean Museum

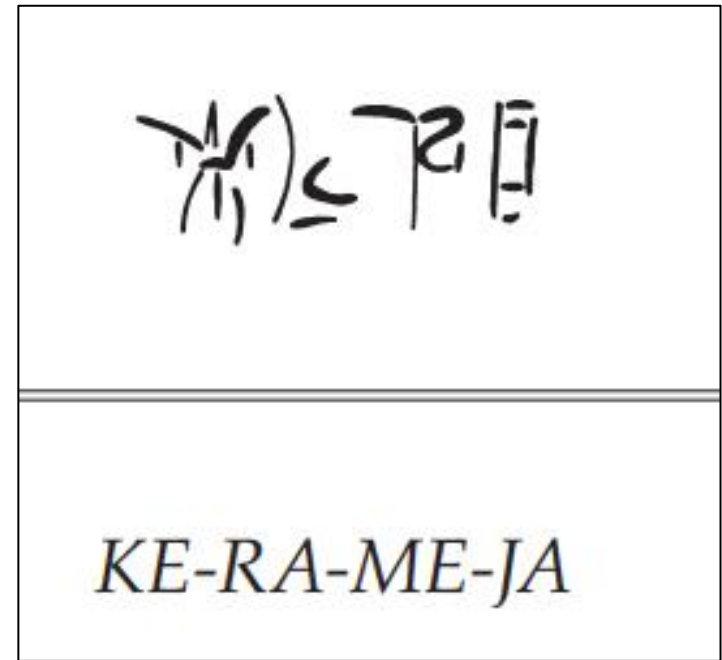
“For example, the 22 women recorded on tablet KN Ap 639 probably worked in the textile industry, though their exact tasks elude us. Some bear the name of their home towns (e.g. Phaistia, "she of Phaistos"), which suggests their servile status.

Most personal names are Minoan in origin but five are certainly Greek (e.g. Philagra and another 'Rosie').

**One is named ke-ra-me-ja -- from which comes our word for 'ceramics'; the lady is a potter or from a potter's family.**

Since it is likely that all 22 women are slaves, such Greek names might have been given them by a Greek master who couldn't pronounce their own funny Minoan names - a common phenomenon in slave cultures”.

<https://judithweingarten.blogspot.com/2014/11/the-women-of-mycenaean-pylos-and.html>



**The earliest (so far) found ceramics were figures from southern central Europe.**

**They date to the Upper Palaeolithic ca. 26.000 -25.000 years ago.**

One of the earliest ceramic figurines:  
the so-called 'Venus of Dolní Věstonice'  
discovered in the modern Czech Republic  
(29.000 -25.000 BC).

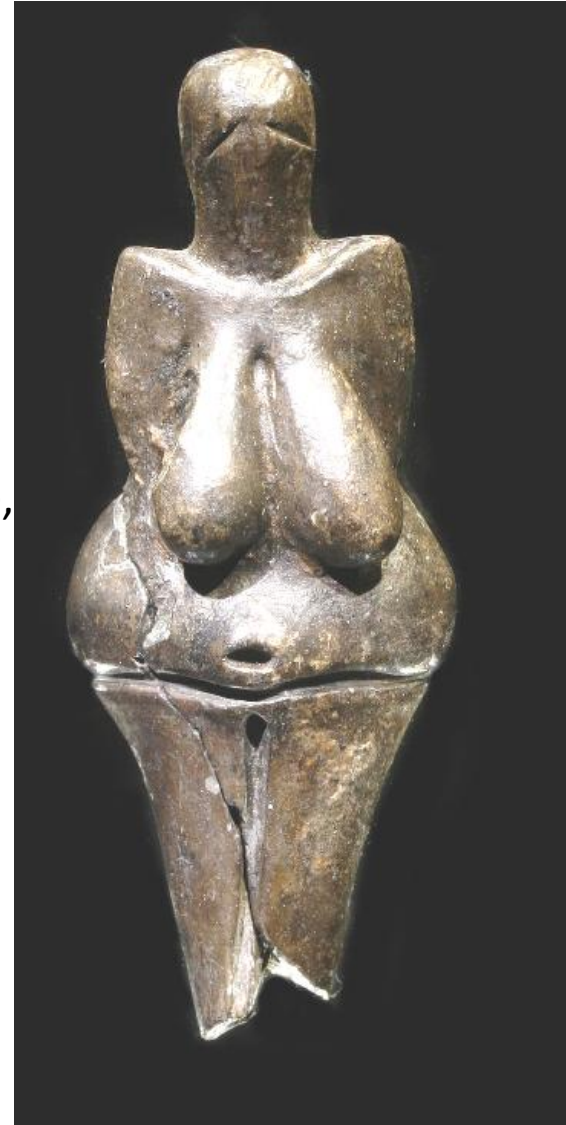
Height 11,1 cm (4.4 in) - Width of 4.3 cm(1.7 in) at its widest point

The figurine was found in the palaeolithic settlement of Dolní Věstonice, which has been under systematic archaeological research since 1924. Figurines of animals – bear, lion, mammoth, horse, fox, rhino and owl – and more than 2,000 balls of burnt clay have been also found at the same settlement.

The 'Venus' was found in 1925, in a layer of ash of a central fireplace, broken into two pieces.

**A tomograph scan in 2004 found a fingerprint of a child estimated at between 7 and 15 years of age, fired into the surface! But this artefact is unlikely to have been made by this child who handled it before firing.**

(Králík, Miroslav; Novotný, Vladimír; Oliva, Martin (2002), "Fingerprint on the Venus of Dolní Věstonice I", Anthropologie, Moravské zemské muzeum, 40/2: 107–113, ISSN 0323-1119)



The earliest known pottery was made by mixing animal products with clay and firing it at up to 800 °C (1,500 °F).

While ceramic fragments have been found to be circa 20.000-19.000 years old, it was not until about 10.000 years later that 'regular' pottery became common.

## PUSHING BACK POTTERY USE

Fragments of 20,000-year-old pottery discovered in south-east China have pushed back the use of ceramics to 10,000 years before agriculture. This shows that pottery was invented by mobile hunter-gatherers, rather than developing from the more settled lifestyles of early farmers, as was previously believed.

Found during excavations at Xianrendong Cave, the sherds are 2,000-3,000 years older than any pottery previously found, and date from the peak of the last glacial period, when climate change dramatically reduced regional food resources. Many of these sherds show evidence of burning, suggesting that they may have been used for cooking – perhaps as people tried to acquire more nutrients in the cold climate. Project leader Prof. Ofer Bar-Yosef of Harvard University told CWA: 'Could the use of pottery pre-date these finds? With systematic excavations, we hope to find out when humans made pots and, critically, what they used them for'.

LEFT & BELOW Stratigraphy at the Xianrendong Cave has shown pottery fragments found there to be the oldest ever recovered.



INMAGES Science/AAAS

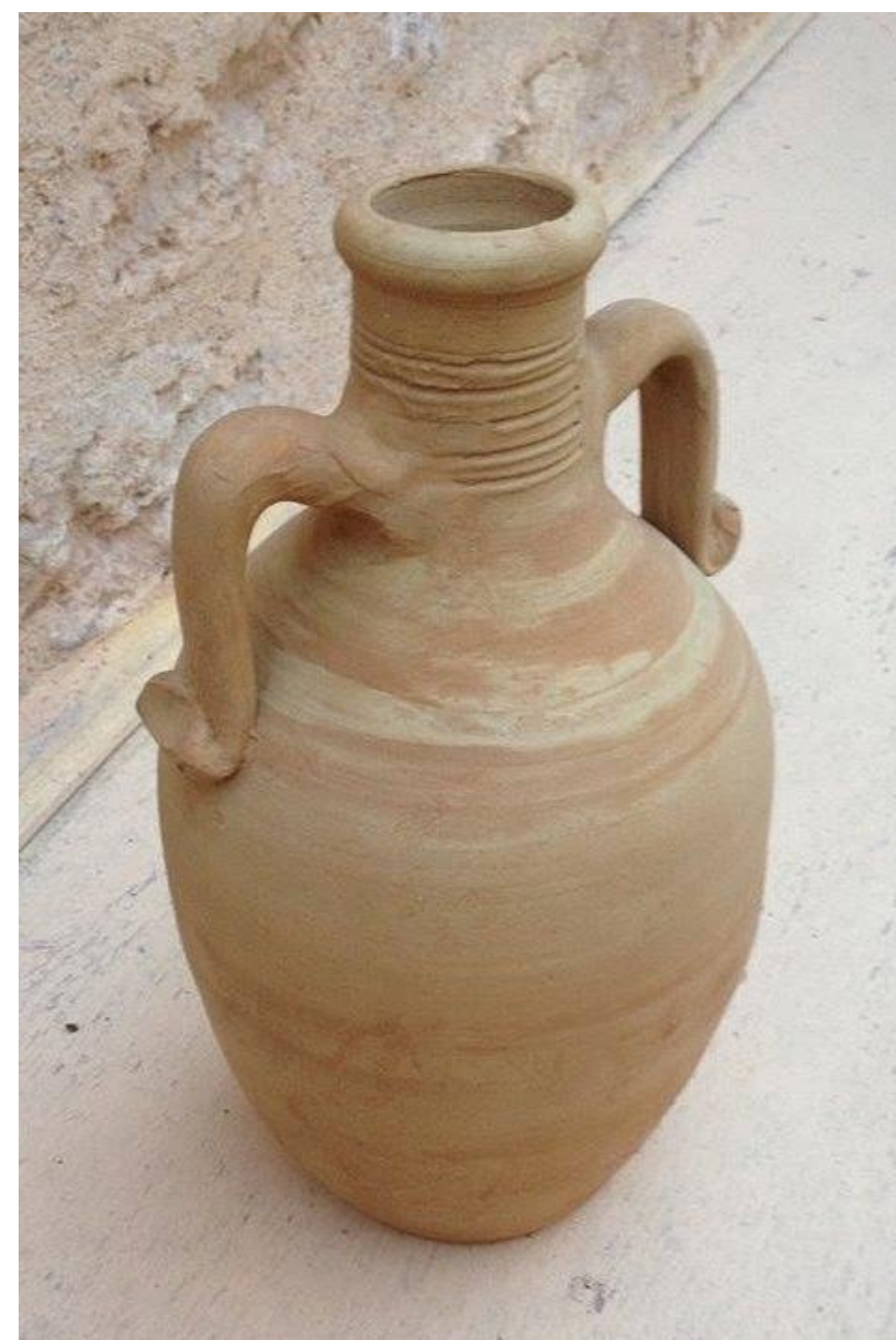
Early ceramics were porous, absorbing water easily.

When various glazing techniques were invented (such as the application of silicon, bone ash, or other materials that could melt and reform into a glassy surface, making a vessel less pervious to water)

it became easier to choose whether they wanted porous or nor porous vessels, depending on their specific use.



Various pitchers from Aegina. The clay was porous ... thus the water remain cold (but they had to put it on a window... breeze)



Some of the earliest known **pottery vessels** were discovered in Jiangxi area, China (18.000 BC).

Other early Neolithic and pre-Neolithic pottery artifacts have been found,  
in Jōmon Japan (10,500 BC)  
the Russian Far East (14,000 BC)  
Sub-Saharan Africa (9,400 BC)  
South America (9,000s–7,000s BC)  
and the Middle East (7,000s–6,000s BC).



**An early people that spread across much of Europe is named after its use of pottery: the Corded Ware culture (ca. 2.500 BC).**

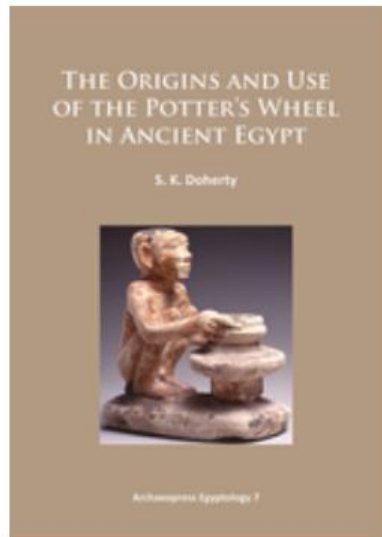
They decorated their pottery by wrapping it with rope while it was still wet.

When the ceramics were fired, the rope burned off but left a decorative pattern of complex grooves on the surface.



The invention of the potter's wheel eventually led to the production of smoother, more even pottery using the wheel-forming (throwing) technique.

“The potter's wheel is often thought to have originated in Mesopotamia in the 4th millennium B. C. and subsequently its use spread to the Levant and Egypt.”



## The Origins and Use of the Potter's Wheel in Ancient Egypt

S. K. Doherty

Series: Archaeopress Egyptology

Copyright Date: 2015

Published by: Archaeopress

<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvr43ks9>

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvr43ks9>





Mixing three types of soil  
(at different percentages each time)  
for the creation of ceramic clay





**Εμπειρικός υπολογισμός: όγκος πηλού = μέγεθος αγγείου**



Handmade

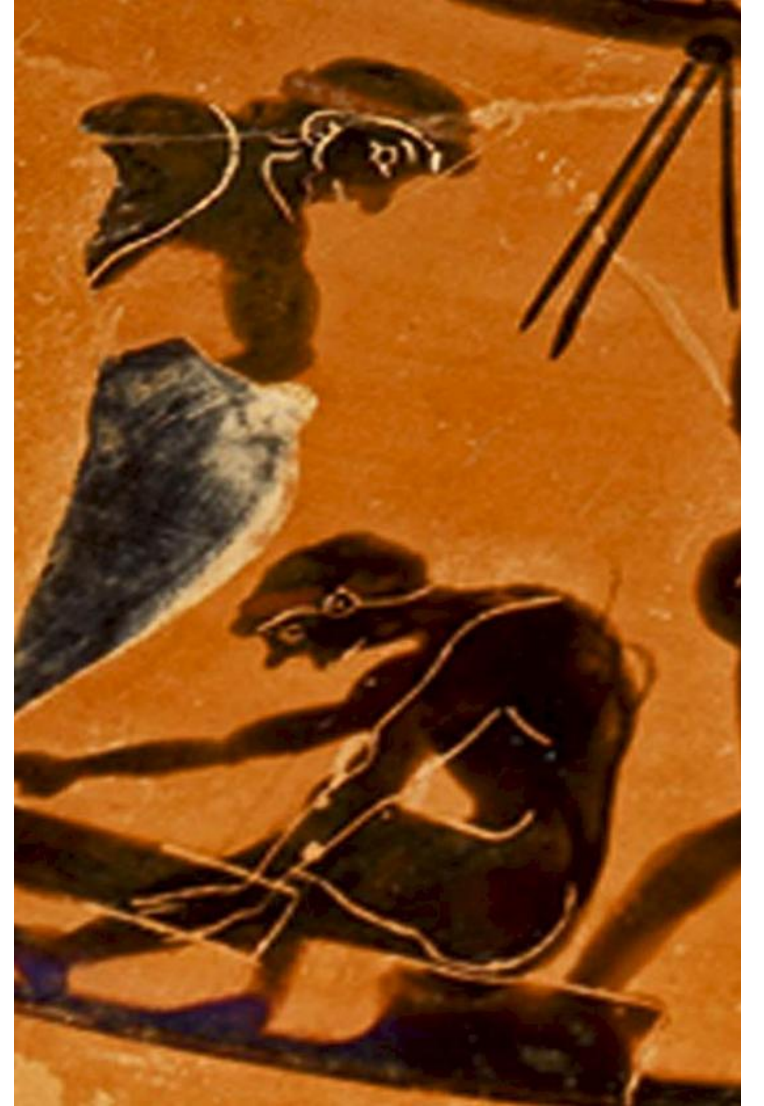


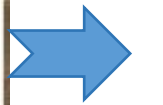
Wheel-made



*Fig. 3. Caltagirone 961, Athenian red-figure calyx-krater with a potter shaping a vessel under the eye of Athena. Photo: after Lollini.*









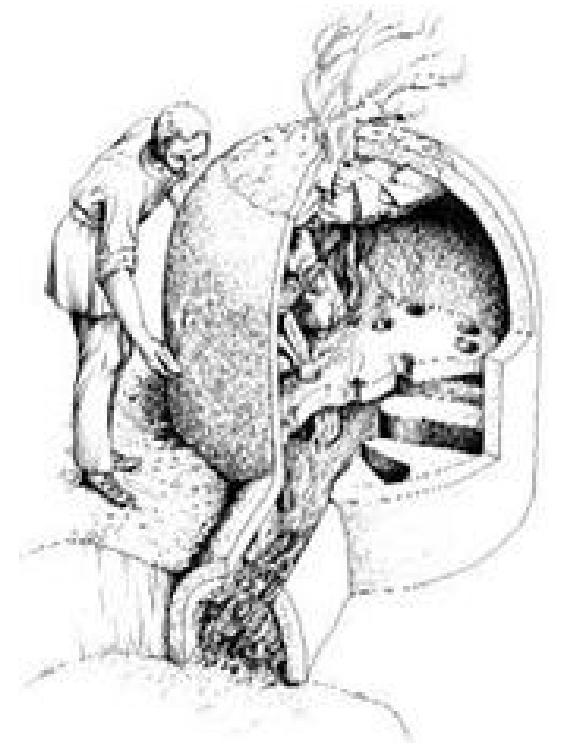
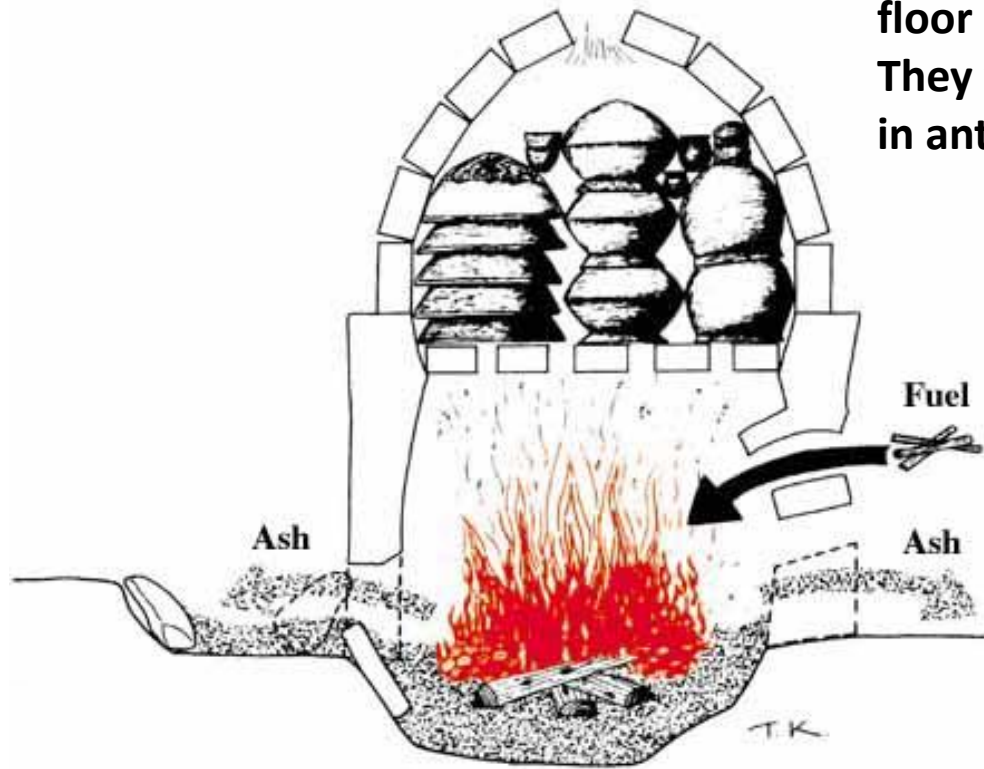
# Experiment



Ancient  
pottery  
kiln



**Updraft kilns: heat enters at the floor and exits at the ceiling.  
They were the most common type  
in antiquity.**





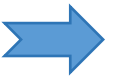


Experimental  
archaeology





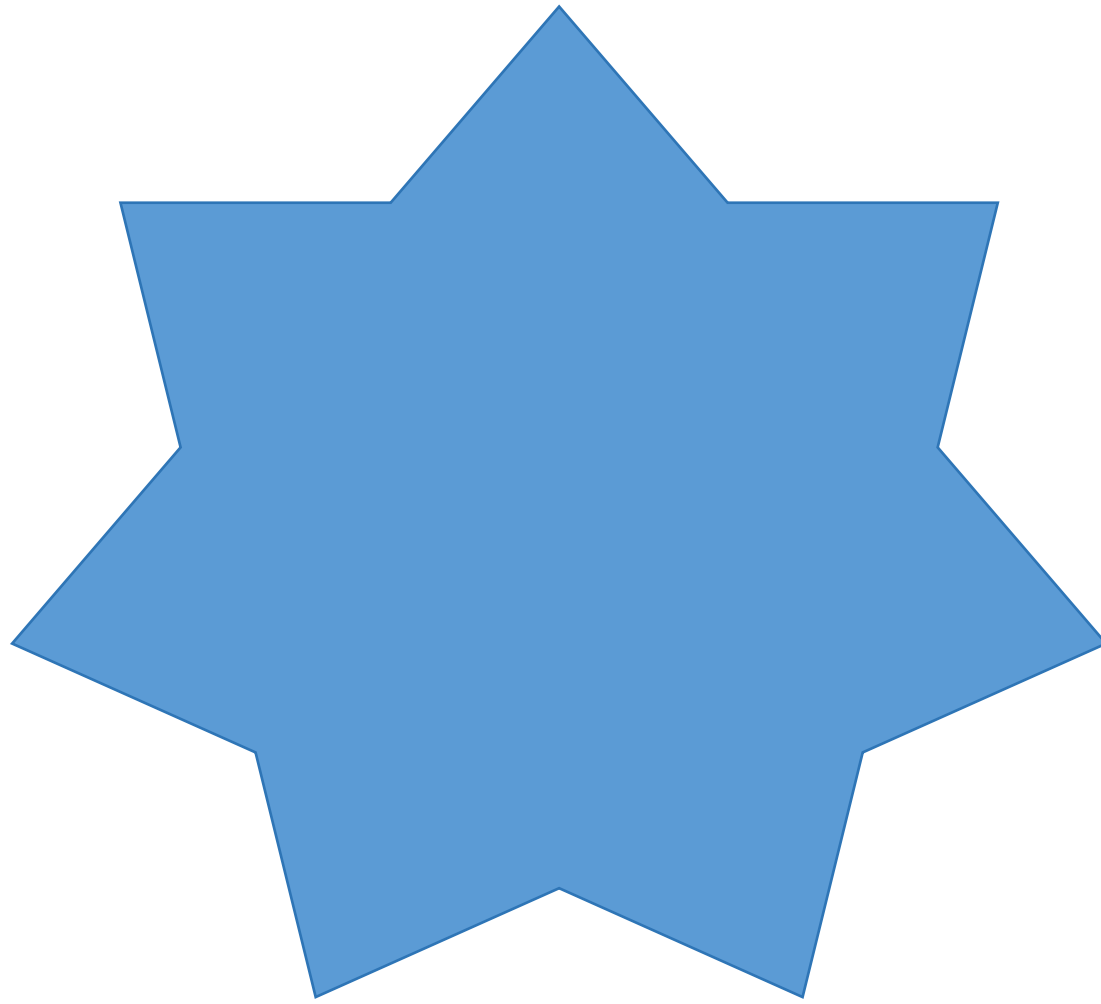
Experimental archaeology





**Jugs made from the same clay  
but fired in an electric oven (left) and the wood-fired oven (right)**







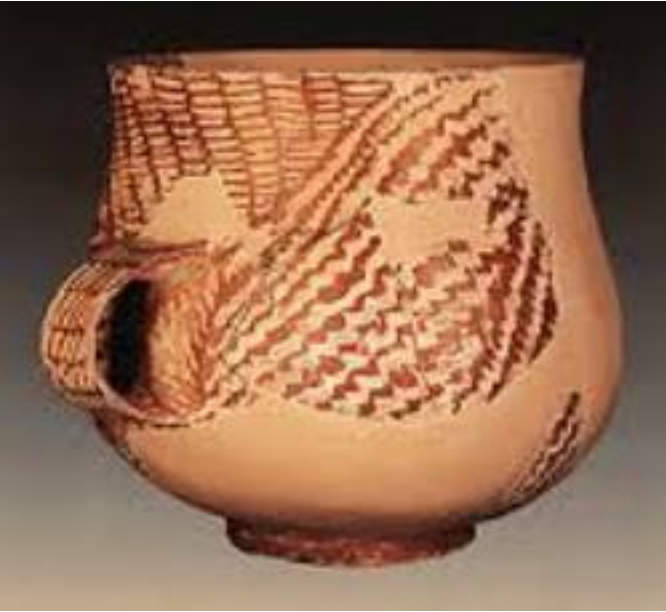
The pots don't need decoration...  
and most of them don't have any...

Plain – Black glazed – Red glazed



## REAR PHENOMENON IN THE WORLD'S ART HISTORY

Since the end of the Geometric period until the end of the Classical period in many parts of the Greek world pots were painted **not only with decorative motifs.....**



Sesclo, c. 5300 B.C.

Milos, c.1600 B.C.

Phaistos, 1450 B.C

Derveni, middle of the 4<sup>th</sup>  
century B.C.

... but with complex narrative paintings



This means that a great part of ceramics has a pictorial narrative character ... already (but occasionally) since the Mycenaean period...

Pyxis, from Aptera (Hania region, Crete) 1300-1200 B.C



## The “Warrior vase” (or ‘Warriors krater’), from Mycenae, 1200-1100 B.C.



The Mycenaean Warrior Vase, found by Heinrich Schliemann on the acropolis of Mycenae, is one of the prominent treasures of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens.[1] The Warrior Vase, dated to the 12th century BCE, is probably the best-known piece of Late Helladic pottery.[2] It is a krater, a mixing bowl used for the dilution of wine with water, a custom which the ancient Greeks believed to be a sign of civilized behavior.

The broad frieze of armed soldiers on the vase, which is incomplete, suggested the name that Schliemann gave it. The warriors are clad in short chitons, breastplates, helmets and greaves; they are armed with spears and carry shields. The bull's head handles for long encouraged scholars to date the piece later, in the early seventh century BCE.

Many scholars observe that the style of the figures and the bull head handles of this thirteenth century BCE vase are very similar to eighth century BCE pottery. Similar spearmen are also depicted in eighth century BCE pottery, which introduces a curious 500-year gap in styles.[1] This vase also leads to clues about post-palatial Mycenaean warriors. The knapsacks the warriors carry suggest that they may have to travel long distances to battle.

Figures on one side of the vase wear helmets with horns. The other side depicts warriors in "hedgehog" style helmets. The latter is equipped with spears that are shorter than general spears depicted of the time. The warriors on both sides have shields, tunics, and leg protection.[3] The warriors on either side appear to be uniform suggesting the army as a whole and not representing individual warriors.[4]

## The pictorial narrative paintings

- \* Disappear in the **Protogeometric period**....
- \* Reappear in the end of Middle and Late **Geometric period**...
- \* And continue in abundance during the **Archaic and Classical period**

### IN ALL CASES:

They give us a lot of information on everyday life, mythology, religion, sports, ideology, society .... even on the political and economical conditions of the time in which these paintings were created

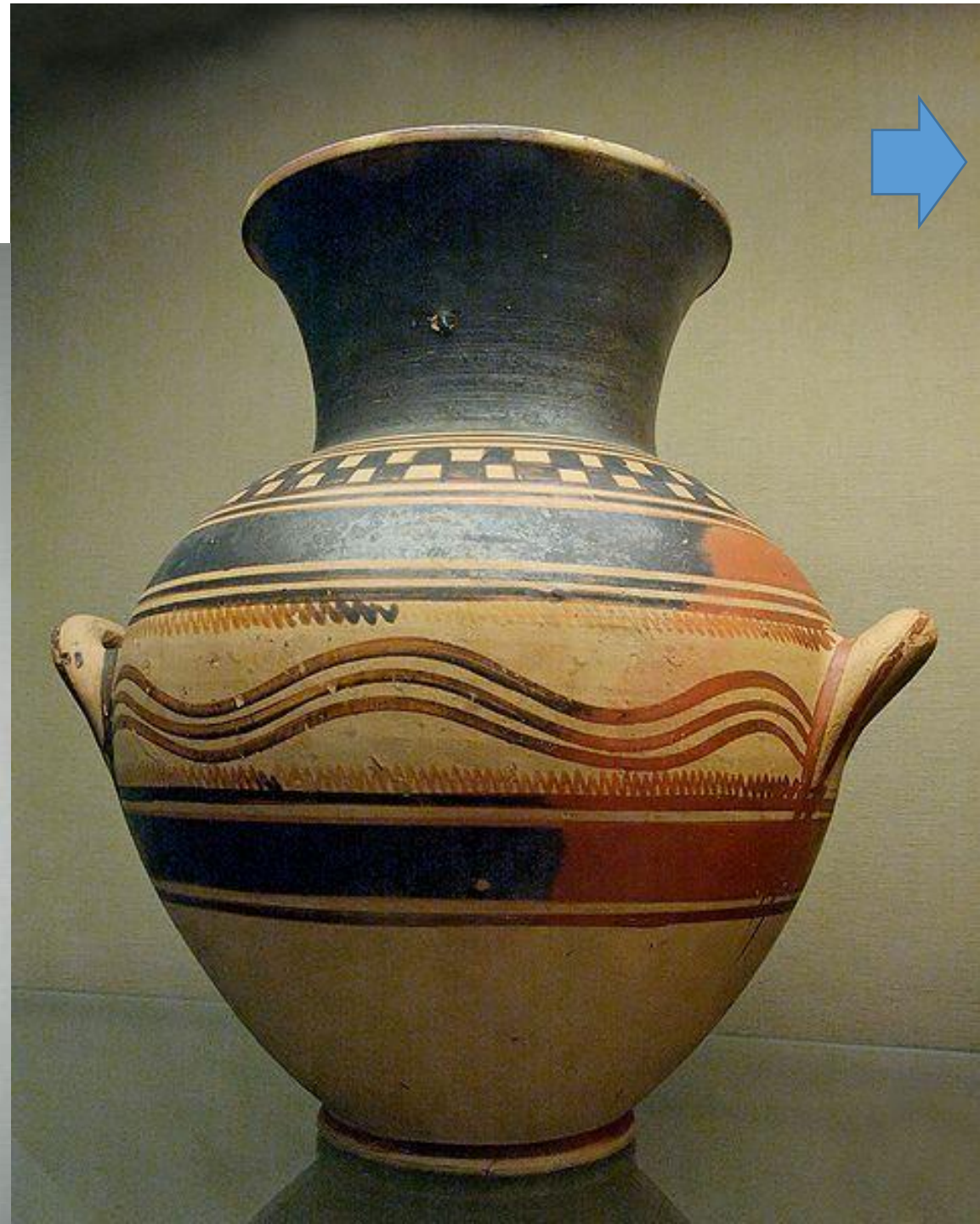


## PROTOGEOMETRIC (PG, 1050-900 BC)

- Progressive declining of mycenaean decorative motifs drawn with a free hand



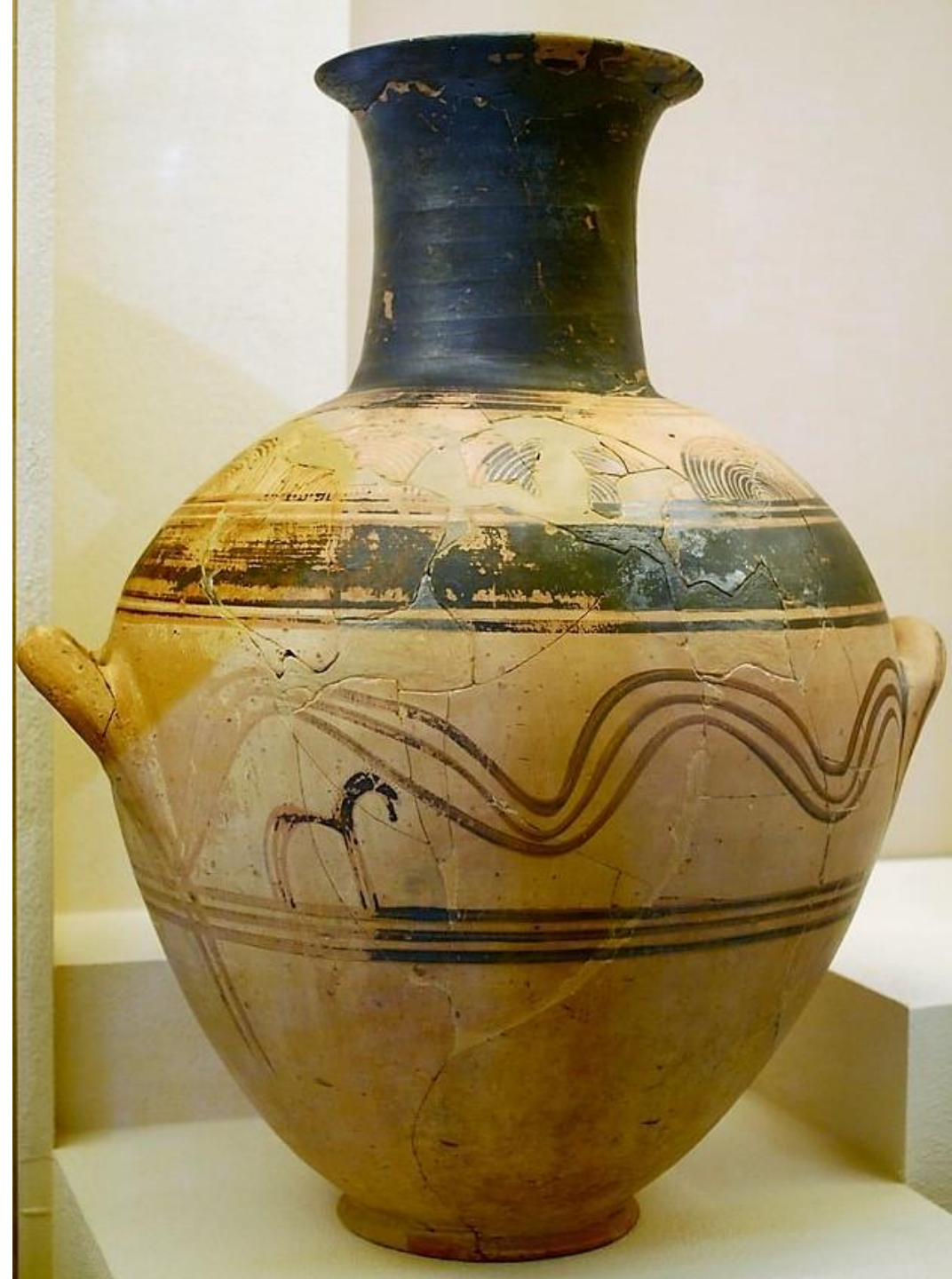
- Preferable motifs:  
Concentric circles and semi-circles, checker-boards, various lines, cross-hatched triangles, key (single meander)



## PROTOGEOMETRIC(1050-900 B.C)

**Human/animal/floral figures are rare and when they appear, they are self-existent, which means that they are not part of the whole decoration**

**Amphora from Kerameikos  
c. 970 BC**



## In the Middle Geometric Period (MG)

Human and animal figures gradually increase

**Attica MG II (770-760 BC)**

Krater with 'prothesis' scene and ship

New York, MMA





Attica MG II (770-760 BC)



In Late Geometric Period ( LG 760-700 B.C.) the tendency for narrative scenes continues



Dipylon Painter  
760-735 B.C..  
Amphora, Athens, NAM



Height: 1,55 m.



End of MG και beginning of LG = funerary scenes appear  
(shortly before 750 B.C.)

Dipylon Painter  
Amphora, Athens, NAM

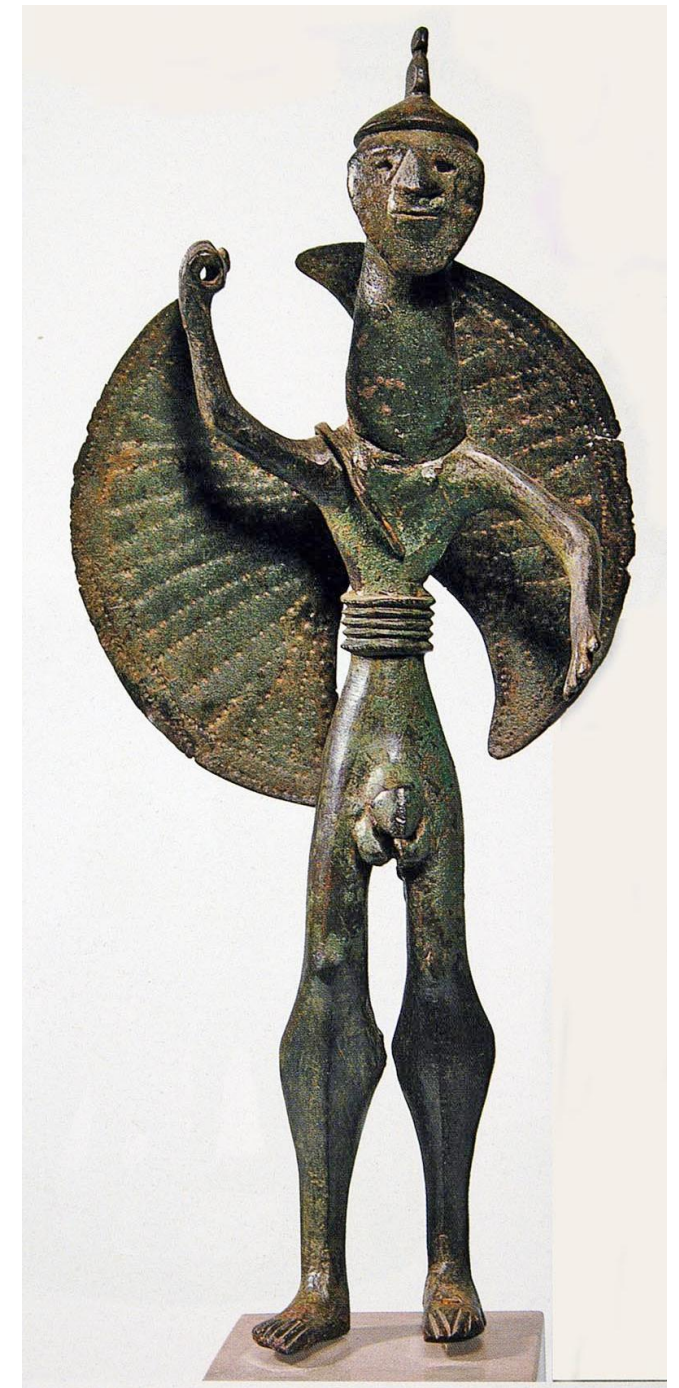


**A short introduction  
to ancient Greek pottery  
and pottery iconography**

**(C)**

# An important question since that time: Do we see mythological or daily life themes?

ANOTHER clue for mythological scenes:  
The depiction of the  
'Eight- shaped'  
mycenaean shields  
which were out of use  
in the 8th century  
(replaced by the  
round hoplite shields)





Geometric painted vases (details).  
Circa 750-700 BC.  
The 8-shaped shields suggest that  
mythological subjects are depicted.

**HOWEVER,**  
their absence does not confirm the opposite!  
We just cannot be sure ...



# Human/animal hybrid figures: Certainly mythological topics

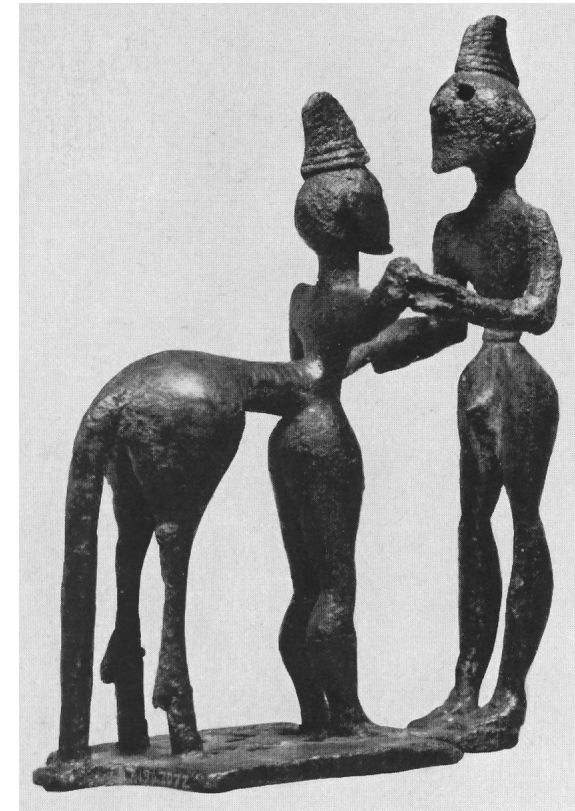


Stamp with archer and Centaur  
(Hercules and Nessos ?)

3/6/2026



Clay LG II  
figurine

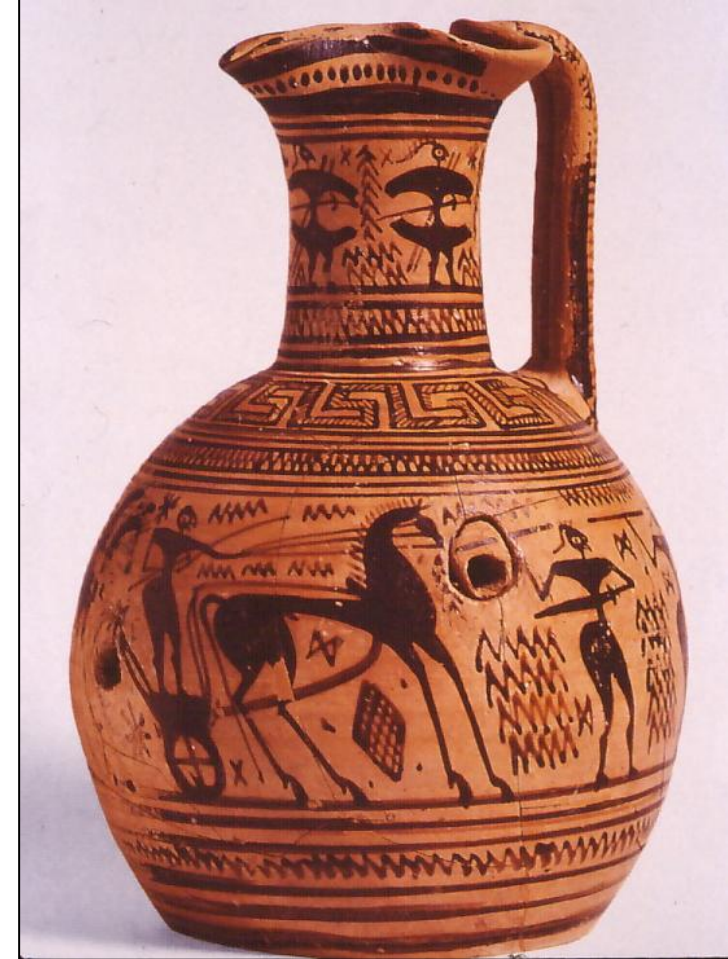


Bronze LG II  
figurine

**Siamese twin warriors (+ eight-shaped shields) :  
Mythological narration**

Drawing of the painting with  
Siamese twin warriors:  
Maybe the epic/ homeric  
Actoriones – Moliones

LG IIb Attic oinohoe  
(c. 730 B.C.)  
(Athenian Agora)



## EVERY-DAY LIFE ???

LG IIb Attic skyphos

(last quarter of 8<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.)

Circular dance:

Possibly an every-day life scene

(always as part of some cult... feast)





**Hunting of a fox and other  
animals...**

**Real life or mythology?**

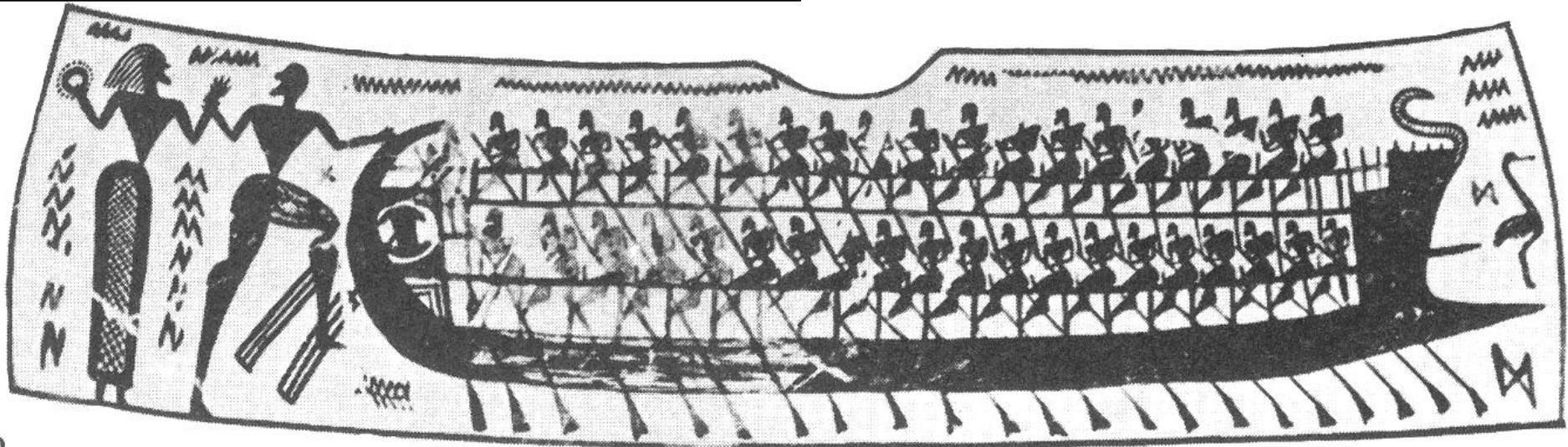
**LG Ila jug**

**(c. 735-720 B.C.)**



**LG Attic krater from Thebes  
with a couple departing with a ship**

- 1) Theseus and Ariadne ?**
- 2) Paris and Helen ?**
- 3) None of the above ?**



## **Why do we care so much for the mythological themes?**

**Because the ancient Greeks also cared a lot ...**

**Ancient Greek myths, narrating the deeds of Gods and heroes as well as their relationships with mortals, are a combination of folk stories, legends based on historical facts, and interpretive-explanatory traditions, combined -of course- with large doses of imagination. These myths spread in ancient societies and helped people to respond to their everyday life and to the accomplishments of their ancestors**

**The Greeks of the Historical Era valued their heroic past, i.e. -more or less- the era which is now called 'Bronze Age'**

**Mythical heroes were regarded as their ancestors**



Nuraghe, Sardinia



They said that Iolaos, Herakles friend, build them!



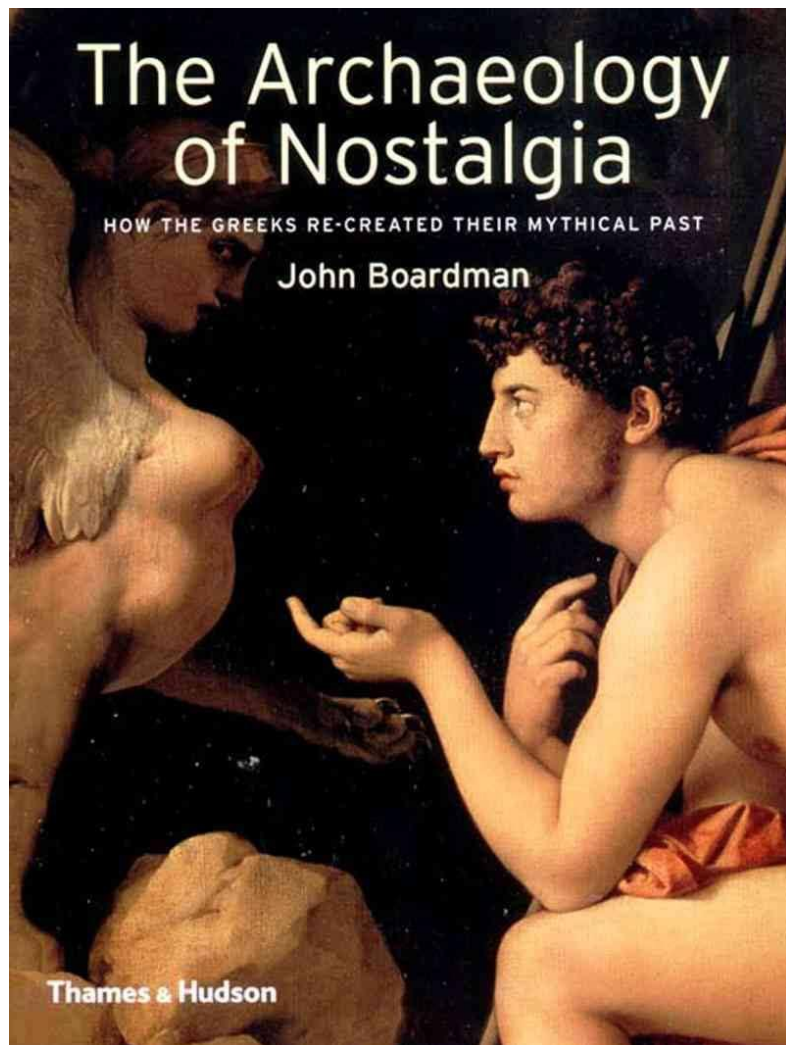
The **nuraghe** is the main type of ancient megalithic edifice found in **Sardinia**, developed during the Nuragic Age between 1900 and 730 BC

Dislocazione  
dei nuraghi

Dislocation  
of the Nuraghi

Verteilung  
der Nuragen



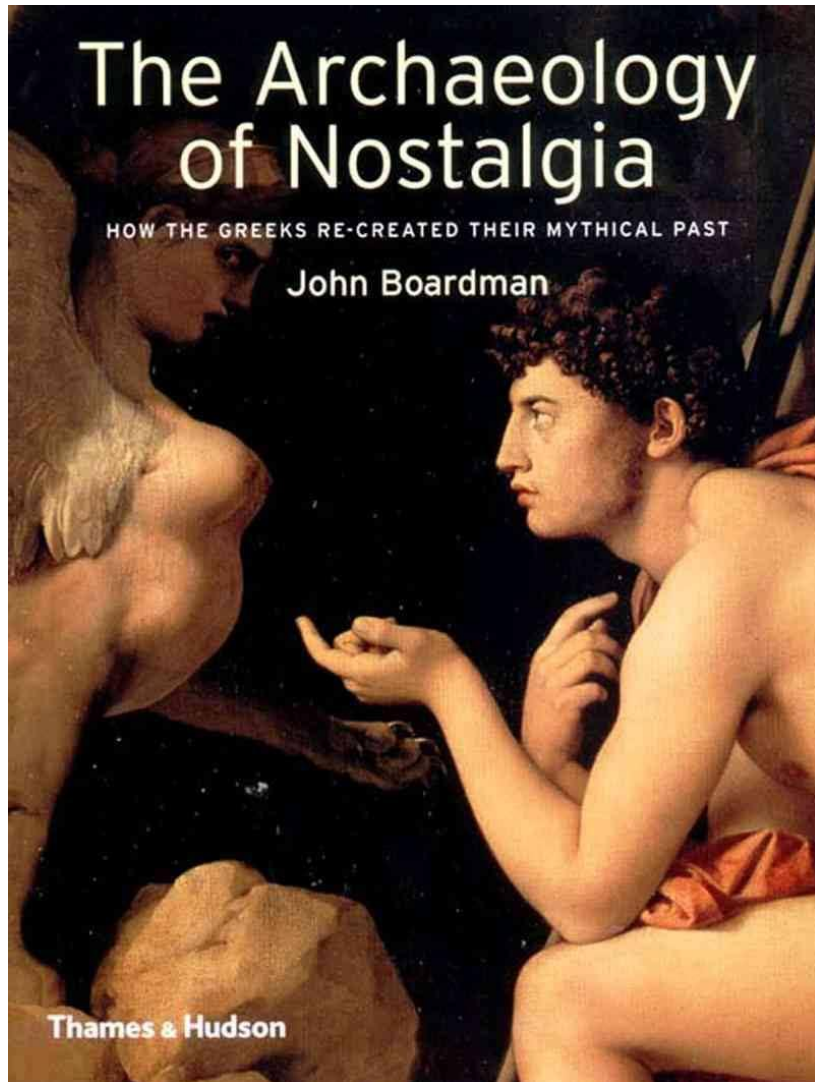


## *The Archaeology of Nostalgia* *HOW THE Greeks re- created their mythical past*

John Boardman researches how the ancient Greeks re- created their own past – in fact how they invented it- through objects and pictures that either survived until now either they referred in texts or even that we can assume their existence. He also collects references in ancient writers, that themselves give us a very interesting reading, and of course they are very useful for the researchers” work.

The **Archaeology of Nostalgia** throws light on the production of the myths and talks about the imagination of a nation who created the first modern civilization through the relics of its past.

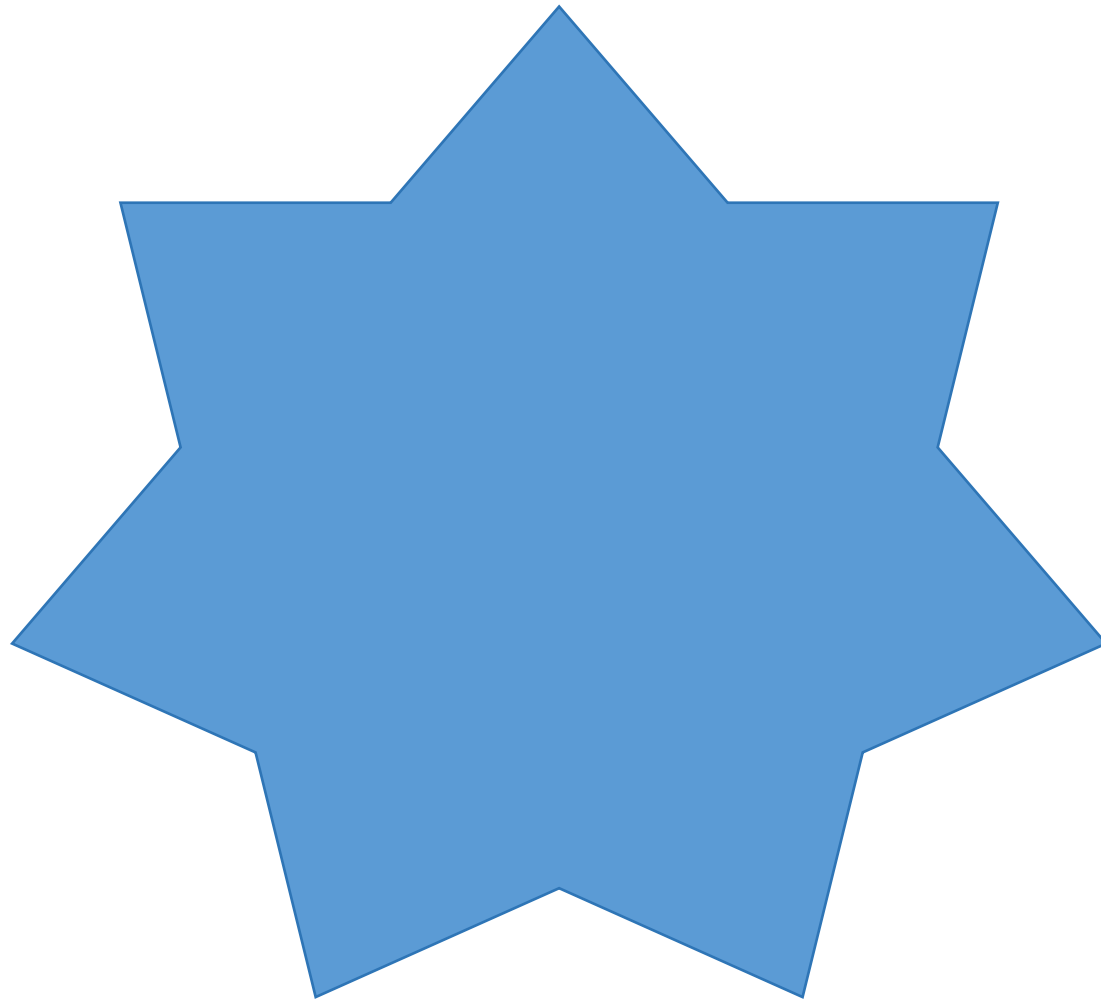




It offers insights into the making of myth and the exceptional imagination of a people building the first modern civilization out of the relics of the past.

The ancient Greeks drew upon their physical environment not just to illustrate the past but also in many ways to invent: massive fossil bones were the remains of giants; strange rocks were petrified heroines; Bronze Age walls and tombs were the work of titans; and artefacts from the past became Achilles' spear, Helen's necklace and Hercules' cup.

The Greeks could point to where Poseidon struck the Acropolis with his trident, to Athena's olive tree, to Odysseus' cave in Ithaca. They worked out what Oedipus' Sphinx looked like, and found Memnon crying to his mother Dawn in an Egyptian statue. **It all enhanced their sense of Greekness and history, and it attracted the Roman tourist too: Julius Caesar was warned to tread carefully in the long grass at Troy lest he step on Hector's ghost.**



**NAMES  
AND  
IMAGES  
OF  
DIVINE (?)  
FIGURES ...**

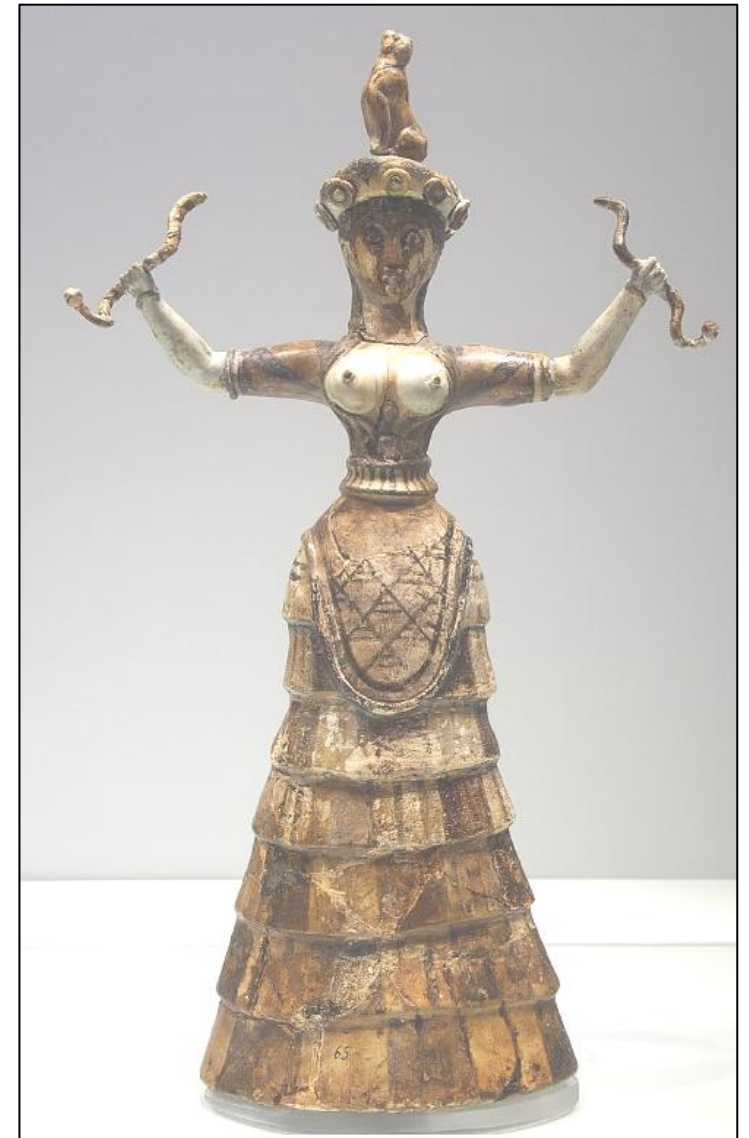
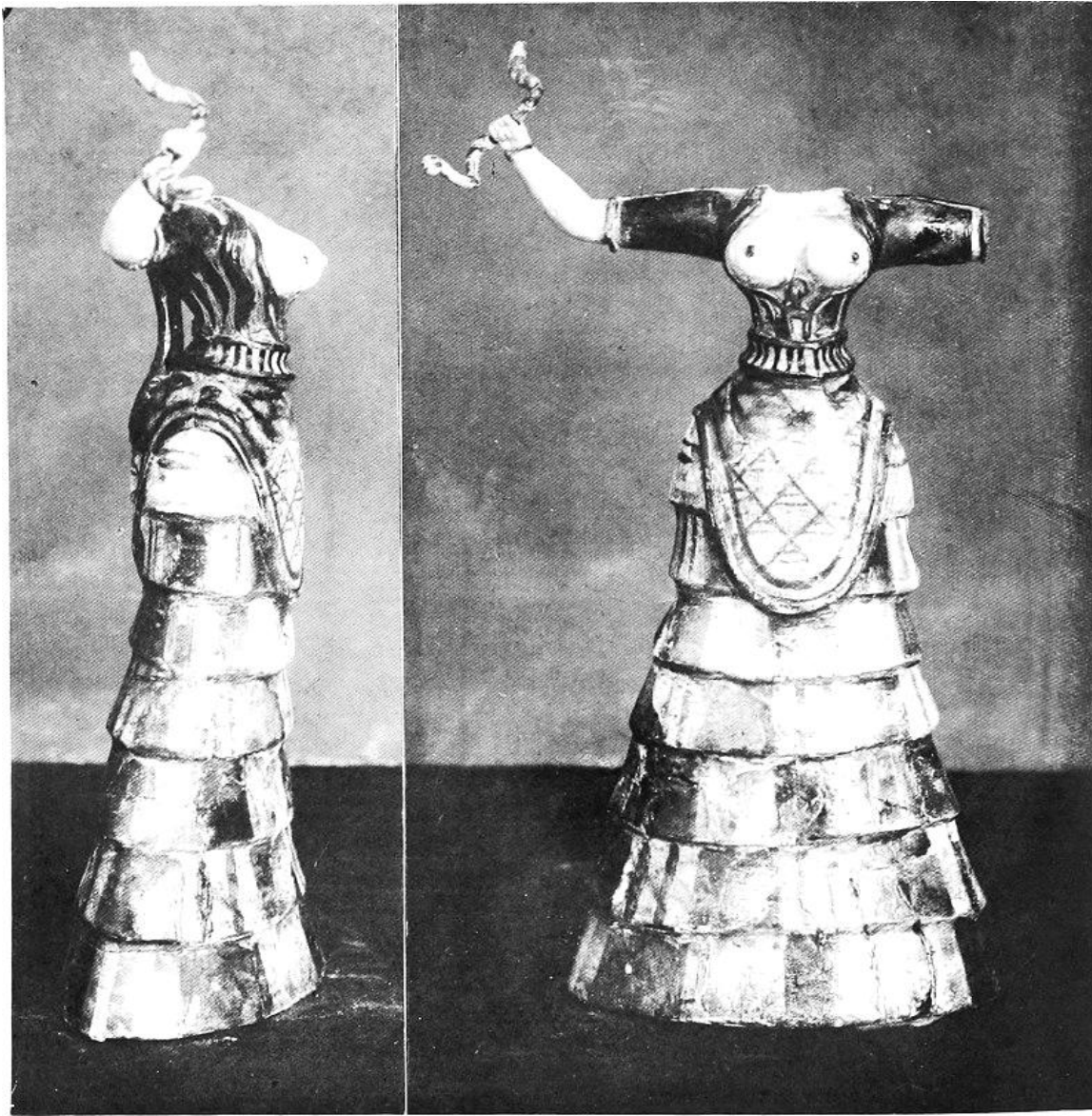
**but we  
cannot (yet)  
be sure  
how to put  
a name  
under  
a figure**



The original part of the larger Knossos figure;  
the skirt is reconstructed

Two Minoan snake goddess figurines  
were excavated in 1903 in the Minoan palace  
at Knossos in the Greek island of Crete.  
Ca 1600 BC





The smaller figure before and after "restoration"



William R. & Clarice V. Spurlock Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Plaster cast: 15.3 cm. long x 4 cm. wide)

𐀀𐀁𐀂 𐀃𐀄 𐀅𐀆 (1) 𐀇𐀈 𐀉𐀊 𐀋𐀌 𐀍𐀎 𐀏𐀐 𐀑𐀒 𐀓𐀔 𐀕𐀖 𐀗𐀘 𐀙𐀚 𐀛𐀜 rapato meno \*47kutode Ideo (erawo) V1 pipituna V1  
 𐀝𐀞 𐀟𐀠 𐀡𐀢 (3) 𐀣𐀤 𐀥𐀦 𐀧𐀨 𐀩𐀪 𐀫𐀬 𐀭𐀮 𐀯𐀰 𐀱𐀲 𐀳𐀴 𐀵𐀶 𐀷𐀸 𐀹𐀺 aurimode Ideo (erawo) V4 pasi teoi V1  
 𐀻𐀼 𐀽𐀾 𐀿𐁀 (4) 𐁁𐁂 𐁃𐁄 𐁅𐁆 𐁇𐁈 𐁉𐁊 𐁋𐁌 𐁍𐁎 anemoiyereya Ideo (erawa) utano anemoiyereya V3 [5]

Translation:

L1 In the month of Lapatos, to \*47kutos? 1 litre \* ? of olive oil, to (the goddess) Pipituna 1 litre of olive oil  
 L2 To Aurimos, 4 litres of olive oil, to all the gods 5 litres (of olive oil?), to the (female) augur 5 litres  
 L3 to the Priestess of the winds 1 unit \* ? of olive oil, Utano to the Priestess of the Winds, 3 (litres of olive oil)

NOTES:

[1] The syllabogram \*47 has not yet been reliably deciphered.

[2] Relying on the estimates of Andras Zeke of the *Minoan Language Blog*.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] This is strange, since the text merely gives the no. 1, with no unit(s). It may refer to an *olive tree* 𐀀𐀁𐀂

[5] It is perfectly normal for Linear B scribes to *omit the obvious*, i.e. in this case the reference to 3 litres of olive oil, to save precious space on the tablets. On this tablet, the scribe was forced to do this, squashing the last *anemoiyereya*, since he ran out of space!



𐀀𐀃𐀆𐀇𐀉

di-wo-nu-so

ΔιFόνυσοίο

(ΔιFόνυσος > Διόνυσος)

Divonysoio (Divonysos > Dionysos)

Dionysus

𐀆𐀃𐀆𐀇𐀉𐀊

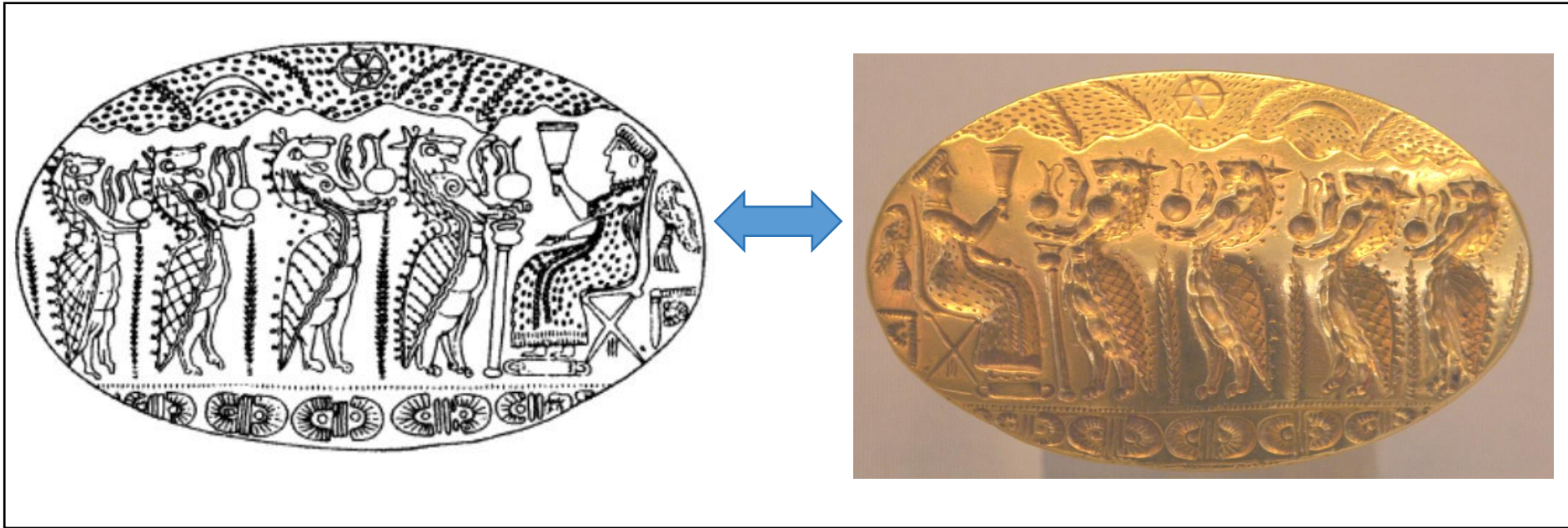
di-wo-ni-so-jo

- Poseidon - chief deity (Linear B: 𐀓𐀖𐀗𐀘, *po-se-da-o*)
- Dionysus (Linear B: 𐀀𐀃𐀆𐀇𐀉, *di-wo-nu-so*)
- Ares (Linear B: 𐀀𐀓, *a-re*)
- Hera (Linear B: 𐀀𐀇, *e-ra*)



Two Mycenaean deities and a child.  
Ivory figurine (Height 7, 5 cm)  
About 1500 BC

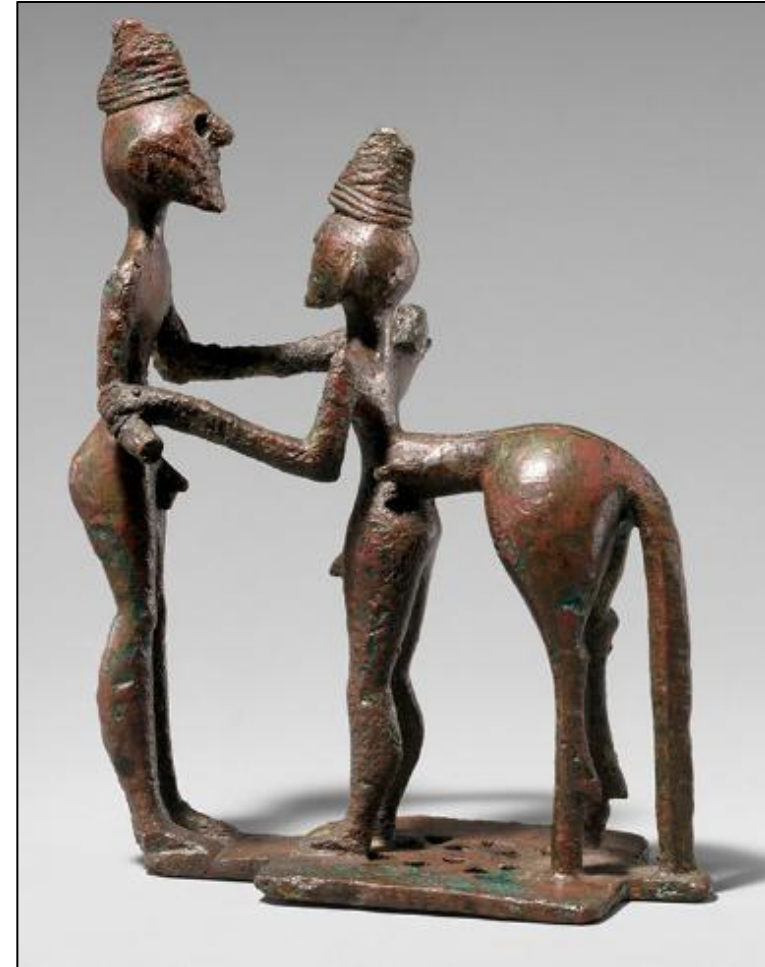
A goddess, sitting on a throne and raising a libation cup,  
receives the procession of lion-headed,  
daemoniac libation-bearers.  
Engraved gold signet ring from Tiryns, 15th century BC.  
It is the largest ring (7.5 × 3.5 cm)  
from the Mycenaean civilization.



**Geometric Period = About 900 - 700 BC**

**Human/animal hybrid figures: Certainly mythological topics**

Terracotta figurine  
of a centaur  
From the cemetery at  
Lefkandi, Euboea  
Circa 900 BC



Bronze statuette of a man and a centaur.  
8th century BC - Bought on the art market  
and thus lacking a confirmed archaeological context  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.  
Public Domain image



## Idean cave, Crete

An oracle said that the son of Cronos and Rhea would take the power from his father. Thus, every time Rhea bore a child, Cronos devoured it! When Zeus was born, Rhea decided to save him; she wrapped a stone in a cloth and gave it to Cronos, who swallowed it thinking that it was the baby.

Then, she hid the baby in the Idaean cave where the native warriors Kouretes guarded the entrance. Also, they masked the noise of the crying baby by banging loudly their legendary shields with their swords, thus Cronus could not hear.





Metal (Bronze)  
Intact  
Diameter: 45 cm.



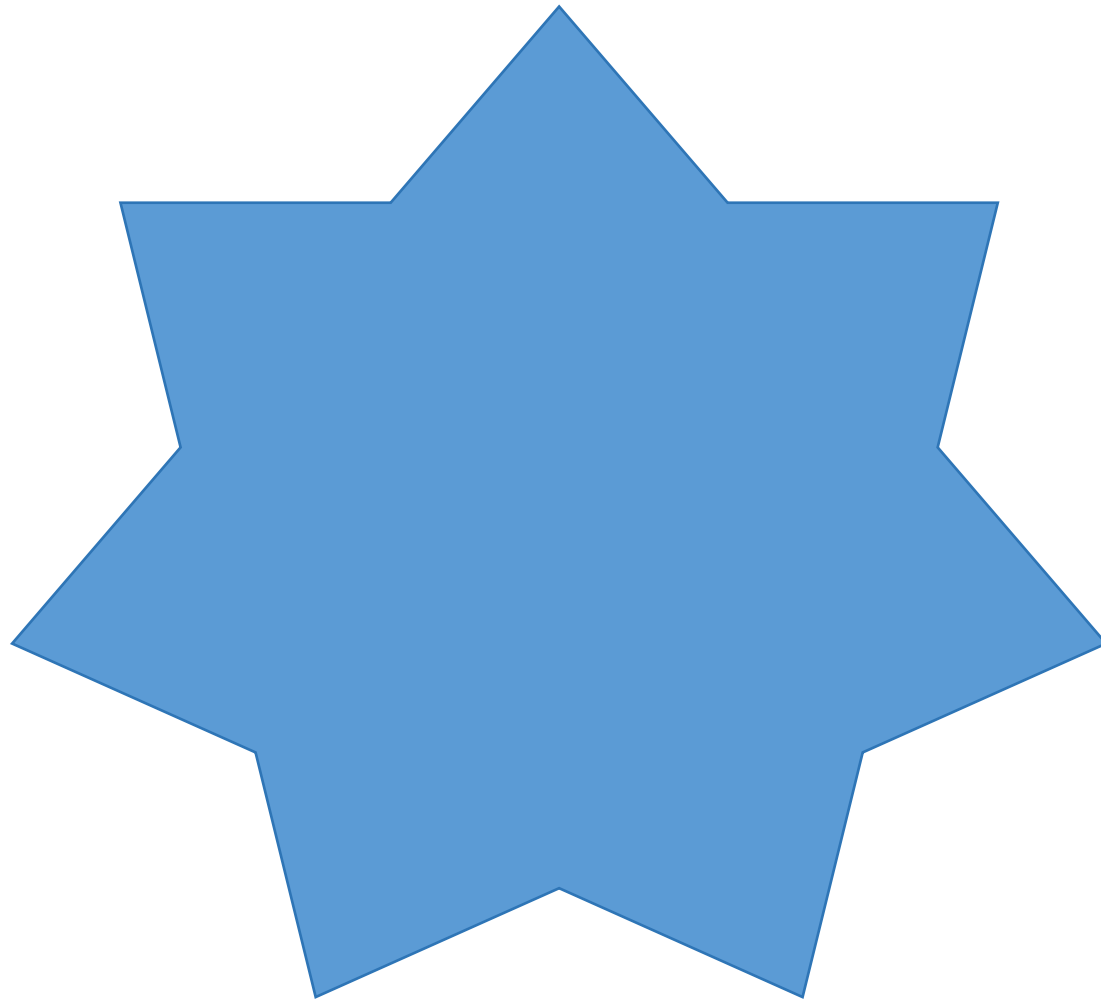
Syrian neo-Hittite relief (9th century BC)



Geometric painted vases (details).  
Circa 750-700 BC.  
The 8-shaped shields suggest that  
mythological subjects are depicted.

**HOWEVER,**  
their absence does not confirm the opposite!  
We just cannot be sure ...





**From the late 7th c. BC onwards:  
(almost) no problem in recognizing  
mythological topics**

**EXAMPLE. Three statuettes from Dreros,  
eastern Crete.  
Found near the temple of Apollo Delphinios.  
circa 700-650 BC**

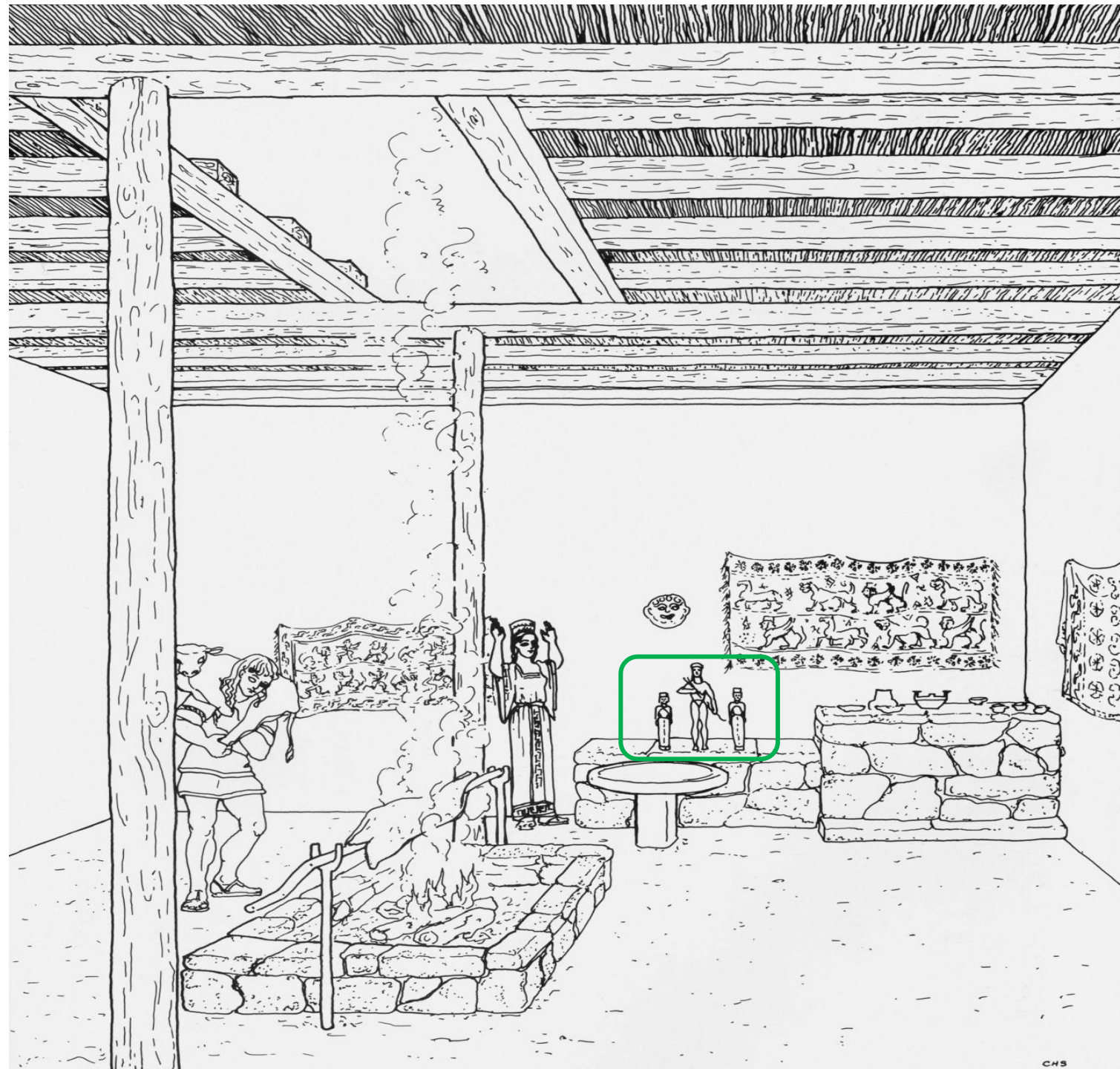
Especially important for their technique  
as they are the earliest in Greece  
made by hammering: they had a wooden core,  
onto which very small metal plaques were nailed.  
The eyes were inlaid.

The central figure, a man wearing a loin-cloth, is identified as Apollo  
(height 80 cm).

The two smaller female figures (height 40 cm),  
who wear tall cylindrical hats (*polos*),  
long ornate dresses and mantles on their shoulders,  
**must be Apollo's mother, Leto, and sister, Artemis.**



A reconstruction  
of the temple's  
interior  
(their placement  
is not certain)



## EXAMPLE: Thermon in Aetolia, western Greece

Ancient sanctuary with a temple of Apollo Thermios, built circa 630 - 610 BC.

A few terracotta painted plaques which survived from the temple's decoration depict scenes from mythology.

Here: \* Perseus running away with Medusa's head in his bag (reconstruction drawing)

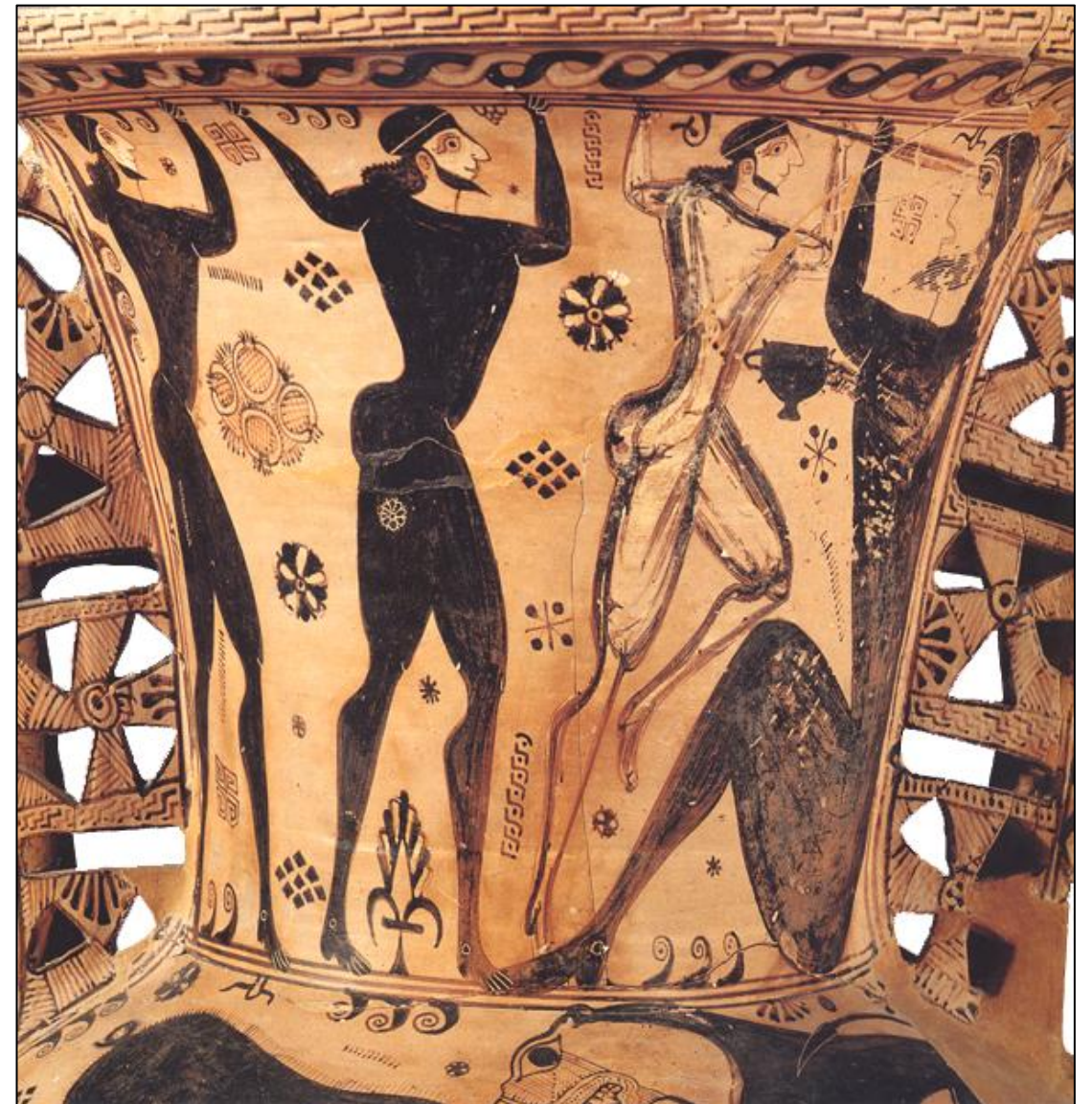
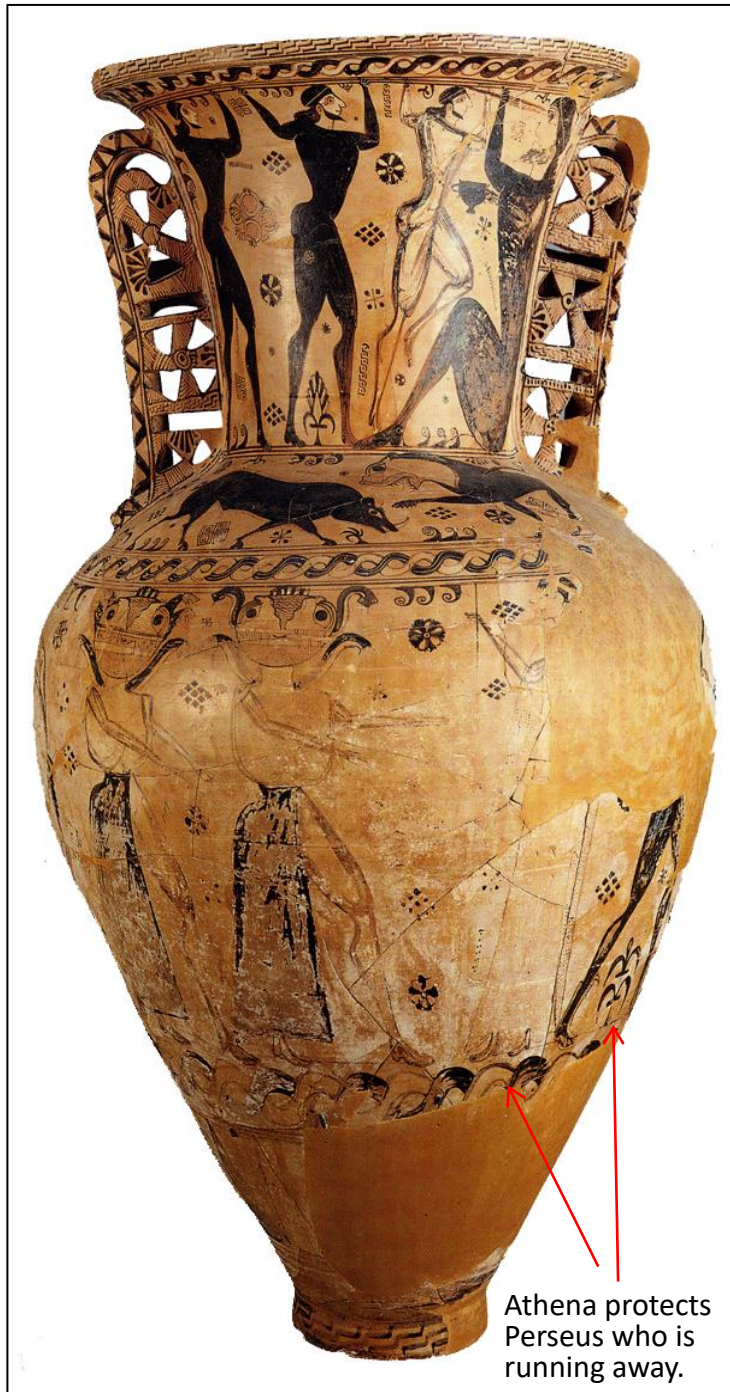
\* Gorgo's head (photo of the original) = *Gorgoneion*



Perseus was the son of Zeus and Danae, the daughter of Acrisius of Argos. King Polydectes of Seriphus, who desired Danae, tricked Perseus into promising to obtain the head of Medusa, the only mortal among the three Gorgons sisters, whose gaze turned all who looked at her to stone. Aided by Hermes and Athena, Perseus decapitated Medusa and brought her head to Polydectes, who immediately turned into stone.

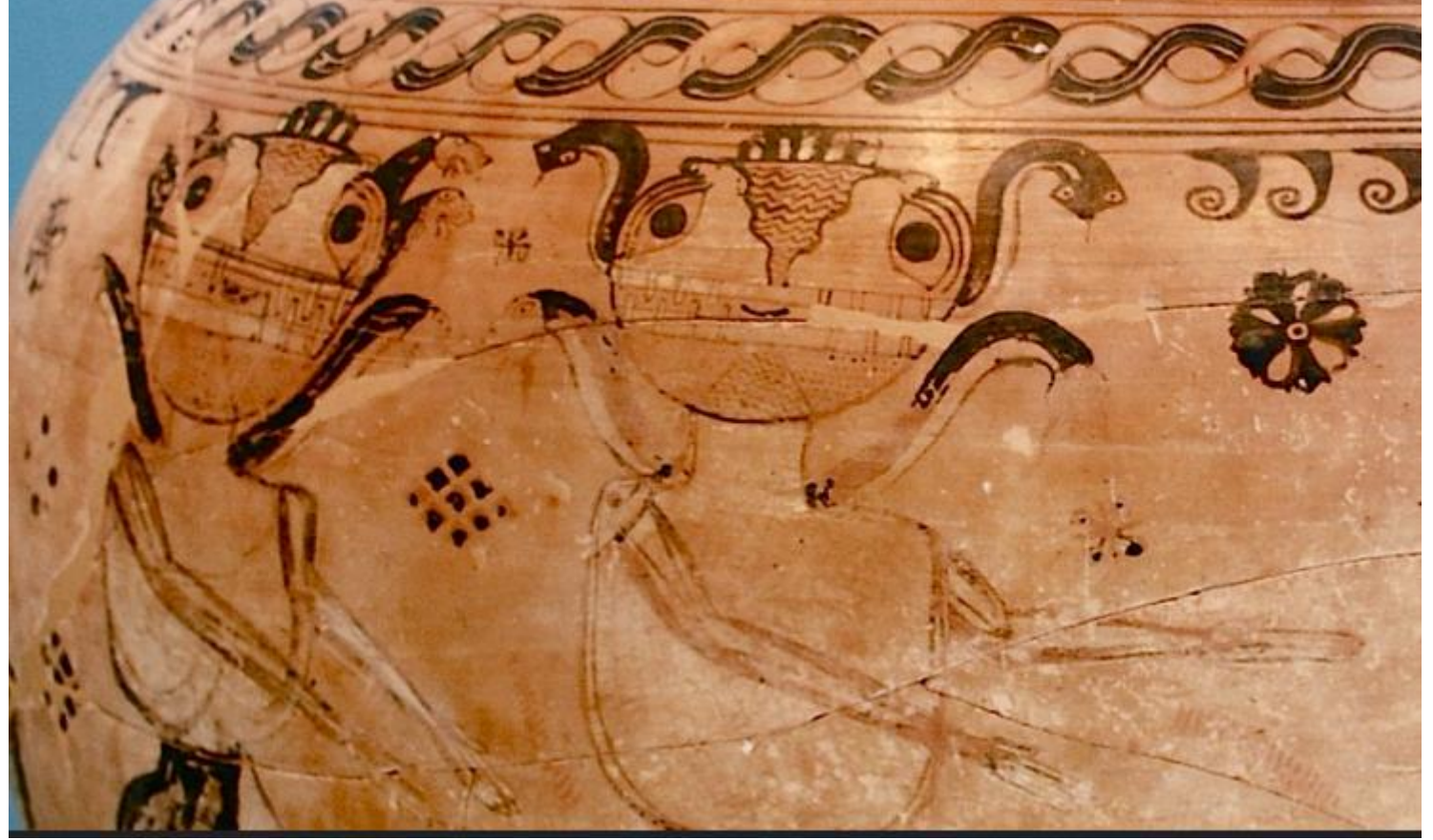
**EXAMPLE:**

Polyphemos,  
Odysseus,  
the Gorgons,  
and Athena!

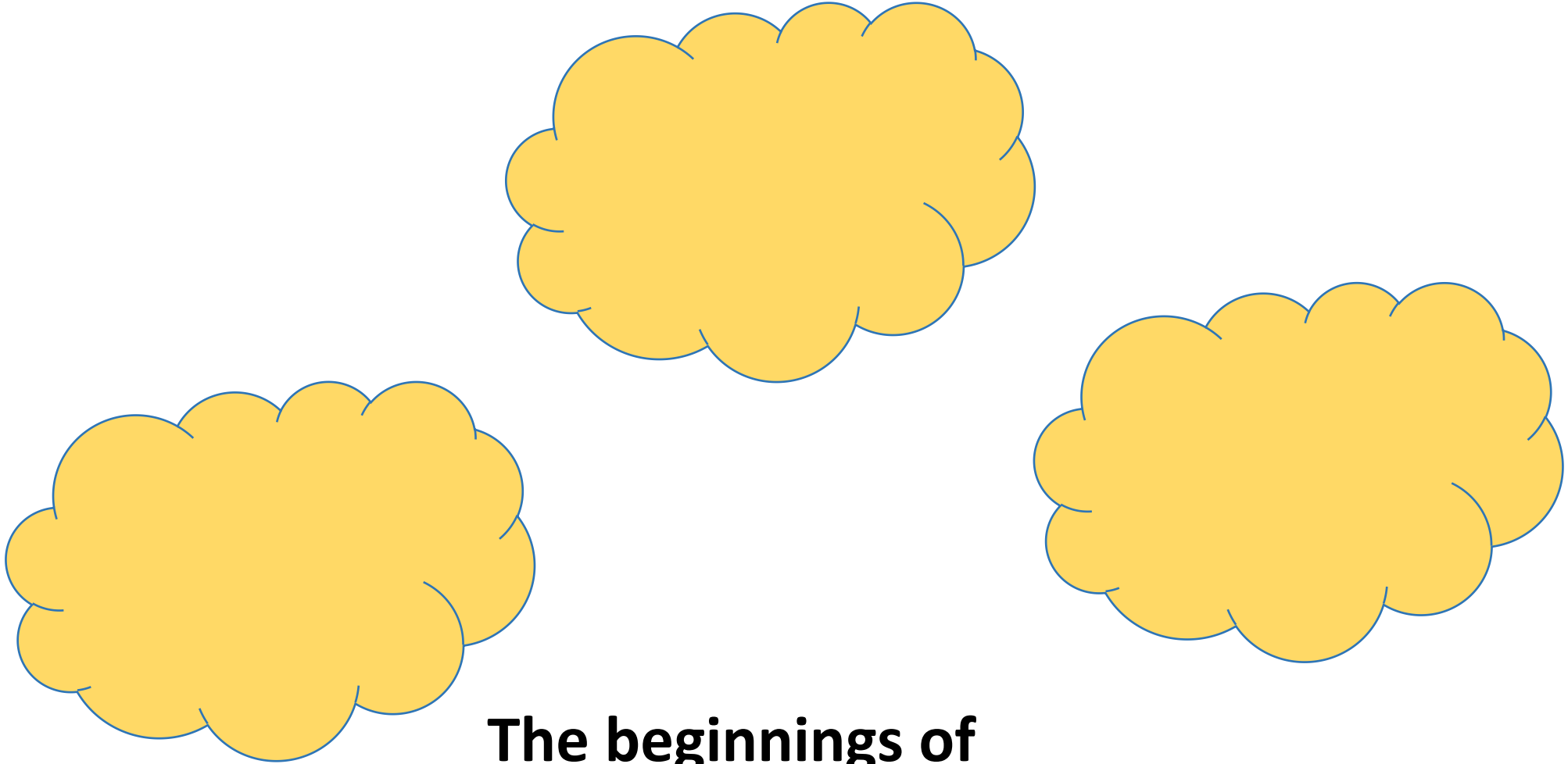


“Polyphemos Amphora” (Eleusis).  
Name vase of the Polyphemos Painter  
Proto-Attic neck amphora, ca. 640-630 BC









**The beginnings of  
pictorial narration ....**

**The oldest known cave paintings: Upper Paleolithic**  
**Found in both the Franco-Cantabrian region in western**  
**Europe,**  
**and in the caves in the district of Maros**  
**(Borneo - Sulawesi, Indonesia).**

The oldest type of cave paintings are hand stencils and simple geometric shapes: 'non-figurative'.

A 2018 study claimed an age of 64,000 years for the oldest examples of (non-figurative) cave art in Iberia, which would imply their production by Neanderthals rather than by modern humans.

The oldest undisputed examples of figurative cave paintings are younger, close to 35,000 years old.

Prehistoric artworks are particularly important records of the lives of our early ancestors, because written records of these cultures do not exist. What we know of these people can only be discovered through archaeological finds.

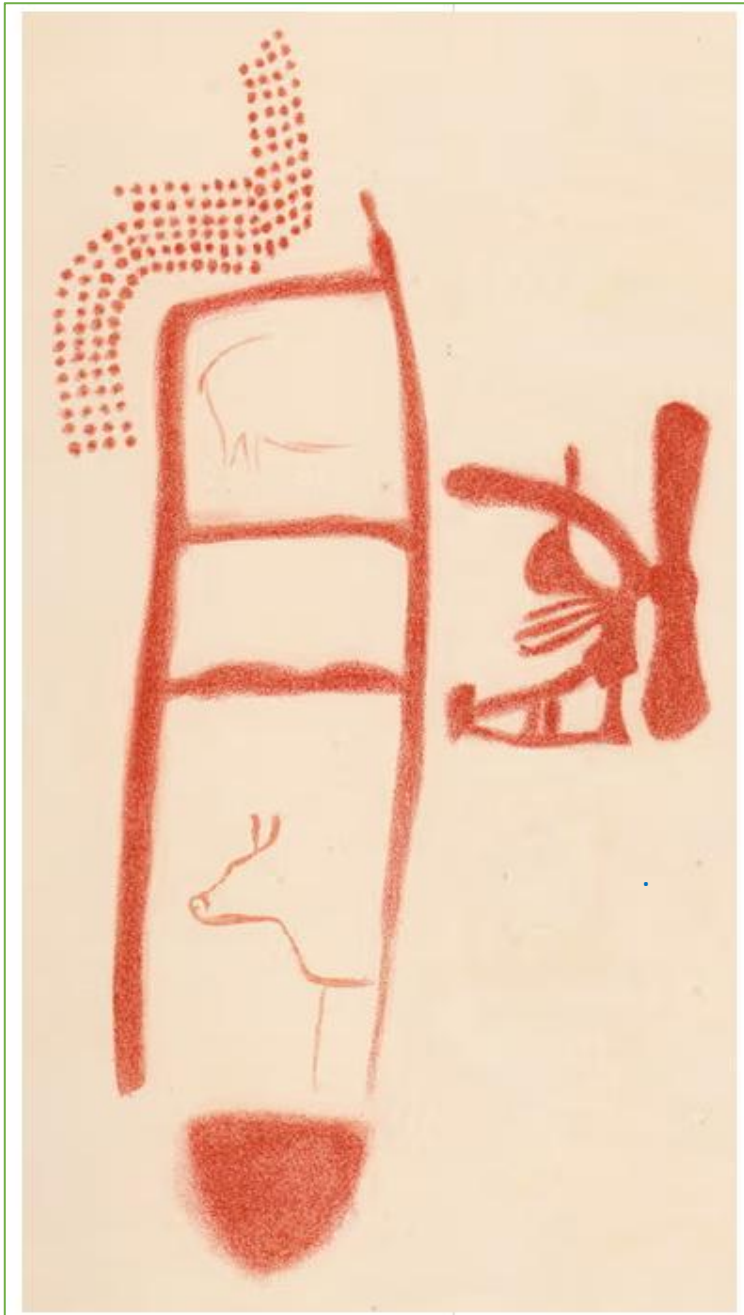
MAYBE: The very common handprints were a form of 'signature' and where great numbers are found together may be an identification with a tribal unit



Borneo rock art: six hands in graphic round. They were made by blowing pigment (red ochre) through a reed around their hand like a stencil!

Note the older orange-red hands covered by the motif.





Paintings on a section of the La Pasiega cave wall, including a ladder shape composed of red horizontal and vertical lines. Photograph: P. Saura/PA

**The red 'ladder'  
from the La Pasiega cave, Spain, near Bilbao.  
Dating shows it has a minimum age of ca. 64,000 years BC,  
thus it was made by Neanderthals.**

**It is unclear if the animals and other symbols were painted later,  
when Homo sapiens found the caves  
at least 20,000 years later.**

\* Cave paintings are found on the wall or ceilings of caves.

\* **PROBLEM = CHRONOLOGY**

EXAMPLE: In the Gabarnmung cave of northern Australia, the oldest paintings certainly predate 28,000 years ago, while the most recent ones were made less than a century ago.

SOLUTION:

Uranium dating of the calcite crusts that cover the paintings

Because the crusts formed **after** the paintings were made, the material gives a minimum age for the underlying art.



Red, black and white were the common colours used because they were readily available as natural pigments. Cave painters would use red ochre (iron oxide in chemical terms). A red dye could also be extracted from the roots of the madder plant (rubia) that grows widely in Europe, Asia and Africa.





**The earliest known cave painting of an animal, is at least 45,500 years old and shows a Sulawesi warty pig.**

The image appears in the Leang Tedongnge cave on Indonesia's Sulawesi island.

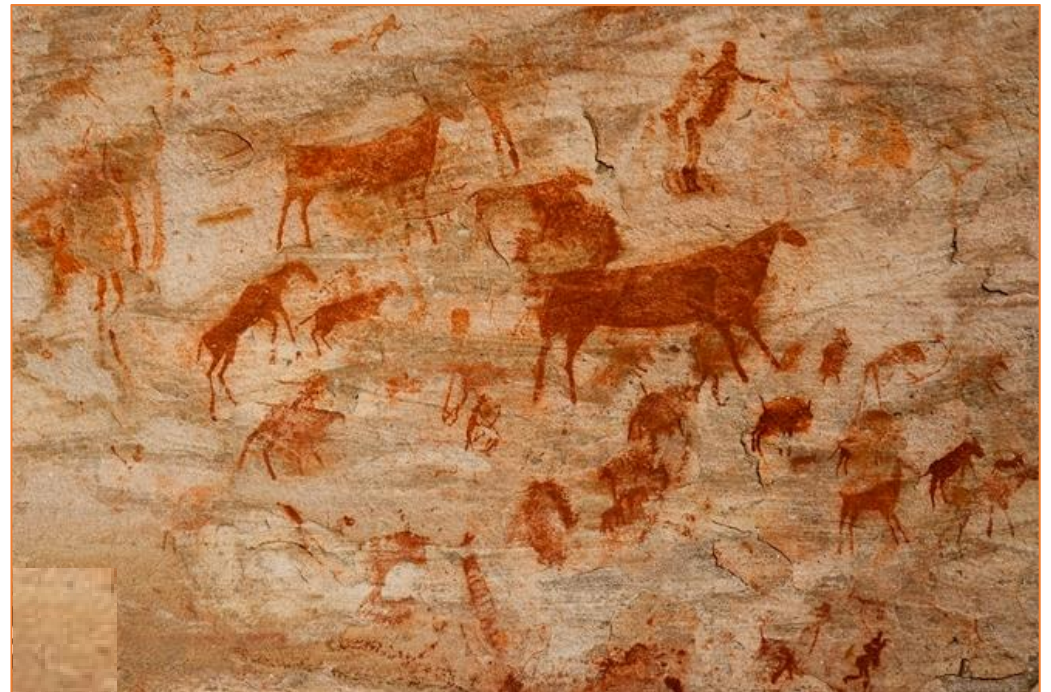
Sulawesi also has the first known cave painting of a hunting scene, believed to be at least 43,900 years old.

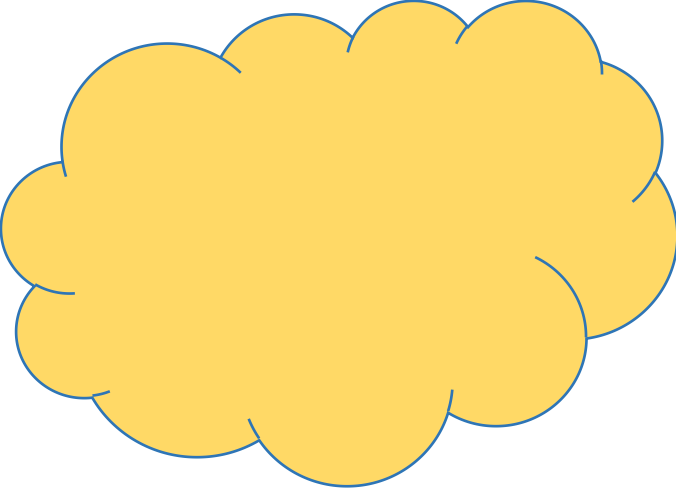
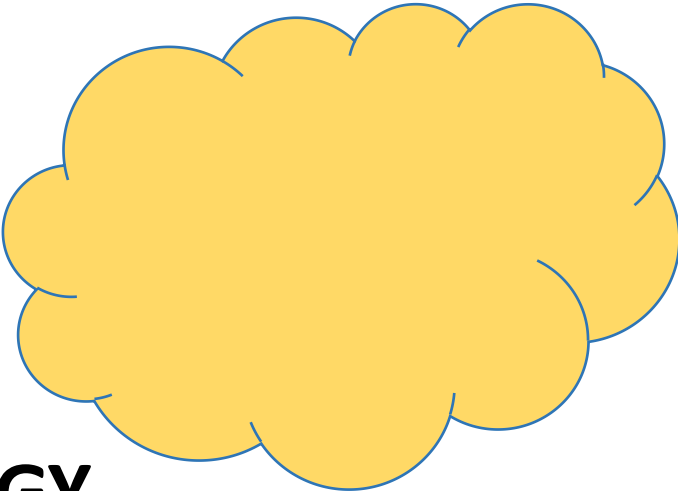
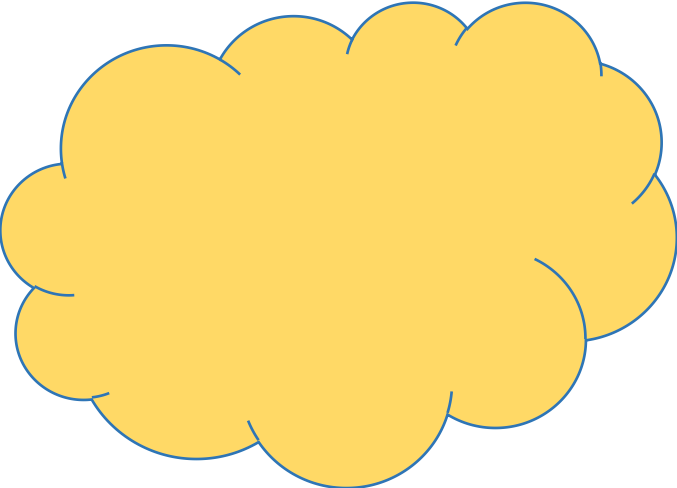


© Coke Smith  
[www.cokesmithphototravel.com](http://www.cokesmithphototravel.com)

An adult female Sulawesi warty pig (*Sus celebensis*) with a litter of very young piglets.  
Nantu Nature Reserve, Sulawesi, Indonesia

From then onwards we have ca. 400 sites with Cave Art (or Paleolithic Art) many of which show narrational images dating ca. between 40,000 and 14,000 BC. Hunting scenes are very common.





**BASIC TERMINOLOGY**

## Remember: TST (all related to Chronology)

### Technique

#### Materials & Methods

Examples:  
marble, ivory,  
terracotta and paint,  
bronze alloy,  
gold with inlay glass,  
oil on canvas,  
etc etc etc.....

### Style

A throughline that characterizes a grouping of art. Generally, it is defined by specific elements that one or more artists incorporate into all of their work.

It can be personal or common/group

Examples: Polykleitos' style, Attic style, Roman provincial style etc etc etc

### Typology

Classification according to physical characteristics. The products of the classification, i.e. the classes, are also called types.

Typology helps to manage a large mass of data.

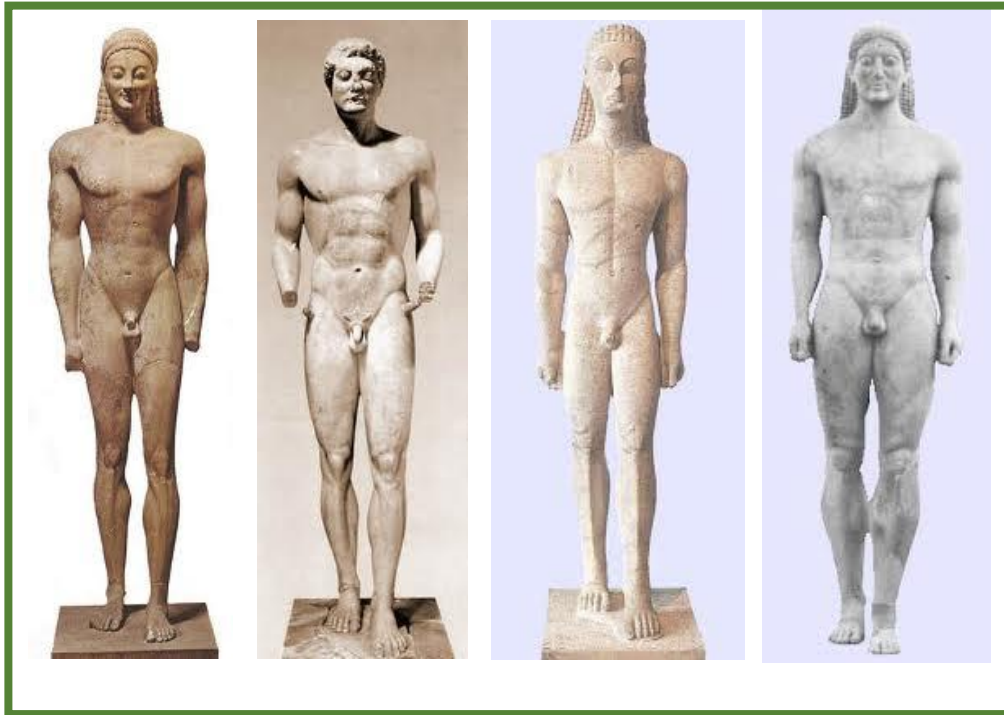
For portable artifacts, smaller or larger works of art, and for larger structures, such as buildings, field monuments, fortifications or roads.

Examples: Type of Kouros, Megaron type building, etc etc etc

## Typology

### Statues in the Kouros Type

Free-standing sculptures of nude young males, typically made of marble, standing with both feet on the ground, with the left foot forward, and their hands on their sides, in fists, touching the thighs.



## Style (of Kouroi)

- (a) Attic
- (b) Peloponnesse
- (c) East Greek - Samos





Technique and Style change through time ...  
but Typology helps us  
to put them in order ...

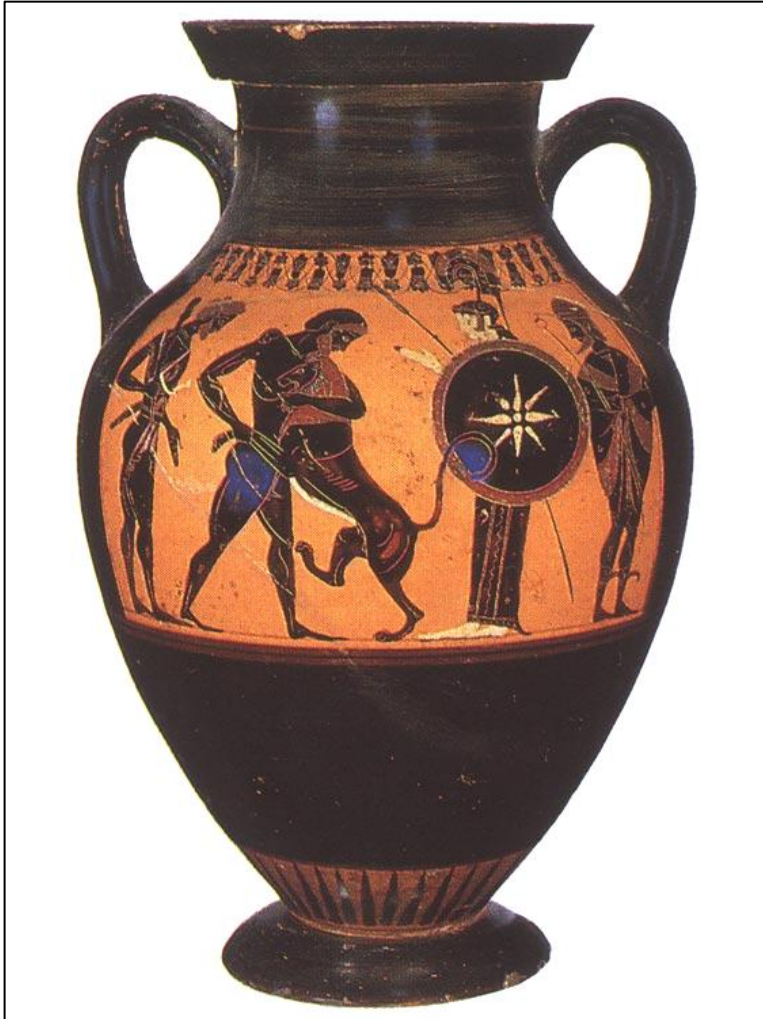


2023

## Iconographic themes vs Iconographic patterns

**Iconographic theme** = the content of an artwork

e.g. the following works have **the same iconographic theme**,  
the struggle of Herakles with the lion of Nemea,  
but they have **different techniques and styles.**



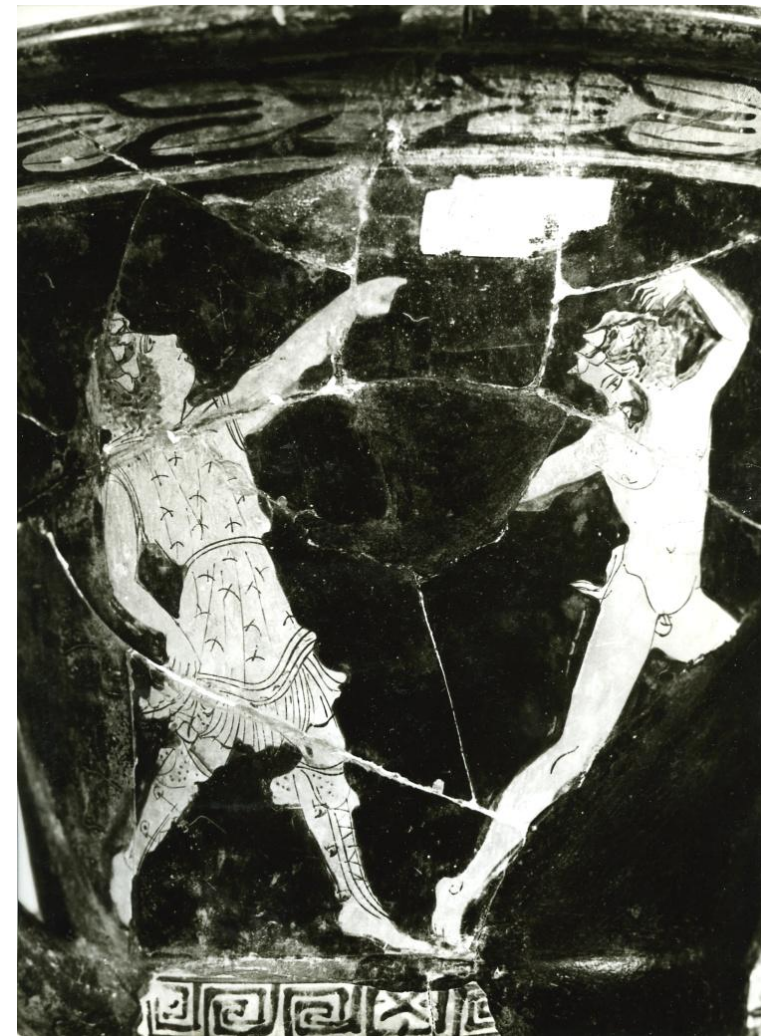
## Iconographic patterns

More general movements, attitudes, gestures, landscape elements,  
which convey a specific message to the viewer

For example, **the iconographic pattern of ecstasy** = **A PATHOS FORMULA**  
tossed back head and maybe open mouth  
(common in Dionysiac scenes ...)



Dancing Maenad 2C AD. Photo © Maicar Förlag - GML



## Pathos formulae – Pathos formel

- Concrete and definite iconographic motifs which impress themselves forcefully on our visual memory.
- The regular narrative context defines the emotions or actions represented, while the gesture or pose that constitutes the pathos formula indicates the intensity of the emotion and the drama of the event.
- The pathos formulae may be ambiguous but they are not vague; they have a precision of their own since they are intended to convey the exceptional and heightened intensity, the “pitch” of emotions or events.

### EXAMPLE 1: THE TOSSED BACK HEAD



Dancing maenad - detail  
(circa 490-480 BC)

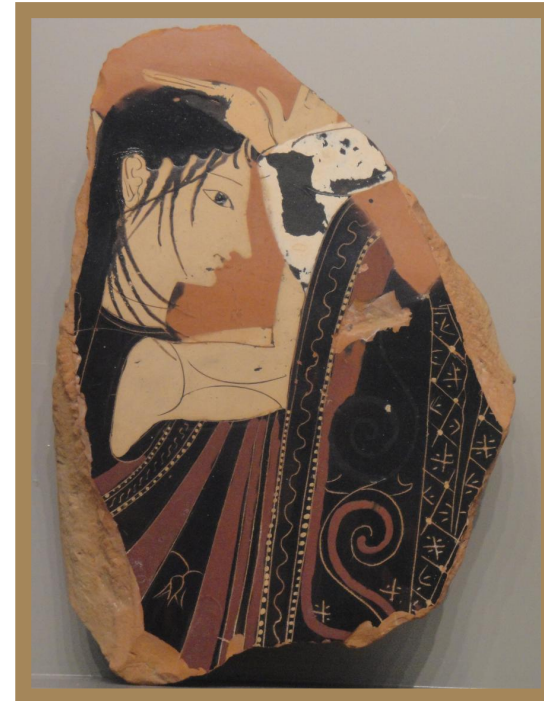
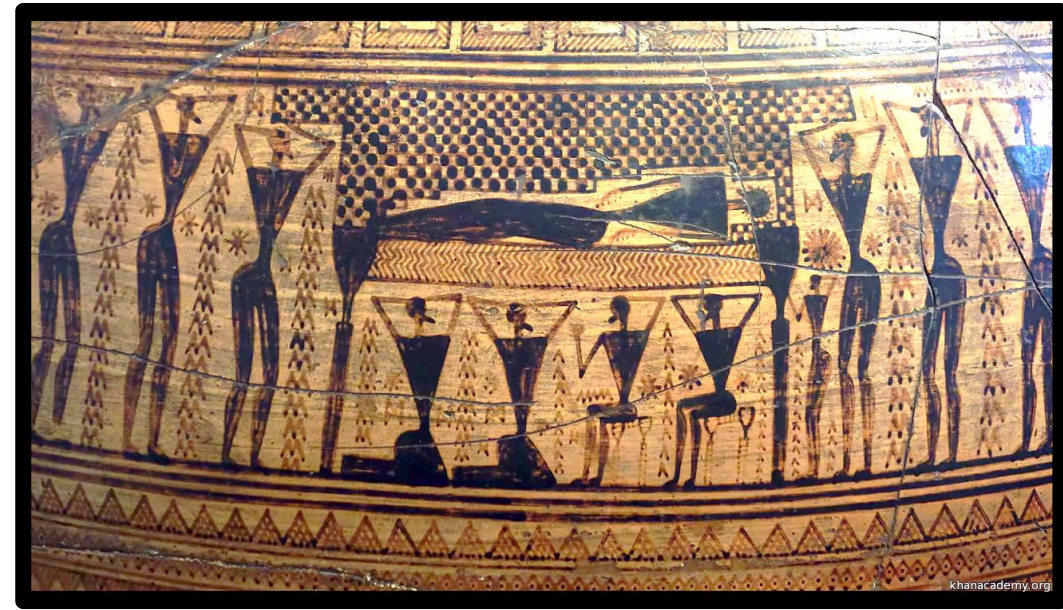


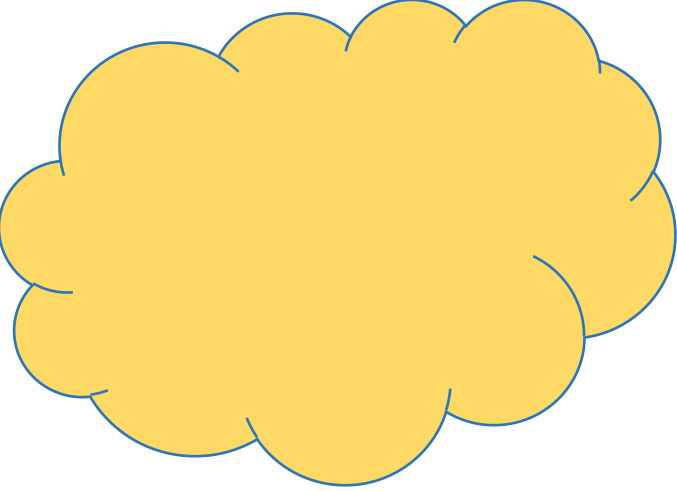
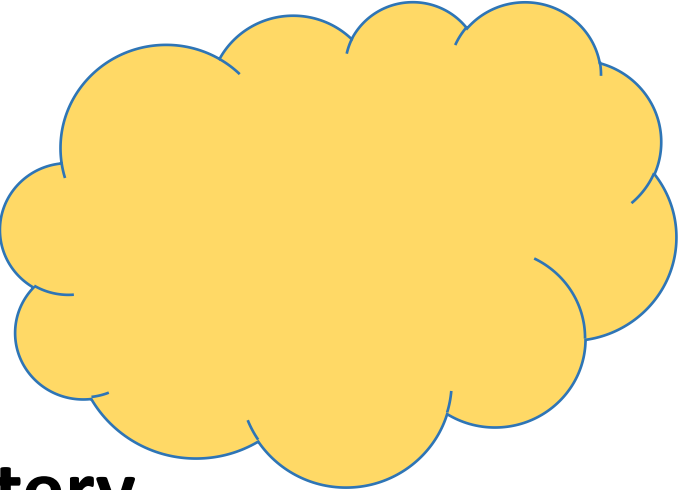
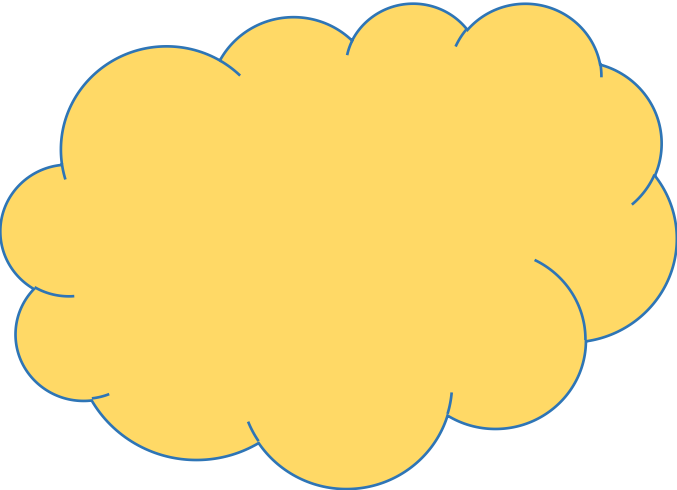
Bernini, Ecstasy of St. Teresa  
(mid 17<sup>th</sup> century)



Caravaggio, The ecstasy  
of St. Mary Magdalene (c. 1606)

**EXAMPLE 2: The pictorial motif of mourning =  
Hands on the head.**





**Lets go back to pottery ....**

Since we are working at the postgraduate level, it is assumed that you already possess the fundamental knowledge regarding Attic black-figure and red-figure pottery, including their chronology, development, general iconography, and major vase painters. Should there be any gaps in your knowledge, you may consult the following printed or online resources:

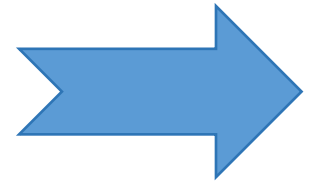
### 1. Beazley Archive Pottery Database (Oxford)

- Website: <https://www.carc.ox.ac.uk/carc/pottery> ↗
- Institution: Classical Art Research Centre, University of Oxford

This is the most important research database for Greek vase painting. It contains tens of thousands of records of Attic vases, including information on painters, shapes, iconography, inscriptions, and provenance. The archive is based on the research of Sir John Beazley and includes around 100,000 photographs of mainly Attic figure-decorated pottery from the 6th–4th centuries BCE. [carc.ox.ac.uk](https://www.carc.ox.ac.uk)

What you can do there:

- Search by vase painter (e.g., Exekias, Euphronios)
- Filter by shape (amphora, kylix, krater, etc.)
- Search by iconography or mythological subject
- Compare vases and attributions



**John Boardman – *Athenian Black Figure Vases* (1974)** One of the clearest scholarly syntheses of the black-figure technique.

Covers:

development of the technique

- major painters iconography
- stylistic evolution.

**John Boardman – *Athenian Red Figure Vases: The Archaic Period* (1975)**

Focuses on the early red-figure revolution (ca. 530–480 BCE).

**John Boardman – *Athenian Red Figure Vases: The Classical Period* (1989)**

Examines later developments in the fifth century BCE.

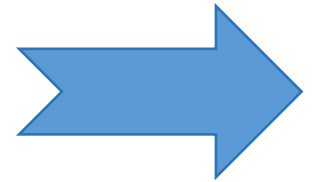
**Brian A. Sparkes – *Greek Pottery: An Introduction* (1991)**

Focus:

- production techniques
- workshop organization
- trade and distribution
- function of pottery in Greek society.

**Brian A. Sparkes, *The Red and the Black: Studies in Greek Pottery* (1996)**

- Surveys the major stages in the development of Greek pottery, including both figured and plain wares
- Provides a detailed analysis of the iconography of figured scenes, exploring key themes
- Places Greek pottery within its broader social and cultural context, demonstrating how these artefacts reveal information about ancient society, art history, mythology, and economic practices.
- Examines the history of collecting Greek pottery, from the Renaissance to the present, tracing the growth of collector interest and the gradual rise in market values.



**François Lissarrague – *The Aesthetics of the Greek Banquet* (1990)**

A classic for iconography and social context.

Focus

- symposium imagery
- Dionysian themes
- meaning of vase imagery in social settings.

**Philippe Rouet – *Approaches to the Study of Attic Vases: Beazley and Pottier* (2001)**

A historiographical study explaining:

- the development of vase-painting scholarship Beazley's attribution method
- methodological debates in the field.

**Richard Neer – *Style and Politics in Athenian Vase-Painting* (2002)**

More theoretical.

Focus:

- aesthetics
- visual language
- political and cultural context of vase imagery.

**Ann Steiner – *Reading Greek Vases* (2007)**

- iconographic interpretation
- mythological scenes
- identifying figures and attributes.

**John Oakley - *The Greek Vase: Art of the Storyteller* (2013)**

Richly illustrated, it presents vases not merely as beautiful vessels to hold water and wine, but also as instruments of storytelling and bearers of meaning.



## **THE 'CARRIERS' OF DECORATION**

SHAPES, USES,  
SPECIAL TECHNIQUES,  
'WORKING HOURS'

Beware of dimensions...  
(size matters!)





## Parade cups

A. Tsingarida, *Vases for Heroes and Gods : Early Red-figure Parade Cups and Large-scaled Phialai*



### Oltos

Signed cup type B (without ring and with a small step on the foot), potter Euxitheos, Parade cup = height 22,5 cm . diameter 52 cm..!!!

From Tarquinia (Etruria), c. 515 B.C.

**ONE OF THE OVERSIZED FOUND!**

# Oltos

Cup of Tarquinia,  
God assembly



Etruscan graffito =  
Somebody's dedication to  
Zeus' sons =  
Dioscuri  
(possible meaning...)



## **GREAT SIZE = GRAVE MARKER**



Oversized amphora from Dipylon

Grave marker

(Dipylon : section of a cemetery ,  
Kerameikos, Athens)

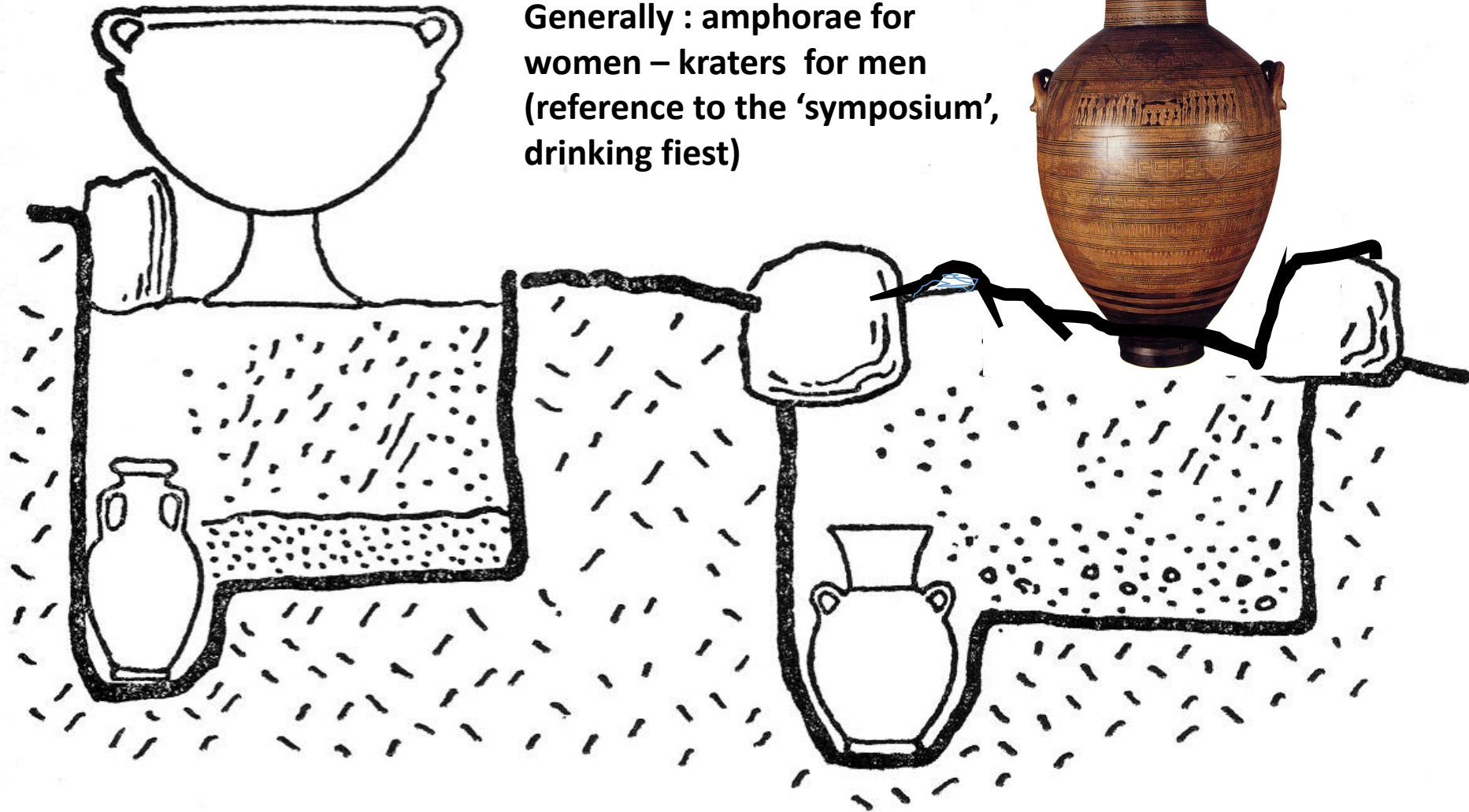
760-735 B.C.

Athens, National Archaeological Museum

Height: 1,55 μ.



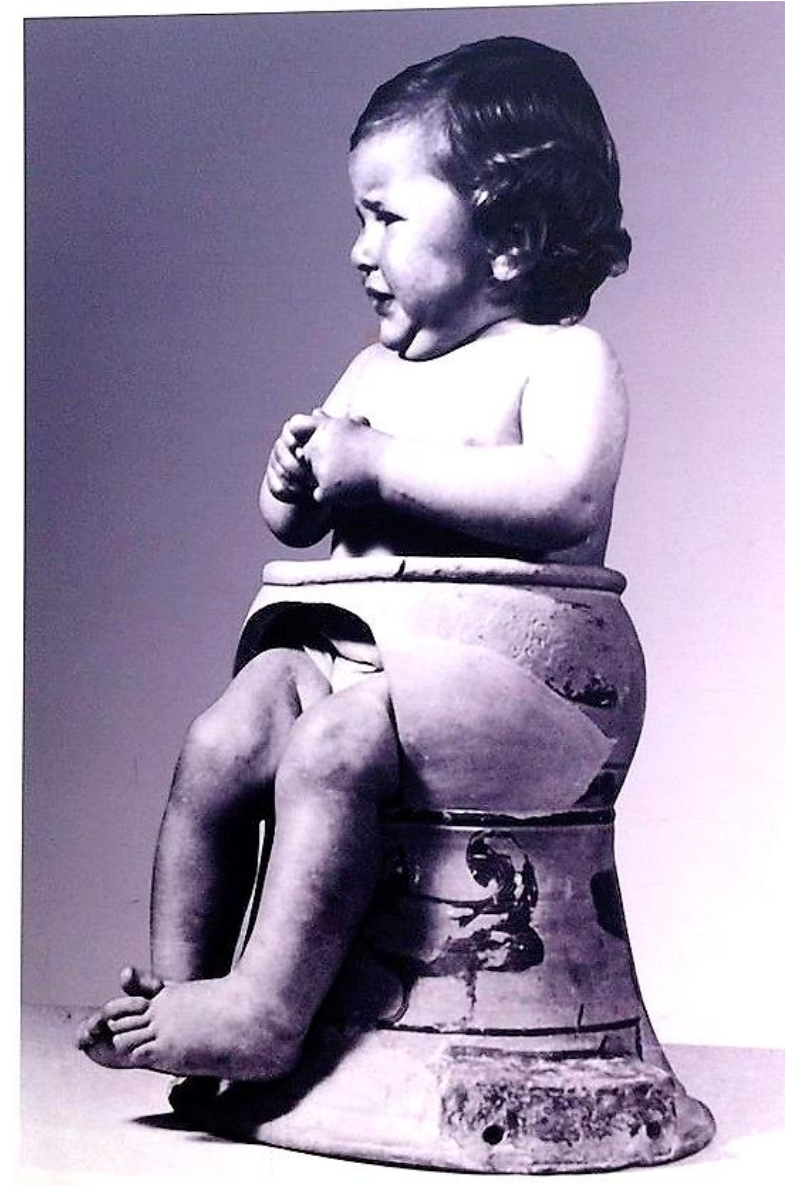
**LATE GEOMETRIC PERIOD** = They usually exceed 1.5m. in height (but with harmonic proportions), especially those placed as markers on graves  
Perforated bases : for “choai” for the dead or/and for practical reasons = ice .....



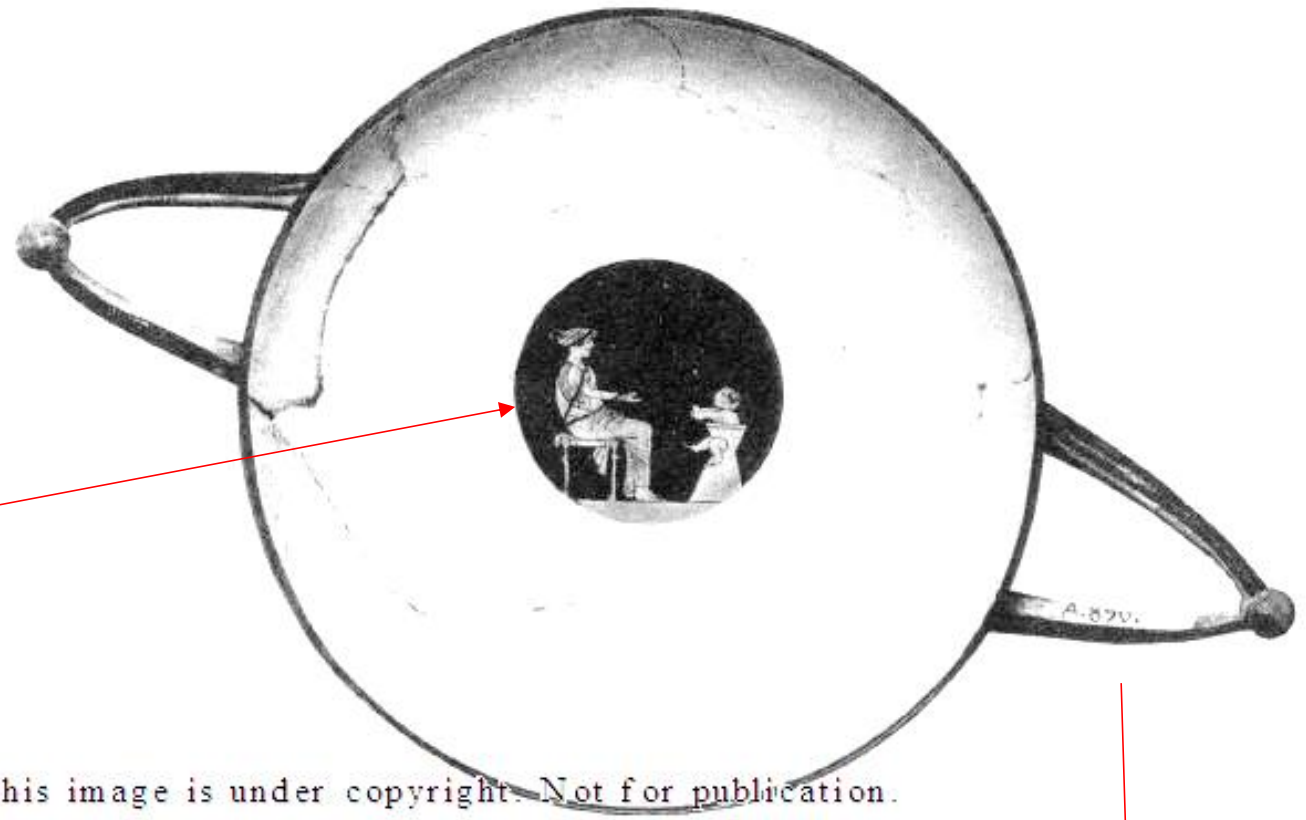
# **IMPORTANT** is the use of monuments or objects

Specific functions that serve all aspects of everyday life ...

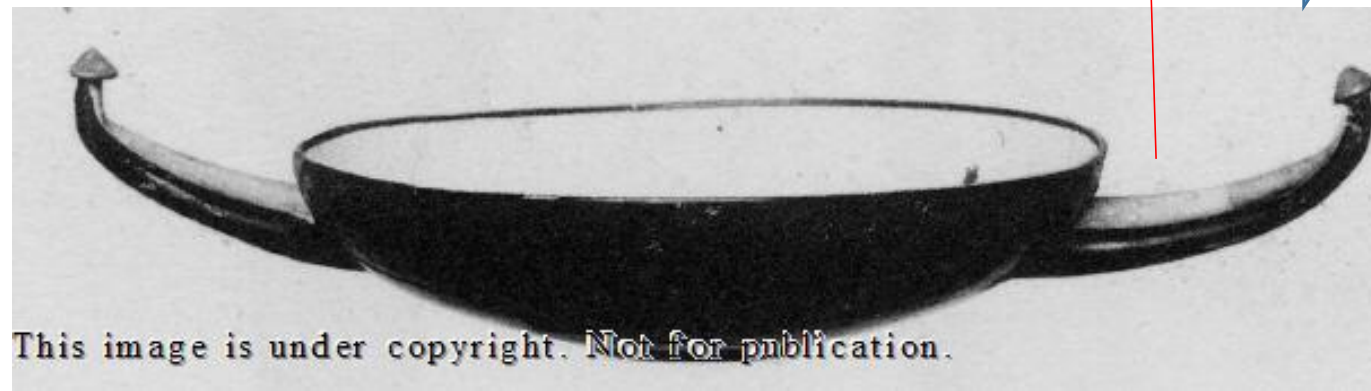
e.g. from a symposium vessel  
to a night pot.



Interesting when the night pot  
is depicted on a symposium vase  
(drinking cup)!



This image is under copyright. Not for publication.



This image is under copyright. Not for publication.



...or on a lecythos  
for fragrance oil !!!!

Why?



# BASIC TECHNIQUES OF PAINTED ATTIC POTTERY: Black-figure and Red-figure



1st PHASE - OXIDATION



Clay body  
Colloidal slip

2nd PHASE - REDUCTION



Clay body  
Colloidal slip

3rd PHASE - OXIDATION



Clay body  
Colloidal slip

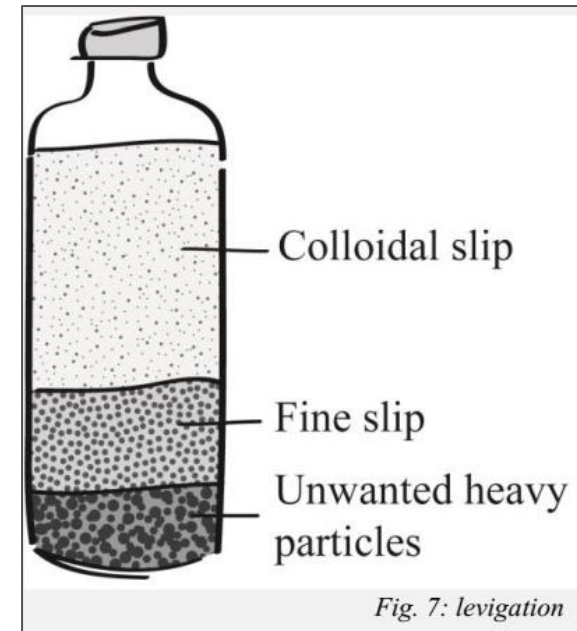


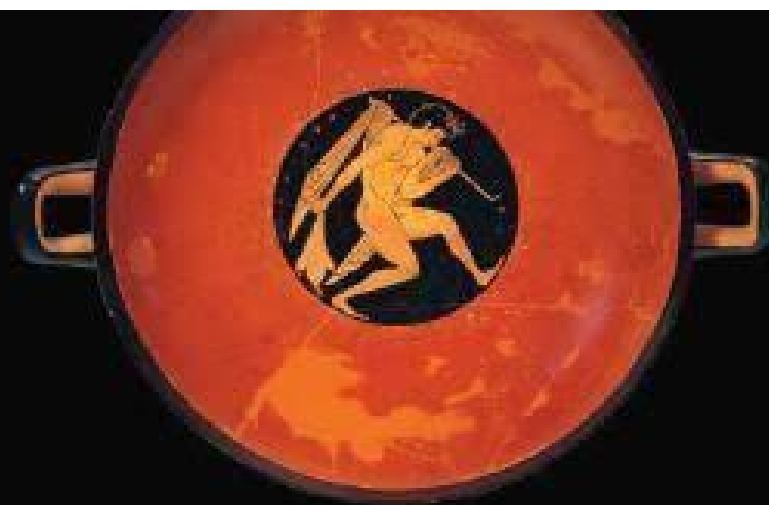
Fig. 7: levigation

# The Colors of Clay

Special Techniques in Athenian Vases



**SPECIAL TECHNIQUES ....**  
**TIME AND EFFORT ....**  
**“WORKING HOURS” ....**  
**SPECIAL ORDERS ....**



PAPERS ON SPECIAL TECHNIQUES IN  
Athenian Vases



## Special techniques = White ground pottery



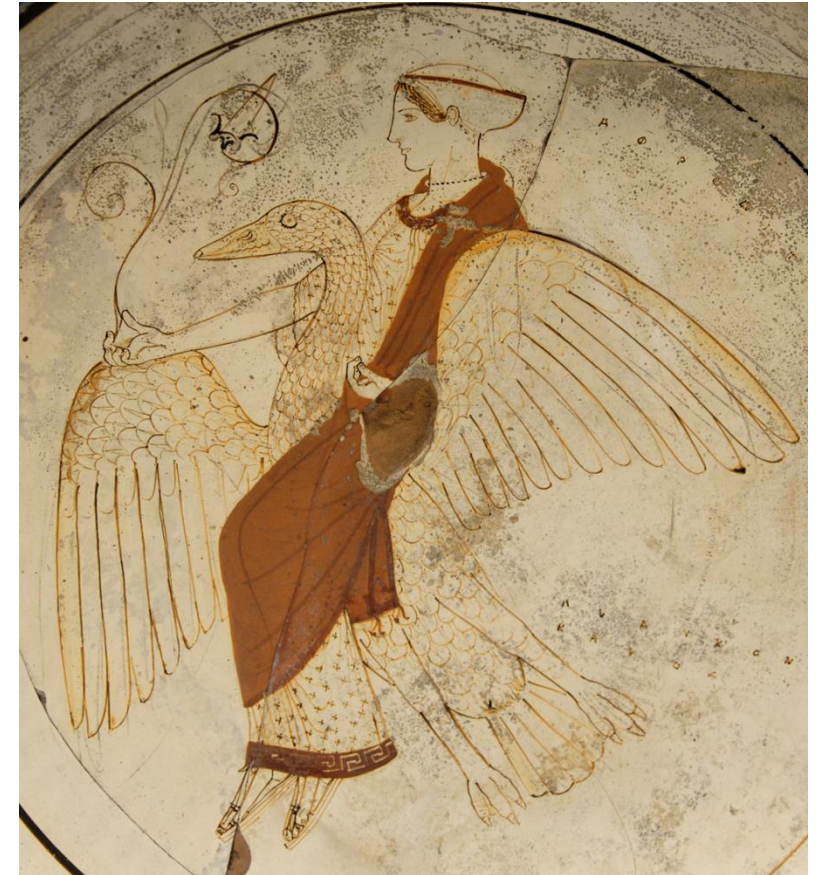
The Pisto Xenos Painter

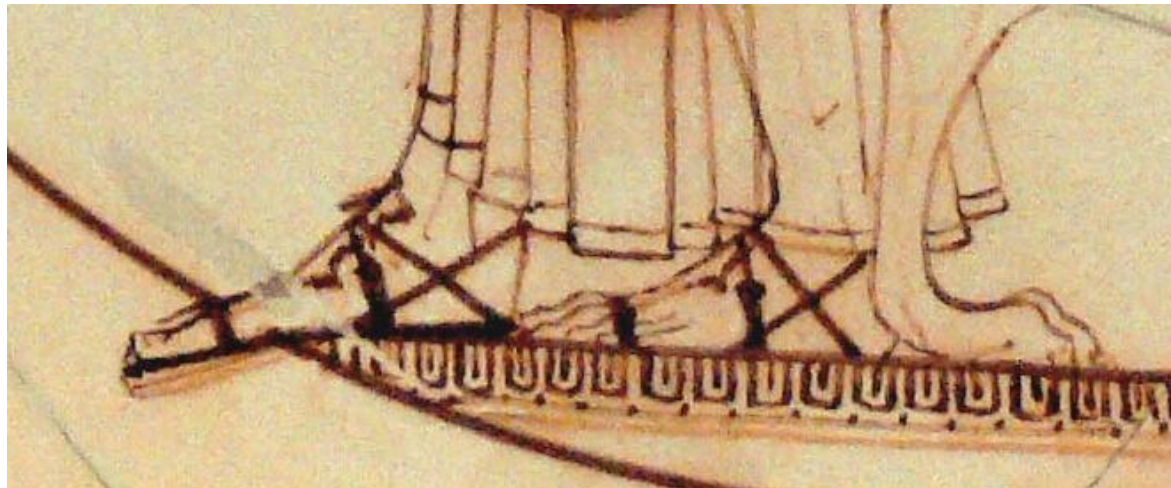


White ground cups

About 480-460 BC

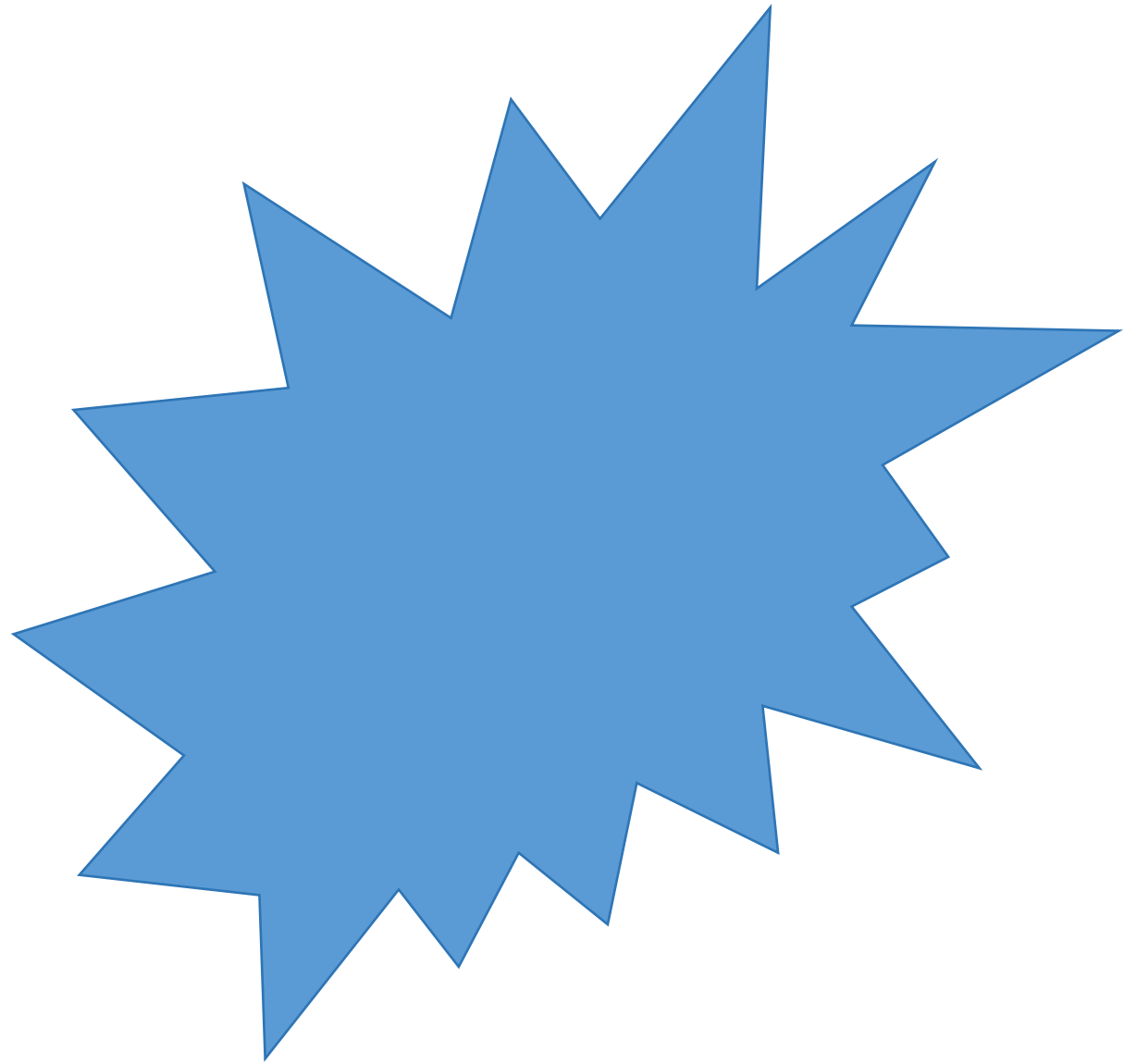
*John Beazley gave him the name from a skyphos now at Schwerin with a signature indicating that it was made by the potter Pisto Xenos*





Meidias Painter ( clay in relief and gilding) - ca. 420-400 BC





# Iconography:

The interpretation of pictorial themes  
based on a specific methodology

*It concerns visual arts = pictorial arts*

Every picture is an act of communication:

We aim to restore communication  
(if and where possible)

иконография

εικονογραφία

ikonogrāfija

iconographie

iconografia

ikonografi

іконографія

Ikonographie

ikonográfia

# ICONOGRAPHY: Methodology

**REQUIRES**

**(A) Wide knowledge  
of the factual data  
of a culture, of an era, of a region ...**

e.g. we know about the  
Ancient Greek Symposium  
(from the texts and archaeological finds)  
and that is why we recognize here  
**a symposiast on his elaborate bed (*kline*)  
and not a sick man lying down  
and drinking his syrup!**



... and here we recognize a courtesan who caresses the symposiast and not an ancient .... nurse!



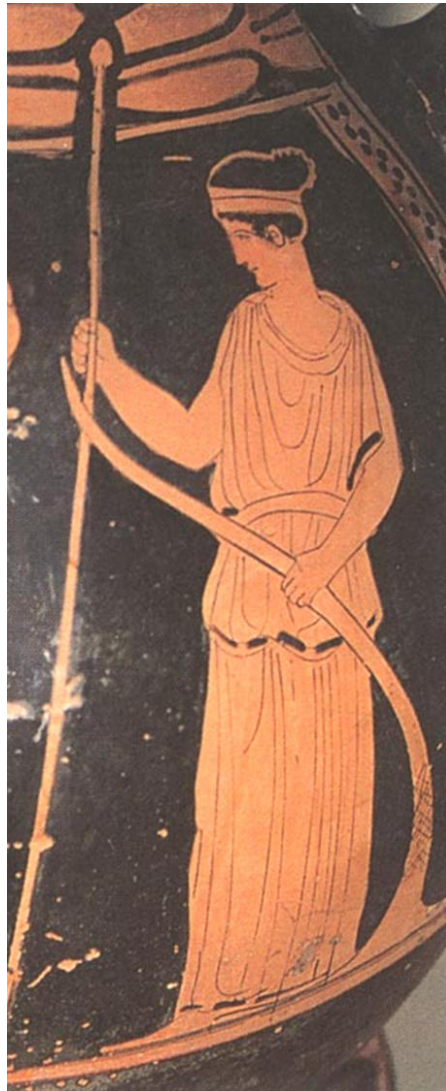


???





Ploughing fields using wooden plough



# ICONOGRAPHY: Methodology

**REQUIRES**

**(B) Knowledge of the iconographic conventions, that is, the 'glossary' of the specific visual language which does not always correspond to our own visual experiences**

EXAMPLE: In Greek black-figure vases of the 6th century BC men have black skin and women white ...

But white color is also used to highlight some elements ... just like the red/violet color.



C) Knowledge of the discovery conditions and context  
(if we are lucky ...)

REQUIRES



White lecythoi found in a tomb in Vergina, Western Macedonia:

The white lecythoi are used in Attic funerary customs.

What is their possible interpretation in a Macedonian grave ? What was the meaning of their iconography for the Macedonians ? If, of course, they were Macedonians and not some other dead (i.e. immigrants from Athens....)

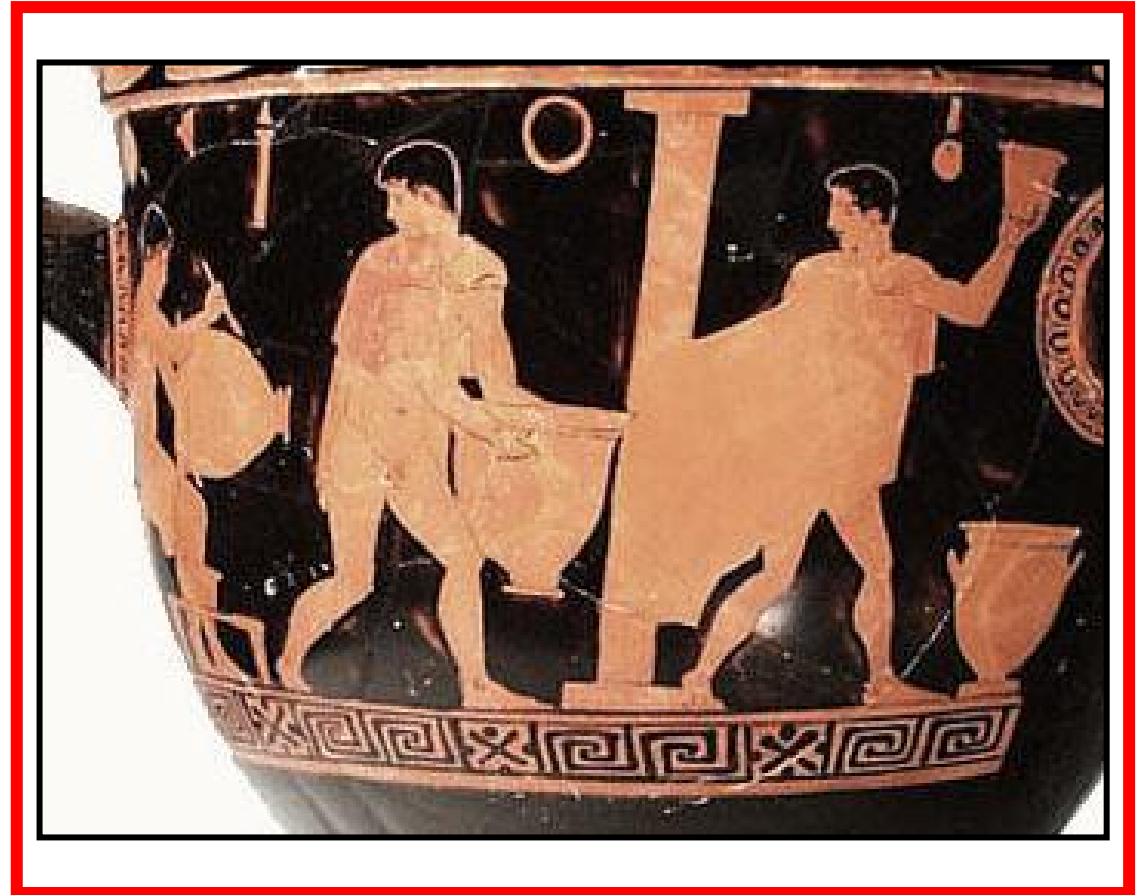


**D) Some knowledge about the creators of images – e.g. the potters and painters. In this case Ethnoarchaeology is extremely important, as well as the images of pottery workshops on vases**

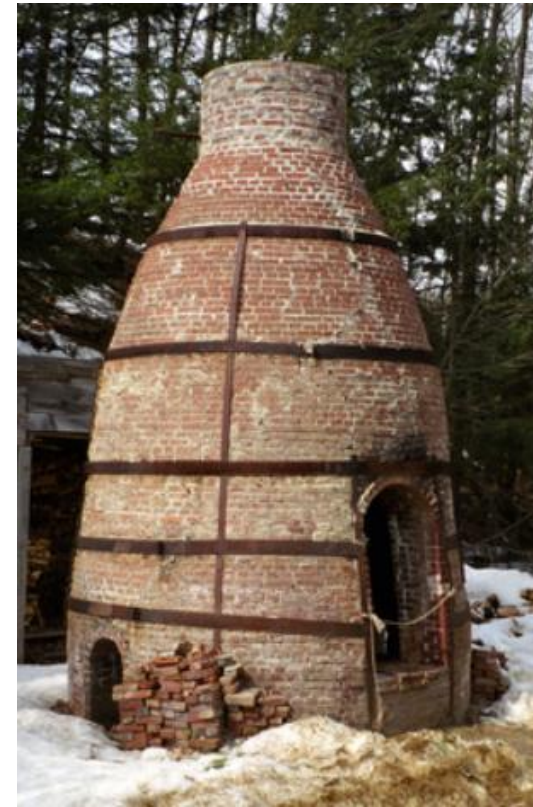
**REQUIRES**



*The ancient written sources mention sculptors and painters of Monumental Painting .... but never the humble vase painters*



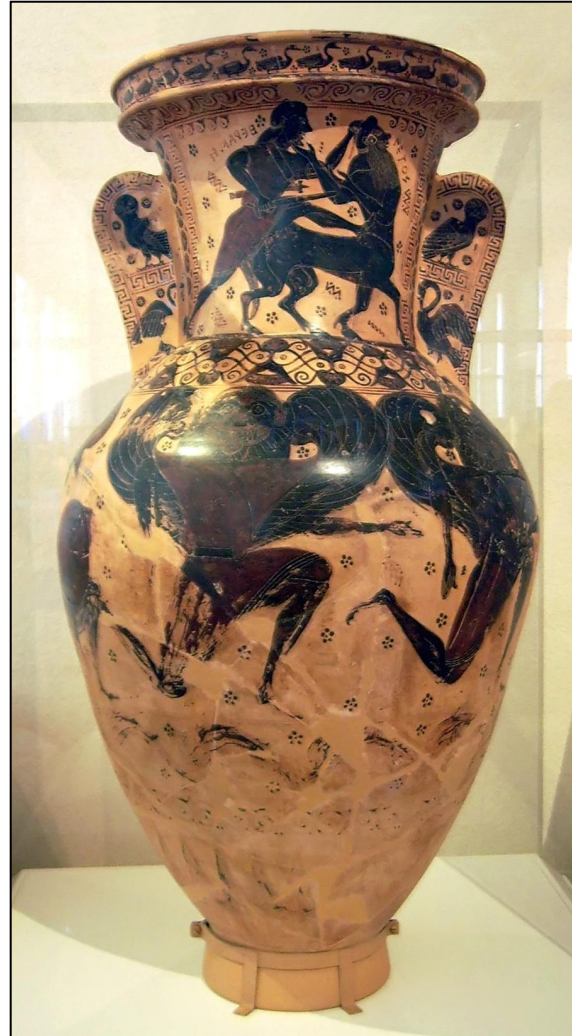
Ethnoarchaeology is extremely important



# ICONOGRAPHY: Methodology

**REQUIRES**

(E) Careful study of any inscriptions  
(they are very helpful ...  
for understanding the depictions  
and  
for gathering data on the craftsmen)



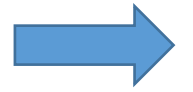
Nessos Painter (c. 620-600  
B.C.)  
Amphora  
Grave-marker found in the  
cemetery of Kerameikos, Athens  
Height: 1,22 m



**HERAKLES**

**NETOS**

... for gathering data  
on the craftsmen



The vase is «talking»  
as many statues of the  
archaic period “talk”,  
especially from the 7<sup>th</sup>  
c. B.C.

## Sophilos

c. 580-570 B.C..

It belongs to the last face of  
early attic black-figure style

**He is the first attic vase-  
Painter whose real  
Name is known to us  
(4 signatures)**

**ΣΟΦΙΛΟΣ ἰ Μ' ΕΓΡΑΦΣΕΝ**

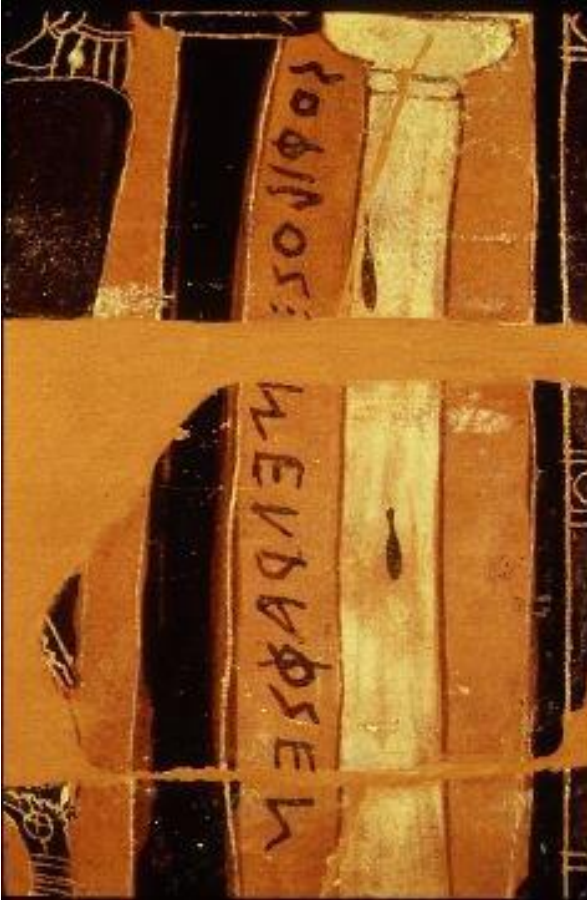


**Kore from the sanctuary of Artemis in Delos island  
Offering of Naxian Nikandre,  
now in Athens Museum  
Height 1,75 (660-650 BC)**

ΜΙΚΑΝΔΡΗ Μ ΑΝΕΘΕΚΕΝ Η[Ε]ΚΗΒΟΛΟΙ ΙΟΧΕΑΙΡΗ ΦΟΡΗ  
ΔΕΙΝΟ ΔΙΚΗ ΤΟ ΝΑΗΣΙΟ ΕΗΣΟΧΟΣ ΑΛΗΘΟΝ ΔΕΙΝΟΜΕΝΕΟΣ ΔΕ  
ΚΑΣΙΓΝΕΤΗ ΦΗΡΑΙΣΟ Δ ΑΛΟΧΟΣ Ν[ΥΝ]

νικανδρη μ ανεθεκεν η[ε]κηβολοι ιοχεαιρη φορη  
δεινο | δικη το ναησιο εησοχος αληον δεινομένεος δε  
κασιγνετη | φηραισο δ αλοχος ν[υν]

**Nikandre dedicated me to the goddess,  
far-shooter of arrows (e.g. to Artemis)  
the daughter of Deinodikos of Naxos,  
distinguished among all women,  
sister of Deinomenes and now wife of Phraxos**

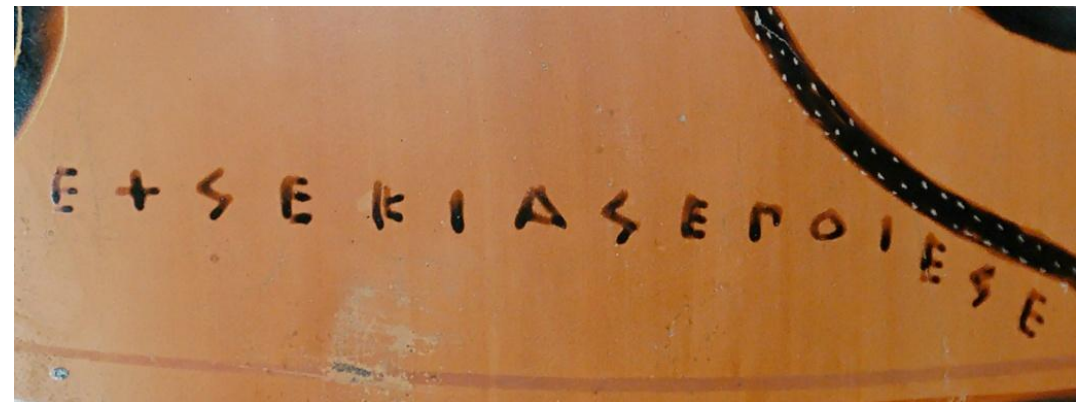
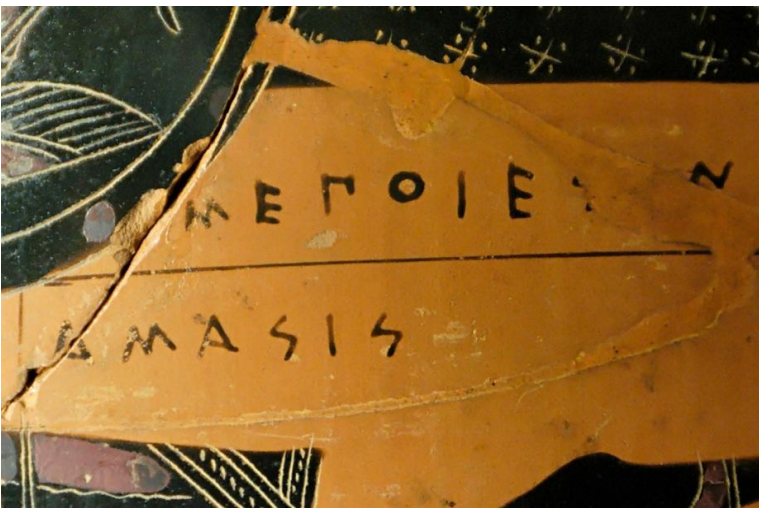


- About 42.000 published Attic black-figure vases and thousands of others in stores
- Only few inscriptions of names of potters and painters

### Signatures of potters and painters:

**ΕΓΡΑΦΣΕΝ** / EGRAFSEN = PAINTED (painter)

**ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ** / EPOIESEN = MADE (potter) ... But maybe also PAINTED (the same person is both potter and painter)



## Examples of inscriptions:

EXEKIAS

ΕΧΣΕΚΙΑΣ Exekias (c. 545-525 B.C.)

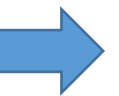


The most iconic vase-painter of the middle black-figure style

He also worked as a potter



He signs either with a single or with both of his capacities (but "epoiesen" could also indicate that he painted the vase)



## CASE STUDY = Exekias, c. 530 B.C..

**Amphora in Vatican  
Achilles and Ajax playing dice  
Precision, conviction , clarity  
and incomparable virtuosity of his line.**

**Interest in detail and ornamentation, which leads to  
trully unparalleled results ,  
without straying from the  
whole picture of his compositions**





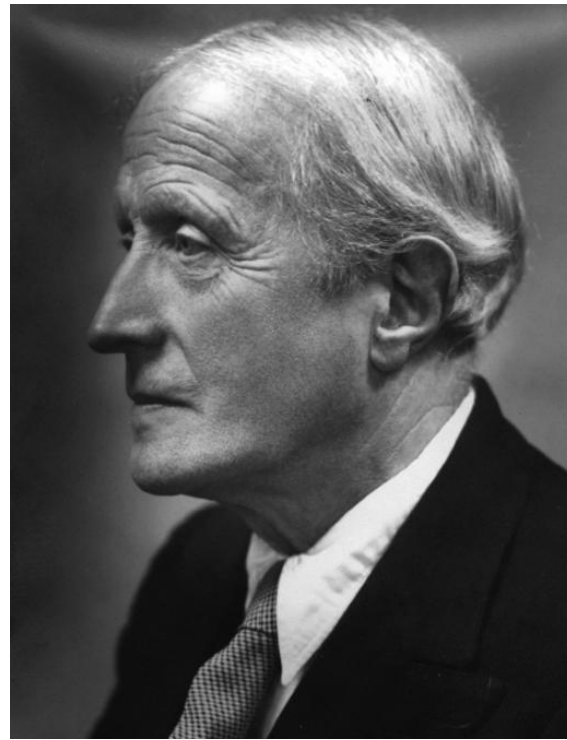
TRIA - TETARA

Three - Four



!!!!





# John D. Beazley (1885-1970)

## CHAPTER 19

### THE SYRISKOS GROUP

#### THE SYRISKOS GROUP

It consists of two artists, 'brothers', the Copenhagen Painter and the Syriskos Painter, who are sometimes hard to tell apart.

In *ARV*<sup>1</sup> I said that the Kephalos Painter continued the style of the Syriskos Painter: I now take the two artists to be the same: 'the Kephalos Painter' being the later, the early classic, phase of the Syriskos. In this phase the likeness to the Copenhagen Painter has disappeared.

#### THE COPENHAGEN PAINTER

*VA.* 63 note 1. *Ant. V.* 156-7. *V. Pol.* 21, 35, and 80. *ARV*<sup>1</sup> 192-5.

An academic artist, akin to the later phase of Douris.

Named after no. 1.

#### AMPHORA

(type B)

1 (1). COPENHAGEN 125, from Vulci. Using *To graeske Vaser* pl. 1 and p. 7; *CV*, pl. 130; A, *Cloché Classes* pl. 2, 3; A, *Antik-Cab.* 1831, 131; A, *Brettenstein G.V.* pl. 37. A, old man with negro slave-boy. B, youth buying an amphora.

#### POINTED AMPHORA

2 (2). LONDON E 350, from Vulci. Cecil Smith pl. 13 and pl. 18, 1; side; Jacobsthal O. pl. 106, 2; *CV*, pl. 18; ph. Ma. 3146. A, Dionysos and Nymphaia; B, two nymphs. On B, KAPTONKALOS retr.

#### PANATHENAIC AMPHORA

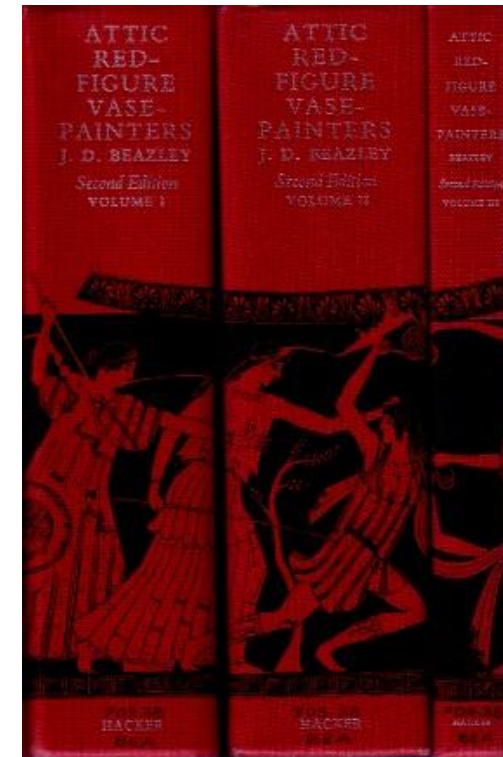
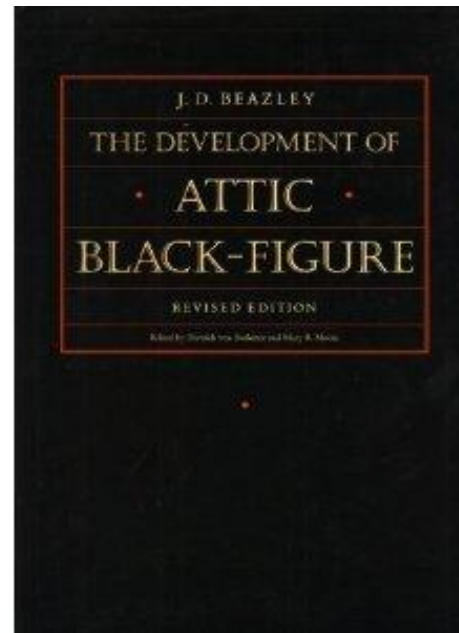
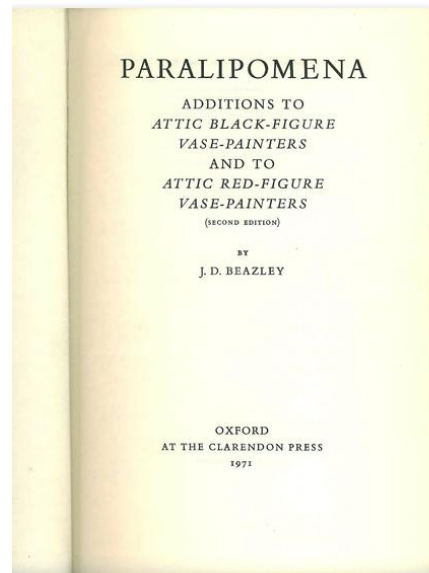
3 (3). ATHENS, Agora, P 7257, fr., from Athens. A, victor with tripod; B, Nike.

#### VOLUTE-KRATER

4 (4). ATHENS Act. 761, fr., from Athens. Langlotz pl. 66, whence (B) *AJA.* 1934, 436, 4. A, Herakles and Apollo: the struggle for the tripod; B, Leto and Artemis.

#### STAMNOI

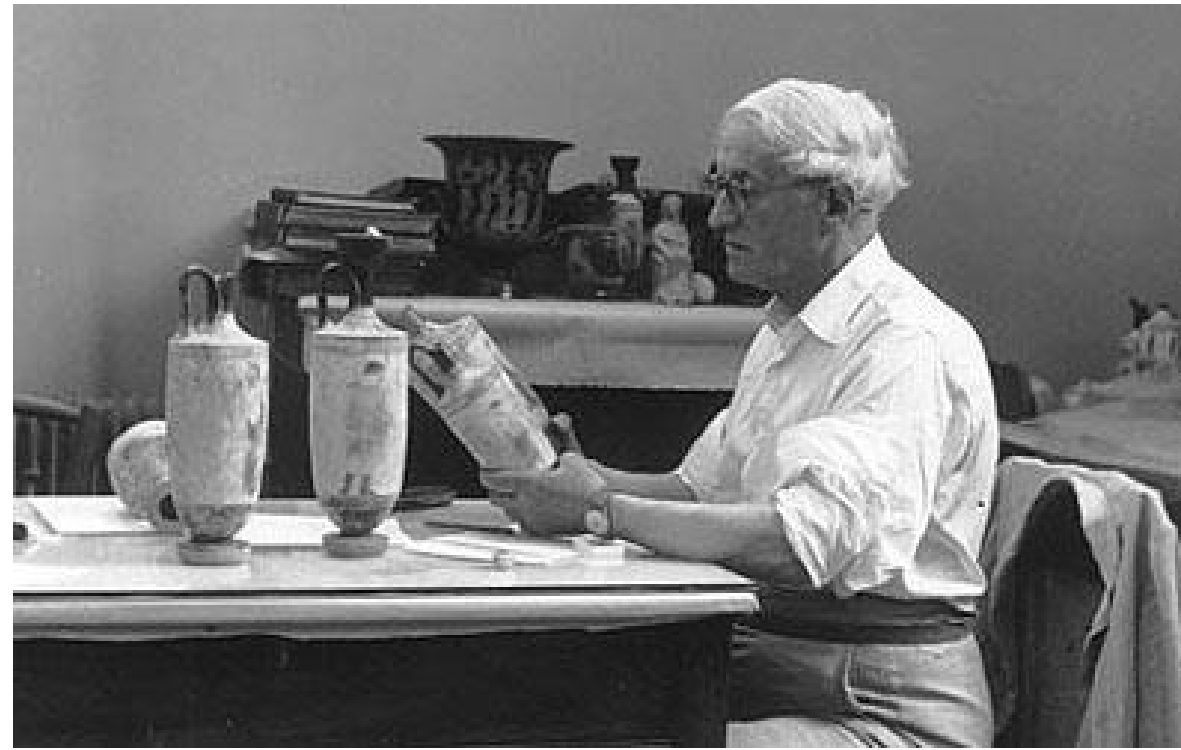
5 (5). WÜRZBURG 515. *AZ.* 1883 pl. 12 and pp. 215 and 218, whence (A) *Farmakovski* i, 219 and (A) *AJA.* 1918, 157; *Klio* 20 pll. 1-4; A, Langlotz *F.G.B.* pl. 14, 5; Langlotz pll. 182-3 and 210, whence (A) *Schnitzler* pl. 47; detail of A, *E.A.A.* ii, 803. Death of Hipparchos. Restored.



<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk>

**Order in chaos ... by John Beazley**

**Identifying the painters in Attic pottery  
(ca. 600 to ca. 320 BC)**



<https://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/tools/pottery/techniques/johnbeazley.htm>

Beazley deliberately concentrated on unsigned vases, **asserting that anonymus does not equate to unknown.** Through meticulous examination of notebooks, preparatory sketches, finished drawings, and photographic documentation, he sought to reconstruct and attribute individual artistic identities. **He demonstrated that each painter employed a distinctive and internally coherent system for rendering details—such as ears, eyes, hands, and drapery folds—constituting a recognizable stylistic signature.**

For the purposes of attribution, close analysis of these formal minutiae provides a more reliable methodological foundation than reliance upon generalized impressions of style alone. Indeed, it is the combined assessment of detailed morphological features and broader stylistic tendencies that establishes the most secure basis for connoisseurial identification.

**No reductive formula or heuristic rule can substitute for this comprehensive analytical approach.**



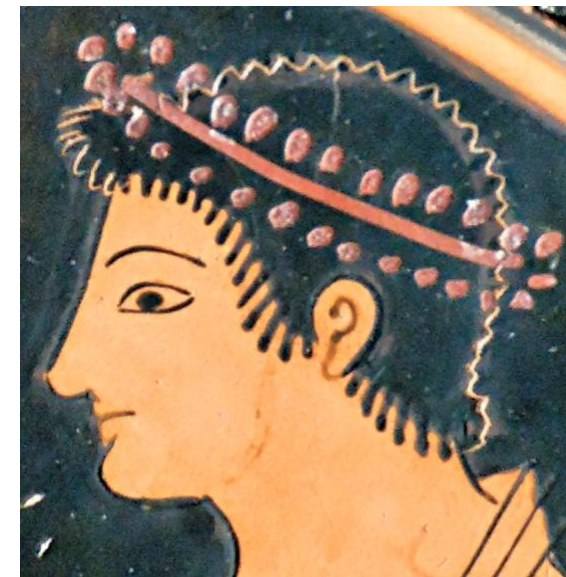
He used a 'system of forms' - forms in shape, design, patterns, figures and execution of technique. Beazley taught himself to recognise the system by drawing the details he considered important over and over again. If all elements of the 'system' are examined in relation to each other it can be said that the connoisseurship of Athenian vases rests on firmer ground than any other art form.



**BOTH by the Kleophrades Painter**

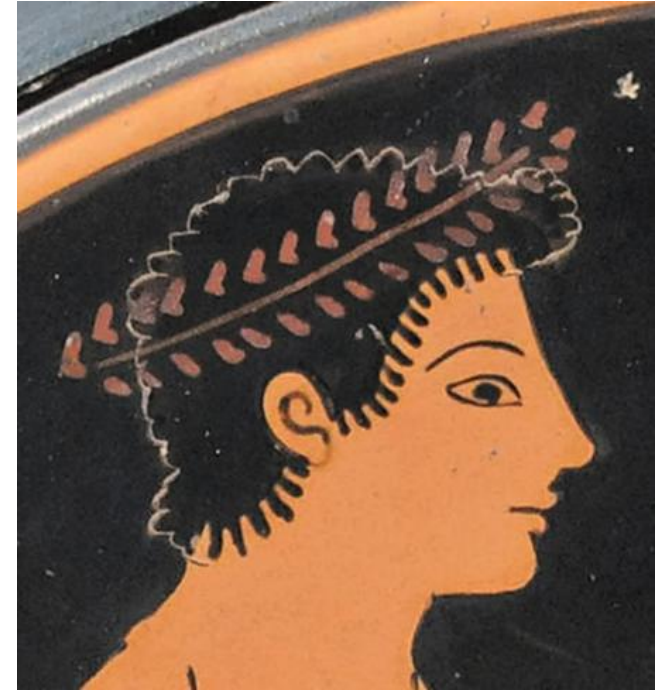
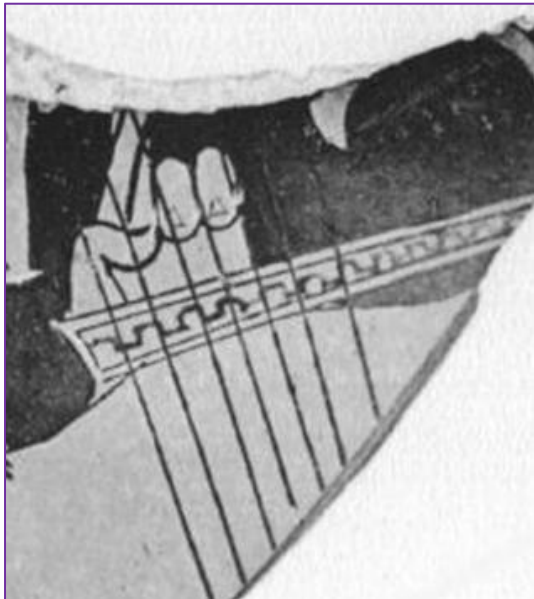
Beazley was able to assign to painters about half of the vases he knew, even if fragmentary or poor quality, and these were recorded in lists which were published from the 1920s until 1970, the year of his death. Since 1979 these lists have been kept up to date electronically in the BAPD.

### Epiktetos (all four)





Kleophrades painter



Epiktetos



**Beazley distinguished more than 1000 individuals and groups (ca. 400 black-figure and ca. 800 red-figure).**

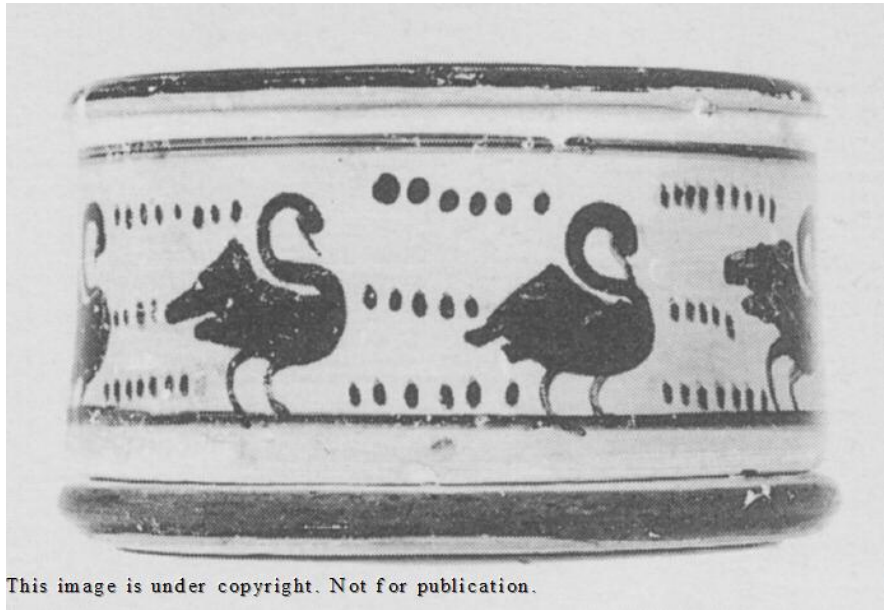
Since we have very few inscriptions with their names ... he gave conventional names inspired from:

**A) Provenance of one or more vases, i.e. the Dipylon Painter, the Siana Cups...**

**B) Museum (and often Museum and Catalogue number),**  
i.e. the Berlin Painter, the Painter of Berlin 1686



C) **Subject matter**, i.e. the Nessos Painter, the Gorgon Painter.... or the Swan Group (see below) ...



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D) **The name of the potter known by the signature EPOIESEN (made)**, i.e. the Kleophrades Painter, the Amasis Painter....

E) **KALOS** names written on the vase, i.e. the Euaion Painter, The Leagros Group... (see below: KLEOMELOS KALOS =KLEOMELOS IS BEAUTIFUL)



F) **Something else, or something funny, i.e. The Worst Painter (!)**

CLASSICAL ART RESEARCH CENTRE  
and THE BEAZLEY ARCHIVE

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- [Pottery database](#)
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Introduction  
to Greek pottery

**Pottery database**

There are two methods of searching the database. If you choose the full pottery database it is recommended that you use the 'Standard Search' option unless you need the full facilities of an 'Advanced Search'.

**Basic search (selective database)**

**Full database**

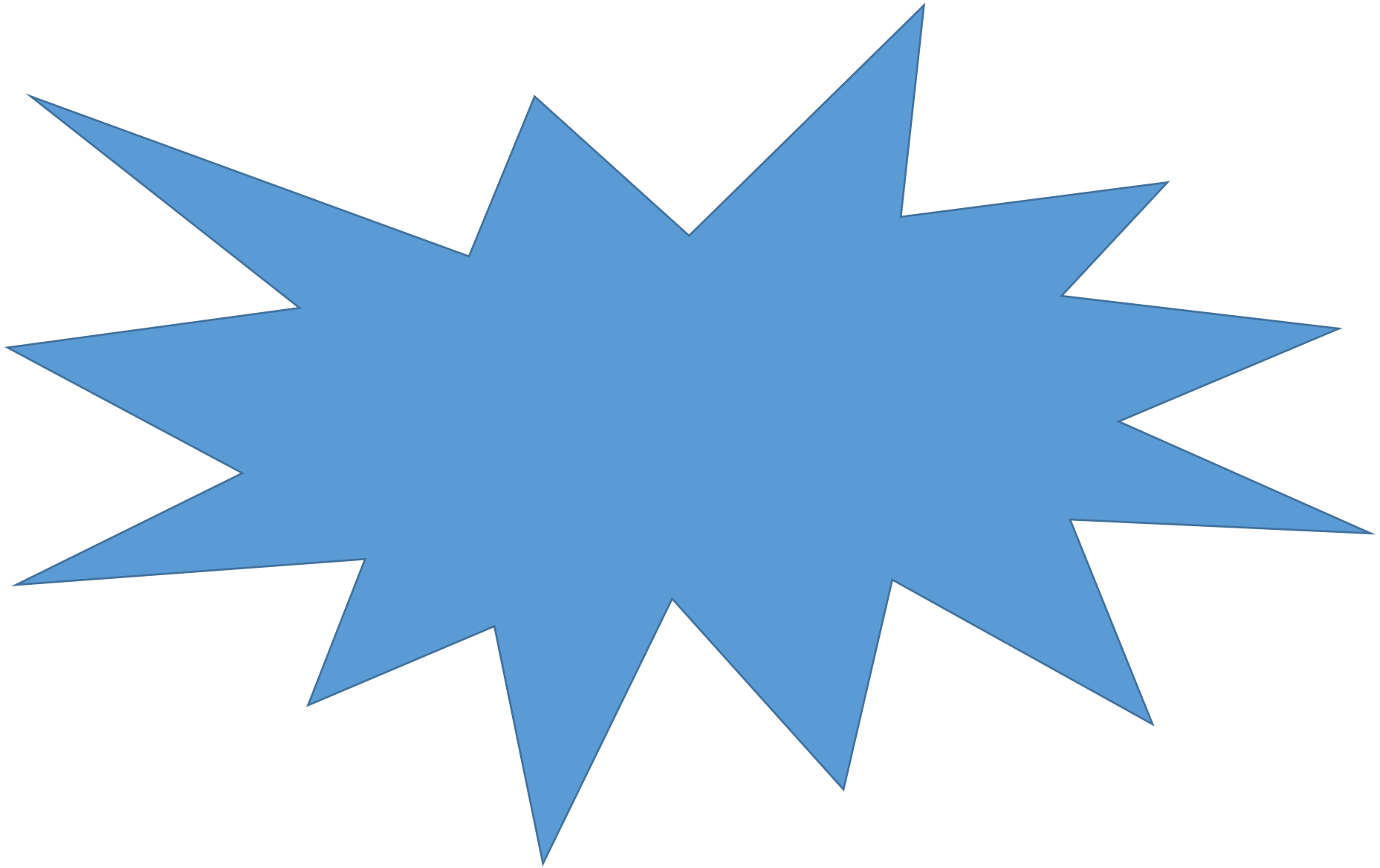




Vase Number	<b>586</b>
Fabric	<b>ATHENIAN</b>
Technique	<b>BLACK-FIGURE</b>
Shape Record	<b>AMPHORA B</b>
Date Range	<b>600-550</b>
Attributed To	<b>Manner of: GORGON P by HOLSCHER</b>
Decoration	<b>A,B: SPHINX</b>
Collection	<b>1: Wurzburg, Universitat, Martin von Wagner Mus.: H4928</b>
Publication Record	<b>Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum: WURZBURG, MARTIN VON WAGNER MUSEUM 1, 43, PL.(1919) 37.3-4</b> <a href="#">View Whole CVA Plates</a>

Last updated 20/05/2012 17:15:00 by Parker, Greg. Created 18/10/2003 12:00:00 by Mannack, Thomas. Approved by Mannack, Thomas. Copyright © 2003-2013 Classical Art Research Centre, University of Oxford.

Link to this record using the address [www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/record/C7B01CA6-6B10-49F5-B958-707CDA7F4483](http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/record/C7B01CA6-6B10-49F5-B958-707CDA7F4483)



## Iconography:



The interpretation of the pictorial themes  
based on a specific methodology

It concerns visual arts / Visual-Pictorial Arts

Every picture is an act of communication:  
We aim to restore communication  
(if and where possible)

**HERE, WE FOCUS ON ATTIC POTTERY**

# I. Ancient images are not photos !!!



**NARRATING TECHNIQUES IN ICONOGRAPHY**

**we will get back to this ....**



## II. Ancient images are not visualizations of ancient texts !



**Vase painters do not 'visualize' ancient texts...  
let alone the texts that have survived to this day...**

**.....but they could have been inspired by:**

- various literary sources which they had probably heard -for example, rhapsodic performances of some epic poems- and not read
- oral tradition of myths, transmitted from one generation to the other
- other works of art (eg sculpture, poetry, monumental painting)
- theatrical performances that they had watched
- their personal experience and imagination

**and MOST OF ALL**

- their own iconographical traditions

**Painters do not visualize  
ancient writings ...**

Attic Red-figured cup (inside)  
Painter Douris  
Ca. 475-470 B.C.  
Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco,  
n. 16545

This is a version of the Golden Fleece myth  
(the fleece is hanging on the branch of a tree)  
unknown from the extant written sources:  
the dragon-guard swallowed Jason,  
but then he is thrown up alive  
after the intervention of goddess Athena.





## PENTHEUS' DEATH

as depicted by  
the painter Euphronios  
one century before  
the "Bacchae" of Euripides



Euphronios' masterpiece, Kalyx Krater: Sleep and Death carry the dead Sarpedon



In the *Iliad*, God Hermes does not participate in the Sarpedon episode....



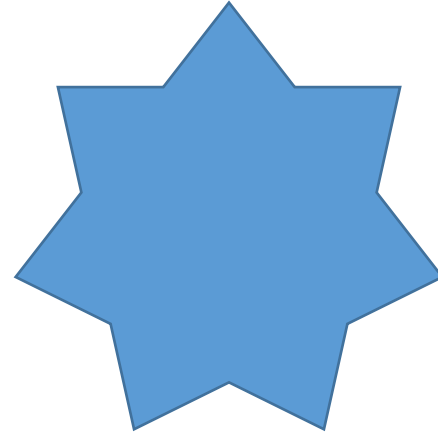
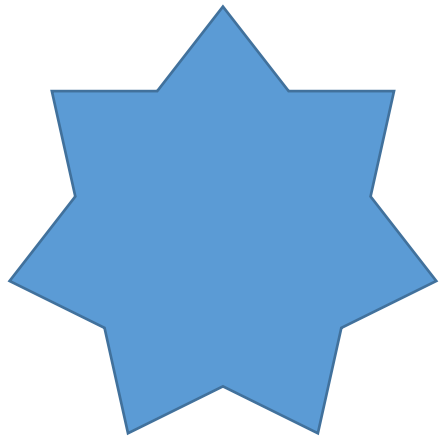


Euphronios

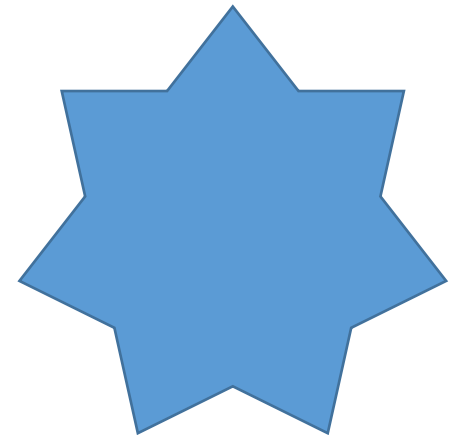


ATTENTION =  
foreshortening

. ... nor his dead body is bloody,  
because Apollo has washed him with ambrosia



**Keep our eyes open ...**



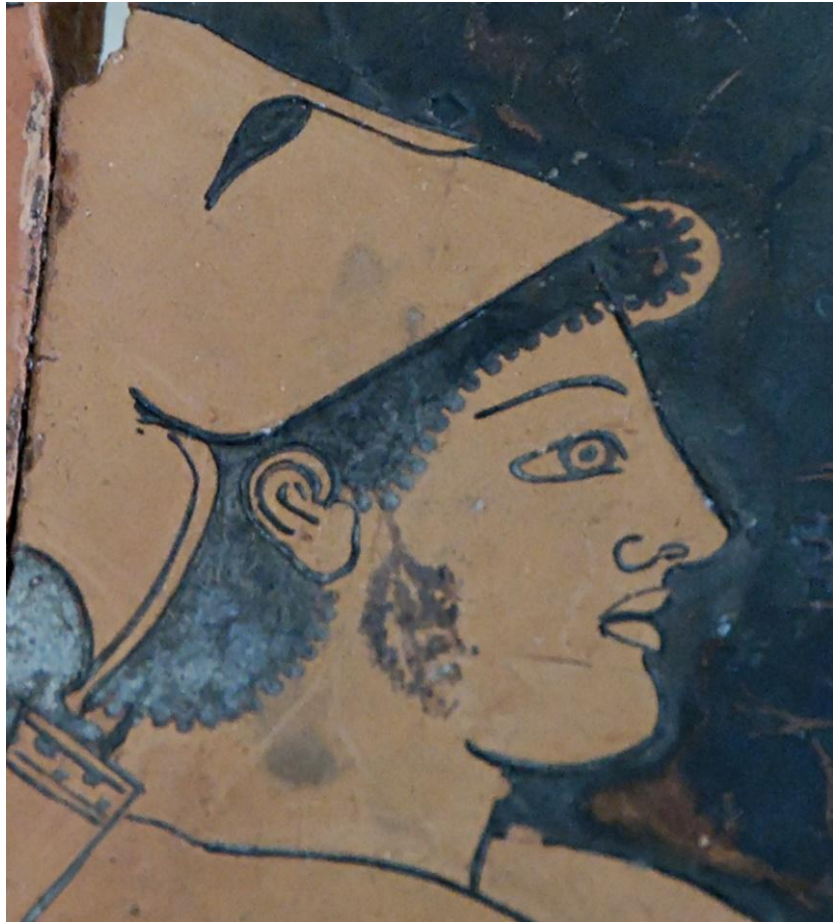
**Keep our eyes open and**

**carefully examine:**

**male hair, mustache, beard ...**

**(and teeth - if shown!)**

Kleophrades Painter: Detail of a young warrior, early 5th c. BC



Painter Euphronios: Herakles-Antaios struggle, late 6th c, BC



Keep our eyes open and



carefully examine  
clothes  
(or their absence)  
and jewellery ....

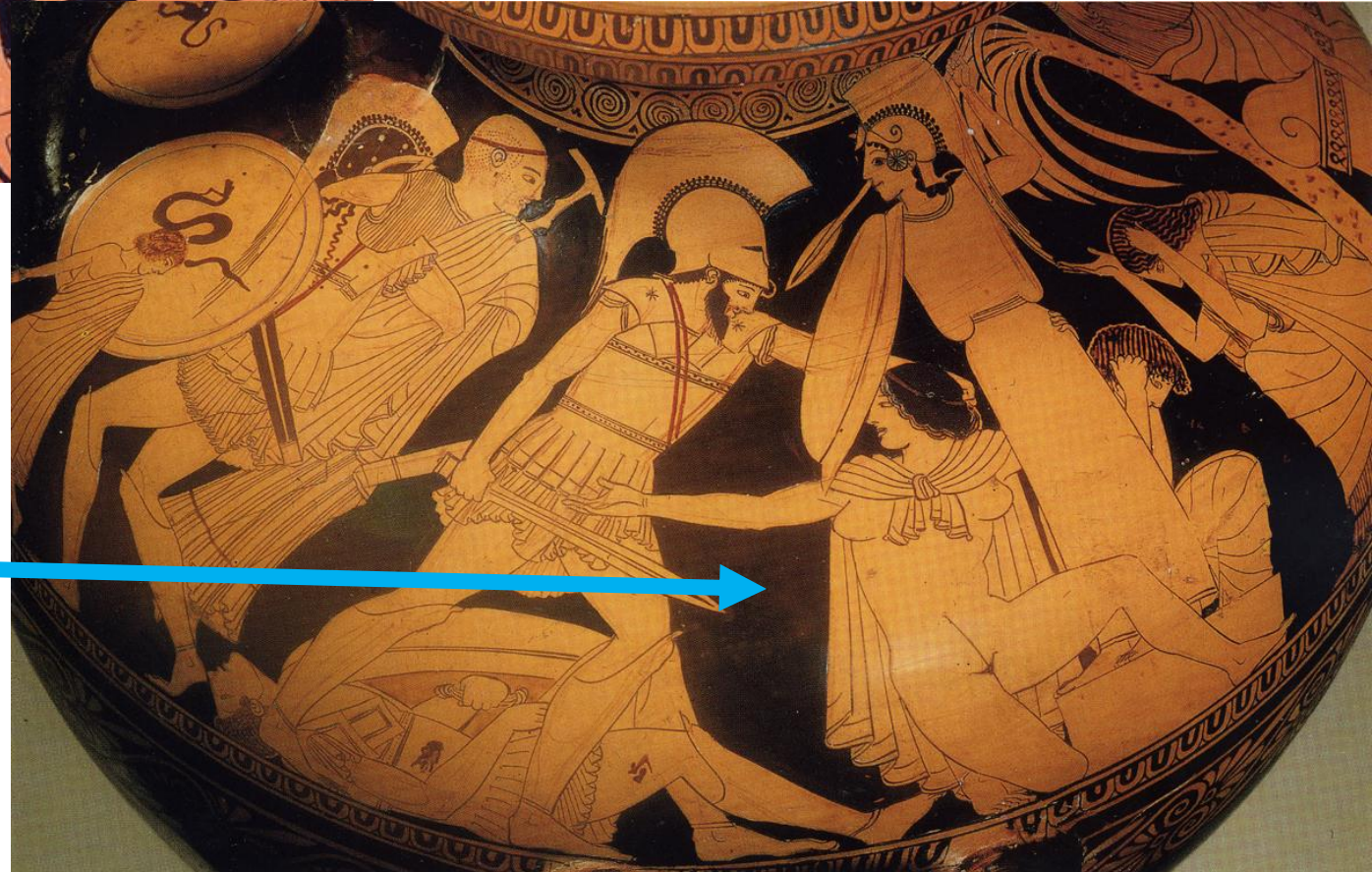


# Sack of Troy

Cassandra and Trojan Women  
Some = semi-naked (rape)



Painter Onesimos  
late 6th c. BC



Kleophrades painter  
early 5th c. BC

**LOOK FOR significant body marks , i.e. tattoos or circumcision**





## Pan Painter

Pelike

Herakles fighting Busiris, an Egyptian priest,  
at a temple/altar.

**Depicting of the Egyptians' circumcised penis**  
unlike the Greek hero  
c. 470 BC.  
Athens, NAM



Keep our eyes open and

examine the various accessories  
e.g. battles with or without  
arms ... it matters!



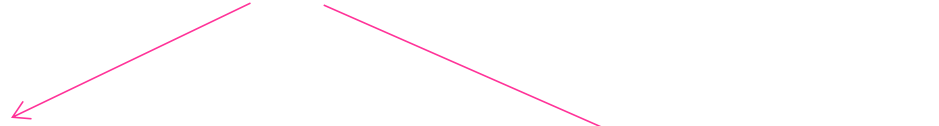


Aristophanes  
(painter)

ΠΕΡΙΘΟΣ, ΥΨΙΠΥΛΟΣ  
ΘΗΣΕΥΣ, ΝΥΚ[Τ]ΕΥΣ  
ΕΛΡΕΤΟΣ ΑΣΜΕΤΟΣ  
ΑΝΤΙΒΑΤΕΣ, ΕΥΡΥΠΥΛΟΣ

**Centaurs .... Inside and outside ... but different topics**

**Bronze lampstand ...as a weapon (right photo)**





## Penelope Painter

Odysseus kills  
the suitors -  
notice the table = 'shield'

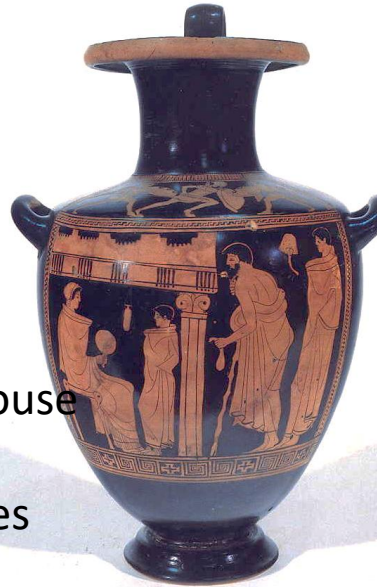




**Keep our eyes open**  
**and check the setting of the scene:**  
**indoors – outdoors .... or both ... or 'none'...**

**Harrow Painter**  
Hydria  
Tampa Museum

A woman indoors is talking with a child  
A man and a young man stand outside the house  
The man is holding a small money bag ...  
and these bags are usually given to prostitutes  
for payment



Or this is an innocent family scene: Husband and  
sons return back home  
bringing the earnings of the day?

Or just some "innocent" financial transaction  
(e.g. the woman is a merchant of some kind)  
the meaning of which escapes us ...





## Possibly a prostitute...

The mirror she is holding and the hanging alabaster (fragrance bottle) indicate that she is taking very good care of herself

Peculiar role if the child:

Was it sent to negotiate the amount on behalf of the man ?

Or did the man (lover) bring the young man? (his son?) to the prostitute for sexual education ...

Or he is her own son living in the same house

We can not be sure ...

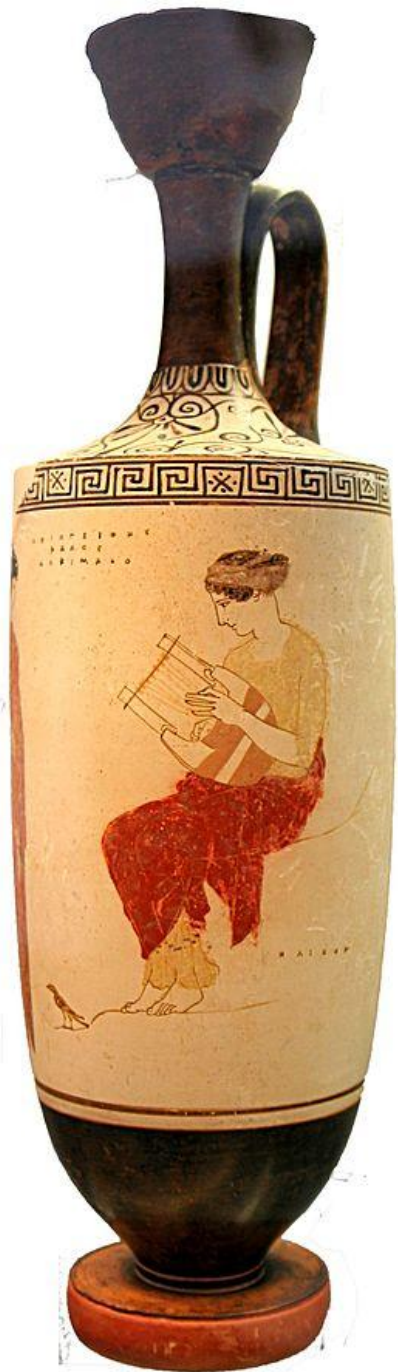


Keep our eyes open and  
check if the landscape,  
is depicted  
(and how it is depicted) ...



Detail  
from a krater  
by the Niobid Painter





ΗΛΙΚΩΝ = ΕΛΙΚΩΝ = ΕΛΙΚΩΝ

Elikon mountain in Boeotia





Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO  
Image Landsat / Copernicus

Google Earth



Map of ancient and prehistoric Boeotia based on the books "Prehistoric Greece" (2000) and "Metron Ariston" (2003). The Homeric city Hyle near the Lake Kephissis is the only one that fits with the significant ruins at the hill Gla (see Gla).

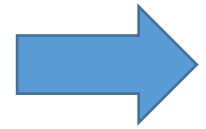


## Lycaon painter

Ca. 440 B.C.  
Pelike  
Boston, MFA

## Nekyia

Elpenor- Odysseus- Hermes







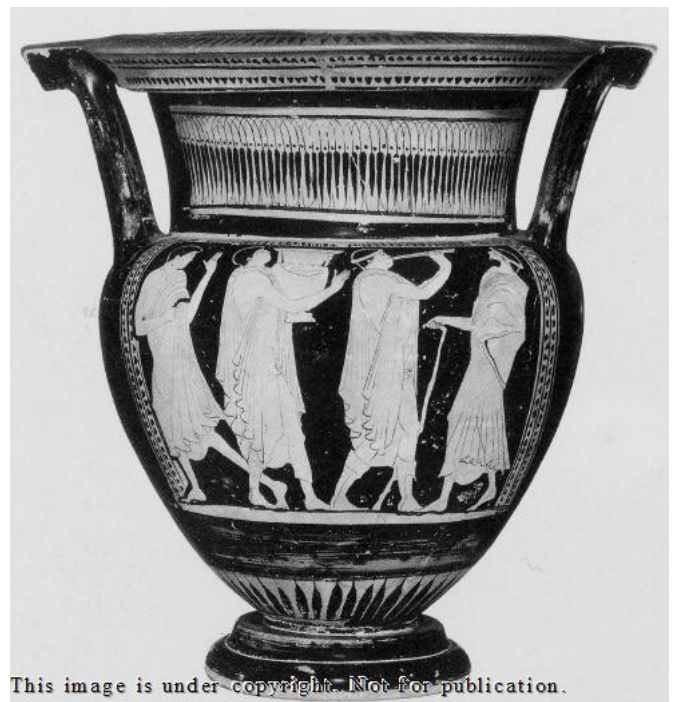
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Keep our eyes open and

always look up  
for other works by the same  
painter or/and potter,  
and by related workshops

Leningrad painter  
column craters ...  
Almost similar themes

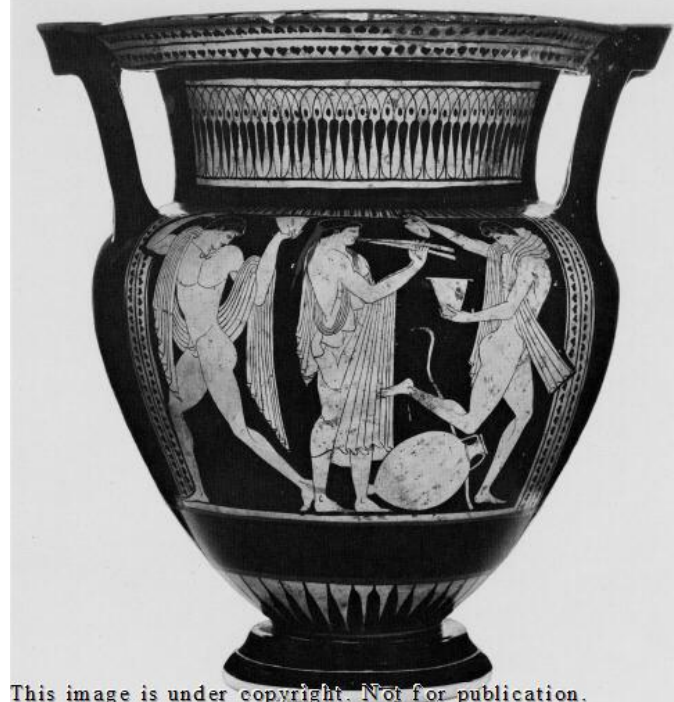
Mannerisms .....



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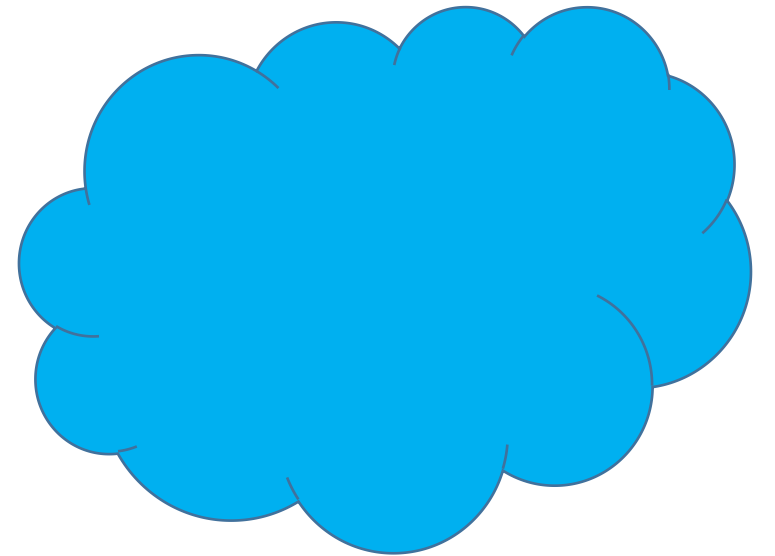
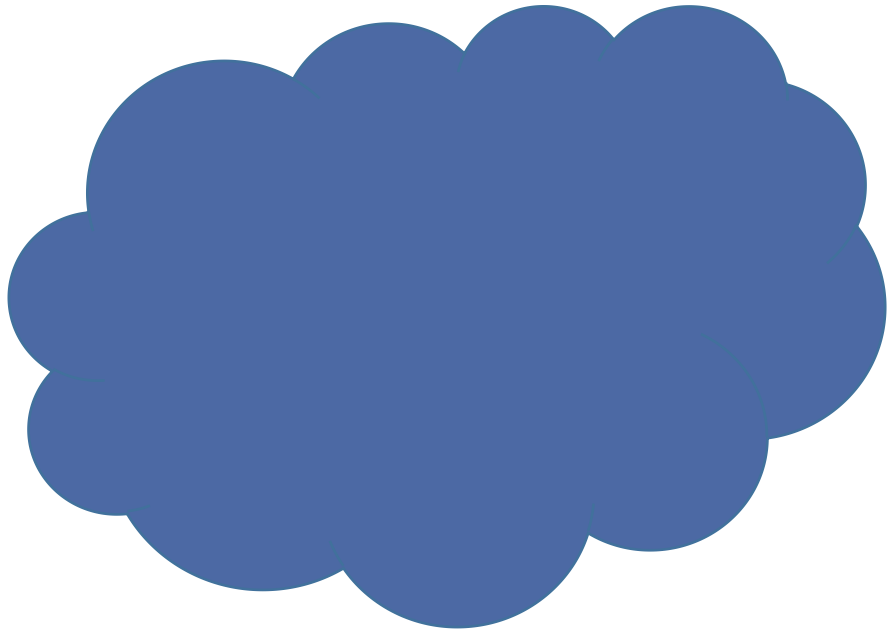
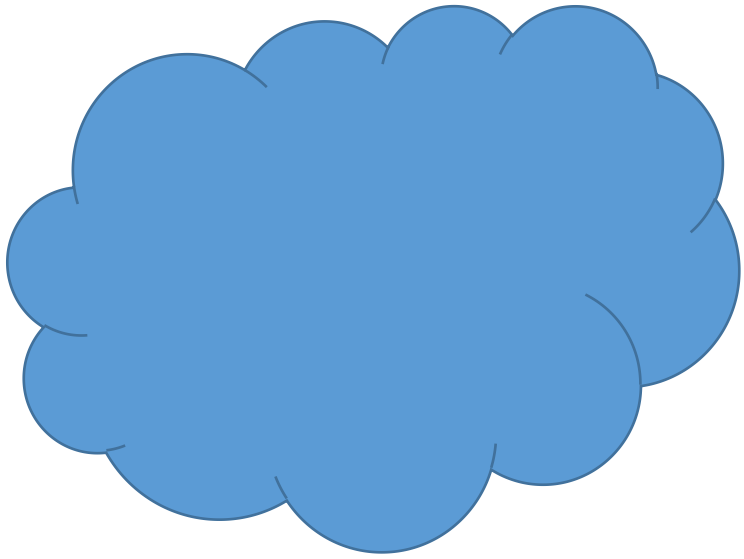


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# ANALYSIS OF VISUAL NARRATION



# ANALYSIS OF VISUAL NARRATION

**A. Description:** α) identity of the work of art : material, dimensions, conservation status, location and storage location, index, etc.

b) Formal analysis

**B Interpretation:** Function, symbols, signatures, meanings, etc.

**C. Evaluation:** Valuation according to its time and space

**ICONOGRAPHY**

Just as a poem is made up of sounds, words, and parts of speech that are structured to create a coherent meaning,  
so **too an image is made up of lines, planes, colors, and surfaces that create a recognizable set of forms.**

For language, one must recognize subject, verb, and modifiers in order to articulate the basic pattern of action that a narrative describes,  
and so too the viewer must decide what the forms of an image represent and their immediate relationship to one another in the picture.

The utility of **structuralism** for the discussion of visual narrative is that it promotes the idea of the relationship between elements over their substance as the basis of similarity and connection.

**Semiotics** in particular deals with the relationship of the sign, or material aspect represented in a work of art, to its referent or object. Structural analysis deals more with the mechanics of narrative structure and the interaction with the audience, and with the archetypes and patterns that a story creates.

**Both share, however, a common approach in identifying basic units and examining how they interact at different levels to create meaning or experience.**

As in language, the viewer is not consciously aware of the function(s) that an individual from within the image may play, but still he or she recognizes the story, its setting, and the identity of the figures by perceiving the functions within the image and their relationship to each other.

The advantage of structural analysis for the study of pictorial narrative is that it allows us to see and define the underlying elements of a narrative and from this, moving to a higher level of analysis, to differentiate the impact that other elements of narrative have on the viewer.

**Nuclei**  
**Catalysts**  
**Indices**  
**Informants**

All elements of a narrative may be identified as one of these four functions, **although an individual element may serve more than one function simultaneously.**

These four functions constitute the most basic elements of a pictorial narrative and make up what we shall call the ***micro-structure of pictorial narrative***

# THE NARRATIVE MICRO-STRUCTURE

## ***Nucleus:***

The essential action and its participants on which the narrative hinges; this action **must be open-ended**.

## ***Catalysts:***

Additional elements that **elaborate on the nucleus**, **but are not essential to the action of the nucleus**.

This elaboration can be an enrichment of the action, by including reacting spectators, or can serve to connect the nucleus to other undepicted nuclei.

## ***Informants:***

Those elements that identify participants or locate the narrative in **time and place**.

## ***Index:***

An element that refers to an event, idea, or person **outside of the immediate narrative**.

# THE NARRATIVE MICRO-STRUCTURE

## 1. NUCLEUS

The most important of the functions is the *nucleus*, an open-ended action on which the narrative hinges. Since it describes an action, it requires at least two elements: an agent - someone or something to act, and consequently someone or something to be acted on. It is open-ended, that is, the action and its result must come from a plausible range of alternatives. This does not mean that the audience is in genuine suspense or that the result is in doubt, for anyone who has heard a story such as one of the labors of Herakles .... will generally know how a narrative based on the story will turn out, (whether the narrative is poem, play, or painting).

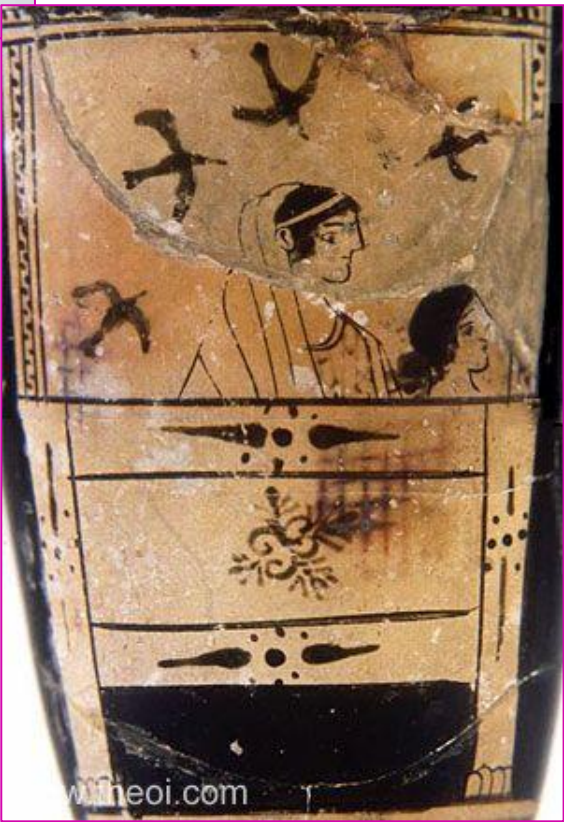
We might identify the nucleus of the scene on this lekythos in Yale (name vase of the Painter of the Yela lekythos, ca. 470-460 BC) as the woman holding the bundle of clothing.

Although the action is not of momentous consequences, It fulfills the requirement of someone acting on something else. It is open-ended in that it plausibly leads from or to other actions: The woman has picked up the bundle? Or she will she put it down?

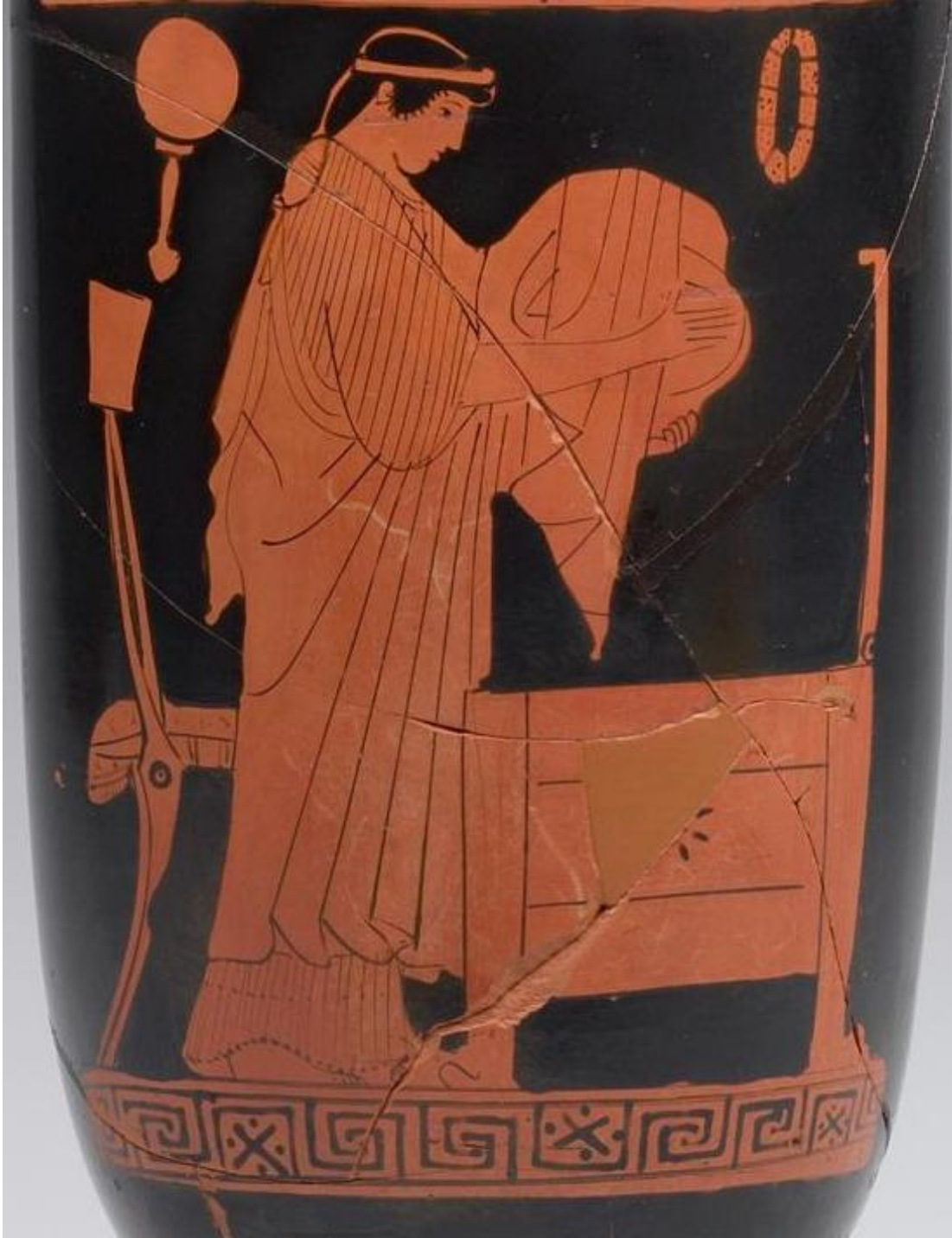




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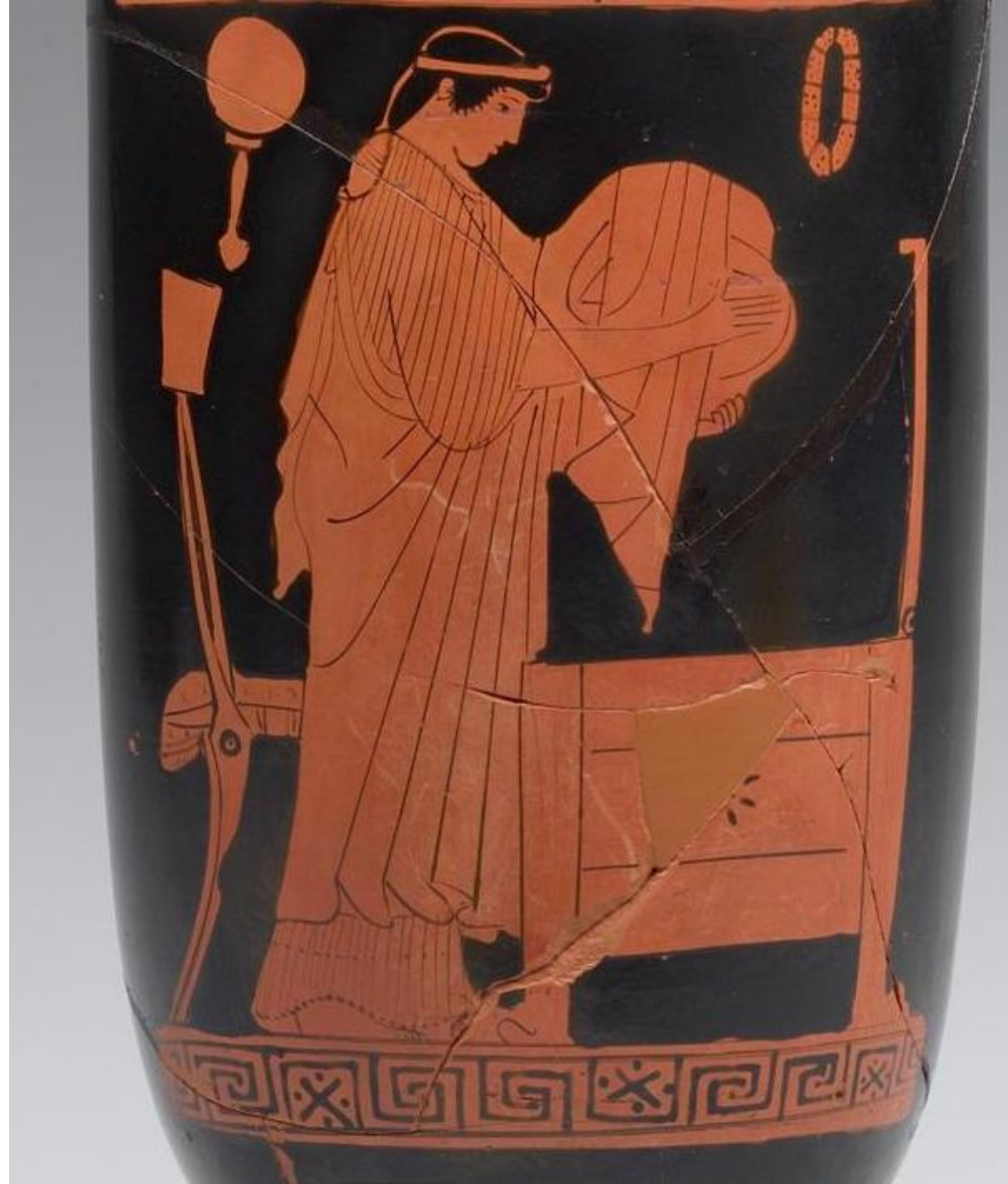


In a literary narrative, a poet would string together a series of *nuclei* to describe the entire action: the woman picks up the bundle or carries the bundle, shifts her hold, lowers the bundle, leaves the bundle... or all the opposites...

An artist working with only one image, as is usually the case, must be more economical.

Frequently, the artist will choose, as here, a moment near the end of the sequence from which the result can be inferred, but whether an earlier or later moment is chosen, **the single nucleus must be perceived as open-ended**, as representative of prior and subsequent nuclei that constitute the basic action.

Clearly, where the nucleus is ambiguous, there would be more potential problems for a viewer, but the nature of the function remains the same.



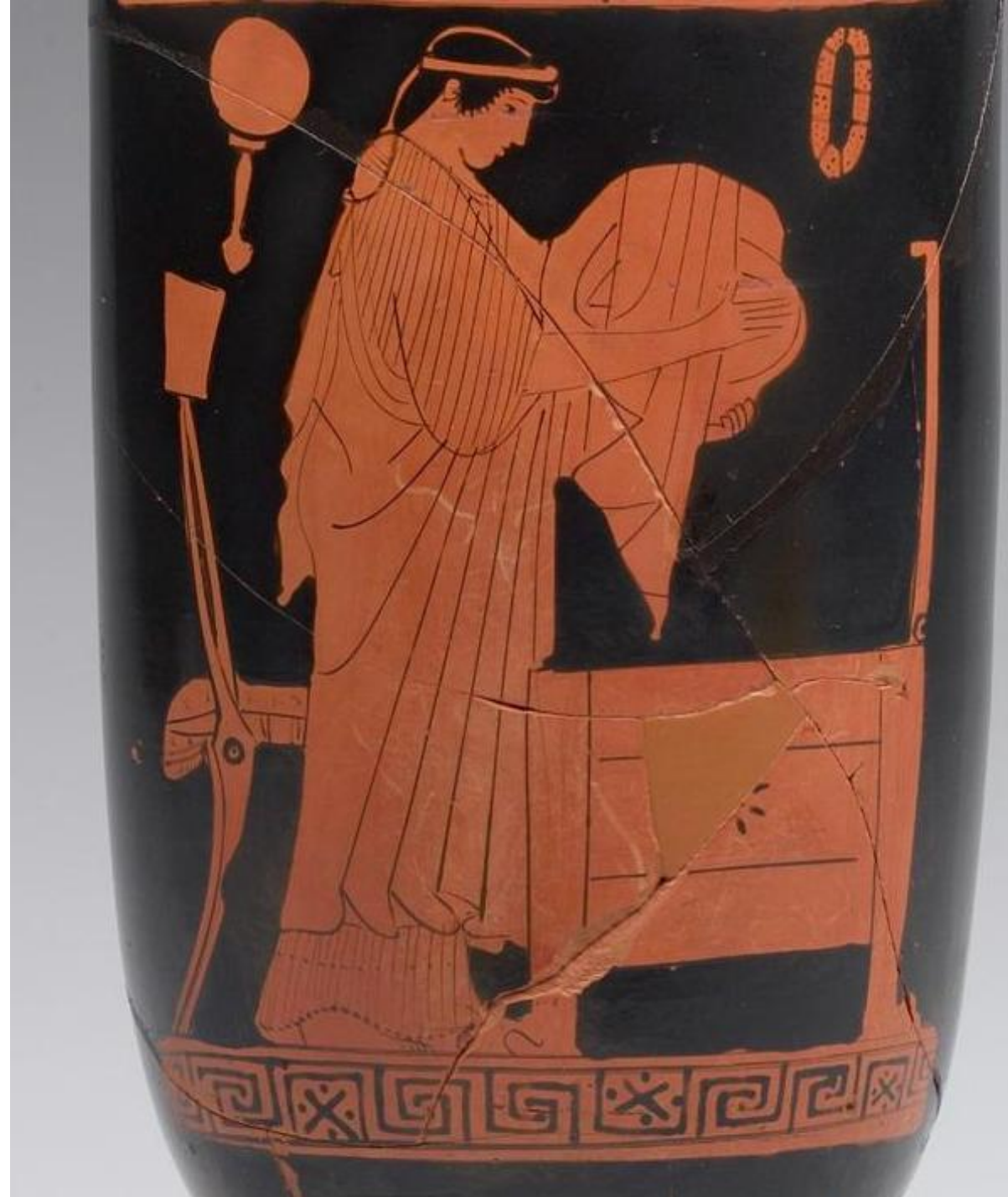
## 2. Catalysts

**They fill in the gaps between the nuclei, elaborating but not altering the story.**

Like their literary counterparts, pictorial catalysts are not necessary to the narrative, which could consist only of the nucleus, but their inclusion provides an important dimension to the story.

They may serve to magnify the scope of the action or provide a means for the artist to refer to earlier or later nuclei that are not depicted, increasing the density of the narrative.

*In the Yale lekythos, we can point to the chest as a catalyst by subjecting it to a test ... by removing it from the picture.*





Without the chest we might imagine that the clothes will be left on a shelf, or that they will be placed in a basket to be carried somewhere else, etc.

The chest provides a clue as to the next-or-previous action or nucleus; it also provides a clue as to another action, that of raising the lid so that the clothes can be placed inside or taken out.

On the other hand, the lid might have been left up from an earlier action unrelated to the present.

In other words, the chest is not fundamental to the main action, but is important in defining it.

### 3. Informants

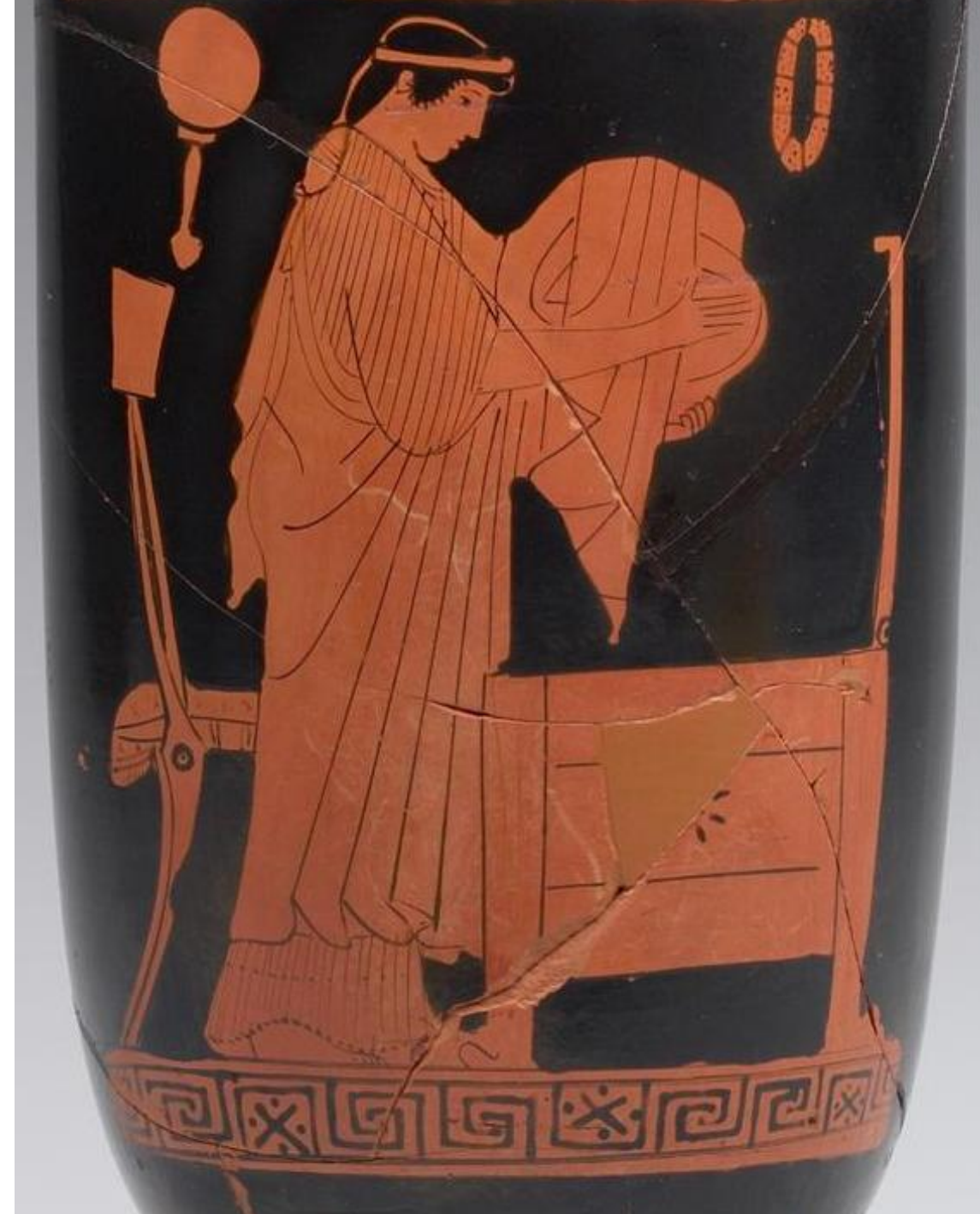
The chest also serves another function, that of *informant*

Informants serve "to identify, to locate in time and space." In this case, the chest tells us that the action is taking place inside a house since it is too large to be carried easily outdoors.

The presence of the **chair, mirror, and wreath** confirm this placement, so that the four elements **work collectively as informants** to identify the place of the action.

The presence of the mirror on the wall suggests that the room is in the women's quarters of the house.

The **chair** is to the side of the woman, farther back in the picture space, **and the hanging mirror and wreath** indicate a wall or back boundary to the space.



## 4. Index (Indices)

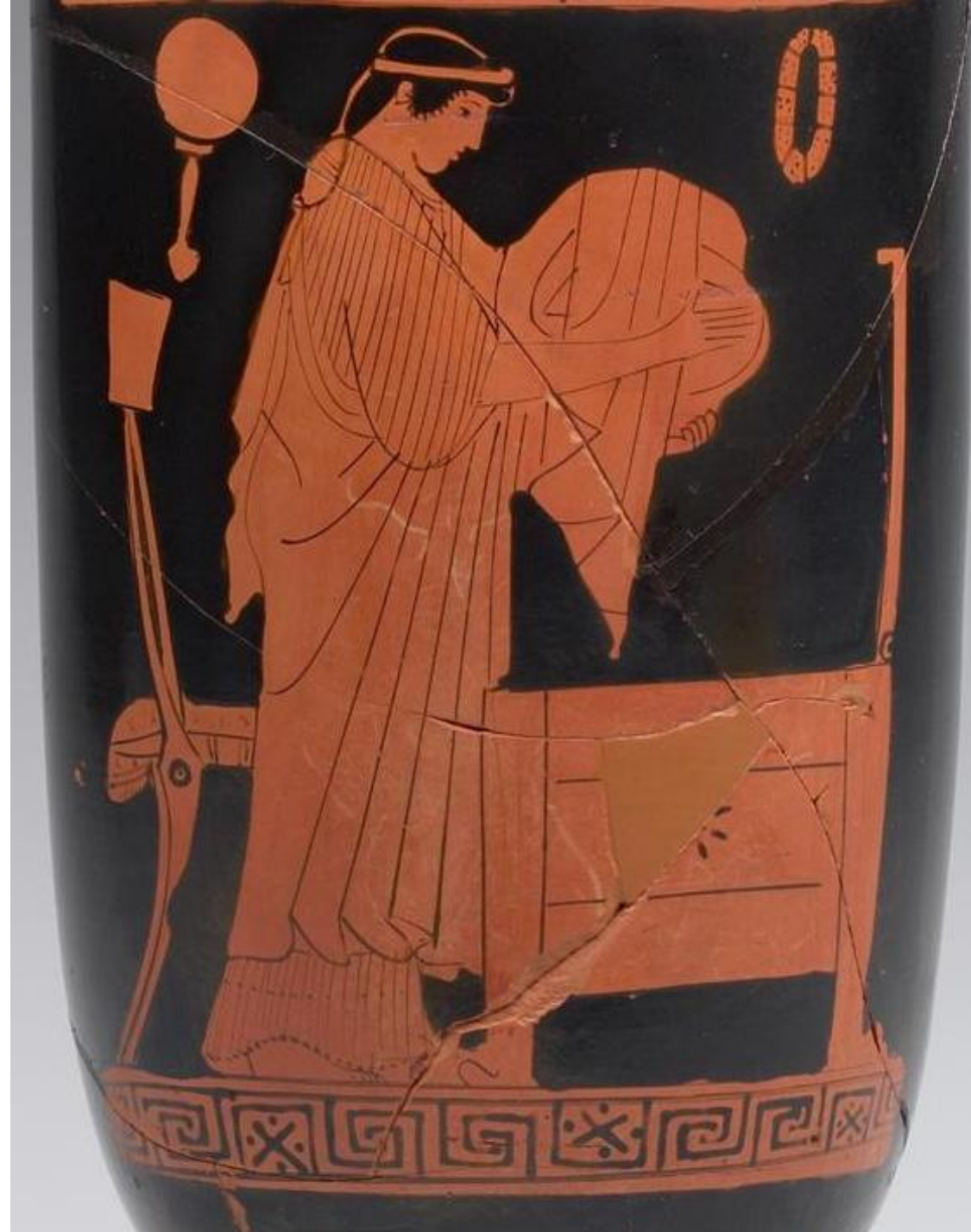
More general:

An element that refers to an event, idea, or person **outside of the immediate narrative**

In the Yale lekythos, **the mirror and chest serve simultaneously as paradigmatic indexes linking the scene to the social context of women's life in fifth-century Athens**

since these objects are most often associated with women.

**They can also recall other possible actions performed by the woman,** such as holding the mirror or opening/closing the chest, since the viewer can recall other scenes from art and from daily life in which a woman would have used these objects. So, too, the bundle of clothes hints at other actions concerned with the making, use, and care of material in the household.





## Remember...

**The biggest part of our research is (reasonable) speculation based on deep knowledge of:**

**A) the written courses**

**B) the methodology of iconography**

*We should always be cautious,*

*when we recognize / identify figures, myths, acts, etc...*

***Ancient vase paintings do not speak for themselves  
(as some may believe).***

***With our systematic study we try  
to 'hear' and 'understand' their silent speech.***

***Today we may not always understand (or precisely understand)  
the technique, decoration, specific use and/or symbolism  
of pictorial narrations ...  
but our conversation continues ...  
nevertheless!***



# Case study: 'All in one': shape and size / signature / special techniques/ topic

ΞΕΝΟΦΑΝΤΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΗΣΕΝ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΟΣ  
XENOPHANTOS THE ATHENIAN MADE (IT)

St. Petersburg- Hermitage Museum

Oversized squat lekythos

Height 38,5 cm. !!!

From Kerch (ancient Pantikapaion)

400-380 BC

Special grave good

Persians are depicted/**HISTORICAL FIGURES!!!**

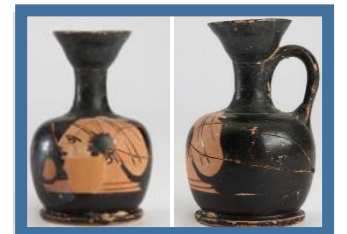
chasing real and imaginary animals

(boar , deer, griffin ,lion-griffin)

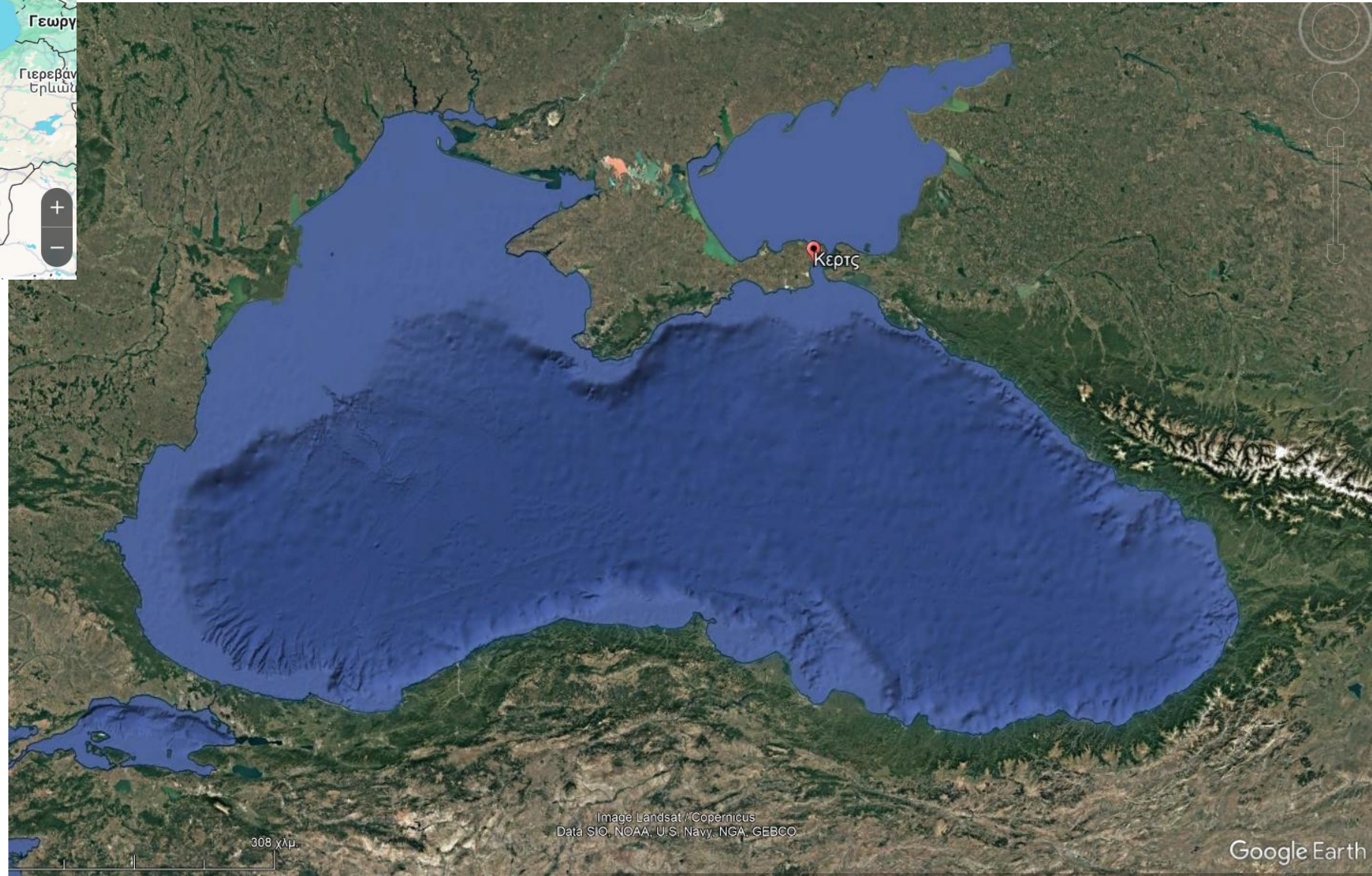
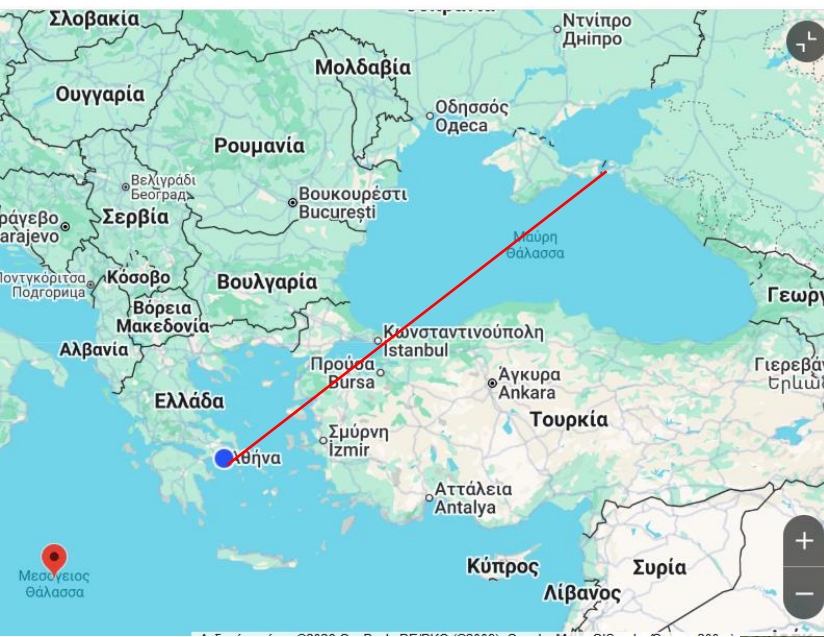
Shoulder = Nike, Gigantomachy, Centauromachy

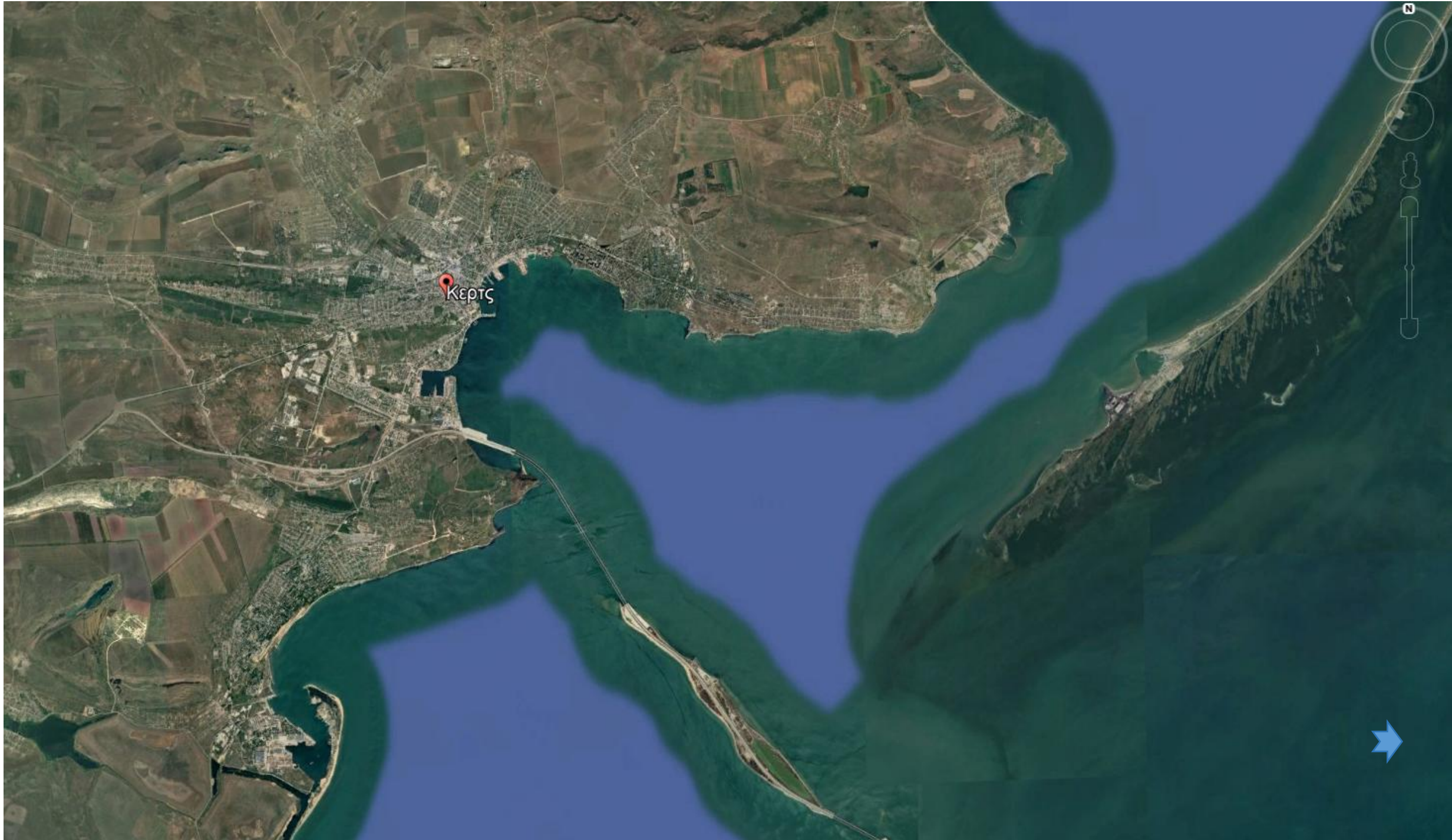


Normal size of a  
squat lekythos



Athens - Pantikapaion (Kertch) 1333 km (straight line)





Κέρτσ





Panticapaeum

Image © 2026 Maxar Technologies

Google Earth

208 μ









## Persian royal hunt

Special techniques=  
Red-figure  
and white relief figures  
and plenty of gilding  
and various other colours  
(light blue, pink etc)



## Named Persians on the vase



The inscriptions (in Greek letters) give Persian names, including:

- **Artamithres** (Ἀρταμίθρης)
- **Arsames** (Ἀρσάμης)
- **Atropates** (Ἀτροπάτης)
- **Mardonius** (Μαρδόνιος)

These are authentic Persian (Achaemenid) names rendered in Greek form.

## Why this matters

- The vase dates to the period **after the Persian Wars**, when Greek artists were still deeply interested in Persian costume and courtly imagery.
- The figures wear **Persian dress** (trousers, soft caps/tiaras, patterned garments).
- The naming suggests the scene may represent **specific noble Persians**, possibly linked to courtly or hunting scenes.
- The object was found in the **Black Sea region**, an area with strong trade and cultural contacts between Greeks and non-Greeks.

Scholars debate whether:

- The names refer to historical Achaemenid nobles,
- Or whether they were chosen as “exotic” but recognizable Persian names for decorative effect.





**ΞΕΝΟΦΑΝΤΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΗΣΕΝ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΟΣ**

Why is he mentioning his descent?  
**VERY RARE!**

Probably because he worked in Kerch and wanted to point out his Athenian origin... since Athenian pottery was famous all over the Mediterranean

Migrant potter

Interesting case!



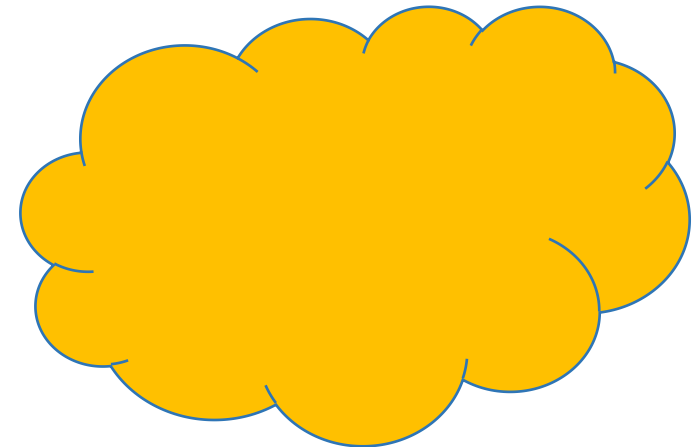
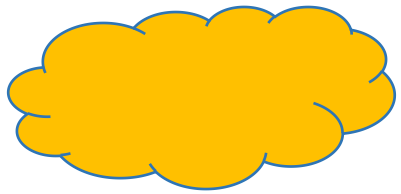
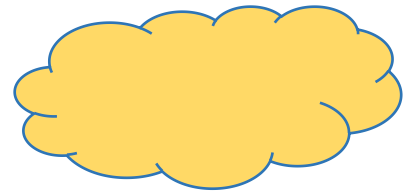
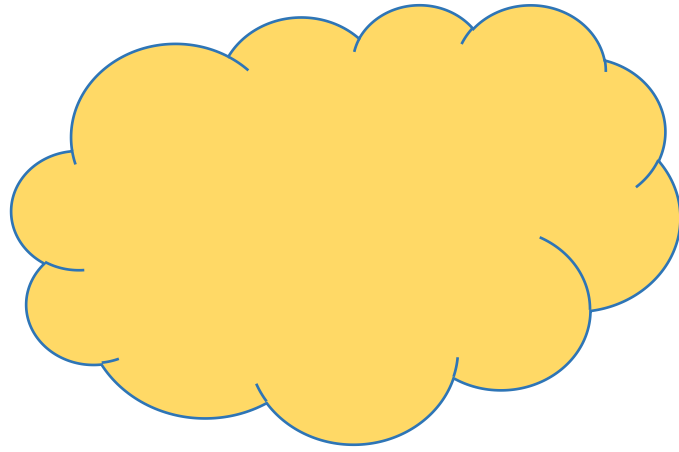


**KEEP  
CALM**

**AND**

**KEEP YOUR  
EYES OPEN**

THINK ABOUT YOUR SEMINAR PAPERS.  
I GIVE YOU SOME IDEAS ...  
BUT WE WILL DISCUSS AND PICK IN CLASS



# EVERYDAY LIFE

Symposium

Sex and the City (& Homosexuality)

Women in fountain houses (& mythology)

Craftsmen and merchants

Travel – sea – ships (& mythology)

Hunt (& mythology)

Pets and birds

Games

Landscape – Countryside



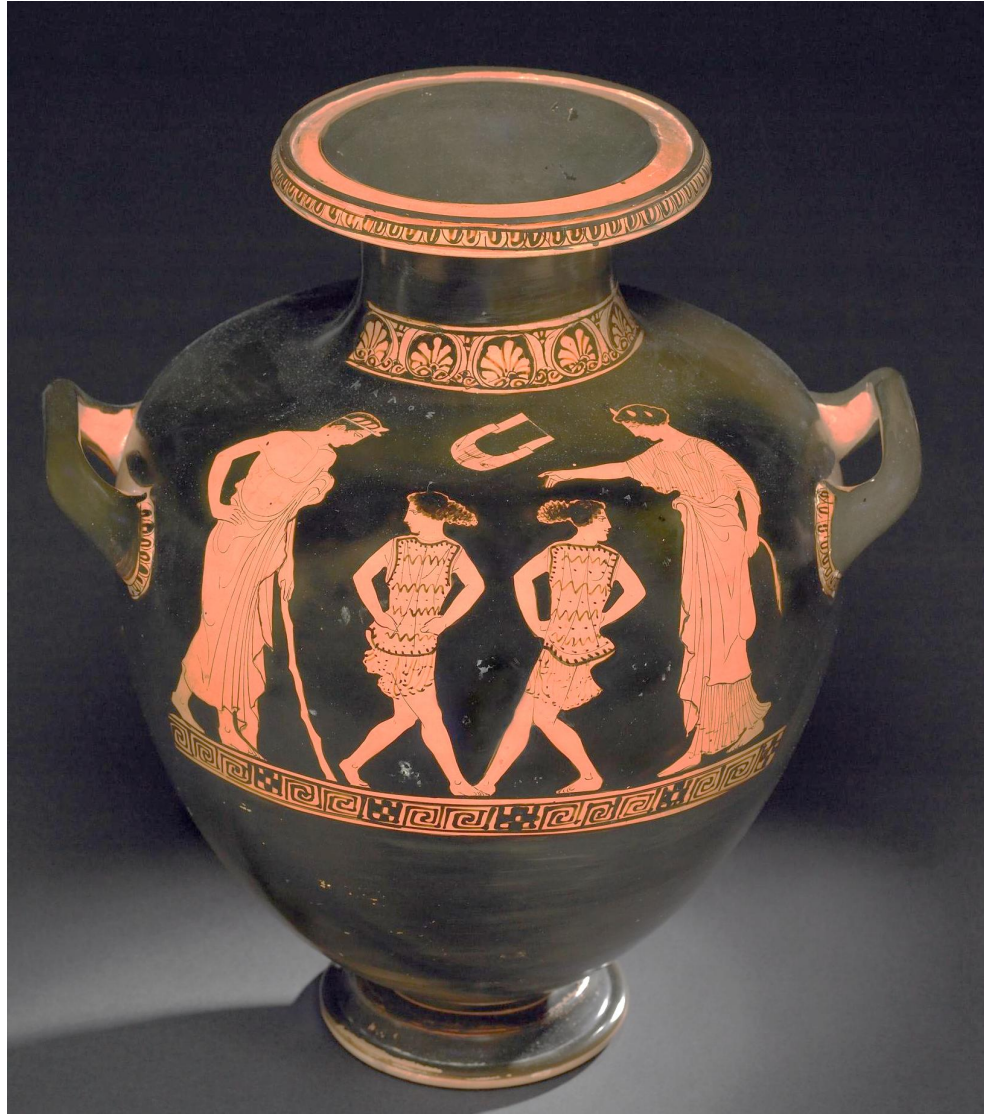
Shoemakers







# RELIGION AND FESTIVALS - ATHLETICS - MUSIC AND DANCE – THEATER



You can choose ONE depiction and discuss your subject based on that: for example this one for

**MUSIC AND DANCE FOR YOUNG GIRLS**

OR

you can choose a wider topic on e.g. **MUSIC AND DANCE ...**

see next screen





... of course you can also use examples from sculpture etc.

**Pyrrhic Dance – Male and Female Pyrrhic Dancers**



## ACTORS & COSTUMES = COMEDY AND SATYR PLAY

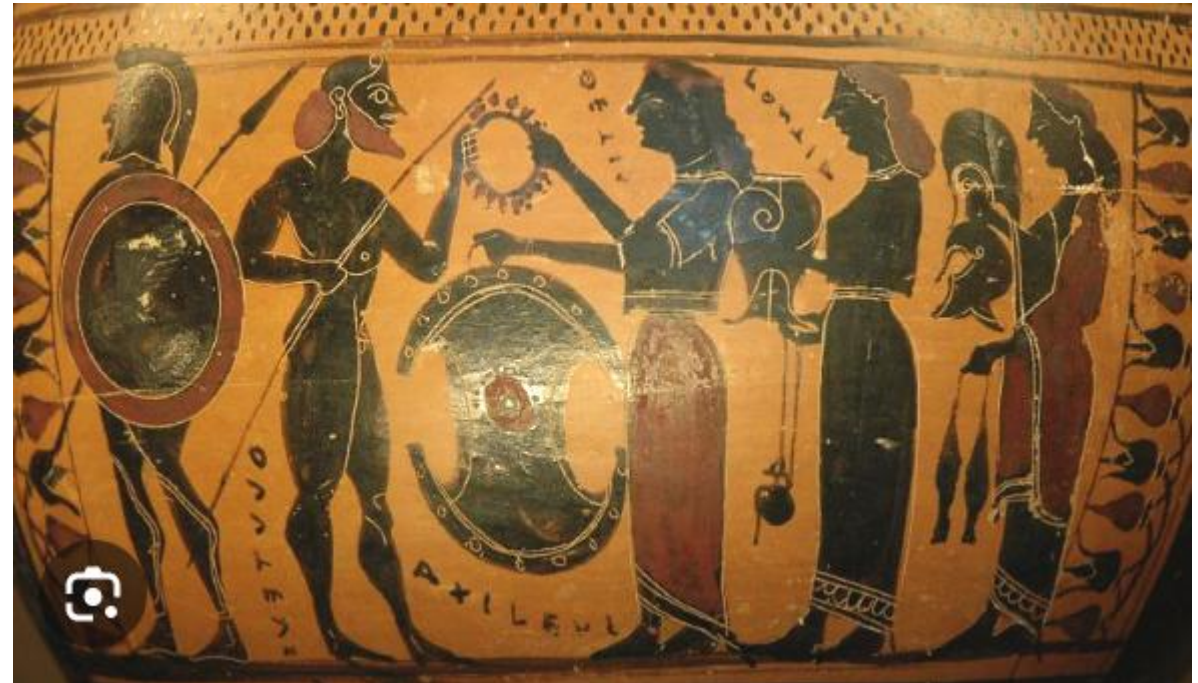
either Attic or South Italian (Phlyax vases) pottery



# WAR

Epic stories (Homeric or not)

- \* Achilles and Ajax playing dice
- \* Thetis and Achilles (mother and son - various stages of their relationship)
- \* The sack of Troy (based on the hydria by the Kleophrades Painter?)



# DEATH

White-ground lekythoi and other vases

Depictions of the Underworld (& mythology:  
Hades's and Persephone's palace, and Kerberos ...)

Charon, the ferryman (& mythology)

Sleep and Death, the twin brothers (& mythology)

Mourners – mourning



# MYTHOLOGY IN GENERAL

*Some not so common depictions on pottery, i.e.*

\* Sky and solar system ...

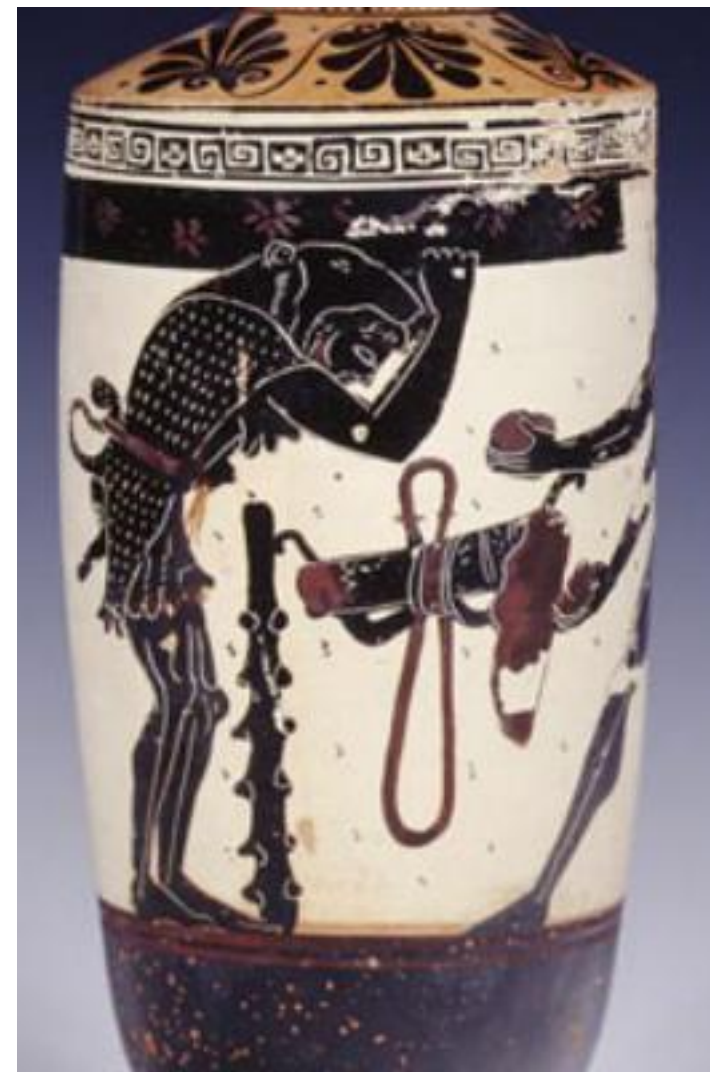
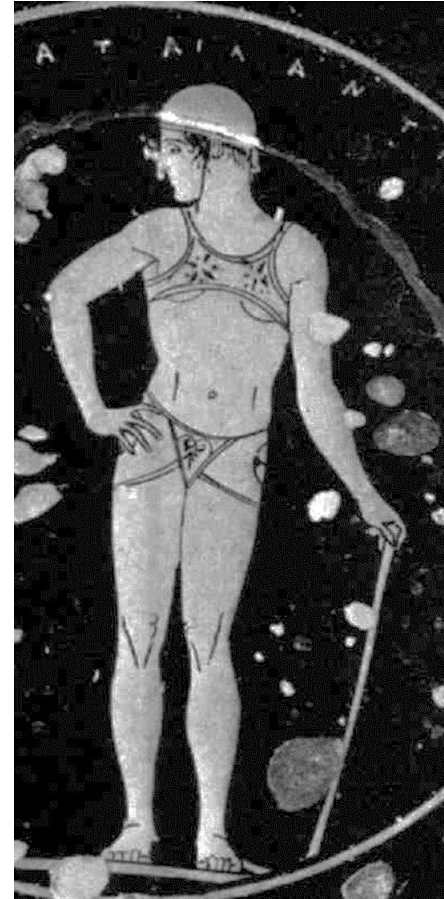
The 'weight' of the sky (Herakles' tasks)

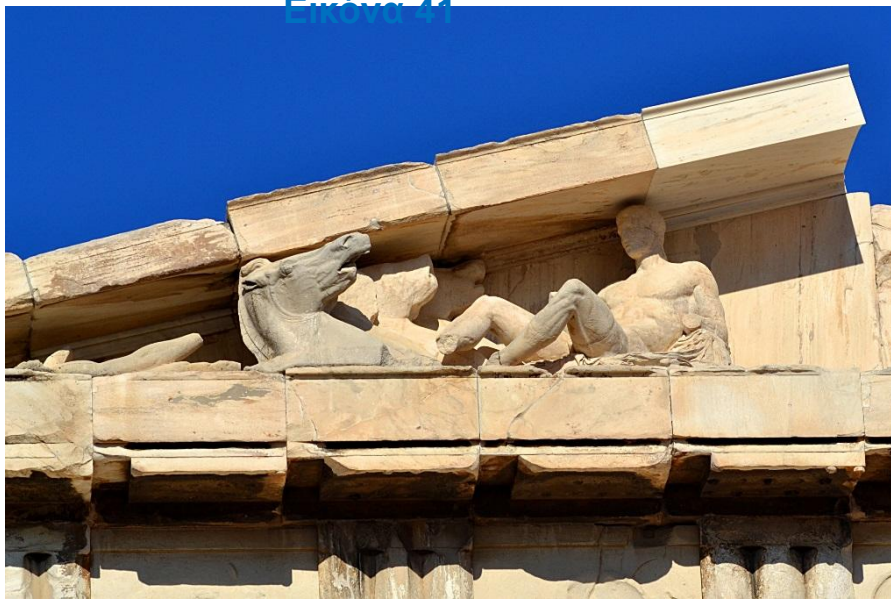
and/or The sky: sun, moon, stars

and/or The stars of Dioskouroi: St. Elmo's fire

\* Women killers and their victims (Thracians, Bacchae, Prokne and Philomela, Medea)

\* Atalanta (and women athletes)





Parthenon pediment = Sun and Moon (chariots)



Red figure vase by the Painter of Karlsruhe  
Paris – influenced by the Parthenon

