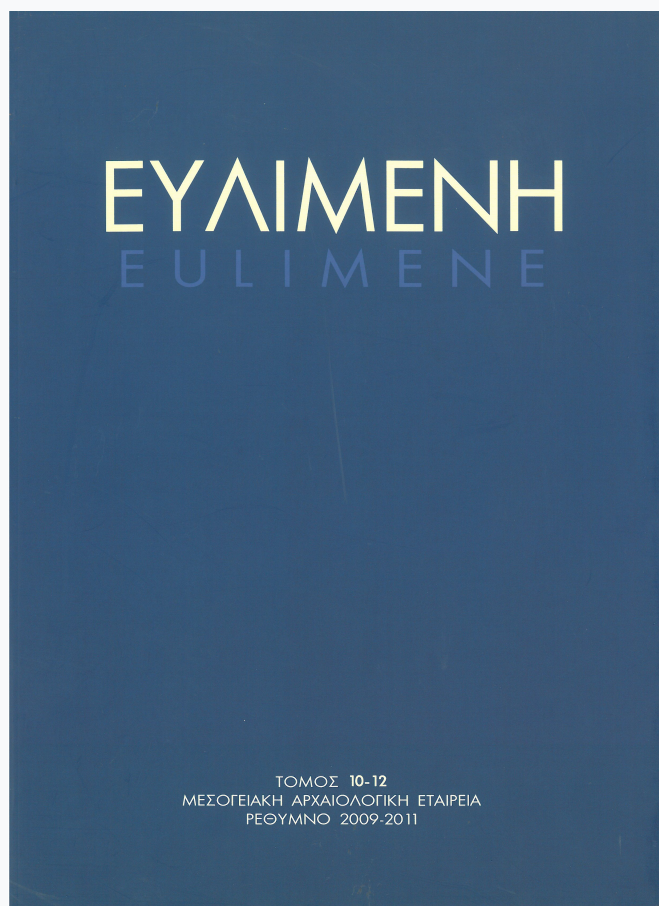


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**The beginning of narrative art in attic vase painting
A review of proposed theories**

Anthi Dipla

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ΕΥΛΙΜΕΝΗ

ΜΕΛΕΤΕΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΛΑΣΙΚΗ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΑ,
ΤΗΝ ΕΠΙΓΡΑΦΙΚΗ, ΤΗ ΝΟΜΙΣΜΑΤΙΚΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΠΑΠΥΡΟΛΟΓΙΑ

Τόμος 10-12
Μεσογειακή Αρχαιολογική Εταιρεία
Ρέθυμνο 2009-2011

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Anthi Dipla, The beginning of narrative art in attic vase painting: A review of proposed theories, EYΛIMENH 10-12 (2009-2011), 11-32.

Η αρχή της αφηγηματικής τέχνης στην αττική αγγειογραφία: Μια επισκόπηση των προτεινόμενων θεωριών. Το άρθρο αυτό διερευνά διάφορες θεωρίες των τελευταίων 60 χρόνων σχετικά με την αρχή της αφηγηματικής τέχνης στην αττική αγγειογραφία (και την ελληνική τέχνη γενικότερα). Το διηγηματικό περιεχόμενο μιας σκηνής συνδέεται κλασικά με τη δυνατότητα ανασύνθεσης μιας συγκεκριμένης ιστορίας ή τουλάχιστον μιας συγκεκριμένης πράξης ή δραστηριότητας, ενώ μια πιο στρουκτουραλιστική προσέγγιση το αναγνωρίζει ακόμη και ελλείψει ιδιαίτερων ή συγκεκριμένων στοιχείων, δηλαδή ακόμη και σε σκηνές γενικού περιεχομένου.

Μετά το τέλος της μυκηναϊκής εποχής και ύστερα από μια μακρόχρονη περίοδο ανεικονικής τέχνης αρχίζουν και εμφανίζονται στα αττικά αγγεία, σταδιακά από τη μεσογεωμετρική περίοδο, εικονιστικές σκηνές, με αποκορύφωμα πολυπληθείς παραστάσεις πρόθεσης, εκφοράς και μαχών σε μνημειακά αγγεία της ύστερης γεωμετρικής περιόδου, τα οποία φαίνεται ότι προορίζονταν ως σήματα σε τάφους αριστοκρατών.

Το περιεχόμενο αυτών των σκηνών έχει προσελκύσει αλληπάλληλες συζητήσεις με διάφορους άξονες: είναι γενικό ή ειδικό, συνδέεται δηλαδή στην αντίληψη των αγγειογράφων και των σύγχρονων θεατών με συγκεκριμένα πρόσωπα, τόπο και χρόνο, δηλαδή με την εκφορά και τα κατορθώματα των νεκρών, με τους οποίους συνδέονται τα αγγεία, οι οποίοι ζούσαν στην Αθήνα του τέλους του 8ου αι. π.Χ.; Ακόμη και αν είναι όμως γενικό το περιεχόμενό τους, αυτό σημαίνει απαραίτητως ότι δεν μπορεί να είναι διηγηματικό; Είναι ιστορικό και συγκεκριμένο, αναφέρεται σε γεγονότα της ζωής των νεκρών, ή γενικά στο στυλ μιας ζωής τιμημένης και περιπετειώδους; Ή είναι ίσως μυθικό-ιστορικό, αναφέρεται δηλαδή στους ένδοξους προγόνους των νεκρών; Ή μήπως πρόκειται εν τέλει για μυθικές σκηνές; Με γενικό ηρωικό ή συγκεκριμένο περιεχόμενο; Αν ναι, συνδέονται με γνωστά γραπτά έργα, για παράδειγμα το ομηρικό έπος, ή και με έργα που δεν μας έχουν παραδοθεί, ή απηχούν μήπως τρέχουσες προφορικές ιστορίες, που δεν μπορούν μοιραία να ανιχνευθούν; Τελικά μπορούμε να περιμένουμε μυθικές σκηνές στην ελληνική τέχνη πριν από τον 7ο αι., τουλάχιστον σε ό,τι αφορά ορισμένες, λιγοστές σκηνές σε υστερογεωμετρικά αγγεία, που δεν ακολουθούν την εικονογραφία της πρόθεσης και της εκφοράς, λ.χ. μιας σκηνής ναυαγίου, ή αποχαιρετισμού (ή απαγωγής;) γυναίκας από πολεμιστή, που την κρατά από τον καρπό, ένδειξη γαμήλιου δεσμού (ή απαγωγής) κ.ο.κ.; Κάποιες σκηνές πάλης με λιοντάρι, που κατά τεκμήριο ακολουθούν συριακά πρότυπα, έχουν ήδη κατά τα ύστερα γεωμετρικά χρόνια συσχετισθεί με τον Ηρακλή ή αποτελούν αντικείμενο μηχανικής αντιγραφής;

Διάφορες θεωρίες αντιπαραβάλλονται και αποτιμώνται (Carter, Ahlberg-Cornell, Webster, Boardman, Snodgrass, Stansbury-O'Donnell), υπό το φως νέων δεδομένων, αρχαιολογικών (λ.χ. σχετικά με τη φύση και την έκταση των επαφών Ελλάδας και Ανατολής, τον προορισμό ή όχι των αγγείων στη γεωμετρική -ή και

άλλες εποχές- για συγκεκριμένους πελάτες), εικονογραφικών (λ.χ. για τους τρόπους της αφήγησης μιας ιστορίας ως εικόνας σε τόσο πρώιμες εποχές, την αλληλεπίδραση ή όχι τέχνης και λογοτεχνίας και με ποιους όρους) και φιλολογικών (λ.χ. για τον τόπο και τον χρόνο σύνθεσης των επών).

Στην πορεία της συζήτησης αναλύεται ακόμη η σημασία δυο επίμαχων μοτίβων α) της ασπίδας του Διπύλου, που κρατούν ορισμένοι πολεμιστές, κάποτε και σε σκηνές εκφοράς, και έχει συνδεθεί με την οκτάσχημη μυκηναϊκή ασπίδα, ως υποτιθέμενο σύμβολο αναφοράς στο έπος ή εν γένει στην ηρωική εποχή (θεωρία που ανασκευάζεται συστηματικά, με αρχαιολογικά και εικονογραφικά επιχειρήματα) και β) των λεγόμενων Ακτοριόνων/Μολιόνων, μιας παράξενης διπλής μορφής με κοινό σώμα, αλλά και με δύο κεφάλια και ζευγάρια άκρων, που έχει ερμηνευτεί ως οι γνωστοί μυθικοί δίδυμοι ή ως καλλιτεχνική σύμβαση για την απόδοση μορφών που τοποθετούνται δίπλα-δίπλα, ή ως συμβολική αναφορά σε μορφές αχώριστες ή εξαρτώμενες η μία από την άλλη (υποστηρίζεται βάσει εικονογραφικών και άλλων στοιχείων η μεγαλύτερη πιθανότητα της τρίτης άποψης, χωρίς να αποκλείεται εντελώς και η δεύτερη).

Από τα πιο βασικά συμπεράσματα που συνάγονται είναι καταρχάς ότι οι πρώτες μυθικές σκηνές πιθανώς δεν χρονολογούνται πριν από το τέλος της ύστερης γεωμετρικής Ι, αν όχι της ύστερης γεωμετρικής ΙΙ, και κατά τεκμήριο πληθαίνουν από τις αρχές του 7ου αι. π.Χ. Η μετατόπιση του ενδιαφέροντος από τη σύγχρονη στην ηρωική πραγματικότητα ίσως σχετίζεται με τις αξιώσεις της αριστοκρατίας της εποχής για καταγωγή από ηρωικές ή μυθικές μορφές. Το έπος, προ-ομηρικό, ή αργότερα και το ομηρικό, φαίνεται να προλείανε το έδαφος για τη χρήση μυθικών προτύπων. Η δε εισροή μοτίβων από την Ανατολή, όπως της πάλης ήρωα με λιοντάρι ή της σφίγγας, που εντείνεται κατά το δεύτερο μισό του 8ου αι. π.Χ., πρέπει να ενθάρρυνε την ταύτισή τους με μορφές της ελληνικής μυθολογίας, ή πιθανότερο να ενέπνευσε γενικά τη δημιουργία εικονογραφικών τύπων για την απεικόνισή τους, όπως επίσης ίσως και η ανεύρεση μυκηναϊκών τεχνουργημάτων με ανάλογες σκηνές. Είτε πραγματική, είτε μυθική, ωστόσο, το σημαντικό είναι ότι τα αττικά αγγεία του τέλους της γεωμετρικής εποχής διηγούνταν μια ιστορία, σημειώνοντας την αυγή μιας διηγηματικής τέχνης, που έμελλε να αναπτυχθεί και να μεγαλουργήσει κατά την ανατολίζουσα και, κυρίως, κατά την αρχαϊκή περίοδο.

Γιάννος Κουράγιος, Ο αρχαίος δήμος των Αιξωνιδών Αλών Αττικής (σημ. Βούλα – Βουλιαγμένη), ΕΥΛΙΜΕΝΗ 10-12 (2009-2011), 33-62.

The ancient deme of Aixonides Halai, Attica (the modern deme of Voula – Vouliagmeni). The article deals with the reconstruction of the history of the ancient deme of Aixonides Halai, Attica, through the recent rescue-excavations, which were conducted by the Archaeological Service.

The ancient deme included the south part of the modern deme of Voula and the modern deme of Vouliagmeni. It constituted the coastal trittys of the Kekropis tribe after the Kleisthenian reform. The first legal excavation was conducted in 1927 at the Laimos peninsula, Vouliagmeni, where the temple of Apollo Zoster (the cult center of the deme) was discovered. The inscriptions from the temple and the funerary stele and inscriptions from the cemetery, which were discovered later at the site Pigadakia in Voula, identified the whole area with the ancient municipality of Aixonides Halai. Since then the archaeological research has revealed the continuous occupation of the region through the Neolithic, Mycenaean, geometric,

archaic and classical times. Because of the intense building activity in the areas of Voula and Vouliagmeni in the past decade, hundreds of rescue-excavations have been conducted by the archaeologists of the 21st Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities. They have brought to light numerous ancient remains: Part of an extensive early Helladic settlement, Geometric graves, parts of the ancient Classical town, including public structures (e.g. roads and towers), a public building (which is considered to be the Agora), houses of the settlement and graves with rich offerings.

Μανόλης Ι. Στεφανάκης – Βασιλική Πατσιαδά, Η αρχαιολογική έρευνα στον αρχαίο δήμο των Κυμισαλέων (Ρόδος) κατά τα έτη 2006-2010: μια πρώτη παρουσίαση, ΕΥΛΙΜΕΝΗ 10-12 (2009-2011), 63-134.

The archaeological research at the ancient Demos of Kymissaleis (Rhodes) during the years 2006-2010: A preliminary report. The archaeological research in Kymissala (Rhodes) started in 2006 as a combined project of the Department of Mediterranean Studies, University of the Aegean and the 22nd Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities in collaboration with the School of Rural and Surveying Engineering of the National Technical University of Athens. The region, already known in Medieval Times for its antiquities, has suffered great damage during the last two centuries, mainly caused by unprecedented tomb raiding, while only limited scientific research was carried out in the course of the twentieth century. The main object of the new archaeological research in Kymissala is to determine, for the first time, the spatial organisation and the development of a country-side Demos of Rhodes, as well as to look at the way the community exploited natural resources of the area through time. So far parts of the acropolis and the vast central necropolis have been systematically explored through excavation, while a number of sites, comprising the Demos of Kymissaleis, have been located and surveyed.

Αναστασία Δρελιώση-Ηρακλείδου – Νίκος Λίτινας, Ροδιακό όστρακο με ερωτικό επιγράμμα, ΕΥΛΙΜΕΝΗ 10-12 (2009-2011), 135-155.

An Erotic Epigram on a Rhodian Ostrakon. During excavations on a plot in the central cemetery of Rhodes a deep filling of black earth with evidence of burning was explored. It contained disintegrated skeleton remains, clay urns, pottery fragments, stamped amphora handles, many small artifacts and a large number of inscribed potsherds. All seem to be transferred there from elsewhere to settle the area probably after a natural disaster. As far as the contents of the inscribed texts are concerned, apart from one literary ostrakon, which is edited in this article, all the other ostraca are documentary and their edition is under preparation.

Based on the palaeographical details the ostrakon can be dated to the end of the third and the first half of the second century B.C. The scribe does not write breathings, accents and other diacritics. Some phonological interchanges are justified as local linguistic characteristics. Lines 1-10 preserve two elegiac distichs and lines 11-14 contain one pentameter and one incomplete hexameter. Two hypotheses can be advanced: (a) The epigram consisted of (at least) four elegiac distichs. The hexameter of the third elegiac couplet and the pentameter of the fourth elegiac couplet have been omitted, either deliberately or by mistake. (b) The

epigram consisted of three elegiac distichs and the scribe wrote the pentameter of the last distich before the hexameter.

The content of the epigram(s) is that Glykera, perhaps a Samian hetaira, managed to be freed from her *eros* by vowing to dedicate a painting of a *pannychis* that had taken place on some occasion. Now a deity is asked that a *thiasos* already offered should also function as a *lysis* from *eros* for Papyrides. However, the kind of the *thiasos* and the way it is dedicated are not clear. Also, there are some questions concerning the corresponding elements between the two stories of Glykera and Papyrides. Since there are missing verses or the verses are reversed, as said above, it is uncertain whether the text constitutes one or two different epigrams. In the first scenario, it is most likely that the epigram belongs to the category of erotic ones, in which the poet refers to a past event and now asks the deity to act likewise in a parallel situation. However, it is not certain whether Glykera and Papyrides were involved in the past. The name Glykera is characteristic for *hetairae*, while the name Papyrides, which derives from Papylos, is attested only in a Byzantine inscription in Bithynia. The deity involved in this story may be Dionysus (because of the *thiasos*) or Adonis (because of the *pannychis*).

The verses preserved on the Rhodian ostrakon are not included in the *Anthologia Graeca*. It would be tempting to assume that the surface of the ostrakon was used for writing down a hasty and incomplete draft of a poet's original creation. However, it seems more likely that we are dealing with the copy of an already existing text. The style and content of the Rhodian erotic epigram, which is written in the Ionic dialect, do not offer internal evidence concerning the poet's identity. The phrase *τὴν τότε παννυχίδα* is found in Posidippus, the phrase *ἀνέθηκεν ὀρᾶσθαι τοῖς φιλέρωσιν* finds a good parallel in the Callimachean *ἀνέθηκεν ἐπεσσομένοισιν ὀρᾶσθαι*, the word *φιλερως* was used by Meleager, and the phrase *καὶ οὐ δέχου* is found in two Byzantine epigrams (Julian and Agathias). But these phrases alone could not indicate Posidippus or Callimachus as the potential composer of our epigram. Besides, the metric sequence dddsd in the third verse, where a spondee occurs before the bucolic diaeresis (Naeke's law), is almost prohibitive in the Hellenistic epigram, with the exception of one verse of Asclepiades of Samos, one verse of Posidippus and another of Leonides. Moreover, a word-break after the first short syllable of the fourth foot is rare. Therefore, it is more likely that the composer of our epigram is either a poet of the third century B.C., from whom Posidippus borrowed the phrase *τὴν τότε παννυχίδα*, or a poet of the third or the early second century B.C., who borrowed that phrase from Posidippus.

We might be entitled to conclude that the reference to a Samian *hetaira* could indicate a Samian epigrammatist, such as Asclepiades or Hedylus. First, Asclepiades influenced Posidippus, Hedylus and Callimachus. The metrical sins in l. 1 and 3 present a strong counter argument to our hypothesis that Asclepiades could be the poet in question, even though the violation of Naeke's law occurs once in Asclepiades' poems. However, there exist some other evidence that fits Asclepiades' vocabulary, style and themes: he had composed another erotic epigram on Samian *hetairai* (AP 5.207), he had used phrases that refer to Homer (cf. for instance the Homeric *ἐν πῖνακι* on the Rhodian ostrakon), and to other lyric poets (cf. the phrase *ἀποτίθεμαι ἔρωτα*, which refers to Theognis, the adjective *ἡδύπικρος* and the participle *θέλουσα*, which refer to the Sapphic *γλυκύπικρος* and *κῶνκ θέλοισα*

respectively). Moreover, Asclepiades includes technical terms that have a poetic dimension (such as the legal phrase *τάσσω λύσιν* in the Rhodian epigram) and creates new words by changing one component of an already existing known poetic word (for example the word *ἡδυπίκρους* instead of *γλυκυπίκρους*). Finally, some words of our epigram are placed in the same metrical position as in other epigrams of Asclepiades. More precisely, in the *AP* 5.207, *αἱ Σάμιαι* are cited in the beginning of the epigram at the start of the first verse, just like *ἡ Σαμῖη* in the Rhodian epigram. In the case of *AP* 5.202, 6, attributed to Asclepiades or Posidippus, the pronoun *τῇνδε* occurs in the same position in the pentameter of the third elegiac couplet. The composer of our epigram creates an alliteration of Δ *καὶ σὺ δέχου θάσσον τῆς ση... τάξας Παιπυλίδη τῇνδε λύσιν δακρύων* (which becomes stronger if we restore *Ἄδωνι* or *Διόνυσε* in the missing part). Alliteration is a characteristic feature of Asclepiades, such as the alliteration of Λ in the epigram *AP* 5.164, 3 and the alliteration of X in the epigram *AP* 5.162, 2-3. Moreover, the way Asclepiades treats love can be traced in the Rhodian epigram: there is no sign of erotic lust, heterosexual love dominates the epigram and the intense erotic feelings are ridiculed. Finally, the composition of short epigrams (usually of two distichs, but also some of three distichs) is characteristic in Asclepiades. In addition, the adjective *ἡδυπίκρους* combined with the name *Παιπυλίδης* might suggest a word play with the name Hedylus. This could support the hypothesis that either Hedylus, also from Samos, was the composer of the epigram, if we accept that he made a word play with his name, or one of his circle and friends (e.g. Asclepiades) played with his name.

All these observations do not exclude the assumption that the epigram on the ostrakon was a composition which imitated well known Hellenistic themes (e.g. of *hetaira*) and styles (e.g. of Asclepiades, Hedylus or Posidippus).

Finally, the archaeological context of the ostrakon is not indicative of its use and purpose and cannot explain why and how a Samian woman could be of interest in Rhodes.

THE BEGINNING OF NARRATIVE ART IN ATTIC VASE PAINTING: A REVIEW OF PROPOSED THEORIES

This article explores the nature of narration in Geometric vase-painting, reviewing various theories advanced on the first occurrence of scenes with narrative content on Attic vases of the 8th c. B.C., or even earlier. Such scenes would invite the viewer to identify the figures involved and through them to reconstruct a particular story,¹ or even a particular action or activity,² depending on the interpretation of pictorial narrative. According to a more structural definition, daily or generic scenes may also be regarded as narrative, despite the lack of individuality and specificity.³

Attic pottery is regarded to have set the model for all Greek Geometric, mainly because of its diverse and well-travelled production, although some other important areas, in central and northern Greece, the Peloponnese or Euboea can be attested.⁴ It is mostly with Attic vases, however, that representational and narrative art gradually reestablished itself in Greece,⁵ after a break of almost three centuries, what has been called a “long, pictureless hiatus”,⁶ with scarce exceptions of single-figure emblems or even extended scenes, dating from the Protogeometric or Early and Middle Geometric, and coming principally from Crete,⁷ as well as Cyprus, Euboea or Argos.⁸

¹ Hanfmann 1957, 71-72.

² Moignard 2006, 76.

³ Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 31-35. In this view, we may detect pictorial narratives, at the basic structural level, before the Late Geometric period, in figured scenes from the 10th down to early 8th c. B.C. See Stansbury-O'Donnell 2006, especially, 247-248.

⁴ Boardman 2001, 15-16. Cf. Cook 1997, 16-17. See also Whitley 1991, 70-73.

⁵ Attic, as well as Argive and Euboean figured vase painting, with their elaborate repertoires, seem to have been the most influential in the Geometric period, as compared to the sparse specimens, of social rather than geographical relevance, from Corinth, which would soon, however, become a leading force in the Protocorinthian period. Morgan 1999, 279, 282-3.

⁶ Benson 1970, 10.

⁷ Boardman 2001, 19-20. Sinantoni-Bournia 1997, 65-68. Cretan examples are explained by a more direct link with Eastern art and a less drastic break from Bronze Age or Minoan tradition. See, for example, Boardman 1998, figs. 22.1-2; 23.1-2. See also Lemos 2000, 12. Benson 1970, 77-78. Morris 1997, 58. Coldstream (2006, 161-162) stresses the conscious imitation of older, Minoan models at Knossos, mostly pictorial larnakes, which were constantly discovered and even put into Geometric graves. See also Stansbury-O'Donnell 2006, 250-253.

⁸ It is mostly recent excavation finds that fill this “hiatus”. Cypriot examples are more prolific and adventurous than the Euboean ones, although both bear heavy Near Eastern influence. Coldstream 2006, 160-161. In mainland Greece Argos we find some bold scenes, dated from the Middle Geometric II, which deviate from the limited repertoire of Argive Late Geometric. Pappi 2006, 232-236.

The figured style in Attica evolved from some occasional Middle Geometric representational motifs. The Protogeometric almost completely lacks representations; only the horse sometimes appears in inconspicuous places or where no geometric decoration would normally be applied. In Middle Geometric we find a very limited repertoire of animals (horse, deer, bird) isolated among the dominant abstract designs, once the figure of a mourner,⁹ and in Middle Geometric II two innovative scenes: first of two men with a horse, in a descriptive, not simply decorative juxtaposition, possibly drawing from contemporary life (horse-taming); then of a naval battle, the first manifestation of interest in action scenes (**fig. 1. See also fig. 6**).¹⁰ The beginning of Late Geometric witnesses a rapid development, in both subject range and narrative complexity, with monumental, multi-figured representations on grave vases, which can be seen as an expansion of the limited Middle Geometric representational vocabulary (the mourner, the battle), effectively combined with its rich stock of abstract geometric patterns.¹¹ This increase and expansion over a short time period possibly served the need to distinguish social elite, which sought to represent its status through new forms, as other classes had already adopted earlier funerary iconography.¹²

The Late Geometric extended figured scenes are found on vast vases functioning as grave markers over the graves of aristocracy, pedestalled kraters for men (**figs 3-4**), belly-handled amphorae for women (**fig. 5a**).¹³ The subjects are directly related with death: the *prothesis* of the dead, the ceremonial display of the corpse on a couch or coffin, surrounded by mourners (**figs 4, 5b**) or, very rarely, the *ekphora*, the procession to the cemetery (**fig. 3a-b**), combined, in relatively few cases, and then mostly on fragmentarily preserved kraters, with chariot or warrior processions¹⁴ (**figs 3a, 4**) and battle scenes on land and sea.¹⁵ They appear by the beginning of the Late Geometric period, around 750 B.C., and for a very limited period of time, the *prothesis* scenes for two generations, and the battle scenes for no more than a decade.¹⁶

Geometric drawing is characterized by conceptuality and assumes an analytical approach: single figures and composition are analyzed and rendered as structures with

⁹ On the first occurrence of a horse combined with a mourner, around the handle of a Middle Geometric krater, and its significance for the evolution of Late Geometric *prothesis* and *ekphora* themes, see Simantoni-Bournia 1997, 68, fig. 57 (in her view mourner and horse have not yet been connected with each other). For Coldstream (2006, 160) these figures may be interpreted as *a pars pro toto*, alluding to the rituals, *prothesis* and *ekphora*, to be depicted in full by the Dipylon Workshop.

¹⁰ Carter 1972, 28 (Protogeometric horses; see also Rombos 1988, 64-65); Carter 1972, 28, 31-33 (Middle Geometric animals); 36 (Middle Geometric mourner); 28-29, 34-35 (Middle Geometric men with horse/naval battle).

¹¹ Carter 1972, 37.

¹² Stansbury-O'Donnell 2006, 251-253.

¹³ Coldstream 1991, 37, 46. These were used to mark the status of rich men and women already from the 9th c. B.C. Whitley 1991, 131-137. Lemos 2000, 17-18. It is difficult to prove generally that the use of figured Geometric vases was socially exclusive, as is commonly assumed, with the exception of grave-markers, most of which come from the Dipylon cemetery and telling contexts. Geometric vases were also used as grave gifts, placed in the grave, or offered to gods or heroised dead. Snodgrass 1998, 44-45. See also n. 36.

¹⁴ On the possible symbolic value of the epic-like chariot and warrior processions, alluding to the aristocratic status of the dead and the fulfilment of their service to the state as warriors, see Pedley 2002, 121.

¹⁵ See Rombos 1988, 77-160 for a systematic iconographic analysis.

¹⁶ Snodgrass 1980, 148; Ahlberg-Cornell 1971a, 107; 1971b, 21, 23-24, 221.

few but distinct details. Painters draw not what they would normally see, but what they know to be there, itemizing their figures. Likewise they strictly select those facts which are essential to the story or the situation depicted. The figures are geometrized to match the rest of the vase's geometric ornament.¹⁷ The composition is based upon a relatively limited stock of *formulae*, rather like the *epithets* in Homer (fixed types and schemes of general character, created by a severe process of abstraction) and particularity or differentiation of meaning is achieved by different combinations of these *formulae* or by addition of special details.¹⁸ Rendering of volume and creation of space is symbolic, making use of some aspects of reality. Painters choose maybe not the most characteristic, as many may have argued, but rather the most two-dimensional aspect of real volume, e.g. chest in frontal view, nose and legs in profile, corpse and shroud as if viewed from above. Overlapping is basically avoided, since the silhouette technique used would otherwise have caused confusion, and is only reserved for inseparable figures (see also the twin figure discussion below). When a further object is meant to be fully or partially hidden by a nearer object it is either depicted beside the nearer object (e.g. the further wheel of a chariot, **figs 3b, 4, 6**), or above it (e.g. the group of mourners above the bier, as in **fig. 4**, may be thought of as hidden by it or, conversely, the group of mourners between the legs of the bier, as in **fig. 5b**, as actually sitting in front of it). A bird's eye perspective is thus employed to give the impression of depth: below in the visual field means in front, above may mean just above (set on a horizontal plane above the ground) or behind.¹⁹

On Attic Geometric vases a prominent compositional scheme involves the isolation of motifs, conceived and meant to be comprehended together as a whole in separate panels. The role of any filling ornament which goes beyond decorative purposes for the representation of actual objects is neglected in Athens, as compared for example to Argive Geometric pottery where it is emphasized and developed, making up for the limited repertoire of figured scenes.²⁰ Attic Geometric focuses on figured scenes themselves, thus contributing critically to the development of narrative art in Greece.²¹

Carter believed that narrative art started not with the massed Late Geometric scenes, which he regards as generic and non-narrative, but as a result of the Greeks' interest in the narration of action, a point in common with contemporary *epos*, in combination with the transplantation of oriental images in the context of an early (earlier than the conventional beginning of the Orientalising period) current of borrowing from

¹⁷ Coldstream 1991, 48-49. The application of an abstract style to physical entities may be seen as a manifestation of the Geometric artist's fascination for abstract values, which is why later figural representations are often more schematic than the earlier, still under the influence of their models from other cultures. Benson 1988, 75. See also Benson 1970, for example 79-88 (Minoan/Mycenaean influence).

¹⁸ Consider, for example the scene of a naval battle on one side of the skyphos in our **fig. 1**. While the ship locates the battle on the sea, the two flanking figures, holding Dipylon shields and not engaged in any activity, may serve here to indicate the nearby shore. The ship may be landing or fleeing from an unsuccessful raid. Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 37-38.

¹⁹ Brunsåker 1962, 188-195, 206-210. Ahlberg-Cornell 1971b, 285, 287.

²⁰ See for example Rombos 1988, 71-72. Pappi 2006, 230. For Benson (1988, 69, 75) the fact that Geometric ornament, e.g. zigzag lines, can be used interchangeably, either as a decorative filler or as a symbol or geometrised representation of an object, water in this case (quoting Boardman 1983), reveals a mental agility which can be regarded as an early version of symbolic logic.

²¹ Boardman 1983, 19, 24-25.

the art of the Orient, which especially affected Athens. Thus images such as the lion-killing man, which made no sense to the Greeks, encouraged them to give them a familiar content, drawing from their own mythical tradition.²² So the lion-killing man became Herakles and the Nemean lion.²³ And the oriental sphinx was adapted to give ultimately the iconographic form of a centaur. At first the adoption of the image must have been purely decorative and baffling, so the Greek vase painter may have given the body of this strange oriental beast a second half of an animal more familiar to him, the horse. It is more probable, however, that the figure of centaur was inspired by an Assyrian demon (as it appears, for example, on seals of the 13th c. B.C.), with the body of a horse, tail of a scorpion, and the torso of a bearded man, but winged and characterized as an archer.²⁴ Interestingly we do find cases of a winged centaur, though not among the earliest examples.²⁵ In any case, Greek artists would have soon adapted the oriental original and given it more familiar features and content (abolished the more demonic wings and scorpion tail, and replaced the bow with branches) to suit their own centaurs, as known from previous epic tradition.

Imported artifacts found in the Lefkandi cemeteries, Euboea, and elsewhere, or cultural influence traced in legends, or cults and burial customs of oriental origin, have proved since Carter's theory that communication with the Near East had already been

²² Carter 1972, 38-44. As a trace of this oriental influence two generations before the actual beginning of the Orientalising period Carter draws attention to the sudden appearance, with the Dipylon workshop, of the continuous frieze of birds, deer, and goats. The two latter occur in poses traceable in oriental art in more or less ancient times and there is a parallel phenomenon in Attic golden bands related with Late Geometric burials. In fact oriental imports, ranging widely from fine textiles to mass-produced objects, exercised a superficial impact on Greek art, comparable to the fashion for imported textiles from China, Japan and India in Europe from the 17th century AD onwards. In both cases the imported items soon brought about totally adapted, native versions of new motifs and techniques that transformed their sources beyond recognition; Gunter 2009, 72-73.

²³ It should be noted that scenes of men with lions depict them either in the role of victim or of slayer (Rombos 1988, 195-208, scheme C). Such images of man-eating monsters die out soon, just because Greek myths, as recited in current epic poetry, prefer heroes who vanquish them. Morris 1997, 59-60. The best known example and the only Attic representation where the man slays the lion can be found on one of the four legs of a stand from Kerameikos (here **fig. 2**). According to Rombos (quoting Fittschen 1969, 87) all four scenes should be considered as different phases of the same, non-mythical story of hunters encountering a lion, extraordinary though this may be for this period (*ibid.* 199, 208). Lions were not native in Greece though by the time this scene was painted, so this may just as possibly be an imitation of a Near Eastern motif before the time when it was actually explained by identification with the story of Herakles and the Nemean Lion. So also Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 24-25. Moignard 2006, 77. For narrative as a *discourse*, see Stansbury-O'Donnell 2006, especially 248: if the story originally intended by the artist is unknown in a foreign place, it will be substituted with a local familiar story, provided there is a need or occasion for the exchange, constituting a new narrative, but also making use of the fundamental structural components of the original.

²⁴ Padgett 2003, 5-6, 10.

²⁵ The earliest is an Attic example, dating from the Late Geometric IIb, considered by others to be an intermediate form between a sphinx and a centaur. Carter 1972, 45-49. Webster 1955, 48-49. Rather a sphinx for Rombos 1988, 244-245. Also, Boardman 1998, 27. Coldstream (2003, 133) explains the strange form from the fact that the painter had possibly never seen an oriental original. See also n. 89. Conversely, two Protoattic examples look more like sphinxes (they have human arms, as well as forelegs, unlike our earliest known centaurs, but also equine hindquarters and they are holding branches. *LIMC* 8, s.v. "Kentauroi et Kentaurides", nos. 345-346. Padgett 2003, 9, 38, n. 42.

reestablished by the 10th c. B.C., with Cyprus and Crete as intermediaries.²⁶ The earliest datable combination of the powerful elite symbol of the horse and the human figure, adapted from a Near Eastern model, so as to represent the first mythical image of a centaur, also seems to come from Lefkandi: the clay figurine of a centaur found at the Toumba cemetery and dated approximately to the second half of the 10th c. B.C.²⁷ Such figures though remain a rarity till the end of Late Geometric.²⁸ Furthermore, the formative stage of poetry which commemorated heroic saga in Greece, estimated to the period from mid-10th to mid 9th c. B.C., may have antedated the introduction of mythical scenes by more than a century, with Thessaly and Euboea again playing an important role.²⁹

According to Carter we cannot expect mythical representations before the end of Late Geometric I and then not in a large number before the end of the 8th c. B.C. Counterparts between Late Geometric I images, especially battle scenes, and the Homeric epics do exist but it is just as possible that they are both inspired by contemporary reality, given that, by the consensus of scholars, Homeric poetry reflects more the contemporary than the Mycenaean world. The pictures of Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*, with parallel motifs traceable in Geometric art, are believed by the majority of researchers to have been inspired, with some exceptions, by everyday life, and they must reflect the subject-matter of contemporary visual arts.³⁰

The content of the "standard" Late Geometric *prothesis* and battle scenes has been the subject of intense debate among scholars. Are all these scenes connected, in the mind of vase painters and contemporary viewers, with a particular person, place and time, the funeral and the deeds of the dead person who lived in Athens of the late 8th c. B.C., in other words are they particular or typical, individual or generic? And, even if they are generic, does that mean that they are also non-narrative? Are they historic and particular, or historic and generic? Do they refer to events from the life of the dead or do they just show that they led an honourable life of fighting and sea-faring? Or are they maybe mytho-historical and refer to the great ancestors of the dead? Or are they mythical scenes, after all? And if so, are they inspired by a known literary work, or some unknown one, or even some untraceable current oral traditions?³¹

Against scholars like Carter, who, as we have seen, believed in the generic character of these Geometric scenes, Ahlberg-Cornell makes a case for their particularity, drawing attention to various features of individualization and particularization: female corpses (**fig. 5b**), the occasional inclusion of children, boys and girls, even of different

²⁶ Phoenician or North Syrian effects can be traced in Rhodes, Laconia, Thera, Attica, Boiotia, Thessaly, Thasos and the North Aegean. Morris 1992, 128-146. Stampolidis 2003, 47-57. Imported exotica, or their imitations, are usually linked to aristocratic elite which had exclusive access to them. On the context and agents of this image circulation, based on evidence from sanctuary dedications, see Morris 1997, 63-67.

²⁷ Nicholls et al 1970, 28-30. Carter 1972, 48.

²⁸ Among 11th and 10th c. B.C. Greek statuettes etc of suggestive form that have been identified as centaurs, the best candidates come from Cyprus, while the Cretan ones have rather been interpreted as sphinxes. Between these, the Lefkandi centaur and their Late Geometric successors (statuettes of the third quarter and Attic vase-paintings of the last quarter of the 8th c. B.C.) we can trace a gap of almost two centuries. Padgett 2003, 7.9. Rombos 1988, 232-244.

²⁹ West 1988, 159-165. Lemos 2000, 17-19.

³⁰ Carter 1972, 51, 55. See also Snodgrass 1998, 40-44, 67-68.

³¹ Most of these interpretations are enumerated in Hanfmann 1957, 72. Palaiothodoros 2009, 46.

sizes (therefore of mixed ages)³² (figs 3-4, 5b), or of the guard of the horses and of the figures carrying the bier in *ekphora* scenes (fig, 3b), the chariot scenes which can be connected with rituals and *athla* (figs 3a, 4), the emphatic appearance of spearmen in one case, the presentation of oars in another in the accompanying scenes, the illustration of details, such as the support for the chin of the dead or the dead (?) birds below the bier (allegedly used at some ritual,³³ fig. 3b). Possibly these allusions, limited by the formulaic character of Geometric style, were far more easily and fully intelligible to the contemporary viewer. Moreover the size and cost of the vases, along with their function as monumental markers of a particular grave might suggest that they were produced by order, which in turn would support the possible individual character of their scenes.³⁴

Even later in the history of Greek vases, however, although there are evidently some types of commissioned vases, such as the Panathenaic amphorae, we can only rarely detect vases made to an individual patron's order for some special occasion.³⁵ This is partly also due to the frequent lack of excavational data. With regard to Attic Geometric vases in particular, even more solid evidence from closed archaeological contexts, such as graves, appears to be mixed: grave markers seem to have been either especially commissioned for the burial, in cases where an exclusive shape or type of decoration is employed, or just have been chosen for the ceremony among vase forms with particular design, also used as domestic equipment and found in well deposits, too.³⁶

A modern school of iconographic analysis, moreover, attempts to draw attention away from the –so far dominant and exclusive– factor of producers and their background towards an exploration of the clients' choices, differentiating between locally manufactured and imported vases. The best documented case for commissioning comes from a late-8th c. amphora from one of the burials in the *polyandrion* in Paros, containing the bones of an important warrior killed in battle. This was a local product but under heavy Attic influence. Three scenes, vertically aligned from the neck to the belly, may recite the story of the warrior's death from a arrow in fight, the removal of his corpse, and his *prothesis*, where the unique addition of an arrow in the hand of one of the lamenters seems to allude to the very way that the warrior met his death.³⁷

³² In Geometric art smaller size does not necessarily imply youth, unless it is combined with other clues, such as physique, e.g. lack of breasts, conduct, e.g. vigorous dancing, or culture, e.g. lack of sword. Langdon 2008, 58-60.

³³ See also Boardman 2001, 22 (courtyard animals) and cf. also *ibid.* 192-193 (food offerings).

³⁴ Ahlberg-Cornell 1971b, 285-287, 290.

³⁵ Johnston 1991, 215-218. Sparkes 1991, 131-135.

³⁶ Whitley 1991, 134-135. It is possible that nearly all battle kraters attributed to the Dipylon Workshop were produced for a restricted group of rich burials on Piraeus street in Athens, perhaps a single family or clan. Elite patronage of Geometric imagery, however, attested for the Late Middle Geometric and the Early Late Geometric period, seems to have gradually led to a wider circulation of images. Langdon 2008, 40-42. Coldstream 2003, 133-137. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest commissioning of a particular shape, *louterion*, with particular decoration, chariot scenes, to give as offerings to the heroised dead in a prehistoric tomb at Menidi. Snodgrass 1998, 45.

³⁷ Coldstream (2003, 398-399) dates the vase to c. 730 B.C. The publisher Zaphiropoulou (2006, especially 275-276) ascribes heroic overtones to these scenes, admittedly of real life (see also n. 54), through the inclusion of the fight over the dead warrior, which she regards as Homeric in type. Hurwitt (2011, 13-14) identifies a "strong" image of a real event (see also below, n. 55). In his view the deceased is the leading

Snodgrass accepts that not only did vase painters intend to tell some story –though not readily intelligible, perhaps even by their contemporaries, owing to their limited means, but also that they used –or even invented– a narrative method generally used in Archaic art, the so-called *synoptic*, by which a number of episodes taking place at different times are compressed in a single picture, as if happening simultaneously.³⁸ This allusion to future or past moments in time can be achieved through the inclusion of figures or actions operative before or after the main episode depicted or by simply giving its protagonists meaningful gestures or attributes pointing to the past or future.³⁹ Thus we have, for example, *prothesis* scenes combined with a funerary ritual which would in reality succeed *prothesis* in time, the chariot procession (**fig. 4. cf. fig 3a**); we can furthermore detect a differentiation of charioteers or dancers (performing two different movements alternately, as on the Shield of Achilles?), apparently illustrating different stages of a ritual, but pictured together. Homer himself, having often his characters foreshadow a future event, seems to resemble Geometric artists in their use of this method to advise the viewers about what will happen.

In the aforementioned mixture of *prothesis* and *ekphora* scenes in the same picture, however, I see rather a narrative method known as *continuous*, assuming that one or more agents, such as the mourners, are probably repeated, or at least shared (against the guiding principle of synoptic narrative, that no figure should appear more than once), in pictures which blend together against a common background with time shifting and place changing or remaining the same.⁴⁰ On the aforementioned amphora from the Parian *polyandron*, furthermore, the vase painter creates a series of consecutive, but segregated scenes depicting separate actions, with one or more of the agents repeated and time and space changing from one picture to the next, in a *cyclic* type of narrative. Both variants of this narrative method are normally known from the Classical and the Hellenistic period.⁴¹

The most important question about the content of standard Geometric scenes revolves around whether they reflect the contemporary reality or the heroic past. Moreover, even if these scenes reflect the reality, can we expect some mythical representation before the end of the Geometric period? At least in those few peculiar scenes which deviate from the typical imagery of Attic Geometric vase painting (see below)?

slingshotter behind the horizontal dead warrior on the body, who has also just been hit by an arrow in the head, and, accordingly, on the *prothesis* scene the lamenter does not touch the dead man's head with an arrow but pulls it out of his eye. Palaiododoros 2009, 45-48, 58-59.

³⁸ Snodgrass 1987, 136-138, 140-142, 153-157. Boardman 1989, 57-59. Snodgrass 1998, 55-66.

³⁹ A view also entertained by Hanfmann (1957, 71). Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 83-91. Woodford 2003, 39-42. The scenes on the Achilles' shield, as described in the *Iliad*, seem to suggest a similar narrative strategy. Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 42-44. Snodgrass 1998, 55, 57-59, 64-65. According to the structuralist view, every episode is treated as something of an attribute of each figure and time sequence is sacrificed to serve this principle. The traditional view sees a compression of these episodes as a manifestation of time defiance. Snodgrass 1987, 147-169.

⁴⁰ Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 4, 7, 149-155. Cf. also Brunsäker 1962, 210-211: it may either be that two places are meant, separated in reality but placed close to each other in a common symbolic field, or that the chariot parade is meant as happening in close connection with the *prothesis*, around the bier in the open air or around the house denoted by the central scene of bier and mourners.

⁴¹ Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 4, 7, 145-155.

Webster believed that the battle scenes along with the *prothesis* scenes and some of those few with different subjects, such as dances, processions, departure of a man, are heroic and inspired by *epos*. Not the Homeric *epos*, however, but the contemporary Athenian epic poetry, which must have been closely related to the Homeric. This relation can be explained from a common poetic tradition which had not yet been divided some 250 years before the composition of the *Iliad*, and from the provable contact between the two centres, Athens and Ionia, during the 8th c. B.C.⁴²

Related with this theory is Webster's celebrated suggestion that the Dipylon type of shield is in fact an adaptation of the long extinct, figure-of-eight Mycenaean shield whose form had been preserved in some still surviving Mycenaean monuments and introduced by Geometric artists to indicate a warrior as heroic (see also below). In addition to the occurrence of the Dipylon shield Webster drew attention to the enigmatic double figure, which he accepted as depicting the Moliones, maybe in their Homeric battle with Nestor, and to the observed common points between the Geometric and the Homeric battle scenes, as to the type of fighting (in connection with ships it might suggest the Battle for the Ships or some Homeric raid) and as to the manner of fighting (weapons used, type of collision or death).⁴³

If the battle scenes are heroic, however, what about the burial scenes with which these scenes of war are combined on the kraters meant for male burials? It should be expected that they are of the same character and Webster attempted to show that they also draw from the same sources.⁴⁴ Apart from the Dipylon warriors found occasionally among the mourners or interspersed among the chariots (**fig. 4**), and the impressive magnificence of representation, as compared to later similar scenes, he points again at the several matching details between scenes on vases and analogous scenes described by Homer: the anointment, the use of shroud, the sacrifice, the type of mourning, the *ekphora* on a wagon, the chariot drive around the pyre, the chariot race with most of the funerary games as described in the Patroklos' *athla*. As for the other scenes that he regards as Homeric, Webster mentions depictions of dances (male, female, mixed, with the accompaniment in some cases of a lyre player) and processions (women with sprays and pitchers approaching a lyre-player, women with sprays approaching a seated goddess) which match scenes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, a scene of a kneeling man holding lyre and spray among two men in which he sees the rescue of Phemios by Odysseus and Telemachos, and a scene of departure of what he regards as Homeric heroes (whereas others have seen the abduction of Helen or Dionysos or Ariadne by Theseus, see below).⁴⁵

Webster's theory raises various objections. In the last few years there has been a move among Homerist scholars to bring down the date of Homeric epics late in the 8th or in the 7th c. B.C., while it is assumed that their texts remained fluid until still later,

⁴² Webster 1955, 38-39, 49-50.

⁴³ Webster 1955, 41-44.

⁴⁴ Johansen (1967, 18-25), a major advocate of Homeric inspiration for works of art, doubts the heroic significance of these scenes. They may nevertheless bear some general influence from accounts in heroic poetry, in the process of the glorification of the dead (cf. also n. 54); not the Homeric *epos* though, which may have dated from about the same years, or even later –may therefore not yet been established- but rather the pre-Homeric oral epic tradition, which had been long popular and widespread.

⁴⁵ Webster 1955, 46-48.

within the 6th c. B.C.⁴⁶ Furthermore, many recent works on the relation of image and word have furnished sufficient evidence against the dependence of pictorial on literary tradition in ancient times down until relatively late. Artists, who seem to have had limited access to texts, seem to have drawn from oral or visual sources and to have depicted stories rather than illustrating texts, that is specific stories told by specific writers.⁴⁷ Moreover, even less than in later centuries can we make a case for Geometric vase painting as a derivative minor art, since there is sufficient evidence to suggest that it enjoyed, in the Late Geometric at least, an unusually prestigious and influential status as the dominant medium, which even set models for art-forms in the round, such as in later times sculpture or painting set for vase-painting. Geometric vase painters could therefore be expected to display an independent spirit in devising their own rules and pioneering the visual representation of Greek myth, also because they had few, if any, precedents at their disposal in their or related media.⁴⁸

Snodgrass takes a somewhat different view from Webster: the vase painter does not seek to illustrate a particular heroic incident, as known from Homer or any other of the contemporary epic poems, but only to generally indicate that the scene is set in the heroic past. Even in later vase painting artists seem to draw from other literary sources than Homer. The alleged typical, non-narrative content of Geometric vase painting might be due to such an intention on the part of the vase painter. The production of these heroic scenes must have been encouraged by a general interest of contemporary Greeks in the heroic age, as manifested by the introduction early in the third quarter of the 8th c. B.C. of hero cults at Mycenaean tombs.⁴⁹ In a more recent treatment of the problem, however, developing and adapting this theory, Snodgrass maintains that Geometric vase painting was produced at a time when the Greek mainland had not yet come under the influence of the *epos*.⁵⁰ If so, current beliefs must have inspired the Geometric pictures. These included the heroization of the anonymous, recently deceased, one of the two types of heroism developed since the Early Bronze Age, traceable as early as 950 B.C.⁵¹ and regarded as the product of evolution of the worship of ancestors. To this type of heroism one should add worship of ancestors itself, as well as local beliefs. Snodgrass concedes, however, that it is not possible to assess how these beliefs could have affected the clients' demands and, subsequently, the vase painters' choice of subject.

⁴⁶ Snodgrass 1998, 12-13 (and bibliography to p. 13), 42-44, 76-77. Snodgrass reports this trend without subscribing to it. Hurwit 2011, 2-3 and n. 7 (researches the Homeric Question in brief). See also n. 44.

⁴⁷ See for example Small 2003; or earlier still Cook 1983, who concludes that "...though there is no proof either way...Greek artists did not regularly or often make deliberate use of epic poetry for their subjects, but preferred the folk tales they knew, probably from childhood" (1983, 6). Compare works such as Shapiro (1994) and Woodford (2003), which attempt to trace intersections between painted and written images.

⁴⁸ Snodgrass 1998, 44-50. On the intellectual delicacy and sophistication of Geometric art in general, see Schweitzer 1969, *passim*. See also n. 20.

⁴⁹ Snodgrass 1980, 51-53, 57.

⁵⁰ Snodgrass 1987, 159-165. Cf. also Snodgrass 1998, *passim*, e.g. 49-53, 76-78: regardless of whether pre-Homeric or Homeric poems were available at that time, the Geometric artist seems to have developed his own concerns and aspirations independently.

⁵¹ A *heroon* over a pair of burials at Lefkandi; Snodgrass 1987, 161.

Such “generalized heroic” scenes can also be found in Archaic art but then not all scenes are heroic and not all heroic scenes are generalized. We cannot even be sure whether the painters did not actually have a particular scene in mind, which they perhaps did not indicate because it was easily comprehensible by their contemporaries. Or whether a generic scene was not originally conceived as a specific incident, which gradually degenerated into generic through unconscious repetition by hacks.⁵²

Stansbury-O'Donnell develops the theory of “generalized heroic” Geometric scenes and introduces the notion of “generic narrative”.⁵³ Vase painters focus on actions and types of agents or places (see **fig. 1** and comment in n. 18) and they can use some elements, such as for example peculiar weapons, to refer to them, but do not seem to illustrate specific incidents either from the life of the dead or from myth, in other words they are generic. The Dipylon shield may in fact act as a sign that these generic scenes refer on one level to real life and on another to the heroic past, conforming to the heroic aspirations of contemporary society for the distinguished dead.⁵⁴ Though generic, however –seemingly even more so than in later times due to the formulaic character of Geometric style- they are nevertheless narrative; they do tell a story, but a more general one, so as to create multiple links and possible interpretations in the mind of the viewers. This seems to be also the case with mythical scenes of the Archaic or even Classical period where sometimes inscriptions play a critical role so that the viewers identify a specific subject after maybe entertaining several other as possible. What is important is the recognition of the action, not the subject or the agents, for a scene to have narrative value.

Among more recent treatments of the issue which assume a similar approach, Hurwitt acknowledges this ambiguity for the majority of Geometric images, but also stresses the specificity of some other, introducing a new classification for Late Geometric iconography. Beyond the standard categories of mythical or heroic, typical or particular, he claims that we can rather distinguish between “strong” or “weak” images, depending on whether the description is concrete enough to evoke specifics of either real life or myth.⁵⁵

The supposed epic character of the Geometric *prothesis* and battle scenes is based largely upon Webster's interpretation of the Dipylon shield (visible in **figs 1-2, 3a, 4, 6**),⁵⁶ allegedly derived from the Mycenaean figure-of-eight type, which has ever since been the point of controversy.

⁵² Boardman 1983, 25. Contra Webster 1964, 206.

⁵³ Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 44-53.

⁵⁴ Benson (1988, 71-73) seems to point in the same direction, maintaining that ambiguity is an essential feature of Geometric art and actually of Greek mentality, which does not seem to make a strict distinction between reality and myth, at least not before the introduction of philosophical reasoning. An action might not have been meant as heroic but given nevertheless heroic overtones. Splendid funerals or battles might refer to actual happenings in the life of the dead, just as well as act as a poetic simile for that life. Langdon (2006, 207; 2008, 30) also entertains the possibility of blurred boundaries between myth and reality, suggesting a “situational” evocation of mythological prototypes, in which the viewers could see themselves. This could imply that even “generic” scenes were just meant to function as templates awaiting specific content, allowing for a variety of readings.

⁵⁵ Hurwit 2011, 11-16.

⁵⁶ Webster 1955, 41.

I share Boardman's and Carter's view that the Dipylon shield is not just an imaginary form, inspired by a Mycenaean type long extinct, and used in art to mark a scene as mythical. There is evidence to suggest the actual existence of the Dipylon shield as a type of light shield, in use along with the figure-of-eight, which was adapted at the end of the Bronze Age and persisted into the following centuries and down to mid-8th c. B.C. on Attic Geometric vases, before being driven away by the round hoplite shield towards the end of the 8th c. B.C. Of course no Dipylon shield has survived, but the same goes, for example, for the figure-of-eight shield, which is generally held to have been in actual use. The reason is their perishable materials.⁵⁷ Furthermore this seems to be the case for almost all Greek shields, with the exception of metal attachments of the hoplite shields.⁵⁸

Snodgrass doubts that the Dipylon shield was an existing evolution of either of the Mycenaean types mentioned above.⁵⁹ He claims that the body shield was driven away by the single-grip round shield by the end of the 14th c. B.C. (round bosses with a spike were found in Protogeometric and Geometric tombs in Athens and elsewhere). In view of the fact, moreover, that the hoplite equipment can be dated back into the Late Geometric, if the Dipylon shield had actually existed, it would appear that it strangely had replaced the single-grip round shield at some point in the 9th c. B.C. and then in turn given way to a new round shield soon after the middle of the 8th c. B.C., but had nevertheless also been preserved in art as an archaizing element.⁶⁰ However, the round bosses cannot be used as evidence for the exclusive use of single-grip round shields in the Geometric period. Even if they were indeed shield bosses, their dating and their distribution could only suggest an early commonness for mainland Greece, down to the 10th c. B.C. But even if they did exist later, this could not have excluded the use of other types.⁶¹

A strong argument against the Webster and Snodgrass theories is the mixture of warriors carrying round and Dipylon shields in the same picture (see for example **fig. 2**). Webster attributed it to the painters indulging in varying the shapes in stock; he even went as far as to suggest a mixing of contemporary with heroic figures.⁶² For Snodgrass the principal reasons for this mixture are the generally observed lack of consistency in Geometric art, even in matters of perspective for example, the vase painters' interest in decorative variety, and the generalized heroic character of the scenes. The Dipylon shield served therefore to mark not necessarily the bearer as a hero but the whole scene as heroic and thus its use in art could have been optional.⁶³ In either case, however, one wonders whether the painter would have been sophisticated enough to vary the represented shapes, unless he had had an actual variation of real shapes in hand.⁶⁴

Snodgrass also raises the issue of the Boeotian shield, regarded by many as an imaginary form, associated with certain mythical figures (Ajax, Achilles, Herakles, the

⁵⁷ Carter 1972, 55-56.

⁵⁸ Boardman 1983, 29.

⁵⁹ Snodgrass 1980, 54-55.

⁶⁰ Webster 1955, 41-42.

⁶¹ Carter 1972, 56. See also Snodgrass 1964, 38-51.

⁶² Webster 1955, 42.

⁶³ Snodgrass 1980, 54.

⁶⁴ Carter 1972, 57.

Amazons) which was introduced in the 7th c. B.C. and used until well into the 6th c. B.C. This seems to have been developed from or inspired by the Dipylon shield whose shape it echoes and it could also be slung around the neck by a *telamon*; it was therefore a light shield, though it was also constructed like a hoplite shield, with *porpax* and *antilabe*.⁶⁵ If the Boeotian shield had acted indeed as an anachronistic element, this would not necessarily have contradicted the actual existence of the Dipylon shield, since at the time of the representation of the Boeotian shield, the Dipylon shield had already been out of use.⁶⁶ Yet this anachronistic use of the Boeotian shield in art could still be evaluated as a comparable case of adapting an extinct type for artistic reasons. There is sufficient evidence, however, to suggest the actual existence of the Boeotian shield itself as an alternative hoplite shield to mark an officer and, accordingly, in mythical scenes, a prominent hero.⁶⁷

Last but not least, if the Dipylon shield was indeed used only in art, to identify a scene as mythical, why does it begin to disappear in Late Geometric II, just when we can probably find the first mythical scenes in Attic vase painting? And why is it so rare in those few Geometric vase scenes regarded as mythical? Would its wide distribution in Geometric vase painting and art not be strange, if it were merely an artistic imaginary form? And why would the artists have chosen a type of shield not described by Homer to indicate the epic character of their scenes?

There are therefore good arguments for the existence of the Dipylon shield. It was a type of light shield, as known since the Bronze Age, along with the figure-of-eight, the tower, the circular, and the crescent type. It assumed a form similar to that of the Dipylon shield by the end of the Bronze Age, which persisted in the following centuries, so that it appeared in the middle of the 8th c. B.C. on Attic Geometric vases along with other light or experiment types of various shapes, circular, square (**fig. 6**), rectangular, and it eventually vanished with the invention of the heavy round hoplite shield by the end of the 8th c. B.C. Thereafter the light shield will be found again on Archaic vases and terracottas only in connection with certain warriors who need to keep their arms free, such as charioteers.⁶⁸

Apart from the typical funeral and battle scenes, there is a relatively small number of unusual Geometric scenes, for which various mythical interpretations have been suggested.⁶⁹

Some scholars place the beginning of mythical scenes in the last quarter of the 8th c. B.C., with the depiction of centaurs and of Herakles with the Nemean lion (**fig. 2**) or

⁶⁵ Snodgrass 1964, 59-60. Snodgrass 1980, 57. Boardman 1983, 29-31.

⁶⁶ Carter 1972, 55-56.

⁶⁷ Boardman 1983, 29-32. Arguments in support of its existence would be a) Its realistic representation b) The fact that there is no parallel depiction in Archaic art of imaginary objects, apart from magical objects and Athena's helmet c) There was apparently no conscious antiquarianism at least in the Archaic art (the artist conceives the heroes in contemporary dress) and probably also in the Geometric. In Homer the case is different but it is only the persistence of an old poetic heritage d) A variation is found used by the guard on the Persepolis reliefs of Dareios and Xerxes, which otherwise display a distinctive realistic character.

⁶⁸ Similar in outline but smaller, this should be distinguished from the Boeotian shield. Boardman 1983, 27-28, 30. Carter 1972, 57.

⁶⁹ Compared to generic scenes these remain extremely rare and can at best be proven to be possibly, never certainly mythical. Coldstream 2003, 355-356. Langdon 2008, 5. Hurwit 2011, 8-9.

the Stymphalian Birds,⁷⁰ though there is arguably still no clear indication that these imported oriental motifs had actually been connected and identified with familiar mythical personae with which they bore similarities. They could therefore just as well be interpreted as art-beasts of decorative function.⁷¹ Similarly, the lack of any clues has led some scholars to see in the celebrated scene of a man about to board a ship holding a woman by the wrist a contemporary scene, farewell or other, depending on the interpretation of the *cheir-epi-karpo* gesture,⁷² rather than Helen abducted by Paris, Medea by Jason, or Ariadne by Theseus, or, as we have seen, the departure of heroes participating in the Trojan War.⁷³ Somewhere in between, it has also been suggested that this is only a vaguely heroic pair, acting as a mythical paradigm, in which human brides and grooms would have liked to recognise themselves.⁷⁴

In those few Late Geometric II scenes of possibly mythical content the identification is based on the use alone of circumstantial details. Let us, first, consider the famous shipwreck scene, with a man mounting an upturned ship, while all ten companions of his have fallen overboard, which has often been thought to reflect the Homeric account of Odysseus' shipwreck by the island of Calypso.⁷⁵ A closer inspection of the details, however, reveals that all figures scattered in the sea are actually still struggling for survival, trying to grasp hold of the ship or of someone already holding it! Given that Geometric style is so economic in the application of gestures, as we have seen, this option should have a central meaning to the interpretation of the story, which is possibly that all but one –who lies prostrate on the keel– will eventually survive. If so, this shipwreck would bear little, if any, similarity to that recounted in the *Odyssey*, and could rather be referring to a contemporary adventure, as a memorial or funerary reference to the dead man's brave, heroic-like life.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Fittschen 1969, 200; Schefold 1966, 22-23; Webster 1955, 40, 49. In other media of non-Attic provenance we have also Herakles and the Lernean Hydra (Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 38-39; in combination with a horse-on-wheels, the Trojan horse, Giuliani 2003, 77-81), Herakles fighting Apollo over the Delphic tripod (Schefold 1966, 22; contra Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 26), Herakles and Nessos? (Padgett 2003, 133-137; Langdon 2006, 211; Hurwit 2011, 12), a centauromachy (Padgett 2003, 140-143; cf. Langdon 2006, 209-210).

⁷¹ Carter 1972, 45-49, 51-52. See also n. 23 and cf. nn. 25 and 28.

⁷² Carter 1972, 52. Ahlberg-Cornell (1992, 26-27) sees an abduction, associated with real life, but with nuptial, rather than funerary connotations.

⁷³ Webster 1955, 47. Schefold 1966, 26. Coldstream 1991, 52-53. Coldstream ventures to suggest that the circular object held by the woman is the crown of light, by means of an attribute of the kind used to identify mythical figures from the 7th c. B.C. onwards. He goes even further to suggest that a series of Late Geometric IIb scenes of women dancing holding similar objects are meant to depict the Crane Dance. Snodgrass (1998, 33-35) draws attention to the close resemblance with scenes on Minoan or Mycenaean rings, entertaining the possibility that our scene reflects a very old, Minoan perhaps, version of Theseus' elopement with Ariadne.

⁷⁴ Langdon 2006, 205-208. Langdon 2008, 25-32. See also n. 54.

⁷⁵ Originally proposed by Hampe 1952, 26-30. For further discussion of this identification see Hurwit 2011, 1-2, and nn. 4, 6.

⁷⁶ Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 27-28. Snodgrass 1998, 35-36. On the conditions for accepting Homeric inspiration for works of art, see Snodgrass 1998, 12-13, 67-73. Hurwit (2011, especially 4-8, 14-16) attempts to restore the possible mythical content of this -unique in all of Attic Geometric- shipwreck scene (a "protonarrative", see also Hurwit, 1985, 106). He explains any differences from an imaginable non-Homeric poetic or a vernacular source, or even from an artistic freedom of deviation from the Homeric model and reconstructs the story of drowning men struck by disaster, combined with the eventual survival of only the

A fragmentary representation of a man holding a boy and lifting his sword to kill him, while a woman by his side raises desperately her hands, has been identified as the Death of Astyanax by Neoptolemos, on the basis of a comparable iconographic scheme applied on a number of later parallels. Similarly, in another medium and of non-Attic provenance, on two clay seals from Samos and Ischia, made from the same stone stamp, a man carries a gigantic corpse over his shoulders, in the way Ajax carries dead Achilles on later vases. This may be the earliest identifiable scene from the Trojan War, though again not derived from Homeric epic.⁷⁷

Of all three cases, however, only the shipwreck dates from the Late Geometric IIa, while “Ajax and Achilles” falls into Late Geometric IIb, and the “Death of Astyanax” dates from as late as about 700 B.C.

Finally, let us discuss the much-debated twin figure (single-bodied, two-headed, four-legged and with four arms, often operating in both directions), which appears on four of the previously discussed massed figured scenes (such as under the left handle of **fig. 5**, not visible), as well as on a battle scene (**fig. 6**).⁷⁸ It has been interpreted as the legendary Siamese twins, the Aktoriones or Moliones fighting Nestor,⁷⁹ or as an artistic convention to depict figures standing side by side, or conceived as inseparable or interdependent.⁸⁰ The first theory has been shown to display many weak points. Although the twin figure admittedly looks as if two upper bodies have merged and are linked at a slim waist, such as in a typical Geometric human figure, it seems that a similar device had been used for the representation of apparently overlapping horses, that is an almost common body with double neck and head, and four pairs of limbs (see for example **figs 3a-b, 4, 6**). The subject strangely disappears from Attic vase painting along with the decline of the Geometric style of drawing. Why would anyway such a myth be of interest in Athens? The suggestion that it might have been used by the Neleid family, which claimed descendancy from Nestor,⁸¹ is improbable since the myth actually illustrated Nestor’s defeat and, moreover, the twin figure has too wide a geographical distribution to have been part of a single family’s history in Athens.⁸² The various settings

axially placed figure striding the keel, in a “synoptic” type of narrative. Hurwit considers the shipwreck to be a “strong” image, according to his aforementioned classification, that may have acted as a prompt for the production of a story “on the spot” among drinking companions filling their cups from the oenochoe that carried this scene.

⁷⁷ Schefold 1966, 27; Coldstream 1991, 52; Carter 1972, 52-54. Snodgrass 1998, 36-38. On the possibility that the story about the Death of Astyanax developed from imported Near Eastern images of ritual child sacrifice, maybe as early as the Bronze Age, which the Greeks were reluctant to admit and displaced into the realm of myth, exchanging the sacrifice detail with that of war casualty, see Morris, 1997, 62-63.

⁷⁸ Ahlberg-Cornell 1971b, 246-247. Fitschen 1969, 68-75 gives a list of eight pictures featuring the twin figure (M1-8), complemented by Ahlberg-Cornell by six more, 1992, 32-35, 62-63, nos 1-9, 34-38, some dating to the Orientalising period. Six scenes come from Athens, the rest from at least five more regions.

⁷⁹ Webster 1955, 41, see also above. Schefold 1966, 23. Coldstream 1991, 51. *LIMC* 1, s.v. “Aktorione”, 472.

⁸⁰ Cook 1934-1935, 206; Boardman 1983, 25-26; Carter 1972, 52-53.

⁸¹ Webster 1955, 41.

⁸² It would therefore make better sense to depict Herakles with the Moliones, who would anyway serve only as informants about the identity of the victor. Why would either of these mythical incidents, of course, be of significance for Attic vases in a funerary context could not be readily explained. King 1977, 37. Stansbury-O’Donnell 1999, 46. See also *LIMC* 1, s.v. “Aktorione”, nos 6-10, for depictions of Herakles

in which it appears also make it difficult to connect with a particular story. The strongest argument, however, is that the twin figure appears four times in total on a krater,⁸³ twice successively in a chariot procession, once in a *prothesis* scene, and once in a strange scene with a tripod. Ahlberg-Cornell saw in these three scenes the successive events of king Amarynkeus' funeral, narrated by Homer, as a unique example of an epic representation among the *prothesis/ekphora* scenes, applied on a grave vase to add to the prestige of a particular dead.⁸⁴ In that case, how could one account for the fact that such a concept had no parallels or imitations? And how could one furthermore explain the appearance of the twin figure in successive chariots in the procession scene? Ahlberg-Cornell also saw the Moliones in **fig. 6**, where, in her opinion, the connected helmet crests and the seemingly single square shield allude to their Siamese nature. In the two remaining Attic scenes, moreover, where the twin figure assumes a marginal position, she explains it as a device for drawing overlapping figures and she concludes that the motif must have been used for both purposes or originally for one of them which was then adapted for the other.⁸⁵ This may be true to a certain extent. Rather than seeing in these figures a convention for showing overlapping figures, which would counter two basic principles of Geometric art, its two-dimensionality, which allows no overlapping, and its striving to clearly indicate each figure's individual action, other scholars have opted to recognize a more symbolic formula for interdependence, inseparability or acting as a team, conceivable for example for ordinary –or even legendary– twins or sworn brothers.⁸⁶ The twin figure, as a convention for drawing overlapping, or, more likely, inseparable figures, seems to have eventually been adapted, so as to serve portray the legendary Siamese twins in scenes of their fight with Herakles from the end of Late Geometric onwards. Here emphasis is placed on their deformity, their bodies clearly not overlapping, but sharing a torso.⁸⁷

In conclusion, we can say that the first mythical scenes do not seem to antedate the end of Late Geometric I, if not Late Geometric II, certifiably gaining in number as of the beginning of the 7th c. B.C. This general shift of interest from contemporary to heroic

against the Moliones on late 8th and 7th c. Boeotian fibulae and on the Throne of Amyklai (third quarter of the 6th c. B.C.). Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 62-63.

⁸³ Boardman 1966, 1-4

⁸⁴ Ahlberg-Cornell 1971b, 248. 1992, 33.

⁸⁵ Ahlberg-Cornell 1971a, 109-110; 1971b, 250-252, 289.

⁸⁶ Brunsåker 1962, 203-204. King 1977, 35, 37. Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 47. Contra: *LIMC* 1, s.v. "Aktorione", 476. In this sense I would see in the connected helmet crests and the single shield rather a sign of close relation, such as the shared *himation* by certain mythical or generic figures in Archaic vase painting. See for example Boardman 2001, figs 62, 64: Hestia, Chariklo and Demeter or the Horai on the François vase (Attic black-figure). Boardman 1998, fig. 399: three triads of women attending a chariot group (Corinthian red-ground). See also McNiven 1982, 106 (N10, 3a-b). It should be noted, moreover, that some legendary twins, such as the Boreads and the Harpies, are drawn in very close, almost complete, overlapping on some 6th c. vases. *LIMC* 3, s.v. "Boreadai", nos 1-2 (Attic black-figure), pl. 100. *Ibid.* no. 4 (Corinthian black-figure), Vojatzki 1982, 75, pls. 9-10 (B39). *Ibid.* nos 5- 6 (Laconian black-figure), Pipili 1987, 21, fig. 31 (65).

⁸⁷ Snodgrass 1998, 26-32. This is made clear on an Argive krater fragment from 700 B.C., where the painter has cross-hatched the chest of the creature, indicating thus the commonness of upper body. *LIMC* 1, s.v. "Aktorione", no. 15, pl. 365 (=Ahlberg 1992, 32 no. 3). Morgan (1999, 281) makes a similar assumption for a unique Corinthian example. Cf. here **fig. 6**, where the bodies look almost separate and independent, fighting in different directions and just holding jointly one large shield. Cf. Boardman 1966, 3.

reality in the last third of the 8th c. B.C. may be explained from the rise of a new aristocracy which sought to establish its legitimacy by claiming to be descended from the ancient heroes.⁸⁸ Moreover, Pre-Homeric epic poetry or later Homer, with their human-like heroes, seem to have paved the way towards a normative use of myth. Last but not least, the inflow of oriental motifs, traceable as early as the 10th c. B.C.,⁸⁹ must have further encouraged identification with daemonic beings of Greeks' own myths, or else the creation of similar forms to depict them.⁹⁰ Occasional finds of Mycenaean artifacts may have also given inspiration,⁹¹ renewing the Greeks' interest in Mycenaean heritage and providing models for the development of a new iconographic tradition.⁹² Admittedly there is no close correspondence, though, between these first possibly mythical themes, such as the lion attack, and their analogues in either Near Eastern or Mycenaean art, which seem rather to have inspired the story, but not have acted as direct models for pictorial narrative.⁹³ Beyond any "tabula rasa" or "artistic precursor" theories, the reemergence of figural imagery and narration appears to be a complex phenomenon, in which all these factors may have played a more or less important role: Near Eastern imports, Bronze Age finds, epic tradition, artistic ingenuity, patron demands, all set against the socio-historical context of the time.⁹⁴

Whether vase painters in Late Geometric Athens recounted a mythical or a real story, particular or typical, with or without heroic overtones, what seems certain and bears great significance is that they actually told a story. It is with these scenes, therefore, that narrative art reestablished itself in Greece, after the end of the Bronze Age and on the threshold of the Orientalising and the Archaic period, in which it would develop and thrive.

⁸⁸ Fittschen 1969, 200-201 (after the alleged Dorian invasion). Simantoni-Bournia 1997, 69. See also Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 44. Pappi (2006, 232,237) likewise associates the emergence of Argive figured style with the rise of an aristocracy with warrior features in the socio-political context of a newly formed city-state. In Crete funerary figural imagery might have developed in a more public context, to serve community practises and needs. Stansbury-O'Donnell 2006, 251, 253.

⁸⁹ In Attica, however, direct access to oriental imports seems to have dwindled by the end of the 8th c. B.C. Coldstream 2003, 133.

⁹⁰ This fashion for imported Near Eastern luxury items (textiles, metalwork, ivories) and its influence on Greek figurative painting has been compared to the role of *japonisme* (the taste for and impact of Japanese prints) in late 19th century European painting. These portable works of art, whose culture was actually unknown to Greece or Europe respectively, encouraged break with an exhausted tradition, by presenting different solutions, conventions or techniques; Gunter 2009, 73-74.

⁹¹ Benson (1970, 4) talked of a conscious imitation of Mycenaean models, of a "revival", rather than a "survival". Coldstream (2006, especially 162-163) opposed this view and even suggested a Minoan influence, in the context of Cretan connections with Athens in the 8th century. Cretan Geometric seems to have inspired some themes of Attic Late Geometric on vases and gold bands, such as hunt scenes, lion combats, scenes with a seated goddess, possibly through a Cretan metalworker working in Athens.

⁹² Hurwit 1985, 68. Hurwit, 2011, 12-13. Cf. Langdon 2008, 48-50 (Mycenaean influence may have been stronger in Early Late Geometric, while the expansion of themes in Late Geometric II may rather reflect foreign influence and native innovation). There are admittedly some similarities in style or even repertoire between Mycenaean (scattered cases, none from Attica) and Attic Early Late Geometric vase painting (Dipylon Workshop). See, for example, Dakoronia (2006) who attempts such a comparative study of Late Helladic IIC vase scenes with war ships, chariot and warrior processions, hunting etc from Kynos, in East Lokris, and their Geometric counterparts (she discerns even common iconographic elements).

⁹³ Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 40-42.

⁹⁴ Stansbury-O'Donnell 2006, 248, 253.

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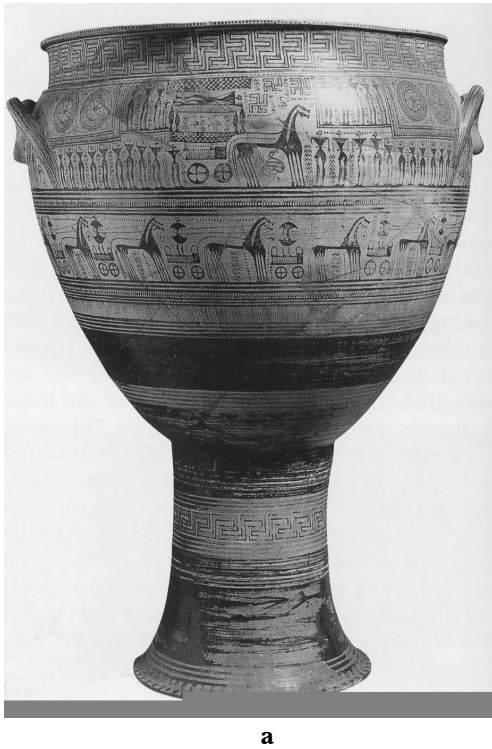
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Fig. 1. Eleusis, Museum 741. Middle Geometric skyphos. Fighting on land and sea. Photo reprinted from Boardman 1998, fig. 41.1,2.



Fig. 2. Athens, Kerameikos Museum 407. Late Geometric tetrapod stand. Hero (?) and Lion. Photo reprinted from Boardman 1998, fig. 66.



a



b

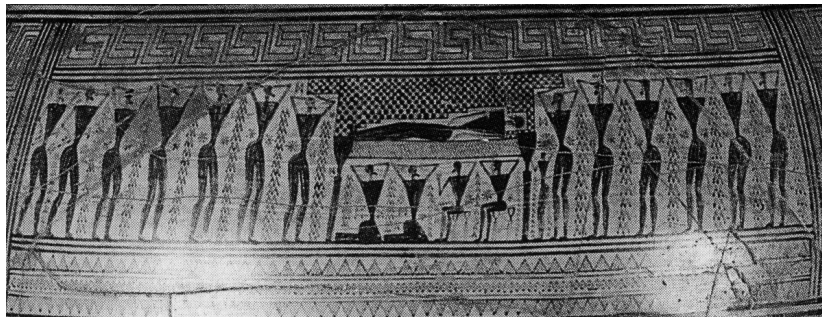
Fig. 3. Athens, National Museum 990. Late Geometric krater. *Ekphora* and chariot procession. Photos reprinted from Pedley 2002, fig. 4.24 (and detail p. 115).



Fig. 4. Paris, Louvre A517. Late Geometric krater. *Prothesis* and chariot procession. Photo reprinted from Simantoni-Bournia 1997, fig. 61.



a



b

Fig. 5. Athens, National Museum 804. Late Geometric amphora. *Prothesis*. Photos reprinted from a) Boardman 2001, fig. 13 b) Beazley Archive.

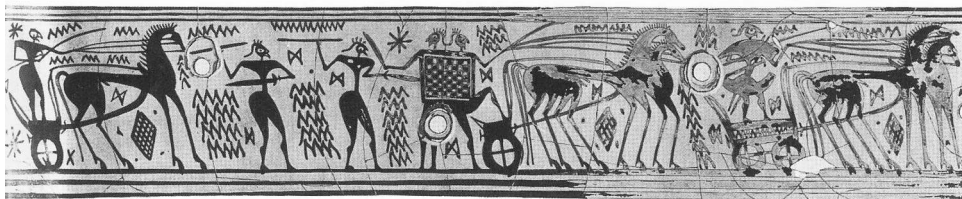


Fig. 6. Athens, Agora Museum P4885. Late Geometric oenochoe. Battle scene. Photo reprinted from Snodgrass 1998, fig. 11.