The Theseus Painter
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XIII. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE THESEUS PAINTER’S ICONOGRAPHY

1. Introduction: general observations on late black-figure iconography

One of the remarkable traits of Attic vase painting is the range of general themes (mythology, ritual RELIGION, daily life, etc.) and the great diversity of the individual subject matter, strengthened by the wide variations in the pictorial schemes. In general, late black-figure is not an exception. However, some peculiar problems concern the identification and interpretation of the subjects in late black-figure. Parallel to their repetitiously clumsy decorative style many of the 'mass-produced' vases of the least accomplished Attic late black-figure workshops show very abbreviated and repetitive representations. In spite of this, the identification of the figures or scenes is often a relatively easy matter. Many late black-figure vases, for example, depict a very simplified picture of a man fighting a bull (often even executed in silhouette). Although the male figure lacks special traits, he can in many instances be identified as Herakles by the carelessly painted club suspended in space or hanging from a tree. In the pictures without a club, however, it is difficult to decide whether the subject is indeed Herakles or Theseus. In other kinds of pictures where attributes are omitted or their nature is ambiguous, identification can pose greater problems.

Another complicating factor is that the same attribute or iconographical element can have very diverse values or meanings in different kinds of representations. It can be the benchmark for the identification of a subject or have a clearly unambiguous meaning in a specific scene and, in combination with other elements, lead to an acceptable identification. Depending on the context, it is also possible that an attribute or iconographical feature has multiple meanings. Furthermore, it might be misquoted, erroneously interpreted or incorrectly employed by a painter who haphazardly borrowed it from the work of others, thus leading to misunderstandings on our part. It is equally possible that an attribute or iconographical element is completely devoid of meaning, being perhaps merely decorative.

The lack of literary sources or parallels in other works of art can also cause difficulties, as we have seen above in relation to the Theseus Painter's numerous subjects whose meanings are uncertain (like Herakles leading a female monster by a rope, Cat. nos. 15-16, pl. 7 a, c, amazon or Arimasp fighting a griffin, Cat. nos. 6, 10, pls. 3 a, 5 a). In addition, literary sources for many such representations might indeed exist but they are not entirely comparable to the preserved images, or the images follow pictorial conventions instead of literary ones and therefore diverge from the written source and have become unrecognisable. Furthermore, written sources are often much more informative when applied to mythological or cultic representations than to more generic subjects, by which the latter are often relatively harder to identify.

A strongly one-sided concern for the identification of subject matter has some limitations and disadvantages, however. In the history of the study of Attic vase painting the main focus of iconographical

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796 This is most evident in the work of the truly low-quality manufacturers like the Haimon Group, CHC Group, Class of Athens 581, Leafless Group, etc.

797 For the helpfulness of repetitiveness in scenes for the identification of subjects see, for example, G. Jurriaans-Helle, 'Het ontleden van griekse vaasschilderingen', Lampas 30, no. 4/5, Oct. 1997, 285-96 (with English summary); ead., 'The Bride, the Goddess, the Hero and the Warrior, Chariot-scenes on Attic Black-Figure Vases', Proceedings Amsterdam, 206-208.

798 See lekythoi and mastoid-skyphoi in the Haimon Group, for example, ABV 547,242-43, 547,246, 547,251 (no club?), 547,253, 558,485, 558,489 (no club?), 558,492-93.

799 See, for example, the numerous scenes with a 'goddess' mounting a chariot in the Haimon Group (ABV 539-43,1-124; Para 271-74).

800 Might, for example, the white-haired central satyr on the skyphos which was once in the Basle market (Cat. no. 37, pl. 15 c-d) truly be regarded as Papposilenos and thus a representation of a stage performance or is he just a decorative variation in a group of satyr musicians? Possibly he is a bit of both. See also Brommer, Satyrspiele', 18.

801 All this largely depends on the context of a representation; see, for example, the female figure of the Goulandris lekythos (Cat. no. 126, pl. 38 b). The question is whether she is a participating goddess or merely a space-filling bystander as often appears to be the case in the Theseus Painter's pictures.
research largely aimed at distinguishing scenes and classifying them according to type and variant.\textsuperscript{802} As a result, their underlying meanings received comparatively much less attention. The approach is regrettable, above all, because it reduces the representations to mere narrative 'cartoons' or decorative templates. Secondly, if the identification of subject matter remains the sole concern, there is the risk that unidentifiable scenes are given less attention in the long run or, alternatively, they become the object of extensive guesswork. Frequently, this results in many different interpretations, none of which is fully convincing (see for example the various opinions about the female monster led by Herakles, Cat. \textit{moe.} 15-16, chapter XI.2).

The large diversity of the subjects and their treatment, as well as their variation, development and varying function and utilisation on the individual vases, suggest that multiple factors must have determined their selection, development and appearance. Considerations like fashion, painters' preferences or simply the nice look of certain subjects played their parts, while functional, symbolic, social, cultural, political and religious factors must have been equally influential. The difference between the two approaches, that is, the identification of subjects only and the interpretation of their meanings might, roughly speaking, be equated with the difference between iconography and iconology.\textsuperscript{803}

In the past decades the iconographical research of vase painting has fortunately shifted towards the iconological investigation of meanings. Two main schools of thought can be distinguished, centring largely on Attic painting. One is dominated by J. Boardman's proposal that certain subjects might sometimes reflect or comment on political situations or historical events, later termed the 'civic message'.\textsuperscript{804} The second one, usually associated with the structuralists, concentrates on a more socially, culturally and religiously inclined approach in connection with hidden meanings in Greek iconography.\textsuperscript{805}

The former will be briefly dealt with below. The latter, though of equal importance, is not of use with respect to the Theseus Painter because it relies on supposed generalities in relations and contexts, and on the discovery of common denominators in Greek iconography as a whole. In contrast, the present study - being a monograph about a painter - focuses on particular characteristics of the Theseus Painter, including his representations, most of which show unusual content and a degree of divergence from the overall Attic development. Therefore it is preferable to investigate the specific features which make his work stand apart. As seen above, the uncommon choice and treatment of subject matter is a prominent factor.\textsuperscript{806} In short, an exploration of iconographical particulars rather than generalities seems the most suitable approach to the Theseus Painter's uncommon imagery, although wider, more general meanings and concepts would inevitably also have come into play.

As a rule, late black-figure portrays the entire thematic range of earlier black-figure as well as that of contemporary and later red-figure. Slight iconographical shifts can be discerned, however. Particular scenes and thematic groups are more popular than previously or afterwards or, alternatively, they are less common. Late black-figure shows relatively many ritualistic, cultic and sacrificial scenes, whereas symposia, for example, are not especially frequent.\textsuperscript{807}

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\textsuperscript{802} Best represented by Brommers \textit{Vasenlisten} of heroes and deities, \textit{LIMC} and numerous monographs. The interest in listing subjects appears to have emerged at the time when Beazley and others were compiling their lists which stylistically classify painters' hands. Often the outcome of both approaches could be combined, for example, to establish whether the earliest appearance of a subject might be linked to a particular painter, thus marking him as its possible inventor in vase painting.

\textsuperscript{803} H. Hoffmann, 'Iconography and Iconology', \textit{Hephaistos} 7/8 (1985/1986) 61-66, gives a rather extreme description of such a distinction, the first may be described as "positivistic descriptive iconography [...] believe that things are what they appear to be on the surface; hence their suspicion of symbolic, psychological, or social-critical analysis". The second as, "interpretive and historically oriented iconology [...] are interested in recovering layers of sense behind the describable phenomena - that which they consider to be their deeper meaning."

\textsuperscript{804} J. Boardman, \textit{The History of Greek Vases, Potters, Painters and Pictures} (London 2001) 202 ff.


\textsuperscript{806} See, for example, also Lissarrague, \textit{Peintre des demi-palmettes}, 125-139.

\textsuperscript{807} Even the two late black-figure workshops that produced a large number of cups seldom depicted these scenes. The Haimon Group has a few representations of a 'man reclining with women and satyrs' (\textit{ABV} 563,574) or Dionysos or Herakles reclining with
Furthermore, some individual subjects are particular to late black-figure (as well as sometimes to contemporary red-figure). Among the examples are Helios in his chariot, which appears late in the sixth century B.C. and disappears early in the fifth; the earliest representation of ‘the meeting of Elektra and Orestes at the tomb’ (?), depicted by the Sappho Painter; the first ‘Lenaea’ vases; and, by the Athena Painter, Hyakinthos (Apollo?) on the swan and Herakles and Atlas. The Theseus Painter might be regarded as an extreme example of a painter who was evidently inclined to choose such uncommon subjects. However, it must also be kept in mind that several other late black-figure painters showed a general interest in subjects and scenes that are out of the ordinary or are not found in vase before or after them.

Another point needs to be noted regarding late black-figure. The continued use of the older black-figure technique in the late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C. might suggest that it largely filled a traditional role, like the black-figure decoration of the Panathenaic amphorai. If so, however, such traditionalism seems to contrast sharply with the relatively many iconographical innovations of late black-figure.

With regard to contemporary red-figure, we see that it differs from late black-figure in something so basic as the range of shapes. As a rule, the late black-figure painters preferred smaller ones like oinochoai, kalpides, small neck-amphorai, skyphoi and, above all, lekythoi. On the other hand, the Theseus Painter’s skyphoi, as shown above, can be quite big, and other late black-figure painters sometimes decorated largish shapes. In contrast, contemporary red-figure painters have a much broader range of shapes, including many more cups as well as big vessels like amphorai, kraters and large hydriai.

Perhaps the differences in subjects and shapes reflect a new, more limited role for late black-figure vases as compared to earlier black-figure and contemporary red-figure. If its altered nature was indeed traditionalistic, this was not to the extent that iconographical conservativeness was dictated. The customers themselves could also have been influential: some might have remained attached to black-figure, while others preferred the newer, more sophisticated red-figure work.

Whatever the true reasons may be for the continuation of black-figure after the introduction of red-figure and the specialisations which appeared in late black-figure, I am convinced that it is insufficient solely to maintain that late black-figure painters were simply not skilled enough to change to red-figure. First of all, several of them show enough artistic ability to let us suppose that they could successfully have switched to red-figure, among others, the Athena Painter, Edinburgh Painter and Sappho Painter as well as the Theseus Painter. Secondly, as remarked above, there are indications that at least one of these painters actually switched to red-figure, namely, the Athena Painter, known later as the red-figure Bowdoin Painter. Moreover, some contemporary red-figure painters were just as incompetent as their late black-figure counterparts, maybe even more so.

2. General aspects of the Theseus Painter’s Iconography

Thematic patterns
As seen in chapters IX-XII, the exceptional and the unique play major parts in the Theseus Painter’s

women and satyrs (ABV 563,573). The Leafless Group (ABV 632-648; Para 311-313) depicted many representations of Dionysos (or “Dionysos twice”) reclining with a goddess or satyrs, but no regular symposia.

808 It is only rarely depicted in red-figure (see above) and never with Herakles, as on the Theseus Painter’s skyphoi and several other late black-figure vases.

809 ABL 226,18; LIMC III, s.v. ‘Elektra I’, no. 54.

810 See LIMC V, s.v. ‘Hyakinthos”; M. Steinhart, ‘Apollo auf dem Schwan. Eine neue Lekythos des Athenamalers’ AA, 1993, 201-212. However, there are also some early red-figure examples, for instance by Oltos.

811 ABL 256,50; LIMC V, s.v. ‘Herakles’, no. 2677. One much earlier example of Atlas is seen on a fragment by Nearchos, LIMC III, s.v. ‘Atlas’, no. 2.

812 There are, of course, also relatively many cups by late black-figure painters – the Leafless Group specialised in them – but they are few compared to late black-figure lekythoi. Even skyphoi and oinochoai seem to be more numerous.

813 Like specific funeralary vases (lekythoi?) or drinking vessels for special occasions (skyphoi?, see below).

814 See, for example, the very rude tondos of the red-figure Pithos Painter, ARV² 139-141.
iconography. Quite a few of his representations might be considered isolated cases in Attic vase painting either because they cannot be fitted into the more common iconographical trends or because they find no place among the larger thematic clusters. For example, the pictures of Herakles dragging a female monster by a rope (Cat. nos. 15-16, pl. 7 a, c) are clearly associated with mythology (Herakles) and irreality (a strange monster with human traits like the face and polos), although their content cannot definitely be called mythological in the sense that it is linked to a particular myth or story. Neither are they apparently part of a larger mythological cycle like the labours of Herakles or the deeds of Theseus on his way to Athens which could provide an identification by association.

Roughly speaking, the Theseus Painter’s subjects can be divided into several larger thematic categories. As said, only a relative small number of the subjects can be regarded as common, whether the content is mythological/narrative or otherwise. Many of his pictures can be placed under thematic headings like religion/ritual/cult, possible theatrical performances, mythological narratives which are new for the period or uncommon, mythological figures in an apparently non-narrative context, and everyday scenes, some of which are related to work.

Another point is the absence or rarity of particular kinds of representations. The relatively few narrative mythological scenes have already been mentioned. But even more striking is the almost complete absence of symposia on the Theseus Painter’s vases. Several of his skyphoi (and some other vases) depict Herakles, Dionysos and Hermes reclining, but none of his skyphoi show revellers at a drinking party, as portrayed on so many black- and red-figure cups, which seems curious if we consider the supposedly common function of skyphoi and cups as drinking vessels. Indeed, the Theseus Painter’s symposia of the more usual kind seem to appear on only two of his cups (Cat. nos. 174, not illustrated, and 176, pl. 56 c).

Another point regarding the Theseus Painter’s iconography is the apparent linkage of some general subjects with particular shapes. The cups mainly depict symposia, butcher scenes and Herakles in various non-narrative roles; the large kalpides seem to be closely associated with Apollo and the Muses; the lekythoi generally show most of the narrative mythological scenes; the palaestra is the subject of most alabastra; the loutrophoroi portray more processions than mourners and prothesis scenes; and the skyphoi have the bulk of the Theseus Painter’s unexplained and rare subjects, many of which can be linked to ritual practices.

Subjects compared

Table 13 complements this section, which examines the occurrences of subjects used by the Theseus Painter in the work of other competent, late black-figure painters. The Athena Painter is included for obvious reasons. The Edinburgh Painter, Gela Painter, Sappho Painter and Diophos Painter were selected because they are the other main late black-figure vase painters with a large body of work which has demonstrable artistic quality and varied iconography. In Table 13, I omit the Theseus Painter’s fragments with only youths, men or goats which lack a further context. The subjects are not counted per side, as in Table 12, but per vase,

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815 Other examples might be the amazon/Arimasp and griffin skyphoi (Cat. nos. 6, 10, pls. 3 a, 5 a), the vases with Herakles served by Athena (Cat. nos. 18-21, pls. 8 d-9 d), or Dionysos and a female seamonster (Cat. nos. 69-70, 115, pl. 29 a-b).
816 Like processions and sacrificial scenes.
817 Like satyr musicians, ostricid riders, dolphin riders.
818 Like the new representations of the deeds of Theseus.
819 Like Herakles either leading a female monster, reclining or being served by Athena; amazon/Arimasp fighting a griffin (depending on the identification this might also be a mythological scene or a stage representation).
820 Like butchers, forge, harvest (or harvest feast), oil-press
821 The picture of the Munich pelikle (Cat. no. 154, pl. 49 a-b) has also been associated with a symposion rather than a komos.
822 Almost half of them: 11 of 25 vases depict narrative mythological scenes: Apollo and Tytios, Hephaistos in a gigantomachy, Herakles in the cave of Photos, Herakles and Alkyoneus, Theseus and Prokrustes/Sinias, Peleus and Thetis, Polyxena at the fountain, Odysseus escaping, Triptolemos and Demeter, judgement of Paris, Herakles and the lion, (Cat. nos. 126-27, 135-39, 141, 144-445, 147, pls. 38 c-e, 39 a-c, 42 d-e 44 a-b, 45 a-c, 46 c, 46 f-g).
823 Such ‘thematic patterns’ seem not to mark his kyathoi, small kalpides, oinochoai or olpai. The pelikai appear partly to represent ‘genre’ subjects like revellers, musicians; partly more specific subjects like a pyrrhic dance or satyrs musicians; and partly ambiguous subjects which might or might not refer to mythological figures: man on a mule/donkey (Hephaistos or Dionysos?), two men on donkeys (Hephaistos and/or Dionysos?), man and woman seated (Dionysos and Ariadne?).
that is, a subject that occurs on the both sides of one vase is counted once. Finally, my comparisons may be somewhat biased because I rely entirely on Haspels and Beazley for the work of the other painters.

On the whole, it can be said that individual vase painters, including those working in late black-figure, seem to have their own favourite subjects or actually specialise in particular subjects. This is most obvious in the less individualistic products of groups like the Leafless Group or the Haimon Group, each of which concentrated on a few subjects. The Haimon Group, for example, has huge numbers of representations of 'a goddess mounting a chariot'. Among late black-figure painters and groups of skyphoi the preferences for certain subjects are equally evident. The CHC Group, for instance, favours subjects (amazon and chariot in three-quarter view, youth courting a boy, dancers) which seldom find counterparts on vases decorated by the Theseus Painter or other painters. Even the Krokotos Group and the Sub-krokotos Group rarely have subjects in common with the Theseus Painter; the exceptions are the Krokotos Painter and the Painter of Philadelphia 5481. As will be shown below, individual painters favouring particular subjects which find comparatively few parallels in the work of other painters is also a characteristic of the more capable late-black-figure painters, even if they are stylistically comparable to each other. Furthermore, although all these painters pre-eminently decorated lekythoi, their overall thematic categories differ noticeably.

In style, as noted, the Theseus Painter and the Athena Painter are strongly related. On the other hand, they show a lesser degree of similarity in their subject matter. The Athena Painter specialised much more in mythological scenes, frequently depicting Trojan stories (Polyxena at the fountain, of which at least nine examples survive, judgement of Paris, Ajax and Achilles playing a board game, Ajax with Odysseus and others, for example, Agamemnon). In contrast, few Trojan representations by the Theseus are known, and they mainly occur on lekythoi which are linked by shape to the Athena Painter’s workshop. Hyakinthos is another uncommon black-figure subject of the Athena Painter which is without parallel in the work of the Theseus Painter.

Like the Theseus Painter, the Athena Painter frequently chose Herakles as his subject, sometimes depicting the hero in scenes which are also found in the work of the Theseus Painter. Other, more uncommon, subjects of the Athena Painter include Nike running over the sea and two men working with hammers on a giant head of Kore. On the other hand, he regularly portrayed centaumachie and, more often, fights, more than 20 examples of which survive (although it is unclear whether or not they are mythological). In contrast, only two pictures of fights can be assigned to the Theseus Painter (Cat. nos. 119, 148).

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824 Although the group's work also comprises several examples of women at an image of Dionysos, the 'Lenia' vases, see ABV 553,392-94.
825 The amazon and chariot in three-quarter view are otherwise quite rare in Attic vase-painting as a whole.
826 ABL 256,40, 257,78-79; ABV 523, 4-5; Para 261 (Amsterdam 3737; Basle, private coll.); MuM 40 (1969) 46, no. 77; K. Herbert and S. Symeonoglou, Ancient Collections in Washington University (St. Louis Miss. 1973) 13, figs. 15-17. To avoid long, space-consuming references, I give in nn. 832-854 only the first listing of the cited vases by the Athena Painter, Edinburgh Painter, Gela Painter, Sappho Painter and Diosphos Painter. Most often they refer to ABL. References to the same vases in ABV, Para and Beazley Addenda can easily be found at the beginning of each of Beazley’s lists: Athena Painter (ABV, lekythoi, 522-23, oinochoai dispersed over 525-33; Para 260-61, references to ABV included; Beazley Addenda 130-32); Edinburgh Painter (ABV 476; Para 217; Beazley Addenda 120); Gela Painter (ABV 473; Para 214-15, references to ABV included; Beazley Addenda 118-19); Sappho Painter (ABV 507; Para 246; Beazley Addenda 126); Diosphos Painter (ABV 508-509; Para 248-249, references to ABV included; Beazley Addenda 127).
827 See, for example, ABL 254,2-3.
828 ABL 254,4, 258,89.
829 Para 261.
830 See, i.a., ABL 255,8, 258,88.
832 Herakles and the deer (ABL 254,4), Herakles and the lion (for example ABV 522,5), Herakles and the bull (for example ABL 257,65), Herakles and amazons (ABL 256,51), Herakles and Atlas (ABL 256,50), Herakles and the birds (ABV 522,50), Herakles fighting centaurs (ABL 257,77), Herakles leading a monster (ABV 260,129), Herakles and Kyknos (ABL 256,36).
833 Thebes (ABL 259,115) and Cab. Méd. 298 (ABL 258,87; ABV 522; Para 260; Beazley Addenda 130).
834 Centaumachie: ABL 256,44, 257,85, 258,92, 258,96-99, 259,116, 260,139; ABV 523,6-7, 525,12; CVA Castle Ashby 1, pl. 23,3-4; CVA Illinois 1, pl. 29.1-4. Fights (see also n. 733): ABL 255,12, 255,21, 255,24-25, 257,55, 257,67, 257,83-85, 258,93-95, 258,106, 260,131, 260,140; ABV 523,2, 523,8-10; Para 261; Para 262 (once Basle market, Neuchâtel); CVA Castle Ashby 1, pl. 23.5-7.
As a rule, the Athena Painter, it seems, was not very interested in the special subjects which the Theseus Painter apparently liked (Dionysian ship-cart, amazon/Arimasp and griffin, ephedrismoi, processions, ostrich riders, Theseus). However, both painters did sometimes share iconographical and thematic preferences and even occasionally illustrated the same unusual subject, for example, Herakles leading a female monster and the Pyrrhic dance (at least seven by the Athena Painter). In addition, as suggested by his name, the Athena Painter depicted Athena no less often than the Theseus Painter did.

The relatively few subjects that the Edinburgh Painter and the Theseus Painter have in common belong mainly to the realm of mythology. As a rule, the Edinburgh Painter's other representations also show the strong influence of mythology, which is in line with his supposed descent from the Leagros Group. He also painted numerous chariot scenes. Some of his subjects which correspond with those of the Theseus Painter are: procession, Herakles reclining (fragment), Herakles with Hermes and Athena, Hermes on a goat, scene with a ball game comparable to the Theseus Painter’s ephedrismoi or palaestra pictures.

Whereas the vase-shapes and painting styles of the Theseus Painter and the Gela Painter are very dissimilar, their iconographical usage shows many resemblances, especially, as it were, in the general mood. Like the Theseus Painter, the Gela Painter seldom chose mythological subjects. His Dionysian correspondences have relatively many similarities to the Theseus Painter's. Other iconographical correspondences are a depiction of Helios in his chariot (without Herakles) and palaestra. Just as the Theseus Painter frequently portrayed goats, so the Gela Painter featured bulls. He placed them in various contexts: maenads on bulls, bulls led to sacrifice and bulls at altars or lavers. Many of them appear in what look like abbreviated sacrificial scenes.

Stylistically, the Sappho Painter and the Diosphos Painter are very close, whereas their iconographical focal points diverge. The Sappho Painter was comparatively much more preoccupied with mythology and

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835 Dionysian scenes other than the common ones are also quite rare in the work of the Athena Painter; most show satyrs and maenads (Dionysos seated, ABL 256,42, 258,102; ABY 531,11; Dionysos in a chariot, ABL 257,62; thiasos, ABL 258,105; Dionysos with satyrs and goats, Para 261; Dionysos on a donkey/mule, ABL 258,103).

836 Only Theseus and the minotaur and Theseus and the bull (ABV 257,66 and Royal Athena Galerries, 1990, no. 52, resp.).

837 Herakles and the monster (ABL 260,129); heroes at a mound (Palermo, Mornin coll., CVA 1, pl. 18.1-3).

838 Pyrrhic dance (ABL 257,56, 258,90, 259,120, 260,141; Para 261, twice; MM 40, 1967, no. 141). Other subjects that occur in the work of both painters are dolphin riders (ABL 255,15); sirens making music (ABL 255,14, 255,20, 255,27, 256,48, 257,59,257,68, 260,136; ABY 525,5; Para 261, twice; MM 63, 1983, no. 36); satyrs (some of which make music, others with maenads, ABL 255,9, 255,11, 257,57, 257,69; ABY 704,11ter, 704,15quat; Para 261); heroes at a mound (Palermo, Mornin coll., CVA 1, pl. 18,1-3); several komoi and palaestra scenes (komoi, ABL 256,45-46, 257,60-61, 258,91, 259,114, 260,137-138; ABY 523,11; Para 261; palaestra, ABL 255,23, 257,76; ABY 523,13).

839 However, the specific scenes in which Athena figures are very different: gigantomachies with Athena (for example ABL 255,13, 255,16, 255,31-32); Athena pronouchos (ABL 255,33, 255,34, 256,37, 256,37, 256,86); Athena seated (for example ABL 256,38-39); head of Athena (for example ABL 254,1, 257,75).

840 Herakles and the lion and Herakles in an amazonomachy (ABL 218,45; Para 218 and ABL 220,78-79); Theseus and the bull (ABL 216,16-17; Para 218); judgement of Paris (ABL 217,32; Para 218); Polyxena at the fountain (ABL 217,31; ABY 477,7).

841 The Edinburgh Painter depicted several Trojan scenes; see, for example, Ajax and Achilles (for example Para 218), the death of Priam (ABL 216,1; Para 218); Aeneas and Anchises (ABL 216,10); ransom of Hector (ABL 217,19). See also Achilles and Chiron (ABL 217,28, 217,38, 219,60). Also various labours of Herakles (ABL 216,15, 217,30, 218,46; ABY 477,9; Para 218); Theseus and the Minotaur (ABL 217,23, 218,56, 220,78; ABY 478,7; Para 218); Odysseus and sirens (ABL 217,27).

842 ABL 216,6-7, 216,13, 217,20, 217,36-37, 218,40-41, 218,50-52, 218,59, 219,60, 219,71, 220,80; ABY 476,4-5; Para 217. One of the few chariot scenes by the Theseus Painter is seen on his Cambridge lekythos (Cat. no. 131, pl. 40 d-e). In shape, it has been linked to the Edinburgh Painter's workshop (see also above).

843 Processions (ABL 216,8); Herakles reclining (ABL 220,84); Herakles, Hermes and Athena (ABL 220,82; ABY 477,2; Para 218); Hermes on a goat (ABL 220,83; ABY 478,2; 478,8; Para 218); ball game (ABL 216,2); palaestra (ABL 217,34, 218,53).

844 Dionysos reclining, which is one of the most common subjects of the Gela Painter (see, for example, ABL 206,21, 206, 23, 206,27, 207,28, 207,31-32, 207,39, 208,53, 209,91, 210,118, 210,120-123, 211,125, 211,127, 211,130-134, 211,141-143, 212,163, 214,189, 214,192-193; ABY 473,2, 474,3-5; Para 215-216); satyrs and maenads and a mask of Dionysos (ABL 206,3, 208,55); Dionysos in a donkey/mule cart or seated on a donkey/mule (ABL 206,22, 206,26, 208,65-66, 209,80, 211,140, 212,155); satyr musicians (ABL 208,56; Para 215); satyrs making wine (Para 216).


846 For examples see ABL 206,13, 207,30, 207,38, 207,46, 208,54, 209,78, 209,84.
related subjects, and depicted many chariots (in battle, or with Athena or Dionysos). In contrast, the Diosphos Painter has some amazons and amazonomachies as well as a few less common subjects which are comparable to ones by the Theseus Painter: Helios in his chariot, and Theseus and Prokrustes.

As the foregoing painters demonstrate, it is impossible to find a common denominator in the subject matter of late black-figure. Even the Athena Painter, who is regarded as narrowly linked to the Theseus Painter, shares comparatively little with him as far as iconography is concerned. In fact, the Gela Painter's subjects better resemble the Theseus Painter's with regard to their broadly thematic content, even though his style and workshop connections are far removed. Very occasionally, the similarity even extends to a new subject: Helios, Theseus and Prokrustes, etc. In sum, although each of the above painters has his own iconographical specialties and rare subjects, it is doubtless clear that the Theseus Painter is exceptional because of their greater number and variation.

Theseus Painter, Herakles and Theseus

The notion that the increase in representations of Theseus on Attic vases after 510 B.C., regarding both quantity and narrative variation, is linked to the newly arisen democracy of Athens and the unification of Attica has found wide acceptance. In 1972 J. Boardman noted that a similar increase seems to occur in Heraklean representations from around 560 B.C. onwards and suggested that the phenomenon might be linked to the reign of Peisistratos and his sons. Furthermore, he and others proposed that certain Heraklean scenes might be interpreted as metaphoric or symbolic references to, or indeed comment on, the political situation of the day, as party propaganda or as a kind of symbolic alter ego of Peisistratos and his sons. Over time, Boardman gave several examples of how the theory might apply to different representations. Later, various scholars put forward many political interpretations of Heraklean pictures, some even proposing the they might be viewed as supporting or opposing Peisistratid propaganda.
At the same time, however, much comment as well as downright criticism and rejection of the theory has emerged.\textsuperscript{854} There is doubt, for example, whether the Heraklean scenes under discussion can suitably qualify as 'political representations' because they are possibly not explicit enough to refer clearly to such unequivocal messages. In addition, the link between the historical occurrences and the pictures to which they are supposedly connected is not always convincing. Moreover, other circumstances can conceivably account for Herakles' immense popularity in the sixth century B.C. For instance, we can consider the possible potential of overseas markets, as the majority of the vases with Herakles and Athena in a chariot were found in Etruria. Therefore, a general Etruscan, basically aristocratic, interest in Herakles and horses could just as well have been the cause.\textsuperscript{855}

Unfortunately, such reservations, among others, make it seem doubtful that the hypothetical political explanation of the Heraklean imagery of sixth-century vase painting can be maintained as a possible option. But the approach serves as an instructive example of the possibilities for research into Greek iconography and demonstrates the value of searching for hidden meanings.\textsuperscript{856} Boardman's theories have led to much useful discussion about new and different ways of investigating Greek iconography.

Whether correct or not, the theory would have little relevance to the Theseus Painter. Even though Herakles is one of his most common personages, there are no grounds for supposing that he interpreted the hero politically. Insofar as known, he only once depicted a scene that belongs among the kinds cited by Boardman and others: the Herakles and Triton of Marseilles 7017 (Cat. no. 23, pl. 10 e-d). Nevertheless, one can imagine that it is very tempting to view some pictures in a political light. But this is exactly the point, often subjects might appear to be linked to political events, whether correctly or not, because of seeming similarities in pictorial and historical elements. For example, the subject of Herakles leading a female monster (Cat. nos. 15-16, pl. 7 a, c) could, without much difficulty, be connected, as a symbolic reference, to Athens' subdual of a 'strange' country like Persia (E.T. Vermeule, in fact, associated the monster with fantastic creatures from the Near East).\textsuperscript{857} The main problem with such interpretations - and indeed the approach as a whole - is their inevitably highly speculative nature.

Moreover, according to the Theseus Painter's chronology, he began his career at the end of the reign of the Peisistratids. Therefore it would seem more probable that his Heraklean imagery had non-political associations with, among other things, religion/cult, mythology and theatre. If so, the Theseus Painter would lend support to Boardman's theory that after 510 B.C. Herakles lost significance as a political symbol. That said, however, it cannot be concluded on the basis of the Theseus Painter alone that no other vase painters placed political references in Heraklean pictures.

On the other hand, there is some chance that the Theseus Painter's depictions of Theseus have political content. As remarked, Thesean subjects, especially those which suddenly appear around the end of the Peisistratids' reign, namely the hero's adventures while travelling from Troeezen to Athens, are more widely

H.A. Shapiro, Art and Cult under the Tyrants of Athens (Mainz 1989) 157-63.


\textsuperscript{855} See, for example, H. Hoffmann, 'Iconography and Iconology', Hephaistos 7/8 (1985/1986) 63-64, who agrees with Moon about other influences on the choice of iconography, "when he [Moon] suggests that the success of such subjects in Attic black-figure may owe more to the Etruscan funerary trade than to Peisistratid interest in painted pottery. Moon furthermore directs attention to an aspect hitherto all but ignored by archaeologists namely 'that the practice of burying vases with the dead, most popular with the Etruscans but by no means exclusive to them' which 'must certainly have been an essential factor in the Athenian ceramic industry' and hence to have influenced iconography."\textsuperscript{856}

\textsuperscript{856} However, Boardman has a point when he says, "Taken as a whole, the Herakles phenomenon in sixth-century Athens seems inexplicable in any other terms, and for me these remain probabilities until some equally comprehensive and more compelling explanation is offered", 'Herakles, Peisistratos and the Unconvinced', JHS 108/109 (1988/1989) 159. See also J.H. Blok, 'Patronage and the Peisistratids', BABesch 65 (1990) 27; \textit{ibid.}, 'Phye's Procession: Culture, Politics and Peisistratid Rule', in H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (ed.), Peisistratos and the Tyranny, A reappraisal of the Evidence (Amsterdam 2000) 28-30, on the relative worth of Boardman's hypothesis.

\textsuperscript{857} Vermeule, Herakles; see also above.
accepted as bearers of political symbolism. Chronologically, it also seems more likely that some of the Theseus Painter’s pictures reflect the post-Peisistratid world after 510 B.C. rather than be concerned with the preceding years of the Peisistratids’ reign.

Furthermore, we have seen that, as indicated by the painter’s name, it was earlier assumed that a strong connection exists between his thematic preferences and the hero, although, as remarked, the degree of linkage has been greatly exaggerated. However, the Theseus Painter was indeed among the first vase painters to depict the adventures of Theseus on his way to Athens. Viewed in this light, he conceivably may have used Theseus as a means of commenting on political occurrences. On the other hand, his work contains relatively few pictures of this kind, as compared with his very many new Herakles scenes, as well as with his other unusual or innovative subjects. J. Neils suggests that the Theseus Painter simply joined the current fashion for portraying cycles of Thesean adventures, which originated with the more prominent red-figure painters and other sources. Such an explanation would seem most in line with the painter’s apparent general fondness for new and uncommon subjects.

3. The Theseus Painter’s iconography and function of the vases: skyphoi

Introduction: connection between image and vessel

I. Scheibler and H.A. Shapiro have recently questioned whether it is possible, as a methodological starting point, "to construct a meaningful chain of associations among the varied subjects that occur on a single shape [...] that both sheds light on the uses of the shape in Athenian life and, in turn, defines the shape as signifier in it's own right." In this regard, an earlier remark by H. Hoffmann is relevant: "Die Frage nach der funktionalen Bedeutung der attischen Vasen ist vor diesem forschungsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund zu stellen: in welchem Zusammenhang sind Vasenbilder und Gefäßfunktionen zu verstehen?"

In a very limited number of cases the correlation between representation, shape and function is unambiguous. Shapiro gives some examples: white lekythoi and loutrophoroi (but also pinakes, alabastra, etc.) with funerary subjects obviously had a funerary function; the sports events of the Panathenaic festival appear on Panathenaic amphorae; hydriae show fountainhouses, and drinking cups symposia. Regarding other vase-shapes, however it is generally thought that their representations range so broadly, spanning mythology to daily life, that it is impossible to detect any pattern of linkage.

Nevertheless, by analysing specific types of subjects in detail, Scheibler and Shapiro try to demonstrate that comparable linkage, though less obvious, can be discerned in other types of vases. Scheibler examines belly-amphorai, Shapiro pelikai. Scheibler concludes that the pictures of belly-amphorai share iconographical elements or themes. In her view, as summarised by Shapiro, the general common background of the different subjects of belly-amphorai might be associated with “certain cults and rituals of initiation for the Athenian ephebes, their training as horsemen and warriors, along with the virtues and values these were meant to instill.” In turn, the representations accord with the practical (and cultic?) use of amphorai as wine containers for the elites.

In contrast, pelikai often depict more commonplace subjects: oil-sellers, shoemakers, workshops and other occupations of daily life. Moreover, the painted representations of pelikai in pictures on vases occur

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858 Neils, Theseus, 76.
860 Shapiro, Shape and Subject, 63.
861 H. Hoffmann, ‘Knotenpunkte, Zur Bedeutungsstruktur griechischer Vasenbilder’, Hephaistos 2 (1980) 128, however, primarily regarding the controversy whether vases were mainly made for daily use or as “Totengeschirr”.
862 Shapiro, Shape and Subject, 63.
863 Scheibler, Bild und Gefäß, 60, “Es sind Themenwichtigungen und -Kombinationen zu erkennen, die auf einen bestimmten ikonologischen Zusammenhang zu deuten scheinen, und es fragt sich, welcher Art dieses Bedeutungsgesetz ist und welche Vorstellungen ihm zu Grunde liegen könnten.”
864 Shapiro, Shape and Subject, 63.

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in comparable spheres of activity. The pelike would then seem to be a much more humble vessel than the belly-amphora, for example, as oil container. And in such scenes pelikai themselves are often depicted. Thus Shapiro places the pelike in a more working-class environment. Strikingly, although the pelike and the belly-amphora have roughly the same shape, their overall subject matter and, in turn, their supposed function are fundamentally different, as argued by Scheibler and Shapiro.

Their method furnishes a practical tool for trying to identify the meanings and implications of the pictures of the Theseus Painter’s skyphoi in relation to the function of the actual skyphoi themselves. Perhaps it will prove all the more useful as Scheibler has recently investigated the connections between subject and shape with regard to large skyphoi, particularly the Heron Class. However, it will probably be much more difficult, if not impossible, to determine such associations between the representations and functions of other kinds of vessels decorated by the Theseus Painter, as their iconography seems, less coherently and distinctively linked to the shape. The only obvious exceptions are the scenes of mourners on loutrophoroi and of symposia on two of the painter’s cups. Thus only his skyphoi will be discussed further.

Specific subjects of Heron Class skyphoi and the possible function of these vases
As pointed out above, most of the Theseus Painter’s unusual subjects are met on his skyphoi. Furthermore, we have seen that many of them may to some degree refer to a religious, ritualistic, cultic or festive context. Importantly, as previously suggested by Scheibler and others, the same tendency marks large (later) black-figure skyphoi by other painters, particularly the Heron Class. However, noting the inherent ambiguity of such representations, Scheibler cautions against too easily linking them with specific practices or events. Nevertheless she finds it significant that Dionysos, Herakles and Hermes figure prominently on the large black-figure skyphoi. As shown above, the same clearly applies to those of the Theseus Painter (and, to some extent, also to his other vases).

For the most part, the Dionysian character of Heron Class skyphoi is seen in komoi and thiasoi, but there are also other festive Dionysian subjects like the ship-cart and the ‘Lenaia’. The references are not always clearly specified, however. Strikingly, the tendency noted by Scheibler in the Heron Class skyphoi as a whole is most marked in the Theseus Painter’s specimens: the Dionysian themes are mainly festive.

Further, Scheibler suggests that the tie between pictures of Herakles and the large Heron Class skyphoi might partly be explained by the hero’s affinity, as a mighty drunkard, with big vessels or simply by his general popularity when most of these skyphoi were made. However, several festive themes conceivably imply that the skyphoi, at least their representations, may be associated with the hero’s cult. In the words of Scheibler, “Wichtig ist beispielsweise die Bedeutung des Herakles als Epheben- und Apaturien-Gott.” In fact, some Heraklean scenes of the Theseus Painter’s skyphoi are indeed thought to refer to cult, though, of course, not with absolute certainty; for example Herakles and Athena together, either shaking hands in a templelike setting or the hero being regaled by the goddess. On the other hand, there are numerous Heraklean scenes which are probably not in any manner related to cult, like his labors or his fight with Alkyoneus. It is also difficult to see how Herakles leading a female monster might relate to the foregoing.

Hermes’ link with the festive usage of large skyphoi is formulated by Scheibler as follows: “Hermes der Gott der Landleute könnte signalisieren, dass auch agrarische Feste zu den Verwendungsbereiche der

865 Scheibler, Skyphoi.
866 Scheibler, Skyphoi, 35-39. See also Scheibler Bild und Gesch., 71, “[...] Das verdeutlichen einige attische Skyphoi des spät-schwarzfigurigen Stils, die wohl selbst rituellen Zwecken dienten und deshalb vom Theseus-Maler mit Szenen geschmückt wurden die Opferzüge und Opfervorbereitungen schildern.”
867 See also Shapiro, Art and Cult, 99ff., concerning all vases depicting Dionysos: “these vases could be called cult vessels in the truest sense, because they depict not the god himself, but an image which represented him in an enacted ritual.” Such scenes, however, as stated above, are not confined to skyphoi or to the later stamnoi, but also appear on cups and lekythoi.
868 With the possible exceptions of the skyphoi depicting Dionysos and a female sea monster (Bonn 1646, Cahn coll.?, Berlin 4528, Cat. nos. 68-69, 115, pl. 29 a-b) and the unpublished skyphos once in the Basle market showing Dionysos, satyr and Hermes (Cat. no. 108), although the latter also resembles a procession.
869 Scheibler, Skyphoi, 37.
870 Herakles regaled by Athena, Cat. nos. 18-21bis, 117, pls. 8-9 d; Herakles and Athena shaking hands in a sanctuary (?), Cat. no. 72, pl. 30 e-d.
Skyphoi gehört, was durch die Aussagen einiger Schriftquellen unterstützt würde. Will man eine Verbindung zwischen dem ursprünglichen ländlichen Hermskult und dem oben beschriebenen Weinfest herstellen, könnte man an die ländlichen Dionysien denken oder die von Malagardis vorgeschlagenen These aufgreifen und alle betreffenden Bilder auf einen Doppelschul der beiden Götter Dionysos und Hermes beziehen.\footnote{H. Hoffmann, 'YPHIN OPHTAN KNOAÁALAI', in D. Metzler et al. (eds.), Antikorin, Festschrift für Jürgen Thimme zum 65. Geburtstag am 26. September 1982 (Karlsruhe 1983) 65.}

Another possible ritual aspect of Hermes, as suggested by H. Hoffmann (see also chapter IX.4 above), might be represented by the god's reclining on a ram (although other deities are also seen doing the same in vase painting): "the ram as 'heroic sacrificial victim' – or ideal 'traveller' across the frontier from this world to the 'Other' – is the vehicle of transport of various deities who by their very nature mediate, or commute between worlds."\footnote{Consevatori (Cat. no. 70, pl. 29 b; the obverse of that skyphos, pl. 29 a, has Hermes on a goat).} One such scene by the Theseus Painter has come down to us.\footnote{Although a similar scene also appears on the lekythos Louvre CA 1837 (Cat. no. 140, pl. 44 c-d).}

Finally, Scheibler also mentions Theseus in connection with cult and ritual. He would have acted as a role model and hero for Attic youths because his youthful deeds contain many elements of 'rites de passage'. However, it can be seriously doubted whether possible ritualistic and cultic links between Theseus and large skyphoi were ever especially strong. First, the Theseus Painter's skyphoi rarely portray Theseus' deeds, whereas they often show Dionysos, Herakles and Hermes. Moreover, Thesean subjects are even less often seen on Heron Class skyphoi by other painters. Secondly, the representations of the deeds of Theseus as noted above, seem to follow a general trend towards the subject's increased popularity in Attic vase painting from 510 B.C. onwards, especially in red-figure. Furthermore, in comparison with some other subjects of the Theseus Painter, like for example some of the we have examined above, the possible religious, ritualistic or cultic associations of his Thesean scenes would appear even more ambiguous.

Curiously, Scheibler hardly takes into account the representations of the Theseus Painter's skyphoi which doubtless have a ritual context, which we have seen above: sacrificial processions (Tampa 86.52, Stuttgart KAS 74, Cat. nos. 40-41, pl. 17);\footnote{See n. 766.} sacrifice (Agora P 9273, Cat. no. 95, pl. 36 J); processions (Acropolis 1295, Cat. no. 94, pl. 37 a, and possibly, some Acropolis fragments under Cat. nos. 82-85, pl. 35 a-b. Perhaps the Theseus Painter's komos must also be included, as suggested by F.T. van Straten and others.\footnote{Malagardis, Skyphoi, on the other hand, takes this group into account.} With regard to the relation between the shape's function and the subject, Scheibler pays relatively little attention to the group of representations by the Theseus Painter, as seen again mainly on his skyphoi, which might refer to theatrical performances, like satyr choruses and ostrich riders,\footnote{Scheibler, Skyphoi, 38. The measure should be the same as a chous, approximately three litres. See also n. 152.} although they can hardly be reckoned among cultic or ritualistic subjects, they certainly have a festive character. However, it is unclear if and how they might be viewed in relation to the Theseus Painter's other special subjects.

With regard to the dimensions of the Heron Class skyphoi Scheibler argues in favour of a more general function: their large size makes them by definition useful for "Zecherwettkämpfen und allen Festen, zu denen übermässiger Weingenuß gehörte, als Trinkgefäss zu dienen, zumal an den Anthesterien, für deren Wetrinken dieses Volumen vorgeschrieben war."\footnote{Scheibler, Skyphoi, 36.} She also refers to Athenaios who mentions "das die Epheben am Apaturienfest anlässlich der Kureotis ein grosses Trinkgefäss (μεγα ποτήριον) herbeirufen, das sie mit Wein füllten um daraus zunächst dem Herakles zu spenden und dann alle Teilnehmer daraus trinken zu lassen. Man nannte dieses Gefäss οἶνοστήρια (...)". According to Scheibler, the term μεγα ποτηριον might refer to the large skyphoi.

In short, all the indications are that some relation must exist between Heron Class skyphoi and ritual representations, as seems especially evident in the case of the Theseus Painter. However, it cannot be automatically concluded that they were therefore used in cult or ritual.

Painted representations of skyphoi

Another potential tool for discovering the possible functions of skyphoi in relation to their subjects may be
supplied by the depictions of skyphoi in vase painting. The approach used by Scheibler and Shapiro for belly-amphorai and pelikai may well prove fruitful for the Heron Class skyphoi, too.⑧7 Malagardis concludes that, in general, skyphoi are portrayed in standard 'Dionysian' scenes like komoi or symposia as well as often in contexts which have a more or less ritualistic character, as references to the Dionysian 'universe', comparable in function to the Kabirios skyphoi, for example.⑧9

To date, the only extensive monograph on vase representations, written by H. Gericke, is rather confused and incomplete insofar as the Attic skyphoi are concerned.⑧8 She mentions five black-figure examples only,⑧1 most of which, in fact, are not skyphoi at all.⑧2 In red-figure, on the other hand, the depictions are much more numerous.⑧3 The skyphoi appears in a wide variety of scenes, many of which are related to the consumption of wine: komoi, symposia, hetairai and hetairai symposia, satyrs and maenads, youths, thiasoi, Herakles reclining, Dionysos, 'Hermes' cult' and Eros. Gericke's lists also include representations of skyphoi on a large number of 'Lenaia' vases, showing women dancing around an image of Dionysos as portrayed on mid- and late-fifth century stamnoi.

More recently, Malagardis presented a longer list which, however, is also incomplete.⑧4 Of the 17 black-figure examples, many are by earlier painters like the KX Painter and Sophilos.⑧5 Malagardis further adds 27 red-figure vases depicting skyphoi to Gericke's list.⑧6 In some instances, skyphoi are actually depicted on skyphoi themselves. The kinds of scenes in which skyphoi are depicted vary. There are many symposia and komoi, but also Odyssean pictures. Sometimes the subjects are Dionysian and ritualistic, including at least ten 'Lenaia' stamnoi.⑧7 Malagardis also notes four examples which have decorative bands with skyphoi and other types of vases depicted in silhouette.⑧8

The types of skyphoi illustrated on other vase-shapes are diverse. Among them are also examples that look very much like Heron Class skyphoi. To repeat, the Heron Class skyphos has a concave off-set lip, handles low on the body and a broad and plump foot (see figs. 35, 40-51, 73-76). The depictions date, as would be expected, from the period of the type's production, the late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C. While being a typically black-figure shape, it was portrayed on both black- and red-figure vases.⑧9 To date, however, no example is found on a vase by the Theseus Painter.

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⑧7 Scheibler, Bild und Gefäß; Shapiro, Shape and Subject.
⑧9 Malagardis, Skyphoi.
⑧8 Gericke, Gefäßdarstellungen, 16, tables 80-86, nos. 1-114. She also mentions the Dionysian/cultic connection of skyphoi (p. 16).
⑧1 Gericke, Gefäßdarstellungen, table 80, nos. 1-4. Her no. 4 actually consists of two separate items, Louvre CA 3100 and CA 3101.
⑧2 Cab. Méd. 343, Krokotos Painter (Ure, Krokotos, 90, no. 1, para 93,1), but in CVA Bibl. Nat. 2, pl. 69, the vertical handles of a kantharos instead of a skyphos are clearly visible. According to Malagardis, Cab. Méd. 271 (ABV 449,5, CV A 2, pl. 66.2) also shows a kantharos, although this is not clear in the published photograph. Malagardis also states that Louvre F 224 (ABV 520,5, CV A 5, pl. 57.11) shows a basket rather than a skyphos, although it looks very much like a skyphos in the published photograph and the woman holding a skyphos, to raise it to her lips. In Gericke's list, therefore, only Louvre CA 3100 and CA 3101 can be definitely regarded as depictions of skyphoi (Malagardis, Skyphoi, nos. A1-A2).
⑧3 Gericke, Gefäßdarstellungen, tables 80-86, nos. 5-114.
⑧4 Malagardis, Skyphoi.
⑧5 Nos. A 1-17, Louvre CA 3100 and CA 3101, two late black-figure cups with komoi (?) (Gericke, Gefäßdarstellungen, no. 4); Protoattic amphora in Eleusis (P. Arias and M. Hirmer, Tausend Jahre griechische Vasenkunst, Munich 1960, pl. 13); two skyphoi, KX Painter, depicting komoi, Athens, NM 640 and Kerameikos 2869 (ABV 26,21 and Par a 15); Samos, cup, KX Painter, symposium (ABV 26,27, also depicted in H.A.G. Brijder, 'New Light on the Earliest Attic Black-figure Drinking-cups', in Potters and Painters, 6, fig. 8); Athens, NM 996, skyphoi, near Sophilos, symposium (CVA Athens 4, pl. 6); Athens, NM 12513, skyphos, procession (CVA Athens 4, pl. 28); Heidelberg 279, skyphos, komos around a krater (CVA 1, pl. 42.8); Rhodes 12895, olpe, Dot-ivy Group, komos (ABV 447,1); London B 377, unpublished mastos; Athens A 17300, unpublished oinochoe; Sèvres 91, kalpis, Painter of the Half-palmettes, satyr holding a skyphos, here fig. 82 d (ABV 573,4); Turquin 1749, stamnos, Beune Painter, symposium (ABV 345,5); Turquinia RC 6823, psykter, symposium (CVA 2, pl. 22.2-3); Witzburg 369, lekythos, Dionysos and Ariadne reclining (E. Langlotz, Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität Würzburg, Griechische Vasen, Munich 1932, pl. 106); oinochoe, Taleides, Dionysos in a komos (ABV 176,2).
⑧6 Nos. B 1-28, of these, nos. 1-17 are standard red-figure scenes, mainly komoi and symposia.
⑧9 Heron Class skyphoi appear not to be painted in red-figure, although an example is in Six's technique, Cat. no. N65.

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Depictions of Heron Class skyphoi appear in various settings. Often the subjects are komoi and symposia (fig. 82 c). Other representations of Heron Class skyphoi or skyphoi of very similar shape occur in pictures of pottery workshops (7). People playing board games, possibly women weaving textile (or baskets?) and Dionysian subjects (fig. 82 d, satyr). As Malagardis remarks, the settings of a part of the representations of skyphoi are religious/ritualistic/cultic. Such vase pictures contain several of the depicted skyphoi which are similar to (or intended as) Heron Class skyphoi. Many vases by the Painter of the Half-palmettes show what appears to be a maenad at an altar. In several instances she holds an oinochoe, but twice she has a skyphos instead (see also fig. 82 b). In another picture by the same painter a satyr similarly placed at an altar is also furnished with a skyphos. Evidently, the skyphos could fulfil the same function as (or be synonymous with) the usual libation vessels: oinochoe and phiale.

S. Pingiatoglou presented a group of vases which apparently show exclusively female figures at a kind of symposion. All of them can be dated to the late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C., and the subject is without parallel before or after that period. The women are generally seated on campstools and, in several instances, there are tables with meat. It is remarkable that on each of these vases some women hold large skyphoi of Heron Class type, into which wine is sometimes being poured (figs. 82 e-f). The skyphos is not the only type of vessel portrayed in these pictures. In contrast to most representations of male symposia, the symposia of women are rather static and solemn. They sit rather than recline. In addition, one symposion is located under a colonnade. All this leads Pingiatoglou to propose that ritualistic/cultic banquets are the subject. She even assigns them to a specific festival: the Thesmophoria in honour of Demeter and Kore which, like the Halia and Stenia, has facets in which wine occupies an important place and women are the chief participants. Pingiatoglou chooses the Thesmophoria and not, for example, a Dionysian festival like the Lenaia because the cult statue of Dionysos is lacking and because the women sit quietly and are dignified instead of dancing ecstatically. She further points out that most of the female symposia show meat and that the eating of pork was part of the Thesmophoric rites. Whether such arguments give sufficient reason to see a specific cult or festival in these scenes is hard to judge, but one thing seems certain: a generally ritual subject is depicted and very large skyphoi form an intrinsic part of the equipment.

900 Examples in black- and red-figure, mainly komoi: Tibingen S/10 1478, komast on a clay plaque, skyphos with slightly higher handles (CVA 3, pi. 37, here fig. 82 c); Toronto 919.5.140, komos/acrobats (CVA 1, pl. 28; Para 169); JHS 95 (1975) pl. XII d); Munich 24220 (CVA 5, pl. 220; ARV 24.8; Beazley Addenda 155); Munich 2421 (CVA 5, pl. 225.2; ARV 23.7; Para 323; Beazley Addenda 155); Berlin F 2289 (CVA 2, pl. 80; ARV 435.95; Para 375).
901 See once Robinson coll., Baltimore, 'potter's shop', man with pottery (CVA Robinson 2, pl. 3; ARV 24.14; Para 323; Beazley Addenda 155).
902 New York M.M.A 68.27, men playing a board game, skyphos or 'lekane' (Agora XII, 13-14, nos. 1781-1820, pls. 83-85). See also nn. 790, 908) on the floor between the men playing, Posters and Painters, 65, fig. 4; JHS 102 (1982) pl. 6d.
903 Louvre F 224, women weaving textile, skyphos or basket (?), see n. 882.
904 See Sèvres 91, satyr with skyphos (CVA, pl. 6,11; ABV 573.4, Lissarrague, Peintre des demi-palmettes, 136, no. 13, here fig. 82 d); London 68.7-5.140, seated woman (maenad?) with oinochoe and skyphos (CVA 6, pl. 98.4; Para 287; Lissarrague, Peintre des demi-palmettes, 137, no. 31), both by the Painter of the Half-palmettes.
905 O. Borgers, 'Some Subjects and Shapes by the Theseus Painter', Proceedings AIAC, 87-89.
906 London 64.10-7.1715, (CVA 6, pl. 98.12; ABL 248.9; Lissarrague, Peintre des demi-palmettes, 136, no. 9, 126, fig. 1, here fig. 82 b); Ferrara 16269 (CVA 2, fig. 24.1-2), attributed to the Painter of the Half-palmettes, but not in Lissarrague's list. The skyphos depicted in London 64.10-7.1715 is particularly interesting. Although rather crudely rendered, it clearly shows lines and tongues at the bottom of the bowl, which are typical of Heron Class skyphoi; note also the vague ivy leaves or dots on the rim.
907 Ferrara 14938 (CVA 2, pl. 36.2; Lissarrague, Peintre des demi-palmettes, 137, no. 59).
908 Pingiatoglou, Frauenegelge.
909 Munich 1538 (ABV 395.3; Beazley Addenda 103; CVA 6, pl. 10; Pingiatoglou, Frauenegelge, pl. 14.1, here fig. 82 f); Agirgento, similar, no colonnade (ABV 377.235; Pingiatoglou, Frauenegelge, pl. 16.1); Athens 12951 (ABV 380.287), once Lucerne market (Ars Antiqua A.G. I, 22, May 1959, no. 110; Pingiatoglou, Frauenegelge, pl. 16.2); once Hirschmann coll. (Para 247; Pingiatoglou, Frauenegelge, pl. 17.1-2; here fig. 82 e).
910 Munich 1538, see the preceding note.
A cup by Makron in Berlin (fig. 82 a)\(^{903}\) features a skyphos with concave off-set lip, ivy on the rim (one row), diagonal handles, satyr between the handle-palmettes and a broad black band on the lower bowl. W. Oenbrink identified it as a skyphos which would have been old-fashioned at the time of the Makron cup's production, like a band-skyphos or a Hermogenian skyphos.\(^{904}\) In fact, it is much more similar to the Heron Class skyphos, in particular those of the CHC Group which also have a broad band at the bottom of the bowl and, often, comparable palmettes at the handles.\(^{905}\) The thematic context is again cultic, as the cup is one of the 'Lenaia' vases, notably the later 'Lenaia' stamnoi.\(^{906}\) However, they show the red-figure shape: horizontal handles which are almost at the level of the lip.\(^{907}\)

To conclude, it is remarkable that many of the scenes showing skyphoi are associated with women and possible festivals in which women had an important role. But because of their relatively small number and ambiguous nature it seems hazardous to draw conclusions which are too far-reaching. Equally risky might be the hypothesis that large skyphoi were partly intended for ritual and cult. Nevertheless, the kinds of scenes in which skyphoi are sometimes featured and the uses to which they are put strongly suggest that, at least in part, the use-context of the skyphos was ritualistic or cultic in origin, as several scholars are also inclined to believe.\(^{908}\) Other questions are much more difficult or impossible to answer, however. Were skyphoi actually part of the cultic equipment of the Anthestheria, Lenaia, Thesmophoria or other festivals, perhaps even more than one of them? Or do the representations only refer to them? Furthermore, can all types of skyphoi be viewed as a whole or must the large skyphoi or, indeed, only the Heron Class type be separately considered?\(^{909}\)

### Subjects, find-contexts, function

Because the find-places of only about half of the Theseus Painter’s vases are known and because information concerning their specific find-contexts is even scarcer, everything that follows is stated with some reservations. Importantly, the painter’s various subjects seem equally distributed over the known provenances of his work. Of his unusual subjects, like ephedrismoi\(^{910}\) and Herakles leading a female monster,\(^{911}\) examples

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\(^{903}\) Berlin F 2290 (\textit{ARV} 462,48, 481, 1654; Para 377; \textit{Beazley Addenda} 244; N. Kunisch, \textit{Makron} (Mainz 1997) 197-98, no. 345, pls. 116-117).


\(^{905}\) Compare, for example., St. Petersburg 4037 (Gorbunova, \textit{Ermitazhe}, 203, no. 179) or Athens, NM 366 (\textit{CVA} 4, pl. 45.1-3). Also \textit{ABV} 618-19. See also E. Simon, \textit{Die griechischen Vasen} (Munich 1976) 121-123, pls. 168-169, who reaches a similar conclusion of this shape being reminiscent to a Heron Class skyphos but also emphasises the old-fashioned nature of such a skyphos painted on a late Archaic cup. As a matter of fact, the CHC Group skyphoi are not necessarily much earlier than the Makron cup.

\(^{906}\) Malagardis, \textit{Skyphoi}, nos. 18-27. Many of the 'Lenaia' stamnoi show one or more women holding a skyphos, see Frontis-Ducroux, \textit{Le dieu-masqué}, L1, figs. 3-4; L2, figs. 5-6; L3, figs. 7-8; L4, figs. 10-13, and on p. 66; L5, fig. 9; L11, figs. 14-15; L15, figs. 19-20; L20, figs. 30-31; L24, figs. 40-42.

\(^{907}\) Several vases portray what might be skyphoi in what are often interpreted as sacrificial scenes. However, they could also depict bell kraters, for example, or vases of the type that are often called 'lekainai' (see \textit{Agora} XII, 13-14, nos. 1781-1820, pls. 83-85). In addition, possibly they are represented as large even for the largest known skyphoi; and their rims are most often more convex than concave. Furthermore, these scenes might simply represent butchers because the animals are being cut up on a block, very similarly to Malibu 96.AE.96 by the Theseus Painter (Cat. nos. 171, pl. 55 b) and other examples: Berlin F 1915, cutting up of a tuna or a sacrifice (?), "im Vordergrund ein grosser Skyphos, der vermutlich für die Abfälle bestimmt ist" (\textit{ABV} 377.274; \textit{Paragroup}, CVA 7, pl. 36); Oxford 1911.167, sacrifice, "a large kotyle-shaped vessel" containing objects (\textit{CVA} 1, pl. 29.7, 3-3; \textit{ARV} 559.152; \textit{Beazley Addenda} 259; Van Straten, \textit{Hiera Kola}, no. V195, fig. 145); Louvre C 10.754, sacrifice (\textit{ARV} 228.32; \textit{Para 347; Beazley Addenda} 199; Van Straten, \textit{Hiera Kola}, no. V135, fig. 47; Ferrara T256, sacrifice (\textit{ARV} 266,85; \textit{Van Straten, Hiera Kola}, no. V152, fig. 119).

\(^{908}\) See Scheibler, \textit{Skyphoi}, 35-39; Kerényi, \textit{Dionysos}, 308, "a skyphos, a form of drinking-cup that was probably customary on shoes day". See also Malagardis, \textit{Skyphoi}.

\(^{909}\) Scheibler considers mainly Heron Class skyphoi, in \textit{Skyphoi}, 17.

\(^{910}\) \textit{Cat. nos. 54, 58 and possibly 62, from Italy; Cat. nos. 56, 59-60 and possibly 63; from Greece (mostly Athens).}

\(^{911}\) \textit{Cat. no. 15, from Greece (Athens), Cat. no. 16, from Italy.}
were found in Greece as well as in Italy, and the same apparently holds for his ritualistic or cultic scenes. As many more of his subjects also show a similarly indiscriminate pattern of distribution, it seems unlikely that local customer preferences existed in the various export markets.

More generally, looking at the different kinds of find-places which have yielded work of the Theseus Painter (Table 11a), we see that the Athenian Acropolis and Agora supply by far the main and most secure archaeological contexts. The Acropolis finds can obviously be associated with a sacred ambience. The situation in the Agora is less clear, however. It remains an open question whether the Agora finds, including those found in the Rectangular Rock-cut Shaft, belong exclusively to a settlement context or have more mixed associations. As to a possible relation between context and shape, no significant difference marks the kinds of shapes decorated by the Theseus Painter which came to light in the two sites and which consist largely of skyphoi. However, some differences can be noted in their subject matter. In the Agora they have a relatively more worldly character, mainly komoi (or komasts) and ephedrismoi. But Herakles is sometimes depicted and a fragment preserves part of a sacrifice at an altar. On the other hand, the subjects of the Theseus Painter’s vases from the Acropolis are much more varied and seem to have a slightly more cultic character, as evidenced by the number of scenes resembling processions and the several deities, especially Athena and Dionysos.

Scheibler suggests that the Theseus Painter’s skyphoi from both the Acropolis and the Agora can more or less be considered ‘ritual’ vessels. Her conclusion is mainly based on the subjects: processions, sacrifices, etc. On the Acropolis such a function can be expected, but the Agora is more problematical. First of all, the ephedrismoi appear to be thematically more worldly than sacred. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether the Theseus Painter’s ‘komoi’ were indeed intended as ritual processions or simply represent revellers. As the komos is by far the most common subject of the Theseus Painter’s vases from the Agora, our interpretation of its meaning will inevitably influence our perception of the thematic relation between his pottery from the Agora and the Acropolis. On the other hand, one of his vases from the Agora indeed depicts a sacrificial scene.

Some indications of a find-context, though not always certain, are also known with regard to several vases of the Theseus Painter which were discovered in other places. In total, such information pertains to 74 pieces only (including those from the Athenian Acropolis and Agora). As could be expected, most of them are skyphoi (54 of the total of 74). If one also counts the uncertain pieces, it can be concluded that the Theseus Painter’s vases have come to light in each of the three possible contexts - funerary, sanctuary, settlement - but that those associated with graves and sanctuaries are the most numerous (see Table 11b). Whereas his work from sanctuaries and settlements is mainly concentrated on the Acropolis and in the Agora, the funerary finds are more widely dispersed, as the graves occur in various sites in both Greece and Italy. It is striking, however, that most of the funerary pottery turned up in Italy.

According to Scheibler, no large skyphos of the Heron Class type has ever been discovered in an Attic...

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912 Cat. no. 2, from Greece (Athens), Cat. no. 8, from Italy.
913 Loutrophoroi from the Acropolis (the North slope, to be precise); also a cup and cup-skyphos from the Agora.
914 Komoi: Agora P 1383, 1544, 1547-49, 13373 (Cat. nos. 45-48, 96, 177). Ephedrismoi: Agora P 1546 and 23174 (Cat. nos. 56, 60). However, as mentioned above and below, the Theseus Painter’s komoi might not be that ‘worldly’ at all.
915 Herakles: Agora P 1543 and P 1545 (Cat. nos. 25, 28). Probably also the fragments Agora P 1550-1, which might depict Herakles regaled by Athena (Cat. no. 21). Sacrifice: Agora P 9273 (Cat. no. 95). Possibly a sacrifice or a butcher’s scene in Agora P 1384 (Cat. no. 72).
916 Athens (often with parts of processions), Acropolis 1265, 1307 1311-12 (Cat. nos. 82-85); Dionysos in ship-cart and a donkey cart, Acropolis 1281, 1286 (Cat. nos. 2, 114); Dionysos (?) with satyrs at a winepress, Acropolis 1290 (Cat. no. 77); Apollo, Acropolis 943 (Cat. no. 209); Herakles leading a female monster, Acropolis 1306 (Cat. no. 15); Herakles and the birds (?), Acropolis 1296 (Cat. no. 88); procession, Acropolis 1295 (Cat. no. 94); Theseus at the labyrinth with Athena, and Theseus and Prokruuutes, Acropolis 1280 (Cat. nos. 76). Also several more worldly subjects: ephedrismos, Acropolis 1276 (Cat. no. 59); ‘washermen’, Acropolis 1271 (Cat. no. 5); people pulling something with a thick rope (possibly a procession), Acropolis 1282 (Cat. no. 66); athletes, Acropolis 847 (Cat. no. 208).
917 See n. 766 above.
918 As a matter of fact, none of the Theseus Painter’s ‘komos’ vases is known to come from the Acropolis.
919 Sanctuaries besides the Athenian Acropolis (including the North slope): Corinth, Cyrene, Delos, Thasos. Settlement contexts besides the Agora: Adria, Corinth.
grave; and insofar as I am aware, her observation applies to the Theseus Painter’s skyphoi. In her opinion, the circumstance may reflect their function: the Heron Class skyphoi could have been so strongly linked to ritual practice in Attica and Athens that their use as funerary gifts was unthinkable. Furthermore, she suggests that because of their subjects and very large size, the Heron Class skyphoi were more likely used, in Attica, for official (religious?) purposes than for private ones. On the other hand, in Italy, including the ‘Greek’ areas, the situation may have been slightly different. There, it seems, Heron Class skyphoi were mostly given to the dead (for the Theseus Painter’s specimens see Table 11 a), which was perhaps also important usage in Greece outside Attica.

4. Concluding remarks

The subject matter of most of Theseus Painter’s skyphoi is exceptional, as compared to that of the majority of his other shapes as well as to that of many other late black-figure painters. Several scholars see, more or less, a connection between skyphoi (in particular the Heron Class type) and cult or ritual. The supposition is consistent with many of the representations on the Theseus Painter’s skyphoi. Although other shapes decorated by the Theseus Painter occasionally show ritual or cult scenes (for example the Uppsala kalpis, Cat. 161, pl. 51 a), his skyphoi bear the most striking, most numerous and most explicit examples. Their general thematic areas are: Dionysos, either specifically or indirectly (like the ship-cart or thiasos, komos, drinking rituals, etc.), theatre (satyr choruses, etc., which also have a Dionysian component), individual heroes or gods like Herakles and Hermes (possibly cultic, although not always definitely), processions and sacrifices (sometimes with a specific reference, like some of the Acropolis fragments, for example the Athena of Cat. no. 85, pl. 35 h, but most often without an indication of a deity).

The ritual component was probably only one aspect of Heron Class skyphoi, however, as they would, of course, have had a wider function as all-purpose drinking vessels. On the other hand, connections between the Heron Class skyphoi in particular and ritual associations and practices, in whatever form, appear certain, although the degree of linkage remains unclear. It cannot be demonstrated that, as for example choes, they were meant for use at one or more specific festivals. The possibility seems not very likely, however, because the subjects are very varied and seem too general to refer to an individual celebration or cultic practice. But there are indications of religious spheres to which some of the Theseus Painter's pictures on Heron Class skyphoi – ship-cart and the Anthestheria, women at an image of Dionysos – although in each instance the tie to a specific festival has been called into question (see chapter VIII, Dionysos, above). Moreover, other representations by the Theseus Painter which can be viewed as ritualistic or cultic give no clue as to the deity concerned, let alone a festival to which they might be linked. In other instances it is highly questionable whether any such content is intended, like those showing Athena serving Herakles. In addition, there remains the remote possibility that the Theseus Painter or his customers were simply interested in the subjects in themselves without looking for any further associations. The latter seems to be contradicted, however, by the noteworthy link between skyphoi and such subjects. It has also been observed that some skyphoi depicted in vase painting are obviously placed in a ritual setting, for example the Berlin cup by Makron or the libation scenes by the Painter of the Half-palmettes. In vase painting, especially red-figure, however, skyphoi function much more often as drinking vessels in symposia, although the Heron Class type is not among them. Obviously, the possible ties between the subjects and functions of skyphoi are much less clear than in the case of other shapes like loutrophoroi.

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921 Scheibler, Skyphoi, 39.
922 Scheibler, Skyphoi, 40.
923 See, for example, the very large number of skyphoi found in sixth- and fifth-century graves at Rhitsona, Boeotia; Ure, Sixth and Fifth.
924 Of course there are specifically ritual skyphoi, like the Kabirion skyphoi. Another example is a group of special fourth-century skyphoi from Taranto dedicated to Dionysos (E. Lippolis, S. Garraffo, M. Nafissi, Taranto, Culti greci in occidente, Fonti scritti e documentazione archeologica I, Taranto 1995, 180-82, pls. L-LVI).
925 One needs to bear in mind, however, that most of the ‘Lenaea’ vases are either late black-figure lekythoi or red-figure stamnoi from the mid-fifth century onwards. Very few of the ‘Lenaea’ vases that depict these scenes are actually skyphoi.
926 To be fair, the links between the shapes, subjects and functions of belly-amphorai and pelikai are not as strong as those of
In my opinion, it is safest, for the time being, to regard the Theseus Painter's skyphoi for the most part as basically drinking vessels, as reflected in their more usual kinds of representations which indicate such use (simply drinking scenes, symposia, etc.). In the case of Heron skyphoi, on the other hand, particularly those of the Theseus Painter, components of other representations suggest that some of the skyphoi may have filled ritualistic or cultic functions. However, all this cannot entirely account for the diversity and range of the Theseus Painter's subjects. The personal preferences of the painter and his customers as well as the iconographical influences of other painters must all have played their parts.

loutrophoroi, although Scheibler and Shapiro's arguments for such links are convincing.