Images of Statues on Attic Vases: The Case of the Tyrannicides

by Stefan Schmidt

Statues depicted in Attic vase-paintings are among the objects which provide the setting of the scene.1 Besides doors, columns, altars and other things, we often find statues which indicate the context of the story portrayed. In most of these cases the statues were intended to mark the sanctuary of a particular deity. Events during the fall of Troy were frequently represented, especially the aggression of Ajax against Kassandra, who seeks help at the cult statue of Athena. In these depictions the statue is part of the story in which Ajax commits an outrageous act in the sanctuary. Sometimes the statues have closer links to the dramatis personae and replace their tutelary gods, as is the case on a bell-krater in Bonn (Fig. 1), which depicts the birth of Helen from the egg.² The small statue of Zeus on the column refers primarily to the god's role as father of Helen and only secondarily to the sanctuary in which she is born.

Vase paintings which emphasize statues as works of art, however, are not numerous. One example may be a well-known cup in Berlin (Fig. 2).³ The name piece of the Foundry Painter shows a workshop where statues of warriors and athletes are being made. In a broad sense one may consider even these statues to be indications of place. But their presence does not suggest a story taking place in the foundry. The focus is instead on the production of the statues. This compares with a few other pictures on Attic red-figure vases which give insight into the workplaces of Athenian craftsmen. Frequent in this group are depictions of vasepainters, as on a well-known hydria in Milan or a cup fragment in Boston.⁴ There were also other portrayals of different kinds of workers, like blacksmiths or carpenters.⁵ On a chous in Berlin Athena herself takes the place of an Athenian craftsman and prepares the clay model for the casting of a bronze horse statue.⁶ Such representations of the working process indicate above all the great esteem for artistic production and for the technical skill of the craftsmen in fifth century Athens.⁷

But neither way of using statues in vase-paintings, as an indication of location or as a representation of artistic mastery, refers to existing sculptures. When statues are depicted they are in almost every case generic. A rare exception to this is the representation of the tyrannicides (Fig. 3). Seven known Attic vase-paintings have more or less accurate depictions of the famous statue group in the Athenian Agora made by Kritios and Nesiotes in 477 BC.8 It is obvious that these depictions were intended neither to indicate the Agora as the statue's location nor to praise the artistic value of the statues. Their representation on the vases undoubtedly has something to do with the political symbolism of the monument. This interrelationship between the images on the vases and the sig-

- 7. Philipp 1990, 93-93.
- 8. See below notes 24, 26, 29, 48, 49.

I would like to thank Joseph L. Rife and John H. Oakley, who helped to improve my English.

See in general: Schefold 1937; Bielefeld 1954/55; De Cesare 1997; Oenbrink 1997.

Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum inv. 78: ARV² 1171.4; De Cesare 1997, 131-132, fig. 71; Oenbrink 1997, 321-322, pl. 38.

Berlin, Staatliche Museen Antikensammlung F 2294: ARV² 400.1; Mattusch 1980; Zimmer 1982, 7-16 fig. 2, 9; Himmelmann 1994, 7-8, fig. 2; De Cesare 1997, 58-61, fig. 12; Neer 2002, 78-85, fig. 37-39.

Milan, Collezione Banca Intesa inv. 2 (C 278): ARV² 571.73; Himmelmann 1994, 10, fig. 6; Boardman 2001, 146, fig. 178; Sena Ciesa and Slavazzi 2006, 62-69. – Boston, Museum of Fine Arts inv. 01.8073: ARV² 342.19; Himmelmann 1994, 13, fig. 7; Scheibler 1995, 91, fig. 82.

Burford 1972; Ziomecki 1975; Zimmer 1982; Heilmeyer 2002.

Berlin, Staatliche Museen Antikensammlung F 2415: ARV² 776.1; Zimmer 1982, 6, pl. I.



Fig. 1. Attic red-figure bell-krater, c. 420 BC, Bonn, Akademisches Kunstmuseum 78 (photo: Akademisches Kunstmuseum Bonn).

nificance of the statues is the focus of this chapter. My aim is not to gain new insights in the meaning or perception of the statue group through the vase-paintings, but to learn something about the role of Attic vase-painting in political and social discourses at Classical Athens by observing how the pictures referred to the official monument.

According to *communis opinio* the images on Attic vases are reflections of ancient Athenian society and culture. They are no longer seen primarily as illustrations of Greek mythology or as snapshots of everyday life in ancient Athens. In recent decades we have seen a growing interest in vase-painting as a source for the topics in which the Athenians were interested and for the ways in which they imagined their city and their own social life.⁹ But this *communis opinio* has been increasingly challenged by important questions. Since most known Attic vases have been found in contexts in Italy or elsewhere outside Greece, should they be considered a source for the intentions of their last owners rather than of the Athenians? In addition, one must ask to what degree the wishes of foreign customers influenced the production of Attic vase-painters.¹⁰ There is, however, strong evidence that the images on Attic vases were mainly determined by Athenian themes and interests, although we must differentiate between

^{9.} The most influential publication in this development was Bérard 1984.

In recent years an increasing number of studies has concentrated on these questions: Isler-Kerényi 1997;

Nilsson 1999; La Genière 1999; Blinkenberg Hastrup 1999; Isler-Kerényi 1999; Shapiro 2000; Reusser 2002; Osborne 2002; Paléothodoros 2002; Schweizer 2003.

the vases from the Late Archaic period, when production was greatly concentrated on the overseas market, and the Classical period, when we find an increasing number of specifically Athenian myths and references depicted. Questions about the significance and function of these images in Athenian society still remain on the agenda, particularly in the case of Classical vases.

I therefore wish to consider the rhetorical intention of the vase-paintings. Did the images reflect what the Athenians believed to be the essentials of their life and their city? Were they simply a mirror to the unwritten rules of religious, social, or political behaviour? Or were they rather intended to propagate ethical or even political convictions? Did the Athenians use the images on painted vases to persuade their fellow citizens of appropriate ways of acting? The case of the depiction of the Tyrannicides Group, with its clear political connotations, is productive to consider in seeking answers to these questions. By examining their representations on the vases, I hope to show how the images communicate statements or opinions by visual means, and will also examine how the expectations concerning visual messages and the techniques of expression changed during the fifth century BC.

Telling a story: early representations of the Tyrannicides.

Let us start with a look at some precursors to the more accurate depictions of the Tyrannicides Group. The well-known stamnos in Würzburg made by the painter Syriskos around 475 BC (Fig. 4 a, b)¹¹ belongs to the earlier of the two groups of representations of the tyranni-

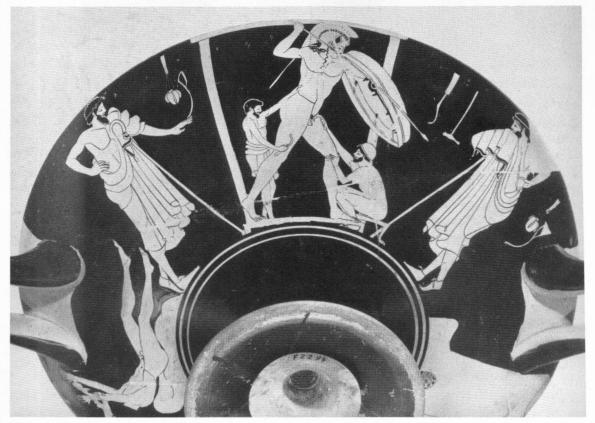


Fig. 2. Attic red-figure cup, c. 490 BC, Berlin, Antikensammlung Staatliche Museen F 2294 (after Simon 1976, pl. 158).

O'Donnell 1999, 80, fig. 35; Neer 2002, 173, 178-180, fig. 84, 85; Ober 2003, 219-221, fig. 8.3.

Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum L 515: ARV²
256.5; Brunnsåker 1971, 108, fig. 16; Bérard 1983, 29, fig. 19; Carpenter 1997, 175-176, fig. 7; Stansbury-

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Fig. 3. Roman copies of the statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton, c. 480-470 BC, Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale inv. 6009 + 6010, (Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei).

cides already distinguished by Beazley.¹² While the second, later, group of images refers closely to the Agora monument, the relation of these earlier vase-paintings to the statues is debated. On the obverse of the Würzburg stamnos we see three figures. The central one is usually identified as Hipparkhos, because he is attacked by the two other figures, most likely the beardless Harmodios on the right and Aristogeiton on the left. The latter thrusts his sword into Hipparkhos' ribs while the victim flees from Harmodios, who raises his right arm to slash with his sword. The pose of the younger aggressor is of prime importance in determining the relationship of the vase-painting to the statue group in the Agora, because his is the only figure which closely corresponds in both these representations. In all other aspects they differ. First, Aristogeiton's pose has nothing to do with the sculpture. Second, both attackers in the vase-painting are clothed in mantles, in contrast with the two naked figures comprising the sculptural group. Finally the tyrant slayers on the vase are not portrayed alone but with their victim.

Could the posture of Harmodius nevertheless prove that the vase-painter was inspired by the official monument? Opinion in recent research is divided. On the one hand, Richard Neer concludes his analysis with the sentence, "The presence of the statues is always felt, but only as something to be transcended".13 On the other hand, Thomas Carpenter points out that the pose had a long tradition for fighters in vase-painting, even before the erection of the statues of Kritios and Nesiotes. Carpenter stresses the dependence of Syriskos' Harmodios on depictions of Apollo fighting the giants, which he finds on vases from the same artistic circle, and there are also other combat scenes including fighters in a similar pose on Late Archaic vases.14 One of the most impressive examples may be a volute-krater by Euphronios now in Arezzo. Herakles' combat with the Amazons is shown on its obverse. One of the fighters, named as the Greek hero Telamon, strikes a fallen Amazon named Toxis in almost the same stance as Harmodios.15 The positions of the defeated opponents in all these cases illustrate the meaning of the action in its context. They are all portrayed as victims of the slayers at the moment of falling. They have lost control of their limbs and are unable to fight any more. In this situation, the victorious fighter prepares for the final stroke. Since it is not necessary for him to protect himself against possible attacks, he can raise his arm in an unprotected manner.

With this pictorial tradition in mind, Harmodios' pose on the Würzburg stamnos can

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^{12.} Beazley 1948, 28.

^{13.} Neer 2002, 180.

London, British Museum inv. E 443: ARV² 292.29; Carpenter 1997, 172, fig. 2. – Paris, Musée du Louvre inv. C 10748: ARV² 178.55; Carpenter 1997, 172, fig. 3.

^{15.} Arezzo, Museo Archeologico Nazionale inv. 1465: ARV^2 15.6; Arias 1962, 325, pl. 114; *Euphronios* 1991, 120-128. – Cf. Suter 1975 with other conclusions on the older tradition of the motif.





Fig. 4a. Attic red-figure stamnos, c. 475 BC, Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität L 515 obverse (photo: Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität, Würzburg).

Fig. 4b. Attic red-figure stamnos, c. 475 BC, Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität L 515 reverse (photo: Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität, Würzburg).

no longer be seen exclusively as a reference to the famous statue. The action of Harmodios depends on the same fighting situation. Hipparkhos is severely wounded and now awaits his death from Harmodios. Since the posture of Harmodios on the vase is perfectly explicable within the conventions of depicting fighters in similar situations, there is no need to suppose a direct correspondence between the Tyrannicides Group and this vase-painting, as Carpenter has already suggested.¹⁶ His arguments are not weakened by the observation that the particular Harmodios stance was to become a recognizable sign in the later fifth century.¹⁷

If the relationship between the Würzburg stamnos and the statue group is not quite certain, we might even doubt whether the identification of the picture with the story of the Tyrant Slayers is correct. Fortunately there are other reasons to confirm this identification. The most important evidence is a fragment of a skyphos in the Villa Giulia (Fig. 5).¹⁸ On the badly weathered piece one can read the labels $[APM]O\Delta IO\Sigma$ for the left figure and $I\Pi\Pi[A]$ PXO Σ for the right. The scene is very similar to that on the Würzburg stamnos but the figures have changed position. On the left, we see the raised right arm of Harmodios holding the sword. On the right, the upper part of the falling Hipparkhos is preserved. Not only is the same situation depicted - the final stroke of Harmodios - but even the characterisation of Hipparkhos is similar. On both vases he wears a complicated hairstyle with a knot of long hair at the back of the head, and his clothing is quite luxurious. On the stamnos his mantle is the

^{16.} Carpenter 1997, 167; see also De Cesare 1997, 64.

^{17.} Ajootian 1998, 10; Ober 2003, 220-221.

Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia inv. 50321: Cultera 1927, 314-316, Abb. 20; Beazley 1948; Bicknell 1970; Brunnsåker 1971, 108-109; Neer 2002, 173, 178, fig. 86. – A further example of an early rep-

resentation of the Tyrannicides is a skyphos fragment in Agrigento, Museo Archeologico Regionale: *ARV*² 559, 147; Beazley 1948, 26, fig. 2; Brunnsåker 1971, 110, fig. 17. – The scene on a red-figured dinos fragment had been suggested as showing the murder at the Panathenaic festival: Knigge 1984, 28-29, fig. 5.

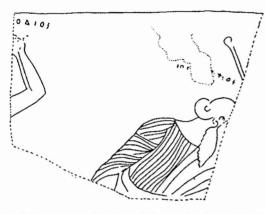


Fig. 5. Fragment of Attic red-figure skyphos, 460-450 BC, Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia 50321 (after Neer 2002, fig. 86).

only one which has decorated borders; on the skyphos fragment, he wears a chiton beneath the himation, the usual sign of wealth and effeminacy.

On the basis of these close similarities, it is most likely that the picture on the Würzburg stamnos depicts the same event and the same actors as the picture on the labeled skyphos, but we cannot be sure whether these early representations of the tyrant slavers were inspired by the group of Kritios and Nesiotes or not. The pose of Harmodios in both sculpture and vase-painting, as we have seen, goes back to the same earlier pictorial convention. It may have been chosen independently by the sculptor and the painter, because it was appropriate for the characterisation of the action. It is also possible that the painters were in fact inspired by the new monument. But if they were, they obviously did not want to reproduce the statue group verbatim. The single motif of Harmodios' raised arm would hardly have been enough to recall the whole composition in the spectator's mind. The vase-painters wanted to tell the story of the tyrant slayers in their own way.

This leads us back to our main point: the rhetoric of these images. If the primary aim of the vase-painters was to recall the affair which took place at the Panathenaia of 514 BC, do their pictures imply a definite position in any

 Athenaeus XV 695a-b (translation by C. B. Gulick); for the discussion of the skolia: Brunnsåker 1971, 23-24;

debate about the tyrannicides? Did the artists make visible the opinions the Athenians held about the deed? Is it possible to see in these pictures that the behaviour of the two men was a model for all citizens, or at least that the slaying of Hipparkhos was an important event for the polis? We know from literary evidence how highly Harmodios' and Aristogeiton's deed was esteemed. Four little songs of the early fifth century BC that celebrate the tyrannicides are preserved in Athenaeus. Most likely they were sung at symposia held in wealthy Athenian homes. These so-called Harmodios skolia praise the murder of Hipparkhos as a political deed, the goal of which was to put an end to the tyranny in Athens and to achieve isonomia for all citizens. The singer of these songs claims that he would act like the tyrannicides with the statement: "In a myrtle-branch I will carry my sword, as did Harmodios and Aristogeiton ... ".19 The performance of these songs implies support by all participants of the symposion (and we may assume most Athenians) for the actions of the heroes of democracy.

Can we find any such implication on the Würzburg stamnos? To anticipate my conclusion, I think the characteristics of each figure and of the whole scene cannot be clearly interpreted one way or the other. Of course, the fact that the story of Harmodios and Aristogeiton is portrayed on Attic vases in the same way as the pictures of other glorious heroes indicates their great importance. The deed of the tyrannicides was seen as part of the collective memory, but this does not mean that it was seen in a positive or a negative way. The resemblance of Harmodios' pose to depictions of Apollo fighting giants could be considered a positive view of Harmodios' action, but we have seen that his pose depends on the similarity of the fighting situation and does not imply a positive or negative evaluation of the actions. Finally, the characterization of Hipparkhos as a luxuriously dressed man could be read as a negative statement about a member of the tyrants' family (Fig. 6). The sophisticated hairstyle and the wealthy clothing

Taylor 1991, 22-35; Ajootian 1998, 9; Neer 2002, 18-19, 170-171.



Fig. 6. Attic red-figure stamnos, c. 475 BC, Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität L 515 (photo: Martin von Wagner Museum der Universität, Würzburg).

could be interpreted as casting blame for an excessive lifestyle and undue personal enrichment. But if we look on contemporary vase-paintings, we find the same characteristics in figures that were clearly not viewed negatively. This is the case with the Lydian king Kroisos on the bellyamphora in the Louvre, who is shown with a hairstyle almost identical to that of Hipparkhos and with particularly rich clothing (Fig. 7).²⁰ In the story of his wish to die after his defeat by the Persians, to which the vase-painter referred, Kroisos was undoubtedly claimed as a positive character. The libation on the pyre shown in the picture emphasizes his piety. Moreover, the hairstyle with long hair knotted at the back of the head occurs frequently in images of the gods. A picture of the Pan Painter on an amphora in Schwerin exemplifies this (Fig. 8).²¹ Carrying a huge rock from the great fight against the giants, Poseidon is shown with the same elaborate hairstyle. In vase-painting these characteristics were obviously a sign for the royal rank of the person, without any positive or negative connotation. So it is logical that artists who wanted to characterize Hipparkhos as a member of a ruling family did so with the same motifs.

To conclude, Attic vase-painters in the first decades of the fifth century BC wanted to depict

the story of the tyrant slayers, not the monument in the Agora. To make clear what had happened at the Panathenaic Festival in 514 BC, they had to show not only Harmodios and Aristogeiton, but also Hipparkhos, the victim of the slaving. Moreover, they expanded the scenes on the reverses of both the Würzburg stamnos (Fig. 4 b) and the Villa Giulia skyphos. By including alarmed bystanders, in one case dressed in the civic himation and in the other bearing weapons, they wanted to show how the Athenian spectators were affected by the murder. The postures and the characteristics of Harmodios, Aristogeiton and Hipparkhos were taken from the common repertoire of motifs in vase-painting, so the artists were narrating the event according to their own conventions. No doubt the painters and their Athenian customers



Fig. 7. Attic red-figure amphora, c. 500-490 BC, Paris, Musée du Louvre G 197(after Simon 1976, pl. 133).

fig. 246.

21. Schwerin, Staatliches Museum inv. 723: *ARV*² 553, 37; *CVA* East Germany 1, Schwerin, 1 pls. 29.1, 31.1.

Paris, Musée du Louvre inv. G 197: ARV² 238.1; Simon 1976, 107-108, pls. 107-108; Boardman 1982, 15-16, pl. 3 a, b; Denoyelle 1994, 120-121; Boardman 2001, 226,

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Fig. 8. Attic red-figure amphora, c. 490-480 BC, Schwerin, Staatliches Museum 723 (photo: Staatliches Museum, Schwerin).

had a clear opinion about the significance and the value of this deed in particular and tyrant-slaying in general, but their views were not expressed through the images on the vases. These images clearly were not intended to communicate an assessment of the deed or the persons involved, but refer to the visible action taking place.

NEW THINKING ABOUT VISUAL REPRESENTATION

In Xenophon's *Memorabilia* Sokrates asked the painter Parrhasios about the limits of pictorial representation. He began his inquiry with the statement that painters imitate the appearance of objects; Parrhasios agreed. Sokrates continued that even the true beauty of a figure can be synthesized by the study of different existing models. This was also Parrhasios' opinion. Finally the philosopher wanted to know whether the painter was

able to "reproduce the character of the soul" or not. Parrhasios' answer was no, and he responded, "for how could one imitate that which has neither shape nor colour ... and is not even visible?" Later Sokrates explained to him that characteristics such as nobility and dignity "are reflected in the face and in the attitudes of the body whether still or in motion," and so they could be represented too.²² If we could ask the painters of either the Würzburg stamnos or the other early vases, just as Sokrates asked Parrhasios, whether their pictures could show that the tyrant slayers had done the right thing, they would be also surprised. Like Parrhasios, the vase-painters of the early fifth century would wonder how they could depict invisible things such as a positive or negative evaluation of the tyrannicides' deed. This was beyond their abilities, and it was not their intention.

The little dialogue in Xenophon's Memorabilia is one of the rare pieces of written evidence for the new discussions about pictorial expression which began in the late fifth century BC. Parrhasios' doubt about the representational capacity of images seems somewhat old-fashioned, and the viewpoint Xenophon ascribed to Sokrates undoubtedly reflects the more recent position of Athenian theorists. From the end of the fifth century on, the nature of images became a subject of their attention. Thinkers like Sokrates and Plato evaluated the connection between reality and images. The most influential result of this thinking about images was the concept of mimesis. Images were claimed to be, foremost, imitations of something outside of them. Above all they were seen as a system of reference to something else, similar to spoken or written language.23 The assumption of this similarity led to many new questions about the nature and the use of pictorial language. This is exactly what was at the core of the dialogue between Sokrates and Parrhasios.

We can assume that the discourse about the potential of pictorial language was widely disseminated in late fifth-century Athens, because we know of a parallel phenomenon which attracts considerable attention at this time. The Athenians

^{22.} Xenophon, *Memorabilia* III 10, 1-5 (translation by E. Marchant).

^{23.} Schmidt 2005, 14-18; cf. Halliwell 2002 for *mimesis* in general.

had recognized that political and personal success depended largely on the ability to persuade their fellow citizens by means of carefully executed arguments. In order to achieve this they were increasingly interested in the art of effective speech. Instructions and rules for successful persuasion were in high demand. This was a perfect time for teachers like the sophists, who gave advice in persuasive oratory. Rhetoric, the technique of persuading an audience, was born in this atmosphere and probably a similar technique of visual persuasion was discussed at the same time.

The vase-painters were surely involved in these debates. The theoretical evaluation of images in the second half of the fifth century altered both their treatment of the images and the expectations of their audience. They became more aware of the possibilities of visual communication and searched for ways to make messages intelligible by pictorial means. These changes, of course, are not attested by any writings but only by the vase-paintings. In particular they are illustrated by the second group of representations of the tyrannicides.

STATUES AND MEANING: LATER REPRESENTATIONS OF THE TYRANNICIDES.

The second group of vase-paintings comprises seven specimens which all clearly reproduce the statue group by Kritios and Nesiotes. One of them, the black-figure lekythos in Vienna²⁴ which is a lone instance from the middle of the fifth century BC, must be seen as the first step toward the more rhetorical use of images on vases. Apart from Panathenaic amphorae, the small lekythoi were the last Attic vases decorated in black-figure in the old fashioned manner. Their often hastily drawn images tend to be of a rather emblematic character. In this context the abbreviated reproduction of the tyrant slaving by cit-

 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum inv. 5247: *ABL* 264, 39, pl. 48, 4; Brunnsåker 1971, 102-104, fig. 15 pl. 23.5; Bérard 1983, 29-30, fig. 20; De Cesare 1997, 211-212, fig. 148.
Schmidt 2005. 37–40. ing only the sculpture group seems explicable.25

But the Vienna lekythos only foreshadows the more intentional depiction of the Tyrannicides Group on Attic vases. All other examples are from the late fifth and the beginning of the fourth centuries BC. The best known is the fragment of a jug in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Fig. 9).²⁶ The reference to the sculpture is beyond doubt. This is not only because the postures of the tyrant slayers resemble closely the statues in the Agora, but also because the base beneath the figures makes clear that this picture depicts the monument as a whole. In front of the base the remains of a pillar are visible. This stele might belong to the ensemble of the Tyrannicides monument, or it could be one of the numerous honorary records erected in this part of the Agora.²⁷ Unlike the more elaborated scenes of the event, this image leaves no doubt as to its significance. The monument stands for the honours which were granted to the tyrannicides by the polis, and so the postures of the figures symbolize the collective praise of their



Fig. 9. Fragment of Attic red-figure chous, c. 400 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.936 (after Vermeule 1970, fig. 7).

& Hedrick 1993, 57, fig. 4.3; De Cesare 1997, 70, fig. 24; Ajootian 1998, 8, fig. 1.6; Stansbury-O'Donnell 1999, 80, fig. 34; Neer 2002, 173-177, fig. 88; Ober 2003, 239, fig. 8.8; Schmidt 2005, 198-199, fig. 104.

 Cf. Ajootian 1998, 8-9, who suggests a gymnasium pillar, which was meant to be an allusion to the Panathenaic games.

^{25.} Schmidt 2005, 37–40.

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts inv. 98.936: Vermeule 1970, 103-107, fig. 7; Brunnsåker 1971, 105-106, pl. 24.7; Bérard 1983, 30-31, fig. 21; Burn 1987, 88-89; Ober

behaviour. Moreover, the focus on their character is stressed by the absence of Hipparkhos. By showing only the two fighters the image moved beyond reference to the single historical event to symbolise the fight against all tyrants.²⁸

This interpretation is supported by the three Panathenaic amphorae with images of the tyrannicides. Two are to be found in Hildesheim; the third is in the British Museum (Fig. 10).²⁹ On the obverse of these vases the usual image of Athena includes the unusual depiction of the tyrannicides as the shield device. Painted in white, they are shown in the typical manner of the statue group. The two fighters stride forward side by side. One of them raises his right arm with the sword above his head; the other covers his attack with a mantle over his outstretched left arm. The small picture differs from the sculpture only in showing Aristogeiton as beardless. In this context the tyrannicides are signs in the true sense of the word. The traditional image of Athena between two columns and with the canonical inscription marked the Panathenaic vases as an official commission and a public prize. Athena in the Promakhos type was a heraldic figure for the whole polis and the community of its inhabitants which was celebrated by this festival. The placement of the tyrannicides in so prominent a position on Athena's shield makes the close connection between the city and the two heroes of democracy perfectly clear.

In academic literature the Panathenaic amphorae with these pictures are almost always connected with the fall of the tyranny of the Thirty in 403 BC.³⁰ Indeed, it is most probable that these prize vases were produced for the festival in 402 BC and were decorated in this manner in order to remind the spectators of this important political event. So message and meaning in this case are easy to recognize. Through reference to the statues of the heroic tyrant slayers, the actual political situation

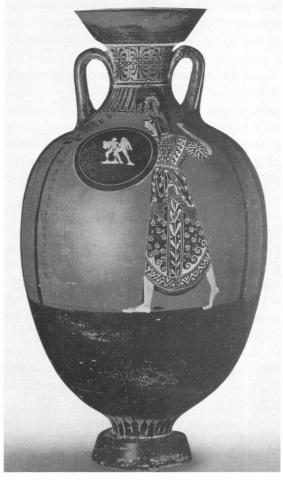


Fig. 10. Panathenaic amphora, 403-402 BC, London, British Museum B 605 (after Simon 1976, pl. li).

was linked to the much earlier event. The action of contemporary politicians was thereby compared with the deeds of their well-reputed predecessors, and the significance of the affair for the polis' constitution was equated with the end of Peisistratid rule and the beginning of democracy. We do not know exactly who was responsible for this choice, but like the quasiheraldic figures on the two columns which were used later in the fourth century BC, the tyrannicides on Athena's shield could have been chosen by leading officials.³¹ If so, by using this

105, pl. 23.6; Bentz 1998, 158 no. 5.244, 5.245, pls. 96, 97. 30. Süsserott 1938, 69-71; Valavanis 1987, 270; Eschbach

1992, 42-46 (argues against the connection); Bentz 1998, 50-51.

 Eschbach 1986, 164-166; Valavanis 1987, 470-474; Eschbach 1992, 46-47; Bentz 1998, 56-57.

^{28.} Neer 2002, 175.

London, British Museum inv. B 605: *ABV* 411.5; Bérard 1983, 31, fig. 22; De Cesare 1997, 69-70, fig. 23; Bentz 1998, 50, 158 no. 5.239, pl. 95; Neer 2002, 173-175, fig. 87. – On the vases in Hildesheim, Roemer und Pelizäus Museum inv. 1253 and 1254: *ABV* 412.1,2; Brunnsåker 1971,104-

image they intended to communicate their view of what had happened in the *polis* to the audience of the Panathenaic contests, for whom the vases would have been displayed.

Modern concepts of communication have evolved from the simple model of a sender who transmits a message to a receiver. Communication is seen to be a far more complex process, depending first of all on the understanding of the message by the addressee. As Niklas Luhmann has formulated it, "Communication is made possible, so to speak, from behind".³² A sender who wants to make his message effective must take into account the expectations of the receiver. Communication can be successful only if he anticipates the addressee's potential for understanding.

If we are to evaluate to what extent the techniques of visual communication were reflected in vase-paintings of the late fifth century BC, we must consider how closely the selection and shaping of the images were connected to the expectations of the viewers. These expectations were conditioned primarily by the context of perception. In the case of the Panathenaic amphorae, the reconstruction of this context is easy. We know the occasion in which the images were seen, and we know the intended recipient of their message: the audience of the Panathenaic games. Moreover, we find in the pictures themselves the political meaning of the tyrannicides determined by their placement on Athena's shield. But what about the representations of the tyrannicides on contemporary red-figured vases such as the Boston fragments? What was their context of perception? Why should an onlooker expect to find a political statement on a wine jug?

The fragments in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts are said to have been found in the memorial precinct of Dexileos in the Athenian Kerameikos.³³ This young fighter died in 394 BC in a battle against the Corinthians. Although the precinct was furnished with a relief stele like the

grave terraces in its surrounding, this was not a tomb. Dexileos was not buried there but in the Demosion Sema according to custom. Nevertheless the oinochoe with the tyrannicides and four other jugs of the same shape, now also in Boston, must have been connected with his funeral. They are more or less contemporary with the death of the hero, and they were found disturbed by later burials. So it is most probable that this deposit had been laid down in remembrance of the deceased Dexileos. Such deposits are not unusual in Athenian cemeteries: we know several offering places that are furnished not only with similar oinochoai but occasionally also with offering-plates and weapons.34 According to these parallels, the vases from the Dexileos precinct were most likely remains of a ceremony held by the family in honour of the fallen soldier.

It is nevertheless questionable whether the image of the tyrannicides on the oinochoe was seen by the participants of this ceremony either as a statement about Dexileos or as an expression of common conviction. Modern authors tend to suppose a direct link between the tyrannicides' image and the life and death of Dexileos. Bérard would like to see herein a hint about Dexileos' fight against the enemies of the city, namely, that they should be considered tyrants.³⁵ Leading in the same direction is Neer's statement, stressing the public virtue that has been ascribed to both Dexileos and the tyrant slayers.³⁶

At first sight, this straightforward interpretation seems to be proved by the context of the whole memorial, but there is no reason to suppose that the jugs were the result of a special commission of Dexileos' relatives. Oinochoai were by no means vessels connected especially with funeral rites, unlike lekythoi or loutrophoroi, but were normally part of the tableware. So a closer examination of the complex relationship between the image, the vessel, and its use is required to understand which expectations

390; from Aiolou Street: Stavropoullou 1965, 100, pl. 56 c; from the Kerameikos: Knigge 1975, 123-131.

36. Neer 2002, 177.

^{32.} Luhmann 1995, 139-145 (quotation on 143).

Vermeule 1970, 94-98; Burn 1987, 7-8; Schmidt 2005, 194-196.

^{34.} From the Royal Stables area: Karousou 1947/48, 389-

^{35.} Bérard 1983, 31.

of his customers the vase-painter had in mind when he chose the image of the tyrannicides.

FESTIVAL IMAGERY ON LATE FIFTH-CENTURY CHOES

Let us have a look at the four other jugs from the Dexileos precinct. All are oinochoai of type III according to Beazley's classification, or more simply choes.³⁷ Whereas the other forms of ceramic oinochoai derive from models in metal ware, the plump and bag-like shape of the choes was inspired by conventional plain-ware household jugs.38 Like these useful vessels, the red-figure choes also had standardized sizes. Their capacities depended upon the ancient measure called a 'chous' after the name of these jugs, the equivalent of approximately three and a quarter litres. Besides the full-sized choes, which have an average height of between 21 and 24 centimetres and a maximum diameter of c. 18 centimetres, there are also half-sized choes which are 17 to 19 centimetres high with a diameter of c. 15 centimetres, and which contain a little more than 1.5 litres.³⁹

The fixed measure of these vessels was the reason for their special use as jugs. On the second day of the Anthesteria, the great festival during which new wine was tasted, choes served as containers at the drinking contest. Their standardized capacity was necessary to guarantee identical conditions for all competitors. The relationship between these vessels and the festival was so close that the day of the contest was called 'Choes'. This does not mean that all choes were ceremonial vessels destined for use at the Anthesteria; indeed, there are good reasons to suppose that the choes used for the drinking contest were plain and not decorated with figures.40 Nevertheless, the shape of the choes was closely associated with the popular feast. The imagery of the choes was completely determined by this association in the second half of the fifth century BC.41 We find numerous pictures of revellers passing through the city equipped with torches, boots or luncheon-baskets. The wreathed choes frequently depicted in these scenes could indicate that these processions took place at the Anthesteria. Even more closely connected to the festival seem to be the representations of cultic activities, such as the well-known swinging scene on a chous in Athens (Fig. 11).⁴² Although it is disputable in many cases whether the particular activities were part of the Anthesteria or belonged to other festivals, it is quite remarkable that such elaborate depictions of Athenian cults are restricted to choes. On vases of other shapes we do not find anything similar.

The jugs from the Dexileos precinct provide good examples of the imagery on choes inspired by different festive activities. One vessel shows a procession of revellers (Fig. 12). The central figure with a torch in his hand is unusual, because he rides on horseback. He is escorted by a lyre player and another figure with a stick.⁴³



Fig. 11. Attic red-figure chous, Athens, c. 430-420 BC, Ethniko Archaiologiko Mouseio VS 319 (photo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Athen, neg. no. Athen Var. 1100 – H. Wagner).

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^{37.} ABV xlix-l; Green 1972.

^{38.} Agora XII, 205-206; Schmidt 2005, 157.

^{39.} Young 1939, 279-280; Schmidt 2005, 157.

^{40.} Schmidt 2005, 158.

Schmidt 2005, 171-194. Since they disregarded the chronological differences, some authors denied this close connection: Rumpf 1961; Hamilton 1992, 67-69.

Athens, National Archaeological Museum VS 319: ARV² 1249.14; Lezzi-Hafter 1988, 201-201, 339 no. 214, pl. 136; Schmidt 2005, 178-182.

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 01.8255: Vermeule 1970, 109-110, figs. 10, 11; Burn 1987, 88; Schmidt 2005, 196-197, fig. 100.



Fig. 12. Fragment of Attic red-figure chous, c. 400 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 01.8255 (after Vermeule 1970, fig. 10).

Although the rider is rare in such depictions, the equipment of the three figures - lyre, torches and stick - makes clear that the context is the festival. The interpretation of the second chous is more difficult (Fig. 13). In the centre of the picture is a near-naked running man who seems to pursue a woman. The couple is framed by a seated woman on the right and a man on the left, who perhaps sits as well.44 A definite conclusion as to what is represented here is not possible, but the similarities between the rushing man with the stick and the reveller on the first chous hint at a similar context. Perhaps the pursuit of the woman referred to the sexual extravagances associated with the choes festival, as best exemplified by the behaviour of Dikaiopolis, the successful participant in the drinking contest in Aristophanes' Acharnians.45

On the third chous from the Dexileos precinct we find a conventional representation of the *thiasos* with Dionysus accompanied by a satyr and a maenad (Fig. 14).⁴⁶ This picture seems to be an equivalent in the divine sphere of the procession of revellers. The activities of the god and of the participants in the feast were interchangeable. The fourth chous is decorat-



Fig. 13. Fragment of Attic red-figure chous, c. 400 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 01.8254 (after Vermeule 1970, fig. 9).



Fig. 14. Fragment of Attic red-figure chous, c. 400 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.934 (after Vermeule 1970, fig. 3).

ed with a scene from a chariot race (Fig. 15 a, b). On the right we see a depiction of the race course, with the turning post and a spectator leaning on a stick. Both are placed on the same decorated base. Further on the victorious team is guided by a running man. A Nike flies above the horses as a sign of their success.⁴⁷ At first sight the depiction of a chariot race might seem to have nothing to do with the festival's activi-

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 01.8254: Vermeule 1970, 107-109, figs. 8, 9; Schmidt 2005, 197, fig. 101.

^{45.} Aristophanes, Acharnenses 1199-1201, 1216-1217, 1220-1221.

^{46.} Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.934: Vermeule 1970,

^{98,} fig. 3; Schmidt 2005, 197, fig. 102.

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.935: Vermeule 1970, 98-103, figs. 4-6; Burn 1987, 88; Schmidt 2005, 197-198, fig. 103.



Fig. 15a. Fragment of Attic red-figure chous, c. 400 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.935 (after Vermeule 1970, fig. 4).

ties, for we know nothing about such contests at the Anthesteria, but we must consider these activities in a wider context. Not only did the actual events at the Anthesteria inspire the representations on the choes, but also the images were supposed to remind the spectator of occasions that filled the whole city with similar enthusiasm. Races and other athletic events were held at many festivals during the Athenian year and attracted great public attention. The passionate support of competitors from one's own phyle or deme must have caused strong collective emotions. Comparable in their effects are the great festivals of the Renaissance cities in northern Italy. Because such pictures reflect an experience of collective enjoyment, they were regarded as appropriate for the decoration of the choes.

We need to bear in mind these expectations of the ancient spectator when we return to the example with the tyrannicides from the same findspot. It is now clear that the context which determined the significance of all these pictures was not primarily the ceremony for Dexileos but the experience of the Athenian festivals. So we have to ask what the meaning of the tyran-



Fig. 15b. Fragment of Attic red-figure chous, c. 400 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.935 (after Vermeule 1970, fig. 5).

nicides was in the context of the choes' imagery, not in the context of the young hero's death. The representation of the statue group can be interpreted in only one way: the public memory of the heroes of democracy engendered similar emotions to the collective ritual and festive enthusiasm depicted on the other choes. It called forth the collective identity of the Athenians in the same way.

One can advance further arguments that the message of the tyrannicides' images was directly linked to the shape of the vessel and its connotations. The most important is that, apart from the Panathenaic amphorae, we find the tyrannicides exclusively on choes. A second example more or less contemporary with the Boston fragments is kept in the Villa Giulia (Fig. 16).48 It differs only in the order of the fighters (Aristogeiton leads here) and in the lack of the base and the stele. There seems to be preserved, however, a comment on the depiction by the ancient owner of the vessel. The letters epsilon and upsilon are scratched in the surface above the head of Aristogeiton. Because there are no traces of the inscription continuing in any direction, we have to read here EY meaning 'good'.

^{48.} Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia inv. 44255: Brunnsåker 1971, 106, pl. 24.8.



Fig 16. Attic red-figure chous, c. 400 BC, Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia 44255 (Foto della Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Etruria Meridionale).

It is most likely that this graffito emphasized the esteem and the ethical value ascribed to the tyrannicides' deeds. For us this little word may hint at the owner's intention to communicate this opinion through the image as well.

The third chous with the tyrannicides comes from Spina and is now in the National Museum in Ferrara (Fig. 17).⁴⁹ In addition to the two figures, we find in this representation two stelae like the one on the Boston fragment, but no statue base. Of particular importance are the two choes depicted between the legs of Harmodios and Aristogeiton. On first glance the jugs



Fig. 17. Attic red-figure chous, c. 400-390 BC, Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina 6406 (photo: su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali).

seem somewhat odd in this picture; they were certainly not actually set up on the monument. On other vase-paintings we find the choes depicted not only in scenes which show events in the Anthesteria, like the revellers mentioned above, but also in pictures that are not otherwise recognizable as connected with the feast. They appear, for example, in some Dionysiac images or musical scenes.⁵⁰ In all these cases, this detail was intended to indicate a close link between the theme of the depiction and the Anthesterian air of the choes imagery. Likewise the choes between the tyrannicides' legs on the Ferrara jug

Ferrara, Museo Nazionale di Spina inv. 6406: Eschbach 1992, 45-46, n. 78. – For the grave context (T 268A VP) see: Massei 1978, 284, pl. 69.4. – For the new photo and the permission to publish it here I would like to thank F. Berti.

Dionysian: Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia inv. 50511: Lezzi-Hafter 1976, 111 no. S 96, pl. 137 c; Athens, Agora Museum inv. P 5729: ARV² 993.78;

Agora XXX, 233 no. 629, pl. 68; Oakley 1997, 43, 129, pl. 69 c; Moskow, Pushkin Museum inv. M-1360: Lezzi-Hafter 1988, 204, 338 no. 210bis, pl. 196 a; Schmidt 2005, 187-188, fig. 96. – Musical: Florence, private: Hoorn 1951, 128 no. 532, fig. 164; Melbourne, University Museum inv. V 19: Green 1971, 201 no. 13, pl. 30 c; Connor & Jackson 2000, 150-153.

signify the incorporation of the ancient heroes in the festive community of all Athenians.

The observation that the representation of the sculpture group of the tyrannicides was closely linked both to the vessel's shape and to the expectations of the spectators toward its imagery leads us back to our starting point. Now we are able to understand why so few recognizable images of once existing sculptures occur on Attic vase-paintings. Well known statues were not depicted because they were particularly admirable works of art or mayor landmarks of the city. Sculptures were rarely used even as artistic models for the composition of vase-paintings; if the vase-painters searched for inspiration they looked to contemporary monumental painting. We find true reproductions of actual sculptures in vase-painting only when their connotations could have been used for visual communication. Moreover, the representation of public statues was apparently expected only on vases linked with public events through their specific shapes.

It is not, therefore, astonishing that the only known definite reference to an existing sculpture beside the tyrannicides is found, likewise, on a chous.⁵¹ A well-known jug in Berlin clearly shows the group of Athena and Marsyas by Myron (Fig. 18).⁵² The often-mentioned discrepancies in the arrangement of the figures in comparison to the actual sculpture group are very similar to the differences that we found in the depictions of the tyrannicides. The significance of the representation, however, cannot be fixed with certainty. But with the case of the tyrannicides in mind, we can see herein a commentary on the particularly Athenian aetiology of Dionysiac enjoyment. The combination in the sculptural group of Athena as inventor of the aulos and Marsyas as its mythical teacher stresses the origin of orgiastic festivities in Athenian mythology.53 By depicting this group originally located on the Athenian Acropolis on a chous, the vase painter emphasized the importance ascribed

51. A further example may be a chous in the Robinson Collection which displays a procession that strongly reminiscent of the Parthenon frieze (Cambridge, Harvard University Arthur M. Sackler Museum inv. 59.129: Robinson 1934). But in this case the reference to the sculpture is not as clear as with the other examples.



Fig. 18. Attic red-figure chous, c. 440-430 BC, Berlin, Antikensammlung Staatliche Museen F 2418 (after Junker 2002, fig. 15).

to Dionysiac enjoyment as a cohesive force in the collective identity of the Athenians.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have shown that reference to existing and well-known statues in vase-paintings was a phenomenon directly linked to the changing expectations toward images on vases in the fifth century BC. Whereas in the beginning of the century the aim of the painters was primarily to depict a situation clearly, in the second half there was a growing interest in underscoring particular aspects of the scenes depicted. Political or ethical values were now communicated by visual means, and the representation of statues from a public context seemed to be appropriate in some cases. The portrayal of the tyrannicides' monument was an opportunity to depict not only the historic or heroic event but also collective opinion about the deed.

At the end of the fifth century BC, vasepainters experimented with visual techniques of communication. One of the most obvious was the increasing use of personifications and allegories.⁵⁴ The use of well-known stat-

A second representation of Athena and Marsyas is poorly preserved. Neither the shape of the vessel nor the reference to the statue group can be stated with certainty: Athens, National Archaeological Museum inv. Acr. 632: *ARV*² 1024.3; Oakley 1990, 32, pl. 133b; Junker 2002, 181.

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Berlin, Staatliche Museen Antikensammlung F 2418: CVA Germany 22, Berlin 3 pl. 147; Junker 2002, 181, fig. 15. –

^{53.} Junker 2002.

Shapiro 1993; Borg 2002; Schmidt 2005, 146–148, 298– 290.

ues had a similar significance. The connotations associated with these statues were used in some cases for the creation of abstract meanings which go far beyond the visible depiction. That such images were not used haphazardly, but with the intention of communicating a statement, is evident from their context. Their restricted application only on Panathenaic amphorae and choes shows that the painters and the users of these vases had carefully considered the requirements for the precise understanding of the visual message. Only on vases expected to show themes closely connected with the collective, political life of the city could the image of the tyrannicides have been effective.

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