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PLATE 1

Herakles charging Geryon. Red-figure *kylix* by Euphronios, Athens, *c.* 510 BC.
See pages 73-5.
Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlung, Inv. 2620.

UNDERSTANDING SHIELD EMBLEMS ON ANCIENT ATHENIAN VASES: THE CASE OF GERYON'S MANY SHIELDS

N. G. Mattias Engdahl

Heraldry as we know it today may not have taken hold through Europe in earnest until the twelfth century, but the idea of decorating shields was not new. Over seventeen centuries earlier, the ancient Greeks were displaying a wide variety of designs on warriors' shields. Some of these were presented by T. R. Davies in his article 'As it was in the beginning', published in this journal in 1979, and he cites these Greek emblems amongst the very earliest known examples of heraldry.[1] It may be of interest to the readers of *The Coat of Arms* to learn more about this early form of shield decoration. The subject has undergone thorough study within the field of classical archaeology, and a brief review of this work, illustrated by a case study, will show that Greek shield decoration, at least as represented on vases, involved complex symbolic communication.

The study of Greek shield emblems

The evidence base for the study of shield emblems in ancient Greece is large. There are many examples of actual surviving bronze emblems fashioned in *repoussé* work (the shields themselves were made from perishable materials), dated to the seventh and sixth centuries BC and found principally during the excavations of votive deposits at Olympia.[2] An additional example from Ionia is particularly interesting as it appears to bear evidence of having been used in battle.[3] The vast majority of the evidence, however, comes from the painter's brush and the engraver's tools: these are emblems not on real shields for use in war, but on shields represented artistically on other artefacts. The same types of emblems appear in both bodies of evidence, with dolphins, gorgons, horses, tripods, eagles, and lions as the most frequent elements.[4]

[1] 'As it was in the beginning', *CoA* new ser. 3 (1978-80), no. 109, pp. 114-24.

[2] See Hanna Philipp, *Archaische Silhouettenbleche und Schildzeichen in Olympia* (Berlin 2004) for a catalogue of just over 100 examples with full plates.

[3] G. Zahlhaas, 'Angriff und Verteidigung: Fragmente eines griechisch-archaischen Schildzeichens', *Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter* (75) pp. 89-97, illustrates an eagle shield emblem with seventeen holes pierced through it. These holes are consistent in shape with arrow heads (p. 95, pl. 9), rather than the round holes associated with the attachment of such emblems to the front of the shield.

[4] See Philipp for examples on bronze shields; for examples on vases, see the excellent on-line, frequently illustrated and freely searchable research database at the Beazley archive (*www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/XDB/ASP/default.asp*).

Although the types used in the two contexts are similar, the distinction between the 'real' and 'artistic' context for the display of shield emblems is important. Choice of emblem in the different contexts may well have been determined by quite different intention. A Greek hoplite, if he had free choice in the matter of his shield emblem, may well have exercised that choice in order to make a statement of some sort about himself. An artist deciding on which shield to paint onto a vase may have been guided by his patron, whimsy, or other demands as required by artistic convention or necessity. Nevertheless, one central purpose underpins the display of shield emblems for both warrior and artist: they are communicating with the observer. They do so by means of what was generically known in ancient Greece as a *sēma* [σῆμα, pl. σήματα], a word which is most conveniently rendered in English as 'symbol' but more specifically signifies 'an object/event/feature that needs to be interpreted'.[5] In the process of interpretation, the context where we find our *sēma* becomes important for our understanding of what it means. Apart from the fact that we know it was the property of an otherwise unknown individual, a 'real' shield emblem is devoid of context. Shield emblems shown in art, however, can be surrounded by a wealth of additional information in the form of a 'scene', which can assist us in understanding what the intended message might have been.

Of the artistic material, vases are the most abundant source of examples, though they are far from the only one. Davies's article provides a starting point. It was illustrated with five examples of what he called 'Corinthian' and 'Attic' shields displayed on vases of the sixth to fifth centuries BC, a 'Spartan'[6] shield seen on figurines and reliefs, and a 'Theban'[7] shield represented on statuettes and coins. In addition to

[5] R. Scodel, 'Homeric signs and flashbulb memory', in I. Worthington and J. M. Foley (edd.), *Epea and Grammata: Oral and written Communication in Ancient Greece* (*Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece* vol. 4 = *Mnemosyne* supplement 230: Leiden 2002), pp. 99-116 at 100, explains a *sēma* as something that points beyond itself. J. M. Foley, 'Traditional signs and Homeric art', in E. Bakker and A. Kahane (edd.) *Written Voices, Spoken Signs. Tradition, Performance, and the Epic Text* (Cambridge, MA., 1997), pp. 56-82, suggests that the *sēma* is both the physical concrete object and the representation of something else through metonymy. Elsewhere he suggests that the Homeric *sēma* '...dependably designates an emergent reality, a prolepsis, a secret known only to a chosen few. But it does so obliquely, by indexical reference, rather than by simply naming its subject': 'What's in a sign?', in E. A. Mackay (ed.), *Signs of Orality: the oral tradition and its influence in the Greek and Roman world* (*Mnemosyne* supplement 188: Leiden 1999), pp. 1-27 at 6. In his analysis of the Phrasikleia funerary statue J. Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: an anthropology of reading in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1993), p. 25, observes that a *sēma* that has not been considered or thought of, i.e. one that has not been interpreted, is incomplete.

[6] In identifying these shields as 'Corinthian', 'Attic' or 'Spartan', Davies seems to have been guided by the location of production of the artefact displaying the shield. In fact all these are the same shield type, usually referred to as a 'hoplite' shield (being part of the hoplite's equipment), and the same as shields used in reality. They are perfectly round, the centre of the shield forming a flattened dome, the whole surrounded by a flat rim.

[7] This variety, commonly referred to as a Boeotian shield, is frequent in vase painting, particularly in scenes relating to the mythological or heroic past: J. M. Hurwit, 'The Dipylon Shield once more', *Classical Antiquity* 4 (1985), pp. 121-6 at 125.

these vases, coins, statuettes and friezes, votive shields made from terracotta were widely used between the seventh and third centuries,[8] and small votive lead warriors, all bearing shields with distinct emblems, were extremely popular dedications at the temple of Artemis Orthia near Sparta during the seventh and sixth centuries.[9] As with the shields dedicated at Olympia by unidentifiable warriors, however, these votive examples provide us with little surrounding context for interpretation. They also tend to display mostly geometric emblems, which is consistent with earlier periods in vase painting, but inconsistent with the work of contemporary vase painters at Athens. It would seem that votive shields were archaising in style and that the emblems considered suitable for them were limited.

It is clear that there are, even within the body of artistic evidence, a multitude of forces at play behind the selection of shield emblems. Many attempts have been made to elucidate what these may be, and in the English speaking world a 1902 paper by G. H. Chase has been, and remains, the most influential.[10] Chase classified shield emblems into twelve categories, some of which he analysed in terms of a message communicated by the shield bearer, and others he clearly saw as adopted for the purpose of personal or familial identification.[11] The latter interpretation was favoured by the numismatist Charles Seltman in an influential 1924 discussion of the early Athenian coin series known since the nineteenth century (precisely because of their assumed 'heraldic' design) as *Wappenmünzen*; sharing a common reverse, these coins display a wide variety of obverse types, all represented on circular shield forms. Seltman postulated the theory that vase painters depicted emblems they would have seen borne by hoplites in the streets of Athens, that these were family badges, and finally that these family badges are to be associated with the types on the *Wappenmünzen*, the design of which was decided by the official in charge of the state mint, who will have placed there his family emblem.[12] Though the idea won widespread approval in its time it has now fallen out of favour on chronological grounds: the coins and the shield emblems do not line up temporally either with each other or with the individu-

[8] A. N. Stillwell, *Corinth. Results of excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, vol. 15.2: *The Potter's Quarter: the terracottas* (Princeton 1952), pp. 216-24, provides an excellent overview. They appear to have been popular across the Greek world.

[9] The lead figurines came in all shapes and sizes, not all of them representing armed warriors. They were flat and cheaply made: over 100,000 of them have been found. For further information, see A. J. B. Wace, 'The lead figurines', in *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta*, ed. R. M. Dawkins (London 1929), pp. 249-84.

[10] 'The shield devices of the Greeks' , *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 13 (1902), pp. 61-127. In Germany the serious study of the area was initiated by G. H. Fuchs, *De ratione quam veteres artifices, inprimis vasorum pictores, in clipeis imaginibus exornandis adhibuerint* (Göttingen 1852).

[11] Examples include warding off evil, displaying the strength or fortitude of the bearer, the bearer's origin, descent, and rank etc.; Chase, pp. 91f.

[12] C. T. Seltman, *Athens, its History and Coinage before the Persian Invasion* (Cambridge 1924).

als suggested by Seltman.[13] As already observed, shield emblems as represented in divergent media are best studied in isolation due to variations in context and purpose.

Two significant studies, narrowly focussed on representations of shield emblems on Attic vases in the black- and red-figure styles, deserve mention.[14] Annelore Vaerst's 1980 doctoral thesis concluded that shield emblems shown on (mainly) Attic black-figure vases were either merely decorative, or, in the case of those showing animals and beasts, apotropaic or indicative of the shield bearer's *thymos* (courage, ardour or fighting spirit).[15] These conclusions are not too different from Chase's, but with the important addition of the mention of *thymos*, a term in its broader senses overlapping considerably with *psyche* (soul/life), of which the body could be seen as a *sēma*, or sign (Plato, *Cratylus*, 400b). In other words, Vaerst touched upon the idea that there was an inner message that the viewer would need to interpret by means of viewing a physical sign (*sēma*).

By contrast, Regina Attula's 2002 doctoral thesis focussed entirely on shield emblems on red-figure Attic vases.[16] Her analysis expanded to the wider context in which the emblems are shown and she demonstrated that they can refer not only to the shield bearer, but to the whole scene, to other characters or persons in the scene, or to events taking place before or after those illustrated. Going further still, François Lissarrague has widened the field of reference for shield emblems, on both black- and red-figure Attic vases, to the activities for which the vase was used.[17]

One final example of the wide areas of reference shield emblems could have comes not from the artistic sphere, but the literary. Aiskhylos' play *Seven Against Thebes*, first produced in 467 BC, features a lengthy scene (often discussed in older books on heraldry) where a scout gives Eteokles, the Theban king, a report describing the shields of the seven commanders leading the attacking army.[18] In this most

[13] See, for example, J. H. Kroll and N. M. Waggoner, 'Dating the earliest coins of Athens, Corinth, and Aegina', *American Journal of Archaeology* 88 (1984), pp. 325-40, who (at 327-9) date the coins in question about a century later than Seltman did.

[14] A black-figure vase is decorated in a technique that involves slipping the vase in a glaze painted on where needed and then incising details into the slip before firing. Additional details could also be added in the form of a white slip, the usual way of indicating shield emblems against their otherwise black background. Red-figure vases are decorated by slipping the whole vase, reserving the areas of the figures, and adding details with brushed on slip. This technique allows for significantly finer detail and progressively replaced the black-figure variety during the last quarter of the sixth century.

[15] 'Griechische Schildzeichen vom 8. bis zum Ausgehenden 6. Jahrhundert.' Doctoral thesis, Philosophischen Fakultät, University of Salzburg, 1980.

[16] 'Schildzeichen in der griechischen Vasenmalerei'. Doctoral thesis, Universität Rostock, 2002.

[17] F. Lissarrague, 'Looking at shield devices: tragedy and vase painting', in C. S. Kraus et al. (edd.), *Visualising the Tragic: Drama, Myth, and Ritual in Greek Art and Literature: Essays in Honour of Froma Zeitlin* (Oxford 2007), pp. 152-64; id., 'Le temps des boucliers', *Images Re-vues*, vol. hors-série 1 (2008), pp. 1-16 (on line at *imagesrevues.revues.org/850*); id., 'Vases grecs: à vos marques', in A. Tsingarida (ed.), *Shapes and Uses of Greek Vases (7th-4th centuries B.C.)* (Brussels 2009), pp. 237-49.

complex of scenes, thoroughly investigated by Froma Zeitlin using a semiological framework, Eteokles interprets each shield emblem (and defeats or deflects its significance by counter-measures such as oracular divination): the shield emblems indicate a range of things, including the intent of the bearer, the bearer's past, or even connections between the different bearers.[19]

A case-study from sixth-century Athens: Geryon

We now turn to the monstrous Geryon, whose shield emblems form the focus of our case study. Geryon appears in the labours of Herakles (usually the tenth labour), dwelling on the island of Erytheia in the far west, with a herd of exquisite cattle which Herakles was required to take from him and bring back.[20] Geryon's monstrosity is variously described in different sources but a standard version has his physique incorporating three whole bodies joined at the waist, with a total of six legs, six arms and three heads, to which are sometimes added two wings.[21] He is supernaturally strong, and his genealogy would imply immortality, although this is a matter of debate: he may have been immortal in Stesikhoros' version,[22] but in others he is clearly mortal. To aid him he has a cowherd, Eurytion, and a dog, Orthros, a two-headed version of the more familiar Kerberos. Herakles reaches Erytheia, kills Eurytion and Orthros, ambushes and (at least in the non-Stesikhoran accounts) kills Geryon and makes off with the cattle.

The battle between Herakles and Geryon is the subject of about eighty known vases in either black- or red-figure Attic vase painting. Of these, 63 have been accessible for examination by way of photographs. Approximately 20% of shield emblems associated with Geryon consist of a tripod, making this the most frequently occurring emblem. Amongst others I shall be considering here are several instances of a *triskeles*, an octopus, a grasshopper, a winged boar, and a dog's head. Also found are snakes, stars (of eight or sixteen points), discs and hoops, an eagle with a snake, a *gorgoneion*, an ivy wreath, a single leg, a leaf, a vine leaf, and griffin, bull, panther, and lion protomes.

Let us begin with the tripod (see **Figure 1a**, over), the most frequent of Geryon's shield emblems. The ancient Greek tripod was closely associated with the deity Apol-

[18] Aiskhylos, *Septem contra Thebas*, lines 375-685. W. Smith Ellis, *The Antiquities of Heraldry* (London 1869), pp. 32-3; A. C. Fox-Davies, *A Complete Guide to Heraldry* (London and Edinburgh 1909), pp. 6-8.

[19] F. I. Zeitlin, *Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes* (2nd edn., Lanham 2009).

[20] The main ancient sources for this story are the early poets Hesiod (*Theogony* 285-99: ?8th century BC) and Stesikhoros (7th/6th century BC), who dealt with the tale in a long lyric composition known as the *Geryoneïs*, surviving in fragments, a new edition of which has recently been published with extensive commentary by P. Curtis (Leiden 2011). Other information comes from the 1st-century mythographer (Pseudo-)Apollodoros (*Bibliotheke*, 2. 5. 10).

[21] M. Robertson, '*Geryoneis*: Stesichorus and the vase-painters', *Classical Quarterly* new ser. 19 (1969), pp. 207-21.

[22] See Curtis's options on the translation of the relevant lines (p. 122, nos 8-10).

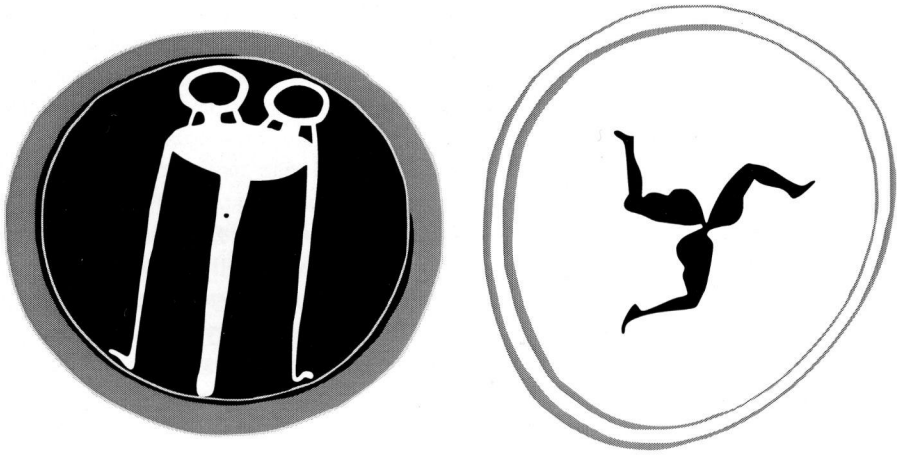

Figure 1: shields on Attic vases. Left (*a*), shield with tripod from a mid-sixth-century black-figure amphora. Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Museum, L245. Right (*b*), shield with *triskeles* (right), from a mid-fifth-century red-figure *hydria*. Gotha, Castle Museum, AK299.

lo and his temple at Delphi, home to the celebrated oracle. There is no evidence that Geryon has any connection with either. We may instead look for a different type of solution and explain this emblem as a direct reflection and commentary on Geryon's physical form and specifically his three conjoined bodies. To put it simply, the tripod's triple-legged nature is an analogue of Geryon's triple nature. Similarly, the *triskeles* (see **Figure 1b**), an emblem familiar to later heraldry from the arms of the Isle of Man, could also be an indication of the tripartite nature of Geryon. By the same line of reasoning, any of the emblems borne by Geryon that have multiple extremities, could be said to represent the same concept with varying degrees of clarity. This would arguably work well for both the octopus (see **Figure 2**, partially obscured on the left) and the grasshopper, possessing the same number of legs as Geryon. However, with these two emblems, we may be seeing allusions to other aspects of the bearer or his context. The grasshopper was also thought to be immortal,[23] which ties in with the possible, if uncertain, immortality of Geryon as well as the future immortality achieved by Herakles. Such double reference to both the bearer and his opponent is evident also in the case of the octopus. In relation to Geryon, the octopus's many

[23] See Tzetzes, *Scholia in Lycophronem* 18; cf. J. G. Frazer on Apollodoros, *Bibliotheke* 3. 12. 4 (*The Library* (London 1921) vol. 2, pp. 43-4). Snakes and grasshoppers (and with them also cicadas, locusts etc.) shed their skins and were so thought to shed their old age which, by extension, allows for eternal life and youth. I thank the anonymous reader of this paper for pointing me towards the story of the Trojan Tithonos. In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, lines 218-38, Tithonos is granted eternal life, but not youth, and the statement in a fragment of Hellanikos that he was the first cicada or grasshopper strengthens the connection between immortality and the grasshopper; see C. L. Wilkinson, *The Lyric of Ibycus* (Berlin 2013), p. 260, for references. The same reader also suggests, and I would agree, that the eventual shrivelled unsightliness of the aging Tithonos may be a parallel for Geryon's monstrosity.

Figure 2: Detail of shields borne by Geryon on red-figure *kylix* by Euphronios, Athens, *c.* 510 BC. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlung, Inv. 2620. For the whole scene, see **Figure 3** over and **Plate 1**.

limbs are once more a visual reflection of the shield bearer. In relation to Herakles, however, the allusion is significantly more subtle. The perception of the octopus by an ancient Greek was perhaps somewhat different from our modern views and one of its many perceived properties, the proclivity to lurk in cavities and ambush its prey,[24] is relevant in the current context. Herakles, as we have already noted, sneakily and surreptitiously attacked Geryon by first firing an arrow at him, before revealing himself and commencing the battle proper.[25] On the vase where this particular octopus is shown,[26] it appears on Geryon's second shield, almost entirely obscured by his first (upon which is a winged boar), only four of the tentacles peeping out. Herakles's lurking and ambushing activities, although taking place before the battle proper shown in the scene, can therefore be said to be indicated allegorically by the octopus.

The very same vase also provides us with yet another example of a dual reference. The winged boar on Geryon's first shield (see **Figure 2**) may be an indication of Herakles' earlier labour involving the wingless Erymanthean one, or alternatively a reference to the extraordinary strength of Geryon himself.[27] Geryon, who is only twice shown with wings on a pair of sixth-century Chalcidian vases, is never there-

[24] See Oppian, *Halieutica* 2. 232-421, for a late example. Sophokles uses the lurking octopus as a simile for the Erinys at *Electra* 489-91.

[25] Stesikhoros, *Geryoneis*, fr. 12, col. i (ed. Curtis, pp. 83-4).

[26] This vase is a red-figure *kylix* (cup) signed by Euphronios and probably made around 510 BC; Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 2620.

[27] Hesiod stated Geryon to be the strongest mortal there ever was (*Theogony* 980-5) and also likened Herakles to a boar (*Scutum* 385-95). The strength and fierceness of the animal can be inferred from, e.g. the 'impossible' task Pelias required his daughter's suitors to perform: yoking a boar and a lion to a car (Apollodoros, *Bibliotheke* 1. 9. 15).

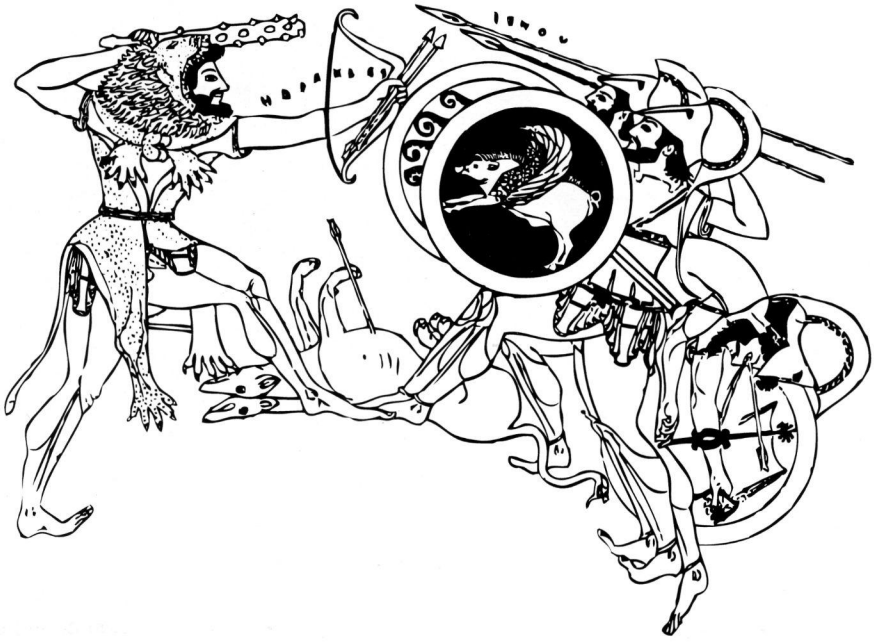

Figure 3: scene of Herakles (left, with lion headdress and wielding club and bow) charging the tricorporate figure of Geryon after the initial ambush. One of Geryon's heads has been hit by an arrow and the body associated with it has slumped to the right, so that the shield it is holding is turned away from us. The remaining two shields are visible as in *Figure 2*. Partial drawing after an illustration in W. Klein, *Euphronios* (2nd edn., Vienna 1886), p. 54. For the same scene in colour, see **Plate 1**. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlung Inv. 2620.

after known to sport these in art, though in literature they remain a feature in later periods.[28] Perhaps the visual combination of a triple-bodied, winged person presented compositional problems for the vase painters and so the convention became to show Geryon wingless.[29] Euphronios, who painted this vase, however, may have cleverly alluded to Geryon's wings by including them in the shield emblem. In a similar fashion, the painter of another vase showing the head of a large dog as Geryon's shield emblem,[30] suggests the presence of Orthros, who is not in evidence elsewhere in the scene (see **Figure 4**). The shield could, in other words, be a useful field for the display of such characters or items as would otherwise be difficult to fit into the overall composition.

For us, the many messages conveyed by the painters of Geryon and his shields could only be deciphered by the use of textual evidence. We have, for instance, had to

[28] The scholiast to Hesiod's *Theogony* (285-99) states that Stesikhoros had Geryon winged (Curtis, p. 17).

[29] See Robertson (note 21 above).

[30] A black figure amphora in private ownership, dated to the third quarter of the 6th century, and painted by Group E; see J. D. Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters* (Oxford 1956), p 133 no. 5.

Figure 4: shield with an emblem of a dog's head protome, from a mid-sixth-century amphora. Private collection.

resort to writers such as Oppian for ancient views of the octopus, and to ancient commentaries on literary works for notes on the grasshopper. The contemporary viewer of the vases would have had grasped the meaning of these emblems in their context as clearly and directly as we read the message conveyed by the symbols on road signs. It is, in other words, a matter of cultural setting. Our suggested interpretations (which may be probable but can never be absolutely certain) need to combine the information we have concerning *both* emblem *and* context. When features of the context, e.g. Geryon's possible immortality, overlap with a known property of the emblem, e.g. the grasshopper's immortality, it is reasonable to propose that the vase painter may have alluded to this particular property.

Conclusion

As we have seen, any number of personal properties can be alluded to by means of shield emblems. Physical characteristics, recent events involving either the bearer or other members of the scene, and supernatural abilities are all alluded to. Despite the important distinction we drew above between surviving shields actually carried by warriors, and shields depicted in other contexts, it is possible that the same or similar communicative purposes motivated the choice of shield emblems by hoplites before going into battle. Like the assailants at Thebes trying to intimidate Eteokles, or Geryon displaying his strength by means of a fearsome boar, a warrior might well attempt to instil awe or fear in his opponents by means of a self-aggrandising emblem. It is unfortunate that we do not possess a corpus of warrior biographies along with the shield emblems they bore, and it is impossible to determine with any certainty what the real-life shield emblems meant to those who carried them and those who saw them. It does, however, seem possible that similar forces were at work there to those in the artistic process: as a shield emblem on a vase takes on a narrative aspect, the reference to an individual's characteristics, abilities, or personal history are in essence also narrative. It is worth noting here that the association between an individual

and an emblem was not necessarily permanent. It seems likely that a warrior could alter the emblem on his shield as he pleased, depending on situation (for which read 'context'); that, at any rate, is implied by the way that the bronze emblems were attached to, but detachable from, the wooden backing of the shield.[31] As his personal history changed, perhaps a battle or Olympic victory won, the emblem could change with him.

Vase painters, on the other hand, had a wider context to allude to with shield emblems. In their hands, emblems could become narrative tools to tell parts of the story which would otherwise not fit, physically, onto the vase or into the section of the narrative chosen to be displayed. Vase scenes often show one specific point within a greater story but, without references to the before and after, it might be difficult for some viewers to identify the correct myth. Clues are left, sometimes obviously and sometimes obscurely, and here the shield emblems come into their own. In the case of our Geryon, the bodies of Orthros and Eurytion are often included, lying on the ground as a graphic reference to the preceding part of the story in which Herakles kills them. In the same way, the shield emblems on the vase by Euphronios refer, by the allegory of the octopus, to Herakles' ambush. In the latter case, the emblem was used to point to someone other than the bearer (Herakles rather than Geryon himself) – a mode of reference that is perhaps unlikely to have taken place when a real-life hoplite chose his emblem. Similarly, any reference to the future, such as the grasshopper potentially pointing towards Herakles' impending immortality, is impossible to emulate in real life – with the exception of references to things the shield bearer might be *hoping* for.

The use of shield emblems in sixth- and fifth-century Athens, artistic or otherwise, is not known to have followed any specific set of rules. Any given individual, real or imaginary, could be associated with any number of emblems. The communicative function of shield emblems *on vases*, however, invites the notion that a similar function may conventionally have been played by shield emblems wherever they occurred – a situation that would have required a culturally shared vocabulary of emblems, with each emblem susceptible to multiple or polysemic interpretation. There is sadly no surviving primary literature on the subject; no ancient version of the sixteenth-century *Iconologia* by Cesare Ripa is available to help us. By careful use of existing literature and contextual clues it nevertheless seems possible to offer suggestions for how to read the allusive, and often elusive, messages concealed behind the shield emblems of the ancient Greeks.[32]

[31] Philipp (note 2 above), p. 94.

[32] This paper forms part of a larger research project on signs and symbols in the visual narratives of ancient Greek art currently undertaken at the Department of Ancient History at Macquarie University, Sydney. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr Ian Plant and Dr Kenneth Sheedy at Macquarie University for their support and encouragement, and Dr Clive Cheesman and the anonymous reader of *The Coat of Arms* for their most helpful suggestions and improvements. All faults are of course my own.