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The Fury of Lyssa in Painting and Drama. Its Depiction on an Attic Bell-Krater in Ancient Iberia

Carlos Espí Forcén
Departamento de Historia del Arte. Facultad de Letras. Universidad de Murcia. C/Santo Cristo, 1. 30001 Murcia. Spain
forcen@um.es
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6674-0832

José Miguel García Cano
Área de Arqueología. Facultad de Letras. Universidad de Murcia. C/Santo Cristo, 1. 30001 Murcia. Spain
jmgc@um.es
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1371-7487

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A Mª Manuela Ayala (1941-2023).

EN **Abstract.** A fragment of an Attic bell-krater found in the Region of Murcia (Spain) features the character of Lyssa standing in front of a falling Doric column. A thorough study of ancient literary sources and iconography suggests that the scene depicted on the pottery fragment could be linked either to the madness of Herakles, as portrayed in Euripides' *Hēraklēs Mainomenos*, or more likely to the punishment of Lycurgus by Dionysus, the subject of Aeschylus' lost play *Edonoi*. In terms of style, some particular details allow to attribute the krater to the Meidias Painter or his workshop, active in the last quarter of the 5th century BC. Attic trade in the Iberian Peninsula increased significantly in this period, so the krater probably arrived in southeastern Iberia through Emporion, some harbor on the coast and a commercial route along the Tader river (now Segura). The 5th century BC was also the heyday of Athenian theatre, and the popularity of Athenian drama may have influenced the choice of the subject on this Attic krater. The Meidias Painter and his workshop likely relied on previously established Attic iconography to represent the character of Lyssa with two sprouting hounds on her head, a rare motif that has only one parallel on an Attic bell-krater of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.
Keywords: Attic bell-krater, Greek trade, Ancient Iberia, Attic drama, Lyssa, Lycurgus.

ES La furia de Lisa en la pintura y el teatro. Su representación en una crátera ática de campana de la antigua Iberia

ES **Resumen.** Un fragmento de una crátera de campana ática, probablemente encontrado en la Región de Murcia (España), representa el personaje de Lisa destruyendo un palacio tras descargar su rabia. Un profundo estudio de las fuentes literarias y de la iconografía de la Antigüedad nos permite vincular esta escena con la representación de la locura de Heracles, conforme a la obra *Hēraklēs Mainomenos* de Eurípides, o más probablemente con el castigo de Dioniso sobre Licurgo, tema escogido por Esquilo para su obra *Edonoi*, conocida sólo a través de algunos fragmentos. Algunos detalles pictóricos permiten atribuir la obra al pintor de Mídias o a su taller, activo en Atenas hacia el último cuarto del siglo V a.C. El comercio griego en el sureste de la península ibérica aumentó significativamente en este periodo, por lo que la crátera hubo de llegar a Iberia a través de Ampurias, de algún otro puerto de la costa y por una ruta comercial que siguiese el curso del río Tader (Segura). El siglo V a. C. coincide con el apogeo del teatro ático, por lo que la popularidad de Esquilo y Eurípides pudieron influir en la elección del tema de la crátera. El pintor de Mídias y su taller partieron de la tradición ática para representar a Lisa con dos perros en su cabeza, modelo iconográfico del que solo conservamos, hasta la fecha, un paralelo en una crátera ática del Museo de Bellas Artes de Boston.

Palabras clave: crátera de campana ática, comercio griego, antigua Iberia, teatro griego, Lisa, Licurgo.

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Introduction

Greek trade in the Iberian Peninsula was responsible for the arrival of many fine pieces of Greek pottery from the late 9th century BC onwards. The import of fine pottery intensified significantly in the late 5th century BC, when it became particularly popular among local Iberians. Many exquisitely painted 6th to 4th century BC Attic pieces of pottery have been discovered in recent decades in Iberian archaeological sites. The fragment studied in this manuscript belonged to an Attic bell-krater with unique iconography. It was found by an unknown collector from the town of Cehegín (Murcia, Spain), most likely in an archaeological site close to his hometown in the current Region of Murcia (Fig. 1). The current location of the piece is unknown, but it was fortunately photographed by a professor of the Department of Prehistory and Archaeology at the University of Murcia. It has never been studied nor published, so this paper aims to decipher the context of this ancient import in the Iberian Peninsula, its unique iconography, its painter and its original meaning.

Fig. 1. Fragment of an Attic bell-krater formerly located in a private collection in Cehegín (Murcia). Photo: Prof. Manuela Ayala.

Ancient Greek trade in the Iberian Peninsula

Greek pottery reached the Iberian Peninsula from the very beginning of its production due to established commercial routes through the Mediterranean. Mycenaean pottery has been found in many archaeological sites in southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and other minor islands, and it is possible that it also reached southern Iberia (Vagnetti 1996: 109-116; Vagnetti 1999: 138-161). Phoenician trade and colonies in southern Iberia brought Attic and Eubean pottery painted in Geometric Medium II style as early as the late 9th century BC, so at least some decades earlier than previously presumed (Cabrera 1994: 15-30; García Alfonso 2016: 101-132). The importation of Greek pottery continued in the following centuries either through the Phoenician routes in North Africa or through central Mediterranean islands. The foundation of the Greek colony of Emporion (L'Escala, Girona) by the beginning of the 6th century BC significantly increased the amount of Greek imports in the Iberian Peninsula (Sanmartí and Santiago 1988: 3-17; Shefton 2004: 61-86; De Hoz 2004: 411-427). Emporion seems to have played a prominent role in the distribution of 6th century BC Greek luxury items all over the Iberian Mediterranean coast, proven by the amount of black-figure pottery found in native Iberian Peninsula settlements (Shefton 1982: 337-370; García Cano and Page 1990: 116, n.º 57, figs. 15-18; García Cano 1991: 373, figs. 2-5; Rouillard 1991, 114-116; Monraval 1992: 53-55; García Cano and Page 2000: 254-255; García Cano and Page 2001: 60; Domínguez and Sánchez 2001: 38-42; Garés 2023: 69-75). The massive importation of 5th century BC Attic Castulo cups by local Iberians could also be explained by the prominent role of Emporion,

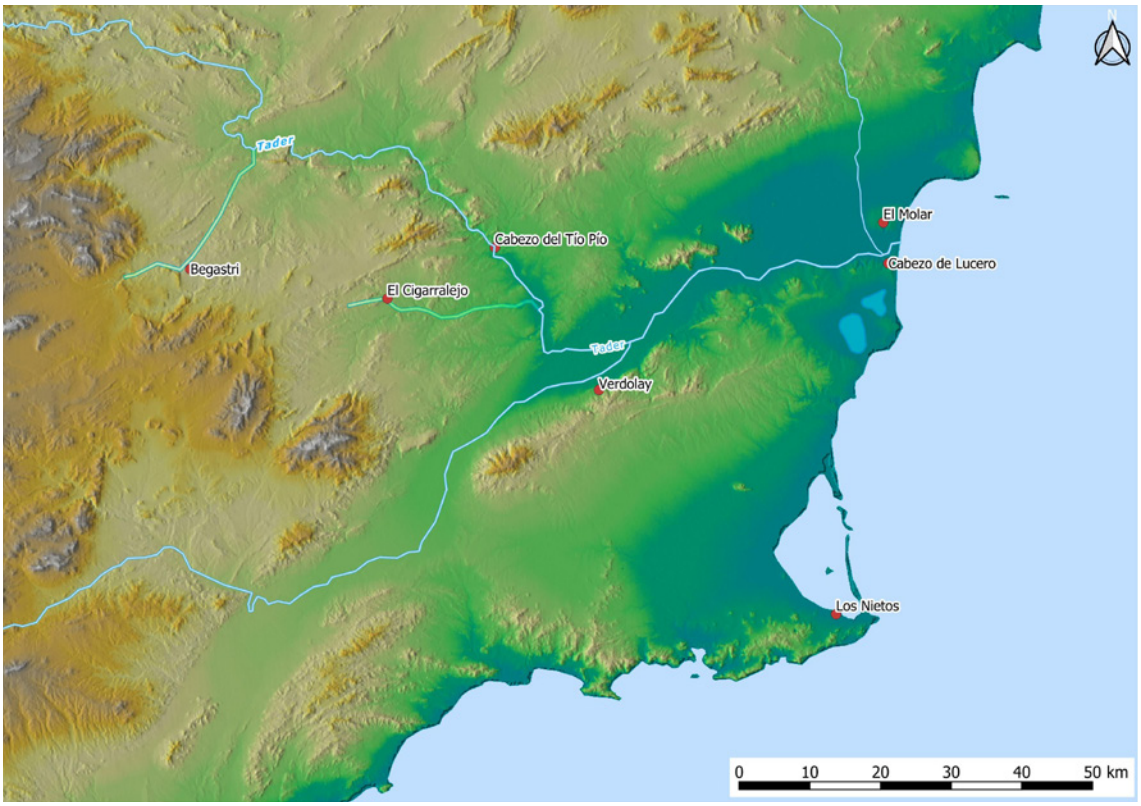

Fig. 2. Tader river (today Segura) and the Iberian settlements mentioned in this manuscript.

since Athenians hardly sold this type of pottery in Balcanic Greece and usually exported it to the far Eastern and Western Mediterranean lands (Beazley 1963: 1484-1492, 1522-1527; Shefton 1995: 136-140; Tsetskhladze 2001 and 2002: 129-150; Sabattini 2000: 47-65; Gil 2010; Sánchez 2023: 187-193). Early 5th century BC examples of fine Attic pottery found along the Tader river (today Segura) settlements include an Attic cup from Cabezo de Lucero (Guardamar del Segura, Alicante) decorated by the Louvre G 265 painter with a battle scene; a mid-5th century BC neck amphorae from El Molar (Guardamar del Segura, Alicante) that shows the head of a woman and the *petasos* of a man in the style of the Polygnotan school; and a Red Coral *kylix* from Los Nietos (Cartagena, Murcia) (see map of Fig. 2) (Trías 1967: vol. 2, pl. 176; García Cano 1982: 252, n.° 612, pls. 17-1 and 18-1; Rouillard 1991: 117-128; Monraval 1992: 49; Shefton 1995: 129-130; Rouillard 2010: 117).

By the second half of the 5th century BC the import of finely decorated Attic pottery became intensive in the southeastern part of the Iberian Peninsula, an area that we can roughly identify with the ancient regions of Contestania, Oretania and Bastetania. Fine examples that must have arrived through Emporion and the Tader river include the mid-5th century BC Attic bell-kraters of the Iberian necropolis of Tutugi (Galera, Granada) and the late 5th century BC *oenochoe* from Alcantarilla (Murcia) with the iconography of the Athenian hero Theseus (Trías 1967: vol. 1, 393-394, 457; Lezzi-Hafter 1976: 38, 49; García Cano 1985: 59-70; Shefton 1995: 138; Domínguez and Sánchez 2001: 201-202, 207). The import of Attic bell-kraters significantly increased during the first half of the 4th century BC, as we can deduct from the large quantity of richly ornamented Attic pottery found on many Iberian sites in Eastern Iberia (Trías 1967; García Cano 1982; García Cano and García Cano 1992: 3-32; Domínguez and Sánchez 2001; García Cano and Gil 2009). This context helps to explain how a finely decorated Attic bell-krater could have been found in the surroundings of Cehegín, where ancient Begastri settled on the shore of the Quípar river, a tributary of Tader. We will now attempt to unravel the fragment's enigmatic iconography, its original shape, its painter and its historical context.

The origin of the Cehegín krater

A fragment of an Attic bell-krater from a private collection in Cehegín (Murcia, Spain) is still completely unknown in the academic

world, and it has a very interesting iconography (Fig. 1). We do not know the exact origin of the fragment, but it was part of an Attic bell-krater looted towards the end of the 20th century and owned by an unknown collector from Cehegín, so we have called it the "Cehegín krater". The story of our fragment goes back to the year 2001, when Prof. Manuela Ayala from the Department of Prehistory and Archaeology at the University of Murcia had the chance to meet the collector due to her interest in Argarian pottery, her specialty. There she found the fragment of the so-called Cehegín krater and took a black and white picture of it for future publications, using the head of a BIC Cristal pen cap as a scale. A few days later, Prof. Ayala gave this picture to one of the authors of this manuscript so that he could study the piece. Unfortunately, the location of the Cehegín krater fragment is currently unknown. Prof. Manuela Ayala recently died after a long disease, and we have not been able to get in touch with her in her last years. We have interviewed Francisco Peñalver, the director of the Archaeological Museum of Cehegín, and he told us that the owner of the Cehegín krater fragment may have been Santiago Sánchez Ruiz, who gathered a good number of archaeological pieces from the surroundings of Cehegín in the last quarter of the 20th century. Santiago Sánchez donated part of his collection to the Archaeological Museum of Cehegín before he died, but he did not hand in this piece. Francisco Peñalver went to his house after his death in search of pieces for the Archaeological Museum of Cehegín, but he did not find our fragment. It is possible that the Cehegín krater fragment was lost after Santiago Sánchez died, but thanks to Manuela Ayala's black and white picture we can study its style and iconography.

Since private collectors of the late 20th century usually gathered materials from areas close to their hometowns, it could be presumed that the most likely origin of the Cehegín krater was the Iberian settlement of Begastri, located precisely in the town of Cehegín (Fig. 2). Begastri was a prominent episcopal city in Visigothic times, but its deeper archaeological layers reveal it was earlier the site of a Roman and Iberian settlement. Due to the renown of its Visigothic ruins, the Iberian layers of Begastri have hardly been excavated or studied. The necropolis has not been located yet, so all the fragments of pottery found in Begastri come from some Iberian houses and parts of the wall of the Iberian settlement. Iberian pottery in Begastri is significantly more frequent than Attic pottery, but we know at least nine fragments of 4th century BC Attic pottery that include three red figure *kylikes* and a five-centimeter fragment of the upper part of a bell-krater with a female head and a pair of wings (Fig. 3) (Gennaro 2008: 261-264; Muñoz and Zapata 2018-2019: 158-159). Since our Cehegín krater fragment was in a private collection in Cehegín, it is likely that the owner found it in the Iberian layers of Begastri, probably on the surface of the archaeological site.

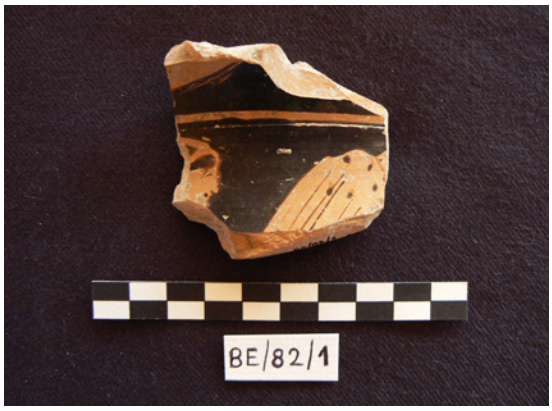

Figure 3. Female head and pair of wings. Fragment of an Attic red-figure bell-krater from Begastri (Cehegín, Murcia). Archaeological Museum of Cehegín (Murcia). Photo: José Antonio Zapata.

Another candidate for the provenance of the Cehegín krater may be the sanctuary of La Encarnación (Caravaca de la Cruz, Murcia), barely ten miles away from Cehegín. La Encarnación is a 16th century church on an ancient Roman temple that was built on the site of a former Iberian sanctuary, where several pieces of Attic pottery have been recovered (García Cano 1982: 238; Ramallo 1992: 39-65; Ramallo and Arana 1993: 71-98; Ramallo and Brotons 2014: 17-44). It is less likely, but also possible, that the so-called Cehegín krater came from the Iberian settlement of El Cigarralejo (Mula, Murcia), some twenty miles away from Cehegín, where many important pieces of Attic pottery were found in the excavations of its necropolis. It is true that we cannot reject the possibility that the piece was found on a more distant archaeological site, but we believe that the most likely origin of the Cehegín krater is Begastri.

The iconography on the Cehegín krater fragment

The fragment of the Cehegín krater photographed by Prof. Ayala corresponds to the obverse side of an Attic red-figure bell-krater (Fig. 1). The preserved fragment shows a figure with a tied boot and a richly embroidered cloak riding a leopard (*panthera pardus*) in a

quite realistic style. The animal's toes have the typical rounded shape of a cat's paws, and the painter has distinguished the yellowish fur with dark spots grouped in rosettes on the leopard's back from the whitish fur on its belly and chest, devoid of dark spots. In front of the leopard, another character holds a bundle of wooden rods - presumably a blazing torch, because the scene takes place at night. Two hounds sprout from this character's curly hair, a feature that makes it possible to identify the character as Lyssa, the personification of fury, rage and madness (Kossatz-Deissmann 1992: 322-32). The similarity of our character with the Lyssa on a well-known mid 5th century BC Attic bell-krater from Vico Equense (Sorrento), housed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, confirms this identification (Fig. 4). The observe side of the Boston krater depicts the death of Aktaion. The goddess Artemis' fury is personified through the figure of Lyssa under an inscription that literally reads *ΛVΣA* (Caskey and Beazley 1954: 83-86; Boardman 1989: 63, pl. 152). Both the Lyssa on the Boston krater and that of the Cehegín krater share the feature of hounds emerging from their curly hair, embroidered long-sleeved shirts, and some laurel branches around them probably to strengthen the agency of their fury. The depiction of just one hound on the Boston krater could be explained by the profile representation of Lyssa (Guimond 1981, 462; Kossatz-Deissmann 1992, 324-325). They therefore belong to the same Attic iconographical tradition of the second half of the 5th century BC (Caskey and Beazley 1954: 84). The association of Lyssa with hounds seems to have its origin in *Atē*, an earlier literary female personification of madness described by Aeschylus as a daemonic hound (Aesch. *Pers*. 112-114; Lincoln 1975: 98-105). However, *Atē* never received a pictorial form so – at least from the second half of the 5th century BC on – madness seems to have been represented with the iconography of Lyssa on painted Attic pottery (Padel 1992: 162-164). Moreover, *lyssa* was the term for rabies in ancient Greek, which could also explain our character's canine features (Xen. *An*. 5, 7, 26; Plin. *HN*. 29, 100; Kossatz-Deissmann 1992: 323). Although the iconography of Lyssa may have been more frequent on Attic depictions of punishments, the only known extant examples are the Boston krater and our Cehegín krater (Caskey and Beazley 1954: 84; Kossatz-Deissmann 1992: 322-329). Unfortunately, we can't compare the scene on the Boston krater with literary sources, since the death of Aktaion may have been described by Aeschylus in *Toxotides*, but this tragedy has not been preserved (Mette 1963: 134-136; Kossatz-Deissmann 1992: 323; Padel 1992: 163). However, the connection between the Boston krater and Athenian drama is clear by the inscription of the name *Eyaion* above the name Aktaion. The existence of the name *Eyaion* on thirteen painted pieces of Attic pottery dated between 460-430 BC and his description as Aeschylus' son in five cases points towards the identification of this character with the son of the tragedian (Krumeich 2002: 141-145).

Fig. 4. Death of Aktaion, detail of Lyssa. Attic bell-krater, 440 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 00.346. H. 37.8 cm. Photo: Carlos Espí Forcén.

We will use literary sources to try to identify the iconography of the Cehegín krater. *Hēraklēs Mainomenos* (*Hercules Furens* or *The Madness of Herakles*), a preserved tragedy by Euripides, depicts a scene of the madness of Heracles that could be related to the scene of our krater. Both Aeschylus and Euripides enjoyed a high degree of popularity in 5th century BC Athens, so it seems reasonable that Attic artisans were familiar with the narratives of their tragedies and may have been inspired by them to create 5th and 4th century BC paintings (Csapo and Slater 2011). On the Cehegín krater, Lyssa is discharging her rage in front of a building that is falling apart. The building is only recognizable by a partially destroyed Doric column with a fluted shaft that ends in a rich decorative *graeca* and a capital with an egg-and-dart decoration, abacus and echinus. The shaft, the capital and the architrave have already been broken apart through Lyssa's agency. This scene recalls an excerpt of *Hēraklēs Mainomenos*, a tragedy about the madness of Herakles that aims to connect its potential audience with the hero's suffering (Duchemin 1967: 136-139). To achieve this goal, Euripides placed Herakles' madness after the conclusion of his labors, which sharply contrasts with the traditional

narrative of Herakles completing the labors as an expiation for killing his children, the plot Euripides himself followed in his tragedy *Alkestis* (Furley 1986: 102-113; Hartigan 1987: 126-135; Vollkommer 1988: 61-62; Riley 2008: 24). Euripides places Herakles in Hades, completing the labor of capturing Cerberus, while his stepfather Amphytrion, his wife Megara and his children wait for him at the court of King Creon of Thebes. A villain called Lycus kills Creon to usurp Thebes' throne and communicates his will to kill the rest of Herakles' family. The play starts precisely at this moment, with a scene in which Amphitryon and Megara beg Lycus to spare their lives and those of Herakles' children. Lycus refuses to save them, but allows Megara to dress her children with burial shrouds so that they can confront their death with dignity. When Amphitryon and Megara take the children to the palace of Thebes to give them proper attire, Herakles suddenly returns from Hades and discovers Lycus' evil intentions. Herakles reveals his plan to kill Lycus, but he is stopped by the goddess Hera, who had always been jealous of Herakles because he was born out of one of her husband's countless infidelities. Hera sends Iris – a messenger of the gods – and Lyssa – the personification of rage and fury – to make Herakles go mad and kill his own children. Initially, Lyssa rejects Iris' commands because she does not believe that the hero deserves such a severe punishment, but Iris admonishes her for questioning Hera's will. Lyssa ultimately obeys the goddess' order and unleashes her fury on the hero (Eur. *HF*. 858-867). It could be deduced that the Cehegín krater contained precisely this scene: Lyssa is discharging her rage against Herakles and her fury provokes the destruction of the palace, depicted through the falling Doric column (Fig. 1) (Papadopoulou 2005: 70-85). The mention of "a huntsmen pack" by Euripides is coherent with the hounds sprouting from Lyssa's hair, - her most recognizable feature in Athenian painting. However, this canine feature does not match Lyssa's description by Euripides like a Gorgon with hundreds of serpents (Eur. *HF*. 882; Provenza 2013: 75-84; Thumiger 2014: 277-323). Furthermore, in *Hēraklēs Mainomenos*, Lyssa unleashes her fury by playing an *aulos*, a feature that is also missing on our krater (Eur. *HF*. 882; Rocconi 1999: 103-112). Nevertheless, we must note that the iconography of Lyssa in Greek painting is not always uniform (Kossatz-Deissmann 1992: 324-329). On our krater, hounds would have been chosen instead of the Gorgon's serpents, and the *aulos* would have been substituted by a lit torch, – one of Lyssa's most typical attributes. On the aforementioned Boston krater, the lit torch was in Artemis' right hand, so the punishments on both the Boston and Cehegín kraters take place at night.

However, there is a feature on the Cehegín krater that is not coherent with Euripides' *Hēraklēs Mainomenos*, this is no other than the leopard behind Lyssa. (Fig. 1). In *Hēraklēs Mainomenos*, Hera sends Iris to urge Lyssa to unleash madness on the hero, so it could be presumed that the character that accompanies Lyssa on the Cehegín krater is Iris, but Iris is a messenger of the gods that is usually winged and holds a caduceus, and we are not aware of any iconographic example where Iris is associated to a leopard or panther (Kossatz-Deissmann 1990: 741-760). We can't reject the possibility that the painter of the Cehegín krater chose to depict Iris riding a leopard to accentuate the violence against Herakles, but we must look for other possible explanations for the presence of the feline. Besides Iris, another potential candidate for the character riding a leopard could be one of the Erinys, the ancient Greek personification of the Furies. Even if the Erinys are not present in *Hēraklēs Mainomenos*, they are often represented on pictorial scenes that involve gods discharging rage against humans (Kefalidou 2009: 90-99; Padel 1992: 168-192). Furthermore, a 2nd century BC poem about Megara, written by Moschos of Syracuse, included the Erinys as the source of Herakles' madness (Mosch. *Meg*. 4.13). It is a much later version of the story, but it shows that ancient Greeks considered the Erinys perfect candidates to provoke fury. The Erinys share many of Lyssa's attributes: they are mostly winged, they sometimes have a Gorgon-type head and they may hold a spear, snakes or a lit torch in their hands. Furthermore, they usually wear tied boots like the one preserved on the Cehegín krater (Fig. 1) (Duchemin 1967: 130-132, 137; Sarian 1986: 825-843; De Bellefonds 1990: 458). Unfortunately, we lack iconographical resources that support these hypotheses, since no Attic depictions of the madness of Herakles have reached our days. The only examples of this iconography on ancient pottery are a well-known 4th century BC Apulian calyx krater in the National Archaeological Museum of Madrid that deviates from the Euripidean tradition by omitting Iris and Lyssa (Séchan 1926: 524-526; Vollkommer 1988: 62; Knauß 2003: 52-55; Taplin 2007: 143-145) and a less likely depiction of the subject on a 4th century BC Apulian calyx krater housed at the Art Museum of Princeton University (Trendall 1984: 4-17; Schmidt 1986: 169-174;

Kossatz-Deissmann 1990: 755; Giuliani and Most 2007: 197-217; Taplin 2007: 238-240).

As we have previously stated, the main problem with the identification of the scene on the Cehegín krater with the madness of Herakles is the leopard. Nevertheless, this is one of the most distinctive attributes of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. If we presume that the character riding the leopard is Dionysus, we must reject the thesis that the Cehegín krater depicted the madness of Herakles, since Dionysus does not play any role in this narrative. The presence of Lyssa would thus indicate that our krater represents a punishment ordered by Dionysus. A 4th century BC Apulian *loutrophoros* found in Canossa di Puglia contains another family murder in the presence of Dionysus, an Erinys or Lyssa and a leopard (Fig. 5). The scene depicts the madness of Lycurgus after being punished by Dionysus for banning his cult in Thracia (Di Marco 1987; Bednarek 2021: 165-183). The god of wine drives him mad and subsequently the king kills his wife and children. On the Apulian *loutrophoros*, Dionysus sends a winged Gorgon-type Lyssa to discharge her fury on Lycurgus. The Thracian king stabs his wife in the chest and she hangs from her husband's left arm as she falls dead. The running leopard between Lyssa's legs can be explained by the presence of Dionysus on the scene, but also to increase the concept of rage and fury discharged on Lycurgus (Farnoux 1992: 312; Bednarek 2021: 169).

Fig. 5. Lycurgus killing his wife. Loutrophoros, 4th century B.C. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen. Photo: Egisto Sani.

The madness of Lycurgus was not an uncommon topic on Greek pottery. It is depicted on another 4th century BC Apulian calyx krater from Ruvo di Puglia that includes a mad and nude Lycurgus with a cap made of a panther's head, who is about to kill his wife driven by the fury of a winged Lyssa above the scene (Fig. 6) (Di Marco 1987; Kossatz-Deissmann 1992: 326). Given the relationship between Lycurgus and Dionysus, the existence of a character riding a panther on the Cehegín krater, the ubiquitous presence of this animal on Dionysus' iconography and the suitability of the god of wine to decorate wine pottery, we can conclude that Lycurgus' murder is a highly plausible candidate for the reconstruction of the Cehegín krater's decoration. The story of Lycurgus is ancient, as attested to by its mention in Homer's *Iliad* (Hom. *Il.* 6, 130-140) and further sources (Bednarek 2021: 7-27). It was the subject of a tragedy by Aeschylus called *Edonoi* - because Lycurgus was the king of the Edoni in Thracia – but unfortunately the play has been lost except for brief fragments (Deichgräber 1939; *TrGF* III, F 67; Mette 1963: 136-141; Duchemin 1967: 135-136; Radt 1985: 54; Taplin 2007: 68-70; Bednarek 2021: 28-120).

Fig. 6. Detail of Lycurgus about to kill his wife, Apulian calyx krater, 350-340 BC, H. 58.42 cm. London, British Museum 1849, 0623.48.

Lacking Aeschylus' *Edonoi*, we must rely on iconographic sources to identify the scene. The main problem to reconstruct the Cehegín krater with the iconography of Lycurgus' murder is the falling Doric column, which aligns more with the madness of Herakles and the destruction of the Theban palace. However, there are some 4th century scenes on Apulian pottery depicting the murder of Lycurgus, set within an architectural frame consistent with a palace or shrine. One mid-4th-century BC column krater, housed at

the Jatta Museum in Ruvo di Puglia, shows Lycurgus killing his son with an axe in front of a building with two columns and a pediment (Farnoux 1992: VI.1, 312; VI.2, pl. I.14 159; Bednarek 2021: 180). In this scene, the columns of the building remain standing. However, another iconographic version of the murder, depicted on a late 4th century Apulian jar from a private collection, shows what has been interpreted as Lycurgus, axe in hand, about to kill a female figure who could be either Ambrosia, Dionysus' nursemaid, or his wife (Simon and Dennert 2009: vol. 1, 326, vol. 2, pl. add. 4, 161). Due to the deviation from more typical iconography and the absence of clear Dionysian motifs, it has been suggested that this Apulian jar could have been influenced by or even represent the madness of Herakles (Bednarek 2021: 173-174, note 33). However, the presence of the axe aligns more closely with the iconography of Lycurgus' murder. Additionally, one of the preserved fragments from Aeschylus' *Edonoi* refers to the trembling of Lycurgus' palace through the intervention of Dionysus (Aesch. *Ed.* fr. 76; Casorrán 1968: 53; Bednarek 2021: 35, 92-93), so this increases the possibility that Lycurgus' palace was destroyed by the god of wine. The loss of Aeschylus' *Edonoi* prevents us from determining the exact context in which Lycurgus committed the murder. However, the depiction of the falling building in the background of this late 4th century Apulian jar provides a compelling argument to reconstruct the scene on the Cehegín krater as the murder of Lycurgus inside his collapsing palace. The motif of the leopard on the Cehegín krater strongly suggests that it featured a Dionysian scene, so the madness of the Thracian king is the most plausible explanation for all the elements present in the preserved fragment of our krater: the leopard, Lyssa, and the falling Doric column. Furthermore, the leopard can be connected to a literary tradition in which Lycurgus was devoured by panthers after the murder of his family. Therefore, the falling panther on the Cehegín krater fragment could allude to Lycurgus' final violent death (Bednarek 2021: 167-173). For all these reasons, we believe that the punishment of Lycurgus by Dionysus, followed by the subsequent murder of his family, is the scene most likely depicted on the Cehegín krater.

Finally, another possible scene for the reconstruction of the Cehegín krater is the murder of Pentheus, a Theban king that was also punished by Dionysus for banning his cult. In this case, the god of wine drove Pentheus' mother and his two aunts mad, causing them to engage in frenzied bacchic dancing as his maenads on Mount Cithaeron. Interestingly, the story of Pentheus was chosen by Euripides in his play *Bacchae*, which has survived to this day. In the play, Dionysus helps Pentheus to climb a tree to observe his relatives from a branch and later reveals his hiding place, driving his mother and aunts mad, leading them to dismember Pentheus by pulling at his limbs (Eur. *Bacch*. 1045-1160). Pentheus' murder takes place on a mountain in the wild, so the falling Doric column of our Cehegín krater hardly fits this scenario. However, the murders of Pentheus and Lycurgus have sometimes been conflated in Attic iconography (Farnoux 1992: 311, pl. I.12; Kossatz-Deissmann 1994: 310-313; Bednarek 2021: 114-120), so this possibility cannot be entirely ruled out for our krater.

The Cehegín krater is a rare Attic example of madness, violence and punishment that can be connected to contemporary Athenian tragedies (Trendall and Webster 1971; Boardman 1988: 835; Kossatz-Deissmann 1992: 321-329; Taplin 2007: 143-145; Riley 2008: 31, note 64; Kefalidou 2009). This raises many potential questions. Is the Cehegín krater a relic of a more frequent topic in contemporary Athenian pottery? Did Athenians choose to sell a piece like the Cehegín krater in ancient Iberia due to its unpopularity in the local market? The scarcity of preserved ancient visual and literary sources makes these questions difficult to answer, and unfortunately the situation for the rest of Athenian tragedies differs little. 5th century B.C. Athenian tragedies were popular on both sides of the Mediterranean, as it is proven by an often-quoted excerpt from Plutarch that reports that the Athenians captured in the disaster of Syracuse in 413 BC were able to regain their freedom by reciting verses from Euripides (Plutarch, *Life of Nikias*, 29.3; Taplin 2007: 8-26). The situation sharply contrasts with the scarcity of Attic depictions of Athenian plays, but there were many other popular tragedies that have not survived, so the overall picture of ancient drama must have been far richer and more complex in the past than it looks today. Recent scholarship has stressed the fact that painters may not have purported to depict specific episodes of Athenian tragedies on contemporary pottery. Artistic freedom seems to have allowed them to create their own images and scenes, even if they were inspired by Athenian drama, which probably influenced the choice of subjects and compositions (Taplin 1993: 21-29; Shapiro 1994: 115-119; Förtsch 1997: 47-68; Taplin 2007; Csapo 2010). In fact, this

may also be the case of our Cehegín krater, since we may be able to identify the scene, but our painting does not have to be considered an accurate depiction of Aeschylus or Euripides' tragedies. To take an example, the Attic iconographical model of Lyssa with sprouting hounds differs from the literary version of a Gorgon-type Lyssa described in *Hēraklēs Mainomenos*. Moreover, many of the preserved depictions of Athenian tragedies were painted on southern Italian pottery and their Attic versions are limited to a few pieces dated between the second half of the 5th and the first quarter of the 4th century BC (Trendall and Webster 1971: 72-105; Shapiro 1994: 115-119; Taplin 2007). The Cehegín krater can now fortunately be added to this exclusive list to enrich our knowledge of ancient Attic iconography.

Now that we have discussed the iconography of the Cehegín krater, we can attempt to reconstruct the rest of the piece. Based on the scale of the BIC Cristal pen cap, the dimensions of the preserved fragment are 16 x 12.2 cm. By considering the diameters of other well-known Attic bell-kraters found in ancient Contestania, we could speculate that the Cehegín krater could have had a diameter of approximately 30 cm.[1] Thus, the circumference would have been around 94.2 cm and each side would have measured approximately 47.1 cm. One-fourth of this surface was probably covered by the typical palmettes on a black varnished area under the handles, so the main scene would have occupied some 35 cm. Therefore, the 16 cm of our preserved fragment would have taken up almost half of the surface area dedicated to the main scene. Given the dimensions of our figures, there would be room for two or three more characters on the rest of the scene (Fig. 7). If the scene on the Cehegín krater represented the madness of Herakles, it would thus show the falling palace of Thebes and a mad Herakles killing his children with maybe Megara and a Greek deity. If the Cehegín krater represented Lycurgus killing his family, the reconstruction of the scene would be different. Dionysus could be riding the leopard that falls towards the main scene, Lyssa would be discharging her fury on Lycurgus and finally the Thracian king would be killing his wife or one of his children inside an architectural structure that falls apart due to the violence of the scene.

Fig. 7. Reconstruction of the Cehegín krater.

The painter of the Cehegín krater

The small fragment of our Cehegín krater contains some small details that gives us clues to identify the painter. These are mostly restricted to the character of Lyssa, the only fully recognizable figure on the scene. To determine the identity of the painter of the Cehegín krater, we have compared Lyssa's head, facial features and the decoration of her long-sleeved shirt with late 5th to early 4th century BC Attic figurative pottery. Focusing in on the decoration of Lyssa's long-sleeved shirt, we notice that under the neck of her shirt there is a decoration of inverted palmettes with separate curvy fronds that are typical of the style of the Meidias Painter, known through his own signature on the so-called Hydria by the Meidias painter housed in the British Museum. On this work, we see the same palmettes on the male and female characters (Fig. 8). The way this painter depicted the characters' heads in a three-quarter view with curly hair, long flat noses and lips and chins with two opposed double-curved brushstrokes is exactly the same style that we can see on Lyssa's face on our Cehegín krater. It is true that the eyes on our Lyssa are rounder than those on the Meidias Painter's hydria, but this could be explained by the fact that Lyssa is in the process of discharging her fury, by an evolution of the Meidias painter's style or by the possibility that the Cehegín krater was painted by a very

[1] The hypothetical proportions are based on the actual measures of other kraters found in Iberian necropolis of the Region of Murcia. The krater found in tomb 532 of the necropolis of Cabecico del Tesoro (Verdolay, Murcia) has a width of 33 cm and the krater found in tomb 47 of the necropolis of El Cigarralejo (Mula, Murcia) has a width of 26 cm (García Cano 1982: 133).

close follower of the same workshop (Burn 1987; Tugusheva 2009). For all these reasons, we can surely attribute the Cehegín krater to the Meidias Painter's workshop and very likely to the Meidias Painter himself. Very similar features can be appreciated on the characters of other pieces of Attic pottery attributed to the Meidias Painter, such as the hydria from Populonia at the Archaeological Museum of Florence, another hydria in the Kerameikos Museum of Athens, a hydria in Karlsruhe, another hydria in New York and a lekythos in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig. 9) (Burn 1987; Neils 1983).

Fig. 8. Detail of the Hydria by the Meidias painter, Attic Hydria, 420-400 B.C. H. 52.10 cm. London, British Museum 1772,0320.30.

Fig. 9. Birth of Erichtonios, detail of a lekythos attributed to the Meidias painter, Attic lekythos, 420-410 B.C. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art 1982.142.

The Meidias Painter was active between 420 and 400 BC (Buschor 1971, originally 1921: 152; Burn 1987: 7-8), which aligns with the date that we had previously estimated for our Cehegín krater. It is worth noting that two early 4th century BC painted Attic *kylikes* found in the necropolis of La Albufereta (Alicante) have been attributed to the Meidias workshop style, although they were painted by different masters (Trías 1967: vol.1, 364-365, vol. 2, pls. 169-171). These cups were found in the so-called L127 tomb, but recent scholarship has noted that it was not a single tomb, but rather a *ustrinum* used over a period of time. This would explain the diverse chronology of the materials found in the site (Llobregat 1972; Verdú 2015: 82-83), and therefore there would be no clear evidence that ancient Iberians reused older pottery for later tombs (García Cardiel 2017). A very similar late 5th century BC *kylix*, attributed to the Kadmos Painter, was found in a tomb of Coimbra del Barranco Ancho (Jumilla, Murcia). The similarity between these three kylikes suggests they were from similar workshops within a close time frame, likely arriving via an established trade route from Athens to Emporion and southeastern Iberia (García Cano 2017: 190-199). Greek trade was particularly intense in ancient Contestania between the 5th and 4th centuries BC. This is evidenced by the fact that seven Attic bell-kraters were found in a storehouse on the coast in Los Nietos (Cartagena, Murcia), likely intended for further distribution along a nearby river route (Fig. 2). The existence of such a storehouse suggests the presence of established Greek settlements on the Iberian coast to manage the cargo from Greek ships (García Cano and García Cano 1992: 24-25). Other prominent Attic bell kraters have been found in Iberian necropolis along the Tader river in sites like Cabecico del Tesoro (Murcia) or El Cigarralejo (Mula, Murcia). The style of the Cabecico del Tesoro krater is close to the style of other 4th century Attic bell-kraters found in the Iberian settlements of Basti (Baza, Granada), Toya (Peal de Becerro, Jaén) and Piquía (Arjona, Jaén) (García Cano 1982: 60-63; García Cano and Gil 2009: 112-138; Olmos et al. 2015: 357-374). The proximity of the Tader river to the Baetis river (just 20 kilometers apart) suggests that Greek traders likely reached Piquía via the Tader river commercial route rather than through the Baetis River from Gadir (Tomás 2022: 21-54). Indeed, the Cabecico del Tesoro krater and some of the Piquía kraters have been attributed to the Oinomaos Painter, indicating that the same workshop likely sold its wares through the same route for several decades (García Cano and Gil 2009: 116; Sánchez 2015: 269-272). It is highly probable that our Cehegín krater was painted in the Meidias Painter's workshop and sold along the Tader River trade route to an Iberian settlement near the river, possibly Begastri, where the unknown collector from

Cehegín could have found it shortly before it was photographed by Prof. Manuela Ayala.

Conclusions

A fragment of an Attic bell-krater without an accurate archaeological context was part of a private collection in Cehegín (Murcia). It probably belonged to Santiago Sánchez Ruiz, a private collector of the town, and it may have been lost after Santiago's death. The lost fragment was probably looted from the Iberian layers of the Begastri archaeological settlement (Cehegín, Murcia) or from another nearby Iberian site. Fortunately, the fragment was photographed over twenty years ago by the recently deceased Prof. Manuela Ayala of the University of Murcia, using a BIC Cristal pen cap for scale. This photograph is now the only surviving record of this interesting piece with a unique iconography. The preserved scene in Ayala's photograph makes it possible to identify the figure of Lyssa, following an Attic tradition that can be traced back to the mid-5th century BC, as seen on the iconography of Aktaion's death on a well-known krater at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The falling Doric column depicted in front of Lyssa suggests a scene in which she unleashes her fury on someone within a building. Among the surviving literary sources, Euripides' *Hēraklēs Mainomenos* could provide clues, indicating that the Cehegín krater may depict the madness of Herakles and the character riding a leopard could thus be Iris or an Erinys. However, the presence of the leopard strongly points towards the identification of a punishment ordered by Dionysus, possibly that of Lycurgus, the king who banned Dionysian cult in Thracia. This aligns with the plot of *Edonoi*, a lost tragedy by Aeschylus. In this interpretation, the figure riding the leopard would represent Dionysus, followed by Lyssa, while Lycurgus is shown killing his wife or son amidst an architectural setting. Some specific artistic features of Lyssa indicate that the painter may have been a close follower of the Meidias Painter or even the Meidias Painter himself. The Meidias Painter was active in the last quarter of the 5th century BC, not long after the heyday of Aeschylus and Euripides in Athenian theater, so it is possible that Athenian tragedy had a direct influence on the Meidias Painter and his workshop. Greek traders likely sold the Cehegín krater along a well-established commercial route that ran from Athens through Emporion and up the Tader river in an Iberian settlement close to this river, most likely Iberian Begastri, precisely in the outskirts of Cehegín (Region of Murcia).

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