The Theseus Painter
Borgers, O.E.

Citation for published version (APA):
V. WORKSHOP CONNECTIONS

Although the use of ‘workshop’ in Attic late black-figure can be rather vague, it basically denotes a group of painters and/or potters who are connected by style and/or potterwork as well as, to a lesser degree, by secondary decoration and related iconography. As shown in the preceding chapters, the Theseus Painter appears to have been affiliated with quite a few very different workshops at various times in his career. Some affiliations are evident from stylistic similarities in the painting as well as the potterwork of individual artisans. In other instances, the link is limited to the potterwork or certain kinds of secondary decoration. In all examples, however, the workshops are themselves characterised by differences in the shapes produced. Moreover, they seem generally not to be associated with each other or to have anything else in common except that they collaborated with the Theseus Painter who worked for or with them.

The Theseus Painter’s main shape, the skyphos, is linked to the painters (and potters?) of the Krokotos Group, who are regarded as specialists in both skyphoi and cups. To a lesser degree, the same applies to the skyphos producers in the White Heron Group. His skyphoi are of various types, which suggests they were fashioned by different potters (see figs. 40-51, and Table 4). Whether one of these potters was the Theseus Painter himself, remains undecided, although as stated above, I find this highly unlikely.

Other extant shapes decorated by the Theseus Painter at approximately the time as the skyphoi include some large pelikai, the kalpis London B 346, a few cups, a cup-skyphos and two oinochoai. They show no tie to the Krokotos workshop, whereas some of them seem to be more or less closely connected to other black-figure workshops or groups: for the large pelikai and the early kalpis, the Nikoxenos/Eucharides workshop; for the two early oinochoai, possibly the Leagros Group.

These relations appear somewhat odd, however. First, it would seem that Theseus Painter collaborated simultaneously with very different workshops, which does not seem common practice in Attic late black-figure. Secondly, the quantity of the Theseus Painter's work linked to the Nikoxenos/Eucharides workshop and the Leagros Groups is very small as compared to his numerous skyphoi.

Furthermore, many of the Theseus Painter's later vases are doubtless related to the Athena Painter and his workshop: the majority of the lekythoi, several oinochoai and possibly the olpe Berlin 3230. The connection is not solely based on similarities in shape, as the Theseus Painter and the Athena Painter must have influenced each other also in matters of style and iconography. In addition, the Theseus Painter's type C cups are the Preys Group type, which commonly occurs in the Haimon Group, and perhaps their potterwork is connected to it, although again the style of the Theseus Painter and the Haimon Group generally bear no resemblance.

On the other hand, some of Theseus Painter's vases cannot easily be seen in relation to an established workshop, but seem instead to form an isolated group or to be the products of separate workshops. His cups of special type, for example, show ties to the Painter of Nicosia C 975, but unfortunately the potterwork and decoration of the latter's cups are hard to link to any other painters or workshops, which would provide further insight in workshop connections of the Theseus Painter. It is even more difficult to associate the small pelikai and kalpides and the kyathoi with a particular workshop. These pelikai and kalpides seem to form a separate group in themselves, as might also apply to the kyathoi. Regarding the latter, Eisman saw a connection to Psiax, the Nikosthenic workshop and the Group of Vatican G. 57. However, the kyathoi of none of them is especially similar to those of the Theseus Painter in either shape, decoration or iconography to suspect a workshop connection, let alone close enough to be the work of one potter.

Because of the lack of evident links to other individual artisans or workshops, the Theseus Painter's special cups, kyathoi and small pelikai and kalpides therefore contrast somewhat with the greater share of his work, that is, the many skyphoi and lekythoi which are firmly rooted in established workshops.399 Perhaps this circumstance indicates that the Theseus Painter actually potted some of his pelikai, kalpides or kyathoi, or that he worked closely with one or more potters who only supplied him with these shapes. The suggestion remains very tentative, however, and is in no way backed up by evidence.

Because of the foregoing as well as because of the great differentiation in the Theseus Painter's vase-shapes, it is very difficult to establish the overall history of his workshop affiliations. Often a painter specialises in a few shapes and is associated with one or more painters who decorate the same shapes and

399 Although one of the small pelikai might possibly be by the Athena Painter (see above).
who are stylistically related to him. These correspondences make it possible to identify (or, as it were, reconstruct) a probable workshop centring on one or more specific painters. In addition, the similarities in the potterwork let us recognise the handiwork of potters who parallel the painters in such a group or workshop. In comparison to painters, however, the identification of potters' hands remains more difficult. By correlating potters' and painters' signatures with his lists of painter's hands, Beazley advanced, as far back as 1944, several possible combinations of potters and painters working together in a workshop situation. Based on the signatures, furthermore, he concluded that more than one kind of painter-potter cooperation existed: potter x worked with painter y; a vase was painted and potted by one and the same artisan; a painter could work with various potters on different shapes, sometimes in separate periods of his career, presumably often collaborating exclusively with one particular potter at one time in his career and later switching to another one. Makron and Douris, for example, seem to begin by painting cups potted by Euphronios and later to work with the potters Hieron and Python respectively. Another example is Euphronios himself, who seems to have collaborated as painter with different potters of large vases (for example, a signature of Euxitheos as potter) and cups (for example, a signature of Kachrylion as potter) and to have ended his career as a potter himself. However, such shifts, it seems, generally took place within the confines of a single workshop and not, as in the case of the Theseus Painter, between unconnected workshops. Moreover, in each phase of his career the Theseus Painter apparently collaborated simultaneously with different unrelated workshops; note, for instance, his middle-period skyphoi, pelikai, kalpides and oinochoai. Therefore his altering workshop affiliations seem not necessarily to coincide with his development or chronology, as they are not always confined to a single phase in his career.

Possible instances of ties between potters and painters can also be deduced from the identification of potters' hands in the potterwork. First of all, there are the painter-potters, that is, painters who themselves potted the vases they decorated and who can be recognised as such because their painting always occurs in combination with the same potter's hand. Secondly, another kind of collaboration consists of small groups or pairs of painters who indiscriminately decorated pots fashioned by an equally small number of potters or who were painter-potters and decorated each other's vases. Other possibilities, are that several seemingly unrelated painters adorned vases by one potter, or that one or two potters collaborated with a very large group of painters.

With regard to the Theseus Painter, the links between him and one or more potters' hands cannot easily be established. None of the above-mentioned varieties of collaboration seems completely applicable to him. This is due, on the one hand, to the very many different shapes and 'sub shapes' that he decorated and, on the other, to the amount of workshops that seem to have been involved in their production. Furthermore, the relationships are all the more difficult to map because of the sometimes rather limited stylistic resemblance between the Theseus Painter and, in turn, the painters who worked for these workshops. Haspel's suggested that the Theseus Painter may have offered his services to diverse

400 Beazley, Potter and Painter, 50 ff.
401 Beazley, Potter and Painter, 55-56.
403 Pioneered by H.J. Bloesch, FAS; id. Stout and Slender. He supplied potters with names more or less in the manner that Beazley named painters, for example, Eukleio Potter, Clubfoot Potter, etc. See also H. Mommsen, Töpferstudien, and H.A.G. Brijder in Vasenforschung nach Beazley, Bericht vom Symposium des Deutschen Archöologen-Verbandes, Tübingen, 24. - 26. 11. 1978 (Mainz 1979) 14-17. See also I. Scheibler, Griechische Töpferkunst, Herstellung, Handel und Gebrauch der antiken Tongefässe (Munich 1983) 113-15.
404 Among Siana cups, the C Painter (Brijder, Siana Cups I, 23-24) and Heidelberg Painter (Brijder, Siana Cups II, 335); or the 'Tyrrhenian' painters decorating and potting their own amphorae, J. Kluiver, 'The Potter-Painters of 'Tyrrhenian' Neck-Amphorae: A Close Look at the Shape', BABesch 68 (1993) 186-87.
405 See, for example, Siana cups, Brijder, Siana Cups I, 23-24, the pairs consisting of the Taras Painter and Malibu Painter and the Double-palmette Painter and the Omobono Painter.
406 The Amasis Painter and (incidentally), Lydos and the Taleides Painter decorated vases by Amasis. See also Mommsen, Töpferstudien, 14a-c; also J. Boardman, 'Amasis, The Implications of his Name, Amasis Papers, 144.
407 Like the potters Euphronios and Kachrylion, each of whom supplied at least ten different painters; Beazley, Potter and Painter, 56. See also the collaboration of Nikosthenes and Pamphaios; Tosto, Nikosthenes, 193-95; Immerwahr, Pamphaios, 341-52. For types of collaboration in general, see also I. Scheibler, 'Formen der Zusammenarbeit in attischen Töpfereien', in Studien zur alten geschichte, Festschrift S. Laufer (Rome 1986) esp. 787-790, 799-803.
workshops throughout his career, like a freelance, which, of course, must remain speculative. She also proposed that he left the 'skyphos workshop' of the White Heron Group and started decorating other shapes for other workshops because "he was tired of inspiring the hacks of the White Heron workshop." Although such an awareness of qualitative differences in the work of fellow painters would certainly have existed, her suggested motive for the Theseus Painter's change of workshop is, in my view, far-fetched. In addition, it would imply that, in sixth- and fifth-century B.C. Athens, so much importance was attached to artistic qualitative differences that they could prompt an Attic vase painter to leave a workshop, which, once again, cannot be substantiated. Most importantly, perhaps, the Theseus Painter was, in fact, not much more skilled than some other painters of Heron Class skyphoi (like the Painter of Philadelphia 5481).

On the other hand, it seems that the Theseus Painter's various workshop affiliations can be partly defined or at least seen as sometimes paralleling his chronological development. After his middle period (see below), for instance, he stops decorating skyphoi, which warrants the conclusion that he left the Krokotos and White Heron Groups and went on to decorate pottery which originated in one or more other workshops. In this respect Haspels certainly has a point.

Painters who were furnished with pottery over the years by a variety of potters are seen more often. A possible explanation for the practice is that large workshops existed in which painters decorated the work of different potters indiscriminately. This seems generally to occur more often in red-figure than in late black-figure. Late black-figure painters like the Athena Painter, Haimon Group, Leafless Group, CHC Group, etc. appear to stick more to their limited repertory of vases and to the fixed workshops to which they belong. There are exceptions, however, like the Sappho Painter, who display somewhat more variety in their shapes. Yet none of them seems to have varied their vase-shapes and the workshops (that is, the potters) with which they collaborated as much as the Theseus Painter. In this respect he therefore seems closer to red-figure painters than those in late black-figure, although he apparently collaborated only with the more 'conservative' manufacturers of late black-figure. In any event, whether this circumstance means that the Theseus Painter was not permanently affiliated with a particular workshop or one or more individual potters at a given time in his career remains uncertain.

A possible alternative explanation would be that, as suggested elsewhere, 'painter-based workshops' existed beside those which were 'potter-based'. The implication is that painters were not always directly linked to potters in a workshop situation but sometimes operated as independent craftsmen who could freely draw on different workshops for their undecorated pottery. This explanation might seem applicable to the diverse work of the Theseus Painter if it were not that with regard to most shapes he decorated he seems to have adopted the customs and rules, concerning composition and secondary decoration, of the painters of the workshop from which the pottery presumably originated. It seems logical that in such circumstances a painter would conform to the workshop's practice for the decoration of a specific shape. But the Theseus Painter apparently went further, as is especially visible in relation to the Athena Painter whose influence extends to the style and iconography of the Theseus Painter's lekythoi. For example, none of the lekythoi shows the weird monsters of his skyphoi; instead, they feature a favourite theme of the Athena Painter, Polyxena at the fountain, as well as Peleus and Thetis and the Judgement of Paris.

408 ABL 146.
409 See Immerwahr, Pamphaicos, 346-47, and table. Oltos painted vases potted by Tleson (ARV² 66,127), Nikosthenes (ARV² 58,8), Pamphaicos (ARV² 53,1-2; 54,5), Kachrylon (ARV² 58,51; 59,54-57; 59,60), Chelis (ARV² 57,43), Hyschilos (ARV² 55,13-16, unsigned, based on shape), Exuithoe (ARV² 54,4; 60,64, 66), several pieces with epoiesen signatures, but names lost (ARV² 60,65; 67,139). Epiktotes painted vases by Andokides (ARV² 77,90), Nikosthenes (ARV² 71,8), Pamphaicos (ARV² 71-72,14-1572,17, unsigned, based on shape; Para 329,14bis), Hyschilos (ARV² 70-71,1-4; 71,7; 79,1), Python (ARV² 72,16), Pistoxenos (ARV² 77,86), plate signed by Epiktotes himself as a potter (ARV² 78,102) and several epoiesen signatures, but names lost.
410 Immerwahr, Pamphaicos, 347.
412 In this regard, I cannot satisfactorily explain the fact that whereas the Theseus Painter in this phase apparently stopped painting weird monsters, the Athena Painter is known to have illustrated the subject on one of his oinochoai (Boston 98.924, ABV 524,1; Beazley Addenda 131, by or near the Athena Painter). Perhaps this is due to the previous, lingering influence of the Theseus Painter's iconography, like the scenes of heroes seated at a mound adopted by the Athena Painter from the Theseus Painter.
A similar phenomenon is seen in the Theseus Painter’s cups. Depending on the group or workshop to which he was attached, the secondary ornamentation consists either of the complex volutes of the Painter of Nicosia C 975 or the large ivy-leaf of the Preys cby painters of the Haimon Group.\footnote{Malibu 96.AE.96; Agora P 1383-84 (Cat. nos. 171-72, 177, pls. 55 a, c, 56 f, h) and London B 446 (Cat. no. 173, pl. 55 d, f), resp.} These motives are not met before or after in the work of the Theseus Painter.

The Theseus Painter’s evident willingness to adopt the decorative practices of different workshops seems to contradict the notion of an independent artisan who largely decided matters of production for himself. Instead, it suggests an artisan who had to comply to the rules and regulations of the workshop in which he was employed at a given time. Therefore, as advanced by Haspels, the Theseus Painter may largely have worked as a freelance artisan who moved between Attic workshops.

With regard to the question whether the Theseus Painter was also a potter at any time during his career, three options present themselves. First, he was never involved in potting, but either obtained his vases from various potters or was dependent on the potters in the workshop where he was employed. Next, he sometimes also potted, sometimes fashioning the vases he decorated; one can consider the small pelikai or the kyathoi which are hard to relate by shape to any fixed workshop. Third, he possibly worked throughout his career as a potter and was responsible for many or most of the vases he painted.

In the light of the foregoing discussions of the painter’s vases and affiliations, it is hard to imagine that the third option can apply. In character, the vase-shapes of the Theseus Painter vary so greatly that it is hard to accept they could be the work of a single potter or even of only a few potters. Absolutely no unity of shape or elements of shape whatsoever links the different vase-types. For the same reasons, the possibility that he was responsible for a substantial part of the potterwork seems equally highly improbable.

However, each of the other two options is plausible. It is very possible that, as remarked, the Theseus Painter fashioned a small portion of his vases or specialised as potter in a few of the numerous shapes he decorated (for example kyathoi and small pelikai). In this respect, however, problems of identification arise. First of all, if signatures are not present, we have no way of knowing for certain that the potter and the painter of a particular vase were the same individual. Second, in none of the different shapes decorated by the Theseus Painter we can identify common distinct traits which point to one potter’s hand. As a result, it is virtually impossible to determine whether the Theseus Painter both shaped and decorated a specific vase. Very possibly, on the other hand, he may have conformed as potter so much to the standards of the workshops to which he was attached that we simply cannot distinguish the vases he potted from those of other potters employed in the same workshops. As explained, a comparably high degree of adaptation influenced his style and iconography.

Nevertheless, in the light of the huge differences in vase shapes that he decorated and the wide diversity of workshops that he can be linked to – both of which we would more probably expect in connection with exclusively a painter than with a painter-potter – I am inclined to think that the Theseus Painter probably was never involved in potting.