The Theseus Painter
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VII. PROVENANCES

Some indications of provenance exist for slightly more than half of the pottery attributed to the Theseus Painter (see Tables 6 a-b, 11 a-b). Sometimes the information can be vague, denoting a very general provenance only, as 'Greece' or 'Italy'. In other instances it is only slightly more detailed, for example 'southern Italy'. The probable find-places of other vases of the Theseus Painter can sometimes be roughly deduced from their history since being discovered or their present whereabouts. The vases now in certain museums may, in some cases, have been found nearby. A case in point is the National Museum of Athens: if no provenance is known or even indirectly indicated, the pottery would almost doubtless come from a not too distant place or region, whether Attica or Boeotia or even a bit farther away still, somewhere in Greece. But since such assumed provenances remain uncertain and may well be often incorrect, this pottery is not included in my tables and map of the dispersion of the Theseus Painter's extant work, where it can be seen that most indications of find-place are quite specific, often referring to a single site (see map, fig. 39, Tables 6 a-b, 11). Such vessels and fragments amount to upwards of 114 of the total of 211 attributed pieces.

The dispersion of the Theseus Painter's pottery with known provenances is not very varied. It was mainly found in Greece and Italy. In Italy the vases range from the far north (Bologna, Adria) to Sicily. Most of them, however, turned up in places to the south of Rome (33 of a total of 37 vases and fragments in Italy, see fig. 39, Table 6 a-b, 11). Magna Graecia, with Apulia, specifically Taranto and surroundings, has the largest concentration (15, see fig. 39). The number of vases found in Sicily is comparatively smaller (8, see fig. 39, Table 6 a-b, 11).

The largest number of the Theseus Painter's vases have come to light in Greece itself, the majority on the mainland, including the northern Peloponnese, Attica, Boeotia and Euboea. (63, see fig. 39, Table 6 a-b, 11). By far the majority was discovered in and around Athens (48).

Three islands have also yielded work of the Theseus Painter: Thasos, Delos, Rhodes (in total 12, see fig. 39, Table 6 a-b). The sole exception to this limited dispersion pattern is a skyphos fragment from the North African site of Cyrene.

Perhaps the popularity of the Theseus Painter's work in Athens and, to a lesser extent, more generally the Greek world, including Magna Graecia, has something to do with his favourite shape: the skyphos. In her study of the so-called Gorgoneion skyphoi, B. Freyer-Schauenburg notes that this particular kind of skyphos is especially common in mainland Greece or in sites associated with Greeks or Greek colonies which, as seen, also applies to the Theseus Painter's skyphoi. Possibly there is a link between skyphoi in general and Greek-oriented distribution.

In a comparison of the provenances of pottery by the Theseus Painter and the Athena Painter, Ch. Scheffer similarly recognises geographical preferences: skyphoi (solely Theseus Painter) are more popular among mainland Greeks, lekythoi (mainly Athena Painter) among western Greeks, and oinochoai (mainly Athena Painter and his workshop) among Etruscans. Evidently a significant divergence marks the dispersion of vases by the Theseus Painter and the Athena Painter, from which Scheffer variously concludes: the Theseus Painter and the Athena Painter were not as close as is usually suggested, or the shapes of vessel played a much more important part in the export destinations of vases than the painters or workshops from which they issued.

Three remarks can be appended to Scheffer's conclusions. First, as shown, the Theseus Painter's

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495 See, i.a., Dresden ZV 1680 and Berlin 3230 (Cat. nos. 20 and 164).
496 See, i.a., Munich 1680 (Cat. no. 154).
497 And four others with very roughly indicated provenances: Greece, Italy, southern Italy.
499 Ch. Scheffer, 'Workshop and Trade-Patterns in Athenian Black Figure', Proc Copenhagen, 536-46, esp. 540-41, 543. See also F Giudice, Vasi e frammenti "Beazley" da Locri Epizefiri vol. 1 (Catania 1989) 47-61 and pls. XVI-XVII.1; pls. VIII-IX.1, pls. XVI-XVII.2; pls. XVI-XVII.3; distribution: Theseus Painter (mainly Athens), Gela Painter (esp. Sicily and to a lesser extent Athens and Etruria), Sappho Painter (esp. Athens and Sicily); Edinburgh Painter (esp. Sicily and to a lesser extent Athens, central Greece and Campania). The foregoing is for the most part based on Beazley's lists.
skyphoi are indeed not connected at all with the Athena Painter; only afterwards did he begin to paint lekythoi which in shape and style are related to the latter painter; therefore only in regard to lekythoi (and oinochoai) can they be considered close colleagues. Second, as skyphoi make up more than half of the Theseus Painter's preserved vases, it is only to be expected that, ultimately, the dispersion pattern of his skyphoi and that of his total extant output differ little because the skyphoi form, quantitatively speaking, the decisive factor in the overall data. Finally, although the Theseus Painter's vases turned up for the largest part in mainland Greece, a relatively substantial number of skyphoi come from Magna Graecia.

I. Scheibler also sees a correlation between skyphoi – particularly the large ones of the Heron Class – and concentration in Greece. Of the 226 examples (including the CHC Group) with known find-places mentioned by her, no less than 88 are from Attica and 69 from elsewhere in Greece. Further paralleling my own numbers for the Theseus Painter, 41 of her skyphoi were discovered in Magna Graecia. This implies that the provenances of almost 88 per cent of her skyphoi are in Greece or Greek-related areas. The remaining 28 come from Etruria and neighbouring areas as well as from the regions to the east of Greece.

In this respect, L. Hannestad seems to arrive at similar conclusion. In her count, skyphoi (of various types) are the second most common shape (of decorated ware) both on the Acropolis and in the Agora, after cups on the Acropolis and lekythoi on the Agora respectively. The skyphos is also quite popular in southern Italy, whereas in Etruria, for instance, it is almost non-existent.

The export picture as sketched above by various observers seems quite clear-cut and generally applies also to skyphoi of the Theseus Painter. However, if we compare the provenances of his skyphoi with those of his other shapes, there seems to be no significant divergence. The only visible difference lies in their quantities, which, as remarked, is simply due to the greater number of skyphoi. Like skyphoi, his other kinds of pottery seem to have ended up mostly in Athens or elsewhere in Attica or southern Italy, which would seem to argue in favour of the primacy of the painter as opposed to the shape in the export process (for the overall distribution and the differences between skyphoi and other shapes see Tables 7-8). On the other hand, we see that the distribution of the Theseus Painter's vases largely conforms to Scheibler's data for the Heron Class skyphoi (see Table 9). Furthermore, when the provenances and numbers of the Theseus Painter's vases are compared to those of the lekythos painter closest to him, the Athena Painter, a significant contrast emerges (see Table 10). By far the largest number of the Athena Painter's vases have been found in both Sicily and southern Italy. But whereas southern Italy is an equally important find-place of the Theseus Painter's work, Sicily has yielded substantially less. In contrast, the amount of the Athena Painter's work known to come from Athens or Attica is meagre in comparison to that of the Theseus Painter.

It would therefore seem that Scheibler as well as Freyer-Schauenburg and Scheffer – as far as the Theseus Painter is concerned – are at least partly correct about a supposed correlation between the distribution pattern and the skyphos. But since the same pattern marks the Theseus Painter's other shapes, it might be equally correct to suppose that sometimes a correlation exists between particular export markets and all the work, whatever the shape, of painters who largely specialised in the skyphos.

Because of the small numbers of the Theseus Painter's other shapes, a further correlation between one shape and its find-places is difficult to make. All his loutrophoroi were found in Athens, which is not surprising as they can be considered a type of local funerary vessel. It is more difficult to say anything about the pelikai and the kalpides because relatively few of their find-places have been recorded. Lastly, although none of the Theseus Painter's kyathoi has a known find-place, one might suppose that the majority of them came to light in Italy.

500 Scheibler, Skyphoi, 18 and fig. 1.
502 Perhaps this is partly due to the small number of known provenances for the Theseus Painter's lekythoi, a shape which, moreover, is often found in Sicily. The four known provenances of four lekythoi are Thebes, Eretria, Gela and Agrigento (see Table 11, Cat. nos. 125, 132, 127-28).
503 However, the statement is not meant to preclude exceptions to this general trend in a correlation between shapes and find-places.