Pottery to the people. The production, distribution and consumption of decorated pottery in the Greek world in the Archaic period (650-480 BC)

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VI The voice of the workshop: signatures as a source of information on potters, painters and the ways they worked together
VI.1 Introduction: much discussion, little progress

Of all aspects of ancient Greek pottery, the study of signatures has probably been the one to evolve least over the past two centuries: their basic meanings were already understood in the early 19th century, and soon afterwards the distinction between the formulae ‘Χ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ (= X made [this]) and ‘Χ ΕΓΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’ (= X painted [this]) was recognised.\(^{410}\) In the 1850s the first serious theories on the exact intention, role and meaning of the signatures on pots were advanced.\(^{411}\) Although the amount of relevant data has considerably increased in the meantime, so that some insights could be refined, few truly essential new points have been introduced over the past 150 years. As will become clear from the following, the central questions already asked in the 19th century – the reasons for signing and the exact meaning of the signatures – remain unresolved, and there is not much to add to the many possible solutions already proposed.

However, both these debated points are directly relevant to the scale and organisation of workshops and the status of potters and painters, the main subjects of this chapter. To mention an extreme contrast, the interpretation of signatures as expressions of the personal pride of artisans implies a radically different attitude from the view which regards them as commercial marks identifying designers or absentee investors. Therefore I cannot avoid beginning my appraisal of the signatures by examining the two most important unsettled general issues mentioned above. The subsequent section treats of the detailed subject of the information provided by the names of signers, which may be related to social status, another hotly debated matter, but one which offers somewhat more room to develop and comment on traditional hypotheses. In the last section I attempt to combine information got from signatures with that offered by stylistic studies in order to enter the workshop itself. This can be done, I hope, by means of the clues which the existing framework of attributions provides about the ways craftsmen in these workshops collaborated and the scale to which that happened.

Before I address these themes, one point must be settled. As must be evident from the foregoing, I take it for granted that signatures refer to people who were actually involved in the manufacture of pottery. This assumption, which may seem obvious, has however been seriously challenged by Vickers and Gill, who relate the signatures on pottery to the designers and smiths of plate.\(^{412}\) Fortunately, this ill-founded notion, which stems from their general hypothesis that ancient Greek figured pottery imitates plate, has effectively been refuted by many scholars, whose arguments do not need repeating here.\(^{413}\)

There is, nevertheless, one aspect of the Vickers-Gill theory that not only seems to have received little critical attention, but is also directly relevant to the following discussion. The hypothesis that the names in the signatures on Greek pots are actually those of the smiths and engravers who produced the plate from which those same pots were copied implies that the stylistic classifications of Beazley and others are, in fact, related to the ‘original’ metal vessels. The inescapable conclusion is that the copyist pot-painters left no stylistic traces of themselves or

\(^{410}\) Jahn 1854a, CV-CX, e.g., is essentially still a valid synthesis. See also the historical overview in Von Bothmer 1987, 185-191.

\(^{411}\) Jahn 1854a, CVIII-CX; Birch 1858, II 28-30, 43-44; see also Klein 1887, 13-15; and sections VI.2-3.


that each of them exclusively imitated one producer of silver or gold plate.\textsuperscript{414} Similarly, the discernible correspondences between potterwork and some maker’s signatures would mean that some potters faithfully and regularly reproduced the forms of the vessels of individual smiths. These premises are plainly absurd. If Vickers and Gill should wish to disregard the ‘Beazleyan’ framework (which they do occasionally, but not systematically), they must at least put forward an explanation for the close stylistic affinities between the works of one potter/maker or painter/designer and the often equally recognisable links with some unsigned pottery. But as long as such an alternative is not available, it seems better to stick to the traditional belief in the basic truth of these apparent potters’ and painters’ signatures.

VI.2 A first uncertainty: reasons for (not) signing

One of the basic questions regarding signatures is why pots were signed at all. After appearing quite suddenly, signing apparently continued for more than a century to be a very exceptional, random practice: the earliest known ‘ΕΙΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ signature, on a pot from Pithekoussai dated ca. 700, is followed by five more 7th-century specimens dispersed over the Greek world (Eretria; Ithaka/Ionian islands; an undetermined Euboian colony in Italy; probably Paros; Chios). One East Greek pot, ca. 650-625, preserves parts of either ‘ΕΙΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ or ‘ΕΙΓΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’. The earliest certain ‘ΕΙΓΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’ occurs on a mid or late 7th-century Naxian krater.\textsuperscript{415}

The practice of signing became somewhat common only in Attic black figure from around 580 onwards, with Sophilos as the pioneer. On three of his dinoi he signs as painter; one of them possibly has also a maker’s signature. A fourth vessel by Sophilos shows parts of one certain signature with either ‘ΕΙΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ or ‘ΕΙΓΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’ and one possible ‘ΕΙΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’.\textsuperscript{416} Very slightly later, the famous François krater (570-565) bears our earliest paired signatures by two artisans: ‘ΕΡΓΟΤΙΜΟΣΕΙΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ ΚΛΕΙΤΙΑΣΕΙΓΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’.\textsuperscript{417} Ergotimos and Kleitias also collaborated on several so-called Gordion cups, which in the 560s became the point from which the practice of signing spread.\textsuperscript{418}

By the mid 6th century, signing really appears to take off on the Little Master cups, which succeeded the Gordion cups. Signatures now have the appearance of a decorative element, marking often otherwise plain or sparsely decorated cups. This conspicuous application of signatures is apparently part of a general fondness for writing which becomes obvious as early as the François krater, with its more than 130 inscriptions, or the tiny figure frieze of a cup potted by Neandros, with 62 names and remarks crammed into it.\textsuperscript{419} As further suggested by nonsense and

\textsuperscript{414} A few names occurring in signatures by more than one stylistically recognised ‘hand’ (Douris, Polygnotos) would be the exceptions. Vickers and Gill (1994, 161; see also Vickers 1985, 126-127; Gill and Vickers 1990, 26-27) treat them as typical examples, however.

\textsuperscript{415} For these early signatures, see Nicole 1916, 375-376; Jeffery 1964, 46-49; 1990, 88, no. 22; 234, no. 2; 241, no. 24; 338, 434, no. 42; 453-454, no. 1; Siebert 1978, 113; Scheibler 1995, 112; Williams 1995, 139-140. See also Jeffery 1990, 459, no. 25a; 470, A.

\textsuperscript{416} Baktr 1981, 1-2, 5-7; see ABV, 39-40, 15-16; 42, 36; Cohen 1991, 52; Williams 1995, 141.

\textsuperscript{417} See recently Cohen 1991, 52; Williams 1995, 141; both with further references.

\textsuperscript{418} See Beazley 1932, 185-187; ABV, 78, 13-15; Brijder 2000, 549-557.

\textsuperscript{419} ABV, 76; 167, 1; Wachter 1991; Rebillard 1992; see also Scheller 1981.
mock inscriptions, literacy was a selling point or a means of impressing buyers and/or their guests.\textsuperscript{420} The fashion did not last long, however, and its chief impact on signing practice was largely limited to the Little Master cups which account for around half of all names of signers and an even higher proportion of all signatures in Attic black figure.\textsuperscript{421} On other shapes, apart from the idiosyncratic Nikosthenic amphorai, signing never developed into a regular phenomenon: among the tens of thousands of preserved Attic figured pots, the signed ones can be counted by the hundreds. Even in the decades around 500, when signatures are most frequent, they remain exceptional.\textsuperscript{422}

Furthermore, a clear pattern in the occurrence of Attic signatures cannot be discerned. Most signers sign only occasionally, usually very rarely, and many potters and painters never seem to sign at all, whereas a handful apparently signs frequently; except for some makers of Little Master cups (which cannot easily be attributed unless signed), Nikosthenes is the only one who seems to sign more or less systematically. In addition, the signatures of sporadic signers mark both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ work (in modern eyes), either decorated or plain, elaborate or simple, large or small; and comparable pots by the same potter and/or painter may or may not be signed.\textsuperscript{423}

On pottery from outside Athens signatures continue to be met only very occasionally during the 6th and 5th centuries. Just three Corinthian pot-painters have left signatures: Timonidas, son of Bias, ca. 570 or somewhat earlier, on a Penteskouphia plaque (Berlin F 846, here Appendix II, C63; Pl. 44b) and a bottle; Chares, ca. 570-550, on a pyxis; and Milonidas, ca. 570-550, on another plaque from Penteskouphia (Appendix II, D1; Pl. 49e).\textsuperscript{424} Boiotian black figure has no painters’ signatures, but Boiotian potters were relatively keen signers: besides six makers from the first half of the 6th century (Gamedes, Gryton, [I?]phithades, Menaidas, Mnasalkes, Polon), there are two from the end of the century (Teisias, who presents himself as an Athenian, and Theodoros).\textsuperscript{425} Of these, however, only Gamedes and Polon have left us figured pots; all the other signatures mark plastic forms and simply decorated pottery. Intriguingly, an apparently local

\textsuperscript{420} Scheller 1981, 221-222; Rebillard 1992, 502; see also Siebert 1978, 117-118; Immerwahr 1992, 49, 52; Scheibier 1995, 128.

\textsuperscript{421} It is impossible to give exact figures. Beazley 1944, 33, notes that three-quarters of all black figure signatures known to him are on Little Master cups; Williams 1995, 145, counts 28 Little Master potters and 4 painters, but the first figure seems at least 5 too low in comparison to Folsom’s list of signatures (1975, 144-147, compiled from Beazley); in total, there seem to be about 60-70 recorded black figure signing makers and 16 painters (see Folsom’s list and Tosto 1999, 1).

\textsuperscript{422} Robertson 1972, 182-183; Scheibier 1995, 112, 114; see Vickers and Gill 1994, 159. Beazley 1944, 34 notes that 42 of the 97 signing makers known at the time and 17 of the 43 painters have left only one signature.


\textsuperscript{424} Amyx 1988, 201, 255-256, 552, 563-564, 569-570, 591, 597; see also Studniczka 1887, 149; Kretschmer 1894, 16-17; Nicole 1916, 175; Cohen 1991, 51-52; Williams 1995, 139-140; and Appendix II, C61. Amyx 1988 (607-608, nos. (28) and (46), apparently both referring to Berlin F 422-F 908-F 937), also suggests that the name [P]eril(l)los on a Penteskouphia plaque is part of a signature, but this is impossible according to Pernice 1897, 14-15, and indeed seems unlikely.

\textsuperscript{425} See Klein 1887, 30-31, 212-213; Kretschmer 1894, 52-54; Raubitschek 1966; Kilinski 1982; 1990, 4; 1992; Cohen 1991, 54, 75-76; see also Jeffery 1990, 92, 435, B, C.
Archaic black figure skyphos from Halai has a maker’s and a painter’s signature: ‘ΕΠΙΘΕΛΕΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΙΣ ΕΤΦΡΑΙ...Ν ΕΚΡΑΦΕΣ’. Lastly, signatures are not attested in Lakonian, East Greek or other less prominent wares of the period.

The absence of an overall or an even individual pattern of signing has always hampered attempts to explain the practice, especially if signing was thought to be related to workshop organisation. A good example is furnished by one of the first of such theories, developed by Edmond Pottier, holding that signed pieces are exemplary models made by the master or under his strict supervision and intended to be copied (freely) by his workshop staff. But the notion seems untenable in view of the low numbers of signed pieces and their usually average quality. The same objection applies to Klaus Stähler’s related idea that only innovative or unusual pieces personally made by the master in a large workshop (in casu Exekias) were signed; moreover, it seems to be based on an overly refined, probably anachronistic stylistic analysis.

A related, but simpler theory coupling signatures with ‘special products’ maintains that potters and painters simply signed the work they liked most and/or were most proud of. This explanation, too, founders on the lack of distinctive qualities in the signed pottery. Despite the fact that our judgement of quality may be anachronistic, we would expect that, if such a theory were correct, modern archaeology would succeed in identifying unusual stylistical, iconographical or technical features marking a significant number of signed pots. In fact, the Little Master cups seem to be the only example of any such distinctive phenomenon, but the signatures on these cups can easily be ascribed to their decorative value as inscriptions.

The interpretations linking signatures to the practices of sales and trade encounter generally the same difficulties as the ‘quality’ argument. To effectively advertise, a producer or workshop would have needed far more signed pieces than those available and a much better selection. Nevertheless, a few signatures praise the inscribed pots or perhaps the makers as ‘ΚΑΛΟΣ’ or ‘ΟΛΟΚΛΗΡΩΣ’.

426 Coleman, Wren and Quinn 1999, 308 (with further references).
427 Pottier 1906, 662, 699-703; s.a., 51; 1927-1928, 188-190. See also Perrot 1911, 360-361.
428 Stähler 1971; his argument is also partly circular, as he excludes the cups signed by Exekias as products of the master himself mainly because of their relatively low quality. See also Scheibler 1986, 788; 1995, 114, who again suggests that some signing may be related to special artistic quality, but without clear arguments or examples.
429 Harrison and MacColl 1894, 10; Hoppin 1917, 30; Rieth 1960, 39; Philipp 1968, 77; see also Birch 1858, II 29-30, 59-60; Rayet and Collignon 1888, XV; Perrot 1911, 359; Scheibler 1995, 114 (and, with some doubts, 1986, 802); Kunisch 1997, 16-17; Cartledge 1998, 256-257.
430 See Richter 1946, 18; Laurens 1995, 164.
431 Although the actual meaning of the signatures doubtless played a role, they are replaced in the handle-zones of many Little Master cups with other kinds of text, meaningless combinations of words or letters or even mock letters. Often, moreover, the same text is repeated on both sides of the cup. Apparently, the medium of writing was more important than its message.
432 Birch 1858, II 29-30, 44, 59; Eisman 1974a; Laurens 1995, 165; Cartledge 1998, 256-257; see also Pottier 1906, 694; s.a. 52; 1927-1928, 187, 190; Perrot 1911, 359; Siebert 1978, 119-127.
433 Robertson 1972, 183; Eisman 1974a, 172; see also already Perrot 1911, 359; Hussong 1928, 54-55; Richter 1946, 18.
which suggests that at least some signatures were partly or wholly intended to increase a pot’s attraction to buyers and users, although the phenomenon is too rare and haphazard to generate an overall interpretation of signatures.

The relative rarity of signatures also contradicts Michael Eisman’s theory that signed pots were control pieces or, more likely in his view, ‘identifications for shipment’ which served to distinguish batches, possibly after packing in the workshop, and to link them to the right producers later in the distribution process. If the practice had such an identifying purpose, it would probably have resulted in many more marked vessels than we have, and would certainly have left a clear trace in the form of groups of infrequently, but systematically signed pots by one producer, somewhat comparable to the certain trademark graffiti and dipinti (incised and painted texts) which can be grouped for individual merchants (treated in section XX.2). In addition, the small and often hardly legible signatures, which occur in different places on the pots and were usually written before firing, seem awkward identification marks in comparison to trademarks which are always placed underneath, often written in large letters, and mostly after firing when the destination of a batch would usually be more definitely known.

Despite the seeming impossibility of generally linking signatures with distribution and consumption, it is quite likely that some special assignments of pottery or individual pots with a specific destination were signed because of their extraordinary character or in order to augment it. A famous example is the dinos (ABV 146, 20) signed on the rim by Exekias and inscribed on its opposite side ‘Epainetos gave to Charops’ in a Sikyonian alphabet, but apparently in Exekias’ handwriting.

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434 See ABV, 83 (‘ΝΕΑΡΧΟΣ [ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ ΕΤ’]; 146-147, 2 (‘ΕΣΧΕΚΙΑΣ ΜΕ ΠΟΙ[ΕΣΕΝ ΕΤ’/ΕΣΧΕΚΙΑΣ ΜΕ ΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ ΕΤ’); 161, 1 (‘ΧΑΡΓΗΑΙΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ ΕΤ’); 162, 1 (‘ΚΑΛΩΝ ΕΙΜΙ ΠΟΙ[ΕΣΟΝ ΕΤ’/ΕΣΧΕΚΙΑΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝΕΜΕ’); 170, 2 = 446, 3 (‘ΠΡΑΙΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ ΚΑΛΟΣ’); 348 (‘ΑΤΣΙΑΑΣΜΕΙΟΙΟΙΕΣΕΝ ΕΤ’)) and possibly 351 (‘ΑΝΔΡΕΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ ΣΟΦΙΑΙΣΙΝ ΚΑΛΟΝ ΑΓΑΛΜΑ’, the meaning is not clear, but the ‘ΑΓΑΛΜΑ’ probably refers to the inscribed pot); further ARV, 28, 14; 1620 (‘ΕΤΟΥΜΙΔΕΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ ΥΟ ΠΟΙΟΙ ΕΤ’ ΤΕ ΝΑΙΧ’); Para, 69-70 (‘ΝΕΑΝΟΡΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ ΕΤ’), twice. See also Scheller 1981, 224-227; Laurens 1995, 164-165.

435 See Laurens 1995, 165, who seems to support such a ‘commercial’ interpretation mainly because she cannot envisage that a signature may express individuality or self-consciousness. Her reasoning is incomprehensible, as the supposed inadequacy of one hypothesis in itself is no argument for the other; moreover, she offers no positive argument for equating the meaning of a signature praising a pot with a normal signature.

436 Eisman 1974a, based on Nikosthenes; see also Seeberg 1994, 164; and much earlier Birch 1858, II 44.


438 See Robertson 1972, 183.

439 It should also be noted that trademarks, including the few applied before firing, never seem to refer to producers and that, unlike signatures, they almost exclusively occur on pots found ‘overseas’. The differences suggest that signatures and trademarks had a totally different meaning and function.

440 Williams 1995, 157, who adds as other examples ABV, 347 (‘ΚΕΛΛΑΣ ΕΠΡΑΣΕΝ ΜΝΗΣΣΗΚΑΙΔΕΣ ΕΔΟΚΕΝ [= gave to] ΦΟΚΙ’), ARV, 447, 274 (an aryballos signed ‘ΔΩΤΕΡΕ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ and also inscribed ‘ΑΣΟΠΟΔΟΡΟΗΕΛΕΚΤΗΘΟΣ’, the lekythos belongs to Asopodoros) and some painted dedications; the latter form a different category of inscription, but confirm that pots could be made on order. See also Kretschmer 1894, 51, 187; Beazley 1944, 40; Richter 1946, 18; Stühler 1971, 79-80; Cohen 1991, 57; Frel 1994, 18; for Corinthian ‘special orders’, see Amyx 1988, 551-552, 555, 561, and for some Boiotian cases, Raubitschek 1966, 158-160, 164-165. Oddly enough, Exekias’s dinos was found in Cerveteri, so either it never got to its buyer or it was
specially made for specific aristocratic clients, but the evidence she cites (mainly iconographic) is not convincing enough.\textsuperscript{441} Some Akropolis dedications with signatures, especially the elaborate ones, may form another such special category, made either to order or perhaps sometimes for the potter's own use (chapter IX). Clearly, however, these are exceptional cases and thus cannot shed light on common practice.\textsuperscript{442} If customers really wanted to know who made the pottery they acquired, manufacturers would probably have signed more often and more consistently.

Another approach to unravelling the tie between signature and product is taken by Roberto Rosati, who proposes that the frequent appearance, in signatures, of 'TAAE' (this) and 'ME' (me) referring to the pot itself reflects the pre-eminence of the product over the craftsman considered typical by him of Archaic Greece.\textsuperscript{443} The notion seems based on very tenuous historical evidence, and is difficult to relate to motivations for signing. After all, a maker who names himself would most likely have something more in mind than simply his product or even the possibility of enhancing it by the addition of a signature. Moreover, the rarity of signatures again poses a problem. Nevertheless, none of the foregoing precludes that the product or at least some of its intrinsic qualities, perhaps not evident to us, could have been more relevant to the practice of signing than one would expect from a modern point of view, and that aspects of personal pride or creativity figured relatively less. Such hypotheses, however, are highly speculative.

Finally, a general factor must be considered which probably disrupts all attempts to interpret signatures: limited literacy. The recurrent misspellings and inconsistencies in the inscriptions make clear that the writers often had little training and practice.\textsuperscript{444} In many instances, especially in regard to the potters and painters who seem never to have signed or have left us only nonsense inscriptions, the absence of signatures may be directly related to the limited availability of people who could write in workshops.\textsuperscript{445} The circumstance may have particularly affected Corinthian potters and painters who left us a total of only 4 signatures and less than 300 inscribed pots and plaques.\textsuperscript{446} Nevertheless, illiteracy in itself cannot generally account for the relatively small

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\textsuperscript{441} De La Genière 1994; much of her argument is based on the supposed aristocratic character of the figured scenes on Sophilos's signed vessels. It seems unwise, however, to assume such a direct link between purchaser and picture. The same holds for the possible aristocratic associations of the types of vessels, three dinoi and a louterion, which (in 6th-century Greece) could not have prevented other categories of people purchasing them. Moreover, Sophilos's oeuvre, as collected by Baklr, includes unsigned items which seem comparable to the signed ones (Baklr 1981, cat. nos. A.4, A.21, perhaps also A.12, A.15) Finally, there are the archaeological contexts: one vessel is without known provenance, one comes from the Athenian Akropolis, one from a votive deposit found in a Mycenaean tomb in Menidi near Athens, and the fourth from a summarily published and disturbed tomb (?) in Pharsalos, Thessaly. Although the latter two finds may be related to elite practices, they offer no specific evidence for the Sophilos dinoi as special private commissions by aristocrats. Tiverios 1997, 278, offers a similar argument for Xenophonos in the early 4th century.

\textsuperscript{442} Nevertheless, Akropolis dedications seem to form a relatively large group among signed pots, especially in the 6th century, and even more so if one excludes Little Master cups. See Wagner 2000, 385-386.


\textsuperscript{445} See Rosati 1976-1977, 70.

\textsuperscript{446} See the lists in Amyx 1988, 556-608. These amount to a total of ca. 175 pots and plaques, to which at least 50 inscribed Penteskouphia plaques, mostly with simple dedicatory formulae, and a few handfuls of

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number of inscriptions in Greek pottery: the pots of many non-signing artisans bear inscriptions, whereas quite a few signed pots are also 'adorned' with nonsensical inscriptions.\textsuperscript{447} Clearly, the decision to inscribe pots depended not simply upon the availability of writers or the popularity of inscriptions among customers, as the inconsistent signatures alone demonstrate.\textsuperscript{448} But the factors that precisely did matter continue to elude us.

Notwithstanding the many problems attached to each explanation and the impossibility of formulating plausible interpretations of the practice of signing, the signatures cannot, of course, be meaningless. Even if a signature was not particularly effective as an advertisement, it should probably be somehow considered an artisan's small bid for renown, albeit one that was not important enough to be made consistently.\textsuperscript{449} In the light of this, signing as a notion of pride or self-awareness on the part of potters and painters would have played a role, even if Archaic Greek craftsmen cannot be equated with Renaissance or later artists in this respect.\textsuperscript{450} Owing to the absence of a compelling alternative, only such personal, largely psychological motives remain for the basis of an explanation.\textsuperscript{451} In any case, as these considerations seem to have been only randomly influential, they were presumably not uppermost in the minds of Greek potters and painters.

VI.3 What do signatures mean: are ‘painters’ really pot-painters and ‘makers’ really potters?

Another fundamental controversy regarding signatures is their basic meaning. Although the elementary distinction between ‘ΕΓΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’ as indicating decorating and ‘ΕΙΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ as related to making has not effectively been challenged since the late 19th century,\textsuperscript{452} the exact sense of especially ‘ΕΙΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ continues to be debated. Before the 1920s, many scholars argued that signatures could not possibly denote the actual potters and painters – mere workers in their view – but instead named the designers (‘ΕΓΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’) and the supervisors or workshop owners (‘ΕΙΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’), who were widely considered the true artistic geniuses and managers behind the workshops.\textsuperscript{453} The interpretation is directly linked to the then-current view of potteries as large,

\textsuperscript{447} See Rebillard 1992, 528-534.

\textsuperscript{448} See Scheller 1981, 221-223. This subtlety is overlooked by Stühler 1971, 80, and Cohen 1991, 60, both of whom base important conclusions on the (partial) absence of writing.


\textsuperscript{450} As has been done by Pottier 1896, 16, and suggested by Beazley 1944, 33.


\textsuperscript{452} As discussed above (section VI.1), I do not see the ideas of Gill and Vickers on signatures as a serious challenge to the communis opinio.

\textsuperscript{453} Harrison and MacColl 1894, 21; Furtwängler and Reichhold 1904, 158-160; 1909, 199-200; Pottier 1906, 699-705; s.a., 51; 1927-1928, 188-190; Frucht 1914, 4-7; Hoppin 1917, 26-28; Reichhold 1919, 12-13;
quasi-industrial establishments. In addition, it also seems to echo the situation in many ‘ateliers’ of prominent 19th-century and earlier artists, where a number of people often collaborated on a large artistic production which was then generally signed and regarded as the work of the chief artist.454

Inevitably, many of the next generation of archaeologists, were critical of precisely such a method of artistic production and returned to the interpretation of Greek signatures as markers of individuals’ work.455 Especially Beazley’s thoughtful view has remained influential: ‘Two explanations have been offered of the eipoiese-signature. One, that it gives the name of the potter, the man who fashioned the vase; the other, that it gives no more than the owner of the establishment from which the vase came. At one time I held it more prudent to adopt the second explanation: but now I believe that, in general, the first explanation is the right one: Ἐὐφρονιος ἐποίησεν means that Euphronio fashioned the vase with his own hands.456 That Beazley’s stylistic attributions largely confirm the individuality of signatures has doubtless played a crucial part in the acceptance of this view.457

Today, universal agreement still prevails that an ‘ΕΠΩΕΘΕΝ’-signature always refers to the actual painter, even though there appear to be at least two misleading, i.e. untrue, painter’s signatures in which Douris signed painter work attributed to the Triptolemos Painter.458 As to ‘ΕΠΩΕΘΕΝ’, however, opinions diverge again, especially since Cook revived the old explanation in 1971 by arguing that ‘maker’ refers to the workshop’s owner, who was not necessarily the actual potter. Cook, who was soon followed by Eisman, further proposed that these non-potting producers ran large, financially successful workshops. The controversy makes it essential that we look more closely at the evidence for the meaning(s) of ΕΠΩΕΘΕΝ-signatures.459

Cook’s first point is that there are two Little Master cups each bearing a pair of makers’ signatures with two different names: Archikles and Glaukytes, Nikosthenes and Anakles.460 As it

Pfuhl 1923, 240-241. Jahn 1854a, CIX; Klein 1887, 11-15, are the exceptions, stressing personal involvement.

454 Explicitly Pottier 1906, 702, 705; 1927-1928, 188; see also Furtwängler and Reichhold 1904, 160; Reichhold 1919, 10.

455 Hussong 1928, 54-55; Richter 1946, 16-18; see Richter 1923, XII.


457 See Laurens 1995, 163, 163-164 n. 8.

458 Berlin 2286, ARV² 365, 59 and collection Von Bothmer; Buitron-Oliver, 1995, 1-2. See, however, Beazley 1944, 41-42, who rightly remarks that the Triptolemos Painter, who seems to have worked in Douris’s workshop, might have been a relative with the same name. Two certain cases of two or three painters with the same name are Lydos and Polygnotos; see also Vickers 1985, 126-127; Gill and Vickers 1990, 26-27; Vickers and Gill 1994, 160-161; Laurens 1995 164 n. 8. The instances presented in Gill 1993, 454-455 and Vickers and Gill 1994, 166-168 as similar to the ‘non-Douris’ are irrelevant since they regard vessels with the same makers’ signatures attributed to different painters. See also Pottier 1927-1928, 190-192, who exaggerates the importance of this single case in his argument against the validity of Beazley’s method and results.


460 Cook 1971, 137; the cups are ABV, 163-164, 2 and 230, 1; for these cups and the problem they pose, see also Jahn 1854a, CVIII; Klein 1887, 11-12, 75-76; Pottier 1906, 701; Hoppin 1917, 32-33; Beazley 1944,
seems unlikely that two men collaborated on the shaping and turning of one cup,\textsuperscript{461} the implication is that at least one of them must have been the maker in the more abstract sense of the word, i.e. the supervisor or workshop owner. The argument is certainly strong and had earlier troubled Beazley and others favouring ‘makers’ to be the actual potters.\textsuperscript{462} Beazley even conceded that one of each pair could just have lent his name, and suggested that the double ‘ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’-signatures mark the transition from one maker/workshop owner to another, but this seems a rather awkward explanation and would imply that ‘ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ does not necessarily indicate an active potter after all.\textsuperscript{463} Martin Robertson, on the other hand, contends that the pairs of ‘ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’-signatures should not be taken too seriously, and that their writers randomly took names from the workshop staff. The idea, though, seems incompatible with the general reliability of signatures in relation to stylistic attributions; and since all four makers are known from signatures in other work, randomness in the choice of names can probably be ruled out. Somewhat more credible is Rosati’s assumption that the double ‘ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’-signatures are mistakes.\textsuperscript{464} According to him, one of the ‘makers’ of each cup was in fact the painter, and should have been designated as such, which seems, in my opinion an unusually far-reaching mistake. Others think, perhaps more reasonably, that it is not necessary to identify one of the verbs as an error for ‘ΕΓΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’ in order to accept that one of the named men was the painter.\textsuperscript{465} An objection would be that each of the four names recurs in ‘ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’-signatures on other pieces, although it seems almost certain that Nikosthenes also painted.\textsuperscript{466}

Perhaps a combination of makers/potters should not be excluded after all, if each of them had a clearly defined task, like one the shaping, the other the finishing, or one making the body and one the feet and handles. It is also just possible that each cup was made in a workshop which had two master potters whose output was not kept clearly separated after shaping, so that the writer of the signature might have been unsure who was actually responsible for the potterwork. If so, each pair of signatures refers to two potential but nevertheless real potters and indeed includes, as it were, one lent name. Whatever the correct interpretation, two double ‘ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’-signatures among hundreds of signed pots can hardly be expected to provide a pivotal explanation of meaning.\textsuperscript{467}

\textsuperscript{461} Beazley 1944, 26-27; Cook 1971, 137; Robertson 1972, 182; Boardman 1991, 11; Rebillard 1992, 526; Williams 1995, 145-146; see also Richter 1946, 16, 168 n. 35. As Beazley remarks (1944, 26), the boy at the wheel can here be safely overlooked since one does not expect him to be worth mentioning as a maker.

\textsuperscript{462} Jahn 1854a, CIX; Pottier 1906, 701; Beazley 1944, 26-27; Richter 1946, 16.

\textsuperscript{463} Beazley 1944, 26-27; see also Robertson 1972, 182.

\textsuperscript{464} Rosati 1976-1977, 67-68; Immerwahr 1990, 50; see also Williams 1995, 146, n. 38.

\textsuperscript{465} Jahn 1854a, CIX; Klein 1887, 14; Pottier 1906, 701; Philipp 1968, 84; Boardman 1991, 11. Hoppin 1917, 32-33, even suggests two painters, one for each side, which seems stylistically impossible.


\textsuperscript{467} Robertson 1972, 182, who also stresses their being ‘funny’ – but any two exceptions would be odd.
Cook's second point concerns his impression that most or all signatures appear to be written by the painters of the signed vessels, whereas most signatures refer to the 'makers' instead. Taking for granted that both painters and potters were employees in someone else's establishment, Cook finds it odd that the painters/writers signed not for themselves but for the owner of the workshop.

The relative rarity of painters' signatures, especially in black figure pottery, is indeed a phenomenon which has troubled many observers ever since the systematic study of signatures began. It has long been recognised, however, that part of the difficulty surely lies in the modern view that painting is the most interesting and therefore the most important aspect of Attic pottery. If we suppose that the relation between the two crafts was viewed differently in Antiquity, the perception changes. Much of Cook's argumentation seems unnecessary if one accepts that the potter was the central figure in an Athenian pottery establishment, as appears most logical and as is commonly met in the ethnographic record all over the world. It must also be remarked that many Attic painters were their own potters, a point to which I shall return below (chapter VII). However that may be, a signature, for example, 'ἘΞΕΚΙΑΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΩΝ' on a pot which can be attributed to Exekias as painter clearly implies that the painter's signature was more dispensable than that of the potter, and that 'ΕΠΟΙΕΩΝ' can include the notion of painting as well.

The position of the potter is again crucial in addressing Cook's third point, which regards the much discussed development of Euphronios who started signing as a painter and went on to become a potter (and not an exceptionally good one) later in his career. Cook sees this as an

468 Cook 1971, 137.

469 This has been disputed by Eisman 1974a, 172, who notes many potters' signatures placed with little regard for the painted scenes or the integrity of the words. Painters' signatures are generally neater according to Eisman, but he offers no firm evidence. Pottier 1906, 696; Hoppin 1917, 20-21; Scheller 1981, 223, also suppose that painters did not usually write the signatures. Detailed studies by Immerwahr (1984, esp. 341-342, 345) and Tosto (1999, 173-185), however, support Cook's general impression, which is also followed by Robertson 1972, 181. Richter 1946, 18, earlier had the same opinion. Cohen 1991 argues (esp. 49-50, 66) that potters also signed, but her study concerns only the small and special group of incised signatures and mentions some exceptions (see 73-75). Scheibler 1986, 789, remarks that it may not matter much for the general discussion who actually wrote the signatures.

470 See Birch 1858, II 28; Rayet and Collignon 1888, XV-XVI; Jamot 1896, 1124; Pottier 1899, 26; 1906, 697-698, 704, 715; 1927-1928, 188; Perrot 1911, 326, 359-360; Beazley 1944, 34; Stähler 1971, 79; Paul 1982, 41-43; Villard 1990, 26; Cohen 1991, 68-69; Scheibler 1994, 164 (see also chapter VII). Richter 1923, XII; 1946, 18, and Scheibler 1995, 112, are the only ones who see no difficulty at all.

471 Only Seeberg 1994, 163-164, advances an alternative view, with painters in the leading position. See also section VII.1.

472 See Villard 1990, 26; Boardman 1991, 11-12; Mommsen, forthcoming. Stähler's refusal to accept this is one of the starting points of his problematical reduction of the list of Exekias's works (1971, see esp. 79). See on attributions to Exekias also Mommsen, forthcoming.

473 As almost universally assumed since the mid 19th century: see e.g. Jahn 1854a, CIX; Klein 1887, 14; Hoppin 1917, 27, 33; Pfuhl 1923, 240-241; Richter 1946, 17-18; Jeffer 1964, 48, and, more recently, Scheibler 1986, 788; Boardman 1991, 11; Cohen 1991, 53-54, 63, 80.

odd succession of events, which might seem to mean that potting was a more desirable occupation than painting. If so, we can wonder why Euphronios ever started as a painter in the first place. In Cook’s opinion, the problems can be solved by assuming that Euphronios progressed from painter to workshop owner. This is possible. To be credible, however, the suggestion seems to require that the potter was the central figure in the workshop and more important than the painter. As I shall explain below (chapter VII), it may have been necessary to begin as a painter in order to become a potter, and the owner of an establishment was commonly its (chief) potter. 475

Cook’s fourth point refers to a single case: he contends there are relatively too many signatures of Nikosthenes as maker in comparison to the number of painters who decorated the pottery. Since Cook, following Joseph Noble, assumes that shaping and painting required roughly equal amounts of time, he would expect more or less equal numbers of painters and potters in a single workshop. 476 The conclusion seems doubtful for several reasons, however. First of all, Vincent Tosto’s thorough examination of Nikosthenes’s signed black figure pots convincingly demonstrates that at least the Nikosthenic amphorai, which form the bulk of the oeuvre, were potted by one man, who was very likely the painter as well, namely Nikosthenes. 477 More generally, the fast production rate of present day potters suggests that in ancient Greek workshops potting may have been less time-consuming in relation to painting than has been thought. Even if we make allowances for the more elaborate and refined shapes and the slower wheel of ancient potters, painting a fully decorated pot like an amphora or krater could well have required more time than fashioning it. 478 But the reverse might apply to smaller vessels which have

55, 58-59, rightly stresses (as earlier Beazley 1944, 35) that Euphronios must have had years of training before his (possible) appearance as a signing ‘maker’. Since no archaeological trace of this period has been recognised, i.e. attributed pots, Cuomo di Caprio (58) concludes (in very ambiguous phrases) that the ‘maker’ Euphronios cannot have been a potter himself. She thereby, however, overlooks that potting has hardly been studied, and that attributions of pots to makers have remained rare and uncertain. It is quite likely that early pots fashioned by Euphronios have escaped notice, as also seems implied by Beazley’s silence on the problem noted by Cuomo di Caprio.


476 Cook 1971, 137.

477 Tosto 1999, 6, 10-12; the relatively fewer pots of other forms leave an uncertain impression, although most were probably shaped by Nikosthenes himself, who seems also to have decorated a few. See also Bloesch 1940, 9; Immerwahr 1984, 345, 347, and Scheibler 1984, 132, who conclude similarly to Tosto.

478 There is little discussion about the production time of Attic decorated pottery. The prevailing opinion seems to be that decorating was more time consuming than potting, without any qualification or argumentation: see Scheibler 1986, 799; 1995, 112, 116; Williams 1995, 149. The very elaborate production process envisaged by Furtwängler and Reichhold 1904, 12-13; 1909, 199-200, is clearly a phantom based on contemporary sculpture and painting; elsewhere (1904, 160), however, they suggest that painting required more labour than potting. Cuomo di Caprio 1991, 55-58, describes how a contemporary potter from Apulia needs two working days to shape a large (40 cm in diameter) kylix of Bloesch’s type B, and estimates that decorating it would take another 5-6 days. Unfortunately, the experiment, which also resulted in a wastage rate of 80 per cent and required that the cups were fired almost singly surrounded by much empty space in the kiln, is plainly absurd (see also the comments in Hemelrijk 1993). No craftsman would invest so much work and raw material at such a risk, and the resulting low production figures and high costs are as incompatible with our evidence as the suggested manner of firing.
little figure work and especially to very cursorily or even crudely decorated products like much late black figure. However, even if potting was as time-consuming as Cook supposes, it must have been possible to even the imbalance in man-hours between potters and painters by adjusting the workshop’s organisation and output instead of by increasing the number of potters. For example, it may not be coincidental that Nikosthenes signed some plain black gloss vessels. Lastly, as I shall try to show below (chapter VII), a workshop with a potter/central figure who collaborates with several painters is not confined to Nikosthenes alone.  

Cook’s final observation is that the verb ‘ποιεῖν’ (to make) is very imprecise in reference to the fashioning of pottery, and that if indeed only shaping was meant, one would instead expect a more specific word comparable to ‘γράφειν’ for drawing, like ‘πλάττειν’ (shaping), as he proposes. Robertson neatly counters the objection by pointing out that ‘ποιεῖν’ appears in the signatures of all kinds of Greek artists and craftsmen, even though more precise verbs were available. Moreover, the one potter who employs a different verb chose ‘ΕΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣΕΝ’ (potted) instead of using a form of Cook’s hypothetical choice ‘πλάττειν’, which is not mentioned on any pot.

On the other hand, Robertson cites some good examples of ‘ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ signatures which do seem to denote personal involvement. Most straightforward is one of the pots dedicated on the Akropolis which preserves a partial votive inscription ‘[…] ΑΝΕΘΕΚΕΝ ΑΘΕΝΑΙΑΙ ΑΤΤΟΣΙΠΟΙ[ΞΑΣ]’ (‘X dedicated to Athena made by himself’; Appendix II, D4). Unfortunately, this exceptional phrase is grammatically ambiguous: Is the ‘ΑΤΤΟΣ’ just strengthening the usual formula or was it a necessary addition in order to convey the sense of ‘self’? Moreover, ‘ΑΤΤΟΣ’ is not found in other ceramic dedications combining a signature and a votive inscription. It could be argued, of course, that none of these dedications was personally crafted by the dedicator, but more logically the word ‘self’ can be considered optional. In any case, even without ‘ΑΤΤΟΣ’ one would expect that craftsmen makes their own votives, as was evidently usual practice among sculptors and bronze smiths.

479 See also Scheibler 1984, 132; 1986, 799-800; 1995, 112.
480 Cook 1971, 137-138.
481 Robertson 1972, 182, stressing the connotations of ‘ποιεῖν’ with ‘personally made’; see also Richter 1946, 16.
482 A crudely painted stanced dish is signed ‘ΕΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣΕΝΕΝΜΕΘΟΙΚΟΦΕΛΕΣ ΟΙΚΟΦΛΕΣΕΜΕΓΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’ (Oxford 189; ABV, 349). In addition, a lost black pyxis (Appendix II, D9) is reportedly inscribed ‘ΑΤΤΙΝΩΣ ΑΝΕΘΕΚΕΝ ΤΑΙ ΑΘΕΝΑΙΑΙ ΤΟ ΠΡΟΤΩΝ ΕΡΓΑΣΤΟ’ (‘Lykinos dedicated [this] to Athena, the first he worked’). If the inscription is ancient, which has been doubted by Beazley and others, it would again show that an alternative to ‘ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ could be equally general and vague. See for both inscriptions Williams 1995, 141; for the first, also Vickers and Gill 1994, 156-157; for the second, also Scheibler 1979b, 16.
483 Akropolis (Graef and Langlotz 1925-1933, I no. 2134 = ABV, 347; see Robertson 1972, 181; 1992, 132; Williams 1995, 142; and also Kretschmer 1894, 229-230; Wagner 2000, 385.
484 At least eight seem to exist: see Appendix II, D1-D9; Pl. 49e-f.
485 See Robertson 1972, 182; 1992, 132; Scheibler 1979b; 1986, 788; see also Wagner 2000, 386.
More compelling is a small but not negligible group of double signatures giving either ‘X ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ, Y ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’ or, rarely, ‘X ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ, X ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’. Whereas the first category may leave room for discussion (though the combination of maker and painter seems to make more sense than that of owner and painter), the second strongly indicates that the maker and the painter were one man. This might be further confirmed by the fact that a relatively high number of the pots with double signatures (at least three out of eight, perhaps four out of nine or ten) come from the Athenian Akropolis: therefore at least some of them, possibly all of them, were potters’ dedications and, as remarked, it seems much more fitting that a craftsman offered his own personal handiwork than a workshop product.

The study of pot-forms and potterwork has the potential of providing final, conclusive arguments in the matter of signatures. Even Cook admitted that research on pot-forms tends to confirm the view that pots with one maker’s signature were indeed generally made by the same potter; but in 1971 few form studies were available, and Cook could conveniently dismiss their results as a very small sample having unclear value. More recent studies, though still limited in number, alter matters considerably and strongly support the impression which Cook dismissed. Thus, almost all (but not quite all) the Nikosthenic amphorai seem to be fashioned by the same craftsman; similarly, the cups and some other forms of Nikosthenes’s ‘successor’ Pamphaios also constitute a consistent oeuvre, more than half of which was decorated by the Nikosthenes Painter; and the potterwork of pots signed by the potter Amasis match that of others which range chronologically over much of the Amasis Painter’s work. In addition, as I will show below (chapter VII) many stylistic studies of non-signing craftsmen suggest that painters often also shaped their own pots. Certainly, one might suppose that all these master potters or master potters/painters were employed in small workshops owned by others, but such a scenario is surely an unnecessarily complicated way out of accepting what appears to be a natural explanation.

486 See, for lists, Robinson 1893, 47-50; Folsom 1975, 144-148; 1976, 192-195; see also Scheibier 1986, 788-789, n. 5.

487 The certain or probable cases are: (1) ABV, 82, 1, Akropolis (Graef and Langlotz 1925-1933, I) no. 611, ‘ΕΝΑΡΧΟΣΜΕ ΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ or, perhaps, ‘...ΚΑ[ΛΟΣ]’ or ‘...ΚΑ[ΝΕΘΕΚΕΝ’; (2) ABV, 143-144, 1, Vulci, ‘ΕΞΕΚΙΑΙΣ ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’; (3) ABV, 145, 13, Vulci, ‘ΕΞΕΚΙΑΙΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ/ΕΞΕΚΙΑΙΣ ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’; (4) (not known to Beazley; see Mommsen forthcoming) Satyrion, near Taras, ‘ΕΞΕΚΙΑΙΣ ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’; (5) ABV, 349, Peristeri, Attica, ‘ΕΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣΕΣΕΝ ΒΙΩΚΟΦΕΛΕΣ ΟΙΚΟΦΕΛΕΣ ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’; (6) ARV, 78, 102, Akropolis (Graef and Langlotz 1925-1933, II) no. 6, ‘ΕΠΙΚΤΕΤΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ...ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’, with either ‘ΚΑΙ’ or ‘ΕΠΙΚΤΕΤΟΣ’ in the missing bit (the style excludes another name); (7) ARV, 240, 42, Akropolis (Graef and Langlotz 1925-1933, II) no. 806, ‘ΕΤΣΩΝ ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’; (8) ARV, 445, 256, provenance unknown, ‘ΑΟΡΙΣ ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ ΑΟΡΙΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’. Doubtful cases are: (I) ABV, 40, 16, Pharsalos, ‘ΕΦΙΛΟΣ ΜΕ ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ/ΣΟΦΕΛΟΣ ΜΕ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’ or, of course, again ‘[..Μ ΕΙΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’; according to Baktir 1981, 6-7, however, the second ‘ΣΟ’ (the phi is uncertain) is probably not part of a signature; (II) ABV 107, 1, Akropolis (Graef and Langlotz 1925-1933, I) no. 607, ‘[..ΣΕΝ ΗΟΛΤΕΟΣ Ε[Γ]ΤΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ’]. See also Appendix II, section D, and Klein 1887, 217; Hoppin 1917, 26, n. 2; 28; Beazley 1944, 39-40; Cook 1971, 137; Stähler 1971, 81; Robertson 1972, 180-181; Webster 1972, 9-12; Boegehold 1985, 30; Von Bothmer 1985b, 33, 39; Villard 1990, 26; Cohen 1991, 55, 57, 76, 93, n. 146; Scheibier 1995, 112, 115; Williams 1995, 142, 145; Tosto 1999, 1; Wagner 2000, 386.


489 Cook 1971, 137; Immerwahr 1984, 341 and Scheibier 1984, 131-132, agree on this point.

490 See respectively Tosto 1999; Immerwahr 1984; Von Bothmer 1985a; Isler 1994, and chapter VII.
Clearly, more research is needed in the sorely neglected area of potterwork and attributions. In the meantime it seems wisest to adhere to Beazley’s cautious belief in the ‘reality’ of potters’ signatures, especially because Cook’s counterarguments are so inconclusive, and because there is increasingly more evidence that signatures refer to individual makers. Exceptions will always exist, however, as surely indicated by a few ‘odd’ signed pieces like the Douris cups painted by the Triptolemos Painter, some of the pottery signed by Nikosthenes which was evidently thrown by other potters in his workshop, and perhaps the two pairs of double ‘ΕΙΟΙΕΣΕΝ’-signatures.

VI.4 Signatures, names and social status

The signatures are not limited to the basic formula ‘X made’ or ‘painted’. Besides many which also mention the pot (‘me’, ‘this’) or even, as remarked, its quality (‘good’, ‘beautiful’), a few signatures tell us more about the artisans themselves. The information mainly concerns their civic and social status, and since such personal characteristics could shed light on matters of workshop organisation and the general status of the potter’s craft, the signatures warrant exploration.

The clearest instance is the signature of an Attic black figure kyathos found in Vulci, dated to ca. 530-520: ‘ΑΤΔΟΣ ΕΠΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ ΔΟΑΟΣ ΟΝ ΜΤΡΕΝΕΤΣ Ε[...Ο’], i.e. ‘Lydos painted, being a slave from Myrina (...).’ The inscription demonstrates that at least one foreign slave worked among the painters of the Kerameikos. The closest parallel is furnished by an Athenian potter of the third quarter of the 5th century who signs ‘ΝΙΚΙΑΣ ΕΡΜΟΚΛΑΕΟΤΣ ΑΝΑΦΑΤΣΙΟΣ’, i.e. ‘Nikias, son of Hermokles, from Anaphlystos’ (ARV², 1333, 1), which was an Attic deme, a district on the coast to the southeast of Athens. This Nikias must be a citizen, but his village of origin, which was not necessarily where he resided, seems an odd place for a potter to come from. Of more equivocal significance is the handful of signers who add their patronymics. The sole Corinthian example is: Timonidas, son of Bias, on a plaque (Appendix II, C63). In Attic black figure they are: Hypereides, son of Androgenos (three times, not in ABV), Ergoteles, son of Nearchos, (twice, ABV, 162, 1-2); Eucheiros, son of Ergotimos (surely twice, perhaps four times, ABV, 162, 2-4, 163); [...] (lost), son of Eucheiros (ABV, 163); Tleson, son of Nearchos (ABV, 178-183, listing at least 80 items); and an anonymous father and son (ABV, 187, 10). In Attic red figure we find: Euthymides, son of Polio[n?] (ARV², 26); Kleophrades son of Amasis (ARV², 191, 103 and two recently found fragments); and the above-mentioned Nikias, son of Hermokles. Their motivations for adding the patronymics are as mysterious as that for signing in general, and should probably be regarded as similarly haphazard. Nevertheless, the ‘father and son’ signatures may allow for a few more definite conclusions. First, it is possible that the use of patronymics

491 Villa Giulia, no inv. no., extensively published in Canciani 1978, with an epigraphical commentary by G. Neumann; see also Boegehold 1983, 90; Scheibler 1986, 797-798; 1995, 119-120, 158, and 113, fig. 103; Arafat and Morgan 1989, 326; Williams 1995, 143, 152. The reading ‘Myrina’ is not certain. Guarducci 1980 (esp. 47) offers an alternative, leading to an awkward interpretation of Lydos as the slave of love of Mydea with the good bed.

492 See Klein 1887, 111; Nicole 1916, 406, no. 99; Para 480; Immerwahr 1990, 115, no. 800.

493 But see Immerwahr 1990, 183, nos. 1197-1198; Bentz 1998, 28, 123, cat. nos. 6.004-6.005 (and one uncatalogued), with references.

indicates that the signers were citizens, as in some official inscriptions of the Archaic period. At least the signature of Nikias, who adds his deme of origin, a possibility open only to citizens, seems to confirm this. Yet signatures on pots may have followed less strict lines than publicly visible texts in stone, so we cannot exclude that some of these signing pairs were metics, i.e. free resident foreigners. The addition of a patronymic by a slave, though, would be highly unusual and can probably be excluded as a possibility. On the other hand, of course, the absence of a patronymic has no definite bearing on the signer’s status - even in publicly visible inscriptions names of citizens appear without this addition. Secondly, since Nearchos, Ergotimos, Amasis and Eucheiros also signed themselves, their sons’ signatures strongly suggest that pottery production was a family enterprise, passed on from generation to generation – a familiar pattern for small operations in pre-modern society.

The patronymic ‘Polio’ or, rather, ‘Polion’ or perhaps ‘Polios’, presents a different, difficult case: the man is often equated with the sculptor Po(l)lias who signed several bronze Akropolis dedications and who, in turn, is assumed to be not only the Polias who dedicated a (ceramic) plaque, possibly painted by Euthymides, found on the Akropolis, but also the Pollis mentioned by Pliny and Vitruvius. If these identifications are correct, Polio(n) and Euthymides link the professions of bronze sculptor and potter, rather pot-painter. Such linkage, however, although perhaps understandable from the perspective of an art historian, would seem awkward from that of a craftsman: even though bronze sculpting and potting are plastic arts both employing clay and kilns, their necessary equipment and skills are quite different, not to mention the yet other requirements of pot-painting. Furthermore, the contrast between high-status, publicly visible statues and small, less prestigious pots mainly for private use, makes it hard to envisage connections between workshops for bronze statuary and for ceramics, for which, moreover, no evidence has yet been discovered. An alternative explanation is that Euthymides was not suited to his father’s business or craft and settled for a somewhat related occupation, although this is not what one might expect to happen among specialised craftsmen whose enterprises are strongly based on family ties. Finally, it must be said that the equating of the rather indistinct names Polio(n), Polias/Pollias and Pollis, which derive from very different sources, demands some, perhaps unjustified, positivism.

Other signatures mention the place of origin after the name. Thus, two potters characterise themselves as ‘Athenaios’, i.e. ‘Athenian’: Teisias, who signed several undecorated kantharoi and skyphoi in Boiotia in the late 6th century, and Xenophantos, who signed two giant red-figure

495 Potier 1906, 694; Perrot 1911, 371; Hoppin 1917, 30; Pfuhl 1923, 34; Scheibler 1986, 801; Williams 1995, 155.


498 Moreover, to be really and fairly positivist, one must also include the later red figure pot-painter Polion in the discussion (ARV², 1171). Following the (in my opinion doubtful) method Raubitschek uses in identifying potters among the Akropolis dedicators (chapter IX) he may well be considered Euthymides’s great grandson. At any rate, this Polion makes clear that Po(l)lias is not the most obvious nominative for Polio.

squat lekythoi with relief decoration, found in the surroundings of Pantikapaion on the Black Sea coast and dated early 4th century. According to some observers, the lekythoi are local products; but the clay and the moulds more likely identify them as Attic, as others argue. Another example is the previously cited signature of Nikias from Anaphlystos. Finally, the signature of the slave Lydos can be noted, for it may instance the use of the ethnic by an immigrant painter, although the reading ‘Myreneus’ is open to doubt.

These four signatures are intriguing. Xenophantos seems to be the only one of these men who worked in his place of origin, and this is even not entirely certain. The motivation for his written claim to be Athenian is unclear: possibly he wished to profit from the prestige of Athenian pottery abroad; but if so, one would expect that more Athenian colleagues stressed their origins similarly. Perhaps he did indeed work far from Athens. Nikias’s reason for stating his origin is even more mysterious. The fact that he, in contrast to the few other contemporary signers, follows the full official formula for naming, may imply an explanation that we do not see, but raises the question why others were less official. However that may be, Nikias’s origin would hardly have impressed buyers of pottery, not even in Athens. Could his full name be a matter of local pride or patriotism, and/or a wish to distance himself from the Kerameikos? But what if he did reside there, as we might expect? As a craftsman working abroad, Teisias seems to have had better grounds for reminding others of his Athenian origin; however, the cases of Nikias and possibly Lydos show that Teisias’s reasons need not have been commercial. His signature may further indicate that the use of the ethnic in nomenclature was not always limited to citizens, as it ideally should have been. All things considered, the ethnics or demotics in signatures seem to raise more questions than they answer.

In contrast, other signatures and inscriptions perhaps conceal implicit, more general indications of the status of potters and painters. It is often remarked that the frequent mistakes and the overall clumsiness of the writing, grammar and spelling suggest a very limited education and therefore a low social and economic status. Yet although some correlation between the ability to write well and someone’s role and position in society seems likely, we know hardly anything about the various levels of literacy among different population groups of Archaic and Classical.

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500 The pots are *ARV²*, 1407, 1, with *Para*, 488 and *ARV²*, 1407; see most recently Williams 1996, 251, and Tiverios 1997, esp. 275-278, with references; earlier literature includes Klein 1887, 202-203; Kretschmer 1894, 116-117; Pottier 1906, 694; Perrot 1911, 371. Tiverios 1997, 276, reintroduces as a possible additional case a plastic kantharos of supposed Corinthian fabric (Louvre CA518), but said to come from the Athenian Akropolis, signed ‘ΚΑΘΟΜΕΝΕΣ ΝΙΚΙΟΤ ΑΘΕΝΑΙΟΣ ΕΠΙΟΙΕΣΕΝ’, incised in the wet clay. This is a much disputed object, first declared a fake by Furtwängler, then defended by Pottier and others, and, in turn, judged to be a falsification by Payne (1931, 180) and apparently Beazley (see references cited by Payne and Tiverios). The inscription confirms these suspicions, based on fabric and style. It is not only technically odd because of the technique of incision and the lettering, but the formula ‘son, father, origin’ is also strange, the only parallel being Nikias’s signature. Perhaps this text, which was known before the kantharos appeared in 1898, was a source of inspiration. Moreover, both Kleomenes and Nikias are well-known historical figures, and Kleomenes would be an Athenian with a Spartan name working in Corinth, which sounds hardly any more reassuring.

501 Neumann in Canciani 1978, 21-22; see Williams 1995 143.

502 Williams 1996, 251.

503 Pottier 1906, 694-696; s.a., 36-37; Perrot 1911, 371-372; Rosati 1973-1974, 196; see Paul 1982, 52. Much earlier Brunn 1871, 16-17, 29, cited spelling mistakes in one of his arguments to deny Greek workmanship to many pots which are now universally recognised as Attic. Quite similarly, Stähler 1971, 80-81, 107-110, argues that some pots with badly spelled signatures could not have been painted by Exekias himself.
Athens. Moreover, the writing capability of the signer, mostly the painter, is not necessarily representative of that of everyone who was involved in the pot's production. Seemingly firmer ground is provided by signatures and inscriptions with oddities in writing and spelling which seem to betray the writer's non-Attic origin. For example, the Nettos Painter, on his name-vase, places a non-Attic letter 't' in the centaur's name, Exekias has some non-Attic spellings, and the Brygos Painter writes pi for phi in the names Philon and Philipsos, which is a characteristic of an apparently Skythian dialect once imitated by Aristophanes. The potter's name Wechekleides finds few parallels in Athens, the digamma has a rare form, and its placement at the beginning of the name may be unique for Attic script. However, with the possible exception of the latter, all these inscriptions are written in good Attic apart from the few odd letters. Paul Kretschmer has pointed out that foreign (i.e. mainly non-local Greek) influences would have been quite common in Athens and Attic Greek. While obviously referring to the presence of foreigners, the observation would further imply that inscriptions with non-Attic spellings may sometimes have been written by second or third generation immigrants or even Athenians themselves. The Nettos Painter's 't', for instance, is possibly an idiosyncrasy which could have been handed down from a, presumably informal, teacher of foreign origin or descend. In the light of the largely clumsy writing on pots, including much odd and apparently non-dialectal phonetic spellings, it would be dangerous to base final conclusions on a few irregular letters if additional indications are not at hand.

One more important category of relevant inscriptional evidence remains: since the 19th century, it has frequently been maintained that some of the names in the signatures of Attic pottery betray the signers' foreign origins and/or low social status. Only a few scholars ventured to disagree, offering alternative explanations for the occurrence of apparently non-Attic or low-status names. Despite the force and detail of many of their counterarguments, they have barely

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504 Kretschmer 1894, 74-76, 80-81; Richter 1923, 100; Boegehold 1983; 1985, 31; Papadopoulos 1997, 454-455.

505 Boegehold 1983, with references, naming Hechekleides as a possible alternative reading. Boegehold seems to have overlooked fragments of a Panathenaic amphora from the Akropolis (Graef and Langlotz 1925-1933, I, no. 914), with an inscription restored by Beazley (ABV, 666) as 'ΚΑΛΟΣ ΕΣΕΚΕΛΕ[Σ]', but more recently by Johnston as 'ΕΕΕΚΕΛΕ[Σ ΕΙΟΥΕΣΕΝ]', for which see Bentz 1998, 28, 125, and no. 6.020, with references and photograph; the first letter is only partial and could well be 'r' (W). Moreover, one could add to Boegehold's parallels for Wechekleides an Echekles known from a dedicatory graffito found in the Corinthian Potters' Quarter, for which see Amyx 1988, 599.

506 Kretschmer 1894, 74, 80.


influenced the general opinion. The discussion is moreover somewhat blurred on both sides by the confusion of different kinds of such ‘impure’ names which should be treated separately.509

The apparently clearest category of possibly socially revealing names in signatures are those indicating an ethnic.510 In black figure: Lydos (‘Lydian’, twice,511 both painters); Kolchos (‘Kolchian’, after an area on the Black Sea, now Georgia, maker), Thrax (‘Thracian’, maker), Skythes (‘Scyth’, painter) and Sikelos (‘Sicilian’, painter). In red figure: again Skythes (maker and painter, possibly but not necessarily the same as the black figure painter), Sikanos (‘Sican’, after an indigenous tribe in Sicily, maker), Syriskos (‘little Syrian’, maker, and possibly painter as well)512, Mys (possibly ‘Mysian’, after a region in northwestern Turkey, but more likely ‘mouse’, for which see below, painter) and probably Brygos (‘Brygan’, after a Thracian tribe,513 maker, who possibly painted also). If the dedicators of the Penteskouphia plaques were indeed potters or potter-painters, one Corinthian example can be added: Lokris (‘Lokrian’, from a city in present-day Calabria, or an area in Central Greece).514

All these names seem quite appropriate for foreigners, especially slaves who often came from the Black Sea area, the inlands of Asia Minor and other borderlands of the Greek world. Indeed, female household slaves in Aristophanes are called (‘ha’, the) Skythaina, Thraitta and Syra;515 and Strabo, writing in the early 1st century AD, mentions Syros and Lydos as typical slaves’ names.516 It may therefore not be fortuitous that Lydos is the one self-professed slave who painted pottery, even if at best Myrina is only close to Lydia (one city of the name is in Lemnos, another on the Aeolian coast, but there is also the Athenian deme Myrrhinous).517

The matter is far from clear-cut, however. Often it is remarked that ethnic denominations were quite commonly given as names to Greeks, including Athenian citizens. Charles Dugas cites several examples, among others, a Lykios (‘Lycian’, after Lycia in Asia Minor), four Skytheses


512 See Williams 1995, 154-155.

513 Klein 1887, 175; Kretschmer 1894, 75, 81, 230, 234.

514 See Appendix II, C40 (Pl. 42b-c), and Amyx 1988, 607, no. (20).

515 Kretschmer 1894, 75, referring also to an inscription mentioning a slave Kolchos.

516 Strabo VII.3.12; see Canciani 1978, 20; Johnston 1991a, 212; Williams 1995, 143, 151.

517 Neumann, in Canciani 1978, 21, prefers Aeolian Myrina, which he states to be on old Lydian earth, although it actually lies slightly outside Lydia. I cannot understand why Neumann excludes the Athenian deme Myrrhinous as a possibility because its inhabitants were called Myrrhinousoi. As he himself states, the ethnikon for the cities called Myrina is only known as Myrniaios, so Myreneus, apart from being misspelled, is odd or wrong anyway.
(one a son of Herakles) and a Delphian Thraix; Hanna Philipp adds an Aigyptios.  

In contrast, others contend that in the case of Greeks such 'ethnic' names would usually refer to Greek places and areas, whereas all those of potters would be truly foreign. If so, we seem to be dealing with an exceptional situation indeed. On the other hand, as Dugas stressed, no trace of 'barbarian' influence is discernible in Attic pot-painting. Potting may be a different story, although the introduction of non-Attic forms (lydion, alabastron, kyathos, Nikosthenic amphora) is usually ascribed to imports or consumer demand rather than to the influence of foreign employees. In any event, most Attic potting and painting looks so thoroughly indigenous that even if (some of) the signers with foreign names were exotic slaves or immigrants, they must have had an intensive Athenian training, presumably beginning in childhood.

A final point is that ethnic denominations form perfect nicknames. The better known Lydos (i.e. not the slave) signs as 'hO ΔΥΔΟΣ', 'the Lydian', suggesting he also had a real name. Other signers were apparently less concerned about the inclusion of the article, however: only black figure Skythes uses it, but only once, while omitting it once or twice. An explanation for the use of such possible nicknames is not so evident, especially in view of their occurrence as signatures. An eastern-looking Greek or Athenian might be called 'Syriskos' by his friends, a blonde 'Skythes', or even someone who has travelled east 'Lydos'. On the other hand, very specific names like Kolchos and Sikanos appear to be odd as informal nicknames. It can easily be envisaged that these and the other ethnic names were given to slaves whose actual names were too difficult to remember or a matter of indifference. As it seems unlikely that the signatures were mainly intended for those few who were familiar with the nicknames and ignored their possibly denigratory connotations, we can wonder why such nicknames deserved to be recorded in signatures at all.

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518 Dugas 1960, 16; he also mentions the legendary Lydos, who, according to Herodotos, was the first king of Lydia; Philipp 1968, 79. Kretschmer 1894, 75, mentions a Sikanos on an Attic tombstone, so he was probably, but not definitely, a citizen. Also of unclear relevance are the Phryx mentioned as one of the admirors of a girl Aineta (or a man Ainetas?) on a Corinthian pot (see Amyx 1988, 562), and the female bread seller or baker Phrygia who dedicated a bronze shield on the Akropolis (IG I3, 546; see Bather 1892-1893, 128, no. 60; De Ridder 1896, 92-93, no. 264, fig. 60; Williams 1995, 152). Both might be citizens. See also, more generally, Rosati 1973-1974, 196; Boegehold 1985, 30; Immerwahr 1990, 38-39; Boardman 1991, 12; Williams 1995, 151, n. 57.

519 Boardman 1987a, 144; see also Dugas 1960, 15-16; Metzler 1969, 151, n. 96; Boegehold 1985, 30.

520 Dugas 1960, 15, 17; see also Kretschmer 1894, 81; Boegehold 1985, 31; Von Bothmer 1985b, 38; Boardman 1987a, 144; Williams 1995, 152-154.


523 ABV, 107, 1; 109, 21; 352, 1-2 (and possibly 352, unnumbered). See Klein 1887, 13; Dugas 1960, 15; Philipp 1968 79-80; Canciani 1978, 20; Boardman 1987a, 144; Williams 1995, 143.

524 See Dugas 1960, 15; Philipp 1968, 80. If the signatures 'ΠΙΣΤΟΣΕΝΟΣ ΣΤΡΙΣΚΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ' on the two cups Para, 352-353, 1-2, indeed refer to only one maker, as suggested by Williams 1995, 154-155, Syriskos would almost certainly be a nickname, but possibly nevertheless that of an immigrant and/or slave, as Pistozenos can mean either 'trusted stranger' or 'trusted host'.

525 As suggested by Boegehold 1985, 31.
Another category possibly denoting foreigners comprises signatures which have existent non-Attic names. These are extremely rare. Apart from the famous case of the black figure potter and probable painter Amasis (from ‘A-ahmes’, a common Egyptian name and that of a pharaoh), the only example is a red figure potter called Midas, like the more or less legendary Phrygian king. The possibilities and problems posed by both these names are similar to those regarding the ethnic names. The latter is recorded as a slave’s name; but despite the ambiguous reputation of king Midas as proverbially both rich and foolish, it seems perfectly plausible that a Greek citizen could have been named after him, like the 6th-century Athenian with the same name as the Lydian king Kroisos who lost his empire. As to Amasis, a Psammetichos, named after another pharaoh, is the last tyrant of Corinth, and another Psammetichos is recorded as the leader of an army of Greek (but perhaps partially locally born) mercenaries in early 6th-century Egypt, alongside a local general Amasis.

A pivotal problem regarding the hypothesis that the name of the potter Amasis derives from Egypt is that he may have been born too early to be named after the pharaoh, who came to power in 570 or 569/568. To judge only from the signatures of the potter Amasis, the earliest known example of which is traditionally dated to about 550, he may not have been born too early to be named after a reigning pharaoh. However, many scholars equate the potter Amasis with the Amasis Painter who decorated most of Amasis’s signed pottery and whose own oeuvre traditionally begins in about 560, that is, a decade before the earliest signature of the potter Amasis and rather too early in relation to the pharaoh’s accession. The seeming discrepancy perhaps argues against the identification of the potter and the painter as the same man.

There are several more or less plausible ways, though, to explain the Egyptian pharaoh name without having to separate potter and painter – who are likely to be one artisan on stylistic grounds. The simplest would be that Amasis was of Egyptian origin. This, however, seems


527 See Williams 1995, 143, 151.

528 See Boegehold 1985, 18, 30; Boardman 1987a, 143-144; Williams 1995, 144. Also two Erechtheion workmen are named Kroisos, one a slave, the other a metic; see IG I', 474-479; Philipp 1968, 79. A Corinthian graffito probably written around 600 contains both the apparently Persian name Angarios and the Macedonian name Amyntas, but these men, of course, were not necessarily citizens or even residents of Corinth: see Amyx 1988, 595.

529 See Philipp 1968, 80; Boegehold 1985, 30; Boardman 1987a, 144.

530 Boardman 1980, 116; 1987a, 143.

531 See e.g. Philipp 1968, 80; Boegehold 1985, 30; Boardman 1987a, 144-145; 1991, 54; Arafat and Morgan 1989, 321; Johnston 1991a, 212; Isler 1994, 93-94; Mommsen 1997 (the last two with references); see also Von Bothmer 1985b, 39; Immerwahr 1990, 38-39.

532 Von Bothmer 1985b, 38; see also Boardman 1987a, 143; 1991, 54.

533 See Dugas 1960, 13-14; Rosati 1973-1974, 195; Boardman 1980, 152-153; Boegehold 1985, 31; Arafat and Morgan 1989, 320; Johnston 1991a, 212; Williams 1995, 144-145, who have various views on this possibility.
unlikely. There is clearly nothing Egyptian about Amasis’s potting and painting, which is as Attic as any of that by his fellow manufacturers of Attic pottery who had ethnic names. Moreover, Amasis gave his son the perfectly Attic name Kleophrades – perhaps not a surprising choice for a foreigner who sees his future in Athens, but the combination of this rather classily-sounding name and the son’s use of his patronymic in signatures probably precludes that the father was a slave. The existence of free, very Hellenised Egyptian immigrants in 6th-century Athens seems hardly more likely. An alternative possibility would be that Amasis’s parents were well-informed about politics in Egypt and named him before the pharaoh’s reign began, perhaps because they were Greeks of Egyptian extraction, or more distant descendants of one of the largely Ionian mercenaries or immigrants from the Delta. Lastly, Amasis could have got his name relatively late, as a nickname. In both these last hypotheses, he could have been born in Athens, either from Athenian or from immigrant parents.

All these problems of explaining Amasis’s name might now be avoided by following Hans Peter Isler’s recent redating of Amasis and the Amasis Painter’s work. In Isler’s account, both start working around 550/545, just late enough to be named after the pharaoh, who must have been well known in Greece soon after his accession. This redating could be the most attractive solution to the Amasis riddle, although it probably will not end the debate. Unfortunately, Isler’s proposal has not won wide acceptance.

The third category of signatures possibly referring to foreigners is even more problematical. It comprises names which are grammatically or etymologically not soundly Attic, or which are otherwise unattested for Attica. The examples are in black figure: Priapos, Taleides, Thypeithydes, Sakonides, Myspios and the already-mentioned Wechekleides; and in red figure: Gaurion, Douris, Oreibelos, Oltos, Chelis, Hilinos and Phintias; Psiax signs in both black and red figure. Kretschmer’s selection of these names as non-Attic or non-Greek seems to rest on tenuous grounds, in view of the limitations of linguistics and our prosopographical knowledge. Moreover, as just seen, some Athenian citizens had far more peculiar or exotic names. In my view, it is best to leave this category of names out of consideration, except if accompanied by additional evidence, like Wechekleides, but this happens rarely.

In addition to the names indicating that some potters and painters possibly had foreign origins, the names of other signers have a diminutive form and/or an apparently denigratory meaning, or are simply most suitable for slaves or foreigners. The classic specimens are, in red figure,

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535 Williams 1995, 144; see, however, Boardman 1987a, 146, who does not see these problems.

536 Kretschmer 1894, 75; Boardman 1987a, 146. See Philipp 1968, 80; Von Bothmer 1985b, 38; Johnston 1991a, 212; Williams 1995, 144.


538 See Mommsen 1997.

539 Kretschmer 1894, 30, repeated by Boegehold 1983, 90, who adds Peikon as a possible example from the many signers discovered since 1894; see also Boegehold 1985, 30-31; Williams 1995, 145, 151; and for individual cases Frucht 1914, 34 (Douris); Kretschmer 1894, 229 (Oltos as a possibly Illyrian name; Williams 1992, 82, however, sees a connection with the Greek word ‘ουλατος’, woolly). Johnston 1991a, 212, mentions Kleitias and Nikosthenes as possible slaves’ names, but without explanation. The evidence for Boardman’s (1975a, 9-10) claim that 60 of the 125 preserved signers’ names in red figure are not Athenian eludes me.
Epiktetos (‘later, additionally, newly acquired’, hence also ‘coming from elsewhere’) and Smikros (‘small one’), a potter-painter and a painter, respectively. Other relevant names may be: in black figure, Phrynos (‘toad’), Priapos (after the ityphallic fertility god?), Polyppos (many-footed or polyp, the animal appears beside the inscription, making it doubtful whether the word is indeed the maker’s name) and Smikrion (once again, ‘small one’, but not certainly a signature); and the red figure painters Pistoxenos (‘trusted stranger’, possibly ‘trusted host’), Onesimos (‘profitable’) and perhaps Mys (‘mouse’, if not ‘Mysian’, see above). On the Penteskouphia plaques we find an addition to the animals, the dedicator Dorkon (‘deer’), as well as highly unflattering words: Phuskon (‘pot-belly’), Kop[ris] (‘dirt’, even ‘shit’; Appendix II, C39; see Pl. 42a) and Phlebon (‘vein’, apparently with an obscene connotation; Appendix II, C11; see Pl. 40a). Though not unique, the latter are rather surprising, especially on votive offerings; if indeed true names, they can hardly refer to free citizens or metics.

Nevertheless, just as the ethnic and foreign names are not necessarily always indicative of metics or slaves, so some evidence counters the assumption that these descriptive and denigratory names always denote low status. The alternatives are basically the same as those for the possibly foreign names. Smikros is widely attested in Athens, even for aristocrats, an Onesimos, son of Smikythos, is the donor of eight Akropolis dedications, and names directly related to ‘kopris’ have turned up in at least three inscriptions which are apparently not references to slaves. A Mys, admittedly a Karian, clearly a man of some status, figures in Herodotos (VIII.133-135) as an envoy of the Persian general Mardonios, though in a rather legendary story. Priapos, perhaps like Mys, may derive from myth or folk tale, somewhat comparably to the Midas or Kroisos mentioned above. As noted, two possible translations of Pistoxenos exist: ‘trusted stranger’ or ‘trusted host’, neither of which seems compatible with low regard. Onesimos and Epiktetos are more ambiguous: ‘profitable’ and ‘acquired later’ are not reserved for slaves alone, and Epiktetos may be compared to the present-day usage of Benjamin in reference to the last-born son of a family.

Animals’ names, descriptions of bodily features, including Smikros and Smikrion, and the scurrilous allusions on the Penteskouphia plaques are more perplexing. Most of them may well be nicknames, for example, Phuskon is known as such for pharaoh Ptolemy VII of Egypt. One

540 See Kretschmer 1894, 76; Pottier 1906, 695-696; Pfuhl 1923, 34; Dugas 1960, 16-17; Philipp 1968, 80; Metzler 1969, 151; Scheibler 1986, 798; Williams 1995, 154-155.

541 Amyx 1988, 607-608, nos. (12) (= Berlin F 392); (44) (= Berlin F 672-F 684-F770, here Appendix II, C38); (33) (= Berlin F 784); and (41)-(42)-(43) (= Berlin F 557; Berlin F 611, here Appendix II, C10; Berlin F 530-F 558); see also Pernice 1897, 29-30, 33-35. A complication is that only Phlebon can be regarded as a dedicating potter with any certainty, as one of his votive inscriptions occurs on a plaque with a potter’s scene, whereas Phuskon is the name label of a probable stoker, so that he is not necessarily also the dedicater of the plaque, however likely it may seem. Dorkon and Kopr[is] occur on plaques without depictions of potters, but Phlebon’s two dedications without a clue to his occupation in the picture demonstrates that the evidence is ambiguous.

542 See Dugas 1960, 16-17; Boegehold 1985, 29; Williams 1992b, 92-93; and the Akropolis dedication Raubitschek 1949, 53-55, cat. no. 53 (chapter IX).

543 Raubitschek 1949, 246-248, 384-389, 391-392, cat. nos. 217, 349-353, 357-358; see also Williams 1990, 36; and chapter IX.

544 Pernice 1897, 35.

545 See (more vaguely) Philipp 1968, 80.

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wonders, however, why people who surely had more respectable, common names would ever have signed or made dedications using nicknames, most of which seem even more denigratory than possibly some ethnics. Perhaps the most negative of them indicate slaves. Animals’ names like Polypous (if a signature) or Dorkon seem puzzling in every way, but perhaps no more so than other odd names which, as remarked, were not uncommon in ancient Greece.546

Finally, the pottery inscriptions can be compared with our best source for 5th-century Athenian metic and slave names: the building records of the Erechtheion. Its surviving parts mention 107 workmen, amongst whom 20 slaves, 42 metics and 24 citizens can be recognised. Their names form a mixed lot, but there is some distinction between the groups. All citizens’ names are perfectly regular, whereas a few striking names occur in the other groups. The metics are: Medos, Psammis (an Egyptian pharaoh), Kroisos and, perhaps, Teukros (‘Trojan’, but more likely after the Homeric hero, so within the regular pattern). The slaves are: Karion, Gerys (twice, probably a Persian name), Sindron (a slave name according to Athenaios), Kerdon (‘earning’, twice), Onesimos and, once again, Kroisos. Of them, by far most metics (38 or 39 of 42) and most slaves (11 of 19 recognisable names) have perfectly regular names, not revealing lower status in any way.547 In fact, the Erechtheion workers who are now recognised as slaves were initially thought to be citizens.548 In view of all this, it is hardly surprising that some potters share their names with famous members of the elites: Aischines, Polygnotos (three times), Aristophanes, Andokides (about whom more in the next section). Obviously, most ancient Greek names are less informative than many scholars assume.

In short, the pottery inscriptions offer meagre evidence for the origins and social positions of potters and pot-painters. Apart from the clear instance of the slave Lydos, the indications are equivocal. It can reasonably be argued that none of the other signatures examined above offers any conclusive argument in favour of metics or slaves working in the Athenian Kerameikos.549 But neither there is a compelling reason to suppose that Athenian pottery production was exclusively in the hands of Athenian citizens, and it can be inferred from the numbers of kinds of workmen in the Erechtheion lists that the few uncommon names more likely represent larger groups of non-citizens than that they denote citizens with exceptional names, who might have been relatively few. In any event, some names on pots refer very likely to foreigners, the most probable candidates being Wechekleides, ‘ho Lydos’, Brygos and possibly Amasis.550 The little evidence from Corinth adds nothing substantial; at most, Phlebon’s dedication and probably that of Kopris suggest that not only Athens employed slave potters.

On the other hand, the Erechtheion lists show that the perfectly regular names of potters and painters may sometimes denote artisans of foreign or non-Attic extraction. However, it is impossible to determine from the names and writing only whether such men employed in the Kerameikos (and perhaps at Corinth) were free metics or slaves. At any rate, even if seen from

546 See Boegehold 1983, 90, with n. 15.

547 The complete records have most recently been published in IG I3, 474-479; Randall 1953 is more accessible but selective; see esp. 199-202, 206-207. See also Kretschmer 1894, 76, n. 1; Austin and Vidal-Naquet 1977, 276-282.

548 See Randall 1953, 199-200; Philipp’s attempt (1968, 82) to revive the old view offers no new evidence and is not convincing.

549 See Dugas 1960; Philipp 1968, 77-83.

the most optimistic vantage point, the traceable non-Athenians are relatively few:551 of the 35 more or less odd names in pottery signatures considered by me, the ethnic and exotic names number only 13; and if some other slightly irregular names are added, the total can hardly exceed 20 craftsmen who can reasonably be considered non-Athenians, based on a total of about 160 signers, i.e. 1 out of 8.552 A more realistic estimate of the actual foreigners would be between 5 and 8, which at most represents 5 per cent of the total of 160 signatures. Whatever the exact figure, the suggested numbers in some discussions are almost certainly too high.553

To close, as rightly underscored by Scheibler, artisans of different status surely worked beside each other, often performing the same tasks with comparable results.554 We can discern no difference, neither qualitative nor quantitative, between the preserved output of potters and painters with perfectly Athenian names and those whose names may indicate foreign antecedents. Once again, the Erechtheion, where much work was carried out by mixed teams, offers a point of reference. Therefore matters of status, though surely directly relevant to both individual potters and painters and the pottery craft as a whole, may have had relatively little impact on the practical organisation of work. In other words: workshops with one or more non-citizen craftsmen probably operated in more or less the same way as those without foreign labourers, the main differences probably being confined to the way income was divided and perhaps the structure of ownership.

551 As previously remarked by Dugas 1960, 15; Williams 1995, 151. The situation for Corinth seems similar, if the Penteskouphia dedicators were indeed potters. Of a total of 3 signers and about 38 dedicators, 5, at most, have odd names (Lokris, Dorkon, Phlebon, Koprism and Phuskon): see Amyx 1988, 201, 255-256, 562-564, 569-570, 591, and his catalogue of names on Corinthian plaques on 603-607. Amyx lists 47 names; nos. 7 and 8 seem not to refer to dedicators or potters; and nos. 24, 31 and 39 belong to horses. Moreover, Phlebon occurs three times and Igron twice, whereas nos. 28 and 46 [P]erilos, apparently refer to the same plaque. No. 13 regards a plaque from the Potters' Quarter, which is perhaps less likely to be a potters' dedication. This leaves a total of 37 or 38 names, to which an Arist[...] on Berlin F 544, not included in Amyx's catalogue but mentioned on 605, could be added.

552 These 20 could be split up into about 10 foreign signers on 60-70 'makers' and 16 painters in black figure and 10 foreign signers on ca. 50 'makers' and 30 painters in red figure. For the total numbers of signers (based on Beazley's works), see Folsom 1975, 144-148; 1976, 192-195, 207; Tosto 1999, 1.

553 See Boardman 1975a, 9-10, who surprisingly identifies 60 non-citizens among 125 signers; Boardman 1987a, 144 even sees a majority of strange names. Williams 1995, 151, estimates ethnics at less than 7 per cent. Boegehold 1983, 90; 1985, 31 and Williams 1995, 159 rightly warn that such statistics are very uncertain.

554 Scheibler 1986, 798; 1995, 119-120.