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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IX To the gods and the world: potters’ votives as indications of wealth and status
The Pentekouphia plaques and the Attic pots with production scenes found on the Akropolis are not the only surviving potters’ votives. Among the Akropolis finds there are other pots with potters’ dedicatory inscriptions (see section VI.3 and Appendix II, D4, D6-D8) and, more importantly, the stone bases of marble and bronze sculptures (and perhaps metal or, less likely, ceramic vessels) whose dedicatory inscriptions are generally assumed to be by potters. The correspondences between the names of dedicators and of those in potters’ signatures were first recognised in the late 19th century, immediately upon the discovery of the relevant bases, and were soon advanced as proof of the high status and financial success of well-known potters like Euphrontios and Nearchos.729 The continued exploration of the Akropolis and its slopes and the restoration of the finds slowly revealed more names which could be associated with potters’ signatures, although the links were often tenuous. In his final publication of all the Akropolis dedications in 1949 Anton Raubitschek lists 29 certain or probable potters’ dedications.730

Unfortunately, many of Raubitschek’s restorations and interpretations are based on uncertain and sometimes unlikely assumptions and hypotheses.731 Thus, four of his identifications rely solely on the inclusion of the word ‘ἐργόν’ (work, in one case even restored) or ‘τέχνη’ (craft), which are doubtless much too vague to warrant attributions to potters.732 In two instances, the name of the supposed potter is only indirectly associated with the craft through supposed relatives.733 More than half of Raubitschek’s list (17 items, 9 individuals) comprises dedications either with the names of hypothetical potters or with names which do appear in the signatures of potters or pot-painters, but lack any additional links to these occupations; in fact, one dedicator, Eumares, is instead known as a panel painter, an entirely different activity.734 Two other partial dedications, supposedly by Brygos, preserve ‘BP...’ and ‘BPT...’,735 which seem a very slim basis for a reliable

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729 Studniczka 1887, 135, 142-147; Hartwig 1893, 2; Harrison and MacColl 1894, 21; Kretschmer 1894, 73; Jamot 1896, 1119; Gaspar 1902, 39-41; Pottier 1906, 692-693; s.a., 31; Perrot 1911, 370-371; Glotz 1920, 171; Pfuhl 1923, 34, 454; Richter 1923, 103; Hussong 1928, 66; Beazley 1944, 21-25; Raubitschek 1949, 458.

730 See Raubitschek 1949, 457-458, 465; the summary on 465 actually notes 30 items, but the last one mentioned (cat. no. 64) is apparently not considered a potter’s dedication and indeed offers no support for this possible explanation. See also Beazley 1944, 21-25; Webster 1972, 5; Rosati 1973-1974, 189; Siebert 1978, 116-117; Harrison 1979, 32; Scheibler 1979b, 13-14;

731 As early as 1944, Beazley, who knew preliminary publications of Raubitschek’s studies, argued for caution (Beazley 1944, 21-25). Others have expressed similar doubts about some or many of Raubitschek’s interpretations: see esp. Webster 1972, 5; Scheibler 1979b, 12-13; Johnston 1987a, 135; 1991a, 212; Gill and Vickers 1990, 7-8; Gill 1991, 30.


733 Raubitschek 1949, 238-239, cat. no. 209 (Kephalos), 389, cat. no. 355 (Theodoros); see Scheibler 1979b, 12-13.

734 Raubitschek 1949, 279-280, cat. no. 244; see also Studniczka 1887, 147-148.

735 Raubitschek 1949, 99-100, 216, cat. nos. 92, 179; see Scheibler 1979b, 12.
identification. Dedications by a Xenokles, Archeneides and Kriton, son of Skythes,\textsuperscript{736} are much later than the signatures of the potters of the same name. And the coupling of the hypotheses that the dedicators were the relatives of the potters with the same names and that they therefore had the same profession leads to even more hazardous speculation. Another three names – Aischines, Smikros and probably also Onesimos, who on his own dedicated seven basins and a pillar – are quite common in 6\textsuperscript{th}- and 5\textsuperscript{th}-century Attica, and cannot therefore be securely associated with the potters of the same names.\textsuperscript{737} Charinos, known also from the signatures of a few plastic vases, is not odd or characteristic either; moreover, it recurs in a shared dedication including several other names which cannot be linked to pottery production.\textsuperscript{738}

Raubitschek’s better cases are few. First of all, the so-called Potter’s Relief, ca. 500 or slightly earlier, possibly by Endoios, portrays a seated man holding two cups in one hand (Appendix II, S3; Pl. 53e).\textsuperscript{739} Unfortunately, only small bits of the dedicatory inscription remain, including ‘...ΑΙΩΣ’, probably preserving the final letters of the name. Paphaios has often been considered a possibility, but the identification necessarily remains conjectural: in fact, the inscribed remains supply no indication at all whether the dedicator was indeed a potter, as the subject seems to suggest.\textsuperscript{740}

Next, four bases bear dedicatory inscriptions with donors’ names possibly or certainly accompanied by (‘hO’) ‘ΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣ’, which is usually interpreted as ‘potter’, although it can also denote other kinds of ceramic artisans, like tile-makers.\textsuperscript{741} The best known is the base of a life-size statue, probably that of the famous kore (no. 681) dedicated by a Nearchos who is usually thought to be the prominent potter of the same name, active between ca. 570 and some years in the 550s.\textsuperscript{742} Incongruously, his supposed dedicatory inscription and statue are datable to about 530 at the earliest, with the 520s being more likely. Even if it is not humanly impossible that an old and apparently long-retired potter could dedicate a large kore on the Akropolis of Athens, it seems hardly probable, and nowhere is there any trace of a potting son or grandson of the same name. Moreover, the base preserves only the last pair of letters in ‘ΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣ’, and since ‘...ΤΣ’

\textsuperscript{736} Raubitschek 1949, 45-46, cat. no. 42 (Xenokles); 219-220, cat. no. 184 (Archeneides); 250-251, cat. no. 220 (Kriton); see Studniczka 1887, 143-144; Beazley 1944, 23 n.1, 24; Scheibler 1979b, 12. The same applies to a dedicator named Phrynos, who is not regarded by Raubitschek as a possible potter (1949, 32-33, cat. no. 30), although he has the same name as a much earlier black figure potter. See Beazley 1944, 24, n. 1; Scheibler 1979b, 12.

\textsuperscript{737} Raubitschek 1949, 50, cat. no. 48 (Aischines); 53-55, cat. no. 53 (Smikros); 246-248, 384-389, 391-392, cat. nos. 217, 349-353, 357-358 (Onesimos, son of Smikythos); see Beazley 1944, 23-24, 23 n.1; Scheibler 1979b, 12-13, 17.

\textsuperscript{738} Raubitschek 1949, 310-313, cat. no. 291; see Scheibler 1979b, 12; Cohen 1991, 77-80.

\textsuperscript{739} Raubitschek 1949, 75, cat. no. 70; see also Bloesch 1940, 144; Beazley 1944, 22-23; for further references, see Appendix II, S3.

\textsuperscript{740} See Johnston 1987a, 135.

\textsuperscript{741} For this last possibility: Beazley 1944, 23. See Johnston 1991a, 212.

\textsuperscript{742} Raubitschek 1949, 232-233, cat. no. 197; IG I\textsuperscript{3}, no. 628; see Studniczka 1887, 135-142; Beazley 1944, 21; Webster 1972, 5-6; Rosati 1973-1974, 189-190, n. 63 (with some doubts); Siebert 1978, 116; Scheibler 1979b, 9-10; 1995, 124; Boegehold 1985, 19, 28; Johnston 1987a, 135; 1991a, 212; Cohen 1991, 55; Laurens 1995, 168; Wagner 2000, 384. The given dates are taken from Boardman 1991, 35.
is a common ending, met in many Akropolis dedications, the restoration of the word is far from definite.  

Of the remaining three dedicatory inscriptions with ‘KEPAMETS’, one names a Peikon, who is not otherwise known. In contrast, the others show the names of renowned Attic potters: Andokides, together with Mnesiades, and Euphronios. As the dates of their ceramic oeuvres seem to match well with those of the inscriptions – the early last quarter of the 6th century and after 480, respectively – the dedications were almost certainly made by these potters. The statues of the inscribed bases have disappeared without a trace.

Recently, however, even the four most probable of the potters’ dedications have come under attack: in their general attempt to downgrade the status of Greek pottery and potters, Gill and Vickers contend that the Potter’s Relief represents a bronze smith and that ‘KEPAMETS’ indicates not the occupation of dedicators but their demotic (i.e. their deme, their official place of origin in the Athenian polis). In addition, taking it for granted that potters could not afford expensive votive sculpture, they conclude that the dedicators whose names correspond with those in potters’ signatures are instead upper-class Athenians, who cannot be further identified.

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743 An even more dubious case is offered by a now anonymous base (Raubitschek 1949, 168-169, cat. no. 150; IG I, no. 663; Wagner 2000, 384), which also has the ending ‘...Τ2’, and ‘made this’. This can better be left out of consideration precisely because the name has vanished; the maker referred to, moreover, is most likely to be a sculptor. See Beazley 1944, 24, n.1; Laurens 1995, 156.

744 Raubitschek 1949, 46-47, cat. no. 44; IG I, no. 633; see Beazley 1944, 23; Scheibler 1979b, 11-12; 1995, 124, 126; Wagner 2000, 384.

745 Raubitschek 1949, 213-216, cat. no. 178; IG I, no. 620; see Studniczka 1887, 145-146; Beazley 1944, 21; Scheibler 1979b, 9; 1983, 124-126; 1995, 124; Gill and Vickers 1990, 7-8; Laurens 1995, 169; Williams 1995, 147-148; Wagner 2000, 383. Gill and Vickers and Laurens note that the text runs ‘Mnesiades, kerameus, me with Andokides dedicated ...’, so that Andokides may not be designated as ‘kerameus’ at all, which could then lead us back to an aristocratic Andokides. Williams, however, suggests that the odd word order results from a metrical arrangement.


747 Andokides is usually said to be active from 540/530 to 510/500; Mnesiades is only known from one or two signatures dating to about 550-540, but we may of course have unrecognised potterwork of his. See for both: Williams 1995, 147-148, with references; Wagner 2000, 383-384; and for Mnesiades also Bentz 1998, 124, cat. no. 6.011. The exact duration of Euphronios’ long career is disputed, but it should extend from ca. 520 till about 470: see Williams 1990, 36-37.

748 It is even difficult to estimate the approximate sizes of these sculptures. Peikon’s dedication has a preserved socket of 15 x 13 cm (width x depth), so it must have been quite small. The offering of Mnesiades and Andokides was considerably bigger, as the preserved parts form the remnants of a pillar which seems to have measured 26 x 46 cm at the top. The fragments belonging with Euphronios’ inscription are even less informative, also because it is unclear whether they are parts of a pillar, as seems most likely to Raubitschek, or a flat base. The maximum preserved dimensions are 16 x 22 cm, but these regard only part of a complete (pillar) section. See also Scheibler 1979b, 13-14; 1995, 126-127.

749 Vickers 1985, 124-125; Gill and Vickers 1990, 7-8; see also Johnston 1987a, 135 (misleadingly quoted by Gill and Vickers). The possibility that ‘KEPAMETS’ is a demotic was already considered in Hartwig 1893, 2, footnote; Harrison and MacColl 1894, 21; Pfuhl 1923, 35; see also Raubitschek 1949, 216; Laurens 1995, 169.
But as earlier remarked by Johnston, among others, the reasoning is flawed. As to the Potter’s Relief, the opinion of Gill and Vickers that a metalworker is portrayed seems hard to reconcile with the thick, heavy forms of the cups held by the man (see Pl. 53c), although it must be admitted that an exact ceramic parallel to the shape is not available.\(^750\) Moreover, one might expect a metalworker to display a more distinctly recognisable example of his craft, like a decorated phiale or a more elaborate vessel. It can also be remarked that stemmed (or footed) cups are relatively rare in bronze or silver, whereas they are among the most characteristic and prestigious (or perhaps pretentious) pottery forms which have come down to us; and being not so easy to make, they could have been regarded by Greek potters as excellent illustrations of their talent.\(^751\) However that may be, Gill and Vickers’s identification of the man on the Potter’s Relief as a smith seems largely to rely on the circular reasoning that potters could not afford a large stone dedication.\(^752\)

The same kind of reasoning influences their interpretation of ‘ΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣ’. It is not easy to judge the argument, but it seems clear that the rather messy body of epigraphic evidence (including mostly other Akropolis dedications) contains both demotics and names of occupations ending in ‘...ΕΣ’ , each with or without the preceding article, which is mistakenly thought by Gill and Vickers to offer the key to the distinction between the two categories.\(^753\) Moreover, they disregard an important piece of circumstantial evidence: although many demes (and thus demotics) in the countryside had always existed, the official use of demotics was introduced by Kleisthenes only in 508. Afterwards, it lasted another generation before demotics came into general use in non-official inscriptions, as are most Akropolis dedications; especially people from the city (including the Kerameikos), where demes had not or only tacitly existed, were slow in

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\(^750\) Gill and Vickers 1990, 7; see Beazley 1944, 22-23. Bloesch 1940, 144; Scheibler 1995, 124-125 (with illustration) do see ceramic parallels.

\(^751\) See Cuomo di Caprio 1991; Scheibler 1995, 82.

\(^752\) The uncertainty regarding the name of the dedicator is, of course, irrelevant to the argument, whatever Gill and Vickers 1990, 7, make of it. It should be noted that Johnston (1987a, 135), whom they quote to support their views, has little doubt that the relief shows a potter.

\(^753\) Vickers 1985, 124-125 and n. 162; Gill and Vickers 1990, 7-8; see also Raubitschek 1949, 257, and his general discussion of the use of demotics in Athens on 467-478; Johnston 1987a, 135; Wagner 2000, 384-385. The relevant evidence follows. (1) The three ‘certain’ potters’ dedications with ‘ΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣ’. None has the article before ‘ΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣ’, but it can be restored on Euphronios’s badly preserved dedication. (2) Other artisans’ dedications. These offer a mixed list: Raubitschek 1949, 51, cat. no. 49 (‘ΤΟ ΚΝΑΦΕΤΣ’); 378-380, cat. no. 342 (‘TO [ΚΝΑΞΕΟΣ’); 60, cat. no. 58 (‘ΤΟ ΣΤΟΛΟΑΣΘΕΠ[ΟΣ]’); 231-232, cat. no. 196 (‘ΤΟ ΤΕΚΤΟΝ’); 410, cat. no. 383 (‘ΤΟ ΠΡΑΜΜΑ[ΤΕΣ]’), but also 407-408, cat. no. 380 (‘ΠΑΥΝΤΡΙΑ’, without article), and the comparable cases of 89-91, cat. no. 84 (‘ΚΙΘΑΡΟΔΟΣ’); 93-94, cat. no. 86 (‘[ΚΙΘ]ΑΡΟΔΟΣ’, probably without article) and 316-318, cat. no. 295 (‘ΚΕΡΥΣΣ’). There are also two small bronze Akropolis dedications of artisans: ‘ΠΩΛΩΤΙΚΕΣ (...) ΤΟ ΚΝΑΦΕΤΣ’ (IG I, no. 554) and ‘ΦΡΕΠΙΤΑ (...) ΔΕ ΑΡΤΟΠΟΙΑΣ’ (IG I, no. 546; see Bather 1892-1893, 128, no. 60; De Ridder 1896, 92-93, no. 264, fig. 60; Williams 1995, 152). (3) Demotics: excluding some uncertain restorations, Raubitschek 1949 notes 34 without article (cat. nos. 13, 40, 46, 47, 68 (a whole list), 118, 119, 124, 133, 135, 135a, 135b, 137, 138, 143, 158, 175, 176, 177, 184, 191, 193, 200, 202, 218, 246, 266, 287, 289, 304, 305, 312, 378, 384), against only one or two with article (239-242, cat. no. 210 (‘ΤΟ ΧΟΛΑΡΤΕΣ<ΣΤΕΣ>’)) and possibly 332-334, cat. no. 311 (‘ΤΟ ΠΛΑΝΕΤΕΣ’), which, however, could also indicate an ethnic). Direct evidence for Kerameis is offered by Vickers 1985, 124-125 and n. 162; Gill and Vickers 1990, 7-8: an ostrakon naming ‘ΑΕΑΡΤΟΣ ΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣ’ and inscriptions designating a Protonikos as ‘ΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣ’, but also as ‘ΕΚ ΚΕΡΑΜΕΟΝ’ (IG I, no. 465.123-124 and no. 278.1). (4) Appendix II, D5: an Archaic terracotta votive pillar from Metapontion, dedicated by a Nikomachos, who calls himself ‘ΔΕ [...] ΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣ.’ On the whole, the absence of the article seems to support the view that ‘ΚΕΡΑΜΕΤΣ’ is a demotic, but the possibility of a reference to crafts certainly cannot be excluded.
adopting the new system. In view of this, it seems very unlikely that the dedication of Mnesiades and Andokides, dating about 15 years before Kleisthenes’s reform, would contain a demotic; Peikon’s base, dated 500-480, would be a borderline case; but only Euphronios’s dedication clearly falls within the period when demotics were often used, though not always.

At any rate, Kerameis is unquestionably the deme where pottery production (hence its name!) was concentrated. As a result, there must be quite a bit of overlap between the usage of ‘KERAMETΣ’ to denote the demotic and the profession. It is therefore more than likely that a name documented in potters’ signatures and the same name modified by ‘KERAMETΣ’ in a dedication of approximately the same date as the signatures indeed refers to one and the same man: the potter. Only Peikon, then, about whom nothing more is known, remains a doubtful instance.

Altogether, the result is that at least three sculptures were doubtless dedicated by potters, and one or two more can possibly be added. At first sight, the figure is not impressive in comparison to the more than thousand ‘hands’ of potters and pot-painters distinguished by modern research or to the total of nearly 400 dedication bases from the 6th and 5th centuries which have turned up on the Akropolis. But it is all too easy to conclude from this small number that potters were a socially and economically insignificant group, as maintained by Arafat and Morgan.

In the first place, it must be borne in mind that very few Akropolis dedications actually offer more information about the dedicators than their names (and sometimes that of the father or other relatives and/or a demotic).

Further, in relation to the entire production of Attic pottery, signatures report relatively few names of potters. In fact, there is even the possibility, however hypothetical, that additional potters are represented by the names of other dedicators and, even more likely, by the many incomplete bases which show neither a name nor a profession (nor a demotic), not to mention the dedications which have been lost.

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755 Williams 1995, 155. It may be noted that both Nearchos’s dedication and the Potter’s Relief would also be too early to contain a demotic.

756 See Johnston 1987a, 135; 1991a, 212, contra Gill and Vickers 1990, 8. One can add that no other epigraphical or historical source mentions a Euphroneios, Mnesiades, Andokides or Peikon from Kerameis.

757 See, however, Williams 1995, 155.

758 Burford 1988, 383; Laurens 1995, 170. Scheibler 1979b, 13-14, has a different view. Note that most extant Akropolis dedications date between 530 and 480.

759 Arafat and Morgan 1989, 312; see also Laurens 1995, 170.

760 Raubitschek 1949, 464-469, treats 79 dedications offering ‘additional’ information, including, as stated, a far too optimistic 29 examples attributed to potters. On 473 he adds that 217 of the 393 inscriptions offer just a bit of a name or even less.

761 See Philipp 1968, 92; see also Raubitschek 1949, 459, 464-466, who remarks that of the 22 Akropolis dedications described or mentioned by Pausanias, the remains of 11 have been recognised. This ‘survival rate’ is remarkably high, but of course it concerns only major monuments, and by Pausanias’s time many dedications had doubtless vanished already. The general survival rate must be lower, especially for small dedications; moreover, preserved bits most often provide no clue to the dedicator.
But if we consider only other Akropolis dedications offering more information than simply a name and disregard the few public monuments, the picture changes dramatically: against at least three potters, we meet one or two fullers and a single tanner, 'TEKTON' (builder, architect or carpenter), probable shipbuilder, washerwoman and scribe;\(^\text{762}\) one small dedication is by the maker himself, probably a sculptor.\(^\text{763}\) Most of the dozen or so donors of other stone dedications who can be identified with some probability from additional historical or epigraphical sources are victors in games or politicians, all clearly members of the upper classes.\(^\text{764}\) However scanty the evidence, it would appear that pottery production enjoyed relatively more prominence than other crafts,\(^\text{765}\) and that some potters conceivably approached relatively higher economic and social status (without however participating in exclusively elite dedications like votive commemorations of political boards or victories).\(^\text{766}\)

Of course, in comparison to the total number of potters known by name or through attributions, three or even five sculptured dedications are very few, as if these potters represent an exceptionally successful minority. However, the theoretical group should not be excessively scaled down by too much overcautious positivism. The fact that only a few dozen of the hundreds of known contemporary artists, aristocrats, politicians and other prominent Athenians are found among the Akropolis dedicators is telling enough. If the proportion of wealthy potters to dedicating potters was comparable, there must have been dozens who could afford such dedications; but whatever their exact number, they were certainly not the non-existent species Arafat and Morgan or Gill and Vickers envisage them to be.

Our view of dedicating artisans is broadened somewhat by the bronze and pottery finds from the Akropolis. Among the scraps that remain of small bronze votives, there are no recognisable potter's dedications, but those of another fuller and a female breadseller.\(^\text{767}\) The far more numerous finds of pottery, though almost equally fragmentary, present a slightly different picture: we meet a few potters who explicitly made a dedication (section VI.3, Appendix II, D4; D6-D8), whereas neither the names of known individuals nor references to other crafts are among the dedicatory inscriptions. It can be supposed, moreover, that besides these explicit potter's
dedications, other pots from the Akropolis, especially signed and/or exceptional pieces, are also the personal dedications of their makers.  

The last probably applies also to the many Penteskouphia plaques showing Poseidon and/or Amphitrite or mythological scenes. At least two of them were certainly dedicated by their painters (Timonidas and Milonidas; Appendix II, C63; D1; Pl. 44b; 49e), but it is likely that also some or perhaps many unsigned plaques, especially the ones naming a dedicator, are the offerings of potters or painters. In any case, the more than 100 plaques or fragments with a pottery production scene represent about 10 per cent of all the Penteskouphia finds, which is a substantial proportion and far more than the few plaques illustrating other crafts or agricultural work. Of course, the Penteskouphia dump is not associated with an average sanctuary, and equally obviously potters are probably overrepresented among the dedicators of pots and plaques, which were so easily available to them. Nevertheless, the plaques seem to confirm the impression given by the Potter’s Relief, the bases and the probable votive pottery from the Akropolis that a good proportion of the dedicators were potters. Despite the obvious and strong biases in our documentation, the numbers of potters among the total population offer a better explanation for these apparent high proportions of potters’ dedications than any particularly strong religious feeling on their part. Specifying this general picture is obviously difficult. There is no way of checking the representativity of the available sample and its relation to the total number of potters or other craftsmen.

Another problematical and fundamental issue is the meaning of the dedications with regard to the status and wealth of the offering potters: the evidence is either indirect or highly conjectural. The ‘lowest’ range of gifts is perhaps least difficult to understand: the Penteskouphia plaques are clearly among the simplest and presumably cheapest (durable) offerings available and, as explained above (see section V.4), the painters of the pottery production scenes seem to have been little concerned about the image of the depicted individuals. The Akropolis votive pottery, though certainly by no means expensive, may reflect a slightly higher social and economic level. Lise Hannestad has remarked that it is generally of better ‘artistic quality’ and includes relatively more signatures, more red figure and more large, refined shapes (or specimens of shapes) than the pottery from the neighbouring Agora. Even though the certain and possible potters’ votives formed a tiny fraction of all such finds on the Akropolis, they appear to confirm Hannestad’s overall impression.

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768 See section VI.3; Robertson 1972, 180-181; Webster 1972, 4-5; Scheibler 1979b, 15-17; Thompson 1984, 9; Cohen 1991, 55; Williams 1995, 141-142; Wagner 2000, 385-386.

769 Berlin F 846 (=Appendix II, C63) and Berlin F511-Louvre MNC 212 (=Appendix II, D1). See Amyx 1988, 201, 255-256, 563-564, 591, 597; see also Studniczka 1887, 149; Williams 1995, 140.

770 Amyx 1988, 551-552; see also Scheibler 1979b, 16-17; Cohen 1991, 52.

771 Interestingly, the overview in Ziomecki 1975 suggests that a similar situation applies on a more general level to Attic scenes of crafts as a whole, not all of which, of course, are associated with votive material: there seem to be nearly as many pottery production scenes as all other crafts’ depictions combined, including those of Hephaistos as a smith.

772 In theory, one could compare the number of potters’ dedications to that of known contemporary signatures, but as each is a selective sample, the outcome would be meaningless. The inclusion of anonymous painters and potters from recent attributions would only muddle matters further.

773 Hannestad 1988, 229; 1992, 161-162; see for a similar argument also Wagner 2000, 386.
Lastly, even if the less coarse depiction of pottery production on Attic pots (as compared to the Penteskouphia plaques) is not meaningful in itself, the presence of these scenes and dedicatory inscriptions by potters among the offerings of the general public at the most important sanctuary of Athens must make clear that some potters and pot-painters were not ashamed of their profession and regarded themselves as more or less equal to the other dedicators. As a result, these potters are most unlikely to be slaves or metics, nor would they belong to the poorest and most despised groups of workers in the potteries. However, whether this implies that many or most potters were citizens, is another, unanswerable question.

On the other hand, the Potter’s Relief (Appendix II, S3; Pl. 53c) and the ‘KEPAMETΣ’ bases have decidedly the character of citizens’ offerings,774 in which case the wealth and social status of the donors becomes yet more problematical and intriguing than in respect to the lesser votive gifts. Although these sculptural dedications are relatively small compared to many others, they were surely not inexpensive. Very little is known about the cost of sculpture in the late 6th and the 5th centuries, but the indications are clear enough. In 409-406, 60 drachmai were paid for the carving of each figure (about 60-70 cm high) of the Erechtheion frieze.775 The Potter’s Relief, about 1.22 m high, would then have cost at least twice this sum, to which the expense of the marble, its transport and the placing of the completed work needs to be added; in all likelihood, moreover, ‘official’ architectural sculpture paid less than private commissions. And although a more exact figure cannot easily be advanced, the statues and bases donated by Peikon (quite small) and Euphronios could not have cost less than the Potter’s Relief, as free-standing, three dimensional, more deeply carved sculpture requires relatively more work and material than a relief. The statue (an Athena?) offered by Mnesiades and Andokides, if indeed made of bronze, must have been much more costly; a possible frame of reference is the price of 3,000 drachmai paid for life-size portraits in the Hellenistic period, when bronze was, however, comparatively more expensive (relative to silver).776 To conclude, a good guess is that the four potters’ dedications from the Akropolis cost at least several hundred drachmai each, and some of them probably even more.

However, these estimates bring us not even halfway to the desired result. To make sense of them, they must be correlated with the income or resources they represent, and probably with the price people were willing to sacrifice to make their status visible. The inscriptions on the dedication by Peikon, the Potter’s Relief and possibly the Euphronios’s base state that each was offered as a ‘AEKATEN’, a tithe.777 If this should be taken literally – which is far from certain – the dedications, as based on the foregoing estimates of prices, represent an income of several thousand drachmai, i.e. the monetary equivalent of at least as many medium-sized pots (the prices

774 Jamot 1896, 1119; Pottier 1906, 692; Philipp 1968, 79; Scheibler 1995, 126-127. Strictly speaking, this is uncertain in regard to at least the Potter’s Relief; and if ‘KEPAMETΣ’ is not a demotic, to the other three as well. Yet, the language, alphabet and names of these dedications are all perfectly Attic, and only a handful of the other Akropolis dedications are given by foreigners who are explicitly designated as such, or recognisable otherwise (Raubitschek 1949, 466-467, 478). Many other dedications have demotics and patronyms confirming the donor’s citizen status. Possibly dedicatory texts with names only ‘conceal’ non-citizens, although this is not the most likely situation; see however Raubitschek 1949, 466-467; Williams 1995, 152.

775 Stewart 1990, 66-67. See also Philipp 1968, 88, 91; Webster 1972, 7-8; Scheibler 1995, 124-125.

776 See Webster 1972, 7; Stewart 1990, 66-67; Williams 1995, 147.

777 In Euphronios’s inscription only ‘Δ...’ or ‘ΔΕ...’ remains, so the restoration ‘ΔΕ[ΚΑΤΕ]N’ is not certain.
of pottery are treated in chapter XIII). In addition, to cover the production costs, raw materials and other expenses, thousands or perhaps tens of thousands of more pots would have had to be manufactured and sold. Clearly, each potter’s dedication represents much more than one exceptionally profitable order, as has been suggested; even the best year’s income would be too little to pay for such a costly ‘ΔΕΚΑΤΕΝ’.

Perhaps these dedications instead represent, as previously advanced, an offering of thanks to mark the end of a career, although retirement is a typically recent concept. The more general hypothesis that an expensive dedication is a reward to the goddess Athena after at least several years of successful working and saving is probably the safest explanation.

Whatever the precise financial circumstances, it is clear that a minority of Athenian potters, however small, was able to set aside a considerable sum to pay for a dedication in the most prominent spot in the middle of Athens, and that these dedications, being openly recognisable as the gifts of potters, were placed among all the other votives on the Akropolis, including those offered by aristocrats. Evidently, not all potters were despised slaves, poor labourers, or insignificant craftsmen. Even if their physical work was looked down upon by the elites, whose social standing lay beyond their reach, a few of them, most likely successful workshop owners, evidently succeeded in emulating some of the elites’ more costly ways.

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778 See Webster 1972, 7-8. Scheibler 1995, 125 takes a price of two drachmai a pot as a starting point, which seems too high.

779 Webster 1972, 8; Wagner 2000, 386-387, both mentioning an order for Panathenaic amphorai, for instance.


782 See Scheibler 1995, 125-126. Another possibility is that the dedicating potters had other means or income besides that deriving from their main occupation, possibly from land holdings. If so, however, one would not expect the prominent inclusion of ‘kerameus’, denoting lowly regarded work, unless of course it is a demotic after all.


784 See Webster 1972, 8; Johnston 1987a, 135-136; Scheibler 1995, 126, 131-133; Williams 1995, 151.