Athenian little-master cups
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5. EXEKIAS, PAINTER OF LOUVRE F 54, c. 555/50 BC (nos. 117-22; figs. 50-54; pls. 38-40b)

Introduction

Lip-cups 117-21, bearing ἐποίησιν-signatures of Exekias, have received much attention as to whether the name refers to the renowned potter-painter who made amphorae and the fine type A cup with the image of Dionysos on a sailing boat in the coral red interior. The same signature on a Siana cup in Athens (1104) is the object of similar speculation.

Judging from the high level of craftsmanship in Exekias’ amphorae, K. Stähler rules out the possibility that the lip-cups were also manufactured by him. On the other hand, D. Callipolitis-Feytmans identifies the Athens Siana cup, which is stylistically linked to the lip-cups, as early work of Exekias. Based on a study of the Exekean inscriptions, H.R. Immerwahr concludes that those of the lip-cups were not written by the Exekias who signed amphorae. Whereas L. Rebillard’s examination of the Exekean signatures leads her to the opposite conclusion: the signatures on the cups are by the same hand as those of Exekias’ larger shapes. H. Mommsen agrees with Immerwahr that the inscriptions of the lip-cups were all written by one artisan whose script differs from that of the eigenhändigen signatures of Exekias. She observes also that the signatures of the Athens Siana cup are probably by that same hand (as are also the palmettes of the Siana cup and the lip-cups).

Remarking that the ornamentation of the signed lip-cups was not carried out by the famous Exekias, M. Steinhardt leaves open the matter of the potter’s identity. H.A.G. Brijder finds it unlikely that the Athens Siana cup was fashioned by the master Exekias himself, maintaining that an improbably large time gap separates the Siana cup, 560/55 BC, from his earliest identified painting, that is, the amphora in Taranto, 550/40 BC.

Significantly, however, any perceived time gap is bridged by four Group E amphorae, two showing ἐποίησιν-signatures of Exekias, dating around 550 BC, which Mommsen identifies as early work of the potter. In fact, the two signatures may well be the earliest known that he wrote himself as the script finds parallels in the inscriptions of vases which he also painted; moreover, inscriptions are otherwise very rarely met in Group E. Mommsen notes further, correctly in my opinion, that it is impossible to determine if the lip-cups, all of which seem to be products of one potter, were fashioned by the renowned potter-painter; the same applies to the Athens Siana cup which is linked to the lip-cups by its inscription and ornaments.

In short, the lip-cups and the Athens Siana cup may very well be our earliest extant potterwork by Exekias, who at that point in his career let other craftsmen apply the decoration (as on the two Group E amphorae with his signature). To judge from similarities between their handle-palmettes and

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534 Type A cup: Munich 2044; ABV 143-46; Ψάρα 59-61. Additions are made by E. A. Mackay and H. Mommsen, e.g., Malibu, Getty 80.AE.101 (Mackay 1983, 39-40, fig. 1), Taranto s.n., and Athens, NM Acropolis 649-d (Mommsen 2002b, pls. 61-62). Literature on Exekias’ cups: Hoppin 1924, 96-97, 102-3; Beazley 1932, 178, 180, 183, 185, 187, 208; ABV 146-47; and Ψάρα 61 under the heading ‘Other vases with the signature of Exekias’; Stähler 1968-70; Haldenstein 1982, 196-9; Immerwahr 1990, 35-36, nos. 146-150; Rebillard 1991; Mommsen 1998; Brijder 2000, 617-21; KLA I, 249 (M. Steinhardt).

535 Stähler 1968-70, 80.

536 Callipolitis-Feytmans 1986, 39.

537 Immerwahr 1990, 35-36, nos. 146-150: ‘With the possible exception of 146 (i.e., the Athens Siana) the Little Master cups, although potted by Exekias, were not painted by him.’

538 Rebillard 1991, esp. 560-62. Rebillard’s dating is unclear: on p. 550 she places the first little-master cups at 560 B.C.; on p. 552 they appear ‘au milieu du VIe s.;’ in n. 10 on p. 554 they were made between 550 and 530; the Siana cup Athens 1104, which Rebillard considers ‘contemporain des premières coupes à lèvres’ (p. 555), is then dated by her ‘vers 540’ (p. 563).


540 KLA I 249; ‘Ob E: selbst diese Schalen eigenhändig getöpfert hat, ist nicht zu entscheiden.’

541 Brijder 2000, 621. For discussion and dating of the Taranto amphora see Mommsen 2002b, 229.

542 Louvre F 53; Toledo 80.1022; London B 147 and B 194; Mommsen 1998, 44-46.

543 This means that the signatures were applied by someone other than the painter of the figurework, as sometimes happened in the case of Nikosthenic signatures (Tosto 1999, 185-86). In contrast, H.R. Immerwahr convincingly shows that the signatures of Paphaios, often situated outside the decorated area, were written by the painter himself (Immerwahr 1984).
Inscriptions, the lip-cups and the Athens Siana cup were decorated by one craftsman, who is here named the Painter of Louvre F 54, after the first lip-cup. An unsigned band-cup (122, pl. 40a-b) can also be assigned to this painter, although it cannot be established if it was fashioned by the potter of the lip-cups.

**Shape and dimensions**

All of Exekias’ lip-cups are large, with diameters between 22.0 and 23.7cm (fig. 50). Of their bowls, one is medium (118), two are deep (117, 121). The feet of 118 and 121 are high and medium, respectively.540 These lip-cups are so similar that they must have been thrown by one potter.541 The band-cup 122 has a deep bowl and short, sturdy stem. In antiquity, its foot broke off and was reattached by pouring lead into the hollow stem. In order to prevent the formation of air bubbles, a hole was often drilled through the centre of the bowl, allowing the air to escape when the lead was poured into the stem. In this case, however, the lead streamed out into the bowl.542 With regard to many other cups in need of repair, this method was not always considered suitable in antiquity because the lead would not affix strongly enough to the smooth surface of the stem. Therefore small holes were drilled through the wall and filled with lead rivets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date-type</th>
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<td>15.4</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>0.48</td>
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**Chart 10. Average absolute and relative dimensions of Exekias’ lip-cups.**

Fig. 50. Profile drawing of 117 (1:2).

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540 The foot of the Louvre cup (117) is alien; that of the one in the London market (120) is modern, modeled after the foot of the Munich cup (118). I wish to thank Heide Mommsen for sending me her profile drawing of the Geneva cup (121). For a profile drawing of 118 see Fellmann 1988, Beilage 5.5.


542 Other examples of this restoration method are, e.g., 123, 132, 141, 323, 344, 412, see Heesen 1996, 161-63, no. 40; Brijder et al. 1996, pls. 95, 96.1, 98.2, 99; Fellmann 1989, 25, with more examples. M. Vickers’ interpretation of the rivet holes of 323 as a practical joke (Vickers 1980, 183-84, pl. 29) is unconvincing because of the ample evidence that such holes were commonly drilled to make repairs. For vases with ancient repairs, found mainly in funerary contexts, see here chapter eleven, section on provenance. For ancient repairs see S. Pfister-Haas, « Wenn der Topf aber nun ein Loch hat »...Restaurierung griechischer Keramik in Antike und Neuzeit, Leipzig 1997; eadem, Antike Reparaturen, in Bentz 2002, 51-57; R. Donijses/O.P. Nieuwenhuyse, Ancient Repairs: Techniques and Social Meaning, in Bentz/Kästner 2007, 15-20; Nadalini 2007.
Inscriptions

The inscriptions read ἐποίησεν, with some variation. One of them, 117, shows the so-called speaking object type, with two double-point dividers: EXEKIAΣ/MEPOIEΣΕΝ/ΕΥ. Word-dividers occur also on 118-19 and 121. The spelling of the verb is not always consistent: on one side of 118, the iota of the diphthong and the final part of the aorist are missing, EXIOEPΣ; on the other side the syllable ΣΕ has been omitted (fig. 51). The fragments from Civitavecchia (119, pl. 38d) lack the terminal ΕΝ.

Fig. 51. ἐποίησεν-signature of 118.

The letters are small and have not been sharply drawn because the writer had a tendency to let the brush clog and smear (fig. 51). Differences are evident in their size and spacing, and the inscription is not written in a neat line. In contrast, such irregularities are not met in the inscriptions of Exekias’ larger pieces.

As remarked above, H. Mommsen notes, rightly in my view, that the precise, more angular and widely spaced letters of the Exekian inscriptions on the Athens Siana cup are probably by the same hand as that of the lip-cups (as are the palmettes of the Siana cup and lip-cups 117-20).

Fig. 52. ἐποίησεν-signature without word-divider on 120.

Interior decoration

Only one cup, 117 (pl. 38b), has figurework in the tondo, which is badly damaged due to the loss of the foot (pl. 38b). It is bordered by tongues. The relation between the diameters of the medallion and bowl is 0.59:1 or large.

The subject is a winged female, who is often identified as Nike or Eris. However, without additional figures or labels, as found inside a cup of Tleson (33, pl. 95f), this type of figure remains very difficult to identify. The figure is always posed in the so-called Knielauf, moving swiftly to the

543 Stähler (1968-70, 80) concludes that the expression of praise in the inscription for the maker of such a minor piece is proof that it could not have been thrown by the same potter, i.e., Exekias, who fashioned exceptional monumental vases. One must keep in mind, however, that Exekias’ cups precede his larger work.

544 Of the signatures of Exekias on larger vases, none has a word-divider.

545 The omission of iota is not unusual; see Kretschmer 1894, 130, section 111. Exekias does the same on his neck-amphora, Berlin F 1720 (ABV 143-44).

546 For a similar development in the script of other painters see n. 235. The nonsensical inscription on side B of the Siana cup belongs to a class which bears an ostensible relation to meaning by playing with the letters of οῖνος or ἐποίησεν. Cf. Immerwahr 1990, 44, with n. 30, and Immerwahr 2006, 144, with n. 31, where he mentions a number of cups with such inscriptions; Munich 2127 and 2172 should be removed from his list because one has a distorted signature, the other various letters which have no relation to ἐποίησεν. To be added are: Berlin F 1765 (Furtwängler 1885, 292, no. 1765), London, market (Christie’s, 31 October 1978, no. 382), Paris, Louvre Cp 10271 (not previously published), possibly also Rhodes 10575 (ClRh III, 174-75, fig. 168).

right and, in all but three cases, looking round. Besides 117, there are only three examples of winged females in little-master cups provided with winged boots. She is dressed either in a long chiton or in a short one with her left leg exposed. The hem pattern of the chiton of the winged divinity inside 117 finds a parallel in the work of Lydos.

Exterior decoration
Each side of the Louvre cup (117) depicts a single grazing deer (pl. 38a), which is a particularly frequent subject in the workshops of the Tleson Painter and the Centaur Painter. The deer are placed a bit off-centre, too far to the right. Their bodies are thin, their ears very long.

Both sides of 120 present a unified action: a hunter and, opposite, his prey. The hunter is a Scythian archer, as recognized by his pointy leather cap with long ear flaps and his one-piece suit which, judging from the markings, is made of animal skin (pl. 39a). Elsewhere, Scythis sometimes wear short chitons. On little-masters, such archers, who are not necessarily dressed in complete Scythian attire, are most often accompanied by hoplites or involved in fighting. Perhaps the painter of 120 simply wished to emphasize the Scythians' proverbial skill with bow and arrow. Moreover, Scythian hunters are usually seen in groups, such as the Calydonian boar hunt. No other representation of a Scythian hunting alone is known to the author.

The hunter's prey - the deer on the opposite side (pl. 39b) - lifts its head towards the danger, disturbed during grazing. The curving pose of the neck is similar to that of a deer scratching itself with a hind leg.

Similarly to the grazing deer of the Louvre cup (117), the lone panther on each side of the Geneva cup (122) is portrayed as standing still on all four legs, which is the most common stance for a panther.
lone panther on a lip-cup (pl. 39c-d). In contrast, as we shall see, panthers on lip-cups of the Tleson Painter and the Centaur Painters always raise one foreleg. Other painters of lip-cups depicted a lone panther as leaping forward, with both forelegs extended.

The animals in the handle-zones of the band-cup in Los Angeles (122) are not simply duplicated on each side, as most often occurs on animal band-cups. It has been noted above that probably the most usual theme of animal band-cups consists of a grazing deer in combination with panthers, as on one side of 122 (pl. 40a). In contrast, the combination of panthers and hens on the opposite side is rare (pl. 40b). Curiously, the hens and panthers stand quite close to one other, whereas the two central hens are relatively far apart.

On all cups, the figurework, however limited, is apparently the work of one painter. All the animals are very slender and have similar incising, as is clearly visible on 120 and 121 (note the shoulder and belly lines). The resemblances between 121 and 122 are even stronger. Their panthers are nearly identical: note the inverted-heart-shaped ears, incised eyes, nose, whiskers, shoulder and leg lines and ‘furry’ paws (fig. 53a-b). Both cups were probably made during the same period of the painter’s career. Small differences can be noted in the animals of 122, however: the panthers have two additional rib markings and the grazing deer is rather heavily built in comparison to the painter’s other animals, although their incisions correspond to those of his other deer on lip-cups. The two hens replacing the central deer on the other side of 122 are characteristically slender.

![Fig. 53a-b. Panthers of 121 and 122.](image)

**Ornaments**

Apart from the palmettes of 121 and 122 (fig. 54c-d), which have seven rounded, black leaves with a red dot at the tip, the palmettes of the other cups (fig. 54a-b) consist of 11-13 fairly stocky, black leaves. The palmettes of Exekias’ Siana cup (Athens 1104) are very similar to those of lip-cups 117-20. It seems rather likely that, despite difference in the leaves, these palmettes and those of 121 and 122 were made by the same painter: note that the volutes of 120 and 121 (fig. 54b-c) are nearly identical to those of other cups of the same painter. The legs are missing on Siamo K 1002 (Kreuzer 1998a, 178, no. 227, pl. 42).

For cups of the Tleson Painter and the Centaur Painter see 292-94, 588 and 589 (pls. 84a-e, 153d-e). For depictions of a single panther raising one or both forelegs on lip-cups see nn. 1178-79.

Panthers and hens do appear together in animal friezes of band-cups, but never without other animals (or sometimes humans) and never in this composition.

For additional black palmette leaves with dotted tips see lip-cups: Cambridge (Mass.), private (Sotheby’s London, 31 May 1990, no. 364), Munich 9408 (Feilmann 1988, pl. 3.1-4); and band-cups: Copenhagen, ThorMuse H 576 (T. Melander 2000, CVA 1, pl. 63-65), New York, market (Emmerich Gallery, Masterpieces of Greek Vase Painting, 1964, no. 12), also a fragment from Himera (Allegro 1988/89, 640, pl. 92 fig. 2).

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identical; compare also the large red cores bordered by double incisions). The palmettes of 121 and 122, with red dots on the tips of the leaves, are especially close; however, the tie of 122 is incised. Furthermore, since they diverge from the handle-palmettes of the other cups attributed to the Painter of Louvre F 54 (the Athens Siana cup and 117-20), it may be concluded that he experimented with a different type of ornament during this period of his career.

Provenance and chronology

Three cups come from Etruria: Vulci (118) and unspecified Etruscan places (117, 119). As happens so often, no excavation data are available which might help to establish the chronology. Exekias’ Siana cup in Athens is central to the dating of these lip-cups because of the similarities in their decoration, specifically the palmettes and lettering. Brijder assigns the Athens Siana cup to c. 560 or no later than 560/55 BC. The more rounded script of the lip-cups suggests that they, in turn, are later than the Siana cup. The shape of the lip-cups points to a date between 555 and 550 BC or a bit later. If so, they predate the earliest identified work of Exekias as potter (the four Group E amphorae, two of which bear his signature, c. 550 BC) and as painter (the Taranto amphora, 550/40 BC).

The Louvre lip-cup (117), decorated inside and out, is most likely the earliest of the lip-cups. Those without figurework, 118 and 119, are closest to the Louvre cup. The figured lip-cup 120 follows: its palmettes link it with 117-119, while the palmettes’ volutes link it with 121. The Geneva lip-cup, 121, corresponds most with band-cup 122 (note the palmettes, for example; they are probably the latest, around 550 BC.

Concluding remarks

All these lip-cups have been fashioned by one potter. The slightness of their potterwork may be accepted as evidence of production early in the potter’s career. The Exekias named in the ἐποίησεν-signatures of 117-21 may very well be the same craftsman as the renowned potter-painter of the same name, although the question of the potter’s identity cannot be conclusively answered.

Brijder’s objection to the attribution of the Siana cup and lip-cups to the renowned potter Exekias, namely, a large time gap would separate the signed Siana cup in Athens from the pottery which can safely be assigned to Exekias, seems no longer applicable because Mommsen has identified early pottery of Exekias from c. 550 BC, which was not painted by him, however. Chronologically, the lip-cups are slightly prior to the earliest amphorae which Exekias potted. These amphorae and the lip-cups close the time gap towards the Siana cup in Athens.

One painter seems to be responsible for the decoration of not only the lip-cups and single band-cup, but also for that of the Athens Siana cup. Many resemblances are visible in their inscriptions, figurework and handle-palmettes. This painter, who was someone other than Exekias, is here referred to as the Painter of Louvre F 54.

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564 Because of the close relation to Siana cups, the (sparse) dates given by others to individual cups must be too late: c. 550/40 (120, Christie’s London, 6 July 1994, no. 521; Wünsche 2008, 93, fig. 7-5), c. 540 (120, Munich, Auktion 34, 6 May 1967, no. 129; Schnapp 1997, 500, no. 221; 122, Frel 1994b, 18. Kozzlof 1981, no. 101; Christie’s London, 26-27 October 2004, no. 35).

565 Cf. n. 537.

566 Cf. n. 538.

567 Mommsen 1998, 49.
If the potter of these cups was indeed Exekias, we see that early in his career he started to fashion Sianas and lip-cups (possibly band-cups as well) which he gave to another craftsman to decorate. Subsequently, he switched to making larger shapes, the earliest of which were adorned not by him but by a Group E painter. Later, he potted and painted the same pieces.