Athenian little-master cups

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6. TALEIDES, TALEIDES PAINTER, c. 550/40 BC (nos. 123-30; figs. 55-58; pls. 40c-42)

Introduction

Taleides’ signatures appear on various shapes, mainly cups: a Siana cup in Taranto and eight little-masters (123-30). The other signed pottery comprises an amphora, three oinochoai, a lekythos, loutrophoroi, and pyxides. H.A.G. Brijder attributes four unsigned Siana cups to the potter Taleides, which, together with the signed specimen in Taranto, form his Class of the Taleides Siana Cups. (123) J.D. Beazley noted that most of this signed pottery, if not all, has been decorated by one artisan, whom he named the Taleides Painter, whose hand has also been recognized on several pieces without Taleides’ signature, including three hydriae, two of which are signed by the potter Timagoras, and lekythoi. Other observers have made several attributions to the Taleides Painter. (124) and another lip-cup is very possibly by him, for in composition, subject and incising of collar bones it recalls very closely the signed cup 123. (125)

The Taleides Painter’s style lacks much consistency. Even both sides of the same cup may vary considerably in style and execution (e.g., 123). His early work, consisting for the most part of cups, is of meagre quality and not especially original; the cups are sparingly decorated with simple scenes. However, his workmanship on other shapes, which will not be discussed here, is generally of better quality.

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125 Brijder 2000, 621-22.
126 ABV 174-76; Para 72-74. Note that amphora ABV 174.1bis; Para 73 is now San Antonio 86.119.1, and lekythos ABV 175.12bis; Para 73 is now Princeton Cl 24. The hydriae signed by Timagoras are Paris, Louvre F 38 and F 39 (ABV 174.5.7). Very close not only in size and shape but also in design are the hydriae decorated by the Zurich Painter (ABV 92.1-3), to whom three more hydriae have been given: St. Petersburg B. 1512 (attributed by K.S. Gorbunova; cadem 1983, 21-22, no. 5), Florence 70994 (attributed by P. Bocci; idem 1969, CVA 5, p. 4), London, market (attributed by P. Heesen; BAAD no. 10597; Christie’s London, 21 April 1999, no. 148; previously, Sotheby’s London, 12 June 1997, no. 304; previously, Sotheby’s London, 17 May 1983, no. 250).
128 London, market (Sotheby’s, 14-15 December 1991, no. 269). However, since I have not been able to obtain good pictures of the cup and must rely on the small illustration of the interior in the sales catalogue, a definite attribution to the Taleides Painter can not be made here. After long consideration I have decided that there is not enough reason to accept Haldenstein’s attribution (1982, 107-8) of four lip-cups to this painter, although earlier I understood and agreed with her assessment of two of them. Berkeley 8:358 and Rhodes 12216 (Heesen 1996, 129, n. 1); on the other hand, A.A. Lemos (CVA Rhodes I [2007], p. 103) indeed considers the latter two work of this painter. Haldenstein’s attribution of the other two lip-cups, Munich 2229 and Christchurch 55:58, has never been accepted by me. Finally, note also the lekythos, Rhodes 12217, assigned by Lemos in her CVA Rhodes I (pls. 74.1-4, 75.1-2) to ‘Near the Taleides Painter’, and the lekythos regarded as ‘Close to the Taleides Painter’ (Charles Ede, Pottery from Athens XVII, 2001, no. 4).
Fig. 55. Profile drawing of 127 (1:2).

Shape and dimensions

The earliest preserved lip-cup of Taleides (123) is small, in combination with medium deep bowl and extra high stem. The latter feature, which is unusual for a cup at this time, results probably from a mistake made in antiquity when the foot was rejoined to the bowl by pouring lead into the hollow stem.274

The other lip-cups are medium to large, with diameters of 16.3–25.0 cm. The bowl of 127 is medium, its foot high (fig. 55). The lips of all the lip-cups are sharply offset. On 126 the lip is quite high in relation to the more narrow handle-zone. Taleides’ single band-cup is medium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date-type</th>
<th>H.</th>
<th>D.</th>
<th>Foot</th>
<th>Bowl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. 550 - Lip-cup</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>550/40 - Lip-cup</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>550/40 - Band-cup</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 11. Average absolute and relative dimensions of Taleides’ cups.

As a rule, the standing surface is rather flat, and the handles curve up to just below the rim. Only the handles of 126 rise slightly above the rim.

Inscriptions

Apart from the nonsensical inscription on side B of 125, the inscriptions are the simple ἐποιεῖσθαι type, one of them being the speaking object variant (129). The first epsilon of the verb is always missing. Most often, the words are separated by a divider consisting of two (129) or three dots (123–24, 126–27, 130, 131). In the signatures on both sides of 126 and 130 the word-divider is incorrectly placed after the pi of the verb. On 125 and side B of 127 there is no divider. The small letters are not written in a neat line, and the sigma tends to be elongated (fig. 56). Misspellings occur twice: on side B of 127 the lambda is missing and an alpha appears erroneously in the verb (fig. 57); on fragment 128 the first epsilon is omitted.275 Nonsensical inscriptions, as on side B of 125, mark also some cups in the Class of the Taleides Siana Cups, one of which seems to play with the letters of Taleides signature; imitation inscriptions also occur in this class.276

274 Possibly an alien foot has been attached to the bowl; the lost central part of the warrior’s body has been repainted. For this repair method see n. 342.

275 Cup 124 has three dots on side A (fig. 56), two dots on side B. A word-divider of three dots occurs rarely; only two other examples are attested on little-master cups: Euchairos 3 (fig. 6a, in chapter one) and Anakles 257. Three dots also appear before or after a few labels of sphinxes on 109 (pl. 34a).

276 On the Siana cup Taranto 112570 the iota in the name is omitted on one side, while on the other side it is misplaced, occupying the position of the name’s sigma.

277 Taranto 52200, Brijder 2000, 622, pl. 196-a-b.
It is interesting that none of the cups bears a drinking-inscription, since one is written in retrograde between the two figures of an oinochoe signed by Taleides and attributed to the Taleides Painter, Berlin 31131.

Interior decoration

Only one cup, 123, is decorated inside, showing a tondo surrounded by rings. The medallion is relatively very small (0.32). The subject - a nude warrior wielding a stone - is unusual (pl. 40b). Stones, usually painted white, are the common weapon of centaurs, while a spear or sword would be the expected arms of a warrior.

The tondo of another lip-cup, once in the London market, shows a single, nude warrior in a medallion surrounded by rings, which is very close to 123 in both style and composition, though the warrior is properly equipped with a spear and sword. If the warrior of 123 is meant to be part of a continuous narrative involving the centaurs on the exterior, he could only represent a Lapith. In fact, a relationship between all the cup’s figures is suggested by their use of a stone or boulder as weapon. As a rule, of course, centaurs wield large boulders in the centauromachy to pound the Lapith Kaineus, who was invulnerable to ordinary weapons, into the ground.

Exterior decoration

The profile shield of the warrior of 123 has large white letters along the rim, ΣΟΤΕΡ, meaning saviour or guardian, which is a fitting motto for defensive armour.

References:

578 ABV 176.2 (where the chaire-signature is not mentioned). See the new photos in Schlesier/Schwarzmaier, 164-65, cat. no. 15.
579 For tondos with ring borders see n. 275.
580 This is the smallest preserved medallion in my database.
581 For a warrior armed with stones see 563 and 650 by the Centaur Painter (pls. 146b, 166a; on 563 no trace of added white can be discerned). In the case of the Centaur Painter, the inclusion of stones may be explained by his tendency often to mix up attributes and characteristics of different figures (see chapter ten). Cf. also the youths with shields who wield white stones as weapons on 562 (pl. 146b). The Centaur Painter frequently armed centaurs with stones. An unattributed band-cup from Baragiano also depicts warriors with white stones: Baragiano s.n. (website exhibition ‘Principi ed eroi della Basilicata antica’, Potenza 18.6.2009-15.1.2010).
582 London, market (Sotheby’s, 14-15 December 1981, no. 269). For a possible attribution to the Taleides Painter see n. 573. Only one other lip-cup with a single warrior in a medallion with tongue border can be cited, known to me from photos only (Basel, market, MuM, unknown date).
584 ΣΟΤΕΡ is an epithet of Zeus and other deities. ZEY ΣΟΤΕΡ is inscribed on two red-figure vases (Kretzschmer 1894, 87, no. 57, nn. 6-7). A nonsensical inscription is written in a similar way along the rim of a shield on an amphora attributed to the Manner of the Princeton Painter, Rome, VG 50700 (Caruso 1985, 22, no. 16).
Mythological subjects

As explained, the centaurs carrying boulders on 123 are possibly part of a centauromachy involving the warrior in the tondo (pl. 40c-d), although a direct relationship between interior and exterior is not found in other little-master cups. Remarkably, details of the centaurs on either side of the cup diverge; note the different incisions of the eyes, beards, upper arms and hands. As99

A seated sphinx adorns the lip on each side of 126 (pl. 42a-b). Varied representations of a lone sphinx are frequently met on lip-cups, especially by the Tleson Painter and the Centaur Painter. They generally preferred either a seated sphinx with one forepaw raised or a sphinx standing on all fours, but the Tleson Painter, at least once, also depicted a sphinx posed as on 126 seated with both forepaws on the ground and facing forward.125

Non-mythological subjects

Amongst the cups with animals on the exterior, 124 stands out because of the antithetic pose of the lions in which they look round, turning their heads away from one another (pl. 41a-b). On side A, they are separated by quite a bit of space. In other antithetic compositions, especially popular in the Group of Vatican G 61, the animals face one another.120

The single lion on each side of 125 (pl. 41c-d) seems to be taken directly from 124 particularly since lone lions which look round find no parallel on other lip-cups.126 Like the left-hand lion on either side of 124, these lions have short, nearly horizontal dashes along the contour of the buttck.

The single swans of 127 (pl. 42c-d) and 128 are portrayed in the standard pose seen on lip-cups, with spread wings, as favoured especially by the Tleson Painter.127 Only two lip-cups are known to the author where the wings are shown stretched back.128

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99 One might wonder if only the foreparts of the centaurs remained would they be attributed to one painter, let alone to the same period of his career.

126 291 (Tleson Painter, pl. 83a-d) and unattributed lip-cups: Athens, NM Acropolis 1573 (Graef/Langlotz, 168, not ill.), London, market (Sotheby’s, 17-18 July 1985, no. 562; previously, idem, 5 July 1982, no. 306), Lugano, market (Atelier Amphora, not previously published), New York, market (Sotheby’s, 8 December 1995, no. 68), Rome, VG 79877-79878 (Hannestad 1989, no. 7a-b), Vatican 35048 (Iozzo 2002, 141-42, no. 189, pl. LXXVIII). With forepaws on the ground, but looki

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Ornaments
The Taleides Painter’s handle-palmettes consist of many thin, black leaves (11-15) which may be rather stocky and separated by space, as on the Siana cup in Taranto (112570), or a bit thicker and more rounded. One cup, 127, has both kinds (fig. 58).

Fig. 58. Varied palmettes of 127.

Provenance and chronology
One cup comes from Megara Hyblaea, Sicily (128); three are from Etruria, probably funerary contexts (Vulci, 125, 127; Cerveteri, 129), and two from unspecified places in Italy (124, 126). No excavation data can be cited.

Various factors—both interior and exterior decoration, style, use of the ring border—seem to indicate that 123 is the Taleides Painter’s earliest lip-cup and probably only slightly later than the potter Taleides’ signed Siana cup in Taranto (112570) which Brijder, based on the funerary context, assigns to shortly before the middle of the century.596 It would then seem to follow that lip-cup 123 was manufactured around 550 BC. The other lip-cups, in turn, most probably date from the 540s BC.

Concluding remarks
The signed pottery indicates that a workshop relationship linked the potter Taleides with the Taleides Painter from shortly before 550 BC to 540 BC, and that one also existed between the potter Timagoras and the Taleides Painter from c. 540 to the early 530s BC.598 Of the unsigned pieces decorated by the Taleides Painter and fashioned probably, at least in part, by the potter Taleides (particularly the lekythoi which show uniformity of shape), none can be placed after c. 540/35 BC. Therefore it appears that the careers of both the potter Taleides and the Taleides Painter ended around that time.596 Furthermore, although unprovable, it seems most probable that the Taleides Painter was the same artisan as the potter Taleides because of the continuity of their production throughout their careers. As a result, the two hydriae signed by Timagoras would then date from the end of the career of the potter-painter Taleides.597 One can only speculate about the reason that Taleides decorated the pottery of a fellow potter; for instance, the action of turning the potter’s wheel might have become too physically demanding. Besides the potter-painter Taleides and the potter Timagoras, the Zurich Painter may also have been employed in this workshop in about 540 BC because his hydriae are very similar in shape, style and design to those of Timagoras and the Taleides Painter.598

Many commentators have noted the undeniable influence of Amasis and the Amasis Painter on the potter-painter Taleides as seen especially in shapes other than cups.599 In my opinion however, 596 For the palmette on the Siana cup see Brijder 2000, 618, fig. 151.
597 Brijder 2000, 622. For the tomb-group see Masiello 1997, 175-77.
598 The hydriae signed by Timagoras (Paris, Louvre F 38, F 39; ABV 174, 5, 7) are assigned to c. 540 BC by T. Mannack and C. Wagner (KLA II, 466).
599 The unsigned Boston hydria (68.105) is dated rather late, c. 540/30, in True 1978, pl. 73.
600 B. Cohen’s suggestion (in Shapiro et al. 1995, 90) that the Taleides Painter started his career as painter for the potter Timagoras is disproved by the evidence of the cups.
601 Beazley (ABV 174.1) states that the small amphorae, like New York 47.11.15, may have been ‘suggested to Taleides by Amasis’, and that, in shape, an oinochoe of Taleides (ABV 176.1) ‘is not unlike’ the oinochoe of the Amasis Painter, London B 524 (ABV 154.47). B. Legakis remarks that the shape of the Taleides Painter’s lekythos in Malibu (Getty 76. AE. 48) ‘is comparable’ to some of the shoulder lekythoi of the Amasis Painter (Legakis 1983, 74). Although all this may be generally so, Taleides’ lekythoi are much larger and less carefully potted than those of Amasis, as noted by Mommsen (1997b, 17).

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a workshop relationship between Taleides and Amasis, as advanced by A.J. Clark who calls them ‘workshop companions’ because of the agreement between their lotus bud patterns, finds no support. The ἐποιεῖσθαι-signature of Amasis on the Malibu lekythos can not be trusted, as H. Mommsen has, convincingly in my view, argued. Nevertheless this signature has confused and continues to muddle our assessment of these craftsmen, as did once Sakonides’ fragment 186 when it was erroneously incorporated into Eucheirōs’ cup 5.