

***Epoiesen, egrapsen,*  
and the organization of the vase trade**

The obverse scene of the krater Oxford 526 by the Komaris Painter (PLATE VI c) was the subject of J.D. Beazley's first contribution to this journal,<sup>1</sup> an exemplary account from which the relevant passage deserves to be quoted:

The space on A is divided by a pillar. To the left of the pillar is the painter's room. A young man dressed in an exomis and seated on a stool is painting the background of a large bell-krater of the same shape as our vase. His left arm is inside the krater, the rim resting on his thigh, and he is applying a large brush to the lower part. At his side is a stand, supporting the skyphos-shaped vase which contains the black paint. In front of the painter a fellow-workman moves to the right carrying a second krater by both handles. He has lifted it from the ground beside the painter and is carrying it out to put it down beside a third krater which stands on the ground at the extreme right of the picture. Presently the batch will go to the furnace. Beyond the pillar is another workman who moves to the right in the same attitude as the last. In his raised right hand he holds a skyphos by the foot. Perhaps he is taking it to join a batch of vases of the same shape, but more probably he has been sent by the busy painter to fetch more paint ... A pleasant rhythm is thus imparted to the scene; the first figure is occupied with both vase and paint; the second with vase; and the third with paint.

Despite the apparent oddity of craftsmen at work wearing the chlamys, the typical garment of travellers and knights, no one has questioned the basic assumption. Beazley, however, later modified his interpretation:

One's first impulse would be to assume that the krater held by the youth in the middle had just been painted by the seated youth and was being carried out for firing; but of course it would have to stand and dry before being taken by the handles. More: this is the one way, it seems, that an unfired pot must not be held. If so, the vase is fired and finished, and the connection with the painter is less close than might have been expected.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *JHS* xxviii (1908) 317, pl. 32; *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1064/3. Bibliography there, in *Paralipomena*, 446, and T.H. Carpenter, *Beazley addenda* (2nd ed., Oxford 1989). Add I. Scheibler, 'Formen der Zusammenarbeit in attischen Töpfereien', in *Studien zur alten Geschichte* (Festschrift S. Lauffer) iii (Rome 1986) 785-804, pl. 1.f; B.A. Sparkes, *Greek pottery: an introduction* (Manchester 1991) 18, fig. II.5. I am grateful to Alan W. Johnston for reassuring me (three years ago) that the substance of this note had not been anticipated; he is in no way responsible for the contents. I am indebted also to the students of two advanced-level classes for their comments, and to the Ashmolean Museum (Dr. M. Vickers) for the photograph.

<sup>2</sup> *Potter and painter in ancient Athens* (London 1946) 17; the work is reprinted in D. Kurtz (ed.) *Greek vases: lectures by J.D. Beazley* (Oxford 1989). See also G.M.A. Richter, *The craft of Athenian pottery* (New Haven 1923) 74.

Dealing with the scene for the last time in *ARV*<sup>2</sup>, he described the motif briefly as 'vase-painters'.<sup>3</sup>

There are not many vase-paintings that show the chores of the workshop. This is only natural. To the painters (and no doubt to their public) no subject could be more humdrum than this one which so fascinates the modern student; when it does occur, one may expect it to be enlivened by a touch of wish-fulfilment, or at least of the unusual. In the present case, all difficulty disappears if the painter's companions are seen as customers, fine gentlemen calling to pick up crockery for a symposium. By anticipation and in a gesture of leave-taking, one of them brandishes his skyphos in a way not uncommonly seen in komos and party scenes,<sup>4</sup> less natural in a workshop-hand on his way to 'fetch more paint'.

Even at twenty-three Beazley did not make senseless blunders, and he would surely have cited in defence of his own reading two cloaked figures from comparable contexts—the boy busy with a kalix-krater on the Caputi hydria, and a potter by his wheel on an Acropolis fragment.<sup>5</sup> The former makes the better parallel; the other figure's garment, as Beazley remarked, 'has no folds, as if it were of thicker stuff'.<sup>6</sup> His well-remembered comment on the hydria—'this is certainly not an average day in the Mannerist workshop'<sup>7</sup>—is a statement of the same point that was argued above; Beazley no doubt alluded obliquely to the presence of divinity, but principally to the choice of vase-shapes in the picture. Pottery shapes, glorified, become like metal shapes. Other appearances may be glorified, too.<sup>8</sup>

All in all, these two pictures are slender evidence for the chlamys as working attire, and they do not compel one to interpret as pottery-hands all characters seen handling pots and wearing the chlamys, if another interpretation is available. On the other hand, garments in Greek art are seldom completely without significance. Are the scenes set in cold weather?<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Loc cit.* (n. 1). Some authors adopt this version, taken *au pied de la lettre*, without (as far as I can see) supporting it with fresh arguments: H. Philipp, *Tektonon daidala* (Berlin 1968) 84 n. 335, 109 no. 12; J. Ziomecki, *Les représentations d'artisans sur les vases attiques* (Warsaw 1975) 96-7.

<sup>4</sup> For example, *Hesperia* lxi (1992) pl. 32.d (Louvre G 100, by Euphronios); W. Hornbostel, *Aus der Glanzzeit Athens* (Hamburg 1986) 114 (cup in private possession).

<sup>5</sup> For illustrations of the Caputi hydria (Leningrad Painter, *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 571/73) see *JHS* lxxxi (1961) 73-5, pls. 6-7 (J.R. Green). For the Acropolis fragment (Painter of the Louvre Centauro-machy, *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1092/76) see Beazley (n. 2) 14-15, pl. 5.2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Beazley (n. 2) 14.

<sup>7</sup> Beazley (n. 2) 13.

<sup>8</sup> That cheaper materials are attracted to the forms of expensive materials is a commonplace of archaeology, and fancy carries this tendency farther than practice can; so Green's correct observation that the vessels shown on the hydria have metal shapes does not fully warrant his inference that these people are not vase-painters. J.V. Noble, *The techniques of painted Attic pottery*<sup>1</sup> (London 1966) 54 n. 19, and <sup>2</sup> (London 1988) 205 n. 11, adds: 'The neatly draped clothing ... surely is not typical of their daily work clothes.' J. Bažant, *Studies on the use and decoration of Athenian vases* (Prague 1981) 13-22 on the 'Ideality of "Scenes of reality"' deserves to be widely read; Sparkes (n. 1) unfortunately omits it in his bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> When fastened at the nape of the neck a chlamys would pull tighter about the body for more warmth. This scheme predominates in the western parts of the Parthenon Frieze (dawn, by the Dipylon gate) giving way gradually, as the day

For the purpose of this note, however, the interesting point is that the customers appear to deal with the painter; no potter is present. It should be noted that exceedingly few pictures do show vase-painters in company with potters<sup>10</sup> despite their obvious need for access to the wheel and the kiln. Painters in fact would seem to have thought of the two trades as separate. Was this a realistic view on their part? Is there any evidence that they were (or might be) independent economic agents, dealers in their own wares?<sup>11</sup>

A direct indication exists in the commercial graffiti on Athenian vases, though admittedly it involves only a minute fraction of the output.<sup>12</sup> Each graffito denotes a transaction, recurrent graffiti denote a number of transactions by the same person; and such 'close groups' of graffiti, it has been observed, are strongly correlated with identifiable painters and stylistic groups, but on the whole unrelated to identifiable potters. *Prima facie* this should mean that painters, not potters, had dealings with customers, as the Komaris Painter's scene suggests.

One may instance the case of Nikosthenes, not because it is the clearest, but because his name appears with *epoiesen* on an unusually large number of vases and provides the strongest case for the potter-dominated vase-factory.<sup>13</sup> Of his many painter-collaborators only two have left work bearing graffiti. Those on vases by Painter N follow a consistent, distinctive pattern. The work of the BMN Painter no more than suggests a pattern, but clearly a different one.<sup>14</sup> If a potter arranged the sales, unless there is a clear gap in time between the painters, it is strange that his routine should vary in this way. If the painters did the selling, no such problems arise.

It can be argued that a master-potter might find it convenient to leave to trusted employees the commercial as well as the technical end of their activity. They were specialists who worked one section (not necessarily a major one) of his market, and knew it well.

and the cavalcade proceed, to the more casual and smarter manner of wearing the brooch on the shoulder. See A. Frantz and M. Robertson, *The Parthenon Frieze* (London 1975) South i-xxii, North xxvi-xlii, West i-xvi, *passim*.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed the fragment, n. 5, may be the only one. Separate but associated pictures of potter (at work) and painter (with customer?) may be suspected on the cup in Karlsruhe, AA (1969) 138-52; Sparkes (n. 1) 14 fig. II.3 and p. 18. For other illustrations see Beazley (n. 2), Ziomecki (n. 3).

<sup>11</sup> H. Philipp (n. 3) 83, arguing from the Oxford krater and the Caputi hydria, could envisage independent painters' workshops, an idea rejected by Scheibler (n. 1) 799, on technical grounds (the constant need to transport green ware about the Kerameikos).

<sup>12</sup> Alan W. Johnston, *Trademarks on Greek vases* (Warminster 1979); see especially p. 45, with n. 13 on painter or potter affinities.

<sup>13</sup> A *communis opinio* that will not be easily shaken: see, e.g., J. Boardman, *Athenian black figure vases* (London 1974) 64. The 'export policy' with which Nikosthenes is sometimes credited could, of course, alternatively be that of individual painters who turned to him as the acknowledged expert on shapes used abroad.

<sup>14</sup> Twelve marked vases by Painter N have graffiti of two types: Johnston (n. 12) 46, 208, etc. Four vases by or near the BMN Painter all bear different marks, two with possible Ionian affinities (*ibid.* 191-92); none of them exists in the work of Painter N.

However, the term 'employee' should not be used without reflection. If, as we are led to believe,<sup>15</sup> your free Athenian disliked being permanently dependant on one employer, there is (when we disregard slave-status and family bonds) a certain presumption that the habitual preference of free agents, no less often than 'employment' in the modern sense, determined the regular collaboration between a potter and a painter. Again, a 'workshop' in the most relevant sense was a locality and a set of necessary installations<sup>16</sup> of which any surplus capacity might be hired out by the owner.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, a freelancing vase-painter would scarcely need to install a wheel and kiln of his own, or transport green ware to and fro in the alleys of the Kerameikos; for potter-labour, wheel-time and kiln-space were likely to be available whenever business slackened in other branches of pottery manufacture.

It cannot be denied that this line of reasoning leads in an unexpected direction. Is it possible that painting vases in Athens was a seasonal occupation whose 'highs' coincided with 'lows' in other ceramic production? The question has not been asked; it ought to be asked, if only for that reason.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, to justify the title of this note, the matter of signatures.<sup>19</sup> There are too many imponderables, apart from personal whim, for any single hypothesis to account for a practice which seems at first sight completely random. In general, difficulties result from the view that signatures on pottery normally express artistic self-consciousness. It is a little easier to posit that their *normal* purpose was practical, and would be intelligible

<sup>15</sup> Xenophon, *Mem.* ii 8.3 is the text usually cited. Note the political effect which T.W. Gallant ascribes to this ethos, *BSA* lxxvii (1982) 124.

<sup>16</sup> In J. Christiansen and T. Melander ed. *Proceedings of the 3rd symposium on ancient Greek and related pottery* (Copenhagen 1988) 524, W. Rudolph rightly complains of the less than precise archaeological usage.

<sup>17</sup> Kiln-sharing is feasible but would be hard to prove; it is accidentally attested for Gaul in Trajan's reign, see J.A. Stanfield and G. Simpson, *Central Gaulish potters* (London 1958) p. xxiv. I owe this observation and reference to T. Refvem. For a survey of recent finds relating to pottery production in Athens, see *OJA* viii (1989) 321-23, 342 (K.W. Arafat and C.A. Morgan); *AAA* xviii (1985) 39-50; *AR* 1988/89, 13.

<sup>18</sup> By way of prolegomena: a short working-year helps to account for an awkward discrepancy between output figures for rustic potteries in modern times and tentative (but well-informed) estimates of Athenian vase production, see L. Hannestad in Christiansen and Melander (n. 16) 222-23. Winter is an obvious 'low' for the making of ceramics in general: D.E. Arnold, *Ceramic theory and cultural process* (2nd ed. Cambridge 1988) 61-98; I. Scheibler, *Griechische Töpferkunst* (Munich 1983) 118; Arafat and Morgan (n. 17) 328; J.M. Hemelrijk in T. Rasmussen and N. Spivey (ed.) *Looking at Greek vases* (Cambridge 1991) 256. But may not coarse pottery be more affected by winter climate than thin-walled fine ware, causing potters to favour the latter? Cf. Arnold, *op. cit.*, 70. The winter season offered to the Athenian vase-painter a good home-market in the concentration of Dionysiac festivals, and time to work up a stock for the start of the sailing season.

<sup>19</sup> See the discussion in this journal, vols. xci (1971) 137-38 (R.M. Cook); xcii (1972) 180-83 (M. Robertson); xciv (1974) 172 (M. Eisman). M. Vickers in vol. cv (1985) 126, provided a salutary reopening of the debate, but his own suggestion is very hard to reconcile with the evidence, and Sparkes' (n. 1) judicious summing-up, 65-68 with n. 23, shows that the situation is substantially the same as it was twenty years ago.

if one knew the routines of the business better.<sup>20</sup> Almost the only rule that is too general to be accidental—and a puzzle in itself—is the fact that names with *epoiesen* occur much more often than the painter's signature, with *egrapsen*.

Regarded as practical information, then, the inscriptions suggest a situation where the painter's name was less useful. If the customer's dealings were more often with the painter, the pattern is logical; the opposite applies if the potter was his normal contact. The identity of the person from whom a batch of vases was bought or ordered would be known to the purchaser; not so the identity of the fellow-craftsman who in this case shared responsibility for the goods delivered, and who would no doubt, on his part, be eager to have it known.

Each of the three kinds of evidence that we have looked at—of pictures, of graffiti, and of signatures—is hard to assess; but together they suggest looking more closely at the hypothesis that many vase-painters ran an independent business and had free disposal of their own produce.

My students got a different impression from Beazley's—who spoke of a 'room', and 'out'—of spatial organization in the Komaris Painter's picture. The hanging objects suggest a continuous wall extending to left and right of the pillar. The two walking figures overlap the pillar slightly. We might be looking at an open shed (or simple stoa) from the open space in front, the craftsman at one end, his sales display at the other, and the two cloaked men just emerging. This seems viable, but the picture may not stand up to such minute analysis.

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<sup>20</sup> The former point is well brought out by R.M. Cook, *Greek painted pottery* (2nd ed. London 1972) 256-57; the latter is exemplified by Eisman's (n. 19) guess that signed vases may be identification pieces for shipment. While hard to substantiate, such a theory neatly explains the occurrences of two makers' names on the same vase, indeed one feels there ought to be more such cases. See Cook (n. 19) 137 with n. 2.

### Palamedes seeks revenge

An Attic black-figure neck amphora in the British Museum (PLATE VI *d*) depicts a winged warrior rushing to the right to overtake a ship that is sailing in the same direction. To the left a bird perches on a craggy rock.<sup>1</sup> The winged warrior in this enigmatic scene should, I believe, be identified as the ghost of Palamedes, whose urgency in outracing the ship is dictated by his thirst for revenge.

The name of Palamedes never appears in the Homeric epics. Most people, like Strabo,<sup>2</sup> assume that this is because the story of Palamedes (and of his father Nauplios) was a creation of the poets of the later epic cycle and so was invented only after the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had been completed. Philostratos, however, suggested that Homer *did* know about Palamedes, but suppressed any mention of him because

he wished to glorify Odysseus.<sup>3</sup> For the story of Palamedes shed such discreditable light on Odysseus' character that the stain it left on the wily hero's reputation could never be effaced.

The tale was certainly told in the *Cypria* (if not before) and was then developed, particularly by the great classical tragedians, all three of whom wrote tragedies called *Palamedes*.<sup>4</sup> In fact, during the fifth century BC Palamedes, whose history now seems rather obscure, was vividly alive in men's imaginations:<sup>5</sup> he appeared in Polygnotos' painting of the Underworld,<sup>6</sup> and his fate—unjust execution—made Socrates ready to identify with him<sup>7</sup> and eager to meet him after death.<sup>8</sup> Small wonder: Palamedes was the cleverest of the Greeks<sup>9</sup> and—like Socrates—had to pay for his cleverness with his life.

Proclus, in his summary of the *Cypria*, mentions Odysseus' feigned madness<sup>10</sup> and Palamedes' role in exposing it. The story can be pieced together from various sources.<sup>11</sup> Odysseus was reluctant to join the Greek expedition, knowing that if he went to Troy he would not return for twenty years, and then only after much suffering. Thus when the generals came to summon him he pretended to be insane, putting on the cap worn by madmen, yoking together two ill-matched beasts<sup>12</sup> and sowing his fields with salt. While the other Greeks were baffled by this bizarre performance, Palamedes immediately saw through the ruse. He realised that Odysseus' attachment to his family was what made him unwilling to go to the war and cleverly played on just this sentiment.<sup>13</sup> He threatened the baby Telemachos, and thus forced Odysseus to show his

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Apollonios of Tyana* iv 16. In his *Heroikos* (195) Philostratos takes this idea to an absurd extreme, suggesting that Odysseus made it a condition of his confiding to Homer the true story of the Trojan war that Homer would suppress all mention of Palamedes. (G. Anderson, *Philostratos* (London 1986) 245 gives a translation of the crucial passage.) See also F. Jouan, *Euripide et les légendes des chants cypriens* (Paris 1966) 354-56.

<sup>4</sup> There was also a tragedy called *Palamedes* by Astydamos the Younger, and tragedies on related themes (*Odysseus Mainomenos*, *Nauplios Pyraeus* and *Nauplios Katapleon*) by Sophokles. Gorgias composed a *Defence of Palamedes*.

<sup>5</sup> D.F. Sutton, *Two lost plays of Euripides* (New York 1987) 111-51 (esp. 111-13, 129, and 153) argues that Euripides' *Palamedes* was intended to allude to the achievements and fate of Protagoras. He claims that 'In the dramatic and rhetorical literature of the fifth century BC Palamedes was firmly established as a mythological archetype of the the creative intellectual ...' 112.

<sup>6</sup> Paus. x 31.1.

<sup>7</sup> Xen. *Ap.* 26.

<sup>8</sup> Pl. *Ap.* 41 b.

<sup>9</sup> His cultural contributions in many instances overlap those attributed to Prometheus (and occasionally others, e.g. Kadmos in the invention of writing) cf. E. Wüst, *RE* xviii<sup>2</sup> (xxxvi<sup>1</sup>) 1942, s.v. Palamedes 2511-2512. W.B. Stanford, *The Ulysses theme* (Oxford 1968) 257, n. 8 remarks that he seems to be 'a superfluous Prometheus in inventiveness and a superfluous Odysseus in his prudent counsel.'

<sup>10</sup> In his summary of the *Cypria*, Procl. *Chrest.* also refers to the death of Palamedes.

<sup>11</sup> Hyg. *Fab.* 95; Lucian *de domo* 30; Apollod. *Epit.* iii 7; Serv. Schol. *Aen.* ii 81.

<sup>12</sup> Hyg. *Fab.* 95 and Plin. *HN* xxxv 129 specify an ox and a horse.

<sup>13</sup> Stanford (*supra.* n. 9) 83.

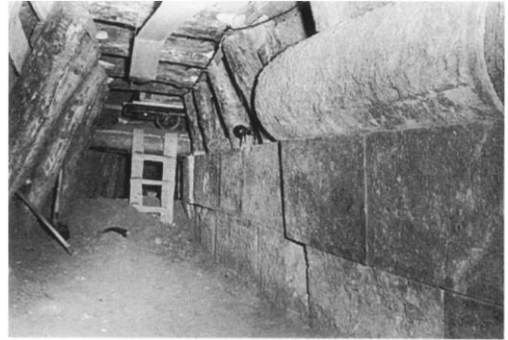
<sup>1</sup> B 240. Height 37.2 cm. CVA British Museum 4 pl. 58 (203) 4a.

<sup>2</sup> Strab. 8.6.2 (C 368).

NOT THE TOMB OF GYGES



(a) Karniyarık Tepe. General view looking north.



(b) Karniyarık Tepe. View of crepis wall.



*EPOIESEN, EGRAPSEN,  
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(c) Krater by the Komaris Painter.



PALAMEDES SEEKS REVENGE

(d) Attic black-figure neck amphora,  
British Museum B 240.