

## A LATE BLACK-FIGURED LEKYTHOS FROM CYPRUS\*

Black-figured lekythoi with repetitive iconography and casual style were mass-produced in Athens in the early fifth century BC and it is generally accepted that they served as cheap grave offerings.<sup>1</sup> One such lekythos, featuring a long graffito, was first published in 1862 but was lost and omitted from subsequent literature.<sup>2</sup> The lekythos has been matched now to a vase catalogued by the Ephorate of Private Archaeological Collections in Athens.<sup>3</sup> This paper attempts a re-examination of this lekythos, proposes two tentative alternative readings of its long graffito, and discusses the possible uses of the inscribed vessel.

The lekythos is in one piece, but the handle, mouth and most of the neck are missing and the surface exhibits scratches and varying degrees of wear. It is a comparatively small vessel (preserved height 10.8 cm and base diameter 3.6 cm) showing a very common representation of a symposion (Figs. 1 and 2). A male figure, most likely Dionysos, reclines

---

\* Many thanks to Mrs Jan Jordan for her help in locating the lekythos; to Mrs Konstantina Kouroukle for permission to autopsy the lekythos in her care; and to the Ephorate of Private Archaeological Collections for granting us a study permit. We are deeply indebted to Dr Charalmbos Kritzas for examining the graffito and advising on various points; to Dr Lucilla Burn, Prof. Angelos Chaniotis, Mr Georg Gerleigner, Prof. John H. Oakley and Prof. Ian Rutherford for helpful discussion; to Dr Thomas Mannack for his assistance at the Beazley Archive; and to the late Dr Eleni Hatzivassiliou for information about Cyprus. We owe special thanks to Dr Alan Johnston and Prof. Robin Osborne for suggestions and critique on an earlier draft; and to Prof. Georg Petzl for his corrections of a near final version. Above all we thank Dr Amy C. Smith for continuous guidance and comments. Our thanks also go to Mrs Aspasia Drigopoulou for her drawings, which she kindly offered at no charge. Any mistakes must, of course, remain our own.

<sup>1</sup> J. Boardman, *Athenian Black Figure Vases: a Handbook* (London 1974) 146; C. Jubier-Galinier, "De la diversité des ateliers de céramique attique à la fin de l'Archaisme: essai de mise au point", *Topoi* 8 (1998) 731–748.

<sup>2</sup> Α. Σ. Ρουσόπουλος, "Ποικίλα", *Εφημ. Αρχ.* (1862) 35–36, πιν. Θ, αρ. 6. The lekythos is also cited by P. Kretschmer, *Die griechischen Vaseninschriften, ihrer Sprache nach Untersucht* (Gutersloh 1894) 5. For the lost status of the vase, see H. R. Immerwahr, *A Corpus of Attic Vase Inscriptions*. Preliminary Edition. Part III: Leuven–Paestum (1998) no. 4820 and vase number 9 018 024 in the online database of the Beazley Archive (accessed 2 June 2008) <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/databases/inscriptions.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Inv. no.: ΕΑΙΑΣ14, Ephorate of Private Archaeological Collections, Athens.

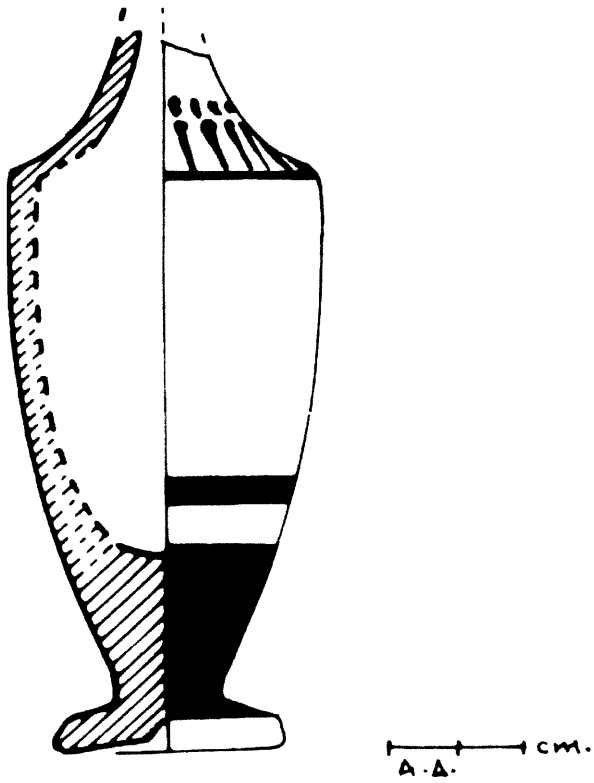


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

on a couch in the middle of the image while two heavily draped females sit on an okladias on either side. In front of the couch there is (according to the conventional interpretation) a small table with pieces of meat hanging from it.<sup>4</sup> The male figure wears a stylised wreath and turns his head towards the female behind him. In his bent left arm he holds a drinking horn to his chest. The horn is barely visible today because the added-white has faded. The extended hands of the women suggest that they also carried something.<sup>5</sup> The figures have been drawn so carelessly that the vase painter appears to have forgotten to paint the faces of the seated females and their necks are remarkably elongated. A few details are given with hastily-incised lines. Above the main scene is a double row of dots and a line of glaze at the junction with the shoulder. Widely spaced rays (degenerate lotus buds) and tongues decorate the shoulder.

We think that the lekythos can be attributed to the workshop of the Class of Athens 581ii and dated to the early fifth century BC.<sup>6</sup> Scenes relating to the symposion and Dionysos are frequent on such lekythoi.<sup>7</sup> The extreme carelessness in drawing is also common.<sup>8</sup> From the 1862 publication it can be inferred that the lekythos was found in Cyprus although the exact findspot remains unknown. A Cypriot provenance is plausible given that lekythoi of this class have been found in many Cypriot sites, including Amathous, Kourion, Marion and Tamassos.<sup>9</sup> There

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, *CVA* Laon 1 France 20 pl. 12, no. 4 for a lekythos attributed to the Edinburgh Painter showing in detail a small table with hanging pieces of meat.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, *CVA* Taranto 4 Italy 70 pl. 11, nos. 3–4 for a lekythos of the Class of Athens 581ii showing two seated maenads holding drinking horns.

<sup>6</sup> For the Class of Athens 581, see E. C. H. Haspels, *Attic Black-Figured Lekythoi* (Paris 1936) 93–94 and 224–225; *ABV* 487–506, 700–702, 705, 716; *Para* 222–246, 519; *Add<sup>2</sup>* 122–126; *Haspels Add* 32–36; D. C. Kurtz, *Athenian White Lekythoi: Patterns and Painters* (Oxford 1975) 147–148. For lekythoi of the Class of Athens 581ii, see *Agora* XXIII (1986) 219–236; *CVA* Rhodes Greece 10 pl. 87, nos. 1–6 and pl. 88, nos. 1–4; *CVA* Marathon Greece 7 pl. 13, nos. 1–5 and pl. 14, nos. 1–6. For the predominance of lekythoi of the Class of Athens 581 in the Athenian Agora, see *Agora* XXIII (1986) 46 and T. L. Shear, “The Persian Destruction of Athens: Evidence from the Agora Deposits”, *Hesperia* 62 (1993) 389.

<sup>7</sup> See *Para* 234–235 for small ‘symposion’ lekythoi forming a subgroup within the Class of Athens 581ii. For symposion scenes on this class of lekythoi, see *CVA* Rhodes (n. 6) pl. 88, nos. 1–4.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, *Kerameikos* IX (Berlin 1976) pl. 24, no. 38 (HW 97) for a lekythos attributed to the Class of Athens 581ii showing a bearded seated figure with a drinking horn flanked by two seated females.

<sup>9</sup> For lekythoi of the Class of Athens 581ii from Cyprus, see *ABV* 499–502; *Add<sup>2</sup>* 124; E. Gjerstad, *Greek Geometric and Archaic Pottery Found in Cyprus*

is no information as to the find context of this vessel. It is reasonable to assume that the lekythos comes from illicit digging, perhaps of a grave, since it was acquired in the mid-nineteenth century.

The graffito was incised casually from left to right in one line on the upper part of the lekythos cylinder, just below the shoulder, and runs horizontally without breaks between the words. Judging from the incisions of the letters, the graffito was written after the firing of the vessel. There is no reason to believe that the graffito is a forgery. The grooves of the incised letters show accumulation of the same type of dirt, which looks ancient, as the rest of the vase surface.

In 1862 the graffito was published as:

ΗΕΡΜΑΙΟΣ ΜΕ ΕΥΡΕ ΚΕΙΜΕΛΙΟΝ ΑΛ<Λ>ΟΝ  
 Ἑρμαῖός με εὔρε, κειμήλιον ἄλλων

Depending on the meaning of κειμήλιον, as discussed below, one possible translation is ‘Hermaios found me, treasure of other people’. The restoration of the last word as ἄλλων, however, can be questioned (Fig. 3). Firstly, the final letter does not resemble a *nu*, as in κειμήλιον, but a letter with

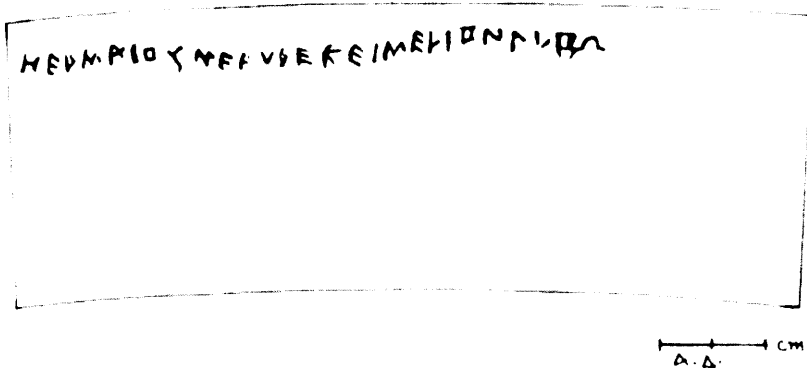


Fig. 3

(Stockholm 1977) 55–57, pl. 67, nos. 1–5; pl. 68, nos. 4–6; pl. 69, no. 4 and pl. 70, nos. 4–6; E. Raptou, *Athènes et Chypre à l'époque perse* (Lyon 1999) 41–43 and 276. K. Nicolaou, “Archaeological News from Cyprus, 1976”, *AJA* 82 (1978) 521 no. 6, reports that the Museum in Nicosia acquired a small (H 14 cm) Attic black-figured lekythos featuring three figures seated on stools. Provenance is unknown. There has been no study of the geographic distribution of lekythoi attributed to this class. It is believed, however, that they were widely traded. See, for example, A. J. Dominguez and C. Sanchez, *Greek Pottery from the Iberian Peninsula: Archaic and Classical Periods* (Boston 2001) 86 for lekythoi of the Class of Athens 581 from various sites in Iberia.

a hook-like shape that could be an *omega*.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, the penultimate square-shaped letter may or may not be an *omicron*. The writer of the graffito appears to have reworked this letter, which is wider than the other two *omicrons*, and joined it with the *omega*. Alternatively, the apparent reworking might have resulted from the difficulty of incising the *omega* on the hard surface of the lekythos. The penultimate letter can, perhaps, be interpreted as a *theta* or *phi*.<sup>11</sup> If this is correct, then, the writer of the graffito seems to have either forgotten to scratch the dot (or cross) inside the *theta* or misplaced the vertical of the *phi*. Assuming that there is only one letter in the penultimate position, our reading of the last word is: ΑΛ(.)Ω

Although graffiti are written idiosyncratically and letter-forms must be identified with caution, many letters here appear to be typical of Attic script: three-stroke *sigma*, *lambda* leaning backwards, *epsilon* with slanting horizontals, V-shaped *upsilon* and low forms of *mu* and *nu*.<sup>12</sup> It can also be noted that, as a whole, the style of lettering looks archaic.<sup>13</sup> Was the graffito produced by an aged individual?

The *omega*, though rare, appears in Attic script from 480 BC onwards.<sup>14</sup> In accordance with the Attic alphabet, the long vowel in κειμήλιον is spelt with E not H. On the other hand, the *omega* could be indicative of a non-Athenian writer, as it is commonly assumed for *omega* in graffiti on early-fifth-century pottery from the Athenian Agora.<sup>15</sup> Apart from the *omega*, another Ionicism, if not a spelling mistake, is the absence of the aspirate *heta* (psilosis) from the initial position of the word εἶπε.<sup>16</sup> It may well be, given this lekythos was found far away from Athens, that the script is mixed.<sup>17</sup> If the *omega* has been

<sup>10</sup> For the reading of the last letter, special thanks are due to Dr Johnston, Dr Kritzas and Dr Smith.

<sup>11</sup> H. R. Immerwahr, *Attic Script: A Survey* (Oxford 1990) 144–147 and 162–164. Crossed *theta* continued to be used until the middle of the fifth century BC. There are many forms of *phi*. Circular *phi* occurs as graffito on a plaque by Exekias. The *phi* here would be Immerwahr's (4).

<sup>12</sup> Immerwahr (n. 11) 131–169.

<sup>13</sup> The *alphas* and *epsilons* in the graffito are not the classical forms. *LSAG*<sup>2</sup> 66.

<sup>14</sup> Immerwahr (n. 11) 165–168; *LSAG*<sup>2</sup> 37–38 and 66–67; A. E. Raubitschek, *Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis* (Cambridge, Mass. 1949) 447: "Ionic letters are extremely rare in the period before 480 BC".

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, *Agora XXI* (1976) F56.

<sup>16</sup> For Ionicisms in Attic stone inscriptions, see C. M. Keesling, "Patrons of Athenian Votive Monuments of the Archaic and Classical Periods", *Hesperia* 74 (2005) 408–414 with earlier bibliography.

<sup>17</sup> Many Attic vases from the Heraion of Delos show a mixed Ionic and Attic alphabet: Haspel (n. 6) 63 note 1.

used for *omicron-epsilon*,<sup>18</sup> the last word is in the genitive. In view of the preceding word *κειμήλιον* and its relation to the verb *κεῖμαι*, however, one would expect a dative.

We would like to explore the likelihood that the last word of the graffito is either a) a personal name or b) a misspelling for the masculine noun *ἄθλος* meaning a contest for a prize. Other restorations are, of course, possible.

In the first case, it is required to find a personal name ending in *-ος*. It could be assumed that the writer of the graffito, possibly *Hermaios*, was unsure about the spelling of the other person's name and made a mistake, such as a letter omission or a transposition. Two possibilities are the names *Ἄλεθος* and *Ἄλφεός*. The former occurs on a stone inscription, dated to ca. 411 BC, as the name of an Athenian who fell in battle.<sup>19</sup> The latter is mentioned by Herodotos as the name of a Spartan and, most importantly, is found as graffito in Cypriot syllabic script at Karnak in Egypt.<sup>20</sup> It is also possible that *ΑΛΦΩ* resulted from contraction rather than a scribal error. Another possibility is the name *Ἄθλος*, which is attested in the Argolid in the second century BC and in Thasos in the first century BC/AD.<sup>21</sup> The name *Ἄθλιος*, moreover, is known from an earlier date. It is attested in Chios in the fifth/fourth century BC and in Thasos in the third century BC.<sup>22</sup> There could also be a misspelling of the name *Ἄϊλος*, which occurs widely.<sup>23</sup>

Assuming that the best 'fit', given the find location and date, is the name *Ἄλφεός*, the inscription could be restored as 'Hermaios found me, treasure for Alpheos'. As such, the graffito seems to indicate ownership (by Hermaios) and possibly gift-giving or dedication (to Alpheos), and could be compared to the graffito on a Boeotian ring

<sup>18</sup> Omega for *omicron-epsilon* is common in Attic script from 480 BC onwards. Immerwahr (n. 11) 167.

<sup>19</sup> *LGPN* vol. II s. v. *Ἄληθος*; J. S. Traill, *Persons of Ancient Athens* II (Toronto 1994) 14; E. Μαστροκόστας, "Ἡ στήλη τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ πεσόντων", *AE* (1955) 184, pl. I.

<sup>20</sup> *LGPN* vol. I s. v. *Ἄλφεός*; *LGPN* vol. III. A s. v. *Ἄλφειός*; Hdt. 7. 227. 1; C. Traunecker, F. Le Saout, O. Masson, *La chapelle d' Achoris a Karnak* II (Paris 1981) no. 39. F. Bechtel, *Die historischen Personennamen der Griechen bis zur Kaiserzeit* (Halle 1917) 555, interprets *Ἄλφεός* as a name of a river. There are two occurrences of the name *Ἄλφιος* in Thrace, but these date to a much later period. *LGPN* vol. IV s. v. *Ἄλφιος*.

<sup>21</sup> *LGPN* vol. I and III. A s. v. *Ἄθλος*.

<sup>22</sup> *LGPN* vol. I. s. v. *Ἄθλιος*.

<sup>23</sup> *LGPN* vol. I-IV s. v. *Ἄϊλος*.

aryballos dated to the middle of the sixth century BC.<sup>24</sup> This interpretation of the graffito may reflect a non-funerary context of use of the inscribed lekythos. The exclusive association of late black-figured lekythoi with the sepulchral domain has been questioned.<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that a large number of such lekythoi, apparently dedications, have been excavated at the Korykian cave at Delphi.<sup>26</sup> Lekythoi of the Class of Athens 581, moreover, have recently been found together with cooking and dining wares in Archaic kitchens at Azoria in Krete.<sup>27</sup>

In the second case, the last word would read ΑΛΘΩ for ἄθλω. The wrong sequence of the *lambda* and *theta* seems to reflect, as discussed, a slip on the part of the graffito writer. If this interpretation is correct, κειμήλιον appears to have been used here in the sense of a trophy and the graffito reads ‘Hermaios found me, trophy for a contest’. The graffito, therefore, appears to fall into the category of prize inscriptions, which is surprising for a small lekythos of this type. The word ἄθλον (neuter), meaning prize of a contest, is commonly found on prize Panathenaic amphorae.<sup>28</sup> The coarseness of this lekythos makes it unlikely that it functioned as a prize vase *per se*. There is a stark contrast, for example, with a bespoke prize aryballos from Korinth, dated to the early/middle sixth century BC, on which both the dance scene and painted inscription have been drawn with great care.<sup>29</sup> Besides, painted

<sup>24</sup> R. Wachter, *Non-Attic Greek Vase Inscriptions* (Oxford 2001) 12–14, no. BOI4C, interprets this graffito as a potter’s signature and dedication of a love-gift.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, M. D. Stansbury-O’Donnell, *Vase Painting, Gender and Social Identity in Archaic Athens* (Cambridge 2006) 41.

<sup>26</sup> A. Jacquemin, “Céramique des époques archaïque, classique et hellénistique”, *BCH Suppl.* 9 (1984) 101–129.

<sup>27</sup> D. C. Haggis *et al.*, “Excavation at Azoria, 2003–2004”, *Hesperia* 76 (2007) 250 and 283.

<sup>28</sup> LSJ s. v. ἄθλον. See M. Tiverios, “Panathenaic Amphoras”, in O. Palagia, A. Choremi-Spetsieri (ed.), *The Panathenaic Games. Proceedings of an International Conference Held at the University of Athens, May 11–12, 2004* (Oxford 2007) 2 about the standardised inscription ΤΟΝ ΑΘΕΝΕΘΕΝ ΑΘΛΩΝ. The word ΑΘΛΩΝ, however, may not have been restricted to amphorae. H. R. Immerwahr, *A Corpus of Attic Vase Inscriptions*. Preliminary Edition. Part I: Aachen – Basel Market (Palladian) (1998) no. 1484, reports a fragment of an omphalos phiale from the Athenian Akropolis with the inscription ΤΟΝ ΑΘΛΩΝ ΕΜΙ and asks “How does a prize inscription get to be on a phiale?”

<sup>29</sup> R. Osborne, A. Pappas, “Writing on Archaic Greek pottery”, in: Z. Newby, R. Leader-Newby (ed.), *Art and Inscriptions in the Ancient World* (Cambridge 2007) 145; M. C. Roebuck, C. A. Roebuck, “A Prize Aryballos”, *Hesperia* 24 (1955) 158.

and incised inscriptions on such aryballoi pertained to the use of these vessels in the gymnasium whereas small lekythoi are not thought to have been used in this manner.<sup>30</sup>

Could it be that the graffito on this lekythos makes a reference to a trophy and contest? Chariot racing is a very common iconographic theme on lekythoi of the Class of Athens 581 and the related Haimonian workshop. It is thought that such scenes implicitly refer to funerary games associated with the heroisation of the deceased either as epic heroes or as Athenian war dead.<sup>31</sup> The graffito, then, might allude to such imaginary funerary games and the name Hermaios could refer to the deceased himself. The sympotic imagery on this lekythos is not necessarily incompatible with this interpretation. On this class of lekythoi Dionysian themes are sometimes mixed up iconographically with racing events.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the graffito appears to communicate a message about the underworld and relate to a funerary context of use of this lekythos. As an inscribed vessel, this lekythos may have been used only once during the funeral or burial. This does not necessarily indicate *ad hoc* writing.

Painted and incised inscriptions of considerable length were not written on Archaic pottery in a haphazard fashion, but with thoughtfulness as to their appearance and how they related to the painted decoration of the vessel.<sup>33</sup> When incising the E after the *mu* in κειμήλιον the writer of the graffito moved upwards so as to avoid writing on the head of the seated female (Fig. 2). Even a hastily-drawn and repetitive scene was important in its own right. Although the letters of the graffito examined here are neither neat nor clearly visible, their placing and direction seem to have had the following effect: In order to read the graffito properly, any user would need to bring the lekythos close to eye level and rotate it clockwise. The act of rotating would also have revealed the full extent of the decorative scene with all three seated figures. This was also noted in the 1862 publication, where the drawing of the lekythos opens up as a scroll. The graffito, therefore, appears to follow a more general pattern of writing on Archaic figured pottery. Thus, we can, perhaps, suggest that this particular lekythos did not serve as a random

<sup>30</sup> Osborne, Pappas (n. 29) 142; Haspels (n. 6) 127–128.

<sup>31</sup> H. A. Shapiro, “The Iconography of Mourning in Athenian Art”, *AJA* 95 (1991) 639–645. P. Schultz, “The Iconography of the Athenian Apobates Race: Origins, Meanings, Transformations”, in: Palagia, Choremi-Spetsieri (n. 28) 63 n. 11, questions the Homeric origin of chariot scenes on Haimonian lekythoi.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, *CVA Rhodes* (n. 6) pl. 87, nos. 1–6.

<sup>33</sup> Osborne, Pappas (n. 29) 131–155.



writing surface for communicating a long and elaborate message, but was an important vessel to its user(s).

With the exception of the last word, which cannot be securely read, how typical is the graffito for Attic pottery?

Hermaios is a very common personal name attested in many different parts of the ancient Greek world.<sup>34</sup> As such, it alone cannot confirm any possible Cypriot provenance of this vessel. There are, nonetheless, occurrences of this name in Cypriot syllabic script, which date to the seventh and fourth centuries BC.<sup>35</sup> Η(ε)ρμαῖος appears as dipinto near a reclining male figure on a Korinthian krater, which dates to 575–550 BC, and shows a non-heroic banquet scene.<sup>36</sup> Hermaios is also known as a potter of red-figured cups, who signed his work and was active in the period 530–500 BC.<sup>37</sup> There is no immediate reason, however, to try to connect these pottery occurrences of the name Hermaios to the graffito on this particular lekythos.

The pronoun με (acc.) appears frequently on Athenian figured pottery and refers to the vase itself.<sup>38</sup> It is unusual, though not infrequent, that there is no elision and the final vowel of με is retained.<sup>39</sup> The verb εὔρε (aor.) is atypical for vase inscriptions; verbs such as εἰμί, ἀνέθηκεν, ἔγραψεν or ἐποίησεν predominate. Since there are no other occurrences of εὔρε on Attic pottery,<sup>40</sup> this word need not be translated in a literary manner. The writer of this graffito may simply be playing with words here. In choosing to use εὔρε close to a word that sounds like a ἔρμαιον, the key message may have been the unexpected discovery of a lucky object.<sup>41</sup> This raises the question: does Hermaios refer to a real person? The phrase ‘Hermaios found me’ might have an allegorical meaning.

<sup>34</sup> *LGPN* vols. I–IV s. v. Ἑρμαῖος; J. S. Trail, *Persons of Ancient Athens* VII (Toronto 1998) 37–40; *EG* III (1974) 276–277; *LSAG*<sup>2</sup> 112; *LGPN* vol. III. B s. v. Ἑρμάϊος, which is particularly frequent in Boeotia. Ἑρμάϊος is also a name of a month. See, for example, E. S. Roberts, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy I* (Cambridge 1887) 341.

<sup>35</sup> *LGPN* vol. I s. v. Ἑρμαῖος. The seventh-century occurrence is on a bronze fragment at Delphi. The two fourth-century occurrences are graffiti at Karnak.

<sup>36</sup> F. Lorber, *Inschriften auf korinthischen Vasen* (Berlin 1979) 76–77, pl. 35–36, no. 120; Wachter (n. 25) 260 and 328, no. COR 92, interprets the label Η(ε)ρμαῖος on this krater as a real name rather than a speaking or throwaway name.

<sup>37</sup> *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 109–111 and 1626.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, A. Steiner, *Reading Greek Vases* (Cambridge 2007) 72 on how the pronoun με personifies the vase.

<sup>39</sup> Wachter (n. 25) 246–247.

<sup>40</sup> H. R. Immerwahr, *A Corpus of Attic Vase Inscriptions*. Preliminary Edition. Part V: Corrigenda. Indices (1998) s. v. εὔρε.

<sup>41</sup> *LSJ* s. v. ἔρμαιον; Ρουσόπουλος (n. 2) opted for Ἑρμαῖος rather than Ἑρμαῖος; Immerwahr (n. 2): “the vase is a ἔρμαιον”; Kretschmer (n. 2) thought

The word κειμήλιον is well known from textual and epigraphic evidence. It assumes a range of meanings, such as heirloom, possession, gift, treasure and trophy, and has sepulchral connotations.<sup>42</sup> This graffito exemplifies the only occurrence of κειμήλιον on Attic vases.<sup>43</sup> Κειμήλιον is probably not used here in the sense of an heirloom. The Archaic lettering style does not allow for a long time lapse after the vase production. In particular, the production date, as for many vases of this type, is only approximate and this further complicates the issue of heirlooms. On the other hand, if the script is Attic, the *omega* may in fact lower the date of the graffito and indicate that the lekythos had a long life-cycle prior to being inscribed. This life-cycle, however, does not presuppose that the lekythos was kept as an heirloom.

The lekythos dates to the latest Archaic period when the popularity of painted inscriptions on Attic pottery was declining.<sup>44</sup> Commercial markings on Greek vases also show a genuine decline during 490–470 BC.<sup>45</sup> Most painted inscriptions in the early fifth century BC appear on red-figured cups.<sup>46</sup> In general, painted inscriptions on late black-figured lekythoi are short, such as name tags or nonsense words.<sup>47</sup> Very few lekythoi of the Class of Athens 581 have dipinti or graffiti inscriptions. The dipinti that we have are trademarks,<sup>48</sup> imitation letters,<sup>49</sup> two *omicrons*<sup>50</sup> and the word αλ<sup>^</sup>σει, which has been interpreted

---

that the inscription conveys the finder's good fortune: "Auf einer nachlassig bemalten Pyxis nennt sich der gluckliche Finder der Vase".

<sup>42</sup> LSJ s. v. κειμήλιον; P. Charneux, "Inscriptions d' Argos", *BCH* 109 (1985) 370–371. We thank Dr Kritzas for this reference. For the sepulchral connotations of κειμήλιον see, for example, Soph. *El.* 437–438: ...ἀλλ' ὅταν θάνῃ, κειμήλι' αὐτῇ ταῦτα σῶζεσθαι κάτω.

<sup>43</sup> Immerwahr (n. 41) s. v. κειμήλιον.

<sup>44</sup> A. Snodgrass, "The Uses of Writing on Early Greek Painted Pottery", in: N. K. Rutter, B. A. Sparkes (ed.), *Word and Image in Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh 2000) 31.

<sup>45</sup> A. W. Johnston, *Trademarks on Greek Vases: Addenda* (Oxford 2006) 29.

<sup>46</sup> Immerwahr (n. 11) 83–84.

<sup>47</sup> For name tags, see, for example, H. R. Immerwahr, "A Lekythos in Toronto and the Golden Youth of Athens", *Hesperia Suppl.* 19 (1982) 60 and 63. Painters of late black-figured lekythoi had a distinct preference for nonsense writing. H. R. Immerwahr, "Nonsense Inscriptions and Literacy", *Kadmos* 45 (2006) 150–153.

<sup>48</sup> Johnston (n. 46) 185 no. 113.

<sup>49</sup> H. R. Immerwahr, *A Corpus of Attic Vase Inscriptions*. Preliminary Edition. Part II: Benghazi-Lentini (1998) no. 3196.

<sup>50</sup> Immerwahr (n. 29) no. 896. This is a lekythos of the Class of Athens 581i from Eretria.

variously.<sup>51</sup> The graffiti are trademarks<sup>52</sup> and a four-letter graffito (γυνε) on a lekythos fragment.<sup>53</sup> In this context, the long graffito on this lekythos from Cyprus is unusual.

There are two well-known examples of lengthy graffiti on black-figured lekythoi. The lekythos by the Phanyllis Painter from Delos, dated to the late sixth century BC, features Dionysos with a drinking horn between eyes and a dedication inscription near the shoulder: Φανυλλίς ἀνέθηκ[ε]ν ἡέρηι θεῶ[ι].<sup>54</sup> Another lekythos from Selinous, dated to 550–525 BC, depicts Theseus and the Minotaur and bears a metrical graffito just below the figural scene: Ἀριστοκλείας ἐμὶ τᾶς καλᾶς καλᾶ· ἡαῦτα δ' ἐμᾶ· Πίθακος αἰτέσας ἔχει.<sup>55</sup> Both of these lekythoi, however, are earlier in date and of much larger size<sup>56</sup> and contrast with the lekythos discussed here. An inscribed black-bodied lekythos from Naupaktos in central Greece is comparable in terms of date and size but dissimilar in view of its short and simple ownership graffito.<sup>57</sup>

The absence of comparanda makes the inscribed lekythos from Cyprus a real oddity. The words εὔρε and κειμήλιον are unusual for a vase inscription. The last word of the graffito is puzzling and, admittedly, the two scenarios presented here rest on tenuous ground. Assuming that there is a greater chance for misspellings when it comes to someone else's name, the first scenario seems more likely. Whatever the exact meaning of the graffito, which may have been purposely obscure, its aim may have been to mark this lekythos, out of a plethora of similar mass-products, as a special vase. It appears that this small and artistically unassuming lekythos was important to its user(s) not so

<sup>51</sup> Immerwahr (n. 28) no. 711. This is a lekythos of the Class of Athens 581ii from the Athenian Kerameikos.

<sup>52</sup> Johnston (n. 45) 177 no. 25 b and 124 no. 9.

<sup>53</sup> Immerwahr (n. 28) no. 636. This is a fragment of the Class of Athens 581iiβ from the Athenian Agora.

<sup>54</sup> Φ. Ζαφειροπούλου, *Δήλος, Μαρτυρίες από τα Μουσειακά Εκθέματα* (Athens 1998) no. 32, Inv. no. B 6136, Museum of Delos. Originally published in *Delos X* (Paris 1928) pl. XLI, no. 548. This is the type vase for the Phanyllis Painter. See Haspels (n. 6) 63.

<sup>55</sup> L. Dubois, *Inscriptions grecques dialectales de Sicile. Contribution à l'étude du vocabulaire grec colonial* (Rome 1989) no. 81 with earlier bibliography. For a drawing of the lekythos, see V. Tussa, "Una lekythos con iscrizione da Selinunte", in: L. Beschi et al. (ed.), *Aparxai. Nuove ricerche e studi sulla Magna Grecia e la Sicilia antica in onore di Paolo Enrico Arias I* (Pisa 1982) 177. We thank Dr Johnston for drawing our attention to this lekythos.

<sup>56</sup> Phanyllis lekythos: H 32.4 cm. Lekythos from Selinous: H 30.8 cm.

<sup>57</sup> I. Δεκουλάκου, "Αλωνάκι Ναυπάκτου", *ΑΔ* (1973) 391, πιν. 347γ. ΚΑΛ-ΛΙΝΙΚΑΣΕΜΙ.

much for its contents, which were presumably perfume or perfumed oil, but for its associations with certain individuals, be it owners, dedicators or the deceased. The writer of the long and elaborate graffito might have simply intended to communicate what is, in most instances, archaeologically invisible: personal stories attached to pieces of material culture.<sup>58</sup>

Katerina Volioti

*Department of Classics, The University of Reading, UK*

Maria Papageorgiou

*Ephorate of Private Archaeological Collections, Athens, Greece*

В статье рассматривается аттический чернофигурный лекиф позднеархаической эпохи, который можно отнести к мастерской Class of Athens 581ii. Он был, по непроверенным данным, найден на Кипре в середине XIX в. и хранится сейчас в частной коллекции в Афинах. Необычайно длинное, потребовавшее немало труда граффито делает этот небольшой и непритязательный с художественной точки зрения лекиф уникальным. Последнее слово, демонстрирующее пример раннего употребления *омеги*, читается не вполне надежно; в зависимости от его интерпретации, граффито может означать “Гермей нашел меня, сокровище для Алфея” или “Гермей нашел меня, награду на состязании”. Небрежно написанное граффито учитывает расположение столь же небрежно нарисованной фигурной сцены. Слова εἶρε и κεῖνῳ необычны для надписей на вазах. Других сосудов этого класса с подобными надписями не существует – длинные граффити известны на более ранних и значительно более крупных чернофигурных лекифах. Скорее всего, надпись характеризовала конкретную ситуацию, сложившуюся в связи с этим сосудом между определенными людьми – владельцами, посвяtitелями, покойным.

---

<sup>58</sup> Studies in social anthropology have shown that artefacts are vested with distinct life histories and variegated private valuations. See, for example, A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge 1986).