

ΗΡΑΚΛΕΟΥΣ
ΜΑΡΑΛΛ

ΕΛΕΥΤΕΡΑΤΑΣ
ΜΟΙΜΙΣΑΘ

Ε ΑΡΚΤΩΝ

GRAFFITI IN THE
ATHENIAN AGORA

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ΗΗΗΗ
ΓΑΔΑΡ

ΕΡΜΗ
ΑΝΤΙΒ
ΞΟΝΙΑ
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ΕΙ

ΟΤΙΑΣΙΑΣΙΝΕΟ
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Excavations of the Athenian Agora
Picture Book No. 14

Prepared by Mabel Lang

Produced by Meriden-Stinehour Press, Meriden, Connecticut

ISBN 87661-633-3

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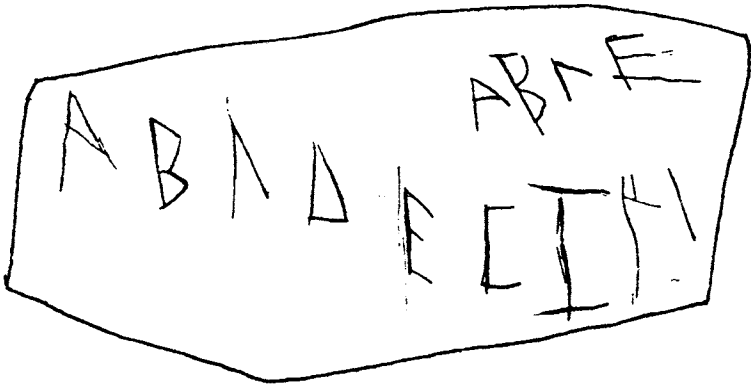
Cover: Graffiti and dipinti.
Title Page: Ostrakon of Pericles.

Graffiti in the Athenian Agora



AMERICAN SCHOOL OF
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PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

1988



1. Abortive abecedarium.

Prometheus: And I invented for men the combining of letters as an aid to memory.

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* 460

The Phoenicians with Cadmus brought arts and letters to the Greeks, since as I think the Greeks did not have them before but the Phoenicians were first to use them. With the passage of time they changed the form as well as the sound of the letters, . . . rightly calling the letters Phoenician after those who had introduced them into Greece.

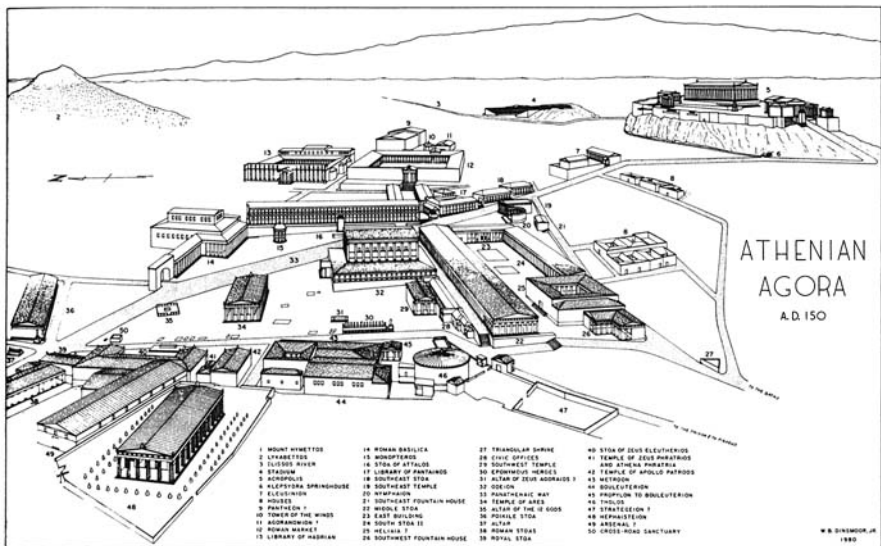
Herodotus v.58

Greece was overwhelmed by innumerable catastrophes which wiped out all memory of the past, and at each new start men thought that the world began with them. Only late and with difficulty did they learn the alphabet. Indeed, those who claim the earliest date boast that they learned it from the Phoenicians and Cadmus, but no one can show any record from that time, . . . and there is much doubt whether the much later men who fought in the Trojan War were literate. . . .

Josephus, *Against Apion* i.2.10

The Greeks write their letters and reckon with counters from left to right, but the Egyptians go from right to left.

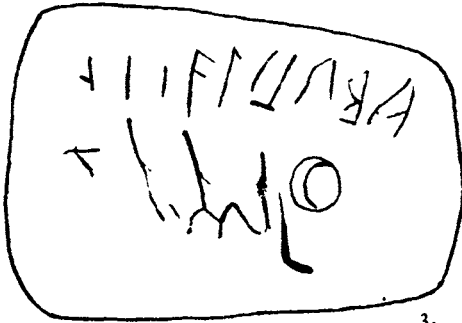
Herodotus ii.36.4



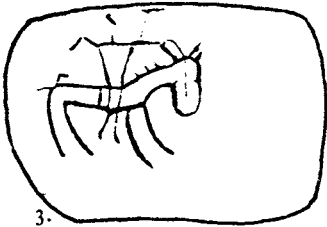
2. Agora Perspective, II cent.

FROM the public and private buildings in and around the Athenian market place have come thousands of informal inscriptions scratched or painted on pots or on potsherds and on other everyday objects. Beginning soon after the introduction of the alphabet into Greece (now generally agreed to be near the middle of the 8th century B.C.), these casual notations continue in ever increasing numbers up through the 6th century of our era. They range in subject matter from the simplest ABC (alpha, beta, gamma) writing exercise or the scratching of a name, whether that of the writer, a god, or a friend, to complicated messages or detailed commercial notations. Such petty communications and expressions of individuality achieve a kind of importance by virtue of their very triviality. The writers, intent on their own concerns and giving no thought to the searching eye of history, reveal themselves unself-consciously and give us not only an insight into everyday life in each succeeding period but also pure and unadulterated evidence concerning the history of literacy (letter shapes, letter values, spelling, direction of writing, use of abbreviation, and so on).

VIII-VII CENTURIES B.C.

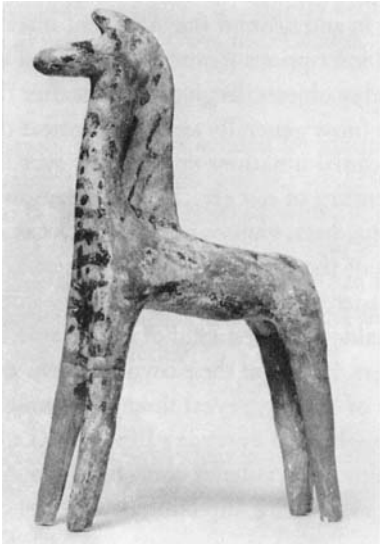


3.



3.

The faint and abortive alphabet scratched on the side of this loomweight exhibits far less confidence than the simple but effective drawing on its underside. The alphabet starts off from right to left, reflecting perhaps the influence of Semitic instructors. Then as it turns into the second line it reads from left to right, demonstrating what the Greeks called the *boustrophedon* style of writing—‘as the ox turns’ in plowing to and fro.



4.

The horse and rider of the drawing show the kind of conscientiousness concerning details that must have been useful for someone making the first painful efforts to form the strange new shapes of letters that could so mysteriously ‘say something.’ Whether the drawing was made from life or from a terracotta figurine like this one that was found in an early 7th century B.C. votive deposit is impossible to say. The age and intent of the artist are equally uncertain.

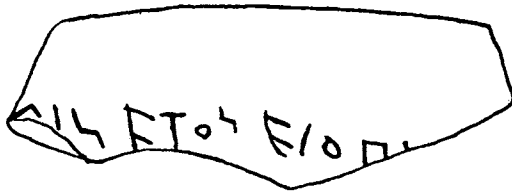
VIII-VII CENTURIES B.C.



5. 'Of Tharrios I am the cup.'

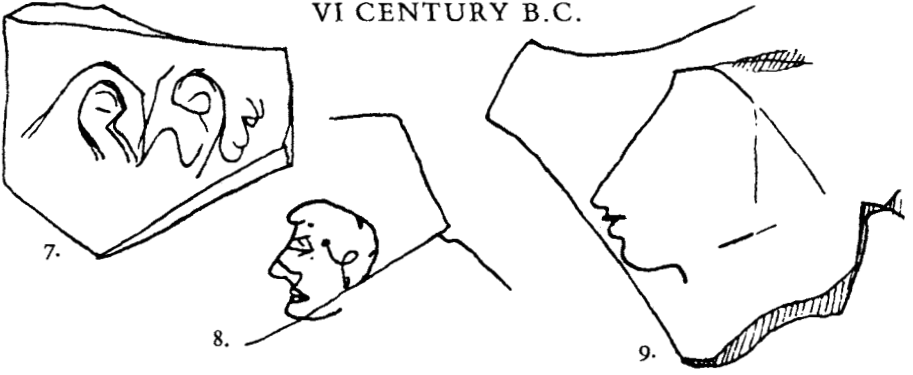
Names on vessels are most often in the possessive case, which seems a fitting and sufficient way to mark one's belongings. Few declarations of ownership are so assertive as this, at least in this early period when writing required painstaking concentration. The early form of theta at the beginning of the name exhibits the cross-in-circle which continues in use till the middle of the 5th century B.C. when the dotted circle becomes standard.

One of the very earliest uses to which the art of writing was put, along with alphabetic exercises and marks of ownership, was sexual insult and obscenity. This scrap of pottery preserves only part of what may have been a longer comment, either written on the sherd as a message or written on the complete cup as a hopeful 'toast' to which to drink. It is even uncertain whether it is 'the boy' or some name beginning with the same two letters that is characterized. A comparable sexual insult of this same early period was found inscribed on a cup dedicated to Zeus Ombrios (Rainy Zeus) in a shrine on the top of Mt. Hymettus: 'Nikodemus is lecherous.' The insulting word *katapugon* continues to be used in graffiti through the 5th century B.C. and is a favorite with Aristophanes.



6. 'The b(oy) is lewd.'

VI CENTURY B.C.



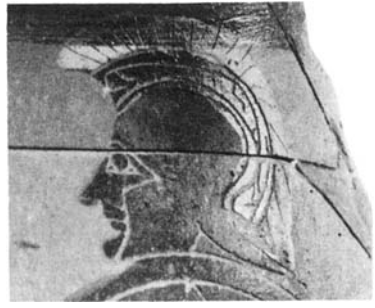
7.

8.

9.



10.



Perhaps it is not fair to compare casual portraits made by amateur artists (7, 8, 9) with contemporary heads drawn by professionals (10, 11). Certainly scratching through hard black glaze with a pointed instrument is more difficult than painting with a fine brush and tends to produce a less fluid line. It is for this reason that we would not think of these graffito sketches as 'dry-runs' made by regular artists.

This graffito fish, on the other hand, compares well with a contemporary painted specimen. Was the subject chosen because it was easier to draw?



12.

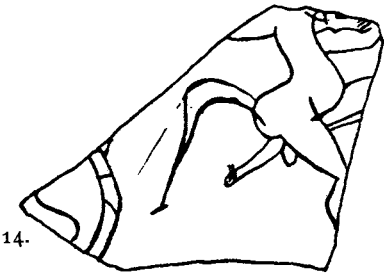


13.

VI CENTURY B.C.

Human heads must always have been a favorite subject for doodlers, but until the fish became a Christian symbol it seems to have had little popularity in any kind of pictures where it is taken out of its element.

Somewhat more lively and comparable to contemporary vase-painting is the unfortunately fragmentary dancing satyr. The function of this graffito may well have been the same as that of the painting, to give to a drinking cup encouraging and appropriate decoration.



14.



15.

ΕΡΩΝΑΣΟΣ ΗΡΜΗΣ ΕΙ

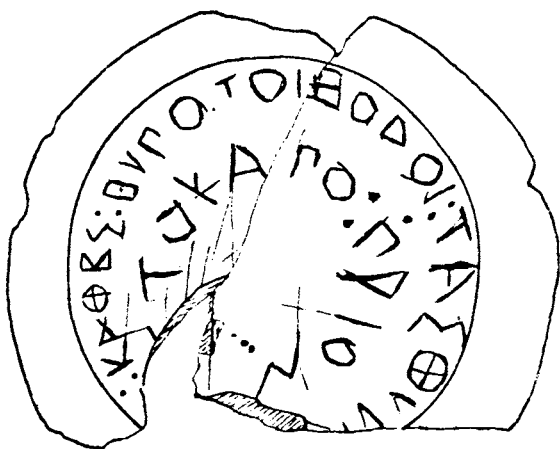
16. 'Eponasos to Hermes.'



17.

More graffito dedications to Hermes were found in the Agora than to any other god. Since Hermes was in at least one of his many aspects a god of the market place (Agoraios) and a patron saint of merchants, interpreters, and liars, it is likely that buyers or sellers who met with good luck in the market place often expressed their gratitude by depositing in one of his shrines a small present to the god who appears in his most characteristic garb on many a 6th century B.C. vase. Here (17) he appears to be receiving instructions from Athena which he is eager to carry out.

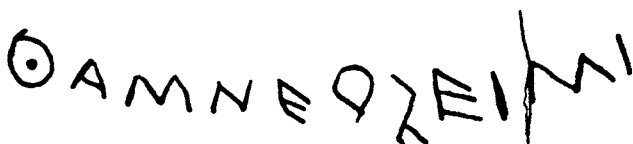
VI CENTURY B. C.



18. ' . . . , put the saw under the threshold of the garden gate.'

The beginning of this message, where the name of the addressee should be, is broken away, but since it was found in the same pit with two vases inscribed as the property of one Thamneus (see below), it is perhaps right to assume that Thamneus received the message and discarded it along with some broken pots. The dialect and letter forms are different from those used in Athens and seem to mark the writer as a Megarian: b-shaped epsilon, closed eta for the h-sound, triangular rho, four-barred sigma. Thamneus himself uses Attic letters.

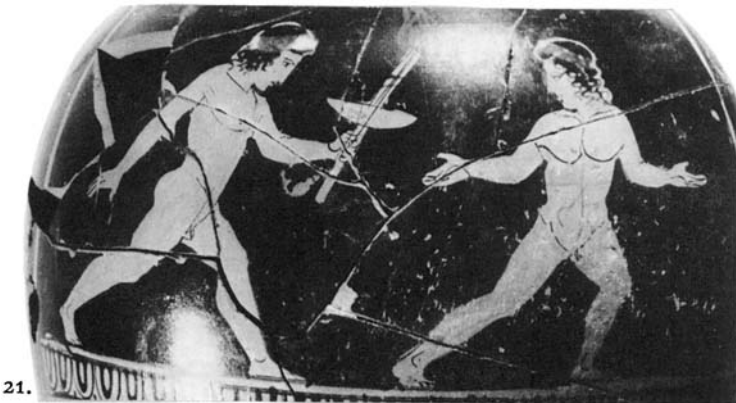
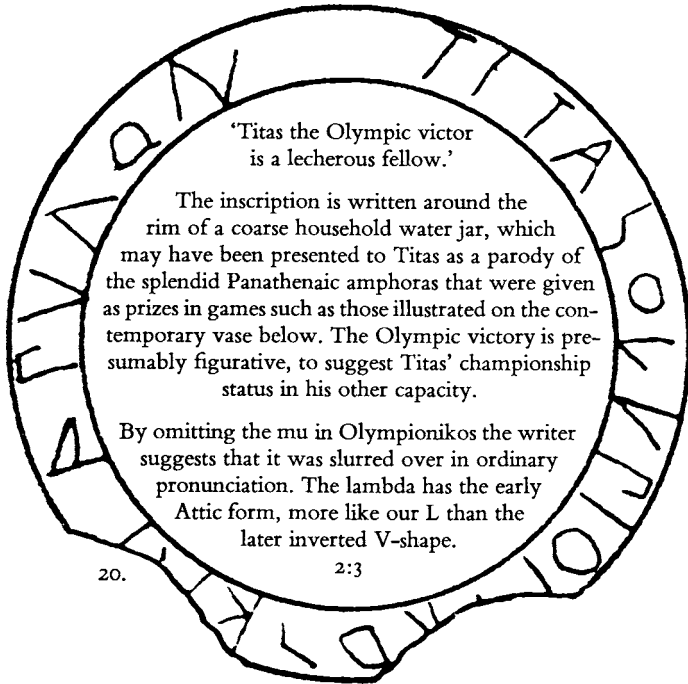
The most likely picture conjured up by this message is that of Thamneus having borrowed from his Megarian neighbor a saw which he is now being instructed (perhaps in the absence of the owner) to put under the garden gate, where there presumably was a convenient drain. If the Megarian was either borrowing the saw or requiring it to do some job Thamneus had asked him to do, one would expect the message to be less curt. And it is so easy to imagine the Megarian suddenly remembering on his way out of Athens to



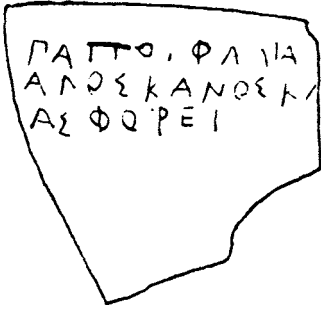
19. 'I am Thamneus.'

VI CENTURY B.C.

visit a sick grandmother in Megara that Thamneus has borrowed his saw and may not know how to return it. So he picked up a handy potsherd, wrote his message, and despatched it by means of a passing small boy.



VI CENTURY B.C.



22. 'Boy, bring other new couches for Phalanthos.'



23.

The writer was preparing for a symposium like that illustrated on a contemporary vase, if it is right to restore the word beginning kappa-lambda as *klinteras* or couches. Phalanthos' name is also restored, but it is not essential to the sense. The message was written on the inside of a rim fragment from a red-figured kylix, just a handy piece of the ancient Athenian equivalent of scrap paper.

Scratched on the side of what we call a wellhead but the Greeks more sensibly termed a wellneck: a heavy terracotta ring set over the mouth of a well to prevent small children and other valuables from falling in. Why someone felt impelled to label it is unclear, but it seems possible from the use of pi for phi in the word for well that the writer may have been a Scythian slave, if we may judge from the dialect attributed to Scythian policemen (public slaves) by Aristophanes.



24. 'Neck of the well.'

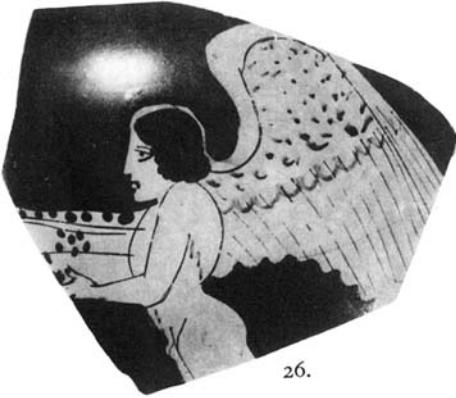
V CENTURY B.C.



25.



27.

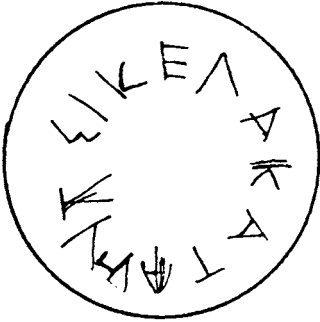


26.

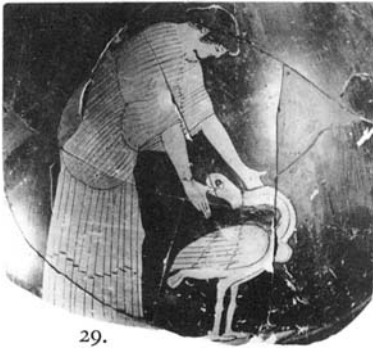
Perhaps the interpretation of the graffito drawing (25) is like those psychological tests which ask the patient to tell what a picture means to him. At the risk of an unfavorable diagnosis it is tempting to suggest that the figure with a bosom (female) is entreating an indifferent (anatomically and emotionally) figure (male?) who is hiding (?) behind a tree and that a presumably flying figure above (Eros?) is presiding over the 'confrontation.' Eros is seen in such a role in a contemporary vase painting (26).

Another tree or branch appears in a quite different context on an ostrakon— a ballot cast against one Kallixenos to send him into a ten-year exile for fear that his growing power might lead to tyranny. Only a few of the many ostraka cast in the 5th century B.C. are illustrated, but in this case the voter apparently felt that one picture was worth a thousand words of indictment.

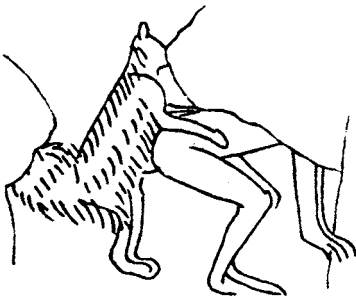
V CENTURY B.C.



28. 'Sikela is lecher(ous).'



29.



30.

Obscenities of word and deed continue to be popular in the 5th century B.C. And despite the homosexual proclivities (both spiritual and physical) of many Athenian men, the female of the species seems to play a prominent role. The small size of the cup-base on which Sikela is immortalized made it necessary for her epithet to be abbreviated, but the meaning is clear; all that is in doubt is whether the ending of the adjective was feminine or whether the masculine form could be applied indifferently to either sex. Sikela's propensities may perhaps be illustrated in a contemporary vase painting.

Particularly interesting on technical grounds is the graffito drawing of sodomy: the lines were incised before the glaze was applied and so are almost invisible except in certain lights. A fragmentary inscription on this same piece was similarly incised and declares that someone is beautiful (*kalos*). It was the fashion in Athens for handsome boys to be praised in this way: pot-painters often wrote '. . . is beautiful' in and around the painted picture, perhaps as a special order, perhaps 'cashing in' on some youth's popularity, with the idea that there would be many buyers eager to toast such a fair one.

V CENTURY B.C.



31. 'Alkaios seems beautiful to Melis.'



32.

A more sentimental mood is reflected in this graffito; whether the vase-painter's tender scene is an appropriate illustration of this text depends on the uncertain gender of Melis' name.

A lid fragment (33) preserves part of a scene from the Battle of the Cranes and Pygmies about which Homer says:

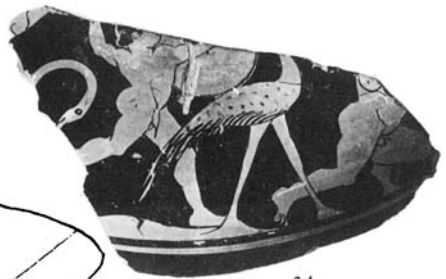
'As when the clamour of cranes goes high to the heavens,
when the cranes escape the winter time and the rains unceasing
and clamorously wing their way to the streaming Ocean,
bringing to the Pygmaian men bloodshed and destruction. . . .'

Iliad 3.3ff. (Lattimore translation)

The elaborate decoration, with its tendril border, is no ordinary graffito; since it was drawn on the clay before the glaze was applied it may well be the work of an artist in the potter's workshop. Unfortunately, the lines of the crane's upper body were too lightly drawn so that they are not visible through the glaze. A pot-painter's version of this battle may be compared (34).



33.



34.

V CENTURY B.C.



35. 'Eumelis, come as quickly as you can. Abresimos.'

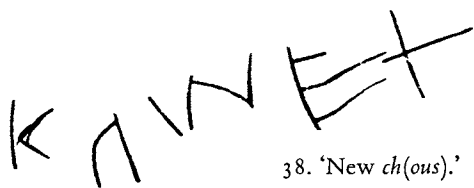


36.

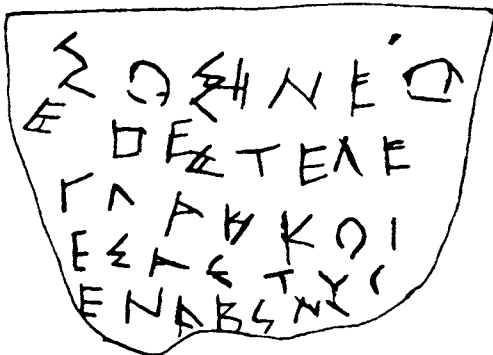
This urgent message might well serve as a caption for the vase-painting of a girl who has not stopped to put on her shoes.

The sherd for another message (37) seems to have been selected with care: it is the handle and adjacent wall of a skyphos, so that in addition to a writing surface on the inside wall it provides a means of attachment. Therefore, it may well be that it served as a tag on the very bundle it mentions, giving the sender's name as well as the address ('in town') of the recipient.

'Sosineos sent a bundle to
Glaukos in town.'



38. 'New ch(ous).'



37.

A pitcher which is labeled 'new *chous*' may be either a joke or a cheat, since it holds somewhat less than a standard *chous* (almost seven-eighths of a U.S. gallon). Owners of vessels often marked on them their capacity, either for home use in measuring or because they were taken to the market to be filled.

V CENTURY B.C.

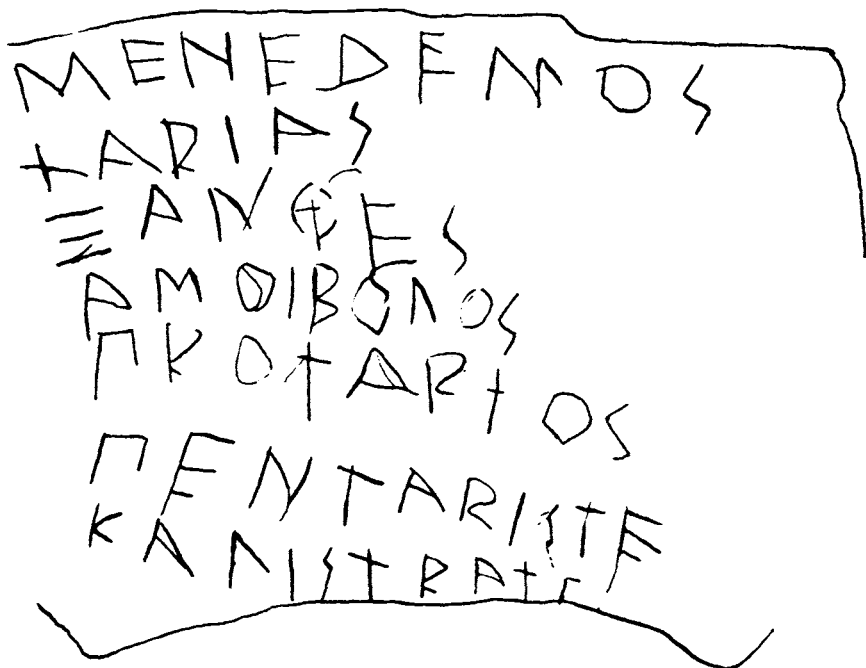


39. 'ku-po-ro-ta-mo'

Hundreds of 5th century B.C. vessels or fragments of vessels found in the Agora were marked with the names of their owners or some abbreviation of the name. Abbreviations range from one letter up to six or seven and apparently depended on the number of names in the particular household, shop, club, or office that began with the same letters. For example, the following abbreviations found in the Agora might all have been for names beginning Arist . . . ('best'): A(), Ar(), Ari(), Aris(), Arist(), Aristi(). And only the last would distinguish between an Aristotle and an Aristion. Unique among the owners' marks found in the Agora is one which uses the Cypriote syllabary; and appropriately enough the man's name as well as his script proclaims his Cypriote origin: Kyprodamos.

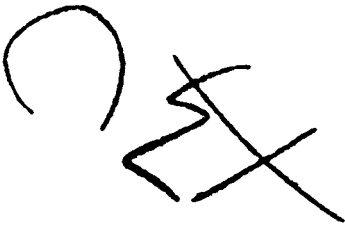
A list of names, of both men and women, is interesting both because it challenges speculation as to its function and because it employs some later letter forms (lambda, xi) side by side with old Attic shapes (theta, rho).

40. 'Menedemos, Charias, Xanthes, Amphibolos, Protarchos, Pentariste, Kallistrate.'

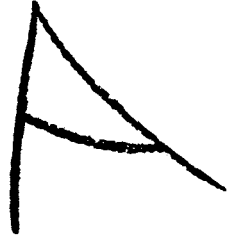


V CENTURY B.C.

Owners inscribed on their vessels not only the capacity but also the nature of the contents. On this very large jar is written the word for the *vin ordinaire* of ancient Greece (the same word is used for vinegar!). The sound later represented by the letter xi, which was ordinarily written chi-sigma by the 5th century B.C. Athenians, is here written sigma-chi, as occasionally elsewhere in informal inscriptions. The separate letter alpha at the end may refer to quality ('first') or to quantity ('one' of some unit of capacity).



41. 'Cheap wine: 1.'



1:2



42.



43.



44.

The important part played by wine in the life as well as the diet of the Athenians is attested by numerous vase-paintings recording the various stages in the production and consumption thereof (42).

An amateur portrait (43) and a professional one (44) seem to have something in common, but unfortunately the pressure required to cut through the glaze in the graffito caused the incising tool to go badly out of control at the mouth.

IV CENTURY B.C.

In the 4th century B.C. the graffiti seem to reflect a trend away from obscenity and toward commerce. It would be over-daring to suggest that this is the difference between the 5th century's exuberance of empire and the 4th century's reduction of Athenian aspirations to a low material level after the loss of empire. But even so, someone in a lingering spirit of fun saw in the nozzle of a lamp a resemblance to a phallus and drew the parallel. The inscribed word is an abbreviated form either of a possible word for testicles, thus underlining the point, or of a feminine name known from one of Demosthenes' speeches.

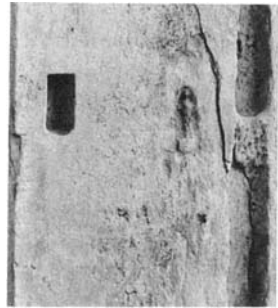


45.



46.

The thrust of this graffiti herm (46) is not so much phallic as religious. On the streets and by the doorways of Athens were set up these aniconic images of the god Hermes (plain marble shafts with simple cross-piece on which to hang garlands but with realistically carved head and phallus) to invoke the god's protection. As a good-luck talisman the herm might be drawn anywhere, in formal vase-painting, in graffiti on coarse pottery, or scratched on the stone door-jamb of one of the shops in the Stoa of Attalos (47).



47.

The significance and relevance of a boukranion is harder to divine, but it might be what we now call a logo for a name beginning with the ox-syllable, e.g. Boukolides.



48.

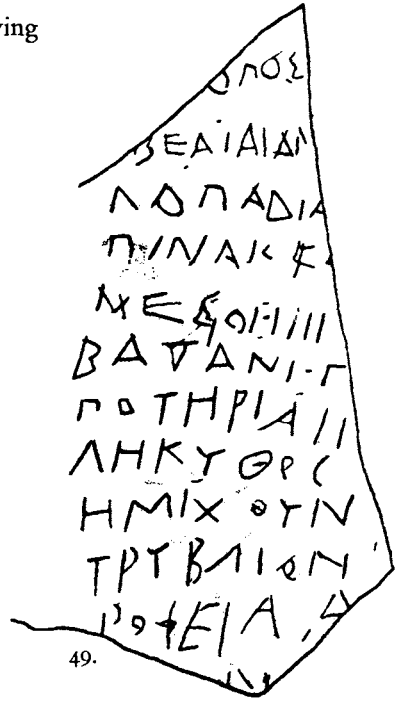
IV CENTURY B.C.

A 'shopping-list' includes the following items:

- '(kneading-) trough
- long loaves 20[
- dishes
- platters, middle-size 4
- little dishes 5[
- cups 2[
- oil-flask
- half-chous
- bowl
- ? 10[



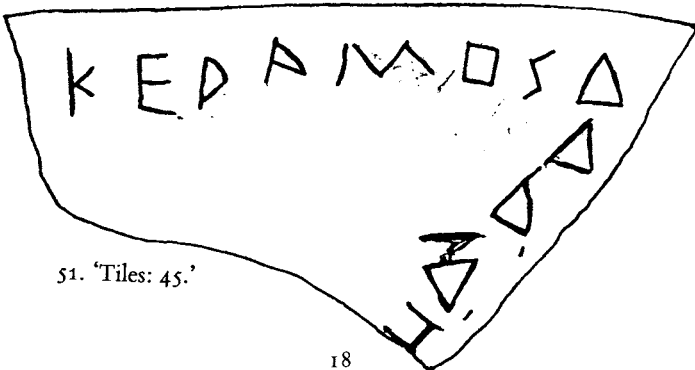
50.



49.

About the long loaves we know that they took their name from the spit on which they were baked and then carried on the shoulders of *obeliphoroi* in processions honoring the god Dionysos, as in this drawing from an Agora water-pitcher (50).

Again a handle fragment (51) appears to have been used as a tag. The number here probably gives not the price but the quantity of tiles or pots in the shipment. The word *keramos* may be applied to any ceramic product.



51. "Tiles: 45."

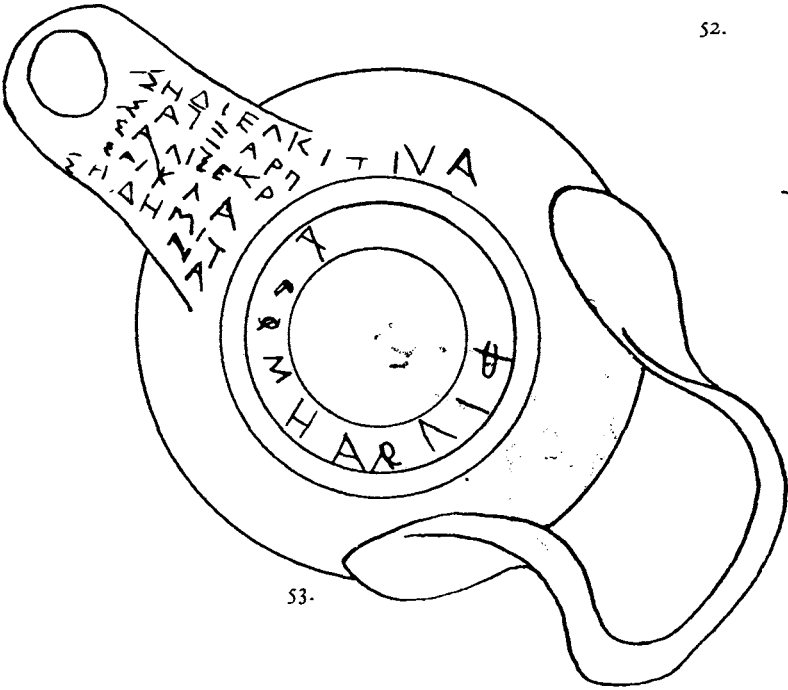
IV CENTURY B.C.

Andriskos claims ownership of a pitcher most assertively in a graffito carefully written down the length of the handle: 'I am rightfully (the possession) of Andriskos.' For the pot itself to speak in this way seems to lend authority to the claim.

The lamp below with its mysteriously backward written names was found buried under a house floor. Both the wrong-way writing and the burial suggest black magic and the invocation of underground powers to curse Philodemos (written around rim), Antikleides, Praxias, Arkesilas, Alkias, and Antimedes (written on nozzle). A contemporary lead curse tablet, also from under a floor, perhaps provides a parallel: 'By spells I bind Aristaichmos the smith to the powers below and also Pyrrhias the smith, both his work and their souls, and also Sosias of Lamia, both his work and his soul. . . .'

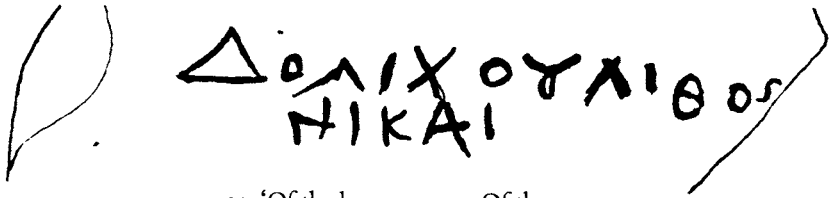
ANΔΡΗΚΟΣ
 K O E | M I Δ | K A I Ω Z

52.



53.

III CENTURY B.C.



54. 'Of the long race. Of the stone.
Victories.'

A fragment of roof-tile preserves what may be the heading of an informal list of victories in two events: the long race (which ranged in various parts of Greece from something under a mile to about three miles) and the stone (either weight-lifting or putting the shot).

Is it possible that this graffito-head does not exhibit horns but a rather ill-conceived shock of hair? If so, it may be a representation of the personified Kairos (Opportunity), who according to the old tale had hair in front but was bald behind, so that it was possible to catch hold of him as he approached, but when he was past there was nothing to grasp.

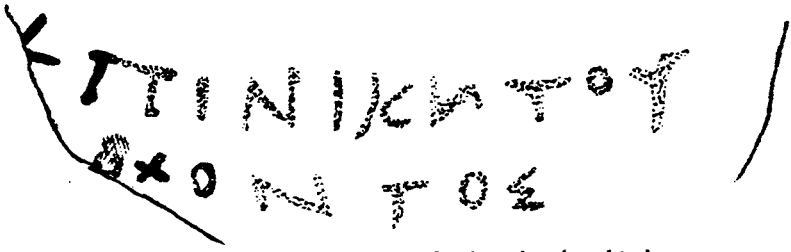


55.



These painstakingly cut letters, reminiscent of inscriptions on stone, declare that the lamp which they adorn is the sacred possession of Artemis. If it was dedicated by someone we may wonder at the giver's willingness to remain anonymous. If it is merely part of a shrine's furniture, the elaborateness of the writing might seem excessive till one remembers that even the roof-tiles of the Metroon were stamped as the property of the Mother of the Gods.

III CENTURY B.C.



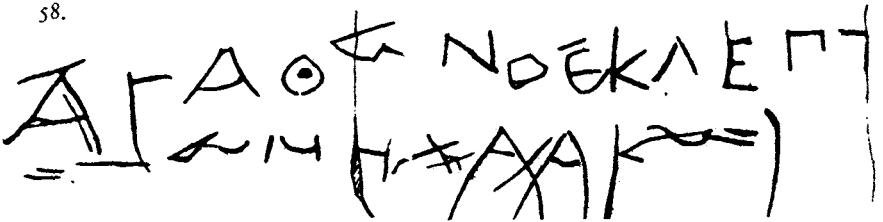
57. 'In the year of Niketos' archonship.'

This painted inscription giving a date is unusual at this period. The jar is from Chios, but where Niketos was archon is unclear.

The more usual dating of wine jars was by stamping on the handles as below where the head of Helios marks the provenience as Rhodian and the inscription puts it in the term of Sostratos. The stamp on the other handle gives the manufacturer and the month.



58.

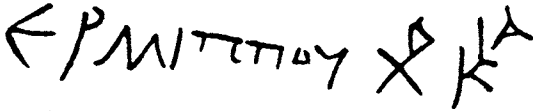


59. '(Property) of Agathon' 'a thief' 'a bargain for a penny.'

This inscription, on the handle of a large pitcher, seems to have been made by two different hands, as if after Agathon labeled the jar he himself was labeled a thief and responded with an assertion of the pot's worthlessness. Now for the first time letters begin to assume cursive forms. Even though the effort of scratching in hard clay made angular shapes easier, both sigma and omega are here rounded.

III CENTURY B.C.

Individual owners of clay vessels give different expression to their assertions of ownership in accordance with their particular interests. Hermippos, who wrote in black paint on the shoulder of his unglazed jug (60), wished to have its capacity clearly indicated, although by present measurement the vessel holds three full *choes* rather than the two and eleven-twelfths recorded. The use of abbreviations for units is regular, as are also the alphabetic numerals.



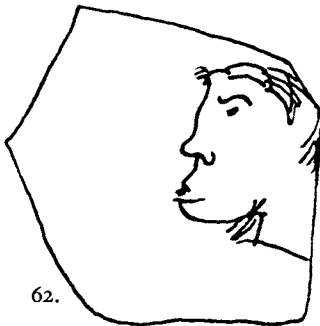
60. '(Property) of Hermippos:
ch(oes) 2; k(otylai) 11.'



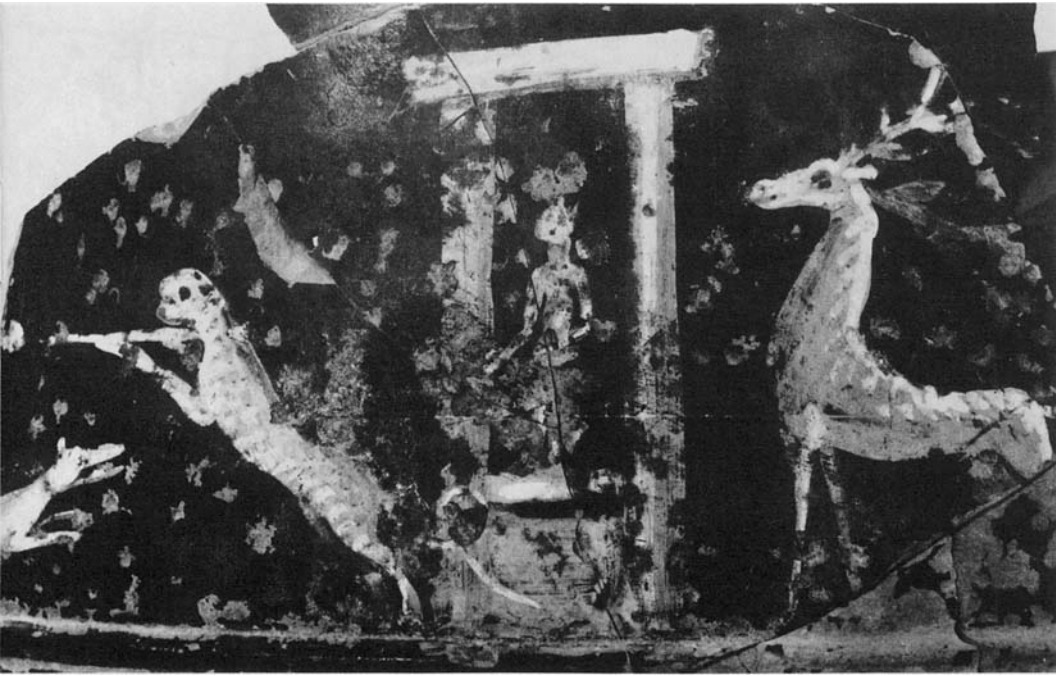
61. 'Kallias'

Kallias scratched his monogram on the underside of a black-glazed lamp. Unscrambling a name which has been tied up in this kind of knot is ordinarily risky, but this seems fairly clear: the large kappa, the upright of which can double as iota; two mirror-image alphas above and below; two lambdas at the right; and a sigma at left using the stem of the kappa for its fourth stroke.

The head of an ape drawn on the rim of a Megarian bowl reminds us of the prominent part played by the ape in Greek fables and proverbs both before and after Aesop: 'an ape in purple' was equivalent to 'borrowed plumes'; 'one must be an ape among the apes' was Greek for 'when in Rome do as the Romans do'; and 'an ass among apes' apparently played the same role as the one-eyed man in the kingdom of the blind. 'Playing the ape' and 'monkey-tricks' had the same connotations then as now.



62.



63.
 ΜΕΝΟΥΚΑΤΙΚ ΔΙΟΝΥΣΩ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΤΕΜΙΔ

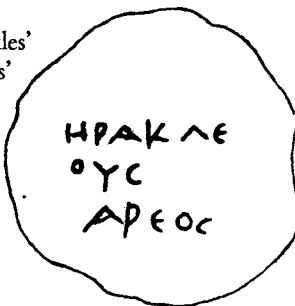
64. 'Menokles to Dionysos and Artemis.'

1:2

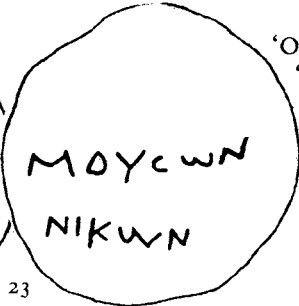
A large West Slope kantharos, with a scene of hunting near a shrine, was an appropriate gift to Dionysos and Artemis. The combination of these two gods in one shrine, which the dedication requires, is otherwise unknown in the Agora. (Greek students will be delighted or appalled by the omitted iota subscript in the dative case.)

A roughly circular disc cut from the wall of a pot has been inscribed inside and out, presumably for use as a counter in some kind of board-game.

'Of Herakles'
 'Of Ares'



'Of the Muses'
 'Of the Victories'

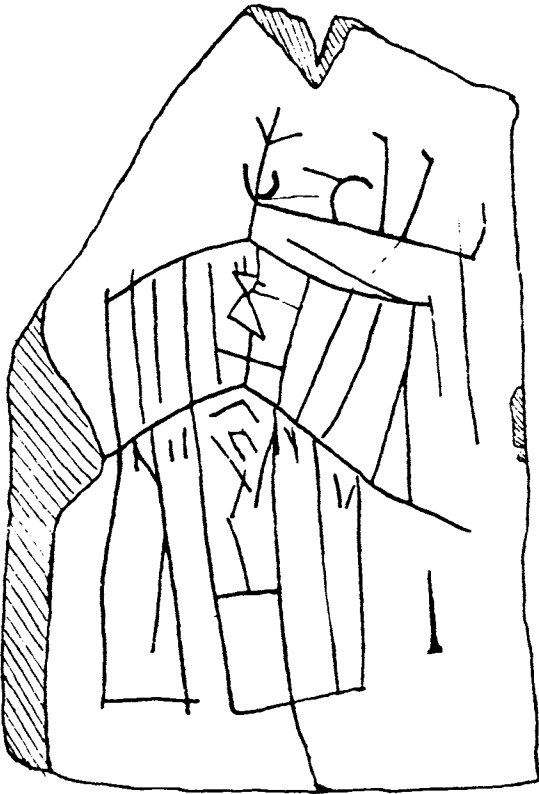
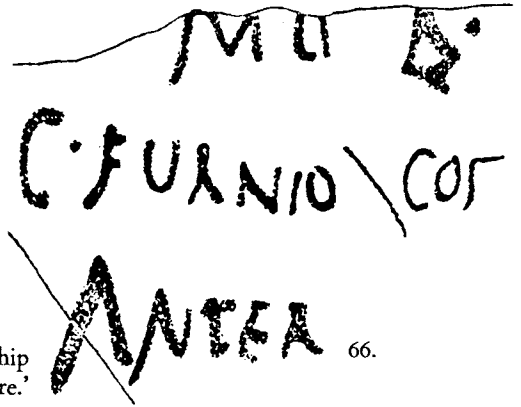


65.

I CENTURY B.C.

Dating by the year of the Roman consul and the use of the Latin language and alphabet are comparatively rare in Athens at this early date. The number recording capacity, however, seems to be Greek. What 'before' may mean in this context is unclear.

'Mo(dii) 4; in the consulship of C. Furnius; before.'



67.

Because the very mysterious drawing at the left was made on a plate rather than on a standing vessel, it is not even possible to say which way is up! So what is it?

The monogram below may be resolved as the first five letters of Adrastos, with the stem of the rho dividing the delta into two alphas (completed by one curving crossbar) and with the sigma attached at right.

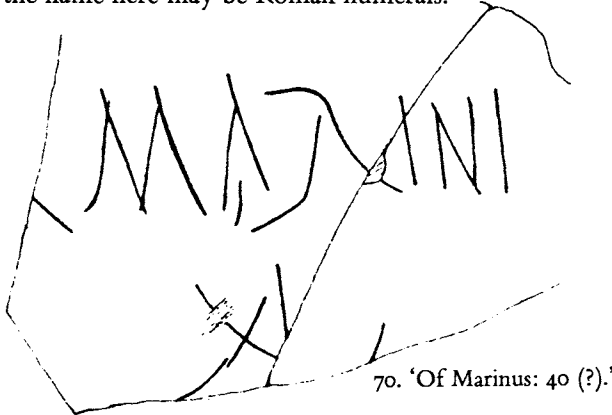


68.

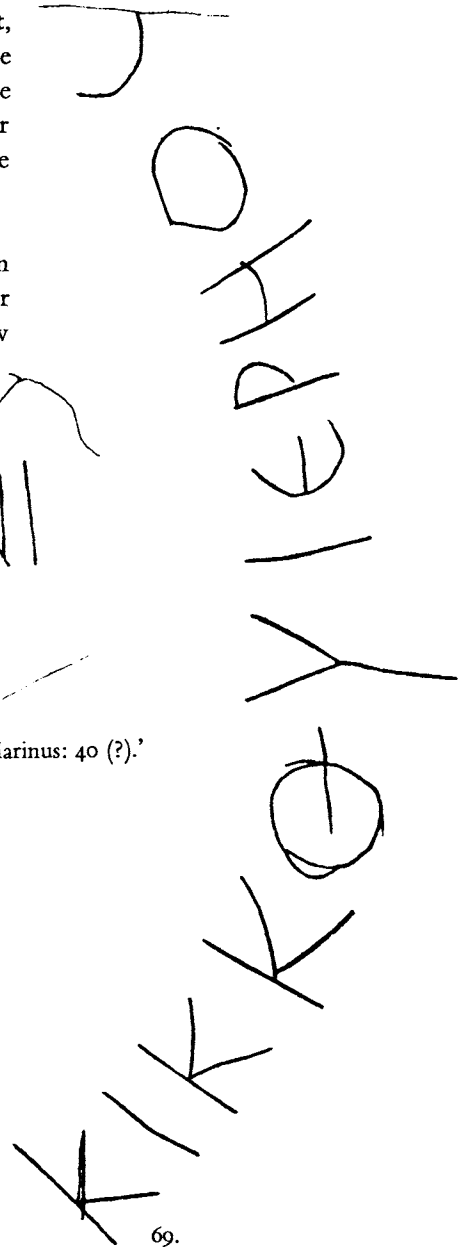
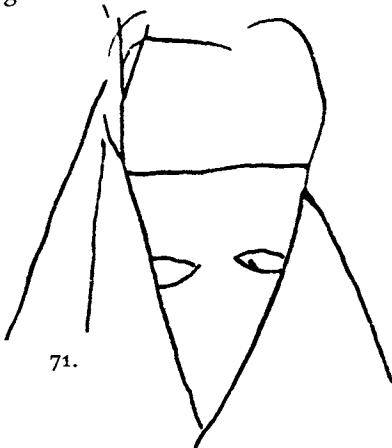
I CENTURY

If Kikkos (69) is not a name but an epithet, it is highly uncomplimentary (the choice being 'cock' or 'thief' or *excreta*), but the pride he takes in both name and title is clear from the size of the graffito: 'Of Kikkos the priest.'

Marinus has here (70) written his Roman name in Latin letters; on another similar vessel he wrote it in Greek. The marks below the name here may be Roman numerals.



This drawing seems to suggest that the Greek genius was running out!



II CENTURY

Κ Τ ΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΔΟΣ
 ΦΙΛΙΠΩ ΦΙΛΙΠΗΣ
 ΔΔΕΞΟΦΩ

72. 'Return the stamnos to Philippa's brother Philip.'

The message is painted in black on the side of the jar.

The shape of this jar (73) is characteristic of the mid-second century, so that the inscribed date is welcome confirmation of pottery chronology, but whether the Year 1 from which the date is calculated is Hadrian's succession (A.D. 117) or his first visit to Athens (A.D. 124) is uncertain. The word in the second line presumably refers to the age of the contents, probably wine.



73.

ΕΤΟΥΣ ΔΙΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΥ
 ΕΝΙΑΥΣΙΑΙΟΝ

73. 'Year 11 of Hadrian:
one year old.'

ΑΙΩΩ Κ
 ΑΣΠΑΡΑΓΟΥ Δ

74. '20 parts of darnel;
4 parts of asparagus.'

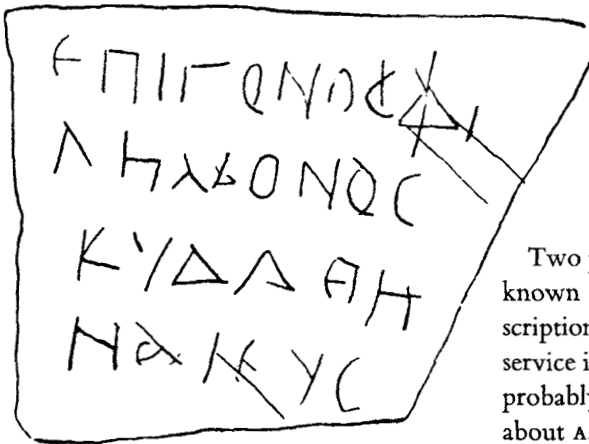
Apparently a decoction of herbs, but the medical writers do not speak of this combination. Darnel with radish and salt was supposed to be good for gangrene; and asparagus boiled helped dysentery! (Dioscorides).

II CENTURY



75. 'Mazathos?' '(Property) of Mazas?'

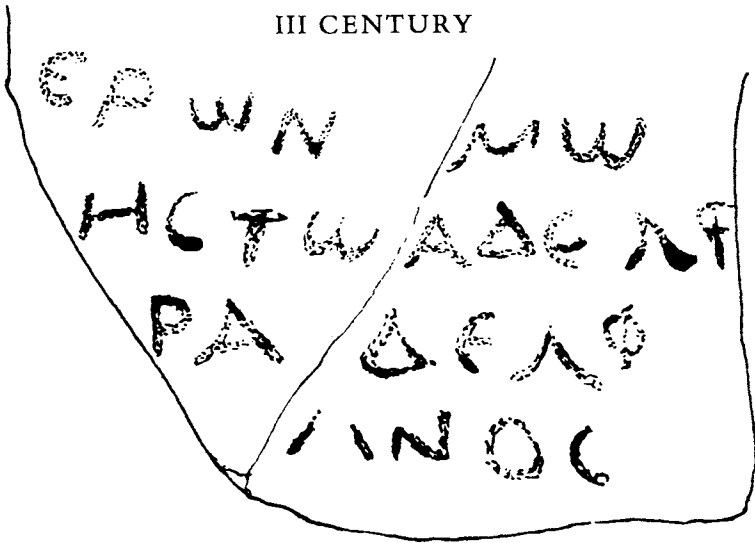
The name, if such it is, is unknown except for its appearance on three similar jugs in the Agora. It might be related to the word for barley cake (maza) or reflect Persian influence (that is, Mazda).



76. 'Epigonos, son of Philemon, the Kydathenaian.'

Two persons of this name are known from formal stone inscriptions: one did his military service in A.D. 118/9; the other, probably a grandson, served about A.D. 180.

III CENTURY

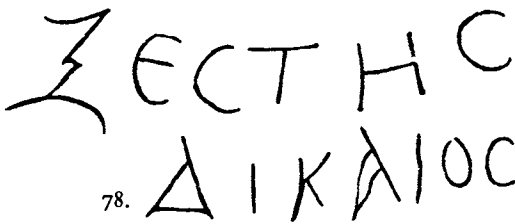


77. 'For (Hi)eronymos / our (go)od brother / (fr)om his brothers / a (sta)mnos.'

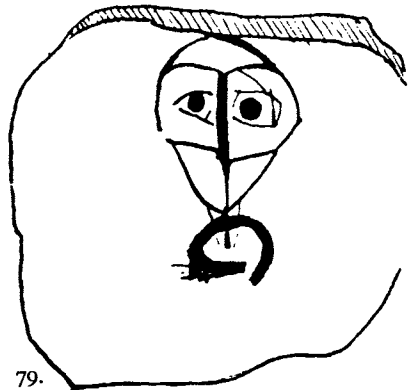
This fragment from the shoulder of the gift-jar (stamnos) has lost some letters by breakage and others from fading of the black paint.

The bold assertion below appears on a round-bodied jug: 'lawful sextarius' or, in our terms, 'honest pint.' But its capacity is almost twice what it should be by the old accepted standard. Is it a joke, or does the owner 'protest too much' in his declaration?

What is it? A helmeted head or a masked bandit?



78.



79.

III CENTURY

80. '(Weight) of vessel: lbs. 3, oz. 8;
(weight) net: lbs. 10.'

The Roman pound (*libra*) is used. The present weight of the vessel is too light by less than three ounces. Ten (Roman) pounds of water (or wine) would fill the jar not quite to the rim.

IV CENTURY

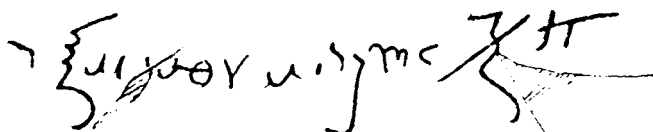
Two other ways of indicating tare are frequent in the 4th century and following; one uses the word *ostrakon* (or *ostrake*) for the vessel; the other uses the word for 'empty.' The abbreviation for pound continues to be lambda with or without a slash for the iota (of *libra*, or *litra*, the Greek equivalent); ounce is abbreviated in a variety of ways.

81. '(Weight) of the
pot: lbs. 9.'

82. '(Weight) of the
empty: lbs. 6, oz. 3.'

IV CENTURY

Honey from Hymettos was famous throughout antiquity, and many jars are labeled as containing it. Often sold by weight, it required a vessel only three-fourths the size as the same weight of water (or wine), because it was heavier by a third, according to the ancient metrological writers. The honey in this jar was not weighed but measured.



83. 'C(ontents) of yellow honey: *s(extarii)* 13.'

In confirmation of the color the poet Simonides once wrote:

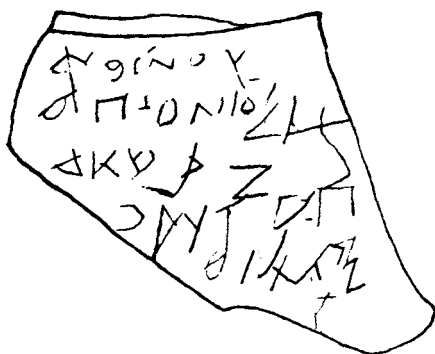
'The bee consorts with flowers to make her yellow honey.'

Below are the two faces of a sherd which reads like a druggist's shopping list: the 'pestles' noted on one side may have been required to prepare the drugs listed on the other side. The abbreviated word in the third line may be either 'acorn' as suggested or a seed (*akyllonion*) which, mixed with white wine, was good for scorpion bites, according to Dioscorides.



84. 'Pestles'

'Of the red poppy, juice: oz. 47 /
of acorn: oz. 7 / of strychnine: ?'



V CENTURY

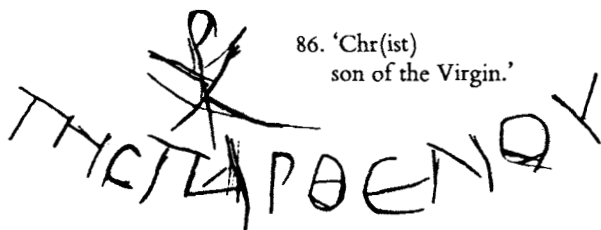


85.

'Of pine-cones
of buns
of fish or relish
peaches (?)
of freight charges (?)
of fish or relish
for wine.'

Because the sherd is broken at the left it is unclear whether the numbers which presumably followed each item represented quantities or prices. If the 'freight charges' interpretation of the fifth line is correct, perhaps this is a list of amounts expended for various items rather than a shopping list.

Ordinarily in Athens the word *parthenos* belongs to Athena, but when it appears, as here, not only in the 5th century of our era but also in company



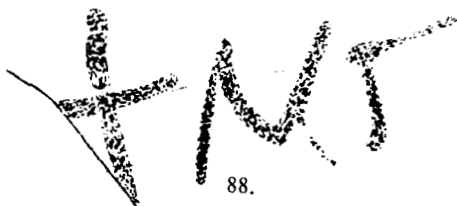
86. 'Chr(ist)
son of the Virgin.'

with the chi-rho symbol, there can be no doubt about its Christian connotation. Contemporary lamps frequently show the chi-rho symbol (87).



87.

The chi-mu-gamma which appears frequently on pots as a Christian symbol has been variously interpreted: Christ - Michael - Gabriel or Christ born of Mary. If a parallel chi-theta-gamma found on a similar jar should be interpreted as 'Christ son of God,' the latter explanation is probably correct.



88.

V-VI CENTURIES

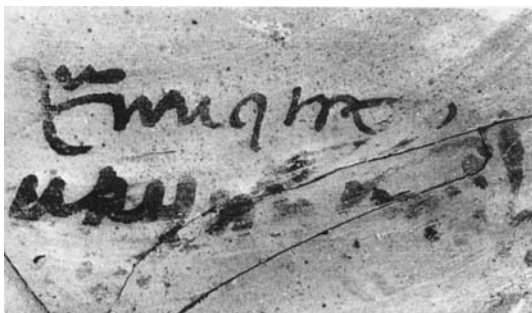
89. 'Weight (of jar): 2 (lbs.)
rai(sin wine): oz. 30.'

The location of this inscription, which is written not on the neck or shoulder as is usual for notations of this kind but just above the toe, combines with the very small size of the amphora to suggest that we have here a wine of such rare quality that it must be stored lying down and can be afforded only in small quantities. Both tare and net weight are accurate by present measurement.

Below are two samples of the notations found on many jars of this period, all of which include the name of an estate as well as a date within the current indiction cycle (15-year tax-period). Some also add indications of quantity or quality of the contents. It seems likely that the jars, full of wine, represented part payment of taxes in kind and that the large complex of buildings in which almost all of the empties were found may have been an official residence (or even barracks) in which the taxes were consumed.



90. 'Tenth year of indiction;
est(ate) of the notary;
s(extarii) 10.'



91. 'Estate of Pasippos; Aminnaean
(wine); eighth year of indiction.'

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Drawings are by Hero Athanassiades and Helen Besi, except where otherwise indicated. Photographs are by Alison Frantz and Eugene Vanderpool, Jr. Numbers refer to the Agora inventory.

Front and back cover: paste-up of various graffiti and dipinti from the plates drawn for *Graffiti and Dipinti of the Athenian Agora*. Title page: ostrakon of Pericles (p 16755).

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2. Agora perspective, II cent. (W. B. Dinsmoor, Jr.)	32. P 29518	62. P 14323
3. MC 907	33. P 10352	63. P 6878 (P. de Jong)
4. T 204	34. P 8892	64. P 6878
5. P 4663	35. P 15208	65. P 22976
6. P 26542	36. P 24131	66. P 21792
7. P 24999	37. P 2022	67. P 3817
8. P 2714	38. P 21553	68. P 13386
9. P 3533	39. P 17463	69. P 10035
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15. P 26639d	45. L 2450	75. P 15305
16. P 24062	46. P 20374	76. P 10775
17. P 24104	47. Stoa of Attalos door jamb	77. P 8341
18. P 17824	48. L 4212	78. P 17499
19. P 17826	49. P 10810	79. P 9873
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21. P 28245	51. P 16981	81. P 25170
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23. P 24579	53. L 5298	83. P 25175
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26. P 29830	56. L 3918	86. P 25133
27. P 7103	57. P 9754	87. L 3208
28. P 17123	58. SS 7584	88. P 3756
29. P 27396	59. P 5820	89. P 26104
30. P 27698	60. P 24935	90. P 13148
		91. P 13433



M H E T D I
A B Γ Δ E Z
O I N O Y

ΣΚΥΟ
ΑΜΥΣ



ΦΑΙΟΓ
ΑΡΧΥΡΙΟΝ

ΛΜΔΙΟΤΙΟΥ
ΟΟΥΡΑΚΟΥ

ΑΒΛΑ
ΚΟΜΔΙΑΚ
ΟΙΤΕΙΣ
ΑΙΤΟΝ
ΖΥ



ΜΕΛΑ
ΡΥΚΡΙ



ΣΩΣ

ΚΑΙΤΟΝ
ΜΕΤΟΝ
ΘΕΟΝ

ΚΩΣ ΠΟΥ ΧΙΕ
ΙΕΚΚΥ

ΚΡΗΣΤΟΥ
ΣΑΙΑΤΑΙΑ