A Son of Nikon or Nikon Victorious: A New Inscription on a Fragment of a Pseudo Panathenaic Amphora

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Abstract: Recently, an inscribed fragment of a closed vase made of buff pinkish clay, covered with a red-orange wash, 11.8 cm wide and 8.4 cm high, and decorated with black, lustrous clay-paint surfaced briefly on the Swiss art market. It preserves a small section of the black tongue pattern on the shoulder and a wide black strip separating ornament and a panel with a straight glossy black line angled upwards; and the incomplete inscription TONIKONO[ . . . . . This paper endeavours to place the inscription and the name Nikon in a wider context and to examine the use of Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphorae.

Keywords: Panathenaic Amphorae; Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphorae; kalos-names; Nikon; chariot race

1. Shape

The decoration of the fragment (Figure 1), a black band between ornament and decorative panel, is typical of Panathenaic prize amphorae (PPA) and Pseudo-Panathenaic vases. Around 1000 Panathenaic Prize Amphorae, complete or fragmentary, have survived (Bentz 1998). They were produced from 566 until the Roman period as prize-vases containing olive oil for the victors and runners up in the athletic contests at the quadrennial Panathenaic Games. Between 1472 and 1567 were awarded each year according to surviving records. The list probably specified clay containers, not measures, since the list of possessions of the Hermokopidae lists 100 in their possession. PPAs were always decorated in the black-figure technique and labelled “TON AΘΕΝΕΘΕΝ ΑΘΛΟΝ” identifying them as a prize awarded in the Athenian games and guaranteeing the quality of the content. They were made initially by leading black-figure workshops, later by the best red-figure painters. After an early experimental phase, the canonical version was created by Group E (Reusser and Bürge 2018; Bentz 1998, pls. 8-9.6014): around 60 cm tall, with a short neck decorated with a double lotus bud palmette chain, ovolo on the shoulder, and an ovoid body with the decoration. The obverse is decorated with Athena with raised spear and raised heel advancing to the left, turning to the right in the fourth century, between two columns surmounted by cocks. The cocks were later replaced by statues. The obverse bears the prize inscription, the reverse an athletic competition; the decoration on both sides is set in panels. The panel on the back is separated from the ovolo by a broad black strip. Rays decorate the lower body above the echinus-shaped foot.

Inscriptions other than the prize inscriptions are rare. Occasionally the prize inscription is combined with a signature for the potter. Signed PPAs are thought to be specimen pieces submitted by workshops applying for the contract to produce the prizes. A few amphorae are labelled with the competition for which they were awarded, and among the earliest examples, dated around 540/530, are vases in Munich, Geneva, and Athens specifying the athletic disciplines, ΣΤΑΙΔΙΟ ΑΝΔΡΟΝ ΝΙΚΕ, ΑΝΔΡΟΝ ΣΤΑΙΔΙΟ combined with the signature for Kallikles, and ΔΙΑΥΛΟΡΟΜΟΙ ΕΙΜΙ next to athletes running to right. In the fourth century, painters briefly added the name of the archon eponymous of the year in which the vase was produced, and later the name of the Agonothetes.
Pseudo-Panathenaic amphorae, 325 of which have been recorded\(^7\), were made by the same workshops that produced the official prizes and share the same distribution pattern; their production appears to have ceased before 450\(^5\). They mimic the shape and decoration of prize vases but lack the prize inscription, save for an amphora in St. Petersburg\(^7\), and are smaller\(^10\). Only a few bear inscriptions; usually the names of men.

Figure 1. Inscribed fragment of a Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphora, private collection.

2. Scene and Inscription

The black line in the panel of the new fragment is possibly the kentron of a charioteer\(^11\) (Figure 2) or the staff of a trainer or judge\(^12\). The fragmentary inscription: ΤΟΣΙΚΟΝΟΙ . . . , can be restored to either TO(Y) ΝΙΚΟΝΟΣ, ‘ . . . son of Nikon’ or the name of the victor in a chariot race, TO(Y) ΝΙΚΟΝΟΣ ΧΑΡΜΑ\(^13\). In either case, the inscribed name identifies the shape as a Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphora since personal names other than those of ceramicists and officials do not occur on prize vases. The formula TOY ΝΙΚΟΝΟΣ for a patronymic is unusual. The few vase inscriptions denoting someone’s father are phrased differently. Tleson identified himself as ho Nearcho, ‘ΤΑΞΟΝ ΗΟ ΝΕΑΡΧΟ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ’\(^14\) on the vast majority of his cups and once as ΤΑΞΟΝ ΝΕΑΡΧΟ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ\(^15\). Euthymides used a similar formula, ΕΥΘΥΜΙΔΕΣ ΕΠΡΑΦΕΣΕΝ ΗΟ ΠΟΛ[Δ]ΙΟ on a belly-amphora in Munich\(^16\). Around 420/410 the potter of a red-figure bell-krater used an unadorned genitive for his incised signature, ΝΙΚΩΣ ΕΡΜΟΚΛΕΟΥΣ ΑΝΑΦΛΑΤΣΙΟΣ ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ\(^17\). The Achilles Painter also used the genitive case for his kalos inscriptions with patronymic, e.g., ΛΑΚΙΜΗΔΗΣ ΚΑΛΟΣ ΑΙΣΧΥΛΙΔΟ\(^18\), and ΑΞΙΟΠΕΙΘΗΣ ΚΑΛΟΣ ΛΑΚΙΜΑΧΟ\(^19\). The victory inscription has no parallels on vases.
3. Nikon, a Social Network Analysis

The name Nikon is common and occurs on two further Pseudo‐Panathenaic Amphorae, both decorated with racing chariots. Around 510/500, an unnamed painter decorated the reverse of a Pseudo‐Panathenaic amphora in Paris20 with two racing chariots and named both charioteers with inscriptions emanating from their faces, NIKON and ΜΥΝ[Ν]ΙΟΝ. A third inscription, placed underneath the horses, praises the beauty of a Hiketes, ΗΙΚΕΤΕΣ ΚΑΛΟΣ ΕΜΟΙ ΔΟΚΕΙ. Hiketes was not the only dreamboat among the three named men on the Pseudo‐Panathenaic amphora in Paris: Nikon is called ‘kalos’ on a Pseudo‐Panathenaic amphora in Mainz (Figures 2 and 3), dated around 500/490. The obverse shows Athena, her shield emblazoned with a Pegasus, the reverse a large chariot. The words EIA and [Ε]ΑΛA with which the charioteer spurs on his horses, emanate from the mouth of the charioteer, and the painter added a kalos inscription to the scene, painting NIKON underneath the horses, KA and KA ΛΟΣ, retrograde and vertical, in front of the horses’ heads (Figure 4). Men named Nikon were popular with several red‐figure vase‐painters. Beazley distinguished three beautiful men of that name: Nikon I shared the appellation ‘kalos’ with Solon and Memnon on a red‐figure cup in London by Oltos24. Myson used the name on a calyx‐krater in Berlin, made around 500/490, where it is combined with Hippon25, and Makron named one of the men in a “mixed petting” scene on a cup in New York, dated around 490/480, Nikon26. Beazley believed that Myson, Makron, and the painter of the Pseudo‐Panathenaic Amphora in Mainz referred to different men of that name27.

Brenne painstakingly sorted the association of ‘kaloi’ in 2000. The names of labelled men can probably be used for the same purpose, since the beatus of the period were often used to christen figures too. The beauty of Hiketes, the Newcomer, and perhaps from Sicily28, was also appreciated by the painter of a black‐figure amphora once in Basel by a painter compared with Psiax by Herbert Cahn29 around the same time. It is probably reasonable to assume that all three men, Nikon, Mynnion, not known apart from this vase30, and Hiketes were alive at the time and therefore contemporaries. Beazley catalogued six certain mentions of Hiketes as ‘kalos’ on vases by Makron, Douris, and others on cups and mugs31, but considered the Paris Hiketes to be earlier than the red‐figure beau32; the Basel amphora by Psiax was not known to him. On the Makron cup, Nikon is in the com-
pany of ΑΝΤΙΦΑΝΕΣ (praised as kallistos, the most beautiful), ΕΥΚΛΕΣ, ΝΙΚΟΘΕΝΕΣ, ΧΑΡΙΝΙΔΕΣ, and ΔΙΟΝΙΣΙΤΕΝΕΣ. Again, we can assume that these men were contemporaries of Nikon and alive at the time of painting. Like Nikon, Antiphanes lent his name to figures and appears on psykters in the Louvre and New York and Rome attributed to Smikros, thought to be an earlier man of that name by Beazley, and Oltos, and was called ‘kalos’ on a red-figure cup in Basel from around 500. Nikon and Antiphanes are shown in the company of a Nikosthenes on the Basel cup, perhaps the potter of that name, who is called ‘kalos’ on a pyxis in Vienna. Antiphanes joins ΣΜΙΚΥΘΟΣ, ΔΟΡΟΘΕΟΣ, ΚΛΕΑΙΝΕΤΟΣ, ΑΛΚΕΤΕΣ, Α[ΝΤ][ΜΕ][Ν]ΕΣ, and ΒΑ[Ι]ΤΡΟΟΣ on the New York psykter. The praise of beautiful ΕΠΙΑΙΝΕΤΟΣ is written between the figures. Antimenes could be the same beau who was praised by the Antimenes Painter. Epainetos appears only twice in the vase-painters’ world: here, and as the giver of a dinos in the Villa Giulia signed by Exekias to a Charops, who is named ‘kalos’ on two cups made around 500.

Smikythos appears elsewhere too, but the name was common. A Smikythos, father of Onesimos, is named on a capital dedicated on the Athenian Acropolis. Euthymides, no doubt the potter and painter and son of the sculptor Pollias, who made statues for Kriton, perhaps the potter Kriton, son of Skythes, around 510/500, and for the son of a Cheimerpos on the Athenian Acropolis, is toasted by two naked women playing kottabos with skyphoi on a hydria assigned to Phintias from Vulci. Phintias also named a youth in the school scene on the body ‘Euthymides’; his fellow pupils are Demetrios, Tlempolemos, and Smikythos. Tlempolemos is probably the potter of three signed Little Master cups; the name is rare, and beautiful on a late 6th century cup in Orvieto. Smikythos is ‘kalos’ with Leagros and Antias on a hydria attributed to Euphronios and the name of a pipes player at a symposium on the shoulder of a hydria signed by Euthymides, which also names Megakles ‘kalos’. Smikythos recurs as one of two warriors on a black-figure kyathos from Vulci, which names Philon ‘kalos’. His fellow soldier is named Skythes.
another example of the rather narrow world of Athenian vase painters, who frequently used their colleagues’ names for their figures.

Figure 3. Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphora, Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg Universität, 74.

Figure 4. Inscriptions on the Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphora, Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg Universität, 74.

Kalos inscriptions are not fully understood. They do not refer to young people, because Onetorides was ‘kalos’ for about 20 years and Leagros for more than thirty (Shapiro 2004; Technau 1936). It is generally thought that they name people alive at the time and there are some indications that they are connected in some way to Athenian pottery workshops since quite a few of them are potters and painters (Scheibler 1995). Some names changed with workshop associations: Exekias potted vases painted by artists of Group E who wrote ‘Stesias kalos’ and ‘Aristomenes kalos’ on their pots. When he set out on his own, he praised Onetorides. Onetorides was also a darling of artists working in the workshop of the Lysippides Painter, a pupil of Exekias. While it is somewhat questionable to identify men by their names only, since there must have been several of the same name at any given time (although Hiketes occurs only on vases), it is perhaps permissible if one considers that they appear in the same context, that of Athenian potteries, and in the same period. It is probable that the men introduced here—Nikon, Hiketes and their numerous companions—were mentioned over two decades or more by painters they came into contact with. Nikon and Hiketes appear together on the Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphora in Paris and both were known to Makron. Given their probable status as wealthy, chariot-racing aristocrats it is not impossible that they had money invested in some of the potteries or trading ventures. Two of the men socialising with Nikon on Oltos’ London cup, Chalphos and Euphoros, are also racing chariots, namely on a pyxis lid excavated in Samos, albeit named Chalops and Euphoros.
4. Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphorae and Prize Amphorae

The use and purpose of Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphorae is still unclear. They were found in roughly the same places as Prize vases, among them Italy, Boeotia, Thrace, Al Mina, Xanthos, Cyrene, and Apollonia, albeit not always in the same quantities. They were as popular as dedications on the Athenian Acropolis (115) as Prize Amphorae (109). A total of 69 were found in Italy against 97 Prize Amphora, among them the vase with the praise of beautiful Nikon, which was excavated in Vulci, where 12 Pseudo-Panathenaic vases and 32 Prize Amphorae were excavated. The few names inscribed on Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphorae appear to be chosen from the same circle as those on contemporary black- and red-figure vases which seems to exclude their use as personalised trophies. Distribution of both types via the second-hand market should be excluded since it probably did not exist. The idea of a market for pre-owned pottery was first proposed by Trendall and Webster for theatre vases and was also used to explain Panathenaic Prize Amphorae in graves of non-Greeks. However, evidence suggests that sets of pottery were bought specifically for the grave in Greece and Italy. Grave 96 in Bologna is representative of burials there and contained a cup, pouring vessels and a large krater which are contemporary and Spina presents similar evidence. A grave in Populonia contained two hydria attributed to the Meidias Painter which are so similar in decoration and shape that they must have been made at the same time. The Brygos Tomb in Capua contains a set of vases, two stamnoi and three rhyta, in addition to the two earlier vessels, which have the same production date and appear to have been specifically acquired for the burial. The occurrence of Prize vases in non-Greek contexts can have several explanations: the winners would have sold the expensive oil, dedicated an undetermined number of pots to sanctuaries, kept a few for themselves, and sold the rest to passing traders. One could envisage eager pottery and oil merchants queuing up right after the games, but the high number of Prize Amphorae held on to by the seems to suggest that the numbers would have been too small to make trading in used Prize-Amphorae a profitable enterprise. A positivist approach would interpret Panathenaic Prize Vases in non-Greek contexts as evidence for Greek residents there; Spina and Caere had treasuries in Delphi. It is also probable that Athenian pottery workshops awarded the contract for making prize vases produced more vases than stipulated in order to prevent shortages through damage over the three-year production period and to sell these highly desired vases. The status implied by the shape alone is attested by numerous red-figure vases of Panathenaic shape made in Athens and South Italy. Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphorae have been seen as souvenirs acquired by athletes who failed to win, containers of wine at banquets or made for surplus Panathenaic oil, although large storage vessels may have been more suitable for that purpose. Given the distribution and the inscriptions it is likely that Pseudo-Panathenaic Prize Amphorae were just another type of Attic vase sold at home and abroad, albeit one trading on the prestige of the shape and the decoration of the “real thing”.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.
Abbreviations

BAPD
Beazley Archive Pottery Database
www.beazley.ox.ac.uk
(accessed on 5 May 2022)

Bentz ‘Schwarzfigurige Amphoren
panathenäischer Form’

Brenne

CAVI

LGPN

Notes

2 Bentz, Preisamphoren, 17; IG I² 2311.
3 IG I² 422.
4 E.g., Athens, Ceramicus: PA443, Bentz, pl. 4.6004; New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum: 1978.11.13, Bentz, pl. 5 CAVI 5726, BAPD 8780.
6 E.g., Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Collection, 1.1138. (Graef and Langlotz 1925).
7 Bentz, ‘Schwarzfigurige Amphoren panathenäischer Form’, pp. 177–95.
8 Bentz, ‘Schwarzfigurige Amphoren panathenäischer Form’, p. 113.
11 Cf. Paris, Musée du Louvre, F 279, ABV 404.2; BAPD 303043; Pseudo-Panathenaic Amphora, Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg Universität, 73.
12 Cf. Munich, Antikensammlungen, 1464, ABV 406.6; CVA 14, 72, 73, 74, fig. 73.1, Beilage 20.1, pls. (4006, 4009) 66.4, 69.1–2; BAPD 303082.
13 I am most indebted to Rudolph Wachter, Georg Gerleigner, and Jasper Gaunt for the readings.
14 E.g., Lip Cup, Malibu (CA), The J. Paul Getty Museum, 80.AE.99.3. (Heesen 2011).
15 Lip Cup, once Bolligen, Blatter, 141. (Heesen 2011, pl. 90d).
16 Munich, Antikensammlungen, 8731, CAVI 3258.
19 Athens, Triti Ephoria A 5606, CAVI 1746; BAPD 3971.
20 Paris, Musée du Louvre, F 283, CVA Paris, Louvre 5, III.Hg. 4, pl. 2.6–7; ABV 716; Bentz, Amphoren, p. 192, no. 279; CAVI 6562; Brenne, p. 49, no. 54.; BAPD 352934.
21 Recognised as names by D.v. Bothmer and accepted as such by H. Immerwahr, CAVI 6562; Mynnion, LGPN II, p. 322.
22 Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg Universität, 74; CVA, Mainz, Universität 1, pp. 37–38, pls. 35.1–2, 39.8; CAVI 4909; ABV 671, p. 716; Para 318; AVI 5094; Bentz, Amphoren, p. 189, no. 244; BAPD 306450.
23 ARV² 1603; Klein, pp. 138–39; Brenne, pp. 41, 52.
24 London, British Museum, 1848,0619.8 (E 19), Brenne, p. 52; ARV² 1602; CAVI 4434.
25 Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3257, ARV² 1602; CVA Berlin, Antikensammlung 11, pp. 29–33, figs. 8–14, Beilage 6.2, pls. 23–25, 75.2.
26 ARV² 1602; New York, Metropolitan Museum, 1912.231.1, ARV² 468.146, 482, 1654; Kunisch, Makron, pp. 32–37; BAPD 204828.
27 ARV² 1602.
28 Robinson & Fluck, p. 116, no. 111.

LGPN II, p. 322.

ARV² 1583; LGPN II, p. 234, s.v. Hiketes.

ARV² 1584.

LGPN II, p. 122.

Paris, Louvre, G 58, ARV² 21.6; 1565.


BAdd 391;

BAPD 13622.

30 LGPN II, p. 322.

31 ARV² 1583; LGPN II, p. 234, s.v. Hiketes.

32 ARV² 1584.

33 LGPN II, p. 122.

34 Paris, Louvre, G 58, ARV² 21.6; 1565.


37 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, IV1870, ABV 671.

38 Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, PC 63, ABV 266.1, pp. 664, 691.


40 Würzburg, Universität, Martin von Wagner Museum: L 469, ARV² 138.1.

41 LGPN II, p. 401.

42 IG I³ 699. (Williams 2013).


44 IG I³ 658.

45 Munich, Antikensammlungen, 2421, ARV² 23.7, p. 1620.

46 LGPN II, p. 434.

47 Berlin, Antikensammlung, 3152, F 1763, Basel, Borowski, ABV 171.13, 178.2; 178.1. Para 74.3.

48 Orvieto, Museo Civico. ARV² 1699; BAPD 275634, CAVI 5801.


51 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, GR 22.1904, ABV 516.1; CAVI 3031.

52 LGPN II, p. 400.


54 E.g., Vatican City, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 16757, ABV 145.13, 672,3, p. 686.

55 Hydria, St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, ST 142, ABV 264.2, p. 672.

56 LGPN II, p. 235, S.V Hiketes.

57 Vathy, Museum, K1606, Beilage 8; CAVI 7430. Not in LGPN. (Kreuzer 1998).

58 Bentz, ‘Schwarzfigurige Amphoren panathenäischer Form’, p. 114.

59 BAPD on 1 April 2022. All the following numbers are from the BAPD.

60 Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg Universität, 74.

61 Cf. Spina T 128, T 308, 12 who observes that the large vases in Spina appear to be 10–20 years earlier than the smaller vessels. I am greatly indebted to jasper Gaunt for help with references. (Berti and Guzzo 1993; Lezzi-Hafter 1988).

62 Florence, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, 81947, 81948, ARV² 1312.1, 2.

63 I am grateful to Ed Bispham for the suggestion. (Antonaccio 2007).


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