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A PERSONAL LETTER FOUND IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA

ABSTRACT

A lead tablet found in the Athenian Agora, presented here for the first time, preserves the text of a personal letter inscribed in the 4th century B.C. by a professional. It is from a boy, his non-Attic name suggesting perhaps a metic background, who complains that the master of the foundry to which he has been sent, evidently as an apprentice, is mistreating him. The question raised concerning the legal rights of (metic?) apprentices is of special interest, as is the locution of the text, at least part of which is in the boy's own excited words.

Excavation in 1972 of the well beside the orthostate shrine at the crossroads near the Royal Stoa in the Athenian Agora (Fig. 1) proved to be remarkably fruitful, especially in its small finds of terracotta and lead, for the epigraphical record of the city.[1] Among the terracotta pieces were several stamps, presumably military passes, and among the lead were not only other military stamps but also the strips that have preserved for us much of the roster of the Attic cavalry. There was also a lead tablet inscribed with what seem to be Bacchic shouts.[2] The few other inscribed lead pieces from the well are the written debris of private rather than civic or organized religious life: a pot-mender and fifteen curse tablets of the 4th century, and the document that I present here, a personal letter of the 4th century, addressed by one Lesis to his mother and to one Xenokles (Figs. 2–4).[3]

Private letters on lead constitute a small but interesting genre within Greek epigraphy.[4] Eight have been published in full, a ninth in part.

1 Berezan, 5th century. *Ed. pr.* Vinogradov 1971 (phot., ills. 1–3; drawings, ills. 4–5); see Dubois 1996, pp. 50–55, no. 26 for later bibliography. Opisthographic. Side *A*: *Inc.* ⸆Ω Πρωταγόρη, ὁ πατήρ τοι ἐπιστέλλε. Side *B* (its writing at right angles to that of *A*): Ἀχιλλοδώρο τὸ μολί|βδιον παρὰ τὸμ παῖδα | κἀναξαγόρην.

2 Berezan or Olbia, 4th century. *Ed. pr.* Latyschev 1904 (drawing), Wilhelm 1909 (phot., fig. 64), cf. *Syll.*[3] 1260. See Dubois 1996,

1. For a detailed description of the excavation, see Shear 1973. I am grateful to T. Leslie Shear Jr. for permission to publish the letter presented below, and to Ios Zervoudaki for permission to publish here, for the first time, photographs of the Lokrian skyphos (Figs. 5–7). I am also indebted to J. Gordon Howie for his observations about the rhetorical figures in the letter, to Alison Burford Cooper and Susan I. Rotroff for advice about the skyphos, and to Jaime B. Curbera, Matthew W. Dickie, and Ronald S. Stroud for their careful criticism of this paper in manuscript. Craig Mauzy is responsible for the excellence of the photographs of the lead tablet (Figs. 2–4). Unless I note otherwise, all ancient dates are B.C.

2. Terracotta and lead military stamps: Kroll and Mitchel 1980 and Kroll 1977b; cavalry roster: Kroll 1977a; Bacchic shouts: Jordan 1986.

3. In a survey of curse tablets from the Athenian Agora, I mentioned seventeen tablets from the crossroads well (Jordan 1985a, pp. 209–210), but that was before it had been recognized that the apparent Bacchic shouts and text of the inscribed pot-mender were not curses. For the text of one of these last, see *Agora* XXVIII, pp. 55–57 (*SEG* XLIV 226).

4. For a useful introduction to the study of letters on lead, see Bravo 1974. At Henry 1991, p. 65, there is a good later bibliography of texts. See also Jordan, forthcoming.

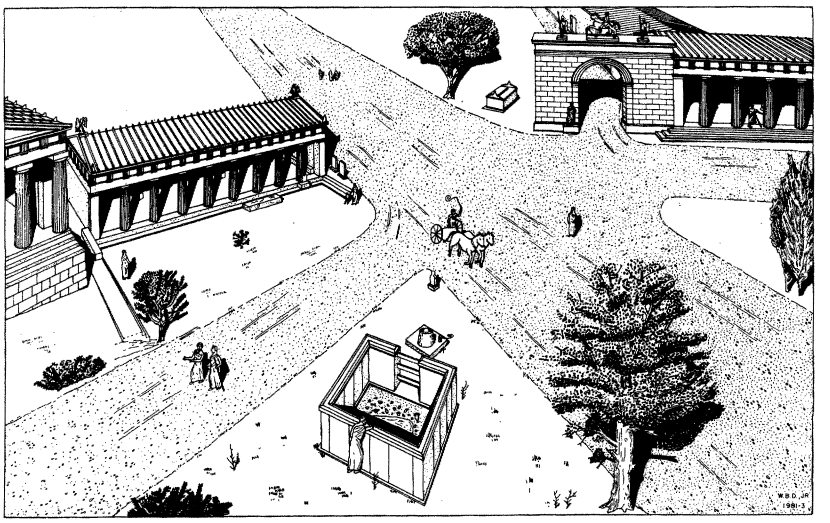

Figure 1. Crossroads, shrine, and well, with Royal Stoa at upper left and Painted Stoa at upper right. Drawing by W. B. Dinsmoor Jr.

pp. 63–66, for later bibliography. Opisthographic. Side *A*: *Inc.* Ἀρτικῶν : τοῖς ἐν οἴκωι χαίρειν :.

3 Torone, third quarter of 4th century. Henry 1991 (phot., drawing, p. 67). Fragmentary, upper and lower edges preserved. *Inc.* [–c.4–]τος Τεγέαι χαίρειν.

4 Attica (Χαϊδάρι), earlier 4th century. *Ed. pr. IG* III.3, pp. ii–iii (drawing, p. ii); cf. Wilhelm 1904 (phot., figs. 50–51), *Syll.*[3] 1259. Opisthographic. Side *A*: *Inc.* Μνησίεργος | ἐπέστελε τοῖς οἴκοι | χαίρεν καὶ ὑγιαίνεν· | καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως ἔφασ[κ]ε [ἔχεν]. Side *B* (its writing at right angles to that of *A*): Φέρεν ἐς τὸν κέραμιον τὸγ χυτρικόν· | ἀποδῶναι δὲ Ναυσίαι | ἢ Θρασυκλῆι ἢ θυϊῶι.

5 Attica (Pnyx), 4th century. Raubitschek 1943, pp. 10–11 (phot., drawing, p. 11). Fragmentary, upper and left-hand edges preserved. *Inc.* Θεοί· *vac.* | Χαίρεν καὶ [ὑγιαίνεν] (suppl. J. and L. Robert, *BullÉp* 1944, no. 90).

6 Agathe (Agde in southern France), 4th century. J. and L. Robert, *BullÉp* 1956, no. 357. Only partly published. Apparently a private letter, with the words χαίρειν καὶ ὑ[γιαίνειν].

7 Emporion, 5th century. *Ed. pr.* Sanmarti and Santiago 1987 (phot., pl. III; drawing, p. 122); later bibliography: *SEG* XLII 972, Slings 1994, López García 1995. Only the lower edge is preserved, which shows that the letter ended χαῖρε.

8 Emporion, late 5th century. *Ed. pr.* Sanmarti and Santiago 1989 (phot., pl. I; drawing, p. 37; color phot., Nieto 1997, p. 147). Fragmentary, no edge preserved.

9 Emporion, 4th century. Almagro Basch 1952, pp. 33–35, no. 21 (phot., drawing, p. 35). Fragmentary, right-hand edge preserved.[5]

The extant lead letters are so few, Ju. G. Vinogradov argues, because the lead, once the letters were received, was reused for other purposes or dis-

5. I know of three unpublished examples, from Olbia (5th or 4th century, Vinogradov 1971, p. 79; cf. Bravo 1974, p. 114), Mende in the Chalkidike (4th century), and Athens (4th century).

carded: the examples that we have today would be chiefly those that were never delivered.[6]

All of the letters with published illustrations have writing that is crisp and sure and most of them have no word-divisions at line-ends within their main texts;[7] **1** and **4** do have word-division in the addresses on their backs. To B. Bravo this style of writing without word-division suggests the work of the professional scribe. Our letter too shows no word-division. The evidence that we have, beginning a few generations later, for letter-writing on papyrus among the Greeks in Egypt shows that it was usual to employ scribes to write one's letters.[8] Our relatively few examples on lead do not allow any generalization for Greek-speaking areas elsewhere or in earlier periods, but the text of our letter (see below), like those from Berezan (**1**), Torone (**3**), and from Attica (**4**, **5**), opening as they do in the third person, may well show a formulaic distinction between scribe and sender.

The writing in the letter presented here is in a good 4th-century hand, the spelling, in every word but one, impeccable. The sounds /ē/ and /ō/ are written ε and ο if they result from contraction (περιιδεῖν [1], ἐλθεῖν [1], αὐτῶ [2]) or compensatory lengthening (τός [2]), while only inherited diphthongs appear as ει (ἐπιστέλλει: Ξενοκλεῖ [1], χαλκείωι [2]; the text has no example of a word that might be spelled with ου).[9] A date in the earlier 4th century is indicated.[10]

The tablet is apparently opisthographic and is unusually well preserved, with all edges intact except for a slight tear near the right-hand end of Side *A*. The edges themselves are not flat and straight but crinkled and have traces of pinking that suggest the use of shears rather than a knife for cutting the lead sheet. The main text (Side *A*) is in four lines. Splits within the individual strokes of the letters, particularly noticeable at the beginning of line 1, suggest the use of a splaying reed stilus (Figs. 3–4); experiment shows that fresh thin lead sheets are in fact soft enough to be inscribed with reeds. The purpose of such splits in stili evidently being to control the flow of ink, we may speculate that the scribe normally wrote not on lead but on papyrus or some other material that accepted ink, such as a potsherd, and that he used the instrument that he had at hand, a stilus that had already begun to show wear. He seems to have sharpened it from time to time, at any rate: there are no splits in the strokes of ΩΙ in ΑΝΘΡΩΠΩΙ in line 3 or in the strokes in line 4.[11]

The tablet was rolled up, with the writing on the inside (Side *A*, Fig. 2), from the direction of the left-hand ends of the lines of the text; this no doubt explains the slight damage at the right, which would have been the outer flap of the resulting scroll. That area of the outer side (i.e., Side *B*) shows, some 0.05 m from and parallel to the right-hand edge of Side *A* (i.e., at right angles to its writing), a row of faint scratchings, with shapes slightly larger than the letters of Side *A*; there may have been more. That they are neatly aligned suggests that they are deliberate, but the area is corroded, encrusted, and badly worn, this being the exposed part of the scroll, and I cannot confidently identify any one cluster of scratchings as a letter. If the marks are deliberate, they are no doubt the remains of what was once an address; indeed **1** and **4** each has an address on its back, in-

6. Vinogradov 1971, pp. 95–96; Bravo (1974, p. 113), *contra*, remarks, interestingly, that the reason why we find no lead letters after the 4th century is that by then papyrus, itself obviously easier to handle than lead, had become more generally affordable.

7. The one clear exception is **8**, of which the last preserved line ends γρ-. Both left- and right-hand edges of the text of **3** are lost, but its editor, A. Henry (1991), without noticing the apparent scribal habit of not dividing words at line-ends, has offered quite plausible restorations that do not require such division. The unpublished Athenian example (see note 5 above) has word-divisions.

8. Turner 1968, p. 83: "The mark of the public letter-writer, making articulate the fears and only half-expressed thoughts of his clients, is to be seen everywhere in the platitudes and clichés of which so many private [papyrus] letters are composed."

9. For the chronology of these conventions, see Threatte 1980, pp. 172–176, 238–258.

10. To put it somewhat more scrupulously, these features may show no more than that our scribe learned to write in the earlier part of the century. The sender of the letter was fairly young, but there is no reason why he could not have employed a scribe considerably older. In other words, letter-forms and spelling need not force us to assume the earlier rather than the later 4th century as the actual time of writing.

11. I regret that in my tracing (Fig. 2) I have not been able to show any of this splitting.

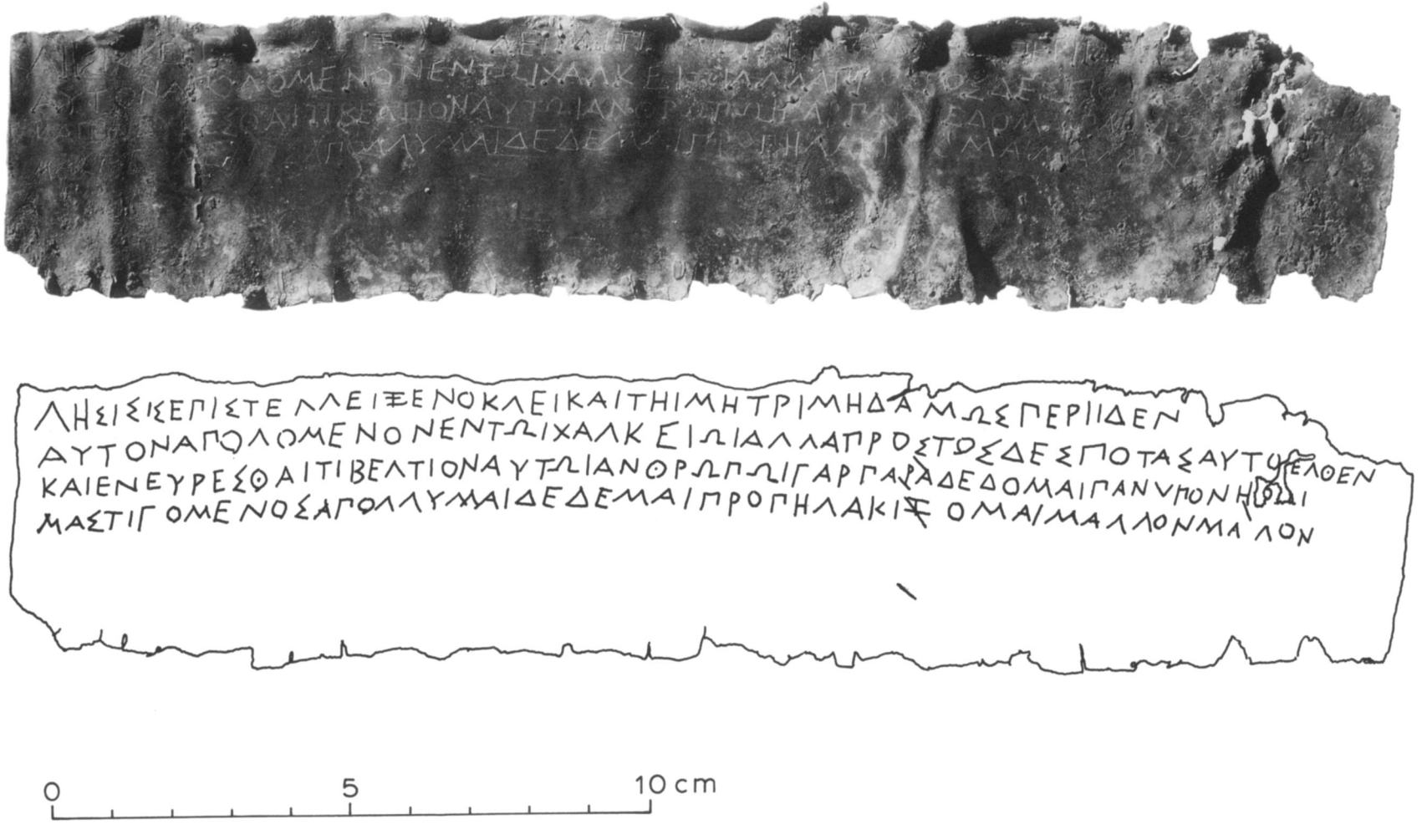

Figure 2. Agora IL 1702, Side *A*

scribed, as here, on the exposed flap and at right angles to the writing on the other side.

A final word, before we turn to the text, about the findspot, the well beside the orthostate shrine. In the Classical and Hellenistic periods the shrine evidently received so many votives—more than any other in the Agora—that they must have had to be cleared out from time to time and discarded, for the well itself had thousands of such votives, most of them suggesting a female cult. Some of the inscribed objects listed at the beginning of this article are obviously appropriate as offerings and may have come from the shrine: for example, the tablet with the Bacchic syllables, whatever its precise significance, and, if the deity is chthonian, the fifteen curse tablets.[12] Other inscriptions were clearly not votives: the cavalry tablets and the military stamps evidently come from the Hipparcheion, which has been assumed by C. Habicht to have been located nearby.[13] From the text of Lesis's letter it should, I think, be obvious that if that tablet was in any sense in situ when it was found among the votives in the well, it was so only in that the person whom Lesis had commissioned to deliver it considered it simpler to drop it down the well or into the shrine than to complete the errand. The letter was not, in other words, a votive at the shrine. This I stress only because, when I was preparing this article, I showed the text of the letter to a friend specializing in magic who, thinking of the texts of certain lead curse tablets with quasi-epistolary formulae addressing the dead,[14] at once assumed Lesis's letter to be a curse tablet, Xenokles the ghost addressed, and the "mother" the Earth herself. It is not; it is a personal letter that was never delivered.

Agora inv. IL 1702 Figs. 2–4

H. 0.050, W. 0.134 m
Early fourth century B.C.

Side *A*

1 Λῆσις {ις} ἐπιστέλλει Ξενοκλεῖ καὶ τῆι μητρὶ μηδαμῶς περιιδεῖν
2 αὐτὸν ἀπολόμενον ἐν τῶι χαλκείωι, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸς δεσπότας αὐτῶ ἐλθεῖν
3 καὶ ἐνευρέσθαι τι βέλτιον αὐτῶι. Ἀνθρώπωι γὰρ παραδέδομαι πάνυ πονηρῶι·
4 μαστιγόμενος ἀπόλλυμαι· δέδεμαι· προπηλακίζομαι· μᾶλλον μᾶ[λ]λον.

"Lesis is sending (a letter) to Xenokles and to his mother by no means to overlook
that he is perishing in the foundry but to come to his masters
and find something better for him. For I have been handed over to a man thoroughly wicked;
I am perishing from being whipped; I am tied up; I am treated like dirt—more and more!"

12. In all, sanctuaries of Demeter and of Demeter and Kore have yielded some forty curse tablets, from Selinous (Jameson et al. 1993, pp. 125–131, late 6th[?]–5th century); Rhodes (Zervoudaki 1973, p. 622; cf. Jordan 1985b, p. 168, 4th century); Mytilene (Curbera and Jordan 1998, 4th century); Knidos (*DTAud* 1–13, Hellenistic); Morgantina (*SEG* XXIX 927–932, Hellenistic); and Corinth (*Corinth* XVIII.3, pp. 281–291, Roman Imperial?).

13. See Kroll 1977a, p. 84; Habicht 1962, p. 138.

14. For a helpful discussion of such "letters" see Bravo 1987, pp. 196–200.

Figure 3. Agora IL 1702, Side *A*, left end, showing effects of splaying of reed stilus

Figure 4. Agora IL 1702, Side *A*, detail of lines 2–4. The stilus has been sharpened for line 4.

Λῆσις {ις}. The name Λῆσις is new and certainly not Attic. Like the masculines Λύσις/Λυσίας/Λυσίων from λύω, Ζεῦξις/Ζευξίας/Ζευξίων from ζεύγνυμι, Φεῖδις/Φειδίας/Φείδων from φείδομαι, and so on, it is evidently formed from a verb, in this case no doubt λῶ (= Att. θέλω), attested in Doric and probably that underlying the name Λησίας, even though the apparently single instance of this last, *IG* V.2 439.31 (Megalopolis, 2nd century), is from Arcadia. Further, the masculine ending -ις being preponderantly Doric,[15] a Doric origin of the name Λῆσις can probably be assumed. We may compare the Doric name Βῶλις, from βώλομαι (= Att. βούλ-), a near-synonym of λῶ. As for the superfluous {ις}, it conceivably results from the unfamiliarity of the name Λῆσις in Athens.

ἐπιστέλλει. We may compare the use of the verb in the opening for-

15. See Masson 1987, p. 246.

mula of **4**, as a parallel to which W. Crönert[16] adduced Selene's lines in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (608–610):

> Ἡ Σελήνη ξυντυχοῦσ' ἡμῖν ἐπέστειλεν φράσαι
> πρῶτα μὲν χαίρειν Ἀθηναίοισι καὶ τοῖς ξυμμάχοις
> εἶτε θυμαίνειν ἔφασκε.

The similarity suggests that the formula with which Lesis's letter opens would have been familiar in Athens.[17] An opening of a message with the verb ἐπιστέλλειν is indeed found on an earlier graffito from the Agora, with the message Σοσίνεο<ς> | ἐπέστελε | Γλαύκοι | ἐς ἄστυ | ἐν δεσμῶ[ι] (*Agora* XXI, p. 9, no. B9, last quarter of 5th century).[18]

Ξενοκλεῖ καὶ τῆι μητρί. Lesis complains to Xenokles and his mother, as we see, of mistreatment by his masters. His request that together with the masters they should "find something better for him" (line 3) implies a previous agreement. We may at the outset rule out the possibility that Xenokles is Lesis's father, for if so Lesis's mother has no legal standing in the negotiations with his δεσπόται in the χαλκεῖον. Lesis's father, we have to conclude, is no longer on the scene or in a position to conduct transactions. In deducing the relation between Lesis and Xenokles we should begin by asking if Lesis is a slave or free. If he is a slave, Xenokles must have contracted the apprenticeship as his owner or conceivably as his owner's representative, to whose compassion, in either case, the boy may, let us concede, be in a position to appeal. If he is a slave, though, his mother can have no legal part in the arrangement with the δεσπόται. Yet Lesis writes to her as well as to Xenokles and, if the letter expresses his instructions accurately, asks them both to come to the δεσπόται and to make a new arrangement. It seems to me therefore unlikely that Lesis is a slave.[19]

I cannot determine, from what we know of Athenian law, whether Lesis and his mother are of the citizen or the metic class. His non-Attic name points to the latter, in which case Xenokles is presumably the mother's *prostatês,* her citizen patron, who acts on her behalf in the polemarch's court if she ever needs to undertake a legal action,[20] for example, if Lesis's masters should default on their part of the arrangements;[21] Xenokles will have been present at the negotiation, then, as *prostatês*.

μηδαμῶς περιιδῆν | αὐτὸν ἀπολόμενον. Spelling at the time would have been the same for a future participle (ἀπολούμενον, contracted from -λεόμ-) and an aorist (-λόμ-). That standard grammars, on the other hand, give several examples of the verb περιοράω with present or aorist but never future participles no doubt reflects usage, and the use of the present ἀπόλλυμαι below probably argues against a future participle here.[22] In any case, we may compare the locution μὴ περιιδεῖν ἀπολομένους at Demosthenes 50.5.

ἐν τῶι χαλκείωι. A χαλκεῖον, its etymology notwithstanding, need not be a foundry specifically for bronzeworking; we may compare the latitude of the use of the word χαλκεύς, which could refer to a coppersmith but also to a goldsmith (*Od.* 3.343), an ironworker (cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1461a29 χαλκέας τοὺς τὸν σίδηρον ἐργαζομένους; *Gen.* 4.22 LXX χαλκεὺς χαλκοῦ καὶ σιδήρου—examples from LSJ). We need not assume that the

16. Crönert 1910.

17. Cf. also the opening of **1**. The preserved beginnings of **2**, **3**, **5**, and **6** use Mnesiergos's and Selene's verb χαίρειν but are more like the formula familiar from papyrus letters, with its nominative-plus-dative-plus-χαίρειν (for examples see Exler 1923, pp. 24–44, 50–56).

18. See Jordan 1978, p. 93, for the articulation of the last line.

19. A reader of an early version of this article made a suggestion: "Could Xenokles not be Lesis's master, who has the boy's slave mother in his *oikos*? Xenokles rents out Lesis to work in a foundry where he is abused. Lesis writes to his master (and to his mother who may here have some influence—sexual?—over Xenokles) to get him out of there. Xenokles may want to protect his investment by finding the boy something better." As I see it, however, against this interesting idea is Lesis's request that *both* Xenokles *and* the mother should make the new arrangements with the foundry-keepers.

20. See Harrison 1968, pp. 189–193, on the relationship of metic and *prostatês*. The evidence on the metic at law is enhanced and complicated by F. Costabile's recent preliminary publication (1998) of an early-4th-century lead curse tablet from the Athenian Kerameikos, directed against three persons with forthcoming lawsuits; the curse on the third, a woman, includes "the polemarch and his court."

21. From Roman Egypt we have a number of apprenticeship contracts (see below), some in fact with penalty clauses should the masters/teachers default, e.g., *P. Mich.* IV 346 (Tebtunis, A.D. 13), in which a master weaver writes, "And if I shall not teach her, or she shall be considered not to know what she has been taught, you will perforce have her taught at my own expense" (lines 9–12).

22. E.g., Goodwin 1889, p. 51, §148; Kühner 1904, pp. 55–56.

letter was actually sent from the χαλκεῖον or from anywhere near the crossroads well. In any case, Lesis is unlikely to have worked in any of the three excavated *bronze* foundries in use in the Agora in the 4th century (see below, note 25).

ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸς δεσπότας αὐτῶ ἐλθῆν | καὶ ἐνευρέσθαι τι βέλτιον αὐτῶι. The word δεσπότης means "master," usually in the sense of "owner," according to the evidence assembled s.v. in LSJ and *DiccGE*. If this were the sense here, with Lesis literally belonging to these δεσπόται, it would have been pointless for him to write to his mother, Xenokles, or anyone else for help. Here the word evidently has a looser sense. His situation may remind us of Lucian's, in the 2nd century of our era, whose father, not a rich man, sent him to the shop of his wife's brother, a sculptor of some reputation, to learn the art. Lucian's words (*Somn.* 3) are παραδεδόμην τῷ θείῳ, not much different from Lesis's ἀνθρώπωι . . . παραδέδομαι below; conceivably the verb was a *terminus technicus* for such occasions. The uncle gave Lucian the chisel and a slab of marble and told him to strike. Lucian did, too enthusiastically, and broke the slab, whereupon the uncle beat him with a stick. Lucian went home in tears and complained to his mother, who heaped abuse on her brother, no doubt using such terms as πάνυ πονηρός. Here the similarities end, though. Lucian was able to go home to complain; Lesis has to write to Xenokles and to his mother. What is Lesis's status vis-à-vis his masters?

We have virtually no direct evidence for the institution of apprenticeship in 4th-century or earlier Athens—in fact, other than the "manumission cup" inscriptions (*IG* II² 1553–1578, *SEG* XVIII 36, all from the 320s), the present letter is the only real testimonium. I quote from Alison Burford's useful summary:

> Few details are known of the apprenticing system in Greece. . . . Indeed we know little beyond the fact that it existed, as it had in earlier urban (and to that extent industrialized) societies. There is a reference to 'competent *didaskaloi*'—instructors—for 'the lowest mechanics' in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* [4.2.2], and Plato [*Meno* 91D] makes a comparison between the master of rhetoric and his fee-paying pupil, and the sculptors Pheidias and Polykleitos and their fee-paying pupils; a little further on he refers to Zeuxis of Herakleia who gave painting lessons. A formal agreement of some kind was made between the parents or guardians of the prospective apprentice and the master-craftsman who had consented to take him on; the only surviving records of such agreements, from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, suggest that the terms would have been of the simplest; although the political and economic organization of Egypt differed in many ways from that of the rest of the ancient world, the conditions of apprenticeship cannot in the nature of things have varied much.[23]

For 4th-century Attica, we may go a bit farther than this. In the "manumission cup" inscriptions a slave, once freed, receives a civic nomenclature in the form Φιλίστη ταλασι(ουργὸς) ἐμ Μιελ(ίτηι) οἰκοῦσα (*SEG* XVIII

23. Burford 1972, pp. 88–89.

36 A, lines 213–214) or Ἀριστομένης ἐμ Μελ(ίτηι) | οἰκῶν σκυτοτό(μος) (lines 216–217), the mention of the profession being apparently optional. The professions, all of which were necessarily learned before the manumissions, are from a wide spectrum of Attic economic life. The ἀπελεύθεροι include wool-workers, farmers, cobblers, shopkeepers, merchants, and also persons with skills that could hardly have been gained in the masters' households but would have required apprenticeship elsewhere: a gem-cutter, a goldsmith, a citharode, a flute-player, a potter, another specializing in amphoras, a χαλκεύς. In the papyrus contracts we see that owners could apprentice their slaves, guardians their wards, parents their sons and daughters to learn professions, and that there were generally two types of contracts: apprentices either worked by day and came home at night or remained with their teachers/masters until the term of instruction (which could be as long as several years) ended;[24] Lesis had to send a letter home, which shows that his contract was of the latter type.

Ἀνθρώπωι γὰρ παραδέδομαι πάνυ πονηρῶι. In contrast to the plural δεσπόται of line 2, with whom Xenokles and Lesis's mother have made the arrangement, stands the singular here, referring no doubt to the man in charge of some particular branch of work within the χαλκεῖον. It is he to whom the δεσπόται of the χαλκεῖον will have handed Lesis over for personal instruction.[25]

μαστιγόμενος ἀπόλλυμαι· δέδεμαι· προπηλακίζομαι. The Old Oligarch speaks of the Athenian sanction on striking a slave or a metic ([Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.10). The evidence is contradictory, though, for at [Dem.] 53.16 the speaker tells of his neighbors' ruse of sending a young Athenian boy (παιδάριον ἀστόν) to destroy a rose-bed, "in order that if I caught him and in a fit of anger put him in bonds or struck him, assuming him to be a slave (πατάξαιμι ὡς δοῦλον εἶναι), they might bring an indictment for assault (γραφὴν ὕβρεως)" (transl. A. T. Murray); presumably the speaker is not aware of the prohibition that the Old Oligarch refers to. The matter of the γραφὴ ὕβρεως is indeed complex.[26] Whether the law deterred or was meant to deter corporal punishment of young persons during apprenticeships is a question for which there is no evidence, as far as I know, to guarantee an answer. Several centuries later, the question of the legal rights of the apprentice was still debated by Roman jurists. Burford[27] refers to an opinion of Ulpian (3rd century A.C.) in Justinian's *Digest,* 9.2.5.3:

> If a teacher kills or wounds a slave during a lesson, is he liable under the *lex Aquilia* for having done unlawful damage? Julian writes that a man who put out a pupil's eye in the course of instruction was held liable under the *lex Aquilia*. There is all the more reason therefore for saying the same if he kills him. Julian also puts this case: A shoemaker, he says, struck with a last at the neck of a boy (a free-born youngster) who was learning under him, because he had badly done what he had been teaching him, with the result that the boy's eye was knocked out. On such facts, says Julian, the action for insult does not lie because he struck him not with intent to insult, but in order to correct and to teach him; he wonders whether there is an action for breach of contract for his services as a teacher, since a

24. For the evidence from Graeco-Roman Egypt for apprenticeship there, see Westermann 1914; Zambon 1935, 1939.

25. If this idea is right, the letter concerns none of the 4th-century bronze foundries in the Athenian Agora, which are too small for such divisions of labor; see Mattusch 1977, pp. 358–363.

26. See Fisher 1992, pp. 36–85.

27. Burford 1972, p. 92.

> teacher only has the right to administer reasonable chastisement, but I have no doubt that action can be brought against him under the *lex Aquilia*.[28]

As an instance of the brutality that could take place in a workshop in Greece, Burford cites a scene on a late-5th-century imitation black-figure skyphos found at Abai in Lokris (National Museum, Athens, inv. 442); the painter is conceivably relying on first-hand knowledge of life in the pottery works.[29] He depicts an assistant, a stack of three skyphoi with horizontal handles in his right hand, walking away to the left (Fig. 5). In the middle of the scene a seated person of undetermined gender,[30] the only clothed figure in the picture, holds a triangular object (a fan?)[31] in one hand, a kylix in the other. To the left of the stool at which the figure sits is another stack of three skyphoi, these with upturned handles. Farther to the right there is a shelf, presumably on the back wall, with a kantharos, another horizontal-handled skyphos, and two small sticks that may be paintbrushes (Fig. 6). On the floor is a potter's wheel, behind which crouches another worker, holding in his raised left hand a skyphos with upturned handles that he inspects (Figs. 7–8). Standing on the wheel, within easy reach of his right hand, is a horizontal-handled skyphos with what is evidently a paintbrush in it. The scene is obviously a pottery workshop. Above the painter who sits peacefully at the wheel we behold something gruesome. No doubt as punishment for some wrongdoing, one of the workers has been suspended face down from the ceiling. His left foot is tied against the ceiling itself; his right foot hangs lower, from a cord. His hands also hang from cords.[32] Another cord from the ceiling is around his neck, strangling him so badly that his tongue hangs out.[33] As if this were not enough, another cord, attached to his penis, is stretched tight and tied to a ring or a hook in the floor. In front of the victim and facing him stands another worker swinging a long, thin object, a leather thong or a stick, in his upraised right hand.

Blümner and all others who have discussed the figure suspended from the ceiling have assumed that he is a slave, Blümner adducing, from Roman comedy, several examples of slaves being whipped while tied up and suspended.[34] (As an Attic example we have a lively description by Aristophanes, *Frogs* 618–822.) But is this assumption necessary? May he not be an apprentice—slave, metic, or free—here *in statu pupillari*?

The second sentence of the letter, with its first-person verbs, is in contrast to the first, with verbs in the "epistolary" third person. It is evidently intended to be read as Lesis's own words. The verbs in the last line are in an almost staccato asyndeton. We may compare the asyndeton of the Spartan Hippokrates' letter that the Athenians intercepted in 410 (Xen. *Hell.* 1.1.23), ἔρρει τὰ κᾶλα· Μίνδαρος ἀπεσσύα· πεινῶντι τῶνδρες· ἀπορίομες τί χρὴ δρᾶν, and what Aristotle offers as an example of a vivid peroration at the very end of his *Rhetoric*: εἴρηκα· ἀκηκόατε· ἔχετε· κρίνατε. This latter is itself an echo of the end of Lysias's *Against Eratosthenes*: ἀκηκόατε· ἑωράκατε· πεπόνθατε· ἔχετε· δικάζετε. J. Gordon Howie, who has been kind enough to point me to these passages, concludes that the composer of the second sentence of Lesis's letter must have

28. Trans. C. Kolbert *apud* Mommsen, Krueger, and Watson 1985, vol. 2, p. 278.

29. Burford 1972, p. 91; Blümner 1889, pp. 150–156. Subsequent discussions: Collignon and Couve 1904, no. 1114 (phot. of one side, pl. 38); Walters 1905, pp. 135–136; Scheibler 1995, p. 120; Halm-Tisserant 1998, pp. 44–45.

30. A man, according to Blümner, Collignon and Couve, and Walters; the wife of the naked man at the wheel (see below), according to Scheibler; the female owner of the shop, according to Halm-Tisserant.

31. Blümner and Walters describe it as a leather sheet, with which the seated figure was in the act of striking the departing assistant; for Collignon and Couve it is a rhyton. That it may be a fan is the suggestion of Susan Rotroff.

32. Blümner, Collignon and Couve, and Walters assume that the right hand is free and is begging for mercy. There are two cords, and admittedly neither is attached to the right hand, but the artistry is crude, and I think that we are meant to understand both hands to be bound.

33. Halm-Tisserant (1998, pp. 44–45) alone assumes that the victim is vomiting into the skyphos that the man at the wheel is obligingly holding up. The man at the wheel seems not to have envisaged this possibility.

34. Blümner 1889, p. 156.

Figures 5–7. Skyphos from Abai in Lokris, late 5th century, depicting a potter's workshop with a torture scene. Athens, National Museum inv. 442. Courtesy Museum

Figure 8. Watercolor showing potter's workshop and torture scene. Courtesy National Museum, Athens

had some education in rhetoric and therefore would not be Lesis himself but presumably the professional scribe. I myself would keep open the possibility, however, that Aristotle recommended asyndeton precisely because persons in such situations as those of Hippokrates or Lysias or our Lesis would naturally, and effectively, use it to urge attention.

μᾶλλον μᾶ[λ]λον. The last expression is otherwise known only from Euripides (*IT* 1406, μᾶλλον δὲ μᾶλλον πρὸς πέτρας ἥξει σκάφος) and a passage that Photios cites (*Lex.*, s.v. μᾶλλον μᾶλλον) from Alexis's *Atthis*, fr. 29 Kassel-Austin (πῶς ἐπινέφει τὸ πρῶτον ὁ Ζεὺς ἡσυχῇ, / ἔπειτα μᾶλλον μᾶλλον).[35] Without quoting his evidence, Photios refers to Alexis's *Pezonikê*, Anaxilas's *Horai*, and Menander for the idiom. The expression evidently went out of use well before it found a firm place in the language, though, for Photios is obliged to explain it: μᾶλλον μᾶλλον· ἀντὶ τοῦ *ἀεὶ καὶ μᾶλλον*, or again, οὕτως λέγουσιν ἄνευ τοῦ *καὶ* συνδέσμου.

35. For discussion, see Arnott 1996, p. 126.

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