

# SELLA CACATORIA

## A STUDY OF THE POTTY IN ARCHAIC AND CLASSICAL ATHENS

*To the memory of Peter Corbett,  
who figured it out, and  
Piet de Jong,  
for so artfully rendering it*

### ABSTRACT

This article provides a detailed publication of an early black-figure infant/child seat, or potty, found in the Athenian Agora, including a series of brilliant watercolors by Piet de Jong. Later red-figure representations show such vessels in use. The potty is attributed to the Gorgon Painter, and the chronological range of such vessels is reviewed by gathering earlier and later examples of the form, both those preserved in the archaeological record and those known through iconography. Finally, the authors suggest that the term *λάσανον* was used in antiquity to refer to such highchairs-cum-chamber pots.

### INTRODUCTION

In 1947 fragments of a “curious stand” (Fig. 1) were found in an abandoned well shaft on the lower slopes of the Hill of the Nymphs, not far from the Athenian Agora.<sup>1</sup> The well itself, designated deposit A 17:1, yielded material dating to the earlier part of the second quarter of the 6th century B.C. (ca. 575–560 B.C.), and the black-figure style of the stand, described by Homer Thompson as bold and open,<sup>2</sup> is in general keeping with this date. The stand was subsequently reconstructed from fragments and partially restored in plaster; it was inventoried among the pottery as P 18010. In his description of the vessel in the preliminary report for the excavations of 1947, Thompson provided as much detail as possible, laying down basic facts about the stand (e.g., interior versus exterior, principal front, decoration, use on the basis of wear) in an attempt to understand better its

1. Thompson 1948, pp. 184–185, pl. 65, nos. 2–3. The authors would like to thank the director of the excavations of the Athenian Agora, John McK. Camp II, for permission to study the potty, and the staff of the Agora excavations, including Jan Jordan,

Sylvie Dumont, and Craig Mauzy. The color illustrations (Figs. 3–6) were made possible by the generous support of the Louise Taft Semple Fund. Special thanks are due to Patrick Finnerty and Anne Hooton for the drawings presented in Figs. 18, 19, and 21. We

would also like to thank the anonymous *Hesperia* readers for their suggestions, Ols Lafe for his help with research on the Gorgon Painter, and Sarah Morris for teaching us about *λάσανα*.

2. Thompson 1948, p. 184. For style, see Boardman 1974, pp. 14–30.

function. His description—in an authoritative, scientifically worded style characteristic of an archaeologist not quite sure of what was found—is worth quoting in part:

[The vessel] consists of a drum-shaped upper member supported on a flaring base. Between these two members is a diaphragm pierced by a large round hole. The interior of the drum is accessible also through an opening with an arched top in its side wall. The base proper is pierced with a much smaller round opening on each of two sides, and it is reinforced at its lower edge by two massive lugs each of which is pierced transversely by two small round holes. The walls are very heavy, having an average thickness of about one centimeter.<sup>3</sup>

Thompson went on to describe the decoration of the vessel, but it was clear that the identification of P 18010 had stumped him.

The purpose for which the utensil was intended is puzzling and its interpretation is made more difficult by the lack of comparative material. That it was actually used is proven by the much worn state of the rim of the drum and of the front part of its floor, i.e., just within the window. The elaborate design shows that it was not, like so many black-figured stands, intended simply for the support of a round-bottomed lebes or the like. That it served as a brazier is ruled out by the absence of any trace of burning.<sup>4</sup>

Having cogently ruled out several possibilities—a normal stand for a footless vessel and the purposes of cooking—and having determined through its condition that the vessel was used in antiquity, Thompson associated the stand—*faute de mieux*—with psykters, or wine-coolers, an interpretation in part suggested by the provision for drainage. Drainage was facilitated, Thompson believed, by the hole in the bottom (i.e., in the floor of the bowl), while the round openings in the base he thought were probably for handling; these were all interpretations that were subsequently borne out. As for the lesser holes in the lateral lugs, Thompson first considered that they “may have been made only to assist the firing of these heavy masses of clay; they show no signs of wear.”<sup>5</sup> In a later publication, however, he concluded that the holes on the lugs were for supporting the stand on two metal rods and that the vessel could be (re)moved by withdrawing the rods.<sup>6</sup>

P 18010 quickly became a curiosity, yet another of those puzzling vessels of the Athenian black- and red-figure style that defied straightforward interpretation. But unlike many of its contemporaries, the vessel was not to languish very long, for shortly after its discovery Peter Corbett, then of the British Museum, recognized the pot’s function.<sup>7</sup> On

3. Thompson 1948, p. 184.

4. Thompson 1948, p. 185.

5. Thompson 1948, p. 185.

6. Thompson 1976, p. 241.

7. The Attic red-figure and white-ground pottery found in the Athenian Agora was originally assigned for publication to the late Peter E. Corbett;

see *Agora* XXX, p. xvii. Corbett’s familiarity with red-figure pottery, not least the representation of the potty on a chous in the British Museum (see below, A1), together with the Archaic and Classical pottery from the Athenian Agora, led him to the correct identification of the function of the

stand, which then featured prominently in the Agora Museum. Corbett never published this identification, nor are we aware of any of his notes on the subject, but he was duly credited with the correct interpretation by Eva Brann (1961, p. 363; *Agora* VIII, pp. 100–101, nos. 600–603).



a



b



c

Figure 1. Athenian black-figure potty, Agora P 18010: (a) front view; (b) back view; (c) side view. Courtesy Agora Excavations

the basis of red-figure representations, Corbett identified the enigmatic stand as a child's commode: a potty by any other name, or "potty-chair," as it was later called by Dorothy Thompson.<sup>8</sup> Thereafter, even relatively small fragments of similar commodes from the area of the Classical Agora were easily identified by Eva Brann,<sup>9</sup> who went on to establish that such stands could be traced back at least to the second half of the 7th century B.C.

Much more than this, P 18010 was destined to attain "celebrity status," a prominent and very popular display in the Agora Museum, illustrated in many of the guidebooks on the site, and an illuminating mainstay for anyone working on children in classical antiquity.<sup>10</sup> Despite its prominence, however, P 18010 was never properly published, and although one of the largest Attic black-figure vessels known, it was subsequently overlooked in the definitive publication of the black-figure pottery from the Athenian Agora.<sup>11</sup> An inadvertent result of the commode not having been published is that it has been largely neglected by students of Athenian black-figure pottery. It was never mentioned by Sir John Beazley—although he attributed many of the Agora figured vessels discovered in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s—and in many publications it is considered an ancient Greek "gadget,"<sup>12</sup> or "a contrivance for purely domestic use," albeit one "gaily decorated with birds and beasts,"<sup>13</sup> rather than a spectacularly and idiosyncratically potted and painted black-figure stand. This was all the more a shame as the vessel was skillfully rendered in a series of watercolors capturing its decoration and a similarly artful profile drawing by one of the great archaeological illustrators of the 20th century, Piet de Jong (see below, Figs. 2–6). Originally destined to appear in the definitive publication of the commode, these watercolors were, for the most part, to languish for decades in the obscurity of a metal cabinet in the Architect's Office in the Athenian Agora.<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of this paper is severalfold. First, we seek to complete what Corbett set out to do: to describe P 18010 in detail and to present it in the company of later red-figure representations that show such commodes in use. Second, we reunite the commode as a domestic contrivance, on the one hand, with its decoration, on the other, by publishing the watercolors of

8. Thompson 1971, discussion under figs. 39, 40.

9. *Agora* VIII, pp. 100–101. The fragments are described more fully below.

10. As Brann (1961, p. 363, under no. H 16) noted, the stand "is much admired by modern parents who visit the Agora Museum." It has been illustrated in the Agora guidebooks: Thompson 1971, fig. 40; Thompson 1976, p. 240, fig. 125. It has been featured most recently in Neils and Oakley 2003, pp. 239–241; and, among others, Rühfel 1984, p. 36, fig. 19. The Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam, com-

missioned a copy of P 18010, which is displayed at the museum in an exhibit on childhood in the ancient world; see Jurriaans-Helle 2001, p. 38, fig. 74.

11. *Agora* XXIII.

12. P 18010 appeared in Brumbaugh 1966, p. 49 (illustration on p. 90), in the chapter entitled "Mechanical Marvels."

13. Thompson 1976, p. 241.

14. To our knowledge, of the various watercolors of the commode prepared by Piet de Jong, only one has been published as a much reduced black-and-white reproduction in Lamberton and Rotroff's (1985, p. 22, fig. 42) overview

of the birds in the Athenian Agora. The watercolor—showing a lion and a siren (here, Fig. 3)—was chosen to illustrate but one of the fabulous and monstrous birds that inhabited the iconographic world of the ancient Greeks. A selection of the finest and most representative Piet de Jong illustrations from the Athenian Agora will soon be published (Papadopoulos, forthcoming). For a sympathetic appreciation of de Jong, together with an account of his work in Greece and his caricatures of famous archaeologists of the day, see Hood 1998.

Piet de Jong. Through the study of the vessel firsthand, aided by de Jong's illustrations, an attempt is made to uncover the identity of the painter—if not the potter—of the commode within the kaleidoscope of Attic vase painters determined by Beazley. Third, we review the chronological range, as far as it can be determined on the basis of the available evidence, of such commodes. To this end, P 18010 is seen within the context of earlier and later examples of the form, both those preserved through surviving remains and those known through iconography. We also discuss a number of related but invariably fragmentary decorated stands that may have served as commodes. A final aim of this article is to uncover the word that the Greeks themselves used for such highchairs-cum-chamber pots, or, as G. van Hoorn stated so conveniently, “ad sedendum summa utilitate infanti est . . . sella cacatoria infantilis.”<sup>15</sup> Following Sarah Morris's clarification of the various meanings of λάσανα/λάσανον, the word used by the Greeks to indicate both a pair of cooking supports and a portable privy or night-stool, we are able to reunite P 18010 with its proper name.<sup>16</sup>

## A BLACK-FIGURE POTTY IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA

Fragments of the potty, P 18010, were found discarded in well A 17:1;<sup>17</sup> sorting of the context lots at the time of discovery yielded no further fragments of the stand and it is clear that the vessel did not enter the well as an intact object. Agora P 18010, like all known similar commodes, is basically a combined bowl-on-a-stand, with an arched hole cut into the front of the bowl for the baby's legs (Fig. 1:a).<sup>18</sup> A hole in the center of the floor of the bowl facilitates passing of excrement, and a set of holes in the stand, one in the front (Fig. 1:a) and a corresponding one in the back (Fig. 1:b), facilitate lifting.<sup>19</sup> Two pierced lugs at the base of the stand (Fig. 1:c) may also have been used for mobilizing or immobilizing the stand (see below). As Dorothy Thompson was to remark, “it comfortably fits a child [what she earlier called a “young aristocrat”] of a year or two.”<sup>20</sup> The vessel was

15. See van Hoorn 1909, p. 30.

16. Morris 1985, esp. p. 402; Papadopoulos 1992.

17. *Agora* XII, p. 383; *Agora* XXI, p. 96; *Agora* XXIII, p. 329. The contents of the well include a range of typical domestic and household shapes (*Agora* XII: kados, p. 348, no. 1590; lekane, p. 359, no. 1746; chytra, p. 371, no. 1922; banded oinochoe, p. 246, no. 141), as well as objects that belong better to sepulchral contexts (votive cup: *Agora* XII, p. 335, no. 1422; horsehead amphora: *Agora* XXIII, pp. 102–103, no. 20; lid of a skyphos-krater: *Agora* XXIII, p. 153, no. 408; plate: *Agora* XXIII, p. 270, no. 1404).

The source of the funerary pottery is likely to be the nearby Archaic cemetery (Young 1951, pp. 72–78). A well-head (P 18276) found in the upper fill of the well indicates that the well had gone out of use. A fragment of the wellhead preserves an inscription (*Agora* XXI, p. 88, no. K 1) identifying the object as the “neck of a well” and giving a personal name, Eukles, which Lang suggests may be the owner of the well, possibly indicating that this was a household well. As a household well no longer in use, well A 17:1 would have provided a convenient place for the disposal of damaged cemetery pottery; the homeowner may have sought out

this debris to help fill in his defunct well.

18. For a different form, resembling a modern bedpan, see Erzen and Başaran 1990, p. 158, fig. 20, from Ainos (Enez), Turkey, dating to the 1st century B.C. The authors do not provide dimensions, so it is difficult to know if this is a child's commode or not. It was found in a grave, and may represent a practice similar to the placement of feeders in the graves of infants. The authors thank Billur Tekkok for this reference.

19. Cf. *Agora* VIII, p. 101.

20. Thompson 1971, discussion under fig. 40.

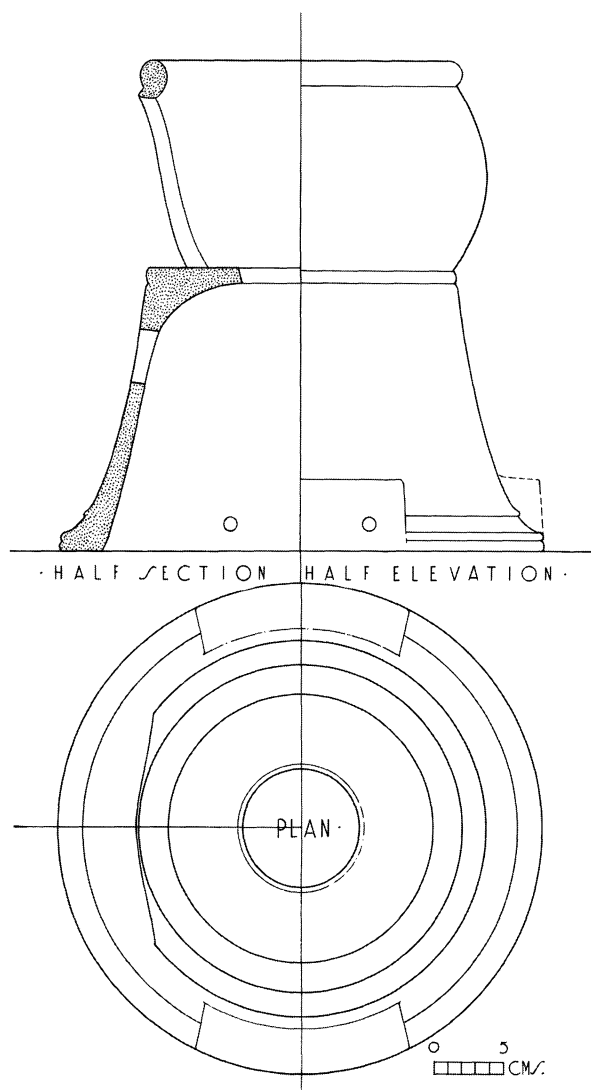


Figure 2. Drawing of Agora P 18010 by Piet de Jong, showing profile, elevation, and plan. Courtesy Agora Excavations

reconstructed from fragments preserving substantial portions of the bowl and stand, including the complete profile. The missing parts—including the lower portion of about half of the stand and parts of the bowl flanking the arched opening—were restored in plaster. The surfaces are very worn in parts, especially on the upper body, though they are better preserved on the side opposite the opening of the bowl. Wear is particularly noticeable in many of those parts that came into contact with the child, such as the edges of the arched opening and the rim of the bowl.

P 18010 stands to a height of 0.343 m, which is virtually identical to the measurement of the diameter of the base: 0.345 m. The diameter of the rim of the bowl at its outer edge is approximately 0.230 m. Piet de Jong's drawing of P 18010 (Fig. 2), prepared at a scale of 1:2, shows both the profile and elevation of the potty-chair, as well as a plan of it, viewed from above. The stand itself is broad and splays rather than flares (i.e., the outer profile is concave) toward the resting surface, which is flat. The base is offset from the stand by an articulated molding, with a double

echinus face at the lower edge. On the preserved side of the lower stand there is a rectangular reinforcement (Fig. 1:c)—described as a “massive lug” by Thompson<sup>21</sup>—about 0.152 m long and pierced transversely by two small round holes, each about 0.010 m in diameter. Only one of these reinforcements is preserved; the other is totally restored in plaster. The holes of the reinforcement pierce the base at its thickest point; there are no corresponding vertical holes piercing the base in line with the horizontal holes. It is highly unlikely that these small holes were for firing, as Thompson first suggested, but Thompson’s later suggestion, that these holes were intended to better secure the stand, is reasonable. The holes seem to show traces of wear on their lower sides indicative of a rope threaded through them.<sup>22</sup>

On the front and back of the stand are neatly cut, roughly corresponding, circular holes (maximum diameter 0.038 m), one of which is in line with the larger arched opening of the bowl, to facilitate lifting (Fig. 1:a, b). An adult could move the child in the chair by putting her fingers through the round holes and lifting. Without these holes, the person maneuvering the potty would have to lift from the rim or junction of the bowl and stand: both would offer precarious grips if the baby was uncooperative or heavy. In profile the upper stand is almost vertical and is offset from the bowl by a substantial ridge molding. The stand and bowl were clearly made as separate components that were subsequently combined. The two elements were connected by the floor of the bowl—what Thompson referred to as the “diaphragm”—that was the surface on which the child was seated.

The bowl itself is neatly rounded and is surmounted by a substantially thickened, round rim. The large arched opening for the baby’s legs is about 0.160–0.164 m wide. Although the arch is largely restored, its position is reasonably clear. The floor of the bowl is flat and nicely smoothed, no doubt to accommodate the baby’s bottom. There is a large opening in the center of the floor, about 0.082 m in diameter. Wheelmarks are clearly visible on the interior of the bowl.

The clay of P 18010 is the standard Athenian fabric, relatively fine, with the normal range of impurities. The clay body, wherever visible, and the reserved surfaces have fired in the range of reddish yellow to pink (Munsell 7.5YR 7/6–7/4) and pink (5YR 7/4).

Both the stand and the bowl are decorated in black-figure technique, well captured by Piet de Jong in individual studies that even include details of the incised lines (Figs. 3–6). In these, as in other watercolors of the Athenian black- or red-figure pottery that de Jong prepared for publication from the Agora, the artist displays an uncanny ability to capture the line of the original painter of the pot, whether that line was incised or in relief.<sup>23</sup> His paintings restore something of the original life to much-worn surfaces. He especially revives the deteriorated decoration on the front of the stand and on the surviving side of the bowl. The decoration on the back of the stand and bowl is considerably better preserved (Fig. 1:b). Wherever black glaze survives, it is mostly fired red, slightly darker only for small patches, with traces of added red for details of both the figured and floral decoration, although no traces of added white survive. The interior of the bowl and the underside of the stand are reserved. There are no traces of black glaze on any of the cut edges or openings. The outer edge of the molded foot is

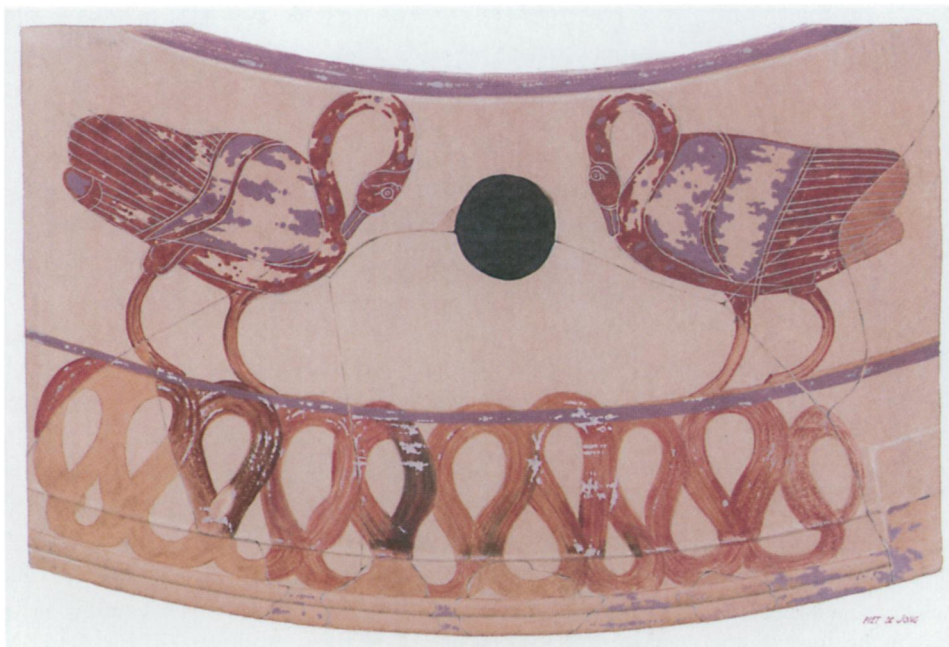
21. Thompson 1948, p. 184.

22. The wear patterns are comparable to those visible in the suspension holes of loomweights.

23. Here we refer to the relief line characteristic of Athenian red-figure; see Beazley’s description in Caskey and Beazley 1931, *passim*; Seiterle 1976; Robertson 1992, esp. p. 16.



**Figure 3. Watercolor by Piet de Jong showing lion and siren flanking the hole on the front of the stand of P 18010. Painting no. 352. Courtesy Agora Excavations**



**Figure 4. Watercolor by Piet de Jong showing geese flanking the hole on the back of the stand of P 18010. Painting no. 355. Courtesy Agora Excavations**





Figure 5. Watercolor by Piet de Jong showing siren to right of the large arched opening of the bowl of P 18010. Painting no. 354.  
Courtesy Agora Excavations

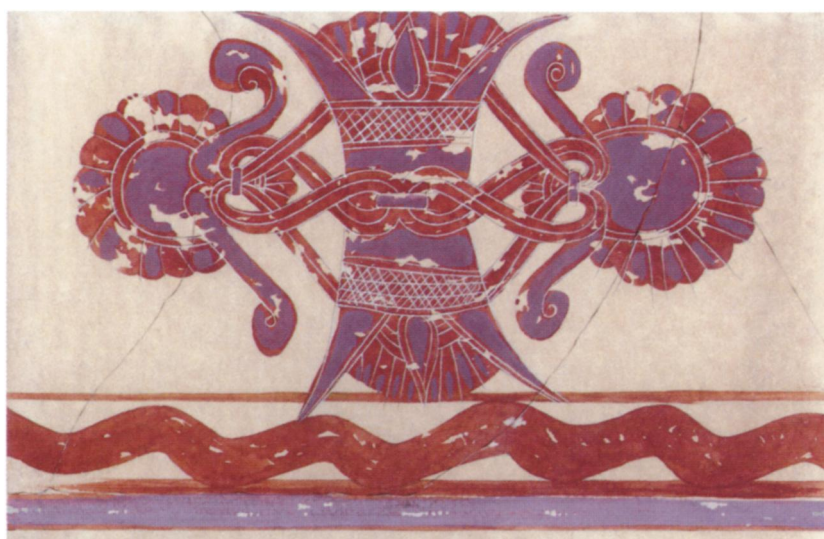


Figure 6. Watercolor by Piet de Jong showing floral motif on the back of the bowl opposite the arched opening of P 18010. Painting no. 353.  
Courtesy Agora Excavations

solidly covered with black glaze, as is the entire rectangular reinforcement. There is a broad horizontal line above the level of the reinforcement, which serves as the ground line for the figured decoration. Below the line, on either side of the reinforcement, is a black-glaze running loop (Figs. 1:b and 4).

There are two pairs of creatures on the stand, each pair heraldically flanking the front and back holes. The hole on the front of the stand, below the larger arched opening of the bowl, is flanked by a lion (left) and a siren (right); the immediate area of the hole itself is flanked by a floral motif (Fig. 3). As indicated in the painting by Piet de Jong, only the upper portion of the lion survives; he strides right with head down, teeth bared. The mane is drawn close to the body and indicated with long fringes of incision picked out in added red. Additional incision emphasizes the musculature and rib cage of the beast. The lion's tail loops up and returns to end in a short fringe touching his back. The loop of the tail probably extended up onto the bowl, but the area immediately above the lion is missing and restored.

To the right of the hole on the front of the stand is a siren, a bird with a woman's head (Fig. 3). She stands to left on two widely placed, streaky, undefined feet. Her body is an elongated oval with the wings curling up and forward in a whirl of feathers. The tail feathers and wing feathers are indicated with incised lines. Her profile head features a pointy nose, full lips, and rounded chin. She wears a fillet around the crown of her head, and her long hair falls in added red tresses cinched at the back of her head by a red band. The added red is fugitive and difficult to discern from the brownish-red color of the fired black-glaze slip. Traces seem to indicate that the flesh of the siren's face, body (but not wing), and hair originally had added red. Added white was not used for the flesh of the siren, although female flesh is commonly indicated in this way in the black-figure style.

Encircling the hole on the front of the stand is an entwined lotus and palmette motif (Fig. 3). Two narrow lotus buds project vertically upward flanking the hole from a double figure-of-eight tendril. The two tendrils are joined below the hole and topped by a small palmette. The lion's head overlaps the left lotus bud. The floral is intricate and detailed, but shows some hastiness in execution. The horizontal bars on the lotus buds, for instance, bear two different incised waves. The fronds of the left lotus suffer some confusion, probably the result of the overlap with the lion's head. Added red is used to highlight the palmette fronds and the bars on the lotus buds.

The hole on the back of the stand is flanked by two birds that are probably geese (Fig. 4). In supporting the identification of these long-necked birds, it is important to note that among domestic birds, neither ducks nor swans were common in antiquity, though numerous references in ancient literature to goose breeding—and fattening—make it clear that the goose was a familiar sight.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Homer himself mentions in the *Odyssey* (19.536–537) that Odysseus's wife, Penelope, in a dream, kept 20 geese:

χῆνές μοι κατὰ οἶκον ἐείκοσι πυρὸν ἔδουσιν  
ἐξ ὕδατος, καὶ τέ σφιν ἰαίνομαι εἰσορόωσα.

Twenty geese I have in the house that come forth from the water  
and eat wheat, and my heart warms with joy as I watch them.<sup>25</sup>

24. For geese, swans, and ducks in the classical world, see Lamberton and Rotroff 1985.

25. Trans. A. T. Murray, Cambridge, Mass., 1919.

The heraldically arranged geese have horizontal, ovoid bodies and stand on two widely spaced, streaky, curving feet similar to those of the siren on the front of the stand. The long neck of each bird curves up and back so that the beak touches the chest. Incision is used to define feathers and divisions on the body. Added red appears in a row of dots on the neck and body of the birds, in patches on the body (separated by a thin band of black glaze outlined in incision), and on the tail feathers. Although the recurved neck position is common in vase painting for long-necked birds, it does serve here to echo a curvilinear theme evident in the form and decoration of the vessel. On the geese, the curve of the neck is followed by the curvilinear incision on the body and even the oddly curving feet. Moreover, the geese's curves are echoed by both the looped pattern below, the loop of the lion's tail on the front, and the various loops of the elaborate floral motives on front and back. The repetition of curving lines even complements the graceful rotundity of the bowl and the flare of the stand. The overall effect is one of balance and visual interest.

The creatures stand on a single ground line that encircles the base. Below the ground line on the back of the stand is a thick, streaky, looped line. The corresponding zone on the front of the stand is missing; enough survives, however, to suggest that it is unlikely that the front bore the same loop pattern. On the back, the loop runs up to the preserved lug and overlaps it.

The molded ridge at the juncture of the stand and bowl is covered with a painted band. This band continues for a short distance onto the area of the arched opening, but it is mostly worn at this point. Nothing survives of the area to the left of the large opening. To the right is the figure of a siren (Fig. 5). Although the general form is clear, only its upper half survives, and it is very much worn, especially the front. It is the genius of Piet de Jong to restore, in a most subtle manner, missing or worn parts of a figure in order to convey a sense of the original draftsmanship, while also making it clear what part of the original survives and what is restored. The siren stands to left, probably on the familiar widely spaced, streaky curving feet, and looks back around to the right. She opens and stretches her wings. The wing feathers, wing bars, tail feathers, and tail bar are all indicated with incision. The face bears the same pointy but rounded nose, full lips, and rounded chin as the siren on the stand. The hair again is long and wavy, topped with a fillet at the crown and cinched with a band at the back. The ear on this siren is more carefully rendered, resembling Ionic volutes. The surface is so badly worn that detection of added red is difficult. Piet de Jong indicated none on his drawing, but it is possible to see traces of red on the tail bar and possibly on the feathers of the upper (far) wing.

The best-preserved surface on the object is the back of the bowl, opposite the arched opening and centered above the hole on the stand. This area is decorated with an intricate floral motif made up of large, horizontally mirrored lotus buds and vertically mirrored palmettes, symmetrically interlaced by tendrils (Fig. 6). The lotus buds feature flaring spines, teardrop-shaped central petals, and a crisscrossed horizontal band. The palmettes are compact, round forms with scalloped edges. The palmette fronds are divided by incised lines and are set off from the heart with a double line.

The interlaced tendrils connect the elements in an elaborate figure-of-eight pattern. Additional, tightly curved tendrils project from the palmettes, and within the knotlike tendril pattern are smaller, opposing, fanlike palmettes. Added red is used throughout to pick out individual fronds of the lotus buds and palmettes.

The floral motif respects the same ground line as the siren on the front. Below there is a broad, wavy line that continues from the front of the bowl around the back, and presumably to the other (missing) side. The outer and upper faces of the rounded rim are painted; the rim interior is reserved.

## THE VASE PAINTER OF AGORA P 18010

The characteristics of the black-figure style place the potty in the early first quarter of the 6th century B.C. Residual Protoattic decorative elements—the broad wave in the bowl exergue and the loop pattern in the stand exergue—indicate that this is an example of early black-figure.<sup>26</sup> The choice of animals represents the influence of Corinth, the city from which Athens learned black-figure, but the pairing of animals heraldically marks a distinctively Attic diversion from the Corinthian style.<sup>27</sup>

That there were few painters of early Attic black-figure pottery makes the identification of the hand easier, but not necessarily straightforward. Idiosyncrasies of style place the black-figure decoration on the potty in the manner of the Gorgon Painter, who was active in the early 6th century. By “manner” we mean that it may be the hand known as the Gorgon Painter himself or another painter working alongside him in his employment or under his tutelage. Followers of the Gorgon Painter who have identifiable styles—such as Sophilos, the Deianeira Painter, and the Istanbul Painter<sup>28</sup>—may be ruled out, as the burden of details do not add up to any one of their individual mature styles. It remains possible, however, that this vessel is a product of one of these identifiable followers, painted more closely to the master’s style during an apprenticeship—a school piece. In attribution of any figured pottery, it seems best to be conservative, reminding ourselves continuously how little we know of workshop organization during the period.

It is the lion from the front of the stand, with teeth bared and head down (Fig. 3), that links the style most securely to the Gorgon Painter’s workshop in its early years. The Gorgon Painter and his workshop love lions: they use them readily both in friezes and as solitary decoration.<sup>29</sup> The lions are often striding, as in P 18010, but they can sit or crouch as well. Distinctive of the Gorgon Painter’s depictions of felines is a downward orientation of the mouth, so that the line of the mouth is perpendicular to

26. For the wavy line as a typical Protoattic motif, see Brann 1961, pl. 81, nos. F 43–45, 47–49, H 47, 52–54, all dating to the second half of the 7th century B.C. Cf. also the decorative motifs of B1–B6 illustrated below (Figs. 16–19).

27. Beazley [1951] 1986, p. 16, n. 25. For a discussion of the Corinthian influences on Athenian pottery production in the Subgeometric period (that is, during Protoattic and Proto-corinthian), see Papadopoulos 2003, esp. pp. 222–224.

28. Sophilos: Bakır 1981. Deianeira Painter: Payne 1931, pp. 191–193; Williams 1986. Istanbul Painter: Kilinski 1978; Bakır 1978.

29. The workshop may have introduced the solitary, striding animal motif; see Scheibler 1961, pp. 42–43.

the ground line (or nearly so).<sup>30</sup> The mouth is carefully drawn open and baring teeth. Ingeborg Scheibler notes that the corner of the lion's mouth in early works is rounded and later becomes more boxlike.<sup>31</sup> According to her scheme, the rounded mouth would place the potty early in the career of the Gorgon Painter or his workshop. She further notes that early works have rounded ears and lack a tuft of hair on the top of the head,<sup>32</sup> again placing the lion on the potty among the early products of the Gorgon Painter's workshop. His lions' eyes are large, depicted as two concentric circles with triangles to the side. There is usually an incised eyebrow, frequently arched. The mane is drawn stiffly, close to the body, and indicated with flamelike locks, sometimes drawn with double-incised lines.<sup>33</sup> Although the lower half of the lion is missing, the axilla (the junction of the front leg and body) is preserved. The Gorgon Painter indicates the anatomy of the axilla with a rounded incision, sometimes recurved or doubled. The incised line extends up from the foot and often continues down the underside of the animal's belly. The painter uses this detail on all striding quadrupeds.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the upswept tail, with incised lines at the base and an incised tuft at the tip, is also a characteristic of the Gorgon Painter's work.<sup>35</sup>

The siren on the front of the stand (Fig. 3) also has close parallels in the work of the Gorgon Painter and his associates (see, e.g., Figs. 7, 8).<sup>36</sup> The most distinctive characteristic of sirens and sphinxes by the Gorgon Painter's workshop and followers is the wing that curves up and toward the head with incised wing feathers forming a pinwheel pattern.<sup>37</sup> Siren bodies are ovoid, and rest on two widely spaced, often sketchily drawn, curving leg lines usually lacking claw articulation. The wing is divided from the body by a double line, and the wing feathers can be a double or single zone of individual horizontal feathers that pinwheel as they ascend.<sup>38</sup> The tail feathers are incised onto the rear of the ovoid body, but can be more distinct on more carefully drawn examples. The hair of the Gorgon Painter's sirens and sphinxes is held back by a fillet around the crown and a second band loosely cinching the hair at the back of the neck. These fillets are distinguished with incision and added red.<sup>39</sup> The hair typically hangs down

30. Scheibler 1961, p. 15. Many examples are known; see, e.g., an oinochoe, Athens, National Museum 19176, *ABV* 9, no. 16; *Paralipomena* 7; Scheibler 1961, p. 4, fig. 5.

31. Scheibler 1961, p. 15.

32. Scheibler 1961, pp. 14–15.

33. See, e.g., the olpe Kassel T669, *Paralipomena* 7, no. 13<sup>ter</sup>; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 3; *CVA* Kassel 1 [Germany 35], pl. 27 [1707]:1–3. An oinochoe fragment, Agora P 25366 (*Paralipomena* 8; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 3), attributed to the Manner of the Gorgon Painter by Beazley, preserves a mane and axilla nearly identical to that of the potty's lion but probably belongs to a chimaera; see *Agora* XXIII, p. 193, no. 708, where Moore calls the double line for the locks of the mane "an unusual feature."

34. E.g., Kassel T669 (see n. 33, above); olpe with ram from Laurion attributed to the Manner of the Gorgon Painter, Ashmolean Museum V505, *ABV* 10, no. 4; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 3; *CVA* Oxford 2 [Great Britain 9], pl. 13 [414]:1–2; olpe with bull, Caudium Excavations, Salerno Museum (no number), Cerchiai 1995, pl. 16.

35. E.g., Kassel T669 (see n. 33, above); amphora fragment, Louvre CP 10628, *CVA* Louvre 11 [France 18], pl. 123 [796]:1–2 [Manner of the Gorgon Painter]; stand fragment, Agora P 23215, *Agora* XXIII, pp. 169–170, no. 532, pl. 51, which Moore (p. 169) describes as "by the Gorgon Painter or in his manner"; this attribution is based, in part, on the tufted tail.

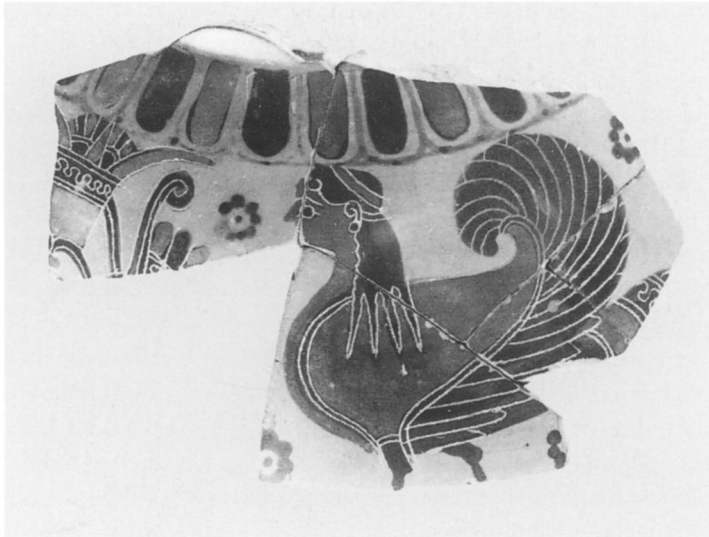
36. *Agora* P 13113: *ABV* 10, no. 24;

*Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 3; *Agora* XXIII, p. 119, no. 139, fig. 4, pl. 17, attributed to the Gorgon Painter. Louvre E 817: *ABV* 9, no. 7; *Paralipomena* 6; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 2.

37. Scheibler 1961, p. 12.

38. Both versions appear on a plate in the Walters Art Museum, 48.215, *ABV* 9, no. 18, 679; *Paralipomena* 7; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 3; Scheibler 1961, p. 19, fig. 20.

39. Scheibler 1961, p. 12. See, e.g., sirens on the plate in the Walters Art Museum, 48.215 (n. 38, above); sphinxes and sirens on a dinos in the Louvre (Fig. 10), E 874, *ABV* 8, no. 1, 679; *Paralipomena* 6; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 2; *CVA* Louvre 2 [France 2], pls. 14 [63]:3, 15 [64]:1–2, 16 [65]:1–2, 17 [66]:1–2, 18 [67]:1.



**Figure 7. Fragment of an Athenian black-figure amphora attributed to the Gorgon Painter, Agora P 13113.**  
Courtesy Agora Excavations

in three to five divided locks;<sup>40</sup> in contrast, the sirens on the potty stand and bowl have one single wide lock. There are, however, occasional examples of the single lock on works by the Gorgon Painter,<sup>41</sup> although its presence here may place the potty farther from the hand of the master or else early in his career. The facial profile of the siren on the front of the stand matches those of typical sirens and sphinxes of the workshop (Fig. 8). The eye is large, a feature used to single out important figures, and is formed by two concentric circles and flanking triangles at the corner of the eye.<sup>42</sup>

The siren on the side of the bowl displays many of the same details that mark the siren on the stand as a work by the Gorgon Painter and his workshop: the ovoid body, hair fillets, facial details, and overall proportions. We have found no parallel, however, for the pose of this siren in the Gorgon Painter's workshop. The siren stands to the left, looks back right and fluffs its wings. The pose of the right-facing head and slightly raised wings varies from the more common pose of avian figures with outstretched wings favored by the Gorgon Painter's workshop. Sphinxes, sirens, and geese are all occasionally shown in profile with their wings extended (albeit awkwardly).<sup>43</sup> The gesture here is much more naturally depicted, and it does not carry with it the imposing, threatening connotation that a siren or sphinx with outstretched wings would.

40. Scheibler 1961, p. 12.

41. See, e.g., a siren on fragments from a closed shape, in a New Jersey private collection, *Paralipomena* 7, no. 9<sup>6</sup> [Beazley Archive no. 350303, with image; for the Beazley Archive Database, see [www.beazley.ox.ac.uk](http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk)]; a sphinx on an olpe in the Louvre, A 474, that Beazley assigned to the Class of the Early Olpai, which he described as "more or less closely connected with the Gorgon Painter and his followers," *ABV* 9, no. 10; *Paralipomena* 9; Scheibler 1961, p. 35, fig. 35.

A pyxis in Bucharest, City Museum 20263, attributed to the Gorgon Painter by the authors of *CVA Bucharest 2* [Romania 2], pl. 12 [57]:5–8, p. 15, also features sirens with single locks of hair. The sirens on the pyxis are very similar to those on the potty.

42. Scheibler 1961, p. 13. Typically, there is a transverse line at the corner of the mouth, giving both sirens and human women a two-dimensional, profile "archaic smile" (as on the sphinx on Louvre E 817, Fig. 8), but the worn surface of the potty does

not preserve this detail.

43. For sphinxes, see, e.g., plate, Walters Art Museum 48.215 (n. 38, above); fragment of a krater, Athens, National Museum (from Munychia), no number, *ABV* 8, no. 3; Papaspyridi-Karusu 1937, pl. 64.2. For sirens, e.g., oinochoe, Agora P 997, *ABV* 9, no. 15; *Paralipomena* 7; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 3; *Agora XXIII*, p. 188, no. 671, pl. 64. For geese, e.g., oinochoe, Agora P 15002, *ABV* 10, no. 5 [Manner of the Gorgon Painter]; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 3; *Agora XXIII*, p. 188, no. 672, pl. 64.



Figure 8. Athenian black-figure amphora attributed to the Gorgon Painter, Louvre E 817, detail.  
Courtesy Musée du Louvre

The geese on the back of the stand also find parallels in the work of the Gorgon Painter's workshop (see, e.g., Fig. 9).<sup>44</sup> Their ovoid bodies, divided by a double, curving line, are quite similar to the geese on the exterior of an exaleiptron attributed to the painter himself.<sup>45</sup> The bodies on the exaleiptron geese are also painted in added red and they stand on curving, ill-defined feet as do those on the commode. A goose on a fragment of an amphora from the Agora attributed to the Manner of the Gorgon Painter<sup>46</sup> shares the looping neck adorned with red dots as well as the characteristics of the body (see also Fig. 9).

The Gorgon Painter revels in the intricate details of complicated florals. His name vase, the celebrated Louvre dinos (Fig. 10), has four similarly elaborate friezes of interlaced, side-by-side lotus and palmettes.<sup>47</sup> The Nessos Painter had utilized interlaced lotus and palmettes both as friezes and complicated filling ornaments,<sup>48</sup> but it is the Gorgon Painter who

44. Agora P 4727: fragmentary rim of an amphora attributed to the Manner of the Gorgon Painter, *Agora XXIII*, p. 120, no. 141, pl. 18; *ABV* 12, no. 26; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 4.

45. Athens, National Museum 19172, Scheibler 1964, p. 97, figs. 18, 19.

46. P 22310, *Agora XXIII*, p. 120, no. 142, pl. 18; see pp. 76, 120 for Moore's attribution to the Manner of the Gorgon Painter.

47. Louvre E 874 (see n. 39, above).

48. Friezes: see the Nessos Painter's name vase, Athens, National Museum 1002, *ABV* 4, no. 1, 679;

*Paralipomena* 2, no. 6; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 1; Boardman 1974, p. 21, fig. 5.

Filling ornaments: see an amphora from the Agora, P 1247, *ABV* 5, no. 2; *Paralipomena* 2, no. 4; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 2; *Agora XXIII*, p. 115, no. 117, pl. 13.



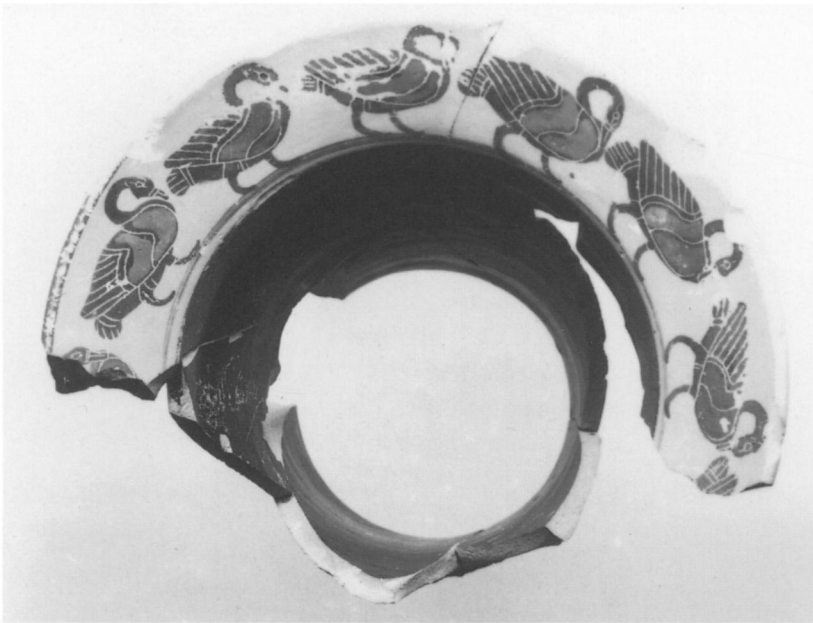


Figure 9. Fragment of an Athenian black-figure amphora attributed to the Manner of the Gorgon Painter, Agora P 4727. Courtesy Agora Excavations

brings the motif into prominence as a major decorative element. Not only does he exploit the potential of the motif for friezes, but he also features it as an eye-catching individual ornament. For example, a cruciform lotus/palmette motif is used on the neck of an amphora from the Agora as a dividing element between heraldic animals, but it can also serve as the main motif.<sup>49</sup> As an independent motif, the floral takes a cruciform shape with horizontally mirrored lotuses and horizontally mirrored palmettes interlaced with symmetrically looped tendrils.

The floral on P 18010 varies from the Gorgon Painter's typical cruciform floral in several small details. Normally, the two vertical lotus buds are separated by a reserved area; here the bases of the buds blend together with the joined tendrils at center. The addition of the subsidiary palmettes within the tendrils opposite the main palmettes represents a flourish not present in other examples. Typically the Gorgon Painter and workshop prefer a tightly undulating line on the band of the lotus or at the center of the palmette. The palmettes here have neither, but rather the band of the lotus features crosshatching. The hatching has parallels in the Gorgon Painter's workshop,<sup>50</sup> but may move the potty farther from the master's

49. Neck motif: P 4727 (see n. 44, above); *Agora XXIII*, p. 120, no. 141, pl. 18 (floral not illustrated). Dividing element: amphoriskos, Berlin, Antikensammlung F 3983, *ABV* 12, no. 28; *Paralipomena* 8; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 4; *CVA* Berlin 5 [Germany 45], pl. 54 [2199]:1–3; olpe, Tübingen, Archaeological Institute, 5445/28, Scheibler 1961, pp. 6, 15, figs. 7, 8, 18. Main motif: amphora, Brussels, Musée Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire A 3483,

Hamilton-Margos 1985, p. 83, fig. 4; Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco N 3737, Marzi 1981, p. 50, figs. 5, 6.

50. E.g., on a lid from the Kerameikos attributed to the Manner of the Gorgon Painter, no number, *ABV* 12, no. 29 [Beazley archive no. 300112, with image]; a fragment from a closed shape from Naucratis attributed to the Manner of Gorgon Painter ("may be the painter himself"), Oxford, Ashmolean G 550, *ABV* 13, no. 41; *CVA* Ox-

ford 2 [Great Britain 9], pl. 1 [402]:30; amphoriskos attributed to the Manner of the Gorgon Painter by Payne (1931, p. 193), accepted by Beazley, but reattributed to the Painter of Istanbul 7314 by Bakır (1978, pp. 36, 38, 43), Berlin, Antikensammlung F 3983 (see n. 49, above); olpe from Laurion attributed to the Manner of the Gorgon Painter, Ashmolean Museum V505 (see n. 34, above).





**Figure 10.** Athenian black-figure dinos with stand. Name vase of the Gorgon Painter, Louvre E 874.  
Courtesy Musée du Louvre

hand. Although not common, the teardrop-shaped petal at the center of the lotuses has parallels in other florals from the workshop.<sup>51</sup> The central teardrop petal also appears on the florals of the Ceramicus Painter, whose female heads and animal bodies share traits with those on the potty.<sup>52</sup> Clearly the Ceramicus Painter operated within the workshop orbit of the Gorgon Painter, but other features, such as the heavy-jawed female

51. See, e.g., the cruciform floral from the neck of an amphora, Agora P 4727 (n. 44, above), where the teardrop appears at the center of the palmette.

52. Florals with central teardrop petals: lekanis, Kerameikos 39, *Kera-*

*meikos* VI.2, p. 500, no. 105, pl. 97; *ABV* 19, no. 6; plate, Kerameikos 43, *Kerameikos* VI.2, p. 503, no. 109, pl. 98; *Paralipomena* 12, no. 7bis; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 6. The Ceramicus Painter's sirens/sphinxes have the same whirligig wings and articulated bodies, and his

female heads normally have a single lock of hair overlapping the shoulder, unlike the Gorgon Painter's divided locks; see, e.g., oinochoe, Kerameikos 42, *Kerameikos* VI.2, p. 502, no. 108, pl. 98; *ABV* 18, no. 1, 444, no. 1.

heads and animals that look out, up, or back (but never down), make the Ceramicus Painter an unlikely source for the potty's decoration.

One anomalous characteristic of the potty's decoration—for the period in general and the Gorgon Painter in particular—is the absence of filling ornament.<sup>53</sup> Black-figure painting of the first quarter of the 6th century B.C. marks the last gasp of the *horror vacui* that dates back to the Geometric period. The unadorned spaces of the potty's decorative zones seem ahead of their time, their balance and symmetry overriding clutter. The black-figure masters of the mid-century, Lydos and Exekias, would capitalize on the effect imparted by a spare setting.

The potty is not the only example of the Gorgon Painter exploring this technique: it is also used on his name vase, the dinos with stand in the Louvre (Fig. 10). On the dinos, the painter resists using filling ornaments throughout, but he utilizes the empty space best to emphasize the main scenes: the beheading of Medusa and a battle. The result is a stunning and innovative composition, especially in comparison to the visually cluttered work of the generation before the Gorgon Painter.<sup>54</sup> On the potty, the lack of filling devices may be a reflection of the utilitarian nature of the object, but the painter's evident skill and patience in decorating P 18010 is similar to that seen in many other pieces produced by the workshop, so one cannot conclude that the potty did not receive the painter's full attention. Instead, it is possible that the uncluttered decoration was a way of imparting monumentality to this atypical shape used by an atypical audience for early black-figure: children. We can imagine the animals delighting the child in the way that goods emblazoned with Winnie the Pooh delight modern children. The apotropaic aspects of the roaring lion and hybrid sirens might even act as talismans for good health, as demonstrated by the child's regular use of the potty, though animals and animal friezes were used not just on black-figure pottery but also elsewhere, such as on woven fabrics, so one should not impart too much significance to their use on P 18010.

It is not a surprise to find another work associated with the Gorgon Painter among the black-figure vessels excavated in the Athenian Agora. More than 50 pieces attributed to the Gorgon Painter himself, or in or near his manner, are published in *Agora XXIII* on the black-figure pottery. As Mary Moore has noted, the Gorgon Painter is the most prolific vase painter of the early 6th century B.C., but what is equally important is that many of his products remained in Athens.<sup>55</sup>

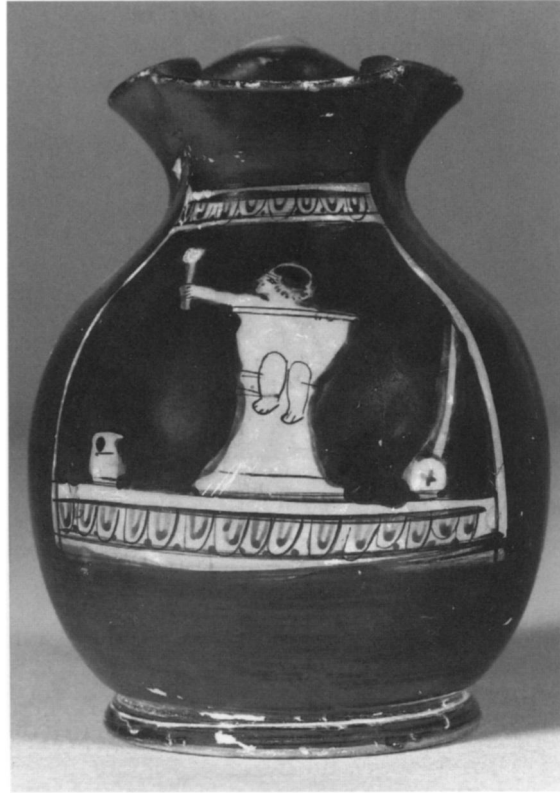
53. See, e.g., Louvre E 817 (n. 36, above), the amphora illustrated in Fig. 8.

54. Cf., e.g., the Nessos Painter's name vase, Athens, National Museum 1002 (see n. 48, above).

55. *Agora XXIII*, p. 75. A search of the Beazley Archive Database (n. 41, above) for the Gorgon Painter, including vases in his manner, returned 153 records, of which 103 include provenance; 54 of these are from Athens or

Attica. It is clear from these numbers that not all of the vases from the Athenian Agora are included in the database. Additional vases with provenances are distributed throughout the Mediterranean from Turkey to France, with the only other significant cluster being in Italy. The Beazley Archive does not include every known vase, but it does offer a good sample.

Figure 11. Athenian red-figure chous (A1), unattributed, London, British Museum 1910.6-15.4, showing child in highchair/potty. Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum



## ANCIENT ICONOGRAPHY AND EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Two Athenian red-figure representations originally assembled by Corbett (Figs. 11, 12), together with a third (Fig. 13), clearly show a vessel similar to Agora P 18010 in use, with a child happily seated inside. The three vessels are a chous, cup, and lekythos.<sup>56</sup>

### A1 Chous

Fig. 11

London, British Museum 1910.6-15.4. Walters 1921, p. 139, no. 6, pl. 4:V.6; Thompson 1971, fig. 39; Jenkins 1986, p. 32, fig. 37; Garland 1990, p. 161, fig. 21; Fittà 1997, p. 75, fig. 136; Neils and Oakley 2003, pp. 239–240, no. 41.

From Athens.

H. 0.11 m.

In a panel with an egg frieze at top and bottom, a child sits frontally in a highchair similar to P 18010, looking left. The child holds a rattle in its extended right hand. Its pudgy legs project through a hole in the bowl of a roughly biconical chair. The legs are slightly askew, suggesting movement. The stand is conical, but flares outward at the bottom, much like the base of P 18010. Horizontal black-glaze lines suggest a molding at the stand base, moldings at the junction of stand and bowl, and a rounded molding at the top of the bowl. On the ground to the left of the seated child is a banded olpe, miniature chous, or other small closed vessel; to the right a wheeled stick toy or roller leans against the frame of the panel.

Unattributed, ca. 440–425 B.C.

56. A further possibility noted in the literature is that the celebrated painting by Polygnotos in the Knidian Lesche at Delphi depicted the young Glaukos sitting, as Pausanias (10.27.3) notes, on or by a corselet (καθήμενος ἐπὶ θώρακι). Davies (1980) wonders whether this was, instead, “a child’s potty,” though he concludes that “it is more prudent to understand that Glaukos was shown seated beside (rather than upon) this piece of armor.”



**Figure 12.** Interior of Athenian red-figure stemless cup (A2) attributed to the Sotades Painter Workshop, Brussels, Musées Royaux du Cinquantiennaire A890. Courtesy Musées Royaux du Cinquantiennaire

#### A2 Stemless cup with wishbone handles

Fig. 12

Brussels, Musées Royaux du Cinquantiennaire A890. *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 771, no. 1; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 287; *CVA* Brussels 1 [Belgium 1], pl. 1 [41]:1; *CAH*, new edition, plates to vols. V and VI, fig. 133:b; Klein 1932, frontispiece; Rühfel 1984, p. 34, fig. 18; Burn 1985, pp. 100–102, pls. 25:1, 27:7; Sparkes 1996, p. 77, fig. III:9; Lewis 2002, p. 8, fig. O.3; Neils and Oakley 2003, pp. 240–241, no. 42.

H. 0.03; Diam. 0.127 m.

Exterior black glaze; interior white-ground with red-figure on black-glaze tondo. In tondo, woman seated on a stool facing right. She wears a chiton and himation; her hair is wrapped in a wide band. She extends her arms, palms up, toward a child seated in a device similar to P 18010. The pudgy child faces left, extends its arms toward the woman, and kicks its legs actively. Its hair is rendered with dilute brown, perhaps indicating blond hair. The child's seat is a roughly bi-conical apparatus; the stand is taller than the seat. The child is clearly sitting with its legs through a hole in the bowl portion of the chair, which features a rounded rim delineated by two black-glaze lines.

Sotades Painter Workshop, ca. 460 B.C.

#### A3 Lekythos

Fig. 13

Berlin, Antikensammlungen 2209. *ARV*<sup>2</sup> 1587, no. 2; van Hoorn 1909, p. 31, fig. 10; Zschietzschmann 1959, p. 225 (top right).

No dimensions available.

Red-figure palmette on shoulder. On body, between meander bands, a woman with short hair stands frontally, in voluminous belted garment with central stripe. She raises her left hand, wrapped in her garment, and extends her right arm outward with palm open. To her left, a child wearing a garment draped over its left shoulder sits frontally in a highchair similar to P 18010, looks right, and mimics the gesture of the woman's right arm. The chair is made of two elements: a curved, roughly hemispherical bowl on a conical, flaring stand. The junction of the two elements is articulated and possibly emphasized with a black-glaze line. The child's legs project through two holes on the bowl of the chair. Unlike the children on A1



Figure 13. Athenian red-figure lekythos (A3), unattributed, Berlin, *Antikensammlungen 2209*. Courtesy Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

and A2, the child on A3 wears clothing, and although the surface of the vase is restored in the area of the child's knees, it is possible that the lower curving lines on his knees represent the bottom of his garment.

Unattributed, ca. 460 B.C.

The form of P 18010 is similar to that of the vessels depicted on the three red-figure examples. All share a tall, conical base and a shallower, more rounded bowl for the seat. All provide an opening for the child's legs, although the Berlin lekythos seems to depict two holes, not one single large hole (see B7, below). The children in the painted examples may be better characterized as infants, from one to three years of age, than young children.<sup>57</sup> As Lesley Beaumont has argued, infancy is the first stage of childhood distinguished and represented by vase painters.<sup>58</sup> The child on the

57. Although the distinction between infants and children in various parts of the world can often be unclear, in Classical Athens when a (male) child was no longer a baby it would be presented to the family clan, the phratry, and it subsequently participated in

the *choes* festival for the first time that same year. It is not entirely clear at what point in early childhood the child was presented to the phratry during the festival of the Apatouria, though it probably occurred during the first three years of life, and most likely in the

third year. For further discussion, see Beaumont 1994, p. 85; Papadopoulos 2000, p. 111; for the *choes* festival see, among others, Burkert 1972, p. 221; Hamilton 1992.

58. Beaumont 1994.

Berlin lekythos (A3) does look slightly older with his curly hair and dress, but he sits low in the chair, suggesting that he is still in the infant stage.

All three red-figure examples date to the middle of the 5th century B.C., when vase painters begin to depict more frequently domestic images and images of the world of women. The Brussels cup (A2) and the Berlin lekythos both show women interacting with the child in the chair. The short hair of the woman on the Berlin lekythos may indicate that she is a slave, but both are obviously caregivers to the children and demonstratively engage the children in playful behavior. The garment worn by the child on the Berlin lekythos (A3) makes it more likely that it is a boy. The child on the London chous (A1) is probably also a boy, as the shape itself is associated with male maturation rites.<sup>59</sup> It should, however, be noted that girls also appear on choes, though they are usually characterized by a topknot coiffure.<sup>60</sup> While there are no iconographic indications of the gender of the child on the Brussels cup, the cultural preference for male children and the association of female virtue with bearing healthy male children may allow us to assume that the child represented here is also a boy.

The stands depicted in all three red-figure images are what may be termed “highchairs,” and there is no way to determine, on the basis of iconography alone, whether these highchairs ever served as chamber pots. It is unlikely that the Berlin lekythos highchair was being used as a potty at the moment, as the child is obviously dressed. Such highchairs were particularly useful for a child who could not yet walk, keeping the infant happily in place while the mother was attending to her other duties. The age and size of the child for which the potty-chair was intended were important, and it is clear that children “grew out” of such highchairs, in much the same way as their clothing, and they were no doubt handed down to young siblings. The point was made all the more clear with an early exercise in experimental archaeology. A child, rather inappropriately wearing a modern diaper, was placed inside P 18010 to provide a visual match for the London and Brussels vessels (Fig. 14). This particular child—whose name we have not been able to determine—is large, both in terms of height and chubbiness, and seems uncomfortable in the potty-chair. The child does not have that air of being at ease that the children in the red-figure images so effortlessly display, and in all of the photographs in the Agora Archives the child is in tears, an unhappy experiment.

The experiment was to be repeated, however, in 1984, this time with much more success. The new model was Elizabeth Carlyle Camp, aged about six months (Fig. 15), and although she was similar in height to the child who first modeled P 18010, she was a little more slender.<sup>61</sup> The Agora Archives contain an entire roll of film documenting the experiment. At first, the young Elizabeth was placed inside the potty-chair fully clothed.

59. See, most recently, Ham 1999.

60. See, e.g., Athens, National Museum 1739 and 14532 (van Hoorn 1951, pp. 68–72, figs. 278, 279); Copenhagen, Thorvaldsen Museum 10121 (van Hoorn 1951, p. 124, fig. 539); Oxford, Pitt Rivers Museum, no number

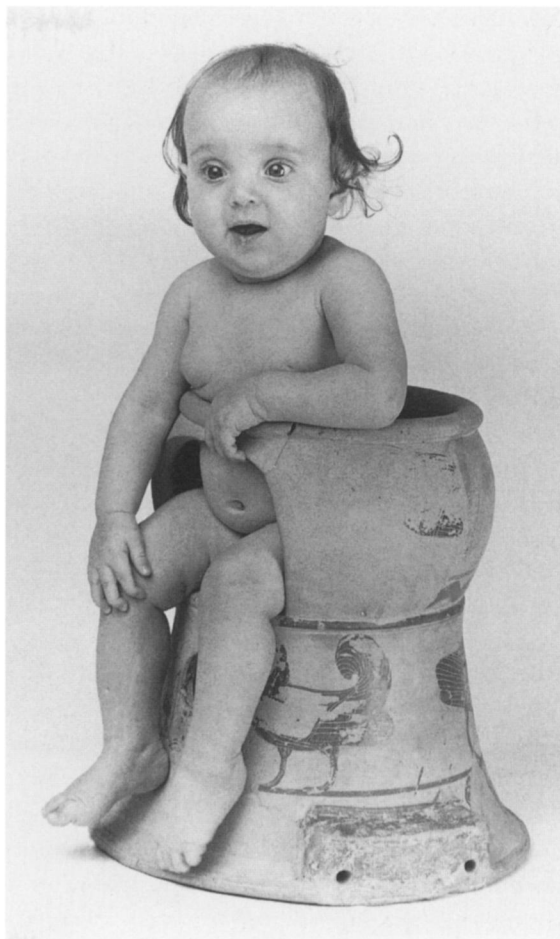
(van Hoorn 1951, p. 166, fig. 488).

61. Fig. 14: first published in Thompson 1971, fig. 40; Thompson 1976, p. 240, fig. 125. Fig. 15: first published in Morris 1985, pl. 103:b. Both babies pictured sitting in P 18010 are larger in relation to the potty-chair

than the babies shown in similar pose on the red-figure vessels, which may suggest that infant size was smaller in antiquity. A variety of reasons (e.g., diet, immature maternal age) might be cited.



**Figure 14 (left).** Unidentified child sitting in P 18010. Courtesy Agora Excavations



**Figure 15 (right).** Elizabeth Carlyle Camp showing the correct use of the potty-chair, P 18010. Courtesy Agora Excavations

Although informative, the exercise lacked the idealized, heroic nudity of the red-figure representations, so it was decided to try the experiment without clothing and, more importantly, without a diaper. Figure 15 clearly shows a contented Elizabeth Camp, a notable contrast to the child in Figure 14. She is at ease in the potty-chair, her right hand comfortably placed on her right knee, her left hand holding the rim of the bowl at the arched opening.<sup>62</sup> Like children on a beach, this child knew *exactly* what to do and how to use the vessel. Indeed, the stand was put to appropriate use by young Elizabeth the moment she was placed inside it. Consequently, what began as an innocent experiment to replicate the red-figure representations of children sitting in a highchair turned into a full-fledged illumination of the proper uses of these vessels: both as highchair and potty, “ad sedendum summa utilitate infanti est . . . sella cacatoria infantilis.”<sup>63</sup>

What this experiment also showed is that for the potty to work most efficiently a second pot would have been needed to catch any discharge; such a pot, placed directly under the opening in the floor of the bowl, would have been hidden by the stand of the commode. Indeed, the use of various

62. The painter of the London chous (A1) may have also intended the child to grip the rim of the bowl. To the

right of the arched opening, two small dilute curved lines descend from the rim, appropriate for a hand gripping the

rim. The painter may have changed his mind or chosen to eliminate the detail.

63. See van Hoorn 1909, p. 30.

pot shapes among adults as receptacles for urine and feces is well recorded in Athenian iconography, as the work of Beth Cohen and Alan Shapiro has established.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the use of portable night-stools or privies is attested in the very name given to them in Greek, λάσανα—together with λασανοφόρος (see below)—not to mention the κόφινος (dung basket) referred to in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (3.8.6.), as well as the ἀμῖς, which, although a chamber pot, is more properly a urinal.<sup>65</sup> Portable night-stools are further implied by references to one of the less savory tasks performed by individuals, whether officials chosen by lot or, as is more likely, private entrepreneurial scavengers, under Athenian democracy, that of the κοπρολόγος.<sup>66</sup> Otherwise, how was the *kopros* to be collected and later transported well beyond the fortifications of Athens?

## CHRONOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY

With the identification of the function of P 18010 secure on the basis of the red-figure representations (Figs. 11–13), it was possible to identify fragmentary and previously overlooked examples of babies' commodes. In 1961 and 1962, Eva Brann published fragments of at least six such commodes.<sup>67</sup> All of these were found in the Athenian Agora as small fragments in various wells or pits, but none is as well preserved as P 18010. Brann assigned most of the pieces to the second half of the 7th century B.C. on the basis of the style of decoration, though the context of many of the pieces can indicate a date in the earlier 6th century B.C., more or less contemporary with P 18010. We provide here a consolidated list of the pieces assembled by Brann, with only essential information given for each piece; for further details of the shape and decoration, the reader is referred to the original publications.

64. Cohen and Shapiro 2002, esp. pp. 87–89.

65. For the ἀμῖς see esp. *Agora* XII, p. 231, no. 2012, pp. 376–377, pl. 96; Cohen and Shapiro 2002, p. 88, pl. 22:c. Although translated as “chamber pot” in LSJ, the *amis* is more usually equated with a urinal, and the word has been specifically applied to basket-handled pots provided with a hooded opening high up on the side (see *Agora* XII, pp. 376–377, nos. 2012–2013, fig. 14, pl. 96). The opening is specifically designed to accommodate the penis, and the vessel would not easily lend itself for use by women. According to Athenaios (12.519e), the invention of the *amis* is attributed to the Sybarites.

66. Aristotle, in *Ath. Pol.* 50.2, in the section of the text dealing with officials appointed by lot, specifically the *asty-*

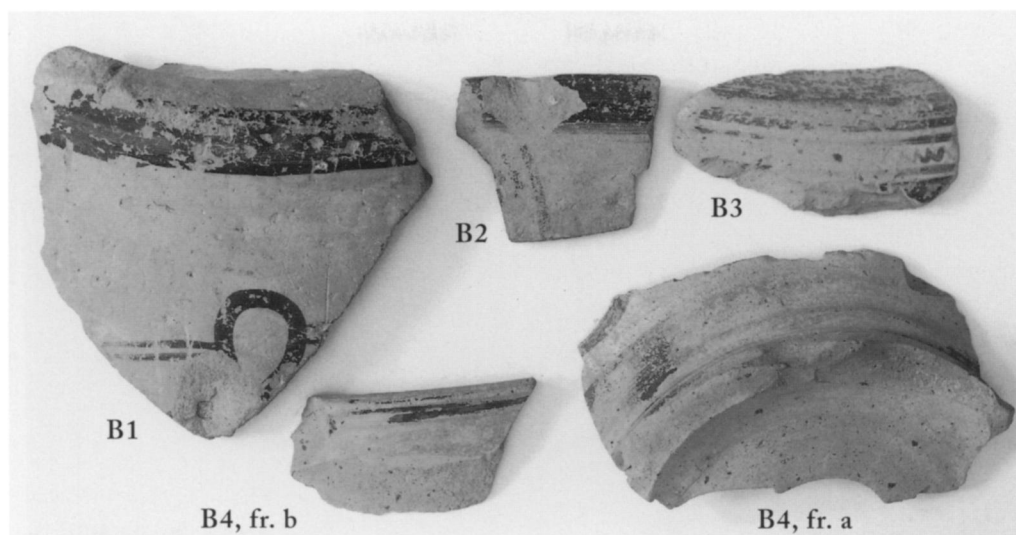
*nomoi*, notes the following: “They also see to it that none of the dung-collectors deposits the dung within ten stadia of the city walls” (trans. K. von Fritz and E. Cipp, New York 1950).

Camp and Fisher (2002, p. 140) mention that there is some debate as to whether the *koprologoi* were officials or private contractors. The seminal article on the subject is by E. J. Owens (1983), who notes (pp. 47–48) that *koprologoi* are mentioned only twice in all of ancient literature, in Aristophanes (*Pax* 9) and in the passage in Aristotle cited here. In dealing with the latter, Owens stresses (p. 48) that it was the duty of the *astynomoi* to ensure that the *koprologoi* deposited the *kopros* at least 10 stades from the city. He concludes (p. 48): “Careful study of both passages offers several indications that the *kopro-*

*logoi* were not a body of public sweepers under the supervision of the *astynomoi*, but were private scavengers.” A similar conclusion is reached by Ault (1999, p. 555), who notes the *koprologoi* were private entrepreneurs—supervised in part by the *astynomoi* or *epistatai kopronon*—“who were able to turn a profit first by collecting waste, and then by recycling and reselling it as fertilizer.” Manure is also a subject treated by Owens, though not in as much detail as by Ault (1999, with further references). For additional notes on Athenians defecating, and in particular on what they may have used to wipe themselves, see Papadopoulos 2002.

67. Brann 1961, pp. 332, 363–364, nos. F 18, H 16; *Agora* VIII, pp. 100–101, nos. 600–603.





**Figure 16. Fragments of Protoattic commodes: B1–B4.** Courtesy Agora Excavations

**B1** Fragment of commode

Fig. 16

P 5417. Well F 12:5 (dumped fill running into the second quarter of the 6th century B.C., with much that is earlier). *Agora VIII*, p. 100, no. 600, pl. 39. P.H. 0.135; est. Diam. (at seat) 0.280 m.

Body fragment preserving portion of upper stand, with remains of hole cut into it (at left side of the fragment), and small portion of bowl, including small portion of seat for the child at the top.

**B2** Fragment of commode

Fig. 16

P 25398. Storage pit B 14:5 (filled late in the first quarter of the 6th century B.C.). *Agora VIII*, p. 101, no. 601, pl. 39. P.H. 0.065; est. Diam. (rim) 0.280 m.

Fragment preserving small portion of rim of bowl and part of arched cutting to accommodate the legs of the baby. Although the fabric, paint, and feel of this piece are very similar to **B1**, the different contexts of the two pieces indicate that they cannot be from the same original vessel.

**B3** Fragment of commode

Fig. 16

P 26301. Well O 12:2 (late 7th and first quarter of 6th centuries B.C.). *Agora VIII*, p. 101, no. 602, pl. 39. P.W. 0.115; est. Diam. (juncture of stand and bowl) 0.390 m.

Published by Brann as a possible fragment from a babies' commode. Fragment preserves small portion of upper stand and flat surface at juncture with bowl, at the point of the presumed opening to accommodate the legs of the baby.

**B4** Fragments of commode

Fig. 16

P 25651. Well O 12:2 (late 7th and first quarter of 6th centuries B.C.). *Agora VIII*, p. 101, no. 603, pl. 39.

P.W. (fragment a) 0.160–0.170; est. Diam. (rim, fragment b) 0.290 m.

Four nonjoining fragments (a–d), two preserving portion of rim of bowl (b, c), one preserving about a third of juncture of stand and bowl (a), and another smaller fragment (d) preserving portion of juncture of stand and bowl. Only fragments a and b are illustrated.



**B5** Fragments of commode

Fig. 17

P 22738. Well O 12:1 (= Brann's well F, mostly third quarter of the 7th century B.C.). Brann 1961, p. 332, no. F 18, pl. 74.

P.H. 0.160 m.

Three fragments, of which only one (a) is illustrated. Of the three nonjoining fragments mentioned by Brann, the rim fragments (a, b) do indeed join. The precise nature of the handle attachment on fragment c is not clear.

**B6** Fragments of commode

Fig. 17

P 17360. Well M 11:3 (= Brann's well H, second half of the 7th century B.C.). Brann 1961, pp. 363–364, no. H 16, pls. 74, 90.

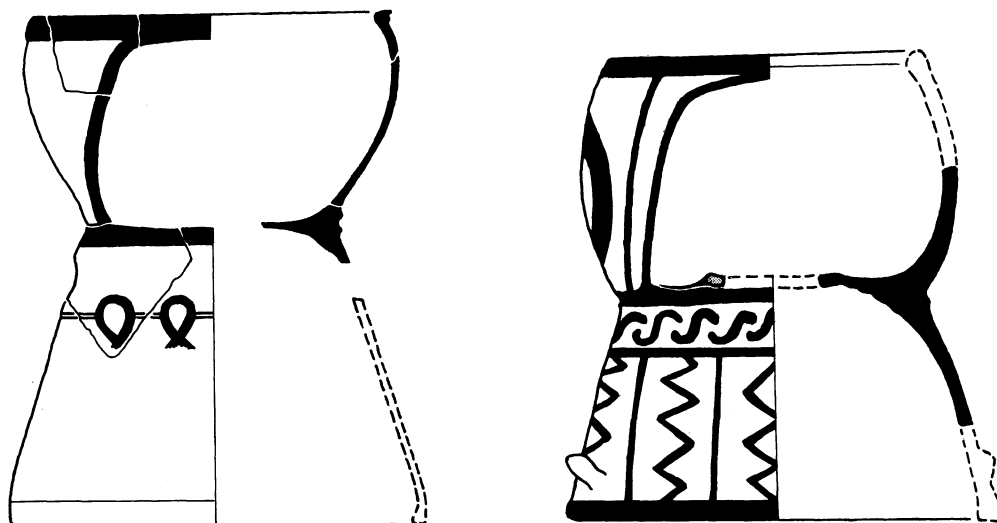
P.H. 0.173; est. Diam. (at juncture of bowl and stand) 0.190; est. Diam. (hole) 0.062 m.

Several joining fragments preserving substantial portion of juncture of bowl and stand, including portion of the hole cut into the center of the floor of the bowl.

**Figure 17. Fragments of Protoattic commodes: B5, B6.** Courtesy Agora Excavations

On the basis of the above pieces, Brann was able to reconstruct two commodes on paper. The first, Figure 18, is a composite drawing supposedly based on fragments **B1–B4**, though it is actually an amalgamation of the shape and decoration of fragments **B1**, **B2**, and **B4**. The two thin bands over which a row of loops is superimposed are based on **B1**, the profile of the juncture of the stand and bowl is based on **B4**, fragment a, while the profile rim of the bowl is that of **B4**, fragment b; the decoration of the rim exterior, however, more closely resembles fragment **B2**. The form of the rim of fragment **B2** is very different, though the curved stripe following the contour of the arched opening of the bowl on Figure 18 is loosely modeled on a similar, but thinner, stripe on fragment **B2**. There is no attempt to incorporate the tremulous line approaching zigzag framed by horizontal bands on fragment **B3**.

On the basis of the more diagnostic fragments **B1** and **B4**, which, it must be stressed, derive from different contexts, the reconstruction in Figure 18 gives an idea of what a potty of the later 7th–early 6th century may have looked like. Although the diameters of the rim of the bowl and the hole in the floor of the bowl were estimated with reasonable



**Figure 18 (left).** Composite drawing of Protoattic potty (B1, B2, and B4).

P. Finnerty, after *Agora VIII*, pl. 39, nos. 600–603

**Figure 19 (right).** Composite drawing of Protoattic potty (B5 and B6).

P. Finnerty, after Brann 1961, pl. 90, no. H 16

accuracy, the height of the stand and the diameter of the preserved lifting hole in the upper part of the stand are only tentative. Similarly unknown is the form of the base and resting surface, which seems, in comparison to the sturdier reinforced base of P 18010, rather slight for the task at hand.

The second drawing, Figure 19, is largely based on B6, though the sherds of B5 also assisted in the overall reconstruction.<sup>68</sup> In details of form the piece was so similar to P 18010 that Brann concluded: “The present fragment resembles the stand [P 18010] enough in construction to make it certain that it is from such a chair. The infant was placed in the bowl on a glazed sitting surface. Its legs were passed out the opening over the finished edge which shows the wear.”<sup>69</sup> Although there is no evidence for the height of the vessel—neither the upper part of the bowl nor the lower part of the stand survives—the vessel was restored by Brann as rather low on the basis of the flaring sides of the stand and by analogy with P 18010.<sup>70</sup> Not only is the reconstructed vessel in Figure 19 shorter than that shown in Figure 18 and a little smaller than P 18010, but the opening for the child’s legs is larger and the bridge higher. As Brann noted, this stand (Fig. 19) seems “also to have been less drawn in at the rim, in short, the child was less constricted.”<sup>71</sup>

Since the publication of *Agora VIII*, fragments of at least one more potty have entered the Agora inventory. The piece in question, B7 (P 31849), was found in the fill of the large well excavated in 1937 and designated well M 17:4, though it was only removed from context and inventoried in 1990. The deposit was one of over 20 Persian destruction deposits assembled by T. Leslie Shear Jr. and, as such, the piece can be securely dated to the early 5th century B.C.<sup>72</sup>

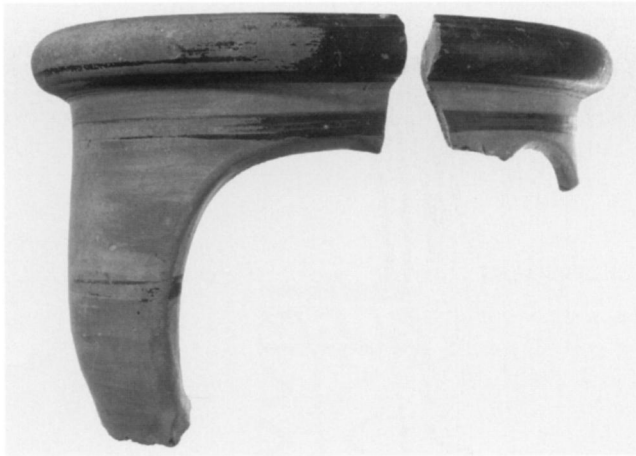
68. See discussion in Brann 1961, p. 363.

69. Brann 1961, p. 363, under no. H 16.

70. Brann 1961, pp. 363–364.

71. Brann 1961, p. 363.

72. Shear 1993, p. 463.



**Figure 20. Fragments of early-5th-century B.C. potty (B7).**  
Scale 1:3. Courtesy Agora Excavations

**B7** Fragments of commode

Figs. 20, 21

P 31849. Well M 17:4 (early 5th century B.C.). Mentioned in Shear 1993, p. 463.

P.H. (fragment a) 0.173; (fragment b) 0.067; est. Diam. (rim) fractionally larger than 0.240 m.

Two nonjoining fragments preserving portion of rim and upper body of bowl, including what appear to be portions of two holes cut into the upper body of the bowl. Although there are minor differences between the two fragments, they probably derive from the same vessel, rather than from two almost identical vessels.

Both fragments have an almost vertical upper body and a heavy rolled or rounded rim. Fragment a (Figs. 20 and 21, left) also preserves a small portion of the floor of the bowl and a fraction of the uppermost part of the stand. Both fragments have a large hole neatly cut prior to firing on the upper body, immediately below rim. The hole on the larger fragment (a) extends to the floor of the vessel at the juncture with the stand.

Standard Athenian fabric; large spall on the rim interior of fragment b. Clay body fired close to light red (2.5YR 6/6); reserved surfaces in parts lighter, closer to reddish yellow (5YR 7/6).

Vessel decorated with black-glaze bands, with glaze rather thickly applied, in places adhering well, but elsewhere with a tendency to flake; mostly fired black but sometimes dark reddish brown. Thin horizontal band near center of upper body as preserved, which extends onto the cut edge of the hole on fragment a; another band on upper wall immediately above hole on fragments a and b. Rim exterior painted solid, with glaze extending onto interior as shown. Interior otherwise reserved.

The number of potties from the Athenian Agora, although not great, is sufficient to establish that the basic type of vessel is well known, at least from the later 7th and earlier 6th century into the 5th century B.C. The three representations of potties on red-figure vases of the 5th century B.C. indicate that the form continued at least through most of the Classical period, particularly in Athens, and it seems very unlikely that Athens was the only city in Archaic and Classical Greece to have used such vessels. The functional character of the potties suggests that the basic form may have lasted for some time. No examples of potties have been recognized from the Geometric period or earlier, though the fragmentary nature of the 7th-century examples provides a warning that archaeologists may not have looked closely enough for such vessels. The discussion above makes

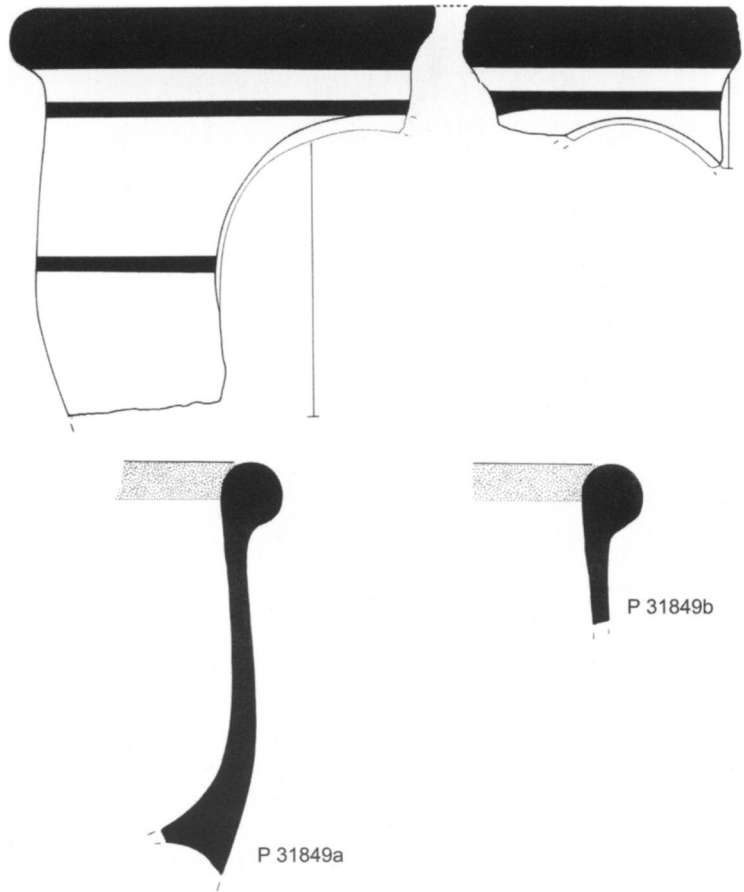


Figure 21. Drawing of fragments of early-5th-century B.C. potty (B7). Scale 1:3. A. Hooton

clear that not all black- and red-figure stands were designed to hold an open vessel for wine or water at a symposium or some other celebratory event. Be that as it may, the potties from the area of the Classical Athenian Agora show that the form is well established by the second half of the 7th century B.C. and, on the basis of the example from well M 17:4 (B7) and later representations, the type can be traced at Athens into the 5th and probably the 4th century B.C. The philological evidence, however, suggests that the basic type of vessel, if not the exact form, may have survived through the Hellenistic period and into Roman times.

In a seminal article on the often-misidentified props for cooking pots, Morris cogently uncovered their ancient name—*λάσανα*—which always appears in the plural.<sup>73</sup> She went on to note that although *λάσανα* as physical cooking props disappeared in the Hellenistic period, ca. 300 B.C., the word *λάσανον*—in the singular—survived to indicate a portable privy or night-stool (cf. *λασανίτης δίφρος*). She concluded that this second meaning—night-stool—must have been contemporary with the culinary one, “for it is also familiar in 5th-century comedy, later appearing in medical texts and lexica. This meaning has a longer and more active life than do *λάσανα* in the Greek kitchen, as it survives into the Latin *lasanum*.”<sup>74</sup>

As Morris explains, in shape and size a *λάσανον*, as in a potty-chair, resembles a brazier; both are two-tiered stands with an upper bowl and were designed to receive two objects: “the brazier holds coals below, pot above, while the potty supports a seated child above, a container below.”<sup>75</sup>

73. Morris 1985; see further Papadopoulos 1992.

74. Morris 1985, p. 402, n. 34. For ancient comedy, see Ar., fr. 462 (Edmonds) and the scholia to *Pax* 1224–1239; Eupolis, fr. 224; Kratinos, fr. 49; Pherekrates, fr. 88; Plato Com., fr. 116. Among the medical texts see, in particular, Hippoc. *Περὶ Ἐπικυήσεως* 8; *Περὶ Συρίγγων* 9. For the evidence of lexicographers, see Poll. *Onom.* 10.44; Moeris 202.30. For the Latin *lasanum*, see Petron. *Sat.* 41.9; Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.109; Hilgers 1969, p. 209, no. 210, s.v. *lasanum*.

75. Morris 1985, p. 402.

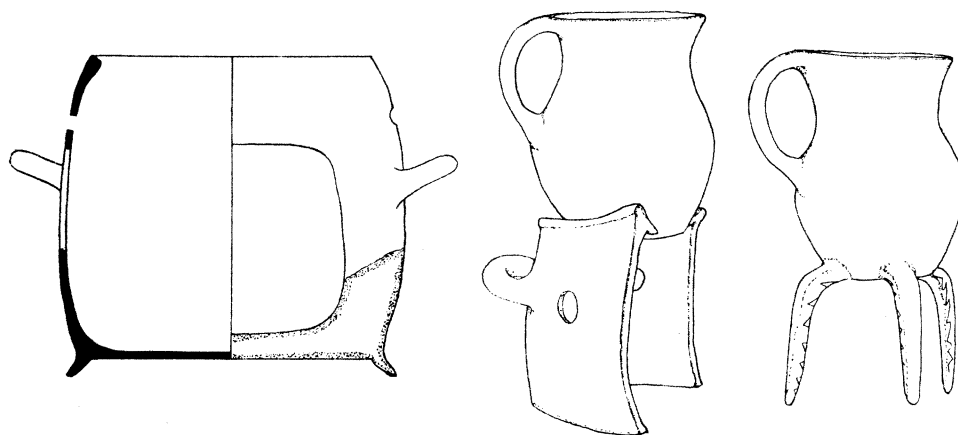


Figure 22. Drawings of braziers of the late 8th and 7th centuries B.C.

Left to right: Agora P 13656, P 14269, P 26174. After *Agora VIII*, pl. 40, nos. 623, 626, 627

When λάσανα as pot props for cooking disappeared around 300, no commentator could sort out these various meanings with ease.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the two meanings given for λάσανα are, first of all, a “trivet or stand for a pot” (e.g., *Ar. Pax* 893) and, secondly, a “night-stool” (e.g., *Hippoc. Περί Συρίγγων* 9).<sup>77</sup> There is also the λασανοφόρος, the “slave who had charge of the night-stool.”<sup>78</sup> As Morris elaborates, at some time when the brazier (λάσανα) and night-stool (λάσανον) resembled each other, the latter may have borrowed the name from the former.<sup>79</sup> That time may very well have been the later 8th or 7th century B.C., the period when a number of “new conveniences in cooking,” as Brann called them, were invented;<sup>80</sup> Brann illustrated a number of these in a series of drawings, which we reproduce here (Fig. 22). In dealing collectively with these fragmentary vessels, Brann noted that they are from shapes that essentially combine a cooking stand with a portable brazier, and hot coals could be put on the bottom and a pot set on the flanged rim.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, looked at from the side, Brann’s drawing of Agora P 14269 with a pot on top (Fig. 22, center) looks remarkably like the potties presented in Figures 1, 18, and 19—not least the two holes on the lower part of the stand—while the large opening on the brazier P 13656 (Fig. 22, left) is very similar to the opening on P 18010 (see especially Fig. 1:a). Hence, the λάσανον resembled λάσανα in form and function for both were designed to support an object (either a pot or a child) and accommodate something below (either coals or a container).

By drawing together the evidence from ancient authors, the iconography preserved on Athenian red-figure vases, and the material remains in the archaeological record itself, we are thus able to appreciate potties—λάσανα—in Classical philology, not least in comedy, to see them in use in Classical vase painting, and to find them in domestic contexts in Archaic and Classical Athens.

76. Morris 1985, p. 403.

77. LSJ, s.v. λάσανα.

78. LSJ, s.v. λάσανα. The critical passage is in *Plut. Mor.* 182C (cf. 360D), where it is stated: Ἐρμολότου δὲ αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ποιήμασιν Ἡλίου παῖδα γράψαντος, “οὐ ταῦτά μοι,”

ἔφη, “σύνουιδεν ὁ λασανοφόρος” (When Hermodotos in his poems wrote of him as “The Offspring of the Sun,” he [Antigonos] said, “The slave who attends to my chamber-pot is not conscious of that!” [Trans. F. C. Babbitt, Cambridge, Mass., 1931]).

79. Morris 1985, p. 402.

80. *Agora VIII*, p. 102.

81. *Agora VIII*, p. 102. For the cooking stand Brann cites Agora P 8396 (*Agora VIII*, p. 55, no. 211, pl. 11), with a portable brazier similar to P 21805 (*Agora VIII*, p. 103, no. 625, pl. 40).

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