
Naukratis: Greeks in Egypt

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Laconian pottery

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1. Introduction

Naukratis has yielded a small amount of Archaic Laconian pottery, less than 1% of the pottery finds preserved from the early excavations at Naukratis. While the range of shapes is restricted, mainly in the form of cups and kraters, some pieces are of considerable interest.¹

Originally believed to have been produced in Cyrene, Laconian pottery was commonly referred to in scholarship as Cyrenaic ware; however, the excavations of the British School at Athens in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta during the early 20th century indicated a Laconian origin for this material. When Cecil Smith was discussing a Laconian cup from Naukratis at an earlier date, he suggested that this ware may have been produced at Naukratis,² basing his argument primarily on the decorative similarities he observed between Laconian cups and Chian fine ware, which at the time was considered to have been produced at Naukratis.³ Ernest Gardner quickly dismissed the idea, pointing out the different fabrics and the fact that only a small amount of 'Laconian' fine ware had been found at the site.⁴ Since its place of production has been established, Laconian pottery has been the subject of numerous studies; the fine wares have been found at many Greek sanctuary sites, used as votive offerings.⁵ The Laconian finds from Naukratis have also featured in a number of studies including, for instance, the work of Marjorie Venit, whose study on Laconian pottery from Egypt, identified 34 sherds from the site of Naukratis.⁶ Conrad M. Stibbe's catalogues on Laconian black-glazed and black-figure pottery include some 50 sherds from Naukratis.⁷ This study will take into account all of the known Laconian sherds from Naukratis, many of which have never been published.

The decorative patterns are perhaps the most recognizable feature of Laconian fine ware, especially the floral motifs found on cups, inside and out. The cream-coloured slip of most Laconian pots is also highly distinctive, ranging from a relatively bright white through cream to a dull greyish-white. The black slip is often fired to a dark brownish black but can also be a deep black. It is mostly shiny, but can be matt, probably depending on both the firing conditions and the soil matrix of the find context. Added colours are used to accentuate the decorative motifs, a purplish red and a white that is whiter than the slip. The fabric itself is usually very well levigated with little mica, and the colour of the clay is generally dark orange brown, but ranges from light brown through grey to a yellowish orange. The wholly (or mostly) glazed Laconian pottery (black-

¹ My thanks go to Professor Gerald Schaus for providing me with invaluable information regarding the as yet unpublished Laconian material from the sanctuary of Aphrodite Oikous at Miletos and for granting me access to his forthcoming article, Schaus forthcoming. All images are © Trustees of the British Museum unless otherwise indicated.

² Smith 1886, 53. British Museum, 1886,0401.1063.

³ For a discussion on the origin of Chian pottery, see the chapter on [Chian pottery](#).

⁴ Gardner 1888, 40–1.

⁵ See Lane 1933–4; Pipili 1987; Pipili 2006; Stibbe 1972; Stibbe 2004. Studies on the different styles and shapes of Laconian fine ware include Shefton 1954; Pipili 1998; Pipili 2009; Stibbe 1989; Stibbe 1994; Nafissi 1989. Laconian finds from different sites have also been published, for example, see Schaus 1985a; Stibbe 1997; Stibbe 1998; Boardman and Hayes 1966; Boardman and Hayes 1973; Pfisterer-Haas 1999; Venit 1985a; Pipili 2001; Schaus forthcoming.

⁶ Venit 1985a.

⁷ Stibbe 1972; Stibbe 1989; Stibbe 2004.

glaze) is of similar fabric and appearance, with the black glaze sometimes appearing bluish to purple through to a dull dark brown.

For the majority of the Laconian sherds at Naukratis no precise provenance is known, as is the case for most of the other fine ware sherds at the site. Four sherds, three of which belong to a single kylix, come from the sanctuary of Apollo.⁸ One kylix, two fragments of another kylix and a third sherd are preserved from the sanctuary of Aphrodite;⁹ Gardner noted that sherds belonging to three or four Laconian kylikes were found during his excavation of this sanctuary.¹⁰ Finally, one sherd, found close to the sanctuary of Hera, bears a dedication to that goddess and therefore probably originated from the Hera sanctuary although Gardner does not explicitly state this.¹¹

The number of extant Laconian fine ware sherds from Naukratis amounts to just over 70, approximately half of which are in the British Museum. These sherds belong to some 55 separate vessels. Despite their fragmentary state, five kylikes were restored, though the conservators relied very heavily on added plaster with very little of the actual cups remaining.¹²

As with other Greek fine wares from the site, pieces of Laconian pottery were selected for retention by the early excavators primarily because of their decoration or inscriptions; this means in particular that black-glazed vessels are very likely underrepresented. Several sherds bear post-firing graffiti, around a dozen in all, probably eight of votive character.¹³ Seven are from the 1884–5 season, including three sherds from the same kylix, five fragments from the next season in 1885–6 and one from Hogarth's excavations in 1903.¹⁴

2. Laconian pottery at Naukratis: chronological development and functions

Despite the small amount of Laconian pottery at Naukratis, the ware enjoyed a lengthy presence at the site. It is possible that Laconian fine ware arrived at Naukratis as early as the beginning of the 6th century BC; there are parallels between three sherds belonging to one Laconian II kylix bearing a dedication to Milesian Apollo by a certain Ermagathinos with dedications on other early vases at Naukratis.¹⁵ Additional early 6th-

⁸ British Museum, 1888,0601.650; 1888,0601.651; 1888,0601.652 and 1886,0401.1063.

⁹ Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.133.1; AN1896-1908-G.121.3; British Museum, 1888,0601.529.

¹⁰ Gardner 1888, 41.

¹¹ Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.141.17.

¹² British Museum, 1886,0401.1063; 1888,0601.523; 1888,0601.524; 1888,0601.525; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.133.1 (also registered as AN1888.1325).

¹³ For details see the chapter on [Ceramic Inscriptions](#) §13.2 and Johnston 2013.

¹⁴ Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN 1896-1908-G.141.17.

¹⁵ Johnston 2013, 104–5. The three sherds are British Museum, 1886,0401.650, 1886,0401.651 and 1886,0401.652. These belong to a single cup. Johnston compares this dedication with that found on Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1912.41, a possibly Samian mug of early 6th century BC date, and British Museum 1888,0601.421, a Chian chalice foot that may date as early as 610 BC. Johnston also notes another dedication published in Gardner 1888, pl. XXI, no. 762. See the chapter on [Ceramic inscriptions](#).

century BC vases consist of a volute krater and another kylix.¹⁶ Only a small number of Laconian vases are datable to the first quarter of the 6th century BC; the majority of Laconian fine ware at Naukratis is dated between 575 and 550 BC (Fig. 1), which is indeed the main period of production for Laconian fine ware. The numbers drop after about 550 BC, though small amounts continue to appear until possibly as late as the 5th century BC.¹⁷

All of the known Laconian fine ware vessels at Naukratis are shapes related to drinking activities offered within the different sanctuaries (Fig. 1). Most commonly preserved are the kylix and the krater; there are very few pouring or storage vessels.

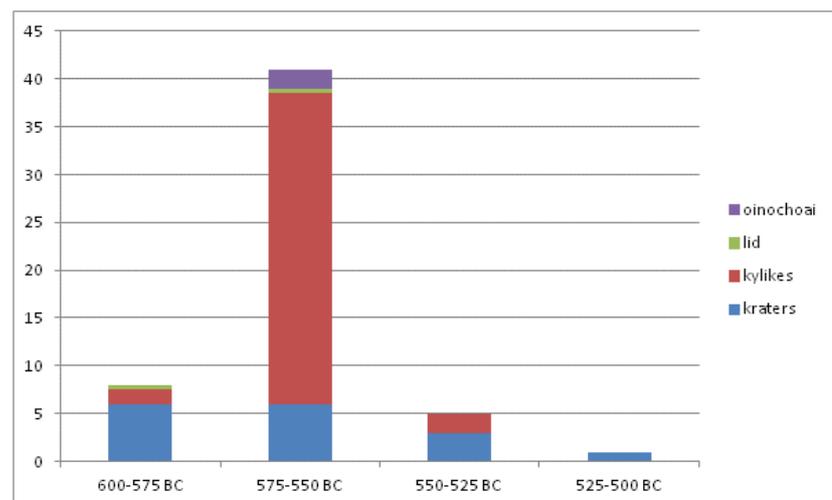


Figure 1 Drinking related Laconian wares by period (total vase count: 55)

3. Iconography, styles and painters



Figure 2 Painted kylix possibly by the Painter of the Taranto Fish or a follower. c. 590–570 BC. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, GR263.1894. Photograph © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Three decorative styles are known within the Laconian pottery assemblage at Naukratis: simple decoration with patterns and figures painted in silhouette technique; black-figure style; and black-glazed vessels. The earliest and least well-represented style consists of simply decorated kylikes. Three rim sherds from the same vessel are covered in a cream slip and decorated with a simple reserved rising ray pattern, which Stibbe attributes to the Circle of the Painter of the Taranto Fish (Fig. 2).¹⁸ Two further sherds decorated with a frieze of geese or another type of water bird and red and black horizontal lines are possibly the work of the painter or one of his followers and probably belong to the same cup.¹⁹ The Painter of the Taranto Fish, an early Laconian vase painter whose career began during the first quarter of the 6th century BC and who decorated several different vase shapes, made use of both the silhouette and black-figure techniques and influenced later Laconian artists. He is generally

¹⁶ Kylix: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.133.7. Volute krater: British Museum, 1924,1201.40 and 1924,1201.41.

¹⁷ The black-glazed krater bases British Museum, 1910,0222.195 and British Museum, 1910,0222.165 have been assigned wide date ranges. The fact that otherwise no Laconian pottery dated to the second quarter and mid 5th century BC is preserved from Naukratis might suggest that the kraters should best be dated earlier to the second half of the 6th century BC.

¹⁸ British Museum, 1886,0401.650, 1886,0401.651 and 1886,0401.652. Stibbe 2004, 233 no. 20 (Group C).

¹⁹ Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, GR.263.1894; City Art Gallery and Museum, Bristol, H.4621. Similar geese are found on a cup from Sardis that Stibbe attributes to the painter himself, see Stibbe 2004, 231, no. 6. I would like to thank Professor Schaus for informing me of similar vases found at Miletos.

considered a minor Laconian vase painter.²⁰ However, Gerald Schaus argues that he ought to be placed alongside other major vase painters as his growing corpus of vases points to a long and distinguished career.²¹ Finally, another simply painted kylix is decorated with a band of single dots set between lines.²²

The majority of the Laconian vases at Naukratis are decorated in the black-figure technique; there are no fewer than 32 black-figure kylikes, two kraters and possibly one oinochoe of generally high quality. Black-figure appears at the site c. 575 BC and continues until c. 540 BC; the works of three of the major Laconian vase painters have been recognized (Fig. 3).

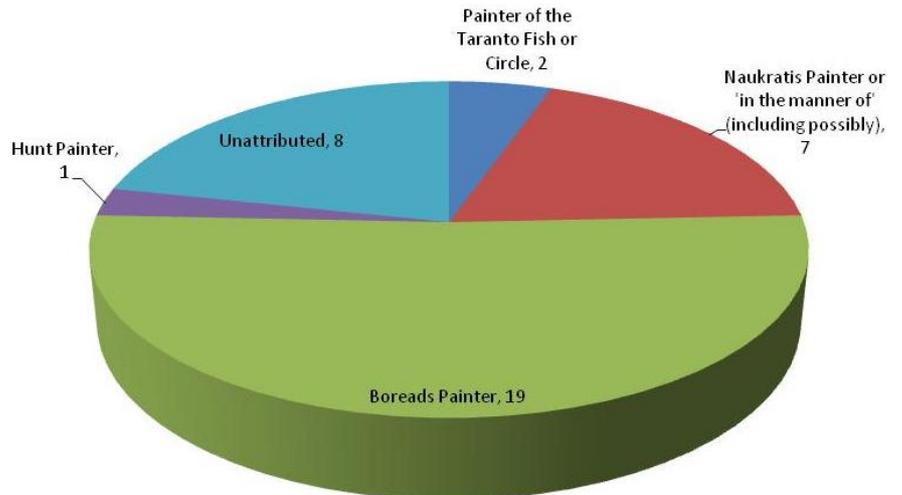


Figure 3 Laconian vase painters and their numbers at Naukratis (total: 37)

Best represented at Naukratis is the Boreads Painter, thus christened by Paola Pelagatti after a kylix in Rome showing the Boreads pursuing harpies.²³ He is known for his work on kylikes and to date no other shape has been attributed to him. His period of production was short, between 580 and 565 BC (Fig. 4).²⁴ The Boreads Painter frequently used a simple pomegranate pattern to frame his tondo decorations and the lips of his cups were often decorated with myrtle leaf and pomegranate net patterns.²⁵ At Naukratis, he is represented by 18, possibly 19 different cups, with the usual pomegranate pattern preserved on several.²⁶ Myrtle leaf patterns are typically found on later Ionian little-master cups and it is possible that these Laconian motifs influenced South Ionian potters.²⁷ One East Greek feature the Boreads Painter frequently used, and which he apparently introduced into the Laconian repertoire, is the exergue in the tondo of cups, a feature frequently found on 7th-century BC and later plates of East Dorian origin.²⁸ Black-figure vases by the Boreads Painter



Figure 4 Black-figure kylix by the Boreads Painter c. 575–565 BC. British Museum, 1888,0601.524

²⁰ Stibbe 1972, 177–8; Coudin 2009, 37–8.

²¹ Schaus forthcoming.

²² Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.133.7.

²³ Pelagatti 1958, 493. Lane (1933–4, 130) had originally named him the Hephaistos Painter, but he was renamed after the vase he was previously named after, a cup showing the return of Hephaistos, was removed from his repertoire. The new name vase is a kylix located in the Villa Giulia in Rome with the tondo decorated with Boreads pursuing the harpies: Boardman 1998, 187; Stibbe 1972, 87–106, 275–9, pl. 41; Stibbe 2004, 31–43.

²⁴ Venit 1985a, 392; Rudolph 1975, 240–52; Stibbe 1972, 90; Stibbe 2004, 32.

²⁵ Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria, 17049.

²⁶ For example Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria, 16889; British Museum, 1888,0601.524, 1888,0601.525, 1888,0601.526.j, 1888,0601.526.k and 1888,0601.523.

²⁷ Pipili 1998, 84; Pipili 2006, 76.

²⁸ For example the Euphorbos plate, British Museum, 1860,0404.1.

have been found at numerous sites, notably at Samos where, until recently, the majority of his vases have been found. More recently at Miletos, over 40 cups or fragments associated with him were identified among finds from the Archaic levels excavated since the late 1980s.²⁹ Interestingly, none of his works have as yet been found at home in Laconia, which has prompted scholars to speculate that he produced vases specifically for export.³⁰ His cups have also been found at Olympia, Cyrene and Selinus.³¹



Figure 5 Chian Grand Style chalice c. 575–565 BC: Siren and winged demon. Photomontage of, left, British Museum, 1888.0601.550, right, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, GR97.1894 (photograph © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) and top, British Museum, 1924.1201.352

Just as the Boreads Painter was influenced by East Greek models, so too it would seem that some East Greek vase painters were influenced by him, notably the painter of a group of black-figure Chian chalices and a kylix exclusively known from Naukratis. Dyfri Williams called him the Sirens Painter on account of his depictions of sirens on the kylix and one of the chalices (Fig. 5).³² All that remains of the kylix is the tondo which portrays a siren with outspread wings, framed by a simple pomegranate pattern, identical to that favoured by the Boreads Painter. Williams suggests that perhaps a Laconian vase painter moved to Chios where he produced typically Laconian images on Laconian-shaped and Chian pottery.³³ Perhaps Laconian pottery, which is so far not known on Chios, was imported there and then influenced local vase painters. Importantly however, no Laconian-influenced Chian vases are known on Chios.

Six or possibly seven vases decorated by the Naukratis Painter or his circle come from Naukratis (Fig. 6). He was named after a kylix found there, which depicts a seated goddess surrounded by winged daemons.³⁴



Figure 6 Black-figure kylix by the Naukratis Painter, c. 570–560 BC, British Museum, 1886.0401.1063

²⁹ Schaus (pers. comm.).

³⁰ Pipili 2006, 84.

³¹ Coudin 2009.

³² Williams 2006, 130–1. Chalices: British Museum, 1888.0601.550.b and 1924.1201.352; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, GR.97.1894; kylix: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.133.2 and 1896-1908-G.133.6.

³³ Williams 2006, 131.

³⁴ Lane 1933–4, 139 no. 1; British Museum, 1886.0401.1063.



Figure 7 Sherd from black-figure krater possibly by the Naukratis Painter, c. 575–550 BC, Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, NA199. Photograph © Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge. Photography by British Museum staff

Unlike the Boreads Painter who decorated only kylikes, the Naukratis Painter also decorated other shapes of vases, including kraters, and one krater sherd from Naukratis is tentatively attributed to him (Fig. 7).³⁵ His period of productivity was also somewhat longer than that of the Boreads Painter, beginning c. 575 BC and continuing until c. 550 BC. His vases have been found at numerous sites throughout the Mediterranean, including Taucheira, Cyrene, Samos, Miletos as well as at home in Laconia. The Naukratis Painter was clearly receptive to both East Greek and Corinthian influences. He used the East Greek exergue in his tondo decorations,³⁶ while Corinthian influences are clear in his use of animal friezes on the exterior of cups and in particular in his use of the lotus-palmette chain. Some of his most common themes (symposia, dancing komasts, fights and cavalcades) find parallels in Corinthian iconography.³⁷ The suggestion has been made, based on a dipinto inscription on a cup from Cyrene, that the Naukratis Painter was in fact Corinthian or perhaps Cyrenaean himself.³⁸ His work characteristically features a pomegranate or lotus bud chain on the interior of rims accompanied by a myrtle pattern band on the exterior,³⁹ and, early on, a tongue pattern on the inside rim and a pomegranate net pattern on the outside.⁴⁰



Figure 8 Black-figure kylix perhaps by the Hunt Painter, c. 540 BC. British Museum, 1888,0601.526.m-n

The Hunt Painter, whose works are dated later (c. 565–535 BC), is possibly represented at Naukratis by a single kylix (Fig. 8).⁴¹ He was named after a kylix in the Louvre depicting two hunters spearing a boar – like many of the images he painted, this is a scene taken from Greek mythology, perhaps the Calydonian boar hunt.⁴² The two sherds from the same cup that are possibly by his hand at Naukratis give part of the rim decorated with the myrtle leaf pattern;⁴³ too little remains of the interior to be able to determine the black-figure motif. Vases decorated by the Hunt Painter have been found also at Taucheira, Cyrene, Olympia as well as at Miletos and other East Greek sites, including the Artemision at Samos, where vessels by his hand eclipse the work of other painters and demonstrate his capabilities as an excellent miniaturist.⁴⁴

A small number of other black-figure kylikes and one oinochoe complete the Laconian black-figure corpus at Naukratis. Unfortunately, too little of each vase remains to be able to determine the painter. Some kylix sherds preserve a representation of mythological creatures including possibly a gorgoneion and a winged male figure, tentatively identified as Typhon.⁴⁵ A further sherd depicts part of a battle scene. Only pattern decoration remains on two others.⁴⁶ A fragment of a possible oinochoe is decorated with incised rising rays.⁴⁷

³⁵ Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, NA199; Venit 1985a, 392, 396; Stibbe 2004, 205, no. 35.

³⁶ Pipili 1998, 84–5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

³⁸ *Ibid.*; Schaus 2006, 176.

³⁹ Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria, 9362 and 9390.

⁴⁰ Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 88.1076; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, GR.4.1899; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.133.8 and Ure Museum, Reading, 26.2.82.

⁴¹ Stibbe 1972, 283 no. 253, pl. 87.1.

⁴² Boardman 1998, 187–8; Stibbe 1972, 281 no. 220, pl. 78.1; Louvre, Paris, E670.

⁴³ British Museum, 1888,0601.526.m–n and 1888,0601.526.p.

⁴⁴ Pipili 2001, 97–8.

⁴⁵ Gorgoneion: Ure Museum, Reading, 26.2.83; winged creature: British Museum, 1888,0601.530.

⁴⁶ Battle scene: Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, GR.252.1894; British Museum, 1888,0601.527; patterned decoration: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.133.5.

⁴⁷ Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.121.3.

The third group of Laconian pottery at Naukratis, black-glazed vessels or mostly black-glazed vessels with a small amount of painted decoration, is smaller than that of black-figure vases; this may be due to the fact that in general black-glazed sherds were rarely retained by the excavators unless they were inscribed (Fig. 9).



Figure 9 Black-glazed krater sherds, c. 575–550 BC. British Museum, 1888,0601.649b

Among the preserved sherds the most commonly observed shape is the krater. A fragment of a black-glazed handle comes from an oinochoe; there is also a fragment of a cup with a decorated rim.⁴⁸

4. Shapes of Laconian pottery at Naukratis

4.1 Kraters

Laconian kraters are represented by 20 sherds belonging to 16 vases (Fig. 10). As the preference during the excavations was to collect decorated (or inscribed) pottery, the majority of extant sherds consist of decorated rims with the remainder of the sherd glazed black as far as is preserved, but there are also two bases with inscriptions.



Figure 10 Laconian black-glazed krater, c. 575–525 BC. Ure Museum, Reading, 26.2.79. Photograph © Ure Museum, Reading. Photographer Marianne Bergeron, British Museum

The rims are slipped and decorated with a geometric pattern usually consisting of meanders. Most specimens fall within Stibbe's Group E of 'kraters with geometric rim ornaments only' and find parallels with kraters found at Samos, Cyrene, Sparta and Aigina, to name but a few.⁴⁹ There are two black-figure krater sherds, one of which has been identified as possibly the work of the Naukratis Painter on account of the incised lotus bud pattern that finds parallels with a vessel from Samos attributed to the painter.⁵⁰ It is worth noting that the Painter of the Taranto Fish also included lotus bud patterns on some of his kraters.⁵¹

In general, it is impossible to allow for further precision regarding the type of kraters represented at Naukratis since almost all that remains are rims. A small number of sherds have been tentatively identified as coming from

⁴⁸ Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, NA196.

⁴⁹ Stibbe 1989, 33–4, 98.

⁵⁰ Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, NA199; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1909.955. Stibbe 1972, 271 no. 37, Samos K1445.

⁵¹ Schaus forthcoming.

volute-kraters based on comparanda found elsewhere,⁵² the only secure identification being a fragment of a volute handle.⁵³ Volute kraters, which developed from the stirrup krater, were popular in Laconia between the late 7th and mid 6th century BC in both pottery and metal, and it is still unclear whether it was bronze smiths who influenced potters or vice versa.⁵⁴ There is also at least one all black stirrup krater handle within the corpus of Laconian pottery at Naukratis.⁵⁵

Laconian kraters have been recorded at numerous Greek sanctuary sites, including the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore/Persephone at Cyrene, where they are the second most popular Laconian vase shape following cups.⁵⁶ Several examples were also found in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore/Persephone at Taucheira and the sanctuary of Aphaia at Aigina.⁵⁷ Black-glazed as well as black-figure kraters by the Naukratis and possibly the Arkesilas Painters were found in the Heraion of Samos.⁵⁸ Only a single Laconian krater sherd has been published from the Artemision on Samos.⁵⁹ Several black-glazed and black-figure kraters have also been found in the sanctuary of Aphrodite Oikous at Miletos, even if very few have so far been published.⁶⁰



Figure 11 Laconian black-glazed oinochoe, c. 575–550 BC. British Museum, 1910,0222.213a

4.2 Oinochoai

Two oinochoe sherds are preserved from Naukratis. The first sherd, which is tentatively identified as coming from an oinochoe, consists of a base decorated with incised rising rays,⁶¹ the second is a handle from a black-glazed trefoil-mouthed jug (Fig. 11). Both are dated between 575 and 550 BC. Black-glazed Laconian oinochoai appear amongst other pouring vessels at Taucheira and Cyrene, where one decorated oinochoe was also found, but the shape was more popular on Aigina. Three or four oinochoai are known from Miletos, though none are yet published.⁶² A few were found at the Heraion on Samos.⁶³ It appears that decorated oinochoai in general are rare outside Sparta.⁶⁴

4.3 Kylikes and other cups

Kylikes form the largest group of preserved Laconian fine ware at Naukratis, with approximately 50 sherds belonging to 34 different kylikes. The majority are decorated in the black-figure style but at least two vessels, dated slightly earlier than the black-figure examples, feature simple decorations without incision.⁶⁵ At least four vase painters are responsible for the production of these pieces.

⁵² British Museum, 1924,1201.40; 1924,1201.41; Louvre, Paris, AM1362 (44); Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 910x234.25; Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria, 9316; Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, NA199.

⁵³ British Museum, 1924,1201.40 and 1924,1201.41.

⁵⁴ See Stibbe 1989, 59–67 for a comparison of both types.

⁵⁵ British Museum, 1965,0930.518.

⁵⁶ Schaus 1985a, 24–5.

⁵⁷ Boardman and Hayes 1966, 87; Williams 1993, 576–84.

⁵⁸ Stibbe 1997, 47–62.

⁵⁹ Pipili 2001, 91–2.

⁶⁰ Pfisterer-Haas 1999, 265; Schaus (pers. comm.).

⁶¹ Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.121.3.

⁶² Schaus (pers. comm.).

⁶³ Schaus 1985a, 20–1; Boardman and Hayes 1966, 88, 90; Williams 1993, 587–8; Stibbe 1997, 113–14.

⁶⁴ Schaus 1985a, 20.

⁶⁵ Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, GR.263.1894; City Art Gallery and Museum, Bristol, H4621; British Museum, 1886,0401.650, 1886,0401.651 and 1886,0401.652; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.133.7.



The Boreads Painter is represented with no fewer than 19 kylikes (Fig. 12), the Naukratis Painter by perhaps six,⁶⁶ the Hunt Painter possibly by one and the Painter of the Taranto Fish and his circle by maybe two. Decorated cups are the most well-known type of Laconian fine ware vases and are most commonly found in sanctuary settings, which is why some scholars believe that their primary purpose was votive.⁶⁷ They are, however, not entirely exclusive to sanctuary settings, as many found their way into Etruscan and South Italian burials.⁶⁸



Figure 12 Laconian black-figure kylix, c. 575–565 BC. British Museum, 1888,0601.523



Figure 13 Rim fragment, c. 600–550 BC. Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, NA196. Photograph © Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge. Photography by British Museum staff

4.4 Lids

A single rim sherd belongs possibly to a lid (Fig. 13). The exterior surface is slipped and decorated with an 'S' frieze pattern and the interior surface is glazed black.⁶⁹ Laconian lids are rare and only two fragments were found at Cyrene, one sherd was published from the Artemision at Samos, another from the Heraion and none were published from Taucheira or Aigina.⁷⁰

5. Laconian pottery at Naukratis in context: traders and trade routes

Laconian fine ware pottery is present at Naukratis from the early phases of the Greek *emporion*, since c. 600 BC. Laconian pottery from the last quarter of the 7th century BC is very rarely attested outside Laconia, with only a few exceptions including the Spartan colony of Taranto in southern Italy and Samos, which, as some sources suggest, enjoyed a special relationship with Sparta in the late 7th century BC (Herodotus *Histories*, 3.39–60).⁷¹ Indeed, the Artemision and in particular the Heraion at Samos have yielded a great quantity of Laconian fine ware rivalled only by pottery found in Laconia itself. A comparison with these sites is therefore likely to be instructive.

⁶⁶ One kylix (British Museum, 1888,0601.526.o) was, according to Stibbe, decorated in the manner of the Naukratis Painter, so perhaps by a follower rather than by the painter himself (Stibbe 1972, 273).

⁶⁷ Pipili 2006, 81.

⁶⁸ Stibbe 1997, 79–100, 140–1; Pipili 2001, 19–48; Pelagatti 1955–6; Pfisterer-Haas 1999, 265; Coudin 2009, 156–63.

⁶⁹ Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, NA196.

⁷⁰ Schaus 1985a, 48; Pipili 2001, 93–4; Stibbe 1997, 115–16.

⁷¹ On the relationship between the two centres, see Cartledge 1982, 243–65.

5.1 Laconian pottery in Ionia: the Samian Heraion and Artemision, and Miletos

Until recently, Laconian fine ware was known on Samos primarily from the sanctuary of Hera,⁷² the earliest Laconian finds here dating to the late 7th century BC. Finds peak in the second quarter of the 6th century BC, when large numbers of high quality black-figure vases, in particular those by the Naukratis and Boreads Painters, are attested.⁷³ Numbers drop sharply after 550 BC, after which time only a small number of lower quality black-glazed wares continued to be used. It has been generally assumed that the decline of Laconian pottery at the Heraion could be attributed to the rise of the tyrant Polykrates, who overthrew the aristocratic government at Samos that had held strong ties with the Spartans, as well as with the supposed Samian acts of piracy against Sparta.⁷⁴ This assumption, however, had to be revised following the excavation of a votive dump at the Samian Artemision, where a large amount of Laconian pottery of the third quarter of the 6th century BC was brought to light.⁷⁵ The material found here demonstrates that (trade) relations between the two centres continued until c. 520 BC, when the sanctuary was destroyed, presumably either following the Spartan attack in 524 BC or the death of Polykrates in 522 BC.

The Laconian wares found at these two sanctuaries are distinctly different in character and date. Maria Pipili, in her discussion of a group of black-figure vases with depictions of worshippers approaching seated deities found at the Heraion at Samos and in sanctuaries at Naukratis, Olympia and Cyrene,⁷⁶ has noted that the deities represented correlate with the deities worshipped in the relative sanctuaries. She concludes that they represent votive cups specially commissioned for elaborate ritual banquets and then deposited as votive offerings. At the Heraion, alongside drinking related wares, shapes associated with eating and personal use have also been identified.⁷⁷ There was a clear preference here for black-figure vases rather than the plainer black-glazed wares. A number of different shapes are painted by the Naukratis Painter, including cups, kraters and at least one aryballos,⁷⁸ and also the Boreads Painter is well attested, with most of the cups attributed to him having been found here.⁷⁹ Other vase painters identified include the Arkesilas Painter and the slightly later Hunt and Rider Painters.⁸⁰ Interestingly, there are few black-glazed kraters from the Heraion (though two do find parallels with those at Naukratis), but no fewer than 20 fragmentary black-figure versions were found at the Heraion.⁸¹ Perhaps the Samian elite preferred to use kraters made of bronze.

The (later) corpus of Laconian material from the Artemision consists mostly of cups and chalices, many of them decorated by the Hunt Painter or his workshop. Pipili recently compared these chalices with krateriskoi used in

⁷² Laconian pottery has also been found in small amounts elsewhere at Samos, including in the burials at the western necropolis, see Stibbe 1997, 30–2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*; Stibbe 1998.

⁷⁴ Nafissi 1989; Pipili 2001, 96; Herodotus *Histories* 1.70; 3.47.

⁷⁵ Pipili 2001.

⁷⁶ Pipili 1998, 94–5; Pipili 2006, 78–9. British Museum, 1888,0601.524; Cyrene 71-659; Samos K1445 and Berlin Sa 138; K1428; Olympia K1292.

⁷⁷ Stibbe 1997, 110–19; Stibbe 2000, 110, 114, 121, 180.

⁷⁸ Stibbe 1997, 140.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁸¹ Stibbe 1989, 20; Stibbe 1997, 47–62. 1) British Museum, 1924,1201.40 and 1924,1201.41; Stibbe 1989, p. 93, no. B25a from the Samian Heraion; 2) Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria and Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 910x234.25; 3) Louvre, Paris, AM1362 (4); Stibbe 1989, p. 98, no. E3.

Attic sanctuaries of Artemis and seemingly typical of the cult of the goddess there. Though these krateriskoi are usually crudely made and have handles, both vessels have a deep bowl, a tall foot, straight and slightly flaring walls and typically depict procession scenes.⁸² The Laconian chalices are rarely found outside Laconia, where several were discovered in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta.⁸³ Other shapes from the Artemision include kraters, lakainai, phialai and dishes.⁸⁴ Numbers overall are fewer than at the Heraion, but again black-figure wares appear to have been favoured with black-glazed kraters, at any rate, being rare.⁸⁵

Pipili attributes these differences between the sanctuaries to the rise of Polykrates c. 550 BC. The members of the Samian aristocracy, who once required elaborate, perhaps specially commissioned vases for banqueting purposes in the Heraion, were no longer clients of Laconian potters. At the same time also the quality of Laconian vase-painting diminished, and the few Laconian wares found in the Heraion until c. 540 BC display a markedly diminished quality. The Laconian vases at the Artemision are of a more ritual character and were probably not used in banqueting.⁸⁶ One might be tempted to find parallels here with the Hera cups found in the sanctuaries of Hera at Samos and at Naukratis, though, unlike the Hera cups which were particular to Samian cult activity, Laconian chalices and other similarly shaped vases were particular to the cult of Artemis in general.

There are greater similarities between the Laconian pottery from the Samian Heraion and the examples found at Naukratis than with those from the Samian Artemision, not least in the simultaneous appearance of the ware at an early date and a peak in the second quarter of the 6th century BC. It may even be that some Laconian vases found at Naukratis were initially destined for Samos;⁸⁷ the Naukratis Painter's name-piece, depicting perhaps Persephone, Aphrodite or Artemis surrounded by winged daemons, finds direct parallels with two other vases by the painter at the Heraion.⁸⁸ That this cup was found at Naukratis is not surprising given the Samians' involvement at the *emporion* and their foundation of a cult to Hera.⁸⁹ In contrast, the Laconian cups and chalices of the kind frequent in the Samian Artemision are not attested at Naukratis. This may in part be due to the cult of Artemis not being prominent at (early) Naukratis, with no secure evidence preserved. Similarly, while the Hunt Painter's work is especially prominent at the Artemision, to date only one vessel by his hand is known at Naukratis. One may thus suppose, as others have, that much of the Laconian fine ware, certainly the black-figure vases, was brought to Naukratis by Samian traders, who then left these vases in the sanctuaries at Naukratis.⁹⁰ The large quantity of Laconian pottery at Miletos may alter this view however.

⁸² Pipili 2001, 99–100.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Johnston 2013, 106, n. 15.

⁸⁶ Pipili 2001, 97.

⁸⁷ Pipili 1998, 87.

⁸⁸ British Museum, 1886,0401.1063; Stibbe 1972, 271 nos 24, 25, pls 12.2–3, 13.1–2.

⁸⁹ The recent excavations at the sanctuary of Aphrodite Oikous at Miletos have also produced a small number of sherds possibly depicting the same scene. Given that the cup at Naukratis was found within the sanctuary of Apollo, which is said to be a Milesian sanctuary, the possibility exists that the kylix at Naukratis was offered by a Milesian dedicant (Schaus, pers. comm.).

⁹⁰ Boardman 1999a, 141; Venit 1985a, 394.

At Miletos, the excavation results from the sanctuary of Aphrodite Oikous and the settlement at Kalabaktepe are still awaiting full publication. A preliminary report based on an early, small subset of the material recovered to date⁹¹ records 360 sherds belonging to some 50 Laconian vases, the vast majority from the sanctuary.⁹² This can now be updated, with the number of Laconian vases now reaching well over 300. From these finds it appears that Laconian wares at Miletos, though still quite short lived, mostly date between 600 and 550 BC and appeared in greater numbers here than at Samos during the early 6th century BC.⁹³ The shapes that have been found are associated with drinking and personal use. The works of some painters have been noted, including cups belonging to the Taranto Fish, Naukratis, Boreads, Arkesilas, Hunt and Rider Painters. Black-figure kraters and aryballoi, not preserved from Naukratis, also appear, as do some black-glazed versions.⁹⁴ Until the Laconian assemblage from Miletos is fully published, it is difficult to draw any conclusions, but the assemblage is not very dissimilar from that at Naukratis, with the exception of a surprising number of Laconian II cups and other vessel shapes.

5.2 Laconian pottery in North Africa

Unlike Samos or Miletos, the Greek sites of Cyrene and Taucheira, situated along the North African coast west of Naukratis, are not attested to have been involved in the Greek *emporion*. However, Greek sources describe them as closely linked with Egypt, including via an alliance between Cyrene and Egypt by c. 567 BC as well as a political marriage between the pharaoh Amasis and the Cyrenaean woman Ladike (Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.181–2). Egyptianizing objects produced at Naukratis have been found at Cyrene and at least some of the East Greek pottery found there may have reached the site via Naukratis.⁹⁵

Laconian pottery is among the finds from these sites west of Naukratis. At the sanctuary of Demeter at Cyrene, Laconian pottery amount to 3–4% of Greek fine wares. While the agora area has yielded a small amount of early Laconian pottery presently dated to 650–620 BC, the earliest examples from the sanctuary date to the beginning of the 6th century BC, coinciding with its earliest phase.⁹⁶ Laconian pottery continues to be found at Cyrene until the end of the 6th century BC, though unlike at Naukratis, the peak is between 550 and 525 BC.⁹⁷ Both black-glazed and black-figure vases are known at Cyrene, associated with drinking, eating and personal use. Painters found include the Hunt Painter and his followers and the Naukratis and Rider Painters, with a few pieces by the Boreads and

⁹¹ Professor Gerald Schaus (Wilfrid Laurier University) is currently working on the final publication of the Laconian pottery from the excavations led by Professor Volkmar von Graeve.

⁹² Pfisterer-Haas 1999, 265–9.

⁹³ Schaus (pers. comm.).

⁹⁴ Pfisterer-Haas 1999, 265–9; Stibbe 2004, 211–12; 215; 231–3; 239.

⁹⁵ Schaus 2006, 177–8.

⁹⁶ A fragment identified as a small Laconian I cup and dated before c. 630 BC was published by Stucchi (1965, 37–8; Schaus 1985a, 16), but this has now been properly recognized as a Corinthian kotyle fragment by Mei (2013, 34–5, pl. IIIc). Mei, however, dated seven Laconian skyphos fragments at Cyrene to the Laconian I period, c. 650–620 BC, but this is questioned by Schaus in a review of Mei (*Mouseion*, forthcoming).

⁹⁷ Coudin 2009, 88.

Arkesilas Painters. Black-glazed wares are also plentiful at Cyrene with several parallels with the black-glazed kraters at Naukratis.⁹⁸

Gerald Schaus explained the large amount of Laconian fine wares at Cyrene in part by the special relationship between Cyrene, Thera and Sparta.⁹⁹ As reported by Herodotus (*Histories* 4.150–8), the Therans founded Cyrene c. 630 BC and Thera itself was a Spartan colony.¹⁰⁰ Laconian interest in Cyrene at an early date is hinted at by Isokrates (*Philippos*, 5), and the second wave of colonization there, c. 580–570 BC, may have involved Laconians.¹⁰¹ Evidence for such a special relationship is more clearly attested at Taucheira, west of Cyrene, founded by the Cyrenaeanes. Laconian pottery found in the sanctuary of Demeter amounts to approximately 7% of the Greek fine ware.¹⁰² The earliest dates to the late 7th century BC and it ceased to arrive during the third quarter of the 6th century BC, coinciding with the Persian attack on nearby Barca. At Taucheira, black-glazed vases are more common than figure-decorated vessels, and shapes associated with drinking, eating and personal use are attested. The range of shapes here is narrower than that at Cyrene. Black-figure vases are again fewer than further east at Cyrene;¹⁰³ they include vessels by the Naukratis Painter and his workshop, and the Hunt and the Rider Painters.¹⁰⁴

Alongside these early Laconian wares, other objects of Laconian origin were recovered from the sanctuary, including bronze pins, ivory fibulae, bone double axes and an ivory pendant.¹⁰⁵ While such objects were not rare outside Laconia, Laconian pottery of 7th century BC date is found at very few sites and these are known to have had close ties with Sparta. Schaus interprets the presence of these early Laconian goods in Cyrenaica as objects belonging to Laconian settlers, including women. The presence of Laconian vases here and in particular the large amounts of lower quality black-glazed wares, may have been prompted by early Laconian residents preferring their own wares to any other.¹⁰⁶

5.3 Aigina and beyond: traders, routes and networks

Looking beyond North Africa, Laconian wares have been found in substantial numbers for example on Aigina, a site closely linked to Naukratis. However, there are few parallels to be noted between the corpora from the sanctuary of Aphaia and those from the sanctuaries at Naukratis. As at Taucheira and Cyrene, the Laconian pottery on Aigina makes up one of the larger sets of Greek fine wares.¹⁰⁷ A small set of Laconian imports at the Aphaia sanctuary dates between 630 and 600 BC,

⁹⁸ 1) Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria, 9316; Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 910x234.25; Louvre, Paris, AM 1362 (44); Schaus 1985a, 28, no. 115; 2) Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, AN1896-1908-G.141.17; Schaus 1985a, 27, no. 113; 3) Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria, 17283; Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, NA197; Schaus 1985a, 27, no. 111; 4) Museum of Classical Archaeology, Cambridge, NA198; British Museum, 1924,1201.39; Schaus 1985a, 27–8, no. 114.

⁹⁹ Schaus 1985a, 98–102; Mei 2013, 26–35; Luni 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Pindar *Pyth.* 5.72–6; Callimachus *Hymn II, to Apollo* 72–6; Strabo *Geography* 10.5.1; 17.3.21.

¹⁰¹ Herodotus 4.159; 161; Schaus 2006, 175.

¹⁰² Boardman and Hayes 1966, 81–95; 116–17; Boardman and Hayes 1973, 39–41, 55.

¹⁰³ Coudin 2009, 95.

¹⁰⁴ Schaus 2006, 176; Stibbe 1972, 269–74, 285–7.

¹⁰⁵ Boardman and Hayes 1966, 163; Boardman and Hayes 1973, 80. The pendant was found in a later deposit and had been reused as an ornamental brooch.

¹⁰⁶ Schaus 1985a, 100; Coudin 2009, 98–9.

¹⁰⁷ Williams 1993, 571.

but the majority is of 6th century BC date, with the greatest concentration between 550 and 525 BC, at the same time as at Cyrene, but later than at Naukratis. Very few black-figure vases were found, including at least one cup tentatively identified as by the Rider Painter.¹⁰⁸ The majority are black-glazed, made up almost exclusively of shapes associated with drinking,¹⁰⁹ especially kraters, with Laconian kraters appearing to eclipse those of other fabrics during the second half of the 6th century BC.¹¹⁰

Williams has discussed the possibility that Aeginetans were active traders in Laconian pottery in particular after 550 BC when the greatest concentration of Laconian wares is found in the Aphaia sanctuary. He suggests an East Greek involvement based on evidence from painted votive inscriptions recording the names of two traders together, Ionian 'Aristophantos' and Dorian (Aeginetan?) 'Damonidas'. Chian kantharoi with dipinto dedications bearing the name 'Aristophantos' have been found at both Naukratis and on Aigina,¹¹¹ while Damonidas appears to have dedicated similar vases on Aigina as well as Laconian kraters. If these traders were responsible for bringing Chian wares to Aigina, it is also possible that they had a hand in the trade of Laconian goods. However, by the second half of the 6th century BC, Laconian wares, while still found at Cyrene and on Samos, were much rarer at Naukratis. To date none have been found on Chios, where the Chian kantharoi with dipinti were specially commissioned.

We may thus need to look elsewhere. In most cases, the script found on the few dedicated Laconian vases is Ionian, and Venit considered that the votive inscriptions could have been made by either Chians or Samians.¹¹² However, since Chians appear to have preferred their own vessels as votive offerings on Chios as well as at Naukratis (see the chapter on [Chian pottery](#)) and no Laconian pottery is known so far from Chios, Chian involvement overall seems unlikely. What about Samos? In her article on Laconian pottery from Egypt, Venit argued that there was a market in Egypt, or at least in the western Nile Delta, for this type of ware and this market was largely supplied by Samian merchants who were involved in the trade of Laconian pottery at Samos and who also had close ties with Naukratis.¹¹³ Yet to date very little Laconian pottery has been found at Naukratis, and only a few isolated pieces have been discovered elsewhere in Egypt.¹¹⁴ Besides, the meagre evidence from Naukratis itself gives little scope for discussion of batches of imports. Venit suggested that the Boreads Painter's cups may have arrived at Naukratis in a single shipment, but given the relatively short production period of the painter and the lack of stratigraphic information from the early excavations, these cups may

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 572, no. 3.

¹⁰⁹ The 'Kolonna' and possibly town areas of Aigina also produced some Laconian black-figure vessels otherwise not found at the Aphaia sanctuary, see Felten 1982, 19–22.

¹¹⁰ Williams 1993, 589; Coudin 2009, 143.

¹¹¹ Williams 1993, 591–4.

¹¹² Venit 1985a, 394; Johnston 2013, 104.

¹¹³ Boardman 1999a, 141; Venit 1985a, 394.

¹¹⁴ Venit notes a black-glazed aryballos sherd in the Allard Pierson Museum (inv. 109) supposedly from Alexandria, but the provenance has been disputed by Stibbe, who suggested that it more likely came from Naukratis. There are, however, no other known Laconian aryballoi at Naukratis. Venit 1985a, 391 n. 1. Weber notes a possible Laconian piece from Abusir: Weber 2012, 400 no. A3.

have arrived individually or in small numbers on several different ships within a 15 year or slightly longer period.¹¹⁵

The argument that many of these wares, especially the black-figure vases, came via Samos or perhaps Miletos, as suggested by a dedication to Milesian Apollo by a certain Ermagathinos, is nevertheless quite plausible.¹¹⁶ There is no evidence for direct contact between Naukratis and Laconia at this time and the existence of very early Laconian pottery here indicates a relationship with other sites that did have strong connections and early trade relations with Laconia. The parallels between the Laconian material from the Samian Heraion and Naukratis certainly point to such a connection (and a similar connection may also exist between Naukratis and Miletos), as noted above, with the similar origins and flow of Laconian imports, and the predominance of works by the Boreads and Naukratis Painters in contrast to those by the Hunt Painter. A number of Laconian vases were found in the sanctuary of Apollo, including one explicitly dedicated to Milesian Apollo. The decoration of one cup by the Naukratis painter from Naukratis suggests it came from the same bespoke order as similar pieces found on Samos. One possibly significant difference between Naukratis and Samos, however, is the presence at Naukratis of black-glazed kraters, while on Samos (both in the Heraion and the Artemision) mostly black-figure (and possibly bronze) versions were used. In contrast, there are only two black-figure krater sherds at Naukratis and no extant evidence for bronze kraters. If Samians were responsible for bringing decorated Laconian wares to Naukratis, it might be argued that another source should be sought for the Laconian black-glazed wares.

Aeginetans¹¹⁷ are one possibility, but perhaps the Greek cities of Cyrenaica, Cyrene and Taucheira should also be considered, albeit discounted by some.¹¹⁸ Cyrene and Taucheira had a special relationship with Laconia from early in their existence and received comparatively large amounts of Laconian pottery, in particular black-glazed wares, with a number of parallels observable in the repertoires of Cyrene and Naukratis during the first half of the 6th century BC. Travellers and traders from Cyrenaica could have brought Laconian kraters to Naukratis, for sale or use and dedication. Indeed, the presence of Cyrenaicans at Naukratis may be supported by the find of two 6th century BC locally made *olpai* with incised dedicatory inscriptions that may employ a formula often used in Cyrene.¹¹⁹

In conclusion, the Laconian pottery found at Naukratis probably found its way there through a number of different routes, from both west and east, but never on a large scale. The evidence suggests that much of it reached Naukratis as personal possessions of traders and other travellers intended to be used in ritual banqueting and as dedications.

¹¹⁵ Venit 1985a, 393–4. For the argument that all of the Laconian pottery at Naukratis came via a single shipment, see Thonemann 2006, 11–43.

¹¹⁶ See *supra*, note 15.

¹¹⁷ Williams 1993, 595.

¹¹⁸ Venit 1985a, 394 n. 28.

¹¹⁹ British Museum, 1910.0222.232.a–b and 1886.0401.1380. Johnston 2013, 109; Schlotzhauer 2006a, 309–10; Schlotzhauer 2012, 171–2, NAU140–142.