This book is about the design of a culture and way of life in times of great change some two and half millennia ago. It deals with the remains of archaic Greece, the end of a 'dark age' in the eighth and seventh centuries BC, the emergence of the city state, colonial settlement outside Greece and the spread of Greek goods and influences abroad. Bearing radical cultural, social and political change, these times must feature in any understanding of the mature classical city state - the *polls.* Written sources are partial and fragmentary; most documentary material is archaeological. Attempt is made to develop narrative and interpretation appropriate to the character of the sources - this book is as much about relationships with the material ruin of times past as it is an account of what may have happened in Korinth, a city state at the forefront of the changes. Through interdisciplinary approaches to material culture and design this book is about what may be done with archaeological sources, the sorts of narrative that may be constructed. In this it is a work of art history as much as archaeology.

The book adopts traditional focus upon a category of material culture, a type of pottery conventionally classified *protokorinthian* and considered of fine artistic quality. The prefix *prow-* is used to indicate that the style prefigures pots produced later and called *of ripe* Korinthian style; the terms belong to a particular conception of the character of art and design history. This is challenged in the book. Different angles are offered on the significance of material culture in the early polis as style and design are related to society and social change, to human agency and ideology. It is this contextualisation that makes the conventional terminologies inappropriate and so they hardly appear in the book.

Nevertheless it is suggested that the arguments and methodology hold considerable implications for the classification and interpretation of pottery and other objects typical of archaeological interest. The book can also be read as a large-scale empirical exploration of the theoretical issues which have been the focus of considerable debate in anthropological archaeology since the late 1970s. While its particular academic context is one of an increasing number of interdisciplinary studies informed by anthropology, archaeological theory and art history, the label *interpretive archaeology* is one which may be attached to the book.

Various influences will be clear. Ian Hodder's contextual archaeology and the work of Anthony Snodgrass are very much in evidence; I studied under both these innovative scholars. Some lines of argument are in the tradition of Moses Finley, and I have found stimulating the French school of classical studies, after Vernant, Gernet

and Schnapp. In material culture studies Bruno Latour and his colleagues have transformed my thinking. Further in the background is a long-running debate in Marxism about the interpretation of culture; for archaeology I may mention Randall McGuire's fine book, *A Marxist Archaeology* (1992) which explores Marxism as a relational philosophy. The project of weaving together fragmentary sources in a way which respects their character and the loss inherent in historical science is epitomised for me in the melancholic Marxism of Walter Benjamin and his great unfinished *Passagen-Werk* (1982) which aimed to fashion a history of nineteenth-century Paris, like Korinth, another great city in times of radical change.

I began my archaeological researches and writing with prehistoric themes of death and mortuary ritual, moving to contribute particularly to the development of archaeological theory - reflection upon modes of thought and interpretation appropriate to the remains of past societies. Foregrounded is the creative role of the archaeologist, constructing knowledges of the past, and I consider archaeology to be as much about its discourse as about its object. A result of a traditional education in classical languages (and having taught the same in high schools) was my encounter with a *discipline* as well as a *topic.* Hence this book on the early polis is accompanied by another, *Classical Archaeology of Greece* (Shanks 1996a), which deals with the *discourse* of classical archaeology. While the two works complement each other, the intention is not to produce any sort of definitive statement or judgement, but rather to sketch a field of possibility. Here I join others in confronting archaeology and art history with a revised set of intellectual and cultural reference points, renegotiating academic interests in these postmodern times.

Anthony Snodgrass, Alain Schnapp, Ian Hodder and Colin Renfrew have given great practical and moral support to my researches. Although I did not realise it at the time, my thinking was to take a new turn after a seminar week in June 1992 on the sociology of techniques at Les Treilles, Provence, courtesy of Anne Gruner Schlumberger. I thank Bruno Latour for the invitation to attend. With respect to ceramic design I have learned much from students and staff of Newcastle and Cardiff Colleges of Art and Carmarthen College of Technology and Art with whom I have worked on and off since 1988.1 make special mention of ceramic artists Mick Casson and above all my partner Helen. I cherish links with the creativity of art workers and makers; she has transformed my thinking about design.

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reproduced with permission of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, parts of Figures 3.3, 3.24 and 3.30 are courtesy of the British Museum.

Work for the book has spanned over seven years, during which time I have explored ideas with the seminar and lecture audiences of many universities in Europe and the United States. Reactions have varied from warm support and constructive comment to aggressive dismissal and virulent opposition, but the point is that so many people have listened, and this is an appreciated luxury. I do not forget the infrastructures of privilege which have enabled this work.

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