
Art, design and the constitutive imagination in the early city state

Through the fragments of practices and lifeworlds a series of dispositions and stories can be traced. Much of what I have had to write could be said to do with the changing culture of the archaic city state and its ideologies of sovereignty, but it is not enough to leave it at that, for ideology, and indeed the class structure involved in the new discourses of sovereignty, are *relationships*; they are worked through people's practices. In the same way the aryballos both signifies and connects or translates: this is its social work, permeated by reworking, contradiction and contestation. Interpretation and uncertainty are endemic to social production, both past and present.

Archaeologists are dealing with the constitutive imagination - the making of goods and the building of worlds to live in. But the new imagery of Korinth is not simply an imaginary or decorative world, part of something like Renfrew's 'protective system' of society, as Snodgrass suggests for Attic Geometric figures scenes (Snodgrass 1979: 128). I have discussed the heroic ethos of late dark age Greece. Consider Gernet's comment (Gernet 1981: 144) that myth is not a way of thinking with images, but is the images themselves in a field of the affective. I read this as doubting the distinction between image and theme represented, or between 'generic signal' and ethos represented. Veyne (1988) has also presented an interpretation of Greek myth as only secondarily referring to a distinction between truth and fiction, reason and fantasy. Myth is instead primarily pragmatic, establishing *relationships* between poet and audience, for example in the case of Pindar (Kurke 1991). Neither true nor false, myth has an illocutionary force which cannot be reduced to content, being instead about themes such as anonymous authorship, repetition, the learned. This is again an argument for seeing beyond the opposition of representation and reality into the constitutive imagination.

The traditional hereditary and exclusive aristocracy in Korinth were in trouble by the eighth century BC; this much is certain from the literature. The old ways were not working; people were not subscribing to conventional legitimations rooted most probably in birth and wealth. Archaeological evidences of the material cultural lifeworld of Korinth indicate how the political was being redesigned to involve an aesthetic field of lifestyle.

I pick up the point that power is about having allies and translating interests, and that material culture may be effective in doing this. Attention was shifted in Korinth to recruitment and mobilisation of new resources. There are coordinated in a new way from the eighth century orientations towards war and violence, represented by the design of weaponry and graphical depiction of violence, and by what is done with

weaponry - discipline, the aesthetics of wounding, the dedication to divinity, for example. Religion becomes the focus of communal energies, of the display of new craft skills, a public arena of *expenditure* - the wealth of patrons or indeed of a community, dedications offered to divinity. There were developed new visual and architectural environments. The new expenditures were made in a nexus of religion, trade and travel. Powers over movement and space find expression in fields of mobility and mediation, shipping and sanctuaries..

Ceramic design, the emergence of a new taste regarding the form and decoration of ceramic fineware, is clearly part of a new display of expenditure and investment in war and religion, travel and trade too, and part of the new and increasing visual environment. This new environment provided a frame and gave cues to the possibility and appropriateness of actions, particularly the actions of the propertied class, those with the wealth and leisure to experience and exploit new opportunities. It was now appropriate to use wealth to build a large public and monumental temple with finely worked and decorated surfaces, to invest energy in that which was beyond the local community and to travel with fine and decorated perfume jars. The body, self and gender are important themes in these new developments. Other conceptions, for example of a productive field gendered feminine, were set in opposition or marginalised. To accept, find significance in, enjoy figured design is to enter an ideological world of masculine sovereignty, a world which determines the powers of a minority over others, and the mechanisms whereby this may be achieved. The new developments involved redefinition or reworking of the material and conceptual resources at the base of elite practice, new orientations for the energies of the propertied class and its community.

Here, in this expressive politics, this repertoire of style, are the elements of an efficient technology of power. Technology may be defined as a nexus of knowledge and technique and to do with knowledgeable agents achieving interests and desired ends. Technology refers to many disparate fields of *applied (systems of) knowledge*. Just as a worker employs or makes reference to a technology (body of applied knowledge and its objects) in achieving ends, so too we may conceive a social agent employing a technology of social power in achieving ends. How do we get our way in social life? What are the bodies of applied knowledge (i.e. practical and not propositional)? You can beat someone (skills and tools may well be relevant here). You may make a speech (rhetorical skills relevant here). Technologies of power include some or all of the following:

- systems of wealth and property which enable projects to be realised;
- tools, to operate upon raw material and realise a design;
- weapons and war-machines, to be used (symbolically too) to enforce interests;
- environments or settings for particular kinds of project and action;
- knowledges and information, as the basis of actions with and upon others;
- concepts and practices of the self and body, ideas of the powers and limits which are appropriate to both;
- systems of rhetoric and persuasion as essential to the translation of interest;

aesthetic systems which indicate the appropriateness of action and which may also work in translating interests by establishing metaphorical links.

I trust it is clear how this listing relates to the cultural assemblage built in archaic Korinth.

The efficiency of this particular technology lies in flexibility and scope, and in the provision of opportunities for richly textured experiences and gratifications. That we may recognise its workings now is a testament to that efficiency: it works.

This new technology of power centred on *expression*, a transformation of power into an aesthetic and expressive field. This involves a discourse of sovereignty. Artifacts and new cultural experiences make visible, rework, articulate, embody and clarify, sometimes even obscure, a series of links between violence, masculinity, what I termed otherness or alterity, divinity, animal and bodily form, and links with the absences - the domestic everyday and feminine. I have shown how these may be central to a relationship of dominance and subordination, between an overlord and an underclass. I outlined a cultural complex, masculine sovereignty, and showed the importance of lifestyle and particular conceptions of self and body - aesthetic fields. Their representation in visual form draws attention to these ideas and dispositions. And however slight the importance of Korinthian imagery may have been in the beginning, this visual environment grew. That the designs also seem to clarify in the relations they represent suggests that there was no established set of ideas and dispositions to be represented, but that the design of pottery grew with the realisation of the significance of these powers and their technologies.

Korinthian ceramics display traditional manufacture and design, but also deviation from these into risk and the moment of manufacture, above all a new visual field. This is a new articulation of tradition and innovation and implicates ideological time in the way just described - past and pregnant futures, and the moment of decisive encounter.

Birth is not at all central to the working of technologies of power which foreground style, the aesthetic, display, expenditure and reference to gender and conceptions of body and self. The old aristocratic *oikoi* and retainers worked as well, if not better, with these expanded dimensions of cultural practice. Birth may still have been referenced, but was dispensable. Tyranny at Korinth usurped the recently elaborated technologies of power while retaining reference to the weight of tradition in the notion of monarchic rule (Kypselos as *basileus*). Here again is that mixture of tradition and innovation.

But we are not seeing simply the development of an aristocratic ideal. Various projects were at work. Someone with the requisite wealth and aspiration would not have come to a potter with a demand for a new class of goods, so much as an *interest*, a sensitivity to the expression of themes to do with style, violence, war and animal and human form, as well as the old certainties of traditional style. This interest may have been generated elsewhere, but found (partial) realisation in the responses of the potters over the years, who produced figured Korinthian wares, designs which clarified and gave form to the new technologies of power, just as did the weapons systems, the stone *kouroi*, ships, stories and experiences of travel.

The potter, attending to the need to dispose of their products, translated the growing interest in figurative imagery and an exotic visual environment into an iconography upon miniature vessel forms, developing a new workmanship of risk rather than certainty, with expressions of self and creativity. Their wares supplied the symbolic economies of new lifestyles, networks of distribution and consumption.

All potters need an outlet for their products (other than in the exceptional case of pottery done for the pleasure of the potter). The relationship here is not so much one between a potter and a market, but one between a potter and an *interest*. A simple relation of positive feedback between potter and interest accounts for the development of the style. But the lack of definition to this interest, in times when power and style had not been expressed in this way, gave a relative autonomy to the potter, enhanced by the lack of heavy demand, and by the relative social and technological independence of the potting *oikoi*. This gave space for the exploration of a new and explicit (political) aesthetic. The resultant energy is carried on through the later development of Korinthian and Greek ceramic design.

Korinthian design was, then, not the output of the creative genius of Greek potters meeting with ideas and artistic schemata of the east. It is not part of some overarching evolution of style. The pots were the result of an accidental meeting of interest in an aesthetics of sovereignty or power and a conservative and specialised technique of production and firing.

Trade abroad is deemed meaningful even in the ideology of pottery design, intersecting orientalia, movement beyond the domestic, agencies of shipping to new colonies, experiences of adventure and travel in a Mediterranean *koine* of mobility and interregional links, and the miniature wares were also suitable for restricted cargo space.

Some may have interpreted the pots and imagery as part of their interest in aspiring to new sovereignty through expressive lifestyles and their accoutrement. The colonist in Italy placing a perfume jar in a grave was uniting all sorts of things - feelings for the dead, Greek identities and links with Greek cities (pots from mother city Korinth), traders, a cultural edge of eastern and exotic motifs, a visual imagery and attendant experiences of masculine and aristocratic sovereignty, decorative order and securities of tradition. The colonist translated these into their own project of attending to the dead, dealing with identity, death and the otherness it represents.

Korinthian pottery from the late eighth century was part of a heterogeneous mixture woven through the projects of potter and consumer to get away from the old political ways and struggles, a network of connections, a manifold and insidious cultural assemblage. The focus on and through the body is a powerful and flexible metaphoric idiom, allowing augmentation and easy translation into various projects. This flexibility and multiplicity is the root of a popularity attested by the growth of production into the sixth century and export across the Mediterranean. In the intimate association with this cultural assemblage was the power of Greek aristocratic interest. Therein was also what we call the polis.