7

Style and Ideology

 The first principle of a materialist analysis would be   productions must not be studied from the standpoint of their unity which is illusory and false, but from their material disparity One must not look for unifying effects but for signs of the contradictions (historically determined) which produced them and which appear as unevenly resolved conflicts '
(Balibar and Macherey 1981, p 87)

'Like private property, the [work] thus appears as a "natural" object, typically denying the determinants of its productive process The function of criticism is to refuse the spontaneous presence of the work - to deny that "naturalness" in order to make its real determinants appear '
(Eagleton 1976, p 101)

Introduction

Questions concerned with stylistic and functional attributes of material culture-patterning lie at the heart of much archaeological theory and practice Pots and broken pots constitute a major type of archaeological data But once they are recovered from the ground, what are we to do with them' Put them in a glass case and admire their aesthetic qualities, comment on their crudities' Speculate as to their function' Or simply treat them as another 'type fossil' - signifiers of chronological location, degree of social contact, diffusion or migration' The designs on pots vary in an almost infinite number of forms and this chapter sets out to tackle this most basic problem, the problem of the style of ceramics and stylistic variability We first consider how archaeologists have treated the style of pots, discussing among other things, the traditional use of pots as a means of dating sites, as supposed signifier of groups of people, the notion of the separation of style and function involving the assertion of the primacy of function and the relegation of style to an irrelevant or mute peripheral feature, the idea of style being adaptive and as reflecting social relations We argue that conventional theories are inadequate in accounting for many aspects of stylistic variability either because of their limited scope and scale of application or because they rely on a reductive form of functionalist analysis which either subsumes or fails to account for the variability of designs Our criticisms rest on the argument that pots are made and decorated by knowledgeable social actors In accordance with previous chapters we stress that the production of material culture is a social practice, a signifying practice situated within social, political and economic structures, structures which enable action The style of ceramics may ultimately be ideological - an imaginary solution to social contradiction This alternative contention is investigated in an analysis of 70 middle neolithic funnel neck beakers from the entrance to a megalithic tomb in southern Sweden

How archaeologists have dealt with style

Seven accounts of stylistic variation **will** be discussed and their implications examined

(1)   the 'normative' theory characterizing the majority} of archaeological research until the 1960s,

(11)   stylistic drift,

(lll)   theories of regional adaptation and vessel form,

(IV)   social interaction hypotheses,

(v)   motor habit variation,

(vi)   information exchange,

(vii)   isochrestic variation

Normative theory

Since the birth of archaeology as a serious and distinctive field of academic inquiry the primary concern has been, and still is in many studies, to analyse ceramic design van ability not specifically to infer aspects of past social organization but as a means to date sites and as a signifier of groups of people That some aspects of design change through time is axiomatic but there is no reason to assume a priori, as many archaeologists have done in the past, that all or most of the variation discernible in ceramic design within and between sites has a primary temporal dimension or that time is merely an abstract refer ence dimension Spatial commodified time (see the discussion in Chapter 1, pp 10-11) provides the background to a great deal of the treatment of ceramics both in 'normative theory' and the theories of the new archaeology In archaeological studies pre-dating 1960, aspects of ceramic design were primarily used as 'index fossils' to date sites in a relational series Concomitantly, the meaning and explanation of changes in ceramic design attributes was almost entirely circumvented An unremitting flow of spatial time provided the background determinative variable Dating the site or the sites was deemed to be an end in itself and so stylistic variation became relegated as the means to establish the passage of time rather than something which could provide information about past societies Such studies are so ubiquitous in the older literature it hardly seems worthwhile citing specific instances (Piggott 1954, Krieger 1944 and Malmer 1962 pro vide a few 'classics' of this genre) The problem of why changes in stylistic attributes might occur was never directly addressed and was simply assumed to be the result of fashion, innovation, or a form of drift in which small deviations from the norms govern ing ideation and action gave societies a form of stochastic in built dynamic more or less directly reflected in a continuous fluctuation in ceramic design attributes and in which pots or other artifacts were virtually ascribed properties such that they could generate other series of pots or artifacts without reference to human agency

Discontinuities were assumed to result from specific historical events such as invasions, migrations, the diffusion of religious or other ideas or as a result of an exten sion of exchange networks Such accounts assumed a statics/dynamics model of cultural process in which change was assumed to be either non directional or accretional (stability) or short and sharp The implicitly or explicitly interred reasons for change

were all essentially non-explanatory in that they failed to account for the processes underlying the event, e g , why a migration should take place and, more specifically, why this should result in the occurrence of one design configuration rather than another Ceramics were held to signify people and the spread of ceramic designs into a region directly represented a group of people or a particular set of ideas moving with them As the meaning of style was supposedly self-evident it was never really investigated

Stylistic drift

Binford (1963) adopting the position that changes in sociocultural systems should be understood in terms of the demographic structure of the human group and the integrative stresses which enable it to adapt to a particular environmental milieu, suggests (a) that in any given social unit variation exists in the execution of stylistic norms, and (b) that this is a pool of variability subject to sampling error analogous to the gene pool of small isolated populations or those undergoing demographic change or segmentation leading, according to him, to the following expectations

   (1)   with demographic increases daughter populations are likely to bud off from parent communities with the result that random sampling error may arise in relation to some attribute classes, consequently covariation relationships should overlap in regular spatial patterns discernible in radiating or linear distributions,

   (ll)   in stable demographic situations sampling error or drift might result because of discontinue between generations in learning and enculturative behaviour in a region Sub-regional social segments would, therefore, be characterized by Vagaries in the execution of any given design attribute state and each attribute subject to drift would tend to have a non-complementary distribution in relation to others Such changes could either remain statistical permutations or under selection for maximizing group identification be objectified and elaborated with the result that real formal differences would arise between sub-regional units

   A further suggestion made by Binford is that cultural content alone would be subject to such a process or series of processes and that this would not affect the overall nature of the sociocultural system, 1 e , the particular form of environmental adaptation and the particular functional tasks earned out the entire thesis assumes that the execution of stylistic attributes (and style in general) is of no particular importance to social groups simply because it has no adaptive importance or functional significance Style is considered to be peripheral, opposed to an asserted primacy of function, and therefore unlike functional traits of material culture, is subject to the vagaries of random permutations which lack meaning but might be statistically registered in the process of research A style function dichotomy is assumed *(cf* Dunnell 1978a, 1980, Jelinek 1976 and see Chapter 3, pp 55-6) and material culture is relegated to a passive role in the change process If, on the other hand, style is considered to be an active element of social relations, drift, in the manner in which Binford envisages it, either will not take place

between residential units then the higher will be the degree of stylistic similarity between them and, concomitantly, the lower the degree of homogeneity within sites. Individuals produce similar designs in accordance with the degree to which they interact. Various spheres of interaction are themselves determined by the type of residence unit and thus degrees of stylistic similarity are reflected at varying spatial scales. Through time, changes in inter-site and intra-site design variability reflect changes in the types of organizational units or changes in marital rules such as village endogamy or exogamy, matrilocal or patrilocal residence patterns.

S. Plog (1978, 1980) has examined several sets of archaeological data which purport to support the social interaction hypothesis, and has shown that in almost all cases there is no empirical evidence to suggest that similarity either within or between sites actually does decrease with distance. More conclusively Hodder's ethnoarchaeological studies (Hodder 1977, 1981, 1982a) have demonstrated that the degree of social interaction between individuals and groups has no necessary or direct correlation with the amount of stylistic similarity. It is possible to have distinctive social groups with distinctive stylistic forms in situations in which between-group interaction is very frequent. There is no reason whatsoever to assume that stylistic similarity falls off in any clear or regular manner with distance. It is simply not possible to set up predictive models of this sort.

Motor habit variation
Hill (1977, 1978) and others (papers in Hill and Gunn (eds.) 1977) have suggested that differences in the motor habits or motor performances of individuals are always slightly divergent and this will result in small stylistic variations in the manufacture and/or use-wear patterns of particular items of material culture. As much of this variation is sub-conscious it cannot be taught or transmitted, and this makes it possible to identify the work of individual artisans. Hill has attempted to demonstrate that these motor habits or performances do not vary significantly during the life of an individual. He specifically suggests that the most sensitive variables by means of which we can identify individuals are such features as the angles at which parts of a design come together, distance measures such as line thickness, distances between lines, relative heights or lengths of a portion of design (Hill 1977, p. 100). While we do not deny the importance or interest of this work, it obviously only accounts for very minor aspects of stylistic variation and it is questionable to what extent the approach would be able to lead us to insights into long term change or the form and meaning of stylistic variation in ceramic design as regards within and between-group social strategies and social practices.

Information exchange
Information exchange theory as put forward by Wobst (1977) and applied, in part, by Hantman and Plog (1982), Braun and Plog (1982) and Weissner (1983), views style as having considerable adaptive importance directly contributing to human survival. According to Wobst, stylistic messaging is adaptive because it makes social interaction more predictable and less stressful by serving to summarize the economic and social situation of an individual *(cf.* Weissner 1983, p. 258) broadcasting the potential advantages or disadvantages to be realized from an encounter between individuals who may

at all or will account for such minor modifications in stylistic form that they are unlikely to be modified or seized upon by social groups to play a role in group differentiation

Regional adaptation and vessel form

In this perspective (Martin and F Plog 1973, Cohen 1977, S Plog 1978, 1980) populations arc viewed as adapting to specific regions so that sites will vary formally and spatially with regard to the nature of the functional tasks carried out and the social composition of the units performing these tasks Different decorative fields of a single vessel or a series of different vessels may have different designs and the choice of where designs are placed on the vessel surface are assumed to be contingently related to vessel form, so that form is the independent variable and decoration the dependent variable Primary characteristics of vessel form arc governed by vessel function So if different functional activities arc carried out at different sites or in different areas of the same site or if more tasks of a particular type are carried out on some sues as compared to other sites this will affect the nature of design similarities and differences both in different areas of one site and between sites (S Plog 1978, p 155, 1980, pp 18-19) Changes in ceramic design are then related to an assumed need to adapt through time to different environmental conditions (Martin and Plog 1973, p 256) Sherratt (1981, p 280) relates the widespread similarity of certain vessel forms in the later European neolithic to the broadening of the resource base in the form of a 'secondary products revolution" and the use of vessels in the processing and storage of these secondary products, primarily milk and cheese

However it is problematic to what extent primary characteristics of vessel form are to be related to their function In practice, function is a vacuous category for analysis For example, storage vessels may perform the 'function' of storage equally adequately irrespective of whether they are large or small or have a curved, angular, rounded regular or irregular profile The functional argument is entirely mute because it is quite incapable of specifying why one form rather than another should be adopted Vessel shape may very well constrain where certain types of designs may reasonably be placed but shape itself is primarily a stylistic rather than a functional feature The only functional parameter that can reasonably be ascribed to shape is that if vessels are to contain anything then they must envelop and contain a volume of space This specifies virtually nothing about the form of that envelopment of space Even if we were to accept the argument linking environment to adaptation to vessel function to vessel shape to vessel design, we would be left with the realization that we were still incapable of specifying why one design rather than another might be chosen

Social interaction

From the interaction perspective (Deetz 1965, Engelbrecht 1978, Frankel 1978, Hill 1970, Longacre 1970. S Plog 1976, Redman 1978a, Whallon 1968, amongst others stylistic attributes are viewed as being more or less directly related to the degree of inter action between social units, and this proposition has been used to infer aspects of prehistoric social organization cither on the basis of the degree of stylistic similarity within and or between sites The essential premise is that if more interaction takes plate

not know each other intimately before such an encounter has taken place (Wobst 1977 p 327, Weissner 1983, p 258) Wobst and Weissner suggest that style becomes of particular importance when sending messages to socially distant receivers, i.e., those beyond the immediate kin group or residence unit Concomitantly, the utility of stylistic messages is deemed to decrease the more closely the emitter and potential receiver are acquainted, but also with increasing social distance beyond a certain point the ability for other individuals to either encounter or be able to decode a message cannot be ensured Stylistic messaging is, therefore, only an efficient mode of information exchange with relation to a target group of socially distant members of a social unit and as social net works increase in size and complexity the need for stylistic messaging becomes more and more important those artifacts seen by most individuals are the most appropriate for transmitting stylistic messages since they are the most accessible (Wobst 1977 p 350) The messages most likely to be signalled, according to this framework, are those of group and individual identity and affiliation, status, wealth, religious beliefs and political ideas, because the cost of decoding and signalling messages via the medium of stylistic attributes would be too great to transmit a wide variety of information

This approach, although in many respects considerably more sophisticated than other theories of stylistic variability, fails to provide an adequate framework for understanding style, first because material culture is assumed to passively reflect individual or ethnic identities It is quite possible that precisely the contrary situation may take place, in which style is actively manipulated to invert, disguise and misrepresent social practices Furthermore, style cannot be held to simply mirror social strategies and practices but can also *mediate* and therefore serve to actively reorientate those strategics Secondly, the theory tells us little or nothing with regard to why particular messages should be signalled with one set of stylistic features rather than another both form and content are overlooked Thirdly, there is no reason to believe that ethnic or other identities should be signalled by the highly visible, the overt, the obvious, as Wobst claims Hodder (1982b, pp 54—6) has shown how even intimate and everyday aspects of material culture such as hearth position may play an active part in stressing social relationships and group identities

Style as isochrestic variation
Sackett (1982, 1985) has developed a particularly interesting and provocative frame work for understanding the nature of style in material culture variation He addressee three central questions fundamental to any consideration of style

   (1)   where does style reside?
  (ii)   are stylistic objects or attributes anything else but stylistic?
 (iii)   what is the style function relationship?

He argues that once the effects of post-depositional alteration have been accounted for style and function 'share equal responsibility for *all* formal variation observable in arti facts' (Sackett 1982, p 68) Style and function are so thoroughly embedded that neither can be understood except in relation to the other Artifacts may play either a utilitarian (e g technological or extractive) role or a non-utilitarian role in the social or symbolic

realm Most if not all artifacts simultaneously operate in both, and their purpose is func
tional in a broad sense in that they cither enable populations to obtain or utilize
resources or signal social relationships and ethnic identities Cross-cutting utilitarian or
non-utilitarian objects or attributes is what Sackett refers to as 'adjunct form' The
paradigm is pottery decoration which displays no obvious advantage in most cases in
procuring or processing resources at least from the archaeologist's outsider point of
view By contrast, stone tools, with which Sacked is primarily concerned, possess no
obvious adjunct form comparable to that found on decorated ceramics He goes on to
argue that there exists a great range of alternative forms of tools which may function in
an equivalent manner for achieving a certain set of ends whether these concern the
design of a weapon to kill a reindeer or the execution of a design on a pot to symbolize
ethnic identity (ibid , p 72) This is isochrestic form Isochrestic form is to be found
embedded in all artifacts and resides in all their attributes from overall morphology
down to features such as retouch on lithics Isochrestic variation requires no expla-
nation 'it neither suggests nor requires an explanation of why any given kind of attribute
does or docs not have stylistic significance in any given situation' (Sackett 1985, p 157)

That isochrestic form requires no explanation depends on the argument that it is
habitual Am one society tends to 'choose' only one or a few of the potentially infinite
ways in which to produce, for example, a projectile point and chance dictates those
forms which actually arc utilized The same specific shape, technique of retouch, etc ,
is unlikely to be chosen by people not ethnically related in some manner and chance
alone dictates if two unrelated societies employ exactly the same isochrestic form(s) for
accomplishing the same ends This is because material culture and its fashioning is a
product of learned behaviours, l e , socialization (Sackett 1982, pp 73-5) So
isochrestic variation occurs across time and space and the formal variation of artifacts
reflects ethnic identity

> choices must be made with regard to every functional end served by material
> objects It follows in turn therefore that style is no more than function writ
> small, that is, function as it happens to be expressed within a culture-
> historically specific, ethnically meaningful segment of the archaeological
> record   Formal variation in short is an inherently dualistic province of
> which function and style constitute fully complementary aspects The func-
> tional aspect resides in the manner in which form serves given ends, while the
> stylistic aspect resides in the specific context-determined ethnic variant of
> isochrestic 'choice' which this form happens to assume   (Sackett 1982, p 75)

Sackett's position in relation to the understanding of 'adjunct' form or that which can
be clearly delimited as decoration is not all that clear On the one hand, his argument
seems to suggest that whether one pot design rather than another is chosen depends on
socialization and, therefore, represents isochrestic form or time-space variation On the
other hand he seems to accept that such variation may be used to *actively* mark out and
symbolize sets of social relationships (whether at a conscious or subconscious level) and
that what he terms an 'iconological approach to style is appropriate (ibid ,p 81)

The position we wish to take in relation to Sackett's argument is as follows We agree

that style is to be found throughout the entire gamut of morphological variation in material culture from the macro to the micro level In other words, style is not to be con ceived of as a residue left over when functional parameters have been taken into account Variability which could be termed 'isochrestic' does exist and may have a habituated basis in the structuring of material culture-patterning in relation to the social construe tion of reality by any particular social or ethnic formation *(cf* the discussion of practical consciousness in Chapter 6) However, the meaning of this variation cannot be side stepped and shifted to some unspecified expression of ethnicity which just happens Style is made to happen in different social and historical circumstances in relation to social, political and ideological relations and in order to understand style - more broadly, the meaning of material culture patterning - we have to understand the social conditions of its production Claiming that ethnicity provides a necessary *and sufficient* explanation for style is inadequate because it is a non-explanation which completely evades the question of meaning and is clearly meant to do so in Sackett's framework which is founded on an essential scepticism 'No doubt iconology also structured life But it seems to lie beyond our grasp, at least in the realm of stone tools and at least if its search is to entail reasonable canons of procedure and evidence This is to be regretted, as is the loss of any part of the fabric of prehistoric life' (Sackett 1982, p 105) Sackett's view of isochrestic variation as compared with iconological variation (the pro- duction of specific designs) depends on a distinction between style which occurs because it is embedded in the consciousness of artisans at an essentially non-discursive lev el, and style with intended effects in terms of specific social strategies or iconological variation The latter is regarded as purposive and therefore amenable to explanation, the former as non-purposive and non-intentional in the sense of being actively used to produce a result, and not amenable to or requiring explanation This distinction might be re-framed in terms of practical and discursive consciousness discussed in Chapter 6 We pointed out that there can be no rigid division posited between the two and that actions have unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences Both practical and discursive consciousness are intimately linked in the production, reproduction and transformation of social life and the boundaries are shifting and sliding outcomes of a specific form of life and sets of social relations and social strategies If we are to under stand style of whatever form and at whatever level it must be related to the social matrix from which it arises Even if certain aspects of style are not produced at a level of dis cursive consciousness the corollary that they are not actively implicated in the structur ing of social life does not follow-style, any kind of style, produces effects, symbolically meaningful effects, forming part of the social conditions for life and structured and restructured, negotiated and renegotiated

   While Sackett usefully stresses the embeddedness of style and function, it certainly does not follow, as he claims, that 'style is function writ small' but rather the reverse- function is style writ small Given that artifacts may take an almost infinite number of forms while fulfilling the same task, the world of material culture is primarily a world of style and not function - function adheres to or is embedded in the style A couple of examples may be given to underline this argument pot shape and projectile point form the latter being an example Sackett himself gives A primary function of pottery vessels

in an everyday domestic context could be said to be for holding either liquids such as water or wine, or solids such as grain or berries So long as the pot possesses a bottom and walls, it can perform these tasks irrespective of the particular shape of the bottom or the walls (see the discussion above) In other words, the function of the vessel as a container explains virtually nothing with relation to its form The style of construction is primary and the function inheres in this style All that is presumably required of a projectile point in terms of its functional operation is to pierce and enter the flesh of an animal and wound or kill it, or allow poison to enter the bloodstream In order to fulfill this task, projectile points need to be both pointed and sharp and 'pointedness' and 'sharpness' may be created in a very, large number of different ways As Sackett suggests (1982, p 73), attempting to measure degrees of efficiency in terms of Western techno-logical, social or ideological standards is a dubious exercise at best Again, the function would seem to be secondary in relation to style (although both aspects cross-cut and enmesh each other), possibly more so than in the pot shape example

What Sackett refers to as 'adjunct style' (e g , pot decoration) is no more nor less active in social strategies than morphological form (pot shape) In terms of morpho-logical form or the production of designs we need to know how to distinguish between individual motor habit variation and isochrestic variation This is basically a question of suitable forms of analysis We do not consider isochrestic variation to be 'passive' in some manner as opposed to a more 'active' area of iconological style signalling social relationships Such an arbitrary distinction lies at the heart of the debate between Sackett (1985 i and Weissner (1983, 1985) in relation to Weissner's data on San arrow-head morphology

Weissner (1983) was able to demonstrate that arrowheads exhibit clear stylistic differ-ences at the level of the language group among the San, distinguishing the 'Kung, 'Xo and G/wi who speak mutually unintelligible tongues and occupy distinct territories (ibid ,p 268*)* but share similar material culture inventories No clear-cut stylistic vari-ation was apparent at the level of the band, but dialect groups could be distinguished amongst the 'Kung and band clusters among the 'Xo at a low level of resolution Weissner could find no coherent principles lying behind the choice of attributes for differentiation which widely vary (e g point size or variations in tip and body shape) She suggests that 'the choice of attributes in which to invest style appeared to be the result of historical events, rather than following coherent principles' (ibid , p 273) that style is not clear cut at the band level is explained as the result of actively suppressing it, since bands do not have a coherent and unchanging membership but are characterized by social fusion and flux The development of distinct styles symbolizing band membership would contradict this process Sackett (1985) suggests that Weissner's data are more parsimoniously explained in terms of passive isochrestic vari-ation which signals ethnic identity, but is not actively manipulated to do so At the band level he argues that style is 'simply inhibited in expression by the very fact that [people] do come together'(ibid , p 159) In relation to the band level of social organization, we would suggest that the reason why there is no distinctive stylistic differentiation is quite simple Bushman bands have no coherent social basis in terms of individual membership and therefore as bands have no ongoing basis but are characterized by a

fusion and flux of social relations there is no distinctive identity to symbolize or repress: the point made by Sackett. At the level of the linguistic group, stylistic attributes would seem to be implicated in the structuring of social relations as Weissner insists. Whether or not this is at a level of practical or discursive consciousness is not an issue which, if it could be settled on the side of the former, would make style any less active in terms of those social relations - the implication of Sackett's argument.

In this brief review of some theories of stylistic variation with reference to ceramics (see S. Plog 1983 for further discussion of some related issues) a number of individual criticisms of different perspectives have been made. To summarize, the major criticisms that can be made of these approaches are:

(1)   Material culture in general and stylistic variation in particular are considered to play a purely passive role in the social world reflecting, alternatively, types of adaptation to the natural environment, ethnic groupings or degrees of social interaction.

(2)   The theories advanced are dependent on a functional type of argument in which, as in the case of stylistic drift theory, stylistic attributes are assumed to be of peripheral importance because they are thought to have no adaptive significance or, as in information exchange theory, are viewed as being of adaptive significance, specific stylistic forms being related to different social identities. In neither case do we have even the beginnings of an account or explanation of why some stylistic elements rather than others should permutate randomly or signal ethnic identity. The notion of isochrestic variation specifi- cally denies the question of meaning altogether and style is relegated to an expression of function. In the frameworks advocated, content tends to be overlooked and, in practice, the arguments advanced become little more than tautologies, e.g. a certain set of stylistic traits or design configurations are 'explained' as relating to the need for an exchange of information in an efficient manner between or within groups, therefore the existence of these traits is explained.

(3)   There is no adequate account of stylistic change except in terms of adaptive expediency which in itself cannot specify why changes in stylistic attributes should take one form or another. The statics/dynamics split implicit or explicit in all these theories has the effect of identifying time with change rather than seeing it as being imbricated in both stability and change.

(4) There is no adequate conception of the *social production of style* and *active* human involvement in its form and use, in the negotiation of structures of meaning within the context of definite social practices and social strategies.

An alternative perspective
Style is such an elusive term that attempts to define it are always likely to remain partial and inadequate. As Muller (1979) points out, the manner in which, historically, style has been conceptualized and defined, redefined and reconceptualized, is virtually

identical to the multitudes of attempts to come to grips with the word 'culture' It is almost as if to try and think about 'style' or 'culture' is to try and think a category which refuses to be categorized, to be tied down to any single essence While recognizing that the word 'art' refers frequently in contemporary society to the production of'works of art' which is considered by many a distinctive social practice, in the following discussion the terms 'style' and 'art' are used, to a certain extent, interchangeably One cannot consider style without considering the nature of art and vice versa It does not seem to be useful to maintain a radical separation between the two terms Art mediates style just as style inheres in art The question of where art and style 'begin' and/or 'end' is not one which we wish to address, since it always involves a dubious line-drawing exercise between various cultural products which cannot but be founded on practical interest and cultural preference Style or the production of form in the most general sense inheres in all products arising from human activity Style is, in a very real sense, everywhere and whether one wishes to term any particular product 'art' is open to considerable debate Our primary interest is in what manner style or art relate to the social as meaningful modes of expression and as ideology

De centring the individual style as a social production

> To all those who still wish to talk about man, about his reign or his liberation,
> to all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence,
> to all those who wish to take him as their starting-point in their attempts to
> reach the truth   we can answer only with a philosophical laugh
>
> (Foucault 1974, pp 342-3)

> A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination   The birth of the
> reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author (Barthes 1977b, p 148)

Foucault's 'philosophical laugh' at the announcement by Barthes of the death of the author are part of an important trend in post-structuralist thought to de-centre or challenge the notion of the individual as mystical and transcendent creator of culture, a position which as we noted in Chapter 6 (pp 122-6) is not necessarily at odds with a notion of active and knowledgeable human agency The view of the artist as somehow transcending society to produce an autonomous comment on it can be traced back to the rise of the myth of individual freedom associated with the development of industrial capitalism which through the progressive division of labour has tended to marginalize artists, giving them an aura of being removed from the social in some sense. To de-centre the individual is to view artistic production as a social and material rather than an individual and psychological process and to explain the work of art with reference to its location and reception in society, to the institutional sites of its production and consumption Traditionally the study of style in art history has been dominated by a study of individual artists, just as in literary criticism the study of texts has been dominated by consideration of their relationship to the individuals who signed them

It is not realistic to regard the artist as a supreme creator or free founder of the work

he or she produces The opposed 'structural' account of the artist as a virtually expendable medium through which a work reveals social and economic determinants is equally unsatisfactory De centring the individual does not require abolishing him or her from the analysis Viewing the artist as cultural *producer* rather than cultural cr*eator* (Macherey 1978, Eagleton 1976, Bennett 1979, Wolff 1981) requires that artistic pro duction, rather than being conceived of as a form of practice radically different from other cultural practices, deriving from a unique creative impulse, should be regarded as being in principle a form of production in essentials no different from others The artist is a material agent acting in a particular time and place under social conditions and con straints he or she has not created, and located in relation to social contradictions which, by definition, cannot be individually controlled Art works are not something deriving from divine inspiration or explicable in terms of their producer's individual psychology This view fails to take into account the manner in which subjects are themselves consti tuted in society and, in part, mediate it

Art is primarily an historical rather than an aesthetic form (Wolff 1984) This means that to consider art is to consider a particular practice of labour structured by and in turn structuring particular sets of material, economic, political and ideological relationships As argued in Chapter 6, all production is located in and affected by social structures, such that all productive activity must be viewed as social labour arising in conjunction with multifarious structural conditions and constraints which do not just post limits but are also enabling Even individuality is constructed in socialization and the artist is always subject to societal preferences, ideas, values and aesthetic codes Audiences or consumers play an active or participator role in creating the finished product, in that they 'read', interpret and so transform it Whether or not these readings or interpret ations correspond to the producer's stated or actual intentions is irrelevant Works of art are not, then, self-contained and transcendent entities but products of specific historical practices on the part of specific social groups or individuals in given conditions There fore they embody the imprint of the ideas and values and the social conditions of existence of these groups

The ideas, beliefs and values expressed in artistic production may be considered as being ideological in the sense that they are always likely to be related in a systematic way to the social, political and economic structures in which the artist is situated the world view of any individual is not only, or even most importantly, to be related to his or her personal biographical development but is also a mediation of group consciousness What is stated in a work of art is the manner in which particular social groups actively construct social reality Styles, genres, rules of design and aesthetic codes are always already established and confront the artist and so delimit and constrain the modes in which ideas can be expressed in any particular material form Hence artistic practice is situated practice - the mediation of aesthetic codes, values and ideologies The artist forms the locus of the mediation of the ideational into the material, and so facilitates a particular way of expressing the nature of social constructs In other words, art is a practice which gives rise to a definite type of cognitive appropriation of reality It can be viewed as a practice of transformation working upon and transforming pre-given modes

of representation giving rise to distinctive social effects which can be subject to political manipulation

To summarize, art (or style) operates on a number of levels to create a tripartite vision of the social First, art can be held to present a vision of the habituated stocks of knowledge present in society and on which artists draw This reflection is never immediate but transformative   The collective social character of artistic production derives from the fact that social structures are, in part, homologous with the mental structures of individuals and groups, or that at the very least these are intelligible in relation to each other The individual work of art is a transformative reflection of social consciousness but is active in that it can help to constitute and structure social consciousness The reflection is never direct   The idea that art merely reflects social reality is inadequate as it suggests a purely passive mechanistic relationship between art and society as though the art work merely registers inertly what is going on in the external world If the image were to correspond wholly to reality it would cease to be an image at all No one-to-one relationship can therefore be held to exist between art and the social The relationship is always transformative and analogous to the manner in which a dramatic production 'reproduces' a written text While formally linked to the text, the dramatic production nevertheless creates something new which is not reducible to that text but transcends it

Secondly, art, by the transformative process which it creates, tends to restructure reality away from normal terms of reference which condition access to the social and is thus capable of producing new and unexpected visions of the social reality to which it relates   In this sense art can challenge existing and habituated social forms

Thirdly, artists are located in relation to social contradictions which, by definition, are not subject to individual control As ideology, art, by virtue of its own formal internal operations, can effect a further transformation and produce an imaginary solution to implacable social contradictions and through its materiality bolster up strategies by means of which the dominance of individuals and groups over others is achieved Ideas are not independent of the social and material conditions to which they relate and this relationship is not haphazard but structured and systematic The relative uniformity of ideas in any given society rests on a successful claim to the universality and naturalness of what is, in fact, a partial perspective structured by those in positions of authority who possess the power to define what is real Similarly, the relative uniformity of works of art may derive their content by virtue of producing an illusion of a reconciliation of the irreconcilable Art as a sign system and a signifying practice produces definite effects delimiting the manner in which people come to think about and approach social reality, actively playing a role in shaping social consciousness Art may thus speak for certain interest groups in society and towards the end of maintaining existing systems of power The ideological element in art provides a link or nexus between the social practices of which the art speaks and the maintenance of power through denying the existence of contradictory social practices

In order to arrive at a more specific and concrete consideration of the three levels in art which we have referred to above, we will consider some discussions of the social nature of art in the anthropological literature

Level 1 Art as a mediation of habituated forms of social consciousness

The majority of anthropological work on art styles has conceived of them as being primarily modes of expression at either an individual level or in terms of collectivities, but there has been much less concern than among archaeologists to tie style into a reductive adaptation and functional model of culture process Art styles are sometimes viewed as being simply beyond the realm of social practices, a medium through which the limits of everyday experience can be transcended and external values and truths expressed 'visual art, like music is a form of communication and is concerned especially with communicating the ineffable, that is truths, values, feelings, etc , for which the normal channels of communication such as speech are unavailable or inadequate' (Fagg 1973, p 155) This view has been criticized above and will not be considered further Munn (1966, p 936) regards art as a mechanism for ordering experience of the world and segmenting it into manageable categories Because this is the case, visual representations are culturally standardized and may serve to organize social experience in the fields of knowledge, the emotions, and the activities of the social group So, art helps to orientate people in relation to their social world and to come to terms with that world, often at an unconscious level Conkey (1978), following Gombrich (1960), regards style as the projection of similar thoughts, feelings, and orientational constructs of those taking part in the sociocultural context of production Thus a style embraces common encoding and decoding strategies 'a style like a culture or a climate of opinion sets up a horizon of expectation, a mental set, which registers deviations and modifications with exaggerated sensitivity In noticing relationships the mind registers tendencies' (Gombrich 1960, p 53) From this perspective, art can be viewed as a form of communication, a material manifestation of ideas held collectively and expressed individually by different members of a community It is thought in visual form, a concrete expression of abstract ideas serving the purpose of transmitting across and within groups concepts, values, and the interrelationships of those concepts and values fundamental to the society in question It may exist and operate because the principles that are expressed are not verbalized and possibly not able to be verbalized Munn (1973) has demonstrated how a particular visual form widely used in the iconography of the Walbiri, an aboriginal group in northern Australia, the circle-line figure,

> presents certain fundamental concepts of world order and thus provides an easily reproducible vehicle for their transmission over time   philosophical premises about the macroeconomic order are continuously brought into the sense experience of the individual Walbiri man through the agency of this iconic symbolism   (Munn 1973, pp 215-16)

Her specific interpretation is that the circle line figure provides an image of a 'world theory' built on the notion of 'coming out' or 'going in', male female oppositions and centre/periphery contrasts making up a spatial model of the relationship between the past and the present, the world of the ancestors and the world of the living It expresses multiple and convoluted referential social meanings about the way social reality is constructed and organized

While expression of habituated social meanings relating to the manner in which the social world is organized must be a necessary element in any attempt to understand the nature of art in society, the perspective remains insufficient as it stands because art works are still only very weakly conceptualized in terms of social practices and their social conditions of existence Sackett's view of isochrestic variation as habituated expression of ethnicity denies the need to conceptualized these conditions of existence Presupposed in the views discussed so far is some kind of consensual unity of values projected into the medium of art so that the meaning of art or style tends to be equated with consensual value orientation

Meaning is always culturally specific and negotiated No cross cultural connection can be held to exist between the meaning ranges for even the simplest graphic elements *(cf* the meanings associated with the circle in Walbiri art (Munn 1966, p 938) or in Abelam flat painting (Forge 1973, p 187)) Munn (1966) attempts to make a distinction between graphic elements with discontinuous meaning ranges and those with continuous meaning ranges The first term embraces those graphic attributes with multiple meanings such as a circle which can, for example, refer to a waterhole, fruit, fire, a yam or a conical hill The latter term indicates that in a set of possible meanings for a rep resentation of a tree only different species of trees would be included In a similar vein Humphrey (1971) uses the Saussurian concept of motivated and non-motivated signs in language Translating these concepts into the field of graphic design, a motivated visual sign would look like the thing it refers to whereas non-motivated signs could take any visual form Such work provides us with very limited insights as to how social meanings arc embedded in designs and glosses over many difficulties As Korn (1978, pp 165-6) points out, in societies in which feathers indicate virility and are worn by young men a feather design might be chosen to represent virile men and would, as such, be motivated even though it obviously does not resemble a man The nature of visual art as a transformative mediation of the social is too complicated to be adequately embraced fry such a simplistic analytical framework Similarly, whether any particular graphic element can be considered to have a discontinuous or continuous meaning range depends to a great extent on the level of conceptual abstraction one uses to interpret the meaning of graphic elements The problem of what social meanings are being referred to in designs is so complex and difficult that some anthropologists openly dismiss the question Fans, in his early work (Fans 1972), regards the only importance of Nuba body designs as the embellishment of healthy bodies, while Korn (1978) conducts a purely formal analysis of Abelam painting without reference to meaning

The search for the social meaning in design is unlikely to be fulfilled if we conduct an analysis with each element, design segment, or pattern standing for or representing one or a number of things As Forge has suggested, it is an ethnocentric assumption for us to think that the meaning of a work of art in an alien culture actually should be able to be verbalized, and to set up rigid dichotomies between representational and abstract features of design is misleading To be able to identify any single representation is not to find out what a work of art means An alternative position is that meaning resides in the relationship between the elements used to create a work of art

> in an art system such as Abelam flat painting, elements, in this case graphic
> elements modified by colour, c a m the meaning The meaning is not that a
> painting or carving is a picture or representation of anything in the natural or
> spirit world, rather it is *about* the relationship between things
>
> (Forge 1973, p 189, emphasis in original)

Gombrich (1979, p 151) has noted a conflict or tension between what he takes to be
the two major functions of perception the perception of *things* and the perception of
order Repetition can detract from, and isolation enhance, potential meaning A row of
eves in a series is no longer anybody's particular eves

> as soon as a shape is identified as a thing or a creature it becomes transformed
> No wonder non-figurative artists fight the tendency of looking for represen
> tational elements in their shapes or colours, for such projections can have the
> most disruptive effects on the dynamics of form Meaning can subvert order,
> just as order can subvert meaning   (ibid , p 158)

The majority of art in small-scale societies, it can be suggested, is to do with principles
of order and how order should be That is to say the art rather than representing particu
lar aspects of the social world and their symbolic referential qualities such as an associ-
ation between males, feathers and virility is to do with principles of social order,
principles which in the widest sense structure society and make it what it is These
principles become embedded in the art through the practical operation of the conscious-
ness of the artist in the process of the production of the art work To conclude, the
habituated forms of consciousness which art projects are principles of order, the struc-
turing principles upon which society operates This is the primary level of meaning in
the art irrespective of its particular execution in terms of representative or non-
representative designs

Level 2 Art and the restructuring of social reality

We have argued above that art by its very nature does not directly reflect or project
reality into a material form In the process of production that social reality to which art
relates becomes transformed The consciousness, which art transforms is a conscious-
ness, usually unable to be verbalized, of principles structuring the social order These
principles are transformed and related to each other through the particular graphic
medium employed They are inscribed within the frame of reference of a formal graphic
vocabulary In order to begin to understand what principles in society are given visual
form in any particular set of designs, it is necessary to adopt a form of structural and
formal analysis which goes beyond 'surface' compositional features to the underlying
principles imprinted in the work To undertake a formal structural analysis is not
sufficient on its own, because such an analysis attempts to seek an interpretation 'within'
the work which will supposedly reveal its secret and result in the discovery of the ration
ality underlying the work To be successful, such an analysis needs to be related to
within and between-group social relations and the manner in which other aspects of
material culture, in various social contexts, arc produced and structured

A number of anthropological studies clearly suggest that several basic structuring principles to do with social order underlie disparate aspects of material culture-patterning and also serve to orientate the form and nature of social relations The art provides a formal set of relations where by these principles are both distanced and revealed Adams (1973) has shown that the same principles sen e to structure the composition of designs on textiles, the spatial organization of village ground plans and in social practices such as marriage gift exchange and formal negotiations in a small-scale society, which arc presented in the formal order of a dyadic triadic set She suggests that the same principles used in the ordering of composition of textile designs run parallel to and are a formal transformation of the structuring principles orientating social interaction Hodder's ethnoarchaeological study amongst the Mesakin Nuba, Sudan, suggests that structuring principles underlying disparate aspects of material culture-patterning can be related to a common conceptual scheme whose principal elements are a concern with group purity and boundedness (Hodder 1982b, pp 125-84) Vastokas (1978) has interpreted the art and architecture of the North-west coast Indians as embodying in visual terms a tension between opposites or conflicting forces 'visual images, therefore, reveal themselves as mechanisms for the expression of these latent cultural-cognitive tensions the rivalry between one principle of order and another and a striving for integration and balance, never perfectly achieved' (Vastokas 1978, p 257) She goes on to relate this tension in the art to other aspects of North-west coast society - economically located between a subsistence and a surplus economy, in social organization between relative egalitarianism and rigid class structure, in religion between individualstic shamanism and organized priesthood Structural features of the art are thus seen as formal transformations of tensions and ambiguities in society as a whole

The studies mentioned above and others (Fernandez 1966, Levi-Strauss 1968, 1973, p 255, Layton 1981) have all lent support to the proposition advanced above that there is a link between principles of order in art and principles of the social order, a transformative formal link to be discovered in the art itself and also underlying social relationships

In order to locate principles of order we need to undertake a formal analysis of design configurations which is both detailed and can be carefully controlled We have already suggested above that meaning resides in order and in relationships between the elements and attributes making up a design We need to pay particular attention to combinations of attributes and their arrangement in space and may, in this manner, derive the rules or principles which underlie the graphic vocabulary Certain combinations of design attributes or elements may conflict with principles of order and should not, therefore, occur Others may only be produced in clearly specifiable sequences and constellations

Level 3 Art and the insertion of ideology
In the perspectives discussed so far in relation to Levels 1 and 2, insufficient attention has been given to the role of artistic style within the context of power relations in society, clashes of interest between individuals, and contradictions between different structur ing principles orientating and giving meaning to social production and action in the world

If we accept the position that style in art and other areas of material culture is about the relationship (in graphic transformation) between ordering principles of life rather than merely being a representation of important elements in the natural and social world, this leads us to some interesting possibilities Artists may manipulate designs and graphic elements to create associations between disparate aspects of social relationships and practices which may be contradictor Art and artistic style may be considered to be ideological when they are actively utilized in order to resolve contradictions which have their basis in social practices. If the principles on which society is based (principles which mediate social action and define social reality) exist in a contradictory relationship, these contradictions may be displaced or 'resolved' through the medium of graphic style

Levi-Strauss has stated that in the face of social contradictions between different principles of social order, the graphic art of Caduveo women 'is to be interpreted, and its mysterious appeal and seemingly gratuitous complexity to be explained, as the phantasm of a society ardently and insatiably seeking a means of expressing symbolically the institutions it might have, if its interests and superstitions did not stand in the way' (Levi-Strauss 1973, p 256) In other words the art expresses, embraces and suggests an ideal, the way things might be rather than the way they actually are 'The art is speaking not in a neutral voice but in terms of power strategies in the hierarchically organized Caduveo society with a hereditary aristocracy, an organization of social relations in terms of endogamous castes, with women subservient to men and exploitation also based upon age divisions (for other analyses of the role of artistic style in relation to social competition and power strategies, see Braithwaite 1982, Fans 1983, Miller 1982b; Welbourn 1984)

Expanding (his position the expression of an ideal through the medium of graphic arts, or indeed any morphological variation in stylistic attributes, may in clearly specified circumstances be considered to have the important ideological effect of mystifying or denying the contradictions between the structuring principles on which society is based. Oppositions and tensions are denied and society is presented in an imaginary fashion as a unified harmonious whole. The immediate ideological effect of a work of art may be to dissolve oppositional elements present in that art, themselves graphic transformations of contradictory structural principles in society, into a spontaneous whole so that what is in fact in contradiction is brought together through the graphic medium to form an inseparable unity as a form of signifying practice in which contradictions between structuring principles are denied to create on an imaginary plane a universe whose content and nature differ entirely from social reality but whose components are akin, recognizable, and therefore acceptable Contradictions in society can be simultaneously displaced into the realm of visual imagery and dispelled through this form of signifying practice. In this way graphic design can contribute to the reproduction of the social order So style can be actively manipulated within the context of within and between-group social strategies. This means that we must take a relational view of stylistic or artistic production in which it provides an object for subjects (I e , individuals in society) and in turn the subject actively relates to the object (artworks) As art is produced in a definite social context it may have the effect, within the context

of social strategies, of negotiating, mediating and transforming that context according to the interests of the individuals concerned

Style: a summary

Building on the discussions above, style in material culture will be defined as the mode of existence of particular attributes of material culture arranged in a series, displaying regularity, and having specifiable social conditions of existence in terms of the constraints placed upon discourse within a determinate set of social relations mediating and transforming the form in which those social relations are, alternatively, conceptualized, represented and misrepresented So style plays an active role in the relation of the subject to the object world Sty le can also only be adequately explained by relating it to its social conditions of production residing in relations of power and social strategies Style is a form of social rather than individual practice offering a triple vision of the world in terms of habituated forms of social consciousness, principles of structural order, and can be manipulated so that it has the ideological effect of misrepresenting and re-presenting strategies of social dominance

Style as ideology in southern Swedish middle neolithic ceramics

The data set used to investigate some aspects of the theoretical perspective put forward above consists of 70 completely restored or restorable vessels attributable to the southern Swedish middle neolithic funnel neck beaker (TRB) tradition, datable to between *area* 2600 by c and 2280-2140 by c (3370 BC - 2950/2750 BC) (Bakker, 1979, pp 142-5, Davidsen 1978, pp 170-1, Nielsen 1977, calibration after Clark 1975) The sherds of these vessels were discovered around and immediately outside the entrance to one megalithic tomb, Fjalkinge No 9, in the north-east of the southernmost province of Sweden, Scania (Figs 7 1,7 2) Fjalkinge No 9 was excavated by Hansen in 1927 (Hansen 1927) and the find material was published by Bagge and Kaelas (1950) In the chamber and passage of the tomb, disarticulated remains of around 20 individuals were discovered (Hansen 1938, p 25) but no osteological analyses were carried out Associated with these human remains were amber beads, a few bone implements, animal teeth and flint blades No pottery was discovered in the tomb chamber and only seven sherds in the passage Contrasting with the sparse finds of artifacts from inside the tomb was a huge accumulation of fragmentary ceramic material around and outside the passage entrance extending over 40m^2 These sherds were packed in a layer about 5 cm thick overlain by large stones and a 50 cm sterile sand layer and, according to Hansen, 'not a single bit [of pottery] had been disturbed by a plough' (Hansen 1927, p 2) Of the approximately 14,000 sherds recovered, a high proportion (62%) are decorated Bagge and Kaelas (1950, p 72) estimated that the original number of vessels, as represented by the sherd material, amounted to 1,256 It is unusual to find all the sherds belonging to the same vessel and impossible to fully reconstruct more than a relatively small number of the pots Bagge and Kaelas (ibid) put forward a four-phase relative chronology for the ceramics which will be adopted here Unfortunately the radiocarbon chronology at present available for the middle neolithic is too shaky to assess the relative duration of these temporal phases The vast majority of the ceramics are all datable to

phases II and III with a comparatively insignificant deposition taking place during the initial and final phases of the TRB Bagge and Kaelas were only able to securely date 260 (about 20%) of the estimated original total number of vessels For the purposes of this study it was essential to have more or less completely reconstructable vessels which could also be dated These criteria limited the sample size to 70 vessels or a 56% sample of the estimated total number of vessels recovered. All these pots are illustrated by Bagge and Kaelas (1950, Figs I-XIX) along with more incomplete reconstructions which were excluded from the analysis. Of these 70 vessels, ten can be assigned to the earliest phase of the TRB, 25 to phase II, 31 to phase III and 4 to phase IV. This numerical temporal distribution more or less mirrors differences in the rate of vessel deposition at the tomb through time, although phase I is over-represented. All the pots were studied in 1980 and examined again in 1984 in order to check the reconstructions of Bagge and Kaelas against the originals The resulting data set, although by no means ideal, was the best it was possible to obtain in the circumstances and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to extend the analysis to also consider material from other sites

Describing the designs
In the discussion which follows we will first present a series of analyses of the designs on these vessels and then go on to interpret the results in terms of the sociocultural context of the production and use of the pots. Fig 7.3 shows some representative examples of the pots from each of the temporal phases and Fig. 7.4 a number of distinct levels of
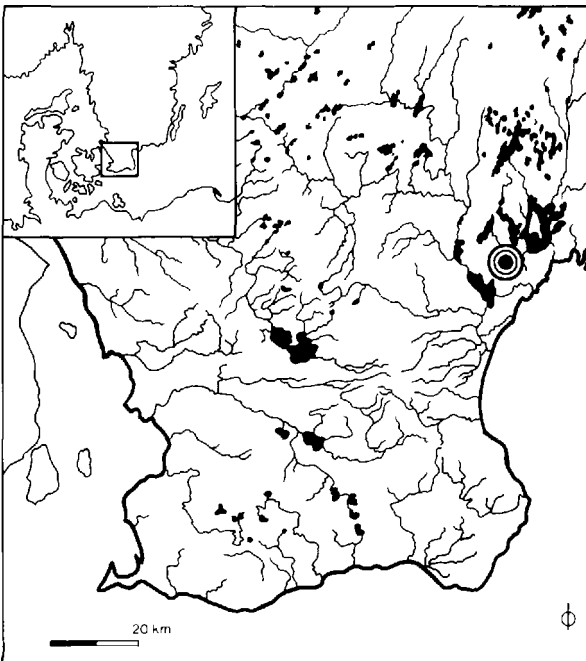

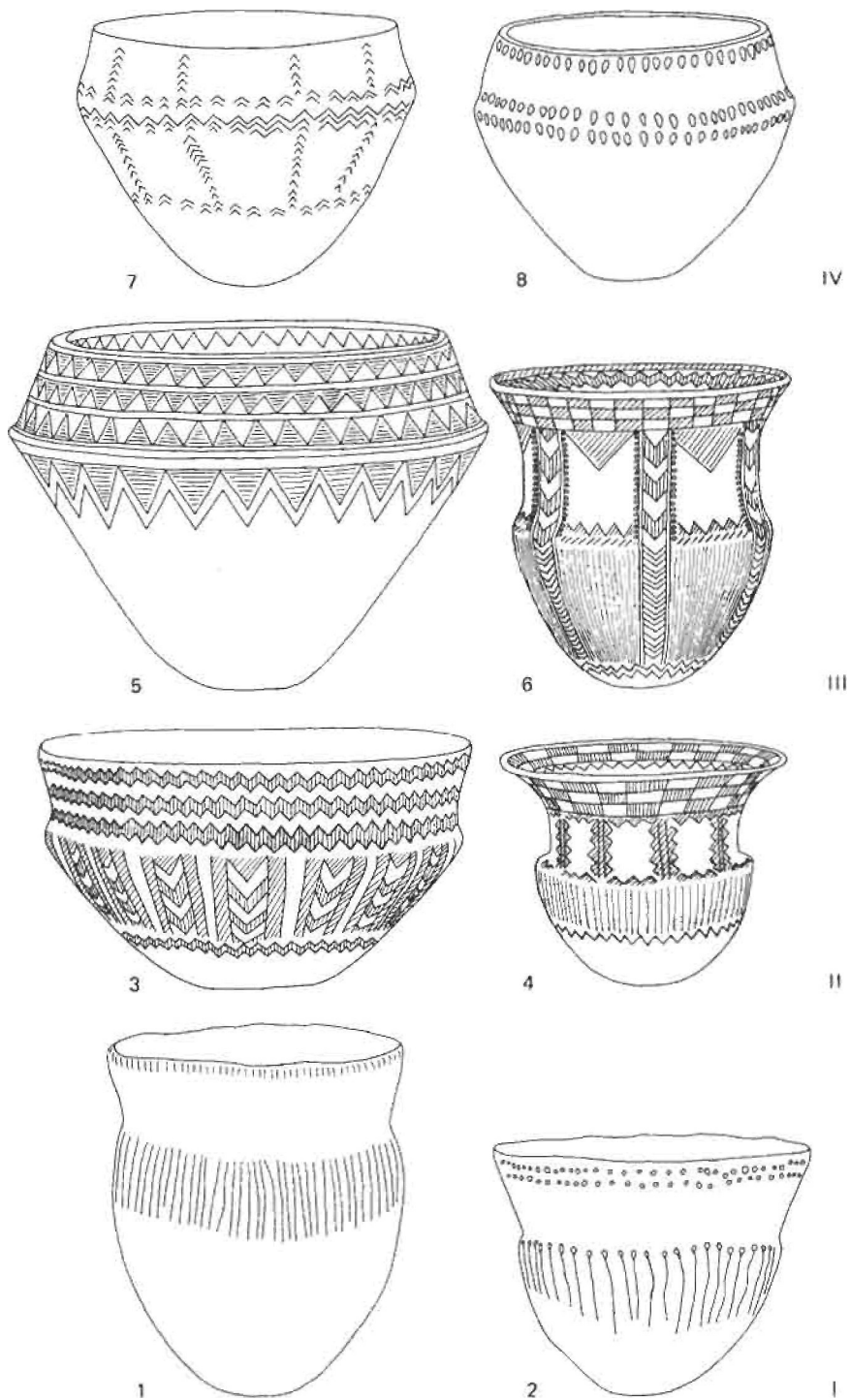*Fig 7 1* The location of the passage grave Fjalkinge No 9

Fig. 7.3 Pots from the four temporal phases at Fjälkinge No. 9.
Pots 1 And 2: funnel neck beakers
Pot 4: funnel neck brimmed beaker
Pots 3, 5, 7, 8: biconical bowls
Pot 6: cylinder neck brimmed beaker

a hierarchical classification system for a format analysis of the designs based on previous work on Swedish TRB ceramics (Tilley 1983, 198-1). At the most inclusive level, two attribute;; were recorded-whether individual motifs were bounded or unbounded. The distinction made here is between the closure or non-closure of any particular design. A bounded design is defined as having lines or boundaries on all sides with or without internal infill, e g., lozenges. By contrast an unbounded design serves to break up the continuous or empty space of the vessel surface without entirely enclosing any area of it, e.g., zig-zag lines. This is a basic distinction dependent on the formal properties by means of which the 'carrier' space of the originally undecorated vessel surface is broken up (for further discussion see Tilley 1984, p. 129). At level 2 of the classification system, ten primary hounded or unbounded forms were distinguished. These form the major elements utilized to create the overall design structure of the vessels analysed and may be combined, infilled or have secondary appended forms in some cases. For three of these primary forms a further level of division is shown (Fig. 7.4).

Establishing order in the designs
The sequence of designs in zones down the pots from the rim to the base was recorded at level 2 except for banded forms (Fig. 7.4: 13) and lines which were differentiated at level 3 (Fig. 7.4: 23; 24) in order to take account more fully of basic horizonial/vertical distinctions in the overall organization of the designs on the pots. The design occurring

*Fig 7.2 Th*e passage grave Fjalkinge No 9 (photo Karin Tilley)

in the top zone of the vessel on or immediately below the rim was coded as A The following design was then also coded as A if it was the same as the top design or B if it was different A series of alternative zones can thus be described in terms of alphabetical sequences, e g , ABCAD *(Fig 7 5)* In carrying out this type of analysis we are not interested in the particular empirical sequences of the various primary forms defined at levels 2 and 3, but in their structural relationships

Table 7 1 give the frequencies of 1 RB vessels possessing particular design sequences according to temporal periodization Looking more closely at these sequences, a number of generative principles may be singled out Using seven simple generative principles it is possible to construct 64 (about 90°/o; of the recorded sequences on the individual vessels Combining these principles is sufficient to generate the sequences on the remaining six vessels (Table 7 2) Rule 1 stipulates simple repetition of the same design on different areas of the vessel surface, rule 2 requires a contrast between two different designs, while rule 3 requires the sequential addition of one different design to another These are the three simplest principles and account for 41 of the vessels (58 6% of the total number) Rule 4 stipulates an additive sequence 'broken' by the repetition of the first design in the middle of the sequence Rules 5 and 6 are variants on rule 4 an additive sequence with a double 'break' created by utilizing the first design (rule 5) or an additive sequence with a 'break' created by repeating the second design before the end of the sequence (rule 6) Finally, rule 7 stipulates an additive sequence 'offset' by the repetition of the third design at the end of the sequence

All except one of the vessels from phase I can be generated using rule 3 One design is simply followed by another different design All but two of the vessels from phase II can be generated by using rules 3, 4 and 7 The pots from phase III with longer design sequences are considerably more complex with only rule 1 not being utilized, while for phase IV the designs on the vessels can be generated by stipulating rules 1 and 2 The overall impression to be gained from the analysis is one of developmental complexity in design generation from phases I to III with a simplification in phase IV In other words specific generative principles for design, while appropriate at one temporal phase, are no longer appropriate at another
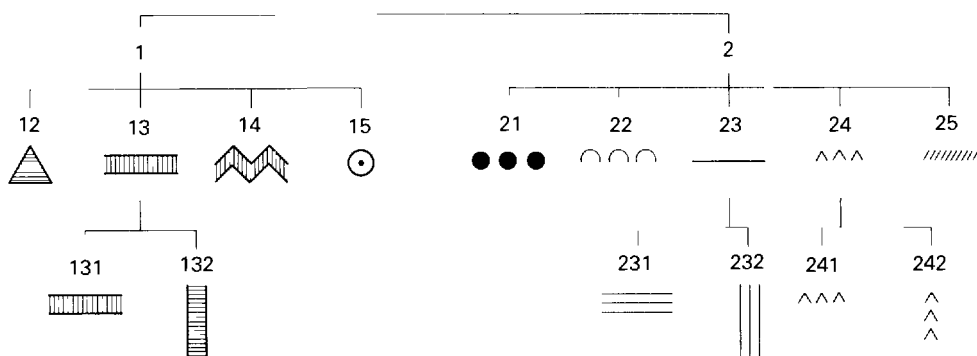

Fig 7.4 A hierarchical classification system for the designs on Swedish 1 RB ceramics initial classification levels only)

Another way of considering the generative structure of the level 2 design sequences is to reduce the primary forms distinguished at level 2 to two basic contrasted forms and then to investigate their interrelationship. We have already put forward such a division in the discussion above of bounded and unbounded forms. The sequence of bounded unbounded designs was coded from the rim to the base of all the vessels Table 7 3 gives the frequencies of the various sequences for the data set and Table 7 4 shows how the individual empirical sequences can be generated by a number of simple rules, alone or in combination Virtually all the individual design sequences on the pots can be generated using four rules All vessels from phases I and IV can be accounted for simply in terms of the repetition of unbounded designs (U') or by alternating bounded and unbounded designs (UB'/BU') while the principles required to generate design sequences during phases II and III are considerably more complex in form

The vessels from phases I and IV can be considered to be more or less equivalent being characterized by a predominantly unbounded design structure (Fig 7 6) either
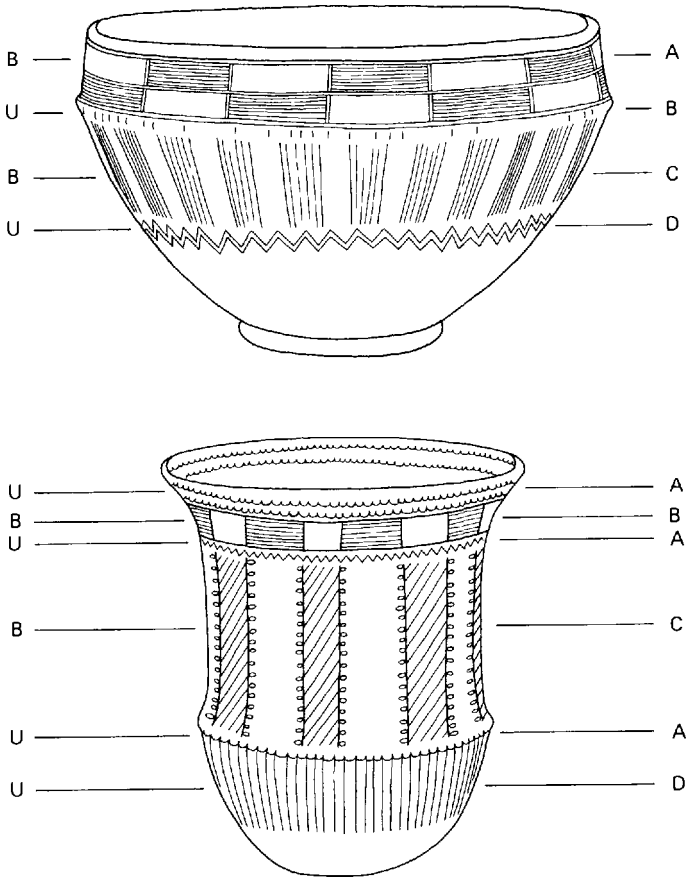

Fig 7 5 Design sequences on two pots from Fjalkinge No 9
(U unbounded design, B bounded design)

Table 7.1. *The frequency of alphabetically coded design sequences according to a four-phase temporal division of the TUB*

	Phase				
Sequence	I	II	III	IV	Total
A	1	—	—	—	1
AA	—	—	—	2	2
AAB	1	—	—	—	1
AABAB	—	1	—	—	1
AB	7	3	—	—	10
ABA	—	—	2	1	3
ABAACA	—	1	—	—	1
ABAB	—	—	—	1	1
ABAC	—	2	3	—	5
ABACAD	—	—	3	—	3
ABACADE	—	—	1	—	1
ABACBBA	—	—	1	—	1
ABACD	—	3	—	—	3
ABBAAB	—	—	1	—	1
ABC	—	3	8	—	11
ABCA	—	—	1	—	1
ABCB	—	1	—	—	1
ABCAD	—	1	—	—	1
ABCBD	—	—	2	—	2
ABCD	1	4	2	—	7
ABCDBE	—	—	1	—	1
ABCDC	—	1	2	—	3
ABCDE	—	3	2	—	5
ABCDEC	—	1	—	—	1
ABCDEF	—	1	1	—	2
ABCDEFC	—	—	1	—	1
Total	10	25	31	4	70

Table 7.2. *The frequency of vessels generated according to different design rules in relation to a four-phase temporal division of the TRB*

		Phase				
Rule	Example	I	II	III	IV	Total
1	AA	—	—	—	2	2
2	ABAB	—	—	2	2	4
3	ABCD	9	14	14	—	37
4	ABAC	—	6	3	—	9
4	ABACAD	—	—	3	—	3
6	ABCBD	—	—	3	—	3
7	ABCDC	—	3	3	—	6
Total		9	23	28	4	64
% of vessels		90	92	90	100	91

Fable 7 3   *The frequency of bounded and unbounded design sequences according to a four -phase periodization of the TRB*

Sequence	Phase				
	I	II	III	IV	Total
BB	—	1	—	—	1
BBB	—	1	2	—	3
BBBBB	—	—	3	—	3
BU	—	1	—	—	1
BUB	—	—	2	1	3
BUBU	—	1	2	—	3
BBU	—	2	3	—	5
BBUU	—	1	1	—	2
BBUUU	—	2	—	—	2
BBBUU	—	1	—	—	1
BBBUUU	—	—	1	—	1
BUBUU	—	2	1	—	3
BBUBB	—	—	1	—	1
BUBBUU	—	1	—	—	1
BUUBUU	—	—	1	—	1
BUBUBUUU	—	—	1	—	1
U	1	—	—	—	1
UU	5	2	—	2	9
UUU	1	—	—	—	1
UUUU	—	—	—	1	1
UUUUU	2	—	—	—	2
UB	—	—	3	—	3
UBU	1	1	3	—	5
UBUB	—	3	1	—	4
UBUBU	—	1	—	—	1
UUBUU	—	1	—	—	1
UBUUU	—	1	—	—	1
UBUUUU	—	1	—	—	1
UBUU	—	1	—	—	1
UBBUU	—	1	—	—	1
UBBBU	—	—	1	—	1
UBUBUU	—	—	1	—	1
UUUBUB	—	—	1	—	1
UBBBB	—	—	1	—	1
UBUBUB	—	—	1	—	1
UBUBUBB	—	—	1	—	1
Total	10	25	31	4	70

being generated by repetition of one or two primary forms or by additive sequences Through time there is an increasing stress on boundedness and the generative principles become more involuted no longer involving simple repetition or addition but instead the structured combination of unbounded and bounded forms in sequences of variable length with 'breaks' and 'offsets' added to a process of repetition or sequential addition of primary forms

Having arrived at this description of the nature of the design structure from a process of analysis 'within' the observed designs we need to go on to assign meaning to these changes in the structural order of the ceramic designs So far we have investigated the

Table 7 4 *The frequency of TRB vessels captured by various generative rules for? the combination of bounded and unbounded designs according to a four-phase temporal division of the TRB*

		Phase				
Rule	Example	I	II	III	IV	Total
U B	BBBBB	7	4	5	3	19
UB BU	UBUBLB	3	7	12	1	23
(UB)U (UB)B (BU)B (BU)U	UBUBUU	—	5	5	—	10
B U U (B	BBBUU	—	6	6	—	12
Total		10	22	28	4	64
% of vessels		100	88	90	100	91

L — unbounded design   B = bounded design   repeat *n* times   = or

formal limits of some aspects of the graphic vocabulary of TRB ceramic design Comparing and contrasting the curtailment or extension of graphic possibilities at any one temporal phase is illuminating since it leads us to ask why are some graphic possibilities exploited rather than others? Given those forms that do occur why are some used frequently as opposed to others[5]

Interpreting the meaning in the order

1 RB ceramic design is strikingly abstract in form It does not represent any thing that is immediately interpretable in the manner in which an oil painting may clearly depict people, landscapes, etc The very geometricity of the designs defies conventional interpretations in that there is no immediate reference point for 'translation', l e , whether am particular design such as a lozenge stands for or represents a specific feature of the natural or social world such as snakes or houses, women or men If the meaning resides in the order, as suggested in the first part of this chapter, we are forced to ask what meaning has order <• In order to reach an understanding of the meaning of the order in the ceramic designs the pottery must be related to its context of production and use

The social location of this ceramic art at and around the entrance to the tomb has important implications The pottery was almost certainly specifically produced for use in a ritual context as contemporary settlement ceramics contrast in the use of a very restricted number of primary forms and their design structure is almost always sequential and unbounded (Tilley 1983) The character of the deposition of the pots around the entrance to the tomb has theatrical connotations This pottery was very obviously displayed for the benefit of the Irving and their relationship to the dead Now in small-scale 'traditional' societies in which artistic production is highly ritualized, little room is left for individual expression or innovation in form or the introduction of new or radical content, hence the potential effectiveness of art to challenge the social order is severely restricted The art tends to legitimate a particular and partial social con struction of reality serving the interests of particular interest groups Another feature of the TRB pottery which should not go unnoticed is not only its geometricity but its

strikingly constrained character - the graphic vocabulary is very restricted and the similarities between individual pots in terms of their overall design structure and appearance, or aesthetic effect, are much greater than their differences Temporally, the same primary forms are combined, recombined and manipulated in various sequences over a period of about 600 absolute years. In this sense the designs clearly transcend time whilst also being transformed through time While the structural sequences change through time, that which is being structured - the primary forms at levels 2 and 3 - remains the same A limited number of graphic elements are being structured and restructured through time with this structuring reaching a peak of complexity during phase III with a drastic simplification in phase IV. The disarticulated human remains in the tomb suggest that the individual human being is being subsumed in a cultural order (Shanks and Tilley 1982) Similarly, individual expression in the art is subsumed beneath a formal geometric order.

The structural order in the ceramic designs occurs in the dramatic ritual context of the deposition of the pots outside the entrance to the tomb. It would seem appropriate to develop a dramaturgical conception of the space-time axes structuring and being structured by patterns of interaction of the social actors using the tomb The area outside the tomb entrance may be considered to be a structured ritual space and we may conceive of this space in terms of its relational qualities, areas to the left or right of the passage entrance or directly in front of it, and areas at the front or close to the tomb or at the back farthest away from the tomb. The space in front of the tomb is thus conceived as a relational contextualized space for action sequences involving pottery deposition - a stage for conduct.

Hansen excavated an area of 71 m^2 outside Fjalkinge No 9 and the spatial distribution of the sherd material was recorded by 1 m^2 excavation units for a 47 m^2 area Material from a further 24 m^2 area was lumped together (Fig. 7.7) The spatial distribution of the sherds for the individual excavation units is shown in Fig 7.8. Fig. 7.9 shows,
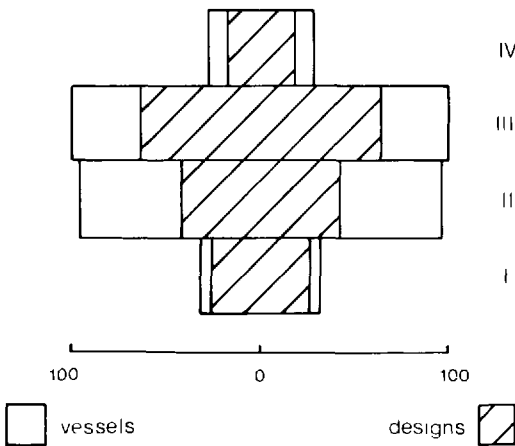
big 7 6 The percentage of vessels possessing bounded designs and the percentage of bounded designs on vessels for the four temporal phases at Fjalkinge No 9

respectively, the total aggregated frequency of sherds (excluding Hansen's area 31) across the entire excavated area by 1 in bands from left to right in relation to the passage entrance and from the metre band immediately in front of the passage entrance to the limits of the excavated area farthest away from the tomb entrance *(cf* Figs 7 7 and 7 9) From these diagrams, even when taking into account that Fig 7 9 is partially influenced by the extent of the excavated area, it is evident that there is a strongly asymmetrical distribution of sherds in relation to the passage entrance Considerably more sherds are to the right of the entrance than to the left and sherd frequency tends to increase with distance from the passage entrance until after six metres they start to decline Such a spatial distribution of sherds is characteristic also of other tombs in
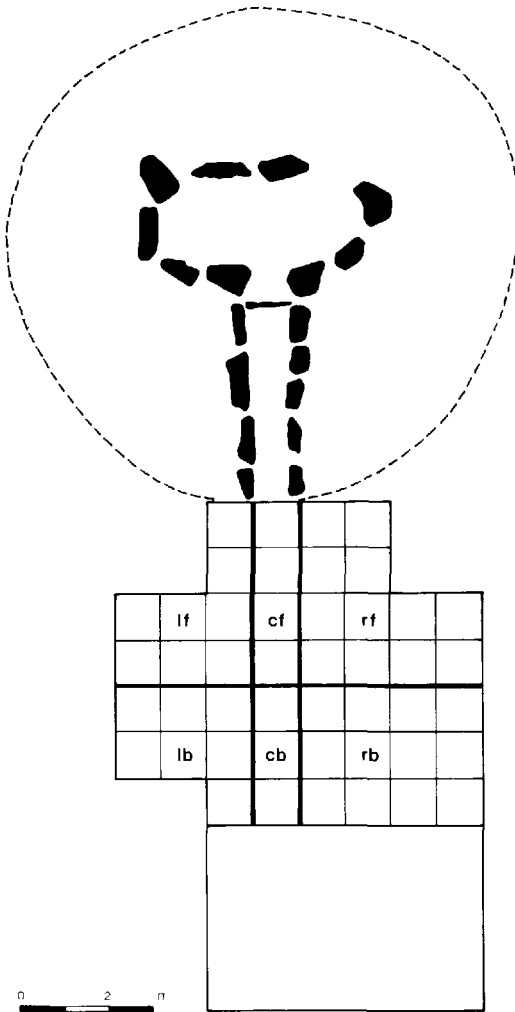

Fig " Plan of Fjalkinge No 9 showing the excavated area and the six analytical space regions
If left back space   cb centre back space   rf right back space
lb left back space   cb centre back space   rb right back space

Scania (Tilley 1983, 1984, p   127) The sherds belonging to individual vessels are in most cases scattered over most or a large part of the excavated area No complete vessels were recovered, either complete or crushed, *in situ* In view of the total lack of plough disturbance this strongly suggests deliberate vessel crushing which has been documented at other tombs in Scania (e g , Stromberg 1971, p 3⁵5 l_y The assumption was made that the excavation square or squares possessing the largest number of sherds from an individual vessel provides an indication of its original position or site of destruc-tion The excavated area outside the entrance to the tomb was divided into six *analytical spate regions (*Fig 7 7) These were labelled using the terms left, centre, right and front and back according to their position in relation to the passage entrance Each of the 70 pots used in the analysis presented above were then assigned to one of these analytical space regions after a study of the sherd distributions Fig 7 10 shows the relative fre-quencies of the vessels occupying these areas through time In the earliest phase, the majority of the vessels are located in right front and back space In phases II and III right back space is the major area for deposition but this has also spread into all other areas with particular emphasis on centre space in phase II and back space in phase III All the
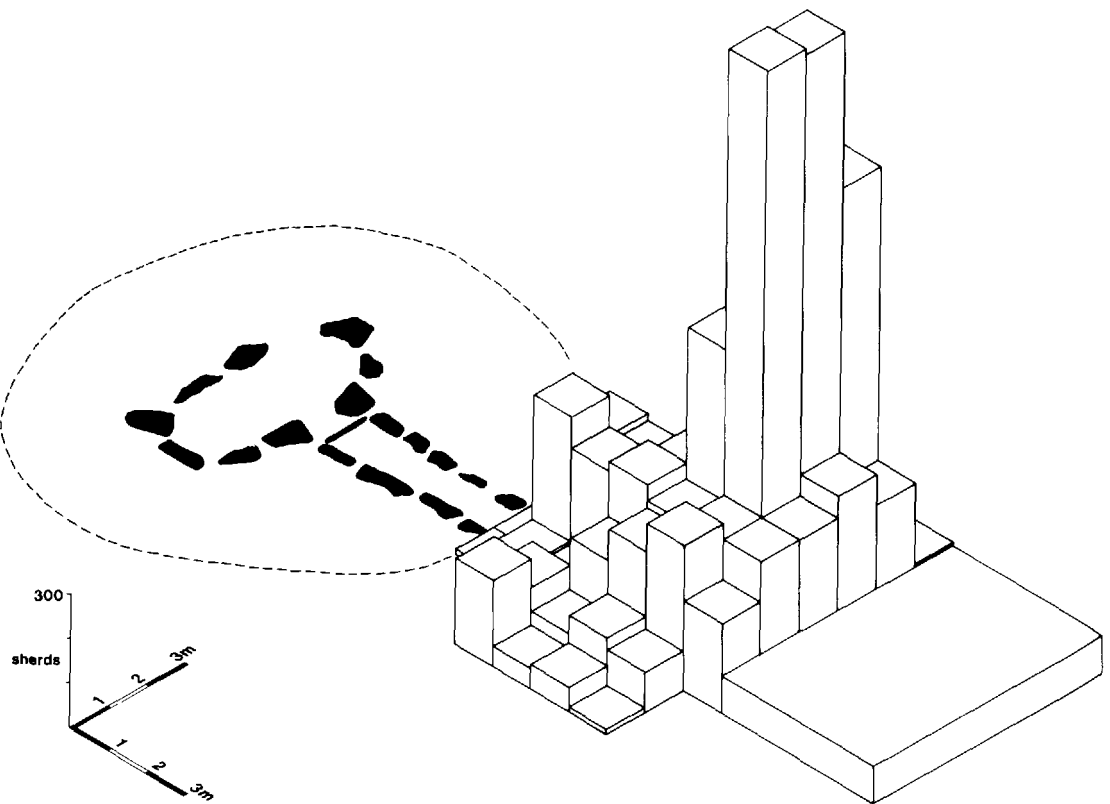

big " 8 The distribution of potsherds at the entrance to Fjalkinge No 9

vessels are confined to right back space in phase IV. Generalizing, there appears to be a trend towards a shift of deposition into back space. Left space is only utilized during phases II and III when vessel deposition reaches a peak and the generative rules governing design are most complex, and it is only during phase II that centre front space appears to have been important. Now these changes in time-space axes for the deposition of the pots in relation to the tomb entrance with a trend towards greater complexity can be viewed as a transformation or rearticulation of the complexity of the generative rules used to structure sequences of designs on the pots. The stress on unbounded design forms in phase I occurs at the same time as a stress on the utilization of right space (this also occurs in phase IV). In phases II and III, characterized by convoluted sequences of unbounded and bounded designs with 'breaks' and 'offsets' in the
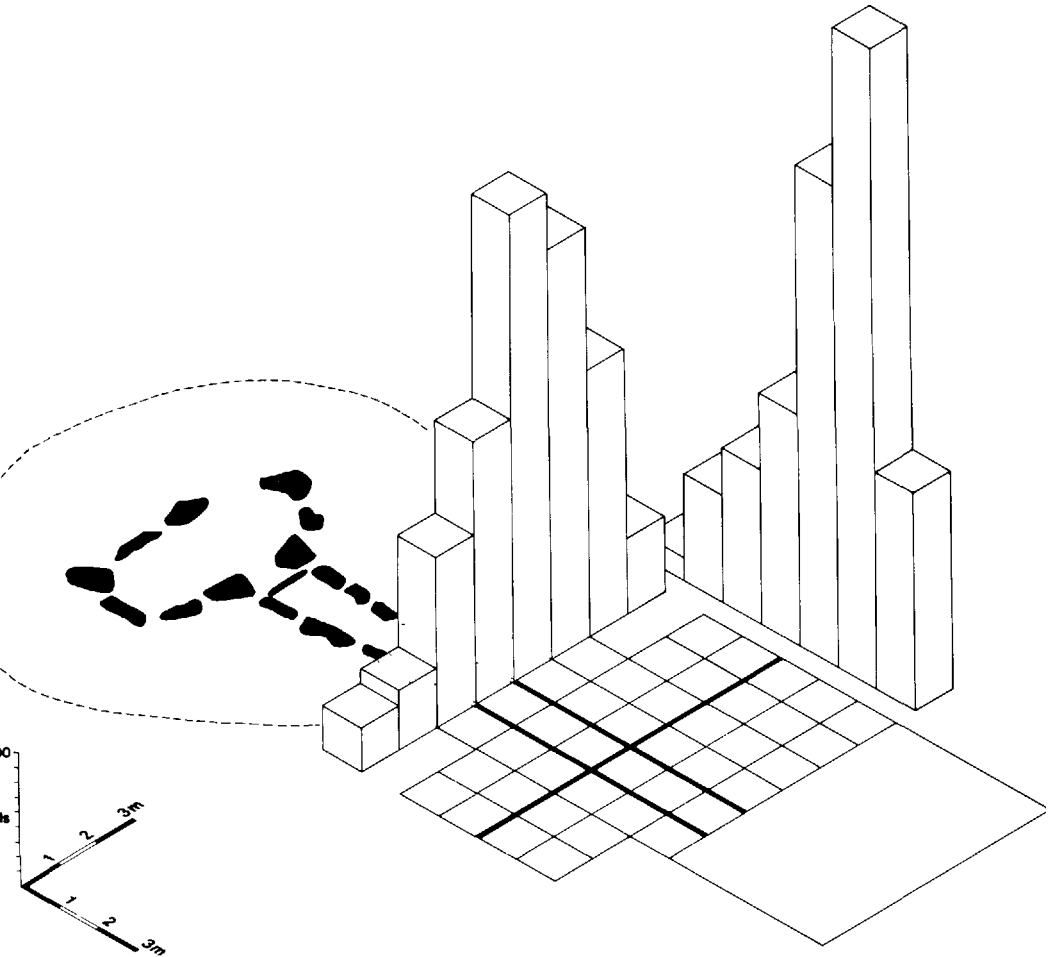

Fig 7 9 The number of potsherds for 1 m bands right to left and front to back at the entrance to Fjalkinge No 9 (enure frequencies combined into the 1 m bands)

structuring of the sequences, the use of space outside the tomb for vessel deposition and destruction becomes similarly complex. The contention being made here is that the *graphic order* and the *spatial order* are linked together on a temporal axis. Further confirmation of this can be found on a micro scale - in certain of the infill types utilized for the four primary bounded forms (Fig. 7.4: 11-14). Fig. 7.11 shows the frequencies of oblique lines, left to right, top to bottom, and right to left, top to bottom, for each of the primary bounded forms. Oblique infill: right to left, top to bottom, clearly predominates in all cases and irrespective of the particular primary bounded form in which it occurs. There is no left to right, top to bottom symmetry in the utilization of oblique infill for the primary bounded forms. Instead there is a preponderance of right to left sloping forms. This, right/left distinction is a graphic translation of the overall distribution of the sherds and the individual pots in relation to the passage entrance of the tomb.

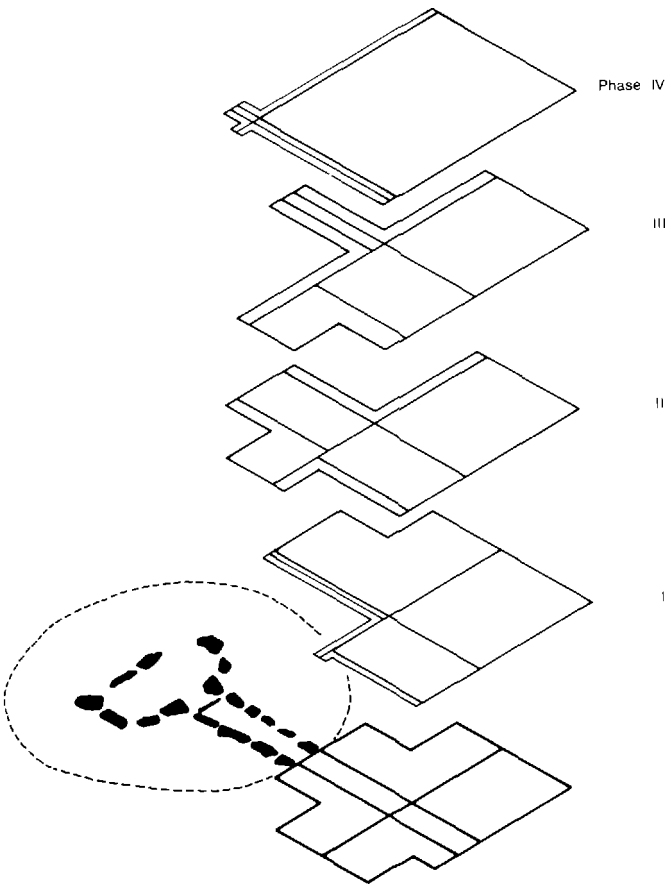Following from this, we put forward the proposition that the distinction between

Fig 7 10 The changing relative frequencies of vessels found in the analytical space regions outside Fjalkinge No 9 (cf Fig 7 7) The area -vanes with the percentage of pots or each phase found in the excavated analytical space regions

bounded and unbounded primary forms can be linked with the dramaturgical utiliz-
ation of space outside the tomb in terms of left and right In turn, these structured
oppositions can be linked with other principles structuring social practice in the ritual
context of the tomb

The deposition of the ceramics outside the passage entrance suggests that the entrance
to the tomb, as one might expect, had a special symbolic importance and it would seem
to symbolize an inner outer distinction, an opposition between the world of the living
outside the tomb and the interior world of death, the ancestors, and the spiritual
cosmos It is significant that cereal impressions occur in relatively large quantities in the
sherds of the pots deposited at the tombs despite the fact that these pots were not used
in an everyday domestic context This suggests an intimate connection between grain
and the pottery, and the vessels very possibly contained grain and other products So,
there appears to be an association being made in the ritual stage of the tomb entrance
between human bones disarticulated and deposited inside, death, pottery and the
ancestors in relation to life, grain and fertility The deposition and destruction of the
ceramics is thus linked with the fertility of grain, disarticulation of bones, hie, death and
the continuance of the social order A number of conceptual and relationally interlinked
dualities are being mediated at the tomb

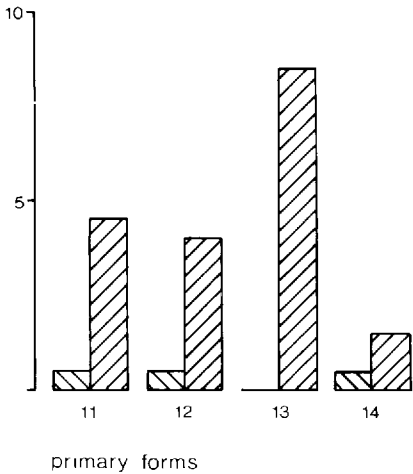| living	ancestors
life	death
outer	inner
right	left
boundedness	unboundedness
production	destruction
fertility	barrenness
individual	cosmos

primary forms

Fig   11 the frequence of oblique infill for each of the primary bounded forms of the classification system
(c *I* Fig 7 4)

where the reproduction of the social order is presented as being dependent on these oppositional elements as structuring principles of the overall social totality

We have no direct access with regard to the nature of social relations existing during the TRB and rejecting empathy (see Chapter 1) we are forced to use the anthropological literature for an anticipatory understanding of the past social totality we are investigating this is not a question of taking one present dav small scale society and then overlaying it on the archaeological record as theoretically constituted through the formulation of conceptual objects and the creation of conceptual links between them (see Chapter 5 , the process we have been engaged in up to this point It is rather a question of using some generalized insights and working within the limits of a dialectically conceived hermeneutic circle (see pp 104—13)

The most suitable model would seem to be a lineage' type social system with a group of people associated with a tomb and using it in ritual activities in which asymmetrical within group and between group power relations are played out represented and misrepresented Each individual social unit is not structurally independent but linked to others through feasting, marriage, exchange and other practices Such societies are very far from a Utopian egalitarianism, but are characterized by socially exploitative practices with a hierarchical set of social relations based on age and or sex (Tilley 1984)

elsewhere we have argued at length (Shanks and Tilley 1982, Tilley 1984) that an emphasis on boundedness serves to express an us them, insider outsider dichotomy between different social groups Through time, at the Fjalkinge tomb, we have seen that there is an increasing stress on boundedness in ceramic design, or spatial and social closure, which directly contradicts another principle expressing unboundedness or non-closure and that such a distinction is also correlated in terms of right/left, inside outside, etc

In order to maintain internal social cohesion or to reproduce a social order with definite conflicts of interests between individuals and groups, an us them distinction is a cogent strategy since it lends to direct antagonisms and social conflicts of interest outside the local group However, since individual social groups are not self sufficient or autonomous socially independent units, an expression of closure conflicts with and contradicts an expression of non closure or social interdependency The generative principles governing the sequences of bounded and unbounded primary design forms on the pots deposited outside the tomb during phases II and 111 can be seen as an attempt to resolve on an imaginary (because graphically displaced) plane the contradiction entailed by an assertion of social boundedness and non-boundedness at the same time The denial of the contradiction between these structural principles serves the interests of those who benefit from the reproduction of the social order rather than Us transformation The style becomes a material form of ideology attempting to transform the relationship between oppositional elements into a spontaneous whole with the overall aesthetic effect of unity rather than opposition The particular manner in which design forms are structurally conjoined is thus used to resolve contradictions which have their basis in social practices the formal structured sequences of designs form on an imaginary basis an inseparable unity as signifying practice in which oppositions between structural principles orientating the social construction of reality become

'resolved' Increasing temporal stress on boundedness necessitates greater generative complexity in the manner in which social closure and non-closure are tied together This is mediated through the utilization of ritual space outside the tomb

Summary

In the theoretical perspective advanced for an understanding of style, or art, we noted three levels in which style or art relates to social reality To recapitulate- style displays

- *(i)* a mediation of habituated forms of social consciousness,
- (11) a restructuring of social reality in material form,
- (in) an insertion of ideology at specific historical moments.

The brief analysis of TRB ceramic design has attempted to work through these ideas in practice, through a process of working conceptually on theoretical objects (e.g., boundedness) and establishing links between these theoretical objects Generative principles producing order in the design sequences were located by means of formal analyses going 'beneath' the empirical sequences of individual design motifs (lower-order theoretical objects) Aspects of the formal ordering of design were then related to the sociocultural context of the deposition of the pottery Embracing a dramaturgical conception of the tomb setting as stage, a linkage was suggested between principles structuring the graphic order of the ceramic designs, the spatial ordering of their deposition at the tomb and changes in this ordering through time, and principles of the social order We attempted to show that the graphic, spatial and symbolic/social orders can be conceptualized as partial transformations of each other. Finally, the interpretation considered the ideological import of the ceramic designs and suggested that they played a role in the maintenance and reproduction of the social order.