

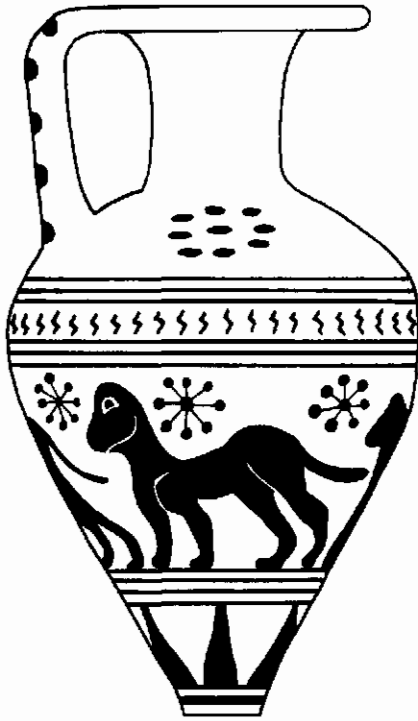
PERFUME AND VIOLENCE

Impressions of some aryballoi (perfume jars) from archaic Korinth²²

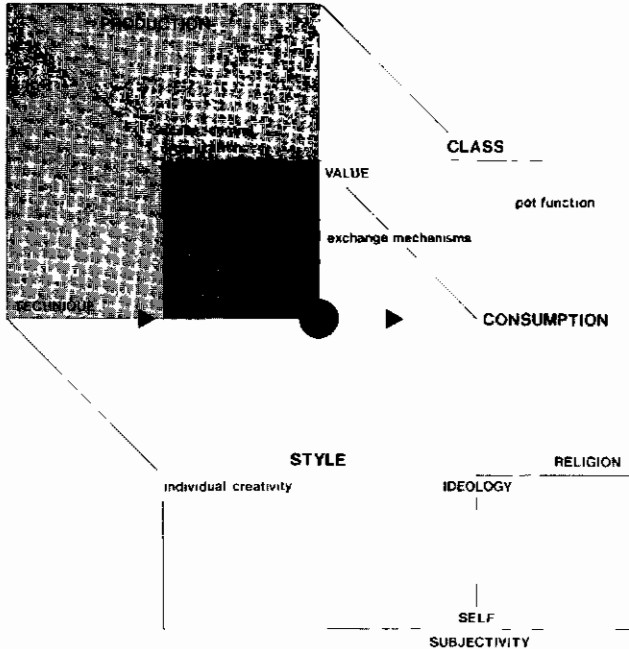
Some of the perfume jars come from Perachora, a sanctuary of Korinth. Dedications to goddess Hera Limenaia, with cups, wine ewers, boxes; some were dedicated elsewhere. The Korinthian Gulf opens blue to the west. Many more were carried to new Greek settlements in Sicily and Italy to turn up in graves. Tiny jars, to be held easily in the palm of a hand or between finger and thumb. A few dozen stowed in an aristocrat's ship. A ship? Well perhaps fifty oared. Aristocrats? Sons, perhaps not yet with their inheritance which would mainly be land. Setting out to travel. The pots were popular in the west. A few potters produced the figured jars crammed with animals, people, stylized flowers (most were still abstractly patterned with many lines), and sometimes still working perhaps on a seasonal basis. In the 'city' of Korinth, though it still looked more like a collection of villages. You wouldn't have seen these pots fifty years earlier. Things were changing. People knew it.

Early Greek history abounds in grand stories. The birth of political man from a dark age. The emergence of western rationalism, of the western tradition of representational art. A classical apogee; inspirational and seminal art, thought and literature. Stories also of economic empires: Korinthians from the seventh century BC dominating the western Mediterranean with their manufactures, to be ousted by the Athenians. These perfume jars and wine jugs have been seen to fit in these narratives, key pieces in transmitting oriental ideas to western art, the beginning of Korinth's commercial success. Such narratives, many the legacy of nineteenth-century fantasies of classical Greek excellence, are tired. They are being challenged.

Where might I start with these aryballoi? There are the syntheses which gather the pots to compare, contrast and establish types and stages of development. There are the stylistic analyses which attempt to attribute pots and fragments to individual artist hands: the 'Macmillan' painter or 'Boston' painter (named after former owner of a particular pot, or museum), 'Head-in-air' painter (after the look of the animals),



ARCHAIC ECONOMY



the Cumae group (after the main findspot). Comment on these gatherings includes conventional art history, describing and appreciating the sequence of stylistic change and influence. Such is the traditional work of Classical archaeology.

I might take a more progressive line and follow the methodology and theory of processual or post-processual archaeology. Many pots occur in graves. I might attempt a mortuary analysis. This would involve establishing patterning in the cemeteries (certain pots being regularly associated with certain others on the basis of type, style, positioning relative to body for example, and with particular individuals). Computer-based statistical analysis of the many variables would probably be used. The patterning discovered in the cemeteries would then be correlated with 'society' on the assumption that the treatment of the dead is related to the way people organize society (social hierarchy, for example, being mirrored in the particular forms of burial). I could alternatively focus on the pot designs themselves and attempt to identify the function of their style (in expressing a social role or persona).

A more 'post-processual' approach might specify the pots as elements of the society's 'ideology', the way it represents its social reality to itself and in a way which disguises social inequalities or exploitations. I would identify the 'semiotic structure' of the pots using a formal analysis (often quantified) of their designs. This would mean identifying key features of the grammar or structure of the designs (contrasts for example between bounded and open designs, left and right, or symmetrical patterning, or order to pattern sequences). Such structuring would be argued as being located within particular social relations of domination and subordination.

Here I begin not with methodology and a theory (of material culture and its place in society), but with a map. A production map of a network of connections which relate the character, style, production and consumption of these pots - their empirical occurrence.

The pot itself is the product of technique which involves questions of the possibility of individual creative input into the design, which in turn begs the question of the control and organization of production. Questions of how production was scaled according to perceived demand, questions of patronage and information flow, as well as more practical issues of workshop organization and ownership. (It is assumed that it is meaningful to identify individual artist styles, but this assumption implies much about the whole ethos of material production and so should be carefully examined.) The style of the pot may be interrogated, from creativity of design through its iconography to its referencing of structures of social relationships - ideology. This latter involves considering the occurrence of particular designs within their apparent location of consumption as accessories to death and worship. The use of

may take wine mixed for the cup Aristocratic, symbol of the *agon* (the contest) and the *symposion* (drinking party), and charged with magical meaning On other pots robed figures stand apparently in judgement, overlooking contests

Looking at these images perhaps they oiled their bodies, floral perfume after the *agon* Perfumes were also aphrodisiac, of seduction Or of death placed in a grave in Korinthian Syracuse Scent of death, sacrificial spices carried on smoke to divinities

All this is antinomial to the world of marriage In the poems of Hesiod, Pandora, the first woman, broke the Utopian prehistory of men With her arrival came sexual reproduction and marriage, agriculture and sacrifice None of these appear on the pots

The swordsman fights a centaur Wild and drunken, these were enemies of order and the polis Creatures of violence Fitting enemies for the hero And these composite creatures were part of an old prehistoric order, at least according to philosopher Empedokles who spoke of three stages in the emergence of animals At first animals and plants were disassembled in component bits and pieces Then the parts came together incongruously in strange jumbled forms Only in the third stage of evolution did animals emerge in their whole and natural forms The swordsman fights this creature which is doubly male, and horses were the most sexual of beasts for these Greeks Fighting then a negation of marriage and ordered reproductive sexuality

Another aryballos monsters face a soldier who carries an eagle shield A big cat looks at us

Monstrosity is the erasure of difference in the mixing of different parts This is what all the monsters are on the pots - bits and pieces, heads, bodies, limbs, wings recombined So in one way the monsters are all equivalent, man\ variations on sphinx, siren, centaur, griffon, chimaera Loss of difference is intimately related to violence in that order and peace depend on difference It is equilibrium which can lead to violence as an attempt to establish a preponderance of one over another, good over evil, a boundary between pure and impure Justice is an imbalance, winners and losers

The historical moment of the pots *dike* (justice), order, its administration and codification, are a focus of a seventh-century crisis in many archaic city-states, including Korinth

We can define ourselves through animals Lions are pre-eminently the animal mirror of the hero for Homer This lion looks at us The look of animals may enter into definitions of the self The lion does not attack the soldier but looks at us It is different, not a person, but through the look, the meeting of gazes, similar We too are lions, like the soldier, individuals who attack and are opposed to the (peasant) herd The look of this lion other confirms our self-coherence, and here draws us into the

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The Macmillan aryballos (reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)

integration fears disruption, break-up. In the fighting formation the armoured soldier's torso has a closer functional connection to the torso of his neighbour than to his own helmeted head or greaved calf. The formation forms new, centred bodies, and provides identity. His armour and fighting equipment hold him together but in the violence of war the soldier risks death. Death does not oppose life (its excess, luxury and transgression are part of the life of the lord). Death is opposed to the consciousness of life which is cultured, life-style, and which is a negation of the animal. Animals are animated, complex, various, like but unlike man, changeable, unpredictable. The fighting man is opposed to this complex multiplicity which overflows the conceptual boundaries meant to contain it. The soldier fights an internal war, engaging those animal forces which threaten to turn his unified body back into a disorganized jumble of flesh, hair, skin, limbs. We have seen the new fighting man, integrated, synthesized amalgam of parts, subduing monsters, forces threatening and fearful in their disorganized jumble of bits and pieces, creatures of old. And the animal friezes on the aryballo and particularly on the later larger vessels stylize and deanimate their animals, lined up in formal sequence. But the soldier may recognize himself in the lion, and may attach an eagle to his shield. Violence allows the soldier to find identity with his bestial interior while avoiding being devoured by it. War animates the dead within him. The fighting man is both hunter and hunted, finding the identity of his self in hunting and fighting the other.

Such aesthetics of war is far removed from the world of work and is a repudiation of the everyday. This is the way the new style (proto-Korinthian as archaeologists call it) began at the end of the eighth century BC. With symbols of the exotic, motifs from the east. Lines of stylized herons on severe geometric cups become strutting cocks. Zig-zag friezes become fabulous lotus and palmette, elaborated into fantastic floral garlands on shoulders of aryballo.

The exotic, flowers, perfumes, heroes, masculinities, war and violence, contests, monsters, hunts, animals. Popular particularly in the new states of the west, presented with the dead or with divinities. Images of the limits of culture, warrior self and the animal, death and divinity, mortal and hero, masculinity and the female.

Perfumed oil and the massage of style. Style wars. Is that what these vessels are about? Images acquired to express social meanings deemed significant, emulating an aristocratic ethos? Visible representations of ideal aspirations? The presencing of style - bringing forward key aspects of imagined class ideologies, what it was to belong to a particular section of the community? To place an aryballo in a grave.

Interpretation of style leads back into the map of production, particularly to questions of social strategy, of social definition and opposition

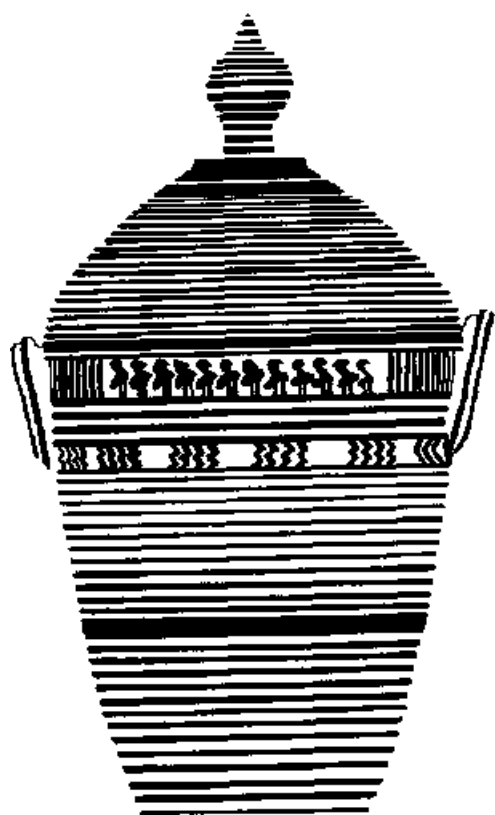
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A floral garland from the shoulder of an aryballos

and conflict (through styles). To questions of why such style appeared when it did in the eighth and seventh centuries, its historical moment.

Each pot, in its imagery and through reflection on its use and where it was found, leads off into spirals of associations, like dream-work. This is that aspect of style which is a reworking, remodelling, transformation of ideas, codes and imagery already known or familiar. And like dream-work the style of the aryballoi is not a representation of meanings which can be exhaustively expressed verbally, either by the Korinthians or by me. Style *requires* interpretation, the interpretive act of Korinthian, colonist in Italy, or contemporary archaeologist. This cannot be separated from the pots and their representations. Just as an understanding of the aryballoi requires their relating to aspects of the productive map I have illustrated - the general economy of the production of these pots.

The figurative designs on the pots represent animals and people. What is the significance of this? What is the nature of the worlds of meanings signified on the pots? What do the designs represent? Are they a realistic portrayal of social relationships in the seventh century? Do they represent what was going on in the mind of the potter-painter? Are they illustrations of myths and legends? Are they expressions of class ideologies - an aristocratic ethos perhaps? I would argue that understanding the design of these pots and following the spirals of association, transformations through their imagery and contexts, would deny any easy separation of pots from economic relations from art from class. Given the insertion of the pots within a network of productive relations, it is not enough to conceive of the figured designs as representing or illustrating something else such as archaic Korinthian society, or a change in ways of fighting, or legends and myths. Nor can they be simply understood as a relay carrying a message from potter to consumer, or from archaic potter to contemporary archaeologist. Such views treat the pots as secondary representation of something more primary or material, or real. Instead, the design of these pots necessarily involves their material location within the work of potter, acts of exchange and consumption, rituals of death and dedication. The design of the pots is a material part of what they may be showing us. Archaic Korinthian society, ideologies, aspirations of potter or of citizen, are not experienced now or then directly and in themselves (what would their reality be?). They appear sphinx-like in the riddles of the object, its design.

