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REFLECTED GLORY:
POTTERY AND PRECIOUS METAL IN CLASSICAL GREECE

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REFLECTED GLORY: POTTERY AND PRECIOUS METAL IN CLASSICAL GREECE

by David W. J. Gill and Michael Vickers

During the past few years we have questioned the role of painted pottery in ancient Greek commercial, social and artistic life, and have suggested that both the form and decoration of Greek ceramics owe much to work in precious metal[1]. Our challenge to some modern perceptions of classical Greece seems occasionally to have touched a raw nerve, but while some reactions have been considered and thoughtful[2], even favourable[3], others are written with a candour unusual in scholarly discourse[4].

Sources of illustrations: Fig. 1: After K. Gorbunova, Kultura e iskusstvo antichnogo mira (1971) fig. 5. — Fig. 2: Photo Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. — Fig. 3: After B. Piotrovsky – L. Galinina – N. Grach, Scythian Art (1986) fig. 117. — Figs. 4. 5: Photos M. Vickers.

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In addition to the normal abbreviations of the DAI according to AA 1985, 757ff., and Archäologische Bibliographie, the following abbreviations have been used:

Beard, Signed = M. Beard, Signed against unsigned, in: Times Literary Supplement 12 Sept. 1986, 1013

Boardman, Silver = J. Boardman, Silver is White, in: RA 1987, 279 – 295

Boardman, Trade = J. Boardman, Trade in Greek Decorated Pottery, in: OxfJA 7, 1988, 27 – 33

Boegehold, Amasis = A. L. Boegehold, The Time of the Amasis Painter, in: D. von Bothmer, The Amasis Painter and his World. Vase-painting in Sixth-century B. C. Athens (1985) 15 – 32

Cook, Commentary = R. M. Cook, 'Artful Crafts': A Commentary, in: JHS 107, 1987, 169 – 171

Gill, Fictile Imitations = D. W. J. Gill, Classical Greek Fictile Imitations of Precious Metal Vases, in: Pots and Pans 9 – 30

Gill – Vickers, Pots and Kettles = D. W. J. Gill – M. Vickers, Pots and Kettles, in: RA 1989, 297 – 303

Johnston, Amasis = A. W. Johnston, Amasis and the Vase Trade, in: Papers on the Amasis Painter and his World, Colloquium J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu (1988) 125 – 129

Pots and Pans = M. Vickers (ed.), Pots and Pans. A Colloquium on Precious Metals and Ceramics in the Muslim, Chinese and Graeco-Roman Worlds, Oxford 1985 (1986)

Robertson, Beazley = M. Robertson, Beazley and Attic Vase Painting, in: D. Kurtz (ed.), Beazley and Oxford (1985) 19 – 30

Strong, GRGSP = D. E. Strong, Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate (1966)

Vickers, Artful Crafts = M. Vickers, Artful Crafts: The Influence of Metalwork on Athenian Painted Pottery, in: JHS 105, 1985, 108 – 128

[1] e. g. Vickers, Artful Crafts; Gill, Fictile Imitations.

[2] Robertson, Beazley; id. in: Papers on the Amasis Painter and his World (1988) 13 – 28; Johnston, Amasis; Cook, Commentary.

[3] M. H. Crawford in: J. A. North – M. H. Crawford – T. J. Cornell (eds.), Art and Production in the Age of the Caesars (1987) 38; M. G. Fulford, WorldA 19, 1, 1987, 59; H. Hoffmann, Hephaistos 9, 1988, 143 – 162; A. J. S. Spawforth, Daily Telegraph, February 6, 1989, 12.

This article is intended to clarify the issues involved, to answer some of the criticisms, and to suggest ways in which Greek ceramics might usefully be studied in a post-Beazley age.

And it was J. D. Beazley who neatly encapsulated the essence of the point at issue in his discussion of the contents of a tomb at Capua (which, if it once contained objects of precious metal, had already been robbed of them in antiquity)[5]. We venture again to quote Beazley's words, for they well express the attitudes which we have attempted to characterise. Two pots in particular engaged his interest: »They must have been treasured for many years before they were placed in the grave. Treasured it may be by more than one owner – father and son, father and daughter's husband. Treasured as wonders, not of minor or industrial art (in the shoddy jargon of today or yesterday), but of art pure and simple: not πάγχρυσα ... but peak of possessions, κορυφὰ κτεάνων«[6]. This is the position we have sought to attack, believing that no one in antiquity could have regarded a ceramic cup and a golden phiale[7] in the same light, no matter how fine the decoration on the pot. And this is the position which is being defended, for to admit that Beazley may have been wrong on such a fundamental point regarding ancient values would be tantamount to admitting that »the Emperor has no clothes«[8].

Value and Cost

Ever since Pierre d'Hancarville in the 18th century, but not before, Greek painted pottery has been widely thought to have been an extremely valuable commodity in antiquity. D'Hancarville's aim was to fetch a high price for William Hamilton's fictile vases, and great skill[9], and cunning[10], went into the preparation of the publicity material. Not only have d'Hancarville's underlying assumptions remained unchallenged until recently, but the practice of rich collectors employing a learned hack to publish their 'vases' has inevitably meant that the status of the material, and of the craftsmen who produced it, has been exaggerated and that market imperatives have resulted in the suspension of critical judgement on the part of those otherwise best equipped to discuss the question of value. The bureaucratization of the study of

[4] Boardman, Silver; id., Trade. Factual errors in Silver are discussed in our »Pots and Kettles«. For the mathematical shortcomings of Boardman's Trade and its follow-up (J. Boardman, OxfJA 7, 1988, 371–373) see D. W. J. Gill, OxfJA 7, 1988, 369 f.; id., JHS 111, 1991 (forthcoming).

[5] D. Williams, Greek Vases (1985) 45 f. pl. 50.

[6] J. D. Beazley, AJA 69, 1945, 158.

[7] Cf. the Φιάλαν ... πάγχρυσον κορυφὰν κτεάνων at Pind. Ol. 7, 1–4.

[8] An insight we owe to M. Finley (in a letter to M. Vickers dated 16 April 1986). Participants at the Malibu 1986 conference »Amasis and his World« had »hoped for guidance« from Finley's keynote address on the »conceptual framework« of the workings of the trade in 'vases' (Johnston, Amasis 125); in another letter to M. Vickers (dated 11 March 1986), Finley wrote: »My lecture was turning into a head-on collision with the Beazley epigoni«. Copies of these letters have been placed in the Beazley archive at Oxford, where they may be consulted

[9] N. H. Ramage, BurlMag 129, 1987, 446–456.

[10] M. Vickers, Past and Present 116, 1987, 98–137.

Greek ceramics, and the mounting of 'major' exhibitions likewise encourage those involved to inflate the importance of Greek ceramics in antiquity, and although most scholars have forgotten d'Hancarville's fraudulent arguments, new points have — usually in all innocence — been brought forward to support his position.

Most recently the supposed importance of Athenian painted pottery in maritime trade (which we had challenged)[11] has been revived, with J. Boardman's attempt to show that it »was not cheap and was as valuable and profitable a trade commodity as most that any classical ship took on board«[12]. The figures which Boardman produces to demonstrate that decorated pottery played a major role in Athenian trade[13] would go far to support the view, for example, that Herodotus' Sostratus (the Aeginetan trader who made a profit of more than 60 talents [= 2 tonnes of silver])[14] was »a major exporter of fine Attic pottery«[15]. Boardman's figures are less impressive when we realise that the data on which his calculations are based are either inaccurate[16] or spurious[17]. Instead, pots (even by the 'best' artists [see below 6]) played an insignificant role in Athens' trade[18]. To put matters into perspective: it appears, on the basis of the most recent research, that in a good year Athens might have imported 190 shiploads of grain[19], at a cost of upwards of 479 talents (at five drachmae per *medimnos*), some 18½ tonnes of silver. If paid for with Attic red-figure bell-craters (among the largest pots) costing 4.5 obols apiece (the going rate for such vessels)[20], some 3,832,000 such vessels would have been required per annum. Even supposing that production figures approached this amount the resulting

[11] D. W. J. Gill, Antiquity 61, 1987, 82–87; id., IntJNautA 16, 1987, 31–33; id., OxfJA 6, 1987, 212–215; id. in: J. Christiansen – T. Melander (eds.), Proceedings of the 3rd Symposium on Ancient Greek and Related Pottery, Copenhagen 1987 (1988) 175–185; M. Vickers in: H. A. G. Brijder (ed.), Ancient Greek and Related Pottery, Allard Pierson Series 5 (1985) 90 f. n. 30.

[12] Boardman, Trade 33.

[13] Ibid. passim.

[14] Hdt. 4, 152.

[15] A. W. Johnston, PP 27, 1972, 416–423. Contrast F. D. Harvey, PP 31, 1976, 206–214.

[16] D. W. J. Gill, OxfJA 7, 1988, 369 f.; cf. id., Antiquity 62, 1988, 739 f.

[17] D. W. J. Gill, JHS 111, 1991 (forthcoming).

[18] Cf. P. Garnsey in: Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World (1988) 110: »... the point to be stressed is the implausibility of the suggestion that fine pottery was an exchange item for grain«; R. Osborne in: Classical Landscape with Figures. The Ancient Greek City and its Countryside (1987) 109: »Despite the millions of pots made in and exported from Athens ... pottery can never have made a significant mark on the Athenian economy«; M. I. Finley, Ancient History. Evidence and Models (1985) 23: »other ceramic goods — table ware, cooking vessels, lamps — also shipped in large quantities, were 'parasitic' on the containers and their contents in their occupation of shipping space«; K. Hopkins in: P. Garnsey – K. Hopkins – C. R. Whittaker (eds.), Trade in the Ancient Economy (1983) p. XXIV: »... pots ... were only a minor item in gross product«.

[19] Garnsey, loc. cit. 105, estimates that Athens normally imported 230 kilos of grain per annum for some 100,000 people (= 23,000 tonnes). A grain ship might carry 3000 *medimnoi* (L. Casson, Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World [1971] 182 f.) or 120 tonnes; 23,000 : 120 = 191.6 ships.

[20] A. W. Johnston, Trademarks on Greek Vases (1979) 161.

trade could hardly be called a luxury one; nor does the artistic embellishment make it so. Furthermore, the idea that there was a 'mark-up' for figured pots rests on inconclusive evidence, for some black-glazed pots are more expensive than their decorated counterparts[21]. Thus, in no way can ceramics have been commercially significant, still less constituted a 'luxury trade', in antiquity.

Luxury

Gold phialai, however, must on any view be classed as luxuries. They might be hymned by a poet whose services were costly[22], they were used as diplomatic gifts[23], and we know that they were exported from Etruria to Athens[24], presumably as part of a luxury trade. What we cannot so readily assume is that Athenian painted pottery formed a significant part of trade in the opposite direction, still less that it represented a 'luxury trade'.

Here we come up against a difference of opinion as to what constitutes a 'luxury'. The word has come to mean 'something desirable but not indispensable' and it is in this sense that Boardman has used it in the context of Athenian painted pottery[25]. This usage, however, is of 'recent' date[26], and has little to do with what the ancients regarded as luxury. *Truphe*, *luxus* applied to high living, and that alone. Eratosthenes neatly distinguishes luxurious practice from what was not in describing how some men had once set up a clay wine-crater to honour the gods, and »not one made from silver, nor one set with jewels«[27]. Silver and jewels belong within the range of 'luxury' in the ancient sense, and clay clearly belongs in another category. Ceramics could be well-made, and ancient observers aware that Athenian pots might be better than others[28], but this is not the same as regarding them as 'luxuries'.

The question of luxury has usually been approached from the standpoint of the lowest paid worker. Since jurymen received three obols per diem (but only when cases were tried) this has been regarded as a subsistence wage. It is also assumed that Athens enjoyed a monetary economy (but this is far from certain); accordingly, a pot which cost more than three obols was a 'luxury', and so it might be in the 'recent' sense of the word. If, however, we look at what passed for respectable

[21] Ibid. 63 n. 15. The belief that there was a substantial 'mark-up' for exported pottery rests on a possible misreading of 'three Persian obols' as 'three sigloi'. For Persian obols, see J. Babelon, Les Perses achéménides (1893) 12–24.

[22] Pind. Ol. 7, 1–4; Pindar earned 43 kilos of silver for a hymn in praise of Athens in the 470s: Isocr. 15, 166.

[23] G. Herman, Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City (1987) 65–67; M. Vickers, AmJAncHist 9, 1984 [1988], 48–53.

[24] Critias ap. Ath. 1, 28 b.

[25] Boardman, Trade 28.

[26] Oxford English Dictionary V (1933) 520 s. v. Luxury 5 b. It is in this sense that J. Hasebroek employs the word in his influential »Trade and Politics in Ancient Greece« (1933) 51; followed by e. g. P. Cartledge in: Garnsey–Hopkins–Whittaker, op. cit. 4. 14.

[27] Ath. 11, 482 a. b.

[28] Critias ap. Ath. 1, 28 c.

gentility in classical times, then painted pottery would not have figured large in popular estimation. According to Plutarch, the Athenians granted Aristides' son Lysimachus »100 silver minae, and as many *plethra* of planted land, and in addition an allowance of four drachmas a day«[29]. For all that the story may have been a fourth-century fabrication[30], these arrangements indicate what was considered to be a comfortable existence. Forty-three kilos of silver point to a way of life which probably included the regular use of plate, rather than pottery[31].

'Value' in Scholarship

D'Hancarville rested his case for value in antiquity on a misuse of Pliny, nat. 35, 162 (46), where the statement »since luxury has reached a point where even earthenware costs more than vessels of Murrhine ware« did not apply to »Earthen Vases, like those [d'Hancarville] publish[ed]«[32], but formed part of Pliny's criticism of the emperor Vitellius who had built »dishes as broad as marshes«. George Dennis was the last to repeat d'Hancarville's argument as it stood[33], but the ground gained has been defended with other arguments. Amongst these was J. J. Winckelmann's claim that »a mere earthen vessel was a prize of victory ... in the games of Greece«[34]. But, as Pindar[35] and Simonides[36] noted, the prize was the oil, not the pots[37]. Winckelmann's arguments, however, have been repeated time and again. They are reflected in Samuel Birch's influential ›History of Ancient Pottery‹[38], and are still being put forward[39]. Birch further buttressed d'Hancarville's position by citing imaginary

[29] Plut. Arist. 27.

[30] J. K. Davies, Athenian Propertied Families 600–300 B. C. (1971) 51; R. Osborne, Demos. The Discovery of Classical Attika (1985) 48–50.

[31] Cook, Commentary 170, suggests that even if aristocratic families used plate for entertaining guests, they might have used painted pots when dining alone. The only description known to us of a meal en famille is Demosth. 47, 58, when a servant was murdered by interlopers for having concealed a cup. Since a ceramic cup might cost a few obols at most, we may safely assume that the cup was of precious metal. If, moreover, later eastern Mediterranean practice is any guide, materials varied according to financial circumstances; thus the Tosephta (of the 3rd cent. A. D.: M. Goodman, State and Society in Roman Galilee, A. D. 132–212 [1983] 10) in discussing a man wanting to apply for public assistance, states: »If he formerly used golden vessels, he must sell them and use silver vessels; if he used silver vessels, he must sell them and use copper vessels; if he formerly used copper vessels, he must sell them and use glass vessels« (Tosephta, Peah 4:11).

[32] P. d'Hancarville, Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities from the Cabinet of the Hon. W. Hamilton II (1766 [1768]) 90; cf. M. Vickers, Past and Present 116, 1987, 98–137.

[33] G. Dennis, Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria I (1848) 85; 2nd edn. I (1878) and 3rd edn. I (1883) 97.

[34] J. J. Winckelmann, Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums I (1764) book 3 chapt. 4 sect. 31.

[35] Pind. Nem. 10, 68 ff.

[36] Anth. Pal. 13, 19.

[37] Cf. B. F. Cook, Greek Inscriptions (1987) 52; Vickers, loc. cit. (see above n. 32) 118 n. 71.

[38] S. Birch, History of Ancient Pottery, Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek, Etruscan and Roman (1858) 220; 2nd edn. (1873) 155.

[39] e. g. E. Cooper, A History of Pottery[2] (1981) 29.

literary references to decorated pottery[40], but his colleague H. B. Walters had later to admit that »few allusions to [painted vases] can be traced in classical literature«[41].

Nevertheless, it is clear that Walters shared Birch's view that some decorated pots were valuable: »Great value seems to have been set upon the painted vases by their possessors«, the evidence being the fact that some were mended[42]. As well claim that the bucket discussed at such length by Dear Liza and Dear Henry was an object »of great value«. And yet »repaired therefore valuable« is a recurrent motif in works of 'vase' scholarship[43]. So too is the belief that pots were bought by contemporaries for large sums. Walters again set the tone of later assumptions: »Of the prices paid for painted vases in ancient times, no positive mention occurs in classical authorities, yet it is most probable that vases of the best class, the products of eminent painters, obtained considerable prices. For works of inferior merit only small sums were paid ...«[44]. In fact, a recent study of prices has shown that even vessels decorated by 'the best' hands might sell for little. Beazley's 'Berlin painter' has been characterised as one of »the ... great pot painters of the early fifth century, arguably [one of] the ... greatest red-figure artists whose works and careers we can judge«[45]. Three vessels from Vulci bear prices which appear to suggest that 'the Berlin painter's' work was not as highly valued in antiquity as today. An amphora attributed to 'the Berlin painter' seems to have cost only seven obols, and the same is true of a hydria said to be in imitation of 'him [or her?]'. Another amphora 'near the Berlin painter' carries a price of five obols, whereas hydrias 'near the Peleus painter' and belonging to 'the Group of Polygnotus' (and presumably less 'worthy' objects) cost eighteen obols[46]. Research so far on this question suggests that the degree of skill involved in pot decoration had no noticeable effect on prices.

Value, and the status of potters

Few of these arguments are explicitly used in recent accounts of the Athenian ceramics industry, but d'Hancarville's position is often defended today with the dedications supposedly made by prosperous potters on the Athenian Acropolis.

[40] Birch, op. cit.[2] (1873) 156.

[41] H. B. Walters S. Birch, History of Ancient Pottery, Greek, Etruscan and Roman I (1905) 131.

[42] Ibid. 147; cf. Birch, op. cit.[1] (1858) 220; op. cit.[2] (1873) 156. See too A. W. Johnston, Trademarks on Greek Vases (1979) 65 n. 6: »Repairs to vases were frequent and sometimes elaborate ... it is possible that even repaired vases could fetch a worthwhile price«; ibid. 242: »Cups were repaired more often and more elaborately than other shapes indicating their value«.

[43] e. g. A. S. Murray, Handbook of Greek Archaeology (1892) 72; C. Brunn in: R. W. Gassen (ed.), Attische Keramik. Schwarzfigurige Gefäße aus dem Besitz des Martin von Wagner-Museums der Universität Würzburg (1988) 14.

[44] Walters in: Walters – Birch, op. cit. 43. In reality, Walters had to turn to the art market for 'prices' of pots: see D. W. J. Gill, OxfJA 7, 1988, 740.

[45] J. Boardman, Athenian Red Figure Vases. The Archaic Period (1975) 91.

[46] Johnston, op. cit. (above n. 42) 159 Type 10 F: no. 21 fig. 12 p; nos. 23. 24 fig. 9 w; Type 18 C: no. 63 fig. 6 b; Type 21 F: no. 8.

Thus, potters apparently had »extra disposable income« with which they »made dedications on the Acropolis frequently enough so that as an identifiable class of dedicators they outnumber all others«[47]. But this can only work if 1. it can be shown beyond doubt that the Acropolis dedications do refer to potters and 2. it is reasonable to expect that the only persons from the deme Kerameis to have made such dedications were potters.

It is true that several dedications bear names which also occur on Athenian pottery, apparently as craftsmen. These names have consequently been claimed as those of potters and painters[48]. But this assumption is far from secure, and Beazley was surely right in his cautious approach to the Acropolis dedications, of some of which he wrote »as none of the identifications are certain and some of them are improbable I relegate them to a footnote«[49]. T. B. L. Webster was similarly hesitant, as »without the description *kerameus* it is difficult to be certain whether the dedicator is a potter or not«[50].

Even the remaining 'certain' dedications are far from secure. Although Nearchos' dedication of a kore by Antenor is often quoted as the most important of the potters' dedications[51], the crucial words ὁ κεραμεύς are not present on the extant inscription; they have been supplied because it was assumed that this was the Nearchus known from decorated pottery. A suggestion that the gap could be filled by e. g. Ἐλευθερε]ύς[52] was initially met with scepticism[53] but the latest epigraphical judgement is that »the Nearchos base cannot be said with any conviction to be that of a potter«[54]. Any argument that potters 'must' have been wealthy is thus seriously weakened.

A further 'certain' dedication by a potter is a relief showing a seated figure holding cups dedicated as a tithe[55]. It was assumed that the cups were of clay and that the dedicator was a potter, and Beazley restored the name Pampha]ios[56]. Earlier doubts that this was a potter's dedication[57] have received support from A. W. Johnston, who considers the restored reading »even more dubious« than that of Nearchos[58]. Other dedications, namely those of Peikon[59] and of Mnesiades and Andocides[60],

[47] Boegehold, Amasis 28. Cf. Johnston, op. cit. (above n. 42) 35; Boardman, Silver 293.

[48] e. g. A. E. Raubitschek, Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis (1949).

[49] J. D. Beazley, Proc. of the Brit. Acad. 30, 1944, 105.

[50] T. B. L. Webster, Potter and Patron (1972) 5.

[51] J. Boardman, Athenian Black Figure Vases. A Handbook (1974) 12; id., Greek Sculpture. The Archaic Period. A Handbook (1978) fig. 141; Boegehold, Amasis 28 fig. 4.

[52] Vickers, Artful Crafts 125 n. 162.

[53] A. W. Johnston, AJA 89, 1985, 182, followed by Boardman, Silver 293 n. 30

[54] Johnston, Amasis 135. 140 n. 56 (where [τοῦ δεῖνα ὑ]ός is proposed).

[55] Raubitschek, op. cit. no. 70.

[56] Beazley, loc. cit. (above n. 49) 104; cf. J. Boardman, Greek Sculpture. The Archaic Period. A Handbook (1978) fig. 137. Boardman now concedes that the dedicator may have been a metalworker, CAH³ IV (1988) pl. 173. The relief need not, of course, even represent a craftsman.

[57] Vickers, Artful Crafts 125.

[58] Johnston, Amasis 135.

[59] A. E. Raubitschek, Dedications from the Athenian Akropolis (1949) no. 44.

[60] Ibid. no. 178. κεραμεύς is linked to [M]nesiades and need not be associated with Andocides.

include κεραμεύς without the definite article. There is also a fragmentary dedication by a Euphronios[61] in which A. E. Raubitschek supplied ὁ to join κεραμεύς. However, the space on the preceding line could be filled instead with a patronymic[62], and to argue that such reservations are unnecessary because a Euphronios is known in the modern literature as a potter is to come dangerously close to circularity.

Such an argument would also overlook evidence which suggests that the word κεραμεύς might identify the deme rather than the trade, in which case any argument on such a basis would be futile[63]. ἐκ Κεραμέων was epigraphically interchangeable with Κεραμεύς, and on ostraca the aristocratic Leagros, son of Glaukon, was described as Κεραμεύς[64]. Johnston agrees that »there is in fact much to be said« for the argument that κεραμεύς might be demotic[65], but we disagree with his attempt to rescue something of the old view in maintaining that any individuals known from inscriptions on pottery and from the deme *Kerameis* must be potters. This both assumes that only one person called Mnesiades came from *Kerameis*, and denies the possibility that potters might have come from other demes as well (some came from Kollytos)[66]. There is no unambiguous evidence even for the view that »some potters did accede to modest wealth, and that is a measure, however unsatisfactory, of the financial success, if not social status, of the members of the Athenian Kerameikos«[67], and as we have seen, there is little support from the known prices for such an assumption. Potters clearly made a living, but this is a world away from seeing »celebrated sculptors like Endoios and Antenor receiving commissions from the great and prosperous potters«[68].

The worthy potter

There are, nevertheless, some indications that although the status of the artist and craftsman was low in most Greek communities[69], and potters might be held in generally low esteem[70], both potters and their products might occasionally be men-

[61] Ibid. no. 225.

[62] For instances of demotic or ethnic + patronymic, see e. g. ibid. no. 135.

[63] Vickers, Artful Crafts 124 f.

[64] F. Willemsen, ADelt 23, 2, 1, 1968, Chron 29; cf. Vickers, Artful Crafts 124 f. Johnston, Amasis 135 seems to be unaware of this: »one would surely have expected the form *kerameus* ... to have appeared here and there in the reasonable number of *ostraka* against Leagros of that deme«.

[65] Ibid. 135.

[66] Raubitschek, op. cit. 239 under no. 209. Other 'certain' dedications (ibid. nos. 92. 150. 209) have been restored with κεραμεύς; they could equally well be restored with a demotic such as Μελιτεύς.

[67] Johnston, Amasis 135 f.

[68] J. D. Beazley, Proc. of the Brit. Acad. 30, 1944, 107.

[69] Hdt. 2, 167; Isocr. 15, 2; R. and M. Wittkower, Born Under Saturn (1963) 4; M. I. Finley, The Ancient Economy (1985) 136–140; G. E. M. de Ste Croix, The Class struggle in the Ancient Greek World (1981) 274 f.; Robertson, Beazley 26. Contrast Boegehold, Amasis 27–31; Boardman, Silver 293 f.

[70] V. Ehrenberg, The People of Aristophanes[2] (1951) 125.

tioned positively. Once again, however, there is insufficient evidence for the exaggerated claims for high status regularly made in current literature.

Kittos and Bakchios, sons of Bakchios, have been regarded as high status Athenian potters[71], and are thought to have made the containers for the prize oil at the Panathenaic games[72]. They appear on a decree at Ephesus where they »made a hydria for the goddess and black tiles [or pots] for the city«, and were granted temporary citizenship[73]. While some individuals are given full citizenship the potters are only granted citizens' rights for as long as they remain at Ephesus[74]. Bakchios and Kittios have also been seen as the sons of [Bak]ch[ios] son of [A]mphis ... ἐκ Κεραμέων, on whose tombstone is written: »Of those who blend earth, water, fire into one by τέχνη, Bakchios was judged by all Hellas first, for natural gifts; and in every contest appointed by the city he won the crown«[75]. It has been maintained that this epitaph shows that »Bakchios was clearly not a poor man exercising a poor and despised craft«[76], but allowance should be made for the fact that the tombstone was set up by his heirs, perhaps potters themselves, and for the likelihood that 'contests' were the usual way for a community to put out to tender orders for a particular commodity.

It goes without saying that ceramics are 'useful', whether at the level of Winnie-the-Pooh's ›Useful Pot for Putting Things In‹ or of Josiah Wedgwood's ›Usefull Works‹, and Boardman has performed a useful service in drawing renewed attention to Critias' lines: »and she that raised the glorious trophy at Marathon invented the potter's wheel and the child of clay and the oven, noblest pottery, useful in housekeeping (χρήσιμον οἰκονόμον)«[77]. While we would not wish to discuss the historicity of Critias' claim[78], what is said about ceramics is certainly favourable. But pottery was self-evidently useful for household purposes, and it is usual to find coarse wares in quantity excavated from domestic sites. It is to these 'useful' pots used for cooking, storage and other domestic functions to which Critias may have referred[79], for all that Athens seems to have »imported certain cooking pots during the 6th to 4th centuries«[80]. The confiscated properties of the Hermocopidae (in whose activities

[71] Robertson, Beazley 21 f.; cf. Boardman, Silver 293 f. For Kittos the goldsmith or gilder (χρυσοτής) and Kittos the bronzesmith (χαλκεύ[ς]) see D. Harris, Hesperia 57, 1988, 331 n. 3.

[72] J. Frel, Panathenaic Prize Amphoras (1973) 21 f.

[73] H. Engelmann, Die Inschriften von Ephesos IV (1980) nos. 1418–1422, Block I.

[74] P. Gauthier, Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs (1985) 150 f. n. 48 bis, draws attention to the threat implied in this »exemple curieux de *politeia* potentielle«.

[75] IG II/III no. 6320.

[76] Boardman, Silver 294.

[77] Critias ap. Ath. 1, 28 c. Boardman, Silver 294; cf. Vickers, Artful Crafts 124 and n. 156; id. in: H. A. G. Brijder (ed.), Ancient Greek and Related Pottery, Allard Pierson Series 5 (1985) 97.

[78] Boardman appears to believe in it (Silver 294 n. 34); contrast D. Williams, Greek Vases (1985) 7: »[the story is] probably not true«.

[79] On which see, B. A. Sparkes – L. Talcott, Pots and Pans (1958); id., Black and Plain Pottery II, Agora XII (1970).

[80] R. Jones, Greek and Cypriot Pottery. A Review of Scientific Studies (1986) 726.

Critias was implicated) included substantial quantities of coarse pottery[81]. Critias' lines therefore do not provide enough support for the high status of the Athenian ceramics industry of its practitioners. His reference a few lines earlier to an Etruscan gold phiale, however, does show a fifth-century Athenian aristocrat's familiarity with gold plate[82].

Artistic rivalry

Before we discuss plate another influential view requires attention, viz. that potters and pot-painters engaged in artistic rivalry. The key text is an inscription on the back of an amphora in Munich which has traditionally been translated as »In a way that Euphronios never could«[83], and (since Euphronios is also the name of a now-famous pot-painter) variously interpreted as »boast« and thus a »general challenge to a rival – friendly or hostile«[84]; as an indication »that these vase-painters were consciously experimenting and innovating, that they felt themselves as pioneers and not merely as imitators of leads given in the minor arts«[85]; or as an introduction »to an atmosphere of Left Bank rivalry«[86] within an artistic milieu described as follows: »It is as though, for the first time in the history of Western art, we can here discern a conscious movement, a cameraderie of artists. Since we know no more about them than we can learn from their vases, with not a scrap of help from any ancient writer, the reconstruction of their careers, common purpose, even rivalries, can be taken as a triumph of archaeological research, though there are many archaeologists who might not recognise it as such«[87].

It has, however, been recognised that the crucial inscription, far from continuing '*Euthymides egrapsen*' on the front, is part of a sympotic dialogue[88]. Next to the komast on the left appears: »Leader of the komasts as never was Euphronios« (Κόμαρχος ὸς οὐδέποτε Εὐφρόνιος [and thus bearing no necessary connection with a pot-painter of the same name]). Elsewhere: »Good! It (sc. the kantharos) is already mine« (εὖ, ἤδη 'μός) and »You've done it! Lead! Drink!« (τελὲς, ἐγέο, πῖ) or »You've done it. You are the true (sc. komarch). So drink!« (τελεῖς, εἰ γε, ὦ πῖ). If this reading is valid, then it raises serious questions regarding the supposed artistic rivalry in the 'potters' quarter' at Athens.

[81] D. A. Amyx, Hesperia 27, 1958, 163–307.

[82] Critias ap. Ath. 1, 28 b.

[83] Transl. Boegehold, Amasis 31. The *Euthymedes egrapsen* inscription on the front of the pot is often taken as running into the inscription on the back; e. g. E. Paul, Antike Keramik (1982) 39.

[84] G. M. A. Richter, Attic Red-figured Vases (1946) 55; cf. E. Buschor, Griechische Vasenmalerei (1914) 152.

[85] M. Robertson, A History of Greek Art I (1975) 224 f.

[86] J. Boardman, Athenian Red Figure Vases. The Archaic Period (1975) 30.

[87] Ibid. 29.

[88] H. Engelmann, ZPE 68, 1987, 129–134; S. Morris, AJA 90, 1986, 360; cf. G. Neumann, AA 1977, 39–41; A. Linfert, RdA 1, 1977, 19–22. For other sympotic dialogues: F. Lissarague, Un flot d'images (1987) 59–64. 80.

Gold and silver

Although most classical archaeologists have tended to underrate precious metals, and have generally sympathised with moralists who maintain that it is »foolish of men to desire barren metal, ... wicked of men to cheat and bully one another for so empty a reward«[89], the ancient sources are unanimous in providing a picture of a world which, however objectionable to a Thomas More or a John Maynard Keynes[90] – or, perhaps, a J. D. Beazley – regarded the possession of precious metal as a higher priority than ownership of ceramics. The study of Greek ceramics has achieved the creation of a Utopian society in the past, in the sense that the Greeks are frequently presented as 'enlightened' and above the preoccupation with gold and silver which disfigured the societies against which More or Keynes reacted. But, it has been wisely observed, »Innovation is a crime in utopia, a sin against perfection«[91], which helps to explain the reluctance in some quarters to have the intellectual bases of 'vase' scholarship investigated.

The use of precious metals

There is less disagreement than might at first appear between us and our critics concerning the question of how widespread was the use of gold and silver plate in the Greek world. R. M. Cook seems to agree with the emphasis that »silver and gold plate ... must have been in fairly common use by rich Athenians in the fifth century«[92], and Boardman has expressed our own position very well: »on the plenty of silver there can be little doubt but the evidence for its presence in quantity in the houses of other than the very rich is open to question«[93]. This is the point we have been trying to make: to re-establish the view that the very rich might normally use plate, to re-insert a level of luxurious living into Athenian society. Where we differ from Boardman is in the conclusions we would draw from this. The extent to which plate was used in the rest of Athenian society is indeed open to question (and more research is needed here), but this is a separate issue. If, moreover, it is »surely right« for us to »stress that pottery is a humble craft, its material, and in consequence its products, vastly cheaper ... than silver and gold«[94], then it is more than »a matter of great interest« that it may be possible to »show that the rich and aristocratic in Athens used only gold and silver and never looked at a painted vase«[95]; it should call into question the central role of painted pottery in discussions of ancient societies,

[89] H. Crome, Introduction to Money (1956) 13; cf. J. Raby–M. Vickers in: Pots and Pans 217–223.

[90] Thomas More, Utopia (1516); J. M. Keynes, The Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren, in: J. M. Keynes, Essays in Persuasion (1931) 358–373.

[91] M. Holquist, How to Play Utopia, in: J. Ehrmann (ed.), Game, Play, Literature (1971) 114.

[92] Cook, Commentary 170.

[93] Boardman, Silver 289.

[94] Robertson, Beazley 26.

[95] Ibid. 29.

and the possibility borne in mind that plate made for the 'very rich' influenced other media, especially pottery. As in 18th century England, the patterns of expenditure at the top end of the market determined broader changes in consumer demand[96], and we can surely begin to think in terms of a 'trickle-down effect'[97] whereby fashions created in expensive materials were copied in less expensive clay in order to provide either cheaper drinking sets or surrogates for burials.

Positivism

It has been wisely observed that »we may misinterpret [monuments and objects] by failing to allow for their incompleteness«[98], and that »iron corrodes [and] bronze and precious metals are melted down for re-use«[99]. And yet it has also been claimed (without any apparent qualification) that »in all archaeological studies we are restricted to what has survived«[100], and it is this trend in current archaeological scholarship, the »'positivist fallacy', which assumes that the importance of a class of evidence for antiquity stands in some relation to the quantity in which it survives to be studied today«[101] which leads to exaggerated assessments of the role of ceramics[102], and the general neglect, even rejection, of precious metal[103]. All we have for precious metalwork is the occasional glimpse; most relevant inscriptions refer to inventories of gold and silver in sanctuaries[104], phialai for the most part, a fact which has been taken to mean that most ancient plate was kept in this form[105], but this is another example of the 'positivist fallacy', for such items as Socrates' 'silver well'[106], or the hundreds of gold phialai and silver craters seen at the departure of the Athenian fleet in 415[107] have not survived.

Skeuomorphism

The possible relationship between pottery and metalwork has been confused ever since it became expedient to sell Greek pots for big money. D'Hancarville argued for a world in the mists of time in which metalwork had not yet been invented and

[96] N. McKendrick—J. Brewer—J. H. Plumb, The Birth of a Consumer Society (1982).

[97] L. A. Fallers in: R. Bendix—S. M. Lipset (eds.), Class, Status and Power[2] (1967) 402—404.

[98] J. Boardman, Greeks Overseas (1980) 10.

[99] Ibid. 12.

[100] D. C. Kurtz—J. Boardman, Greek Burial Customs (1971) 203; cf. M. Vickers, DArch 3. ser. 6, 1988, 140.

[101] A. M. Snodgrass, Archaic Greece (1980) 126; cf. id. in: M. Crawford (ed.), Sources for Ancient History (1983) 163.

[102] »We exaggerate the importance of what survives now because we have to«: J. Boardman, Athenian Black Figure Vases. A Handbook (1974) 31.

[103] »... we need shed no tears for the loss of the great essays in gold and ivory«: J. Boardman, Antiquity 62, 1988, 388.

[104] D. M. Lewis in: Pots and Pans 71—81.

[105] Boardman, Silver 289.

[106] Plat. symp. 223c; Ath. 5, 192a.

[107] Thuc. 6, 32, 1; Diod. 13, 3, 2.

in which pottery reigned supreme[108]. The 'Age of Gold' was replaced by an 'Age of Pot'. The philosophical priority of ceramics having thus been established, it was easy to assume that the pots d'Hancarville was selling possessed moral superiority over the metal vessels mentioned in literature. But whether or not early man made pottery before metalwork, the philosophical argument is irrelevant to the interrelationship of these crafts in historical times.

The continuity of the pottery industry is more frequently adduced today as an argument in favour of the priority of pottery over metal[109]. Again, it is an argument whose relevance diminishes on closer examination. Naturally there were continuous traditions of ceramic production, but although it is true that Geometric pottery, for example, more readily obeys a ceramic aesthetic[110], the same is not necessarily the case with later pots. The development of European ceramics in early modern times provides a parallel. English potteries in the 16th and 17th centuries characteristically produced slip-ware vessels whose relationship to metalwork was remote. By the 18th century, however, royal silversmiths were employed to make designs (inevitably influenced by a metal aesthetic) for French porcelain factories, and English manufacturers readily followed suit. No one would claim that potters had achieved these forms fortuitously, and yet this is the claim that is frequently made in the Greek context. B. Leach believed that classical Greek pottery was »conceived coldly and without reference to its material and to the organic growth of spinning clay shaped by human hands« and was aware of its 'metallic' nature[111]; his judgement deserves respect. So too does an idea put forward in the 1920s, but neglected since. The theoretical basis of L. D. Caskey's ›The Geometry of Greek Vases‹ (1922) in which the complex design of the forms of Greek pottery is emphasized, may be somewhat 'fanciful'[112], but it is less so if the geometry of metal vessels is taken into account[113]. C. Loret has amply demonstrated the complex mathematics involved in the construction of the bronze Vix crater[114], and it will have been such careful design which the potter emulated.

What J. L. Myres and V. Gordon Childe called 'skeuomorphism' allows the archaeologist to obtain »a glimpse into productive activities and artistic media of which no direct evidence survives«[115]. This principle is widespread in areas of archaeology other than 'vasology'. In Bronze Age Aegean prehistory, for example,

[108] P. d'Hancarville, Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities from the Cabinet of the Hon. W. Hamilton II (1766 [1768]) 62; cf. G. Semper, Der Stil II (1863) 21.

[109] e. g. Robertson, Beazley 24.

[110] Although their strap handles surely embody distant metallic references.

[111] B. Leach, A Potter's Book, new edn. (1976) 235 f.

[112] R. M. Cook, Greek Painted Pottery' (1972) 355. See too, J. Hambidge, Dynamic Symmetry. The Greek Vase (1920).

[113] Contrast J. Boardman, Athenian Black Figure Vases. A Handbook (1974) 184: »Where these studies imply a knowledge of geometry far beyond the wit of any ancient potter they can be ignored without more ado«.

[114] C. Loret, Bull. de la Soc. Archéol. et Hist. du châtillonais 4th ser. 2, 1961, 49–56.

[115] V. G. Childe, Piecing together the Past (1956) 13 f.; M. Vickers in: Pots and Pans 137.

we read that although »vessels in precious metals have not come to light in the Middle Minoan Palaces ... the reflection of such metallic originals is seen in a whole series of ceramic forms belonging to MM I and II«[116]. D. E. Strong endorsed this view – for the Aegean Bronze Age[117], but he took a different, positivist, stance in the context of the Aegean Iron Age. Since »in Greece itself very little classical silver has been found ... for most of the fifth century no plate was manufactured for private domestic use in Greece, but ritual vessels and expensive versions of everyday vessels were dedicated at the sanctuaries of the gods«[118]. Elsewhere, he states that »for a long time the Greeks had been making expensive metal versions of clay vases for the barbarians at the fringes of the Greek world, even when the fear of *hubris* prevented their use in Greece«[119].

This has no basis in any evidence from antiquity, but is a reflection of the relative status of metalwork and fictile vases in 1960s scholarship, and owes much to an influential article by D. K. Hill published in 1947[120], in which it was suggested that the hitherto prevalent desire for seeing metal prototypes for ceramics[121] was a »blind admiration« and »natural in our age of steel«. Instead, she maintained that the shapes had been developed by potters for pottery; otherwise how could »those wonderful forms with their subtle curves and infinite variations [have] delighted the eyes of generations of critics?« Miss Hill was unaware of many of the techniques used by metalworkers in antiquity since there was little ancient plate in the United States at the time she wrote. She believed that techniques were simple and would not have allowed large pieces of metalwork to be created. She held, moreover, that »in ancient times all metal was soft, and that metal tools were therefore of slight importance in making metal vases«, a view which ought to have been challenged before now. Many of the reasons which led Hill to see pottery influencing metalwork must be set aside with the appearance of so much plate in the last few decades. There are still those who find merit in her paper[122] but if her position is to be defended, it needs to be re-argued.

Another influential argument was put forward by B. B. Shefton[123], who notes the dependence on eastern models of new clay shapes in the Attic repertoire at the end of the 5th century, but regards them as a »conscious and intended challenge to oriental luxury vessels in precious metal« which themselves influenced local silver

[116] A. J. Evans, The Palace of Minos I (1921–1936) 191. 193; cf. S. Hood, The Arts in Prehistoric Greece (1978) 153.

[117] Strong, GRGSP 30.

[118] Ibid. 74.

[119] D. E. Strong, BMQ 28, 1964, 99.

[120] D. K. Hill, AJA 51, 1947, 248–256.

[121] e. g. H. G. G. Payne, Necrocorinthia (1931) 210–221, esp. 210: »it is an absolutely certain conjecture from the character of Protocorinthian and Corinthian clay vases, that metal vases were made at Corinth throughout the archaic period«.

[122] e. g. Boardman, Silver 289 f. See, however, our »Pots and Kettles«.

[123] B. B. Shefton, AAS 21, 1971, 109–111 pls. 20–22; cf. Boardman, Silver 294.

shapes. This, however, is to introduce unwarranted complication, and to overlook the likelihood that earlier Athenian plate (which the new clay shapes evoked) has disappeared.

We agree with H. R. W. Smith: »Sometimes the Greek potter is altogether pedantic in his imitation of metal ..., but as often his metalloid work is some easy compromise adapted to his material«[124], and the numerous parallels now known in silverware[125] indicate their likely immediate metallic source. Indeed, our critics allow much influence from metalwork to ceramic, but believe that since some shapes may have had their ultimate origins in other materials such as wood our case for the privileged position of work in precious metal is consequently weakened. This, however, is to come close to the philosophical arguments which d'Hancarville employed, and we continue to hold the view that fine ceramics followed standards set by silversmiths, irrespective of the ultimate sources of a particular form.

Colour

a. Fabrics other than Attic

One strand of our work has been to explore the possibility that particular colours were chosen by potters to evoke specific materials. It is, we feel, a legitimate line of research which finds precedent in the work of others. Beazley, for example, observed that the clay of some Etruscan pots »is covered with a grey slip, which is thought to imitate silver – if so, tarnished silver«[126]. This position is adopted by Boardman, who goes beyond Beazley to suggest that Etruscan pots with a yellow slip imitated gold[127]. Likewise, W. Lamb's observations on Lesbian bucchero where »the influence of metal prototypes shows itself in the plastic knobs, handles with discs, imitation rings on deinoi, ridged stems, and countless other details«[128], and the surface colour described as »silver-grey to gun-metal«[129], are expanded by Boardman to suggest that these pots were »certainly influenced by silver shapes [and] also by silver colour«[130]. J. N. Coldstream thinks that Rhodian Late Geometric »pyxis bodies are probably modelled on a Levantine ivory prototype, and their surfaces are toned with a reddish slip resembling the dyeing of ivory«[131]. Beazley's view that white-ground alabastra »recalled the alabastra made of the original material, alabaster« and »white pyxides ... recalled vases of the same shape in marble«[132] is endorsed by

[124] H. R. W. Smith, Univ. of California Publications in Class. Ant. 1, 10, 1944, 242.

[125] Gill, Fictile Imitations; M. Vickers – J. Allan – O. Impey, From Silver to Ceramic (1986).

[126] J. D. Beazley, Etruscan Vase-painting (1947) 282.

[127] Boardman, Silver 284 f.; cf. M. Moltesen, MeddelelsGlyptKøb 39, 1983, 32–53.

[128] W. Lamb, JHS 52, 1932, 3.

[129] Ibid. 3; cad., BSA 32, 1931/32, 51.

[130] Boardman, Silver 285. Boardman, ibid., believes, that »tin ... does not blacken«; Gareth Harris, a Hatton Garden goldsmith, kindly informs us that it does indeed tarnish.

[131] J. N. Coldstream, Greek Geometric Pottery (1968) 275.

[132] J. D. Beazley, Attic White Lekythoi (1938) 4.

D. C. Kurtz who also sees the influence of metal vases (although which metals are intended is not stated)[133]. Elsewhere Boardman sees the 'marbling' on some Lydian clay vessels not as evoking marble, but 'beaten copper work'[134].

b. Attic pottery

If there is thus a scholarly tradition of seeing the finish of a pot evoking a prototype in a more precious medium, if only in 'beaten copper', we consider it legitimate to explore the evident similarities between Attic wares and precious metal. For if it is allowed that some potters chose particular colours to evoke certain materials (whether gold, ivory, silver, or 'beaten copper'), it is inconsistent to explain the colours favoured by potters at Athens as »the most convenient ones to obtain«, or in terms of »tradition«[135].

This is particularly relevant when we consider the 'black-glaze' found on Athenian and other categories of pottery where the 'metallic' nature of the glaze is frequently noted[136]. We invite our critics to show where a line can be drawn between these 'metallic' glazes with the undeniable appearance of 'oxidized'[137] silver (glazes which occur on Attic black- and red-figure, as well as on Etruscan and South Italian pottery) and those which are 'lustrous black'. The latter effect is to be found on pure silver which has been allowed to darken[138].

c. Purity of silver

The purity of the silver used in Greek silver plate has been questioned in the context of its potential influence on Athenian pottery[139], but not only is the silver in question extremely pure[140], but most pieces of extant plate seem to have been made in multiples of coins[141], a few of Attic drachmae[142], but for the most part darics, sigloi and Thraco-Macedonian drachmae[143]; doubtless so that they could be

[133] D. C. Kurtz, Athenian White Lekythoi (1975) 11; cf. Robertson, Beazley 23.

[134] J. Boardman, Greeks Overseas (1980) 99.

[135] Cook, Commentary 169 f.

[136] e. g. J. W. Hayes, Greek and Italian Black-gloss Wares and Related Wares in the Royal Ontario Museum. A Catalogue (1984) passim; J. V. Noble, The Technique of Painted Attic Pottery (1965) 31; A. S. Murray, Handbook of Greek Archaeology (1892) 96, speaks of the »black metallic glaze« of Attic black-figure.

[137] The term used by silversmiths to describe patinated silver (unknown to Boardman, Silver 280). It is thus used by W. Morris in: A. Briggs (ed.), News from Nowhere (1962) 189: when coins were offered to the ferryman as payment »the silver had oxydized, and was like a black-leaded stove in colour«.

[138] e. g. inside the mug Ashmolean Mus. 1948.104, illustrated in our »Pots and Kettles« fig. 1.

[139] Boardman, Silver 286.

[140] e. g. the Dalboki pieces (Ashmolean Mus. 1947.104; 1947.102; 1947.103) contain respectively 98%, 98.5%, 99.4% of silver. A cup from Nymphaeum (Ashmolean Mus. 1885.486) contains 98.7% silver (kindly analysed by S. Stos-Gale using energy dispersive X-ray fluorescence).

[141] Cf. D. von Bothmer, BMetrMus N. S. 21, 1962/1963, 155. Silver coins seem to have been used to weigh plate: C. H. Grayson, Greek Weighing (D. Phil. thesis, Oxford 1975).

[142] D. W. J. Gill, Omnibus 15, March 1988, 10–12.

[143] M. Vickers, Proceedings of the British Museum Rogozen Conference, March 1987 (1989) 101–111; id., AmJAncHist 9, 1984 [1988], 48–53.

used for exchange (whether gift or trade) in what was fundamentally a non-monetary economy[141]. It was the effect of the shiny black sheen of pure silver which we believe potters to have attempted to evoke with their black slips[145].

d. 'Baptism' and patination

The idea of a glaze imitating silver should not be surprising since one of the very few ancient literary references to the technique of pottery manufacture mentions potters at Naucratis 'baptizing' pots to make them resemble silver[146]. We wonder whether this could explain the black-glazed or silvered Campanian Arethusa cups »in which both the form, the central design, and the metallic lustre are imitated from silver work«[147], but which Boardman believes support his view that »silver is white«. But a coin mounted in a cup is no longer acting as a coin; hence it does not follow that »a white coin was acceptably imitated by black clay«[148]. Boardman overlooks the consequences of the propensity for silver to become patinated given the right conditions, such as sea air[149] (a condition common to most centres of black-glaze pottery production).

The idea that ancient silver could have been kept in a patinated condition is one that seems to raise deep and confused emotions. Boardman seems to argue for two things at once: to allow »gun-metal« grey pottery to imitate the »dusky surface« of some ancient silver[150], but in his determination to privilege Athenian ceramics and to keep them out of consideration as skeuomorphs, resolutely to assert that »we might think that in antiquity the pain of regular cleaning might have been too much, and a virtue made of the results of idleness, and we would be wrong«[151]. He has taken the same route as Hill: »Nobody has been foolish enough to suggest that green vitreous glaze outside and yellow within, as it occurs on Roman cups of Cicero's time, was imitation of dirty and clean bronze, so let me not start here on such a false scent!«[152]. In fact, many scholars believe these features to have been

[141] Cf. M. I. Finley, The Ancient Economy (1985) 166; H. W. Pleket in: P. Garnsey – K. Hopkins – C. R. Whittaker (eds.), Trade in the Ancient Economy (1983) 133.

[145] Cf. H. J. Plenderleith – A. E. A. Werner, The Conservation of Antiquities and Works of Art[2] (1971) 220: »In silver objects there is generally a clear-cut distinction between the corrosion products derived from relatively pure silver and those from base silver alloys containing an appreciable amount of copper«. We do not understand Boardman, Silver 281: »black or near-black corrosion on silver has a velvety, non-reflecting surface«.

[146] Ath. 11, 480 e. Not mentioned by Noble, op. cit.

[147] A. J. Evans, NumChron 3rd ser. 11, 1891, 317.

[148] Boardman, Silver 284.

[149] Mr. Richard Hattatt used to exhibit a silver electrotype of a Syracusan coin next to an Arethusa cup in his house near Bournemouth. The sea air caused it to go black within a short time of cleaning, and he eventually left it in this state.

[150] Boardman, Silver 285.

[151] Boardman, Silver 280.

[152] D. K. Hill in: C. Roebuck (ed.), The Muses at Work. Arts, crafts and professions in Ancient Greece and Rome (1969) 83.

intended to evoke such bronze[153], and the idea that the past was generally clean is easily dispelled; Utopias, however, are usually spotless.

Although silver is usually kept light today, such was not always the case. An observer at the Great Exhibition of 1851 condemned English silver for its 'flashiness' since the means used »to produce the whitest possible appearance of the silver, seems to be one essentially opposed to the display of excellence of design«. The foreign silver-work, by contrast was oxidised: »The process of oxidation, as it is termed, not only protects the silver from further tarnishing, but can convey every variety of tint from white to black, so that it is particularly well calculated to display fine modelling or chasing, which would be utterly thrown away in a dazzling white material«[154]. Moreover, within living memory, »the shelves of the sideboard [in the dining room at Mentmore, Bucks] were set out with a remarkable display of French and German silver of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, in a manner which had been traditional in great houses ever since the Middle Ages. Surprisingly – or so it must seem today – it was all so tarnished that it resembled pewter. This was not due to any lack of care of an underestimation of its value on the part of the owners, but had for many years been customary with continental collectors to protect the silver from over-zealous polishing in the butler's pantry[155]. The practice survives today only in the greatest collection of such things in the world, the two silver galleries at the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad«[156]. This should serve as a warning against ethnocentric anachronism, and the too ready assumption that practices with which we are most familiar must be universal.

c. The literary evidence

The literary evidence, it must be admitted, is far from clear. Some will insist for example that the vessel described by Eubulus as »thick-lipped, rattling, black, well rounded, pointy-bottomed, glistening, reflecting«[157] was ceramic; we would not be so sure. Then some choose to take an anonymous Roman commentator's quotation from the pre-Socratic philosopher Thrasyalces »silver is black« as an affirmation of

[153] c. g. S. Loeschke, Mitt. der Altertumskommission für Westfalen 5, 1909, 190; id., TrZ 3, 1928, 75; D. Pinkwart, Hellenistisch-römische Bleiglasurkeramik aus Pergamon (1972) 140; H. Gabelmann, JdI 89, 1974, 266.

[154] R. N. Wornum in: The Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition (1851) p. VIII*** [sic.].

[155] If silver in antiquity was indeed »simply wealth«, (Boardman, Trade 28), then to remove the surface of soft metal vessels at frequent intervals would result in a steady reduction of that wealth (today's Sterling silver contains 7.5% copper to prevent undue wear – and impoverishment). Public holdings of precious metal were controlled by weighing (C. H. Grayson, Greek Weighing [D. Phil. thesis, Oxford 1975]), and we may safely assume that similar considerations applied in private life.

[156] F. Watson in: Mentmore II, Sotheby Catalogue, May 18–23, 1977, 10 f. This medieval manner of display has its roots in the classical past, in d'Hancarville's »Buffets of the Ancients« on which were placed »their richest vases«: P. d'Hancarville, Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities from the Cabinet of the Hon. W. Hamilton II (1766 [1768]) 80–82; (but not their pots [Cic. Verr. 4, 16. 20. 25. 27; Petron. 73, 5]).

[157] Fr. 56 ap. Ath. 11, 471 d.

the opposite[158], even as 'proof' that Greek silver, like Roman, was always kept in a brightly polished 'white' condition[159]. Far better to keep the whole range of possibilities open, and agree with the anonymous Roman that »the colour of silver is unclear«. Asclepiades of Myrlaea believed that the world was round and built allegorical conceits upon this unusual notion. His observations with regard to the dark silver colour of his imaginary Nestor's cup are still worthy of attention[160] even if some of his 20th century readers have no taste for allegory[161]. M. Robertson's view comes closest to ours: for all that references to silver-footed Thetis or Aphrodite show that silver could be, indeed ideally was, white, they would not »rule out a taste at a given time and place for tarnished vessels«[162].

We would simply argue that there was a tolerance for patination in classical Greece and Etruria, especially in maritime centres. There is, however, an additional reason why silver at Athens in particular may have been 'dusky'. Bad water, adduced by Athenaeus as a reason why silver might become oxidized[163], was a problem. Vitruvius describes how Athenian water brought in by conduits had »a foam floating on top, like purple glass in colour« so that people only used it for washing and took drinking water from wells[164]. This sounds like a recipe for oxidation. Fumigation too, would have had a similar effect on silver, for if Homeric precedent was followed (as it seems to have been)[165] both houses and storerooms might be cleansed by burning sulphur[166]. Both sweaty hands and flatulence would also have contributed to making silver 'dusky', and Herodotus' surprise both that Egyptians drank from bronze instead of from, presumably, silver vessels, and that »they all without exception scoured them clean every day«[167] suggests that 5th century Greeks may have been indifferent to oxidation. Egyptians, moreover, were said by Pliny to »stain silver« and »strange to relate the value of the silver is enhanced when its splendour has been sullied«[168]. This is surely an archaic remnant of a once widespread practice.

[158] e. g. Robertson, Beazley 22; Boardman, Silver 282.

[159] Ibid. Even if Boardman is correct in his view that black was the colour chosen by Greek potters to imitate white silver (ibid. 284) the point remains that pottery was subservient to silverware.

[160] Ath. 11, 489 e.

[161] e. g. C. B. Gulick, Athenaeus, Loeb edn. V (1933) 170, cited with approval by Boardman, Silver 283. The roots of classicists' antipathy to allegory seem to lie in J. J. Winckelmann's ›Versuch einer Allegorie, besonders für die Kunst‹, in: J. Winckelmanns sämtliche Werke IX (1825); Winckelmann's patron took slight notice: see E. Schröter on the complex allegory of the fresco decoration of the Villa Albani in: H. Beck – P. C. Bol (eds.), Forschungen zur Villa Albani. Antike Kunst und die Epoche der Aufklärung (1982) 185–299, esp. 189.

[162] Robertson, Beazley 22.

[163] Ath. 2, 46 b.

[164] Vitr. 8, 3, 6.

[165] R. Parker, Miasma (1983) 227 f.

[166] Od. 22, 481 f. 493. Sulphur was also used to clean a vessel of precious metal at Il. 16, 228.

[167] Hdt. 2, 37.

[168] Plin. nat. 33, 10, 56.

Fig. 1. Tondo ornament of a silver 'Acrocup'. Leningrad, Hermitage SBr. IV.15

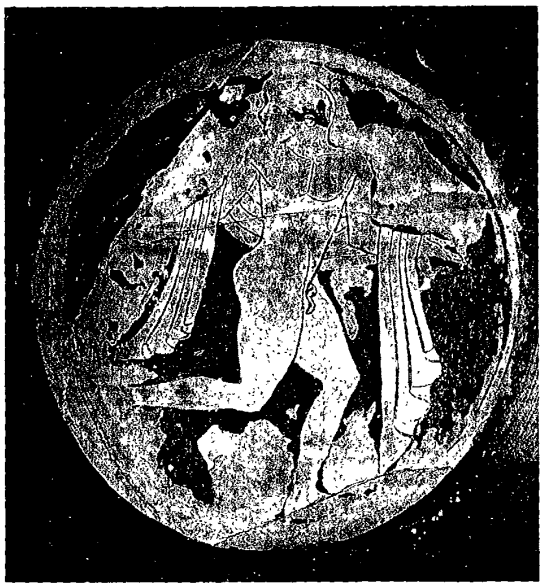


Fig. 2. Tondo ornament of a pottery 'Acrocup'. Oxford, Ashmolean Mus. 1923.73

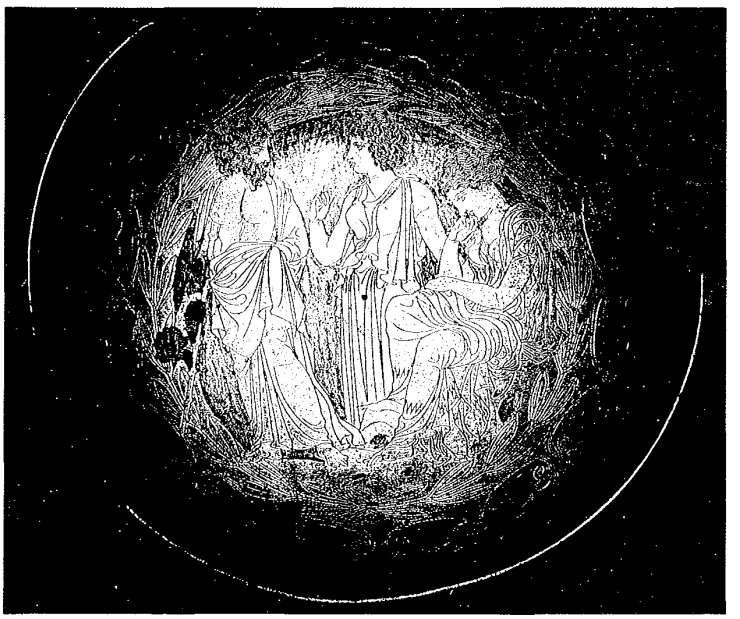


Fig. 3. Gold-figure ornament in the tondo of a silver cup.
Leningrad, Hermitage SBr. VI.11

f. Gold-figure and red-figure

Some pieces of extant plate are decorated with gold figures and invite comparison with Athenian figured ceramics. The best known examples are the four silver cups in Leningrad and the kantharos and phiale in Plovdiv. The sizes of the surviving gold-figure vessels are small, so that comparisons with pottery are inevitably limited. Nevertheless, the simple border of the tondo of the Leningrad 'Acrocup' (Hermitage SBr. IV.15, Fig. 1) is similar to that of e. g. an 'Acrocup' in Oxford (Ashmolean Mus. 1923.73, Fig. 2). The deep incisions on the wings of the Nike of the former have the same tactile effect as the so-called relief lines in red-figure, and perhaps provide a reason for an otherwise inexplicable phenomenon. The finely incised lines on the Nike's tunic occur where 'dilute lines' appear in red-figure, and again there may be a connection[169]. The engraving of the hair of the gold figures on the slightly larger cup Leningrad, Hermitage SBr. VI.11 (Fig. 3) appears black, and we would thus challenge Boardman's claim that there is no black hair on gold-figure[170].

[169] This would seem to meet the reservations of both Robertson, Beazley 22, and Cook, Commentary 171.
[170] Boardman, Silver 287.

The similarity of the red of red-figure to gold has also been challenged[171], but 'ruddy gold' was a commonplace in the Near East, Greece and Rome for pure metal. »Buy half a pound of red gold of very fine quality with my silver« an Assyrian asked of his servant[172]. Theognis writes of »refined gold, ruddy (ἐρυθρόν) to look upon«[173], and for Pliny »fire serves as a test of [gold's] goodness, making it assume a similar red hue (*rubeat*) and itself becomes the colour of fire«[174]. Furthermore, ancient gold from excavations often bears a ruddy deposit[175]. In any case, the semantic range of ἐρυθρός/red is very wide (compare that of μέλας, encompassing everything between 'gun-metal grey' and 'black')[176], and it is unremarkable that a similarly wide range of hues was adopted for the decoration of the ceramic analogues of silverware. But to suggest that it would have been as easy for potters to use real gold to create a golden effect[177] is unrealistic, for to have done so would have added a great deal to the price of a pot[178], but value enhancement is perhaps the reason behind the occasional practice of touching up details on red-figure pots with real gold. There is, moreover, a need for research on the origins of amalgam gilding of silver in Persia and Greece (the two must be interrelated)[178a].

g. Other genres: 'token plate'

Arguments regarding the skeuomorphic status of other genres of pot decoration (black-figure = silver on bronze[179], then silver against gold; white = ivory, and purple = copper) have been presented elsewhere, as has the view that the orange-red of Hellenistic and Roman wares reflects widespread use of gold in rich households in those periods[180]. If one attempts to answer the question as to why this limited

[171] Boardman, Silver 286.

[172] M. Ichisar, Les archives cappadociennes du marchand Imdilum (1981) 228. Cf. the footstool covered with 'ruddy gold'; hoes of 'ruddy gold'; wood covered with 34 talents of 'ruddy gold'; an incense altar of 'ruddy gold': D. D. Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia II (1927) nos. 601. 674. 761 B. 883. 1001.

[173] Theogn. 449.

[174] Plin. nat. 33, 19, 59.

[175] e. g. V. N. Basilov, Nomads of Eurasia (1989) 29.

[176] H. Dürbeck, Zur Charakteristik der griechischen Farbenzeichnungen (1977) 121 123. 151–168.

[177] Boardman, Silver 286.

[178] »In the Classical Greek period gilding was carried out with metal foil ... the thickness of strong paper«: Strong, GRGSP 11. Gold leaf was valuable enough to be itemised in the Erechtheum inventories: G. P. Stevens–J. M. Paton, The Erechtheum (1927) 397 (a few cm^2 for 2 drachmas).

[178a] see, however, P. R. S. Moorey, IrAnt 23, 1988, 231–246.

[179] A position already adopted by R. Ginouvès, L'Art grec (1964) 80, but one rejected by Boardman, Silver on the positivistic grounds that no such bronze vessels survive; for other objects which do, see Vickers, Artful Crafts 119 n. 110 (add the strigil Cambridge Fitzwilliam Mus. GR. 162.1890). M. Robertson, Vase painting, in: The Human Figure in Early Greek Art, Exhibition Washington DC (1988) 39, has softened his position: »[The Attic black-figure] style cannot have much relation to drawing on wall or panel; its connections seem rather with metalwork ...« and in the case of red-figure, »the direct influence of the potter's technique may be from metalwork rather than painting«.

[180] Vickers, Artful Crafts 119; M. Vickers–J. Allan–O. Impey, From Silver to Ceramic (1986) pls. 27–30.

range of effects was attempted by Greek and Roman potters, work in precious materials provides the only logical, internally consistent, answer. When, moreover, we take into account ancient value systems (and the relative values of pottery and plate)[181] then decorated metalwork is the only reasonable solution.

We do not suggest that deceit was involved, as with the 4th century Athenian husband who spoke of deceiving his wife with »counterfeit coins and necklaces of gilt wood«[182]. The ceramic trade served purposes which were different from those met by silversmiths. Its products might be used to provide 'token plate': the form, without undue expense, of an elaborate Etruscan funeral, or the makings of an inexpensive symposium for those unable to afford the real thing. We do not argue for »slavish imitation«[183] preferring to speak of potters and pot-painters »consciously echoing« or »evoking« the appearance of precious materials as best they could given the materials they had and the financial constraints within which they worked. We have noted that the prices of ceramic vessels of any kind were low. How different was the world of the silversmith: Pliny, a puritan avant la lettre, laments the »prodigality of our inventiveness. In how many ways have we raised the prices of objects! The art of drawing (*picturae*) has come in addition, and we have made gold and silver dearer by the art of engraving (*caelandi*) ... The enticements of the vices have augmented even art. It has pleased us to engrave scenes of licence upon our drinking cups, and to drink through the midst of obscenities. Afterwards these were flung aside and began to be held of no account, when there was an excess of gold and silver«[184]. This both reflects the nature of some pre-Hellenistic table furniture, and hints at value enhancement by decoration. There may indeed be room for 'artistic rivalry', but in a more believable context than in the area of ceramics.

Art and Quality

Robertson rightly points to the very high quality of some painted pottery and the skill with which scenes are composed and applied. We would not dispute this, but would argue that such excellence of design was a by-product of work of high standards achieved in more noble materials, and in more difficult techniques than

[181] Available evidence suggests that if a pot (painted or not) cost one unit, an equivalent silver vessel would cost 750--1000 units, and a gold one 9750–13,000 (M. Vickers in: H. A. G. Brijder [ed.], Ancient Greek and Related Pottery, Allard Pierson Series 5 [1985] 90 n. 26).

[182] Xen. oec. 10, 3.

[183] Boardman, Silver 286; Robertson, Beazley 24. The use of 'slavish' is significant, for since the Enlightenment Greek artists are supposed to have been 'Born free': P. d'Hancarville, Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities from the Cabinet of the Hon. W. Hamilton II (1766 [1768]) 48. Cf. G. Semper, Der Stil II (1863) 134: »In Gegensatz zu den Barbaren war den Griechen die Töpferei eine freie Kunst«. It is perhaps relevant that the only Athenian pot-painter whose civil status is known for certain was a slave: F. Canciani–G. Neumann, AntK 21, 1978, 17–22.

[184] Plin. nat. 33, 1, 4. 5.

ceramic[185]. The high quality plate made for elites would have set standards which potters had of necessity to emulate if they were to continue to furnish Etruscan tombs or the tables of those unable to afford precious metal.

The 'trickle-down effect' has been defined as »the tendency ... for new styles or fashions in consumption goods to be introduced via the socio-economic elite and then to pass down through the status hierarchy, often in the form of inexpensive mass-produced copies«[186]. And this is the model which we believe existed in archaic and classical Greece. Robertson has a clever argument in which he suggests that because Fabergé, »a talented manipulator of expensive substances«, was »not the most influential name in the art of his time« is but »a footnote in the history of art«, then any case for originality being usually found in more expensive materials and imitation in cheaper is thereby weakened[187]. But to some extent this is a self-serving argument, for the 'history of art' has for the most part been written by the high-minded for the enlightened and, as we have seen, tends to eschew work in precious metal; it also overlooks the role of the arts in an autocratic and fragmented society[188]. The contemporary *fortuna*, in a more open society, of the Duchess of Windsor's Cartier jewels provides a more suitable parallel. Robertson again invokes the 'history of art' to give Cellini's 'big bronze Perseus' a privileged position vis-à-vis his 'great salt at Vienna'. The 'history of art' is largely written on the basis of what survives, and is itself an often unconscious victim of the 'positivist fallacy'. Cellini was thus perhaps an unfortunate choice to make, for »almost all of Cellini's work in precious metals has been lost«[189] just as, or so we would claim, has almost all of the silver- and gold-figure plate made for wealthy clients in the classical world. It is only thanks to Roman antiquarians and historians of art, writing after »drinking cups engraved with scenes of licence« had been »flung aside« (i. e. melted down), and consequently using as limited a sample as we have of Cellini's work, that we know the names of even a few of the artists and craftsmen active as designers and makers of vessels of precious metal.

The quality of lost work in gold and silver is attested in the reaction of ancient observers. Indeed, aesthetic reactions to artefacts in antiquity tend to relate to vessels of precious metal. Thus Herodotus, in describing Theodore of Samos' silver crater at Delphi: »the workmanship does not appear to be what one meets every day«[190]; Thucydides (the director of a gold-mine) said of the plate in a temple at Eryx that »most of the vessels were only of silver, and therefore they made a show quite out

[185] Cf. J. Collins, The Omega Workshops [London 1983] 6: »In one case, metalwork, the technique involved was so complex that no amount of inspiration alone would allow an artist to work in that field ... [consequently] metalwork could not be attempted at all«.

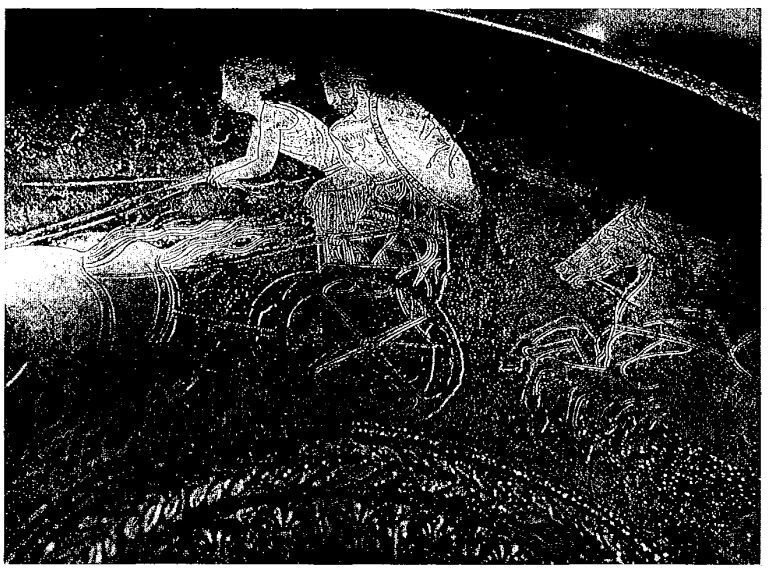
[186] L. A. Fallers in: R. Bendix—S. M. Lipset (eds.), Class, Status and Power[2] (1967) 402.

[187] Robertson, Beazley 24.

[188] B. Brutzkus, The Historical Peculiarities of the Social and Economic Development of Russia, in: Bendix—Lipset, op. cit. 121—134.

[189] J. Pope-Hennessy, Cellini (1985) 7.

[190] Hdt. 1, 51, 4.



Figs. 4 and 5. Gold-figure Attic silver phiale, details. Plovdiv, Museum 1515

of proportion to their value«[191]; and Demosthenes paid close interest to both the appearance and workmanship of a Persian gold drinking cup[192]. The quality of extant work in gold and silver is not as well known as it should be. The gold-figure phiale in Plovdiv[193] is a case in point. Its weight of 100 Attic drachmae[194] suggests that it may have been made at Athens. It shows an apobates race[195], and is full of finely observed characterisation. One youthful charioteer is shown with his hair swept back, and the first down just visible on his receding chin (Fig. 4); another, more squarely built, bares his teeth in grim determination to win (Fig. 5). The horses are exquisitely rendered, with tossing heads and flaring nostrils, impressive musculature and flowing tails. This is Athenian craftmanship and design of the highest order, but the surprising thing is that although the Duvanli phiale has been known for more than fifty years, it never appears in histories of Greek art. It may be that since it was thought to copy a ceramic technique, that it overstepped the bounds of 'good taste', that it was somehow 'Kitsch'. Such considerations did not of course apply in antiquity, and the boot may be on the other foot, and ceramic be the subsidiary medium.

Painted pottery is, however, rightly regarded as a prime source for understanding how Western art evolved at an early stage in its development[196]. Since many of the surviving pots are well made and skilfully decorated, they have come to be regarded as representative of the very highest artistic output of Athens. We would argue that the spectrum of artistic activity at Athens was immensely wider, and that even greater skills were expended on the decoration of figured plate. The ancient 'trickle-down' will have been aided by the circulation of *graphides*, parchment designs for metalwork still being used by craftsmen in Pliny's day[197]. Once bespoken plate was made, the designs were redundant, but they might still exert an influence on the decorators of fictile vases. The inscriptions which survive on the latter have been taken as evidence that »many [potters] could read and write: they were proud of their work and signed it with their names: they labeled figures and cited this or that young man as *kalos*«[198]. But there are many oddities and discrepancies in the way in which signatures occur on pots. There are very few in any case, which is why Beazley had to invent so many 'artists' to give to the hands he identified[199]. We now, though, have the strange situation where both Beazley's 'Triptolemus painter' and his 'Douris' sign themselves as Douris[200], and works signed by Polygnotus are divided between three, if not four,

[191] Thuc. 6, 46, 3.

[192] Plut. Dem. 25, 3.

[193] B. Filow, Die Grabhügelnekropole bei Duvanlij (1934) 63–65 fig. 80; C. Danov–T. Ivanov, Antique Tombs in Bulgaria (1980) pl. 16.

[194] D. W. J. Gill, Omnibus 15, March 1988, 10–12.

[195] For silver phialai and cups as prizes at games, see Pind. Nem. 10, 43; Ol. 9, 89 f.

[196] e. g. M. Robertson, History of Greek Art (1975) p. XVII f.; id., Beazley 29.

[197] Plin. nat. 35, 68.

[198] Boegehold, Amasis 29.

[199] Beard, Signed.

[200] It is hoped that D. Buitron will deal with this crucial problem in her forthcoming monograph on 'Douris'.

of Beazley's 'vase-painters'[201]. We now have two Lydoi[202] although the extant pots bearing their names are not by the same hands. The possibility that pot-painters drew much of their inspiration, and inscribed on their pots names, whether of designers[203], craftsmen[204] or aristocratic youths[205], in evocation of words they saw on silversmiths' designs, should not be lightly dismissed. E. Gerhard once composed extensive lists of pots on which there occur both recognisable Greek words and gibberish, long meaningless inscriptions written in Greek characters, repetitions of arbitrary assemblages of characters, and inscriptions placed by mistake against the wrong figure[206]. These need to be explained before exaggerated claims are made on behalf of Greek ceramics. E. Dodd has made the appealing suggestion that craftsmen's names on classical Greek gold and silver plate would have »served to guarantee the quality of the metal«[207]. If so, their repetition on the down-market pots would have been another acknowledgement by potters of the materials they were emulating.

T. B. L. Webster identified a real problem when he discussed the discrepancy inherent in the fact that the best surviving Attic pottery was apparently made for one public (Athenian aristocrats), but seems to have been used by another (foreigners, as grave goods). He reconciled this by suggesting that sets of ceramic dining equipment were bespoken for a single Athenian symposium, and that they quickly found their way on to the second hand market, and thence into tombs abroad[208]. Although few have followed Webster, the difficulty remains. It can, however, be met if Athenian aristocrats did behave as the literary sources suggest and drank from gold and silver vessels, and that our pots were made in evocation of them to be spacefillers for merchants trading in goods of greater commercial significance.

Context

The contexts in which Greek pots have been found raise many questions which have rarely been tackled. It has been estimated that some 90% of extant fine Greek pottery comes from Etruscan tombs[209], but this is partly due to the fact that the survival of complete pots depends on the existence of well-built burial chambers. The Etruscans were famous for luxury (in the ancient sense of the word), although

[201] Vickers, Artful Crafts 126.

[202] F. Canciani – G. Neumann, AntK 21, 1978, 17–22.

[203] *egrapsen* inscriptions.

[204] *epoiesen* inscriptions.

[205] *kalos* inscriptions. On which see S. C. Humphreys, Anthropology and the Greeks (1978) 291 n. 54: »There is no reason to suppose that vases with *kalos*-names were only produced on special commission; they are the ancient equivalent of tee-shirts printed 'I love Ringo'«.

[206] E. Gerhard, Rapporto intorno i vasi volcenti (1831) 170–175. A metalworking explanation would also explain the errors in nomenclature on pots isolated by C. Sourvinou-Inwood, Theseus as Son and Stepson (1979).

[207] E. C. Dodd, Byzantine Silver Stamps (1961) 3.

[208] T. B. L. Webster, Potter and Patron (1972) p. XIII.

[209] J. Hemelrijk, VerAmstMeded 34, October 1985, 4.

our only real glimpse of their dining practices dates to the 1st century B. C. Even then, though, they are still eating and drinking from silver[210]. An index of their earlier wealth may be gained from the fact that when the Etruscan harbour town of Pyrgi was sacked by Greeks in the 4th century, booty to the value of 40 tonnes of silver was carried off[211]. But the idea that decorated pots were objects of value – 'luxury items' – has coloured interpretations of the archaeological record. »Corinthian vases« we are told, »were being carried for their own sakes, as objets d'art, or at least best plate«, while Athenian black-figure pots »must certainly have been carried for their intrinsic value«[212], while silver itself was »not an ordinary commodity of trade«, being »simply wealth«[213]. There are frequent echoes even today of G. M. A. Richter's early work on the distribution pattern of Attic pottery: »It may seem to us curious that the Greeks, who were known for their inborn good taste, should have been satisfied with inferior goods, while they sent their best work to a people who could hardly appreciate with the same fulness the exquisite beauty and finish of the articles they imported in such quantities«[214].

There does, however, remain the problem of the nature of grave goods. H. Hoffmann, following Gordon Childe, has recently suggested that in sophisticated societies such as Etruria or Athens, people were buried with surrogate goods rather than valuables (and he sees the Greek ceramics from Etruria in this light)[215]. Athens is even more difficult to elucidate, for if I. Morris' calculation that we only have a sample of the graves of 1.7% of the total population is correct, the tombs so far discovered clearly cannot provide a cross-section of Athenian society[216]. In any case, Athenian elites would scarcely figure in the archaeological record, for unlike wealthy Etruscans, they tended to practise cremation[217]. These are not easy issues, but the assumption that tomb goods were necessarily of high monetary value in the eyes of contemporaries is coming to seem overly simplistic. Hoffmann's position could benefit from further investigation, but even if it proves not to be borne out every-

[210] Diod. 5, 40; M. Vickers, Hephaistos 7/8, 1985/1986, 165.

[211] Diod. 15, 337.

[212] J. Boardman, Greeks Overseas (1980) 17. Boardman, Trade 28, has, however, recently begun to use 'intrinsic' in the opposite, correct, sense.

[213] Ibid. 28. This is not borne out by the Naucratis stele set up in 380 B. C. by Nektanebis I, where tithes were imposed on both »the gold and the silver, of the timber and the worked wood, and of everything which comes from the Greek Sea« and »the gold and silver and of all things which are produced in ... Naukratis«. Transl. B. Gunn, JEA 29, 1943, 58. Xenophon, vect. 3, 1 f., too, states that silver was regularly used for trading purposes.

[214] G. M. A. Richter, BSA 11, 1904/05, 237; cf. Boardman's animadversions on the »artistically immature and impoverished« Etruscans, Boardman, op. cit. (above n. 212) 199.

[215] H. Hoffmann, Hephaistos 9, 1988, 143–162; cf. V. Gordon Childe, Progress and Archaeology (1944) 78–97, esp. 86. Cf. Vickers, loc. cit. (above n. 210) 165: »[In Etruria] pottery provided ... the rich with the show, but not the expense, of an elaborate funeral«.

[216] I. Morris, Burial and Ancient Society. The Rise of the Greek City State (1987) 99–101.

[217] For what can be known, see D. W. J. Gill, Antiquity 62, 1988, 737 f.; cf. M. Vickers in: H. A. G. Brijder (ed.), Ancient Greek and Related Pottery, Allard Pierson Series 5 (1985) 95.

where, it at least attempts to grapple with issues involved, as does R. Osborne's analysis of the iconography of death which has superseded less sophisticated approaches[218].

Likewise, because 'fine' pottery has been found in both urban and rural dwelling sites, it is often assumed that pots were valuable[219]. It should be recognised that when a house was vacated everything of value was removed, and that all that remained were objects of no intrinsic value[220]. But the distribution of painted pots in domestic contexts is a topic which requires further study.

Conclusion

It has been maintained that »personalities ... should be the aim of any successful classification« of ancient artefacts[221], but in the discussion and display of objects we all too readily focus on the craftsmen who made them[222], rather than on who commissioned, used and viewed them. In the case of Greek pots this is a matter of little importance. The best we can do is to use ceramics to give insights into other crafts where patronage was an important matter, for iconographical and iconological purposes, to reconstruct trade patterns, or to assist with dating. They can help elucidate social history, but here again they should be used with care. O. Murray has persuasively argued for the symposium having been a characteristically aristocratic institution, but is willing to see painted ceramic playing a major role[223]; some students of the symposium, however, regard the ubiquity of sympotic pots (albeit mostly from Etruscan tombs) as an indication that the symposium was less restricted, more civic, in scope[224]. Perhaps it was, but either way, a level of society which regularly used plate needs to be inserted into our picture of Greek life. Research urgently needs to be done to establish the level at which painted pottery might have regularly been used in Athenian society. Classical archaeology has not yet begun to contribute to the debate on the ancient economy. Indeed, given the values shared by most of its practitioners it probably could never do so. Likewise, much potentially valuable work has been done by structuralists, but without much awareness of the status of the material they discuss.

[218] R. Osborne, Art History 11, 1988, 1–16.

[219] e. g. »The material dumped in [a house near the Agora] included fine pottery which shows that the inhabitants of this modest house were not so poor as one might expect« H. A. Thompson – R. E. Wycherley, The Agora of Athens, Agora XIV (1972) 174; the discovery of a clay red-figure bell-crater was thought to be evidence for »a typical prosperous Athenian family« having occupied an Attic farmhouse. J. E. Jones – L. H. Sackett – A. J. Graham, BSA 57, 1962, 100.

[220] Even at the Dema house, most of the tiles had been taken away: Ibid. 83. 101 n. 26; cf. J. E. Jones – A. J. Graham – L. H. Sackett, BSA 68, 1973, 360; R. S. Young, Hesperia 20, 1951, 195.

[221] J. Boardman, Gnomon 42, 1970, 495.

[222] Cf. Beard, Signed.

[223] O. Murray, Concilium Eirene, 1, Proc. of the 16th Int. Eirene Conf. Prag 1982 (1982) 49; id. in: E. Gabba (ed.), Tria Cordia. Scritti in honore di Arnaldo Momigliano (1983) 264.

[224] e. g. P. Schmitt-Pantel, MEFRA 97, 1985, 135–158; La Cité des Images, Inst. d'arch. et d'hist. anc. Lausanne – Centre de rech. comp. sur les soc. anc. Paris (1984); F. Lissarague, Un flot d'images (1987).

Connoisseurship – »mere classification of vase paintings«[225] – has little place in historical scholarship, although it clearly serves a useful purpose in the art market[226]. But now that Greek ceramics are a controversial area, some collectors are understandably cautious about investing in them[227]. So long as they realise that what they are collecting are 'bygones'[228], the products of 'craft' rather than 'art', comparatively little harm is done. If, however, they – or anyone else – continue to accept the value judgements to be found in most current catalogues and handbooks dealing with Greek ceramics, then the past will continue to be impoverished[229] – to the detriment of our understanding of it.

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[225] G. F. Bass, Archaeology 42/41, 1989, 55.

[226] Cf. Beard, Signed.

[227] Cf. Mr. Hattatt's foresight in selling his collection of Greek pots: Sotheby Catalogue, December 10–11, 1984.

[228] Cf. W. C. Ketchum Jr., Collecting Bottles for Fun and Profit (1985); Elmer L. Smith, From Trash to Treasure. Contemporary Collectibles (1979); M. Thompson, Rubbish Theory (1979).

[229] see further, M. Vickers, Antiquity 64, 1990 (forthcoming); id., AJA 94, 1990 (forthcoming); D. W. J. Gill, ibid.