

## I

## Introduction

**Five contrasts**

In 850 BC, or thereabouts, in Athens a woman of middling years died and was cremated. Her cremated remains were placed in an urn, which was buried with some ceremony in the already large cemetery of the Kerameikos. Her cremation urn, a vessel form known as belly-handled amphora (plate 21), is decorated in what is called the Geometric style, a style that eschews imagery and relies exclusively on linear, geometric decorative forms. To be pedantic, the style of the vessel can be assigned to the transition between Early Geometric II and Middle Geometric I. For me, this is one of the more impressive and memorable objects on display in the Kerameikos Museum. The care with which it was made and decorated is clear, both in the use of the lustrous black paint, and in the precision with which the decoration is applied. It is painted with care and, one might say, love.

In contemplating this vase we are, however, necessarily confronted with certain difficulties. We may appreciate its formal qualities, its shape and decoration, but remain unable to offer any convincing interpretation of its 'meaning'. We may be struck by its qualities of restraint, order and clarity, but we are unable to relate these qualities to their original social or cultural milieu. We may speculate as to the relationship between the woman interred and the vase chosen as her urn. We may wonder how this case could 'register' the conditions that surrounded its creation. We may even hope to find a means whereby the vases of this period 'may be addressed as lenses bearing on their own circumstances' (Baxandall 1980, vii). The problem we face is not unusual: it is typical of many archaeological problems. How can we relate our desire to understand the traces of persons far removed from our own cultural experience (what we might call hermeneutics) to our immediate perception of and enjoyment in a tangible physical object (what we might call aesthetics)?

But compare this Geometric vase with a later example of the art of the Attic painter and potter. Plate 1 shows a sixth-century black-figure belly amphora in the Museum of Boulogne-sur-Mer (Boulogne 558), a vase attributed to the potter and painter Exekias. Many of the visual qualities we admire in this vase – the effect of the lustrous black paint, the careful execution of the decoration (including the scene), the overall impression of order and restraint – could be applied with equal force to the ninth-century vase. It might even seem reasonable to speak of such qualities as being inherent in the Attic tradition of pot painting (we will come to the difficulties with such a statement in a moment). But anyone viewing both vases must be struck by one obvious difference. The vase by Exekias depicts a scene, a scene which, if we know some Greek

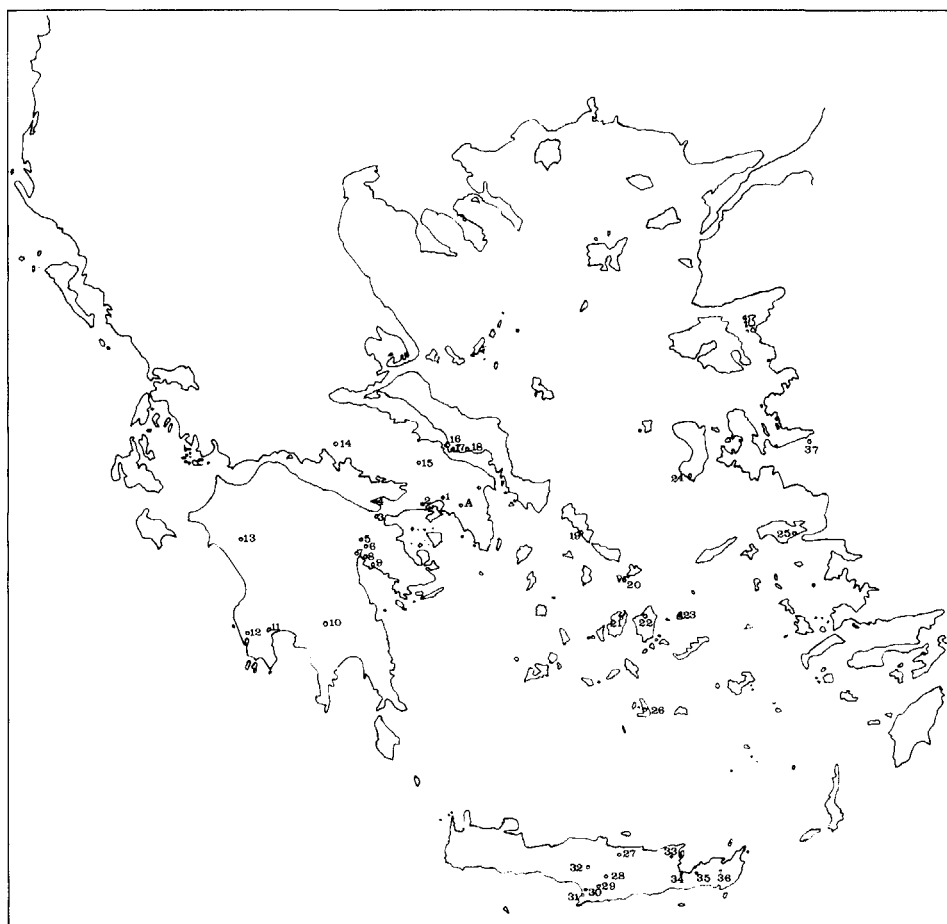
myth and have read some Sophocles, we can recognise. It is this recognition that makes the vase comprehensible. For it allows us to place the scene in the wider context of Greek myth. The hero Aias was angered by losing to Odysseus in the contest for the arms of the dead Achilles, and resolved to avenge this humiliation. But he was driven mad by Athena, and, instead of killing his rivals, slaughtered a herd of cattle. After this double humiliation, he decided to kill himself. The scene on the vase shows Aias preparing for his suicide. He has taken off his armour, and is placing his sword in the sand. The moment of his immolation is anticipated, but not shown. Such reticence is in marked contrast to earlier depictions, which had shown the suicide of Aias in all its gory detail (see Hurwit 1985a, 228, 271–2).

Many of the qualities we perceive in this vase depend upon our recognition of the scene, and what it implies. In recognising that the scene anticipates but does not depict the moment of self-immolation, we are made conscious of its reticence, its restraint. Our understanding hinges on two features which are not available for the earlier vase: the fact that there is a scene, an image, and the fact that the scene is made recognisable from our acquaintance with Greek literature.

Does then the absence of images make the task of understanding the Geometric vase an impossible one? Not completely. Clearly there is nothing to be recognised in the ninth-century vase, in the way that a scene can be recognised on the vase by Exekias. But our appreciation of both vases and of their qualities can be enhanced by purely archaeological comparison. The Boulogne vase may be compared with earlier examples, such as a relief from Paestum, or contemporary examples from Etruria, and these comparisons sharpen our sense of its restraint, and of the Attic qualities of its draughtsmanship. Similarly, there is a range of Attic vases which offer fruitful comparisons with the urn from Grave G41 in the Kerameikos. We can compare the form and decoration of these vessels, and compare the contexts from which they come. There are later examples of this vase form too. It has developed from its role as an urn into a monumental grave marker. Athens NM 804 (plates 28 and 29) stands at the end of this development. Our understanding of this vase is enhanced by an awareness of its precursors, their form, size and decoration, and their use.

In one respect we know more about the Geometric vase than the one by Exekias. For we know something of its context. We know of its use as an urn, that it was used to contain the ashes of a woman, and we know of the other artefacts that were associated with it in the grave. No such information survives for the Boulogne vase; and the probability that it was recovered from an Etruscan context makes its relationship both to the society that produced it (Athens) and to the society that used it – probably but not certainly Etruria (Beazley 1956, 145) – even more problematic.

Nor are images necessarily helpful in themselves. Plate 2 shows a close up of a representation from a ninth-century burial urn, a PGB straight-sided pithos from the Fortetsa cemetery near Knossos. We can certainly trace the antecedents of this image (Alexiou 1958), and we know of other contemporary examples from graves in and around Knossos (Coldstream 1984). But this does not refer to anything we think we understand, such as a known myth. Whether or not it depicts a ‘nature goddess’ is a matter for inconclusive speculation. No one analysed the cremated remains from this



- |    |                               |    |                         |
|----|-------------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| A  | Athens                        | 19 | Zagora                  |
| 1  | Eleusis                       | 20 | Delos                   |
| 2  | Megara                        | 21 | Koukounaries (on Paros) |
| 3  | Corinth                       | 22 | Grotta (on Naxos)       |
| 4  | Perachora                     | 23 | Dhonoussa               |
| 5  | Mycenae                       | 24 | Emborio (on Chios)      |
| 6  | The Argive Heraeum (Prosymna) | 25 | Samos                   |
| 7  | Argos                         | 26 | Thera (Santorini)       |
| 8  | Tiryns                        | 27 | Knossos                 |
| 9  | Asine                         | 28 | Prinias (Rhizenia)      |
| 10 | Sparta                        | 29 | Gortys (Gortyn)         |
| 11 | Nichora (in Messenia)         | 30 | Phaistos                |
| 12 | Pylos (Ano Englianos)         | 31 | Kommos                  |
| 13 | Olympia                       | 32 | The Idaean Cave         |
| 14 | Delphi                        | 33 | Dreros                  |
| 15 | Thebes                        | 34 | Vrokastro               |
| 16 | Chalkis (in Euboea)           | 35 | Kavousi                 |
| 17 | Lefkandi (in Euboea)          | 36 | Praisos                 |
| 18 | Eretria (in Euboea)           | 37 | Old Smyrna              |

Fig. 1 Map of Greece, showing sites mentioned in the text

urn, so we cannot relate either the image, the decoration as a whole, or the choice of this kind of urn to the personal circumstances of the deceased, as we can for the Attic Geometric vase.

A consideration of this Knossian vase may also sharpen our appreciation of Attic restraint. For the Knossian vase is anything but restrained; it shows an interest in new motifs, derived from metalworking; it is experimental, if not entirely successfully so. But we would be deceived if we thought that restraint was always the distinguishing feature of Attic vase painting. The Polyphemus vase (plate 3), which is seventh-century in date and was found in Eleusis in Attica, is anything but restrained. It shows an interest in outlandish ways of depicting myths, in this case Perseus and the Gorgons, that requires the interpretation of the imagery to be more than the mere act of recognising the scene. Like the Knossian vase, it is gaudy and undisciplined. The question we should be asking ourselves is not, then, what are the perennial features of Attic vase painting but under what circumstances are restraint, discipline and economy on the one hand and experimentalism, gaudiness and outlandishness on the other favoured by particular communities? What determines taste in these matters? The old answer is artistic practice, invoked either as tradition or as individual idiosyncrasy, but this answer will not do. History is littered with experiments that were never taken up, and with traditions that were abruptly abandoned. What makes certain art styles, certain forms of artistic practice, propitious, and in what circumstances?

An historical analogy may illuminate this point. Around AD 1490 or 1492 a German artist, Tilman Riemenschneider, made a decisive break with the usual practice of 'Florid' German limewood sculptors. He decided that his carvings for a retable altarpiece should not be painted. The vivid colours that had been customary until that time were not used, and his carvings were finished with a simple brown glaze. This innovation precedes the German Reformation by some decades. But it does not precede a certain religious unease about images. Michael Baxandall (1980, 172–90) shows how Riemenschneider's abandonment of polychromy and his search for less seductive, more purely spiritual aesthetic effects was in part a response to a debate about the role of images in Christian devotion. Polychrome images had been criticised precisely because they were too realistic; they spoke too much of this world, of the donor's wealth and of the artist's skill. There were of course respectable defences of the use of images in Christian devotion, referring to the miracle of the incarnation. But certain popular images, such as those of the Virgin dressed as a pretty young woman, had attracted particular criticism. Such images were too worldly, too seductive; they encouraged idolatry and carnal, not spiritual, thoughts. Baxandall shows how Riemenschneider's images register these anxieties, how they attempt to become truly spiritual images; concrete, but not worldly; real, but not seductive. The sculpture registers the anxieties of the age, anxieties which were later to erupt into iconoclasm in the German Reformation.

It may not be possible for an archaeologist to pick an artefact, and show how that object represents the age from which it came. The ninth-century vase I began with cannot be used to draw out the lineaments of a system of representations, a structure of social and ideological conventions, in the way that Michel Foucault (1970, 3–16) was

able to use Velazquez's *Las Meninas* as a visual representation of the conventions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thought. But, as I hope to show, this vase does indeed 'register' much of what was peculiar to ninth-century Athenian society. There are relationships between the conventions governing the decoration of this vase, and others like it, and a more general system of 'collective representations' which can be drawn out. But why, it may fairly be asked, should anyone consider this vase, and the society that created it, as important? It is time to consider the reasons for studying the period from which this vase comes, the Greek Dark Ages, and to uncover the process by which the Dark Ages became an object of historical interest.

### **The Greek Dark Ages: an historical object**

As Anthony Snodgrass (1971, 1–10) has shown, the Greeks themselves knew of no Dark Age. In so far as they held any views at all about their distant past, these contradicted one another. Hesiod (*Works and Days*, 110–201) saw human history as a slow moral decline, leading to his own most miserable age. Thucydides (*History* 1.3–15) on the other hand saw only technological and social progress, progress that culminated in the Athens of his own day. The Dark Age of Greece is our conception. It is a conception strongly coloured by our knowledge of the two literate civilisations that preceded and succeeded it: the bureaucratic, palace-centred world of Mycenaean Greece and the chaotic and creative Archaic age of Hellenic civilisation. To the text-based scholar it appears dark simply because little or no literature survives from it, and that which does (Homer) seems to refer to an earlier age. To the archaeologist it seems to be the poor relation, lacking the glamour of earlier and subsequent periods.

It is perhaps for these reasons that the Dark Ages of Greece have been so slow to enter into the academic consciousness of either classicists or archaeologists. The fits and starts through which Geometric and Protogeometric pottery were first assigned to their correct chronological position have been well described by R. M. Cook (1972, 300–3). Attention was first focussed upon (and knowledge virtually confined to) the Geometric style of Athens, particularly the 'Dipylon cemetery' at Piraeus Street, the first properly conducted diggings being those of Stais in 1891 (Brückner and Pernice 1893). Geometric vases had been turning up in illicit excavations for some time, and the quantity of material was sufficient for Sam Wide (1899a; 1899b; 1899c; 1900) successfully to characterise various regional styles. With excavations in Eleusis, Eretria, Knossos, Tiryns, Sparta and elsewhere it became apparent that Geometric was a more widespread phenomenon than was previously thought. It was left to Schweitzer (1917; 1918) to define the chronological relationships between the various schools, and to place and characterise an earlier phase, Protogeometric.

Yet in a sense the emergence of the Dark Age as a distinct entity is closely tied to the study of the earlier Mycenaean and Minoan civilisations. For with the recognition of the achievement of these societies, their palaces and citadels, their trade and literacy, the poverty of a later age began to seem the more poignant and mysterious. In many areas the investigation of this later period was an extension of the exploration of the history of the main palace sites. At Knossos this led to the excavation of the Fortetsa cemetery (Brock 1957), which provided one of the first continuous sequences to cover

the whole period from the end of Late Minoan III to the Orientalising period. Much Geometric had already turned up at Tiryns (Müller and Öelmann 1912), and systematic excavation of the acropolis at Mycenae by Wace led to the discovery of many Dark Age graves dug into or over places of earlier occupation (Wace 1979). In other areas there was a more conscious urge to 'fill the gap'. This was most thoroughly done through the German excavation of the Kerameikos in Athens (Kraiker and Kübler 1939; Kübler 1943; 1954). With Kahane's (1940) chronological classification of Attic Geometric and with the excavation and publication of the cemeteries at Fortetsa and the Kerameikos there were for the first time accurate and authoritative accounts of two local sequences. This stimulated further systematic excavation in the late forties and fifties into this period, in Corinth and in the Agora of Athens by the Americans and in Argos by the French (Courbin 1957; 1966; 1974). With the beginnings of rescue excavation in Greece the Greek Archaeological Service also began to uncover many Dark Age graves, particularly in Athens and Argos.

It is to Vincent Desborough, however, that most of the credit must be given for bringing the period into focus. For with the publication of his *Protogeometric Pottery* (1952) one could for the first time consider the earlier, Protogeometric phase as a unity throughout Greece. It was the first synthetic study, and it is more than a guide to the pottery. By comparing different local sequences he made it clear that the emergence of Protogeometric and the more general transition from Late Minoan and Mycenaean to later styles was by no means a simple process. There were peculiarities such as Submycenaean. There were gaps in the sequence in many parts of Greece, which had to be explained. He saw the problem of transition as largely an historical one, as a problem of reconstructing historical events from archaeological facts. A later work, *The Last Mycenaean and their Successors* (1964), is largely concerned with resolving these questions in this manner. In seeing culture change as a product of racial admixture he was in my view largely mistaken. But he was too scrupulous and judicious a man to be entirely convinced by any theory, even his own.

It may seem surprising that, though it was a pottery style which had been long recognised and clearly defined, the first synthetic account of Geometric pottery did not appear until Nicolas Coldstream had brought out his work of that name (Coldstream 1968). It is a comprehensive account of several regional styles and an invaluable guide to the pots themselves.

By the late 1960s therefore there were studies of the development of the pottery from 1100–700 BC (Desborough 1952; Coldstream 1968; and for 'Submycenaean' Styrenius 1967); published and studied sequences from Argos, Athens, Knossos and a few other sites; a few excavations of settlements completed or underway. There were also studies of metalwork which had appeared in *Olympische Forschungen* and in the Delphi and Delos publications. But no archaeological syntheses of the period as a whole had yet appeared. In the late 1960s and early 1970s this anomaly was rectified by the almost simultaneous publications of three works; Bouzek's *Homerisches Griechenland* (1969), Desborough's *The Greek Dark Ages* (1972) and Snodgrass' *The Dark Age of Greece* (1971). Desborough defined the Dark Ages as lasting from the fall of Mycenae (c. 1150 BC) until the beginnings of the Geometric style c. 900 BC. His con-

cern was much the same as in *The Last Mycenaeans and their Successors*: to try to reconstruct the events and the history following the collapse of Mycenaean civilisation. His attention was concentrated upon major sites whose pottery was well documented, such as Athens and Knossos, and for which there were *a posteriori* grounds for being regarded as important centres. This is not to say that he neglected other areas; on the contrary he examined and discussed every scrap of evidence. But it is fair to state that he saw the changes in Greek society at this time as having their origins in 'innovating centres' of which Athens, Argos and Knossos were the best examples.

Snodgrass' work (1971) is in two respects more comprehensive. Chronologically the period covered is longer, 1100–700 BC, and the definition of the Dark Age consequently somewhat broader. It is this definition that I shall be following. It is also broader in scope in its attempt to see the period and region as a whole and in setting the area more firmly in the context of developments in the eastern Mediterranean. It differs from Desborough's work in many other ways. There is a much greater emphasis on the material indices of decline and progress, and especially upon those indices whose characterisation would be uncontroversial. Technology and settlement pattern play as great a role as the innovations in pottery style.

As a result of these two works there was a much better understanding of the problems and peculiarities of the Dark Age. It was appreciated that the transition from Mycenaean to post-Mycenaean was a far from even process, and that a recognisably Late Mycenaean (LHIIIC) style of pottery continued in the islands long after it had perished in Athens; that, though the acceptance of Athenian innovation was rapid and widespread, there remained a number of local ceramic schools whose emergence and disappearance were often not understood; that there was an abundance of graves throughout Greece and especially at major sites, but a general paucity of settlement evidence; that the best-known domestic (settlement) sites were those abandoned in the seventh or sixth centuries, such as Emporio on Chios (Boardman 1967a), sites which were in many ways anomalous. Now that the chronological gap had been filled, questions of a more specific type could be addressed. Was the general paucity of sites, particularly of settlement remains, simply an artefact of archaeological inattention, or did it represent a real decline from the Bronze Age? Why, even when there had been contacts for some two centuries, did oriental styles only affect the mainland centres of Greece in the late eighth century?

These questions stimulated further research. Since 1969 a large number of settlements in the Cyclades, such as Koukounaries (Schilardi 1983), Zagora (Cambitoglou *et al.*, 1971; Cambitoglou 1981) and Dhonoussa (*AD B* 24, 1969, 390–3) and in other islands have come to light. With the simultaneous and systematic exploration of both Lefkandi and Eretria the relationship between the former, abandoned site and the later, probably eighth-century, foundation has been investigated. Archaeologists generally are more conscious of the significance of the period as a prelude to later Greek achievement. There have also been two further syntheses. Bernhard Schweitzer (1969) has brought together the art of the period and considered the relationships between the various craft traditions. Coldstream, in his *Geometric Greece* (1977) has continued the work of Desborough. He covers, in much the same way, the later Dark

Age of the ninth and tenth centuries. Attention is focussed upon the regions and their separate but parallel development. It is, again, an account of the period that concentrates upon the achievements of selected innovating centres.

Recently, more synthetic works, which focus on particular problems, have been undertaken by younger scholars. Kare Fagerstrom (1988), Alexander Mazarakis-Ainan and Alexandra Coucouzeli have re-examined Dark Age architecture and internal settlement organisation; Irene Lemos has re-examined the Protogeometric period as a whole; and Ian Morris (1985; 1987) has looked at Dark Age and Archaic burials in Athens. It is now perhaps time to outline my programme.

### The project

The main interest in the Dark Age (1100–700 BC) is not that it followed the Mycenaean but that it preceded Archaic and Classical Greece. The immediately post-Mycenaean period, though important, is of lesser significance. It was at the end of the eighth century that Greek society took on its most significant historical form, the *polis*. This is the institution that made the achievements of Classical Greece possible. But the emergence of the *polis* is not a purely Greek development. Its appearance is part of a wider transformation of the Mediterranean world, one that affected Italy and North Africa as much as Greece. At the beginning of the first millennium BC, the societies of the west and central Mediterranean were both isolated and impoverished, maintaining only tentative links with the urbanised and literate communities of the Levant. By 700 BC all this had changed. A trading network had been established linking Italy, North Africa, Greece and the Near East, a network which fostered an unprecedented exchange of ideas, goods and technologies. One of the technologies adopted from the Near East was alphabetic scripts, one of the ideas figurative art, both of which were put to uses which their Near Eastern inventors could not have imagined. Most of the goods and ideas came from the Levant, and for a time it might have seemed that the newly literate and only partially urbanised communities of Greece and Italy might have developed simply as the Mediterranean extension of Near Eastern civilisation. That they did not do so requires explanation, an explanation that will have to rely on more than the antiquated pieties of the ‘Greek genius’. This explanation must lie in the character of the social development that took place during the Dark Ages. To anticipate my conclusions somewhat, I would argue that it was a principle of social rationing (which characterised Athenian society in the ninth century) that facilitated a selective attitude towards what the Near East had to offer. It helped the Greeks, or at least the Athenians, to resist the allure of the Levant, and prevented Athenian society from becoming a mere dependency of a Levantine maritime civilisation. It is important to understand the nature of social change within Dark Age Greece if we are to gauge the nature and the effects of the response to Near Eastern ideas, art and technology when they became a pervasive feature of the Mediterranean in the eighth and seventh centuries BC. These responses were by no means uniform, either across the Mediterranean or even within Greece itself. This is not to deny that, at a very general level, conditions within Greece and, say, Etruria may have been similar, and that these conditions may have helped in the spread of trade and ideas. There is, for example,



evidence for a rise in population in both areas (Champion *et al.* 1984, 245–7), which is obviously important. But to explain the emergence of either Greek or Etruscan civilisation by attributing both to a rise in population is surely the worst kind of reductionism.

There is a subsidiary reason for wishing to study the second, Iron Age emergence of civilisation in the Aegean. For the Aegean is a region where state formation, where the ‘emergence of civilisation’, happened twice: the first took place in the Bronze Age, and led to the Palace civilisations of Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece; the second took place in the Early Iron Age, and led to the civilisation of Archaic and Classical Greece, the civilisation of the *polis*. These successive civilisations, in their developed forms, seem to have been utterly unlike one another. The Late Bronze Age Palace states of the Aegean were both larger and more uniform in size than their Iron Age successors; at least, there are fewer palaces. Bronze Age Palace states were bureaucratic, and their economies were strictly controlled from the centre (Chadwick 1976). The use of writing was restricted to the management of this centralised economy. Archaic *poleis* tended to take little collective interest in economic affairs as such, and in general did not monopolise the use of writing. The *polis* seemed to have emerged suddenly, within the space of a hundred years, whereas most scholars seem to think that the development of Palace civilisation was a gradual process (Renfrew 1972; but see Cherry 1984; 1986 for criticisms). The advent of iron-working and of alphabetic scripts, both innovations which helped in the dispersal of economic and political power, are usually held to be sufficient reasons for this change. This is not a view I share. To understand the nature of the difference between these two civilisations we have to take the five centuries of the Dark Ages, and the social change that took place within it, into account.

The *polis* is an institution whose origins are prehistoric. Its history, as a distinct social form, has already been written. Its prehistory has not. Prehistory is necessarily the province of the archaeologist, and there are several reasons why an archaeological attempt at understanding the conditions from which the *polis* emerged has become a more urgent task. It used to be thought that the social conditions of an early, pre-state Greek society could be reconstructed by philological means. Through a comparison with other Indo-European social forms, the elementary and primitive elements could be separated from the more developed aspects of fifth-century Athenian society. By means of this anthropological sieve, a picture of primeval Greece could be arrived at. It was believed that the early society of Athens could be described in terms of its original institutions, the *genos*, *phratry* and *phyle*. This comforting myth has, however, been comprehensively demolished by two French scholars (Bourriot 1976; Roussel 1976). The supposed universality of early kingship has also been questioned (Drews 1983). We are left with archaeology, Homer and the judicious use of ethnography as the only available means whereby an understanding of the early forms of Greek society can be reached.

This development – from a ‘pre-state’ society to that of the *polis* – is not one that can adequately be characterised by purely material and technological indices. We cannot content ourselves with a description of artistic and technical progress but have to

understand the conditions that made such progress possible. Any attempt, however, to use archaeological data for the purposes of understanding social change must recognise its distinctive, and not necessarily limiting, features. What then are these features? What types of archaeological information can be used to gain an understanding of social change and how are they to be approached?

One prominent feature of the period is the large quantity of painted pottery. These pots have been carefully studied to resolve questions of chronology and origin, such that these questions are a matter of quibble rather than debate. There are well-defined classes of shapes and motifs from each period. It is a rich body of evidence and, like any such, one that is amenable to a number of approaches. The traditional approaches to style, the arrangement of forms on a temporal and spatial grid, has reached a point where any additions seem to be little more than footnotes to a definitive text. Such empiricism, though a necessary preliminary to any study, is needlessly restrictive if we want to understand the way in which Protogeometric and Geometric art registers the changing nature of the society which conditioned their creation.

The most abundant form of evidence from the period is mortuary: cemeteries and graves. Most of the painted pottery, at least the complete examples, come from graves. The importance of the grave as a social document needs some underlining. In the case of burials, and with the exception of certain types of collective interment, structures, materials and material culture are associated directly with individuals, and in aggregate with society. The picture derived from a cemetery therefore not only provides an empirical link between material culture and a specific social form but may be said to be a collective transformation of that social form. This is not to say that the pattern within a cemetery is a mirror of a once 'living' social organisation. Nor is a cemetery a fossil through which we can reconstruct, can flesh out, those features of a social organisation which interest us. Though the associations are clear and direct, the collective self-representation of society at death is far from being a simple matter of interpretation, as I hope to show. This does not, however, diminish the archaeological attractions of this body of evidence. For burials have other qualities which are of particular interest to those concerned with society. Unlike other kinds of information, a burial relates to one activity, interment, and one activity only. Burials are not random samples of the material culture of the time but contain the sealed residue of ritual. They provide us with evidence for a specific social occasion and with intimations of its purpose.

If vases form the greatest and most scrupulously studied body of material, graves provide the most abundant context for ritual and behaviour. They also furnish us with the only clear evidence for the use to which vases were put, as opposed to their more general function. There is thus, on an empirical level, a direct link between style and society, between artistic progress and changes in social behaviour. Such a claim can be sustained for some sanctuary deposits, a much smaller body of evidence and one in which the archaeological associations are less clear. It cannot be made for even the best excavated settlements.

It is my intention to investigate the possibilities of this link. The relationship between style and archaeological context should be of intrinsic interest, but I have throughout given a justification for this enterprise that emphasises the aspect of social