INTRODUCTION: THE SETTING AND ARGUMENT

A narrative setting

We have heard of Korinth, city on the isthmus joining central Greece with the Peloponnese to the south. Korinth figures in biblical and ancient histories of Greece and Rome. Proverbially wealthy and always known to the Greeks as a commercial centre (Thukydides 1.13.5), the place is described by Homer (*Iliad* 2,570) as *aphneios* (rich). For Pindar (*Olympian* 13.4) it was *olbia* (blest with worldly goods), for Herodotos (3.52) *eudaimon* (fortunate).

Our knowledges are subject to the sources. Most physical traces of the city are Roman and later – history was obliterated in 146 BC by Roman general Mummius who sacked the city. Only snippets give glimpses which take us back earlier. Back in the eighth to sixth centuries BC of archaic times Korinth was at the forefront of those changes which are associated with the early years of the Greek city state, the polis. Here developed new architectures, including the monumental temple. Changes in the accoutrement of war (standardisation of the hoplite panoply) were focused upon the north-east Peloponnese; the most familiar helmet of the Greek heavy infantryman is, of course, known as Korinthian. From meagre traces of later historical writing it seems that Korinth was one of the first states to undergo something of a social revolution in the middle of the seventh century, as the power of the old and exclusive aristocratic big men was broken. They had been known for their interests abroad. Colonies out west were set up. Korinthian naval power came to be foremost in Greece.

Its sanctuary at Perachora, just across the gulf, was one of the richest in Greece in its day, outstripping even Delphi with its deposits of goods of local and foreign manufacture. Herodotos, writing in the middle of the fifth century BC, notes that the Korinthians despised craftsmen least (2.167.2), a phrase referring to the characteristic Greek attitude towards manufacture. From metal figurines to painted stucco and roof tiles, archaic Korinthians produced a distinctive range of products, including, most notably for the archaeologist, pottery.

Edward Dodwell had bought a pot of the distinctive style and fabric in 1805 (von Bothmer, 1987: 187), establishing Korinth as the site of manufacture of a style found across the Mediterranean from the eighth to sixth centuries BC. It was here that some potters began producing new vessel forms upon which were made experiments in painted design. From pots with very austere linear surface, multiple lines with only a narrow range of geometric decorative devices, there was a shift to smaller sized and miniature pots with floral devices and pattern and with figurative design – painted animals, birds, people and monstrous creatures. While most pots continued to be

decorated geometrically as they had been for some generations, this time of experiment in the late eighth and early seventh centuries is taken now to mark a significant change; for early Hellenic archaeologists and art historians the change is from Geometric to orientalising style, a key phase in the development of Greek figurative art with its topic of the form of the body. The demand for figured fine ware from Korinth increased. Design evolved into a distinctive animal art of later Korinthian ceramics. The mode of painting caught on too. Potters, in Athens particularly, adopted the freehand style of painting with incised details; this is the basis of Athenian black figure pottery, with later red figure considered, of course, an acme of ancient Greek ceramic achievement.

'Orientalising', because contacts with the east are evidenced, whether fabrics brought to Korinth by a mercenary, or a Phoenician trader making a stopover to exchange and collect. Korinthian goods travelled. Pliny (*Natural History* 13.5) much later remarked that Korinthian perfume of lilies had been popular for a long while. From its harbour at Lechaion were shipped the distinctive small archaic *aryballoi* (perfume jars) and other vessels. They were taken to sanctuaries such as that of Hera Akraia at Perachora, to Delphi, Ithakan Aetos and the Samian Heraion as votive offerings and accompaniment to sacred rites. They reached the Greek colonies of southern Italy and Sicily in quantity, where they turn up particularly as grave goods. Some items of Korinthian make are found in most western Greek, and even some Phoenician and native non-Greek settlements of the seventh century BC and after.

Mobility and far-flung connections, social and political change, precocious manufacturing talent, and the polis: these are some features of Korinth in that 'Greek renaissance' of the eighth and seventh centuries BC.

A social archaeology

This book is a social archaeology, seeking to make sense of the design of Korinth, this 'capital city' of archaic Greece. Following the pioneering work of Anthony Snodgrass (esp. 1980a, 1987) and Ian Morris (esp. 1987) a break is made with the artifact-centred, descriptive and typological work of so much classical archaeology, the art histories of stylistic change and pot painter, the historical chronologies. An aim is to further establish the worth of archaeologically based accounts of social history. Attempt is also made to reconcile social archaeology (interpreting art style in relation to social and cultural strategies of potters, traders and consumers) with the aesthetic appreciation and idealist accounts of conventional art history (compare Whitley 1991b and 1993; for further context Shanks 1996a).

I draw on approaches to artifacts and society found in postprocessual or interpretive archaeology (particularly the work, for example, of Hodder, Miller, Tilley, Barrett; see Hodder, Shanks *et al.* 1995; Shanks 1992b; Shanks and Tilley 1992 for issues and bibliography). Emphasis is placed on the contexts of artifact design – placing archaeological finds in context of their production, exchange and consumption. There are also strong links with the iconology of French classical studies, after, for example, the classic volume *Cité des Images* (1984), investigating the structures of meaning, the *mentalités* to be found behind the visual arts.

Changes in art and design are related to social factors, to changing life-styles and ideologies, and to everyday life. The category 'Art' is here challenged and replaced somewhat by 'style' and 'design', but without, it is hoped, losing the facility of being able to distinguish between different qualities of design (between good and bad 'art'). Conventional typological nomenclatures are shown to be largely redundant in such an approach which situates art and design in social context.

It is held that understanding the archaic city state must involve locating structural changes within the local social and political strategies of the people of the time: aristocratic 'big men', soldiers, potters, sailors, traders and travellers, and other 'citizens' of the early polis of Korinth. Here the argument follows a major premise of much contemporary social and archaeological theory that social understanding must refer to the *agency* of social actors. A fundamental aspect of society is material culture: another premise is that any historical interpretation which fails to take into account the material dimension of society is inadequate. Goods and artifacts are not just resources or expressions of social relations, but actively help make society what it is; material culture is active.

Narrative textures and archaeologies of the ineffable

The necessity of translation

The sources – pots and wall foundations, hints in early lyric poetry, accounts of later Greek and Roman historians – are varied and fragmented. It will be seen that they do not cohere. Indeed an argument can be made that they should not be expected to cohere, because they are part of, they help construct a social world which is not singular but manifold (Shanks 1996a). The question is then begged: in working upon the sources, what sort of narrative or interpretive structure is appropriate? Should all be brought together in a clear and coherent narrative or analytical account of early Korinth?

Any adequate account of archaeological and historical sources, it is held here, must consider how they are constituted in social practice – what people do. This connects closely with the necessity of subjecting source materials to critique and interpretation, not accepting their apparent face value, for critique is about reading (social) interest and motivation in materials presented as without or with different interest.

And how is practice to be conceived? The social is experienced, felt, suffered, enjoyed. Institutional forms such as economy, religion, technology and the state, so often the main features of social histories, are the medium and the outcome of concrete sensuous human, or indeed inhuman, practice. Most importantly, practice should be considered multi-dimensionally, as *embodied*, that is, rooted in people's senses and sensibility as well as reasoning. Here must be stressed the importance of the concept of *lifeworld* – environments as lived and constituted in terms of five senses, not just discursive rationality, which is so usually taken to be the basis of an understanding of society. I use the term experience to refer to the embodied, lived character of practice. (These issues are discussed in Shanks 1992b, 1995a.)

Thus it is held that a task of the scholar of the humanities is to ground social

reconstruction and understanding in a *sensorium*, a cultural array of the intellect and senses embodied in social practice. So much of this is ineffable (as what cannot be put into words, the unspeakable, the otherness of experience, alterity). So much is felt, left unsaid. Our sources speak only through an interpreter; they are in need of translation. The ineffable: because archaeological sources are material and are translated into image and text. The ineffable: because there is always more to say (about the site and the artifact, the textual fragment); the loss, decay, death. How many, which data points, in what way shall the item be classified? What is to be discarded, what more lost? We translate what is left so inadequately. The ineffable: because the social is embodied in the human senses. A subject of this book is the aesthetic, the evocations of Greek art. Is such a field to be separated from the social, from rational thought processes and analysis? Is art to be considered to belong with subjective response and sensuous perception? This book attempts to deny such distinctions between reasoning and perception or feeling.

So a task is set to attempt to get to grips with sources translated through lived experience, with experience a constituting part of social lifeworlds which are not singular and coherent, but multiple, contested, forever reinterpreted.

Translating textures

A well-established route for dealing with the ineffable and with varied sources is the presentation of historical and narrative *texture* or illustration. Detailed empirical material may be presented in apposition to analytical interpretation. However, my reading of social theory and philosophy indicates that the relationship of manifold social reality to its representation and interpretation is one which supports no easy resolution; the separation of raw material or data from interpretation is one stringently denied here. Instead a technique from the arts and film is adopted – collage, juxtaposing in parataxis, allowing the friction between fragments to generate insight (for definitions see Shanks 1992b, 1996b).

Accordingly, much of the book is designed as a textured collage characterised by thick description achieved through close empirical attention to the particularity of style and design and to the production and consumption of goods, coordinated also with reference to written sources and anthropological discussion. A primary aim is to relate macro- and micro-scales, moving to and fro between particular sources and wider themes and narratives.

An interpretive method is outlined in Chapter One. This discussion is intended as clarification in response to calls from colleagues, though it is one I would have preferred to emerge simply from my treatment of the sources. There is no intended *application* of theory (for example of material culture, society, or archaeology); the presentation does not take the form of theoretical critique and development followed by data exposition and then explanation. Instead the bulk of this book is an attempt to be more empirical, moving through interpreting accounts of the design and production of fine pottery in Korinth, the workshops and the changing character of the 'city', the society of the early city state, style and iconography, the sanctuaries

where were dedicated many items produced in Korinth, travel, trade and exchange out to the new colonies of Italy where many Korinthian pots or local copies were deposited with the dead. Basically the technique is to follow association in exploring contexts appropriate to different source materials. Contexts are conceived as fluid and open to allow interpretive leaps; it is not considered valid to have contexts predefined according to date and place.

Evidence relating to the design, production, style and the consumption of Korinthian goods leads off into explorations of a constellation of fields:

- Early historical sources and social revolution in Korinth in the seventh century BC.
- Gender issues in the early city state: women constructed as other.
- Sovereignty and power of the (aristocratic) lord: the hero as individual; warrior 'castes' and war machines; warfare (and fighting in phalanx); discipline, drill and posture; armour and the armoured body; speed, war and the race; mercenaries; the symposion.
- Boats and travel.
- Animal imagery and body metaphor: lions and other animals in orientalising Greek art; the warrior as lion; monsters and myth; birds; panthers; faces, eyes and helmets.
- Flowers and perfume in the archaic Korinthian world.
- The (techniques of) manufacture of fine artifacts.
- The pottery craft and industry: organisation of production; understanding the technologies of firing, painting and decorating; the possible meaning of miniature wares.
- Town planning and temple architecture.

The creative process of interpretation consists in the careful structuring of this collage, (re)constructing what I term assemblages, the implicit or explicit links made evident or possible, the commentary and critique applied. The juxtapositions may thus create, in Walter Benjamin's phrase, *dialectical images*, where insight comes from the friction between positioned source materials, their translations and interpretations. This may require from the reader more of an active role than often found in expository texts.

Emergent narratives and an argument

Sometimes the impression is necessarily one of dislocation and an incessant need to (re)interpret – immersion in the shifting textures, but nevertheless various narratives do emerge. Ultimately a subject I present here is the forging of political discourses of sovereignty, discourses which are still effective today. This is not to imply that there are no other subjects of this history, that other narratives may not be at work; interpretive choice has inevitably been exercised in constructing the collage.

I connect the material culture of the late eighth and seventh centuries BC in Greece to political and social interests and strategies by a set of concepts refined from

recent archaeology, material culture theory and social philosophy. These concepts include: style and stylistic repertoire, technology of power, translation of interests, ideology, design and agency. They are given definition and form throughout the book, but I may anticipate a little, if some lack of clarity is permissible.

Style is interpreted partly as a mode of communication (via methodologies developed through and after structuralism) and it is proposed, for example, that the new figurative imagery to be found particularly on pottery dealt with ideologies of self and identity *vis à vis* worlds of violence and animals. Materiality is considered a primary dimension of social experience; people in the early city state were reworking their lifeworld and the experiences it afforded. It is proposed that this reworking can be understood as involving a new technology of power, that is, new uses of wealth and resources in building environments, promoting new designs of goods and developing experiences such as trade and travel, all of which were partly means of facilitating the achievement of certain goals (hence the term technology of power). For example, a self-defining social elite channelled their wealth into new lifestyles, assemblages of goods and experiences which articulated displays of their sovereignty. They did this because older technologies of power were not working; legitimations of rank based on birth and tradition alone were weakening.

So the changes of the late eighth and seventh centuries are presented as ideological shifts; new richly textured ideologies (of lifestyle, narrative and social experience, and prominently focused upon gender) legitimated a particular distribution of wealth and power. However, there is no simple process of a dominant group imposing a new ideology upon subservient underclasses. Ideologies are always contested. It is also argued that fundamental to the working of power is the translation of interests. At a time when the old ways were not working as they had done, some sections of archaic Greek society translated their (strategic) aims and interests (political and personal) into lifestyles and newly articulated ideologies of sovereignty. Potters and other artisans in turn translated these into new artifacts, attending to such interest in new ways of living and behaving with new techniques and designs, relating demand and concern with new visual forms and life-styles to their own interests in making and finding an outlet for their goods.

Such processes of translation, interpretation or reworking of interest contain the possibility of perhaps profound unintended consequences; this is the contingency of history. It applies to Korinth. Created were new forms of belonging and identity (particularly citizenship) as older and restricted aristocratic ideologies opened up. Demand and design principles combined, through the agency of potters and others, to create the values and intricacies of archaic Greek art.

It is via such concepts and interpretations that items like the Korinthian perfume jars are related to society and historical change. They were part of a new visual lifeworld, part of attention to the body in new ways, part of new pottery techniques. The pots translate interests in a reworking of political discourse. It is in this way that artifacts and material culture forms are central to the changes in what is known as the polis.

The structure of the book

Five chapters follow the life-cycle of some artifacts made in Korinth in the late eighth and seventh centuries BC. A sixth rounds off with summary comment.

Chapter One deals with the questions of beginning. Methodology is raised and discussed as a theory of design is presented. Rather than define a method in advance of interpretation, a relational philosophy or outlook is sketched. The varied intellectual contexts include critical theory, Hegelian marxism, poststructuralism and constructivist thought. Taking an arbitrary beginning, a single Korinthian perfume jar, the task is set of following indeterminate association through the life-cycle of the artifact.

Chapter Two sets out with the workmanship of the artifact introduced in Chapter One. The social context of craft production in the early city state is explored. Several types of source and approach are juxtaposed: archaeological remains of archaic Korinth, centred upon a working sample of 2,000 ceramic vessels; traditional and processual archaeologies of art style and the building of the archaic city; attempts to write political histories of the eighth and seventh centuries BC; anthropological approaches and social histories; analyses of the discourses of the archaic state.

Chapter Three tackles art and style. Radical changes in pottery design are outlined, illustrated and discussed. The first part of the chapter is a collage or counterpoint of illustrated vessels, literary sources and anthropological discussion – routes into the archaic Greek imagination. Connections are followed into ideological worlds of animals, soldiers, violence, gender, personal identity, sovereignty, posture and techniques of the body. The second part of the chapter begins with a wider consideration of anthropologies of art and style, then an overview of Korinthian ceramic style is presented.

Chapter Four, *Perfume and Violence in a Sicilian cemetery*, deals with patterns of consumption in a statistical and qualitative interpretation of the contexts of deposition of the sample of 2,000 Korinthian pots. These artifacts are proposed as unalienated products, 'total social facts' in a repertoire of style, a set of resources drawn upon in social practices of cult, death and travel.

The shipping of goods out from Korinth, travel, trade and exchange is the topic of Chapter Five. Rather than traded as 'economic' goods, it is argued that Korinthian ceramics were part of a social construction of travel and attendant experiences explored in previous chapters. This argument is set in the context of long-standing discussions of the character of the ancient economy, anthropologies of travel, as well as more recent notions of the archaic Mediterranean 'world system'.

Chapter Six returns to the concept of ideology and Marxian ideas of material production to draw the book to a close with a sketch of contestation and strategic interest in the emerging states of archaic Greece.

A note on illustrations and references to ceramics

Many of the illustrations have been taken from older sources, adapted and altered through computer processing according to my own museum notes and drawings. The aim has been to indicate as clearly and accurately as possible the subject matter –

a surprisingly difficult task given the disparate location of many of the pots, marked differences in access and publication, and, not least, the miniature size of the perfume jars which feature most in this study. Given this aim, there are not many photographs and there is no consistency with respect to the depiction of the characteristic 'black figure' incision. Sources for each illustration are given, and location too (usually a museum, with accession number). Reference is made to standard catalogues simply for further description, bibliography and context; there is no intention to acknowledge the position taken by these works on design and iconography, though my debt to the great catalogues of Johansen (1923), Neeft (1987), Amyx (1988) and Benson (1989) will be clear.

A note on Greek texts

For early Greek poetry I have used the texts and translations of Davies (1991), Lattimore (1951, 1960, 1967), Lobel and Page (1955), West (1992, 1993), and the Oxford editions of Thukydides, Herodotos, Pindar and other authors. Supplementary use was made of the excellent Loeb edition of Greek lyric (Campbell, 1982–93). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

1

The design of archaic Korinth: the question of a beginning and an interpretive archaeology

This chapter deals with the interests which lie behind the book, the issue of where to begin, the object of interest (the design of archaic Korinth), how this may be understood (the methods of interpretive archaeology), and finally a sketch is made of some directions to be taken from the starting point adopted – a single perfume jar from the early seventh century BC.

Interests and discourse

Korinth and its material culture in the eighth and seventh centuries BC – why have I chosen to research and write upon this topic? Any answer to such a question must deal with interest and discourse.

The topic is at the margins of several (sub)disciplines and historical themes and narratives. There is the art history of orientalising style, first appearing in Korinth fully fledged within a generation at the end of the eighth century. The characteristic black figure incision was taken up in Athenian and Attic potteries, forming the basis of fine classical ceramics found in art museums the world over (see Cook 1972). Iconographers take up the figured designs as illustrations of myth and narrative (for example Fittschen 1969). In classical archaeology this style 'protokorinthian', with its distinctive aryballoi, is the basis for the relative and absolute chronologies of the century in most of the Mediterranean (after Payne 1931). An ancient historical interest lies in the emergence of the polis and the tyranny and social revolution in the middle of the seventh century (Salmon 1984 for Korinth).

These disciplines have become the subject of significant change of outlook, with new anthropologically informed approaches in ancient history and classical studies, critical approaches to early literatures, new social archaeologies and iconologies, art histories too, breaking the mould of the last two centuries. Detailed reference will be made to these later; here and for orientation, I cite discussion in my book *Classical Archaeology of Greece* (Shanks 1996a). This interdiscipliniarity makes of archaic Korinth a rich topic.

These are the interests of discourse. However, my interests do not lie in the fulfilment of any obligations or rites of passage in these disciplines (such as the filling of lacunae in empirical knowledge of the past). My interest is in the *constitution of an object*, how Korinth and its material culture, particularly its pottery, came and comes to be what it is. I consider early archaic Korinth as an artifact, in two senses. First, the material culture, the archaeological sources: presented is an interpretation of their

design. In so doing it is necessary to consider style and design generally – a theory of design. Second it is considered how this Korinthian past itself is and may be designed – the category 'archaic Korinth' is treated as artifact. Hence this study is between disciplines, somewhat meta-disciplinary. There is also here a symmetry between past and present about which there will be more below.

A premise is that an artifact is always and necessarily an object of discourse. I do not mean by this a stronger (idealist) sense of the material past being created by the discourse of the present. I refer to the (unexceptional) argument that while the raw materiality of a Korinthian pot may have been given shape some time ago, and in this way be considered to *belong* to the past, the same pot can only be known, understood and described through discourses which are of the present. Its raw substance is meaningless. A Korinthian pot, any artifact, cannot exist for us without interest, even desire, sets of assumptions, categories valued, without questions and answers considered meaningful, forms of expression. Discourse (as a shorthand term for such a nexus) is a mode of production of the past; hence I refer to 'archaic Korinth' as artifact.

In foregrounding the constitution of the past in the present, a substantial part of this book is a presentation of what can be called an interpretive encounter with the material culture of Korinth and what it touches. I conceive this as the construction or crafting of an interpretation and understanding which can only be said to lie *between* past and present; the past is no more 'discovered' than its empirical form is invented (such 'constructivist' thought is dealt with below). Again, within the interstices.

I have described this awareness of the contemporary location of interpretation as unexceptional; why is it therefore necessary to raise the issues? Because the implications are beginning to re-emerge in classical studies. I have worked in the theory and philosophy of material culture, archaeological methodology, prehistory and modern material culture studies. The contrast between these, with their disciplinary introspection of the last two decades, and the discourse of early Hellenic studies is a sharp and fascinating one. The weight of classical discourse has obfuscated and acted against considering the constitution of the empirical object of study; it is already there, built by decades of research (Morris 1994). The sheer weight of remains stored in museums is there, *a posteriori*, the empirical past to be known, discovered. I anticipate eagerly the changes sweeping the field and alluded to above; this study, and its accompaniment (Shanks 1996a) will, I hope, contribute to the fervent debate (see also Dyson 1989, 1993; Fotiadis 1995; Morris 1994).

The question of a beginning and a problem of method

Thus my approach is an oblique one and rooted in personal circumstance. I have this topic, archaic Korinth, and a set of interests. But where do I begin? The introduction *here* of the personal may seem inappropriate because there are well-established methodologies and research strategies to follow, but I begin with a worry concerning the idea of methodology – that there can be independent and *a priori* specification of how to approach and deal with an empirical encounter. Essentially, the worry originates in an argument that methodology defines the object of study in advance.