

McDONALD INSTITUTE MONOGRAPHS

An Age of Experiment: Classical Archaeology Transformed (1976–2014)

Edited by Lisa Nevett and James Whitley



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with contributions from
Susan E. Alcock, Giovanna Ceserani, Alexandra Coucouzeli, Thomas W. Gallant, Michael Given, Jonathan M. Hall, Paul Halstead, Sturt W. Manning, Ian Morris, Lisa Nevett, Robin Osborne, Sara Owen, Gillian Shepherd, David B. Small, Jeremy Tanner and James Whitley

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Chapter 4

The Krater and the Pithos: Two Kinds of Agency

James Whitley (Cardiff University)

In 1994 Anthony made one of those true but uncomfortable statements for which he is famous. Talking about what was then a new, contextual approach to the study of ancient painted pottery (where ancient pottery is treated as part of the 'total material culture' of a particular time or place) he noted that this approach had rescued this material (Protoattic painted pottery) from the art historians. He went on to predict that:

> 'For, make no mistake, the real opponents of the new approach ... are not the pure classicists, looking down their noses at those who use non-literary evidence; … nor is it the prehistorians, who will be puzzled but gratified to find tactics similar to their own being employed in 'enemy territory'; no, it is the new art historians who regard the concept of 'total material culture' as a tedious impediment to their own mystic communication with the viewers and users of the pottery'. (Snodgrass 1994, 198).

Anthony did not have to wait for very long for his dire prediction to be realized. For, in that same year, *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture* (Goldhill and Osborne 1994) appeared. While some contributors to that volume did look at sculpture in its architectural context (Osborne 1994) others exemplify the logocentric tendency of much classical art history: 'art' is subordinated to text. For some (Henderson 1994) ancient Greek art is there to be continually re- re-interpreted to reflect the contemporary anxieties of present-day, Western liberals. 'Greek art' becomes a mirror in which we hope to find our own reflection. There is now (in 2016) quite a lot of 'Classical art history' in Cambridge Classics and very little contextual archaeology: there is no Cambridge-based scholar with a permanent position whose primary interest lies in the field of Greek archaeology between the Bronze Age and the Roman period.

Art is, above all else, a concept. As such it surely requires some kind of theoretical explication, some justification for one set of artefacts coming under this classification while others do not. While Jeremy Tanner's (this volume) notion of art as 'expressive symbolism' might fulfil the requirements of a proper, scientific definition of the term it is not one that has (as yet) been widely applied. Moreover Classical archaeology, like any archaeology, needs to reconsider the concepts it habitually makes use of – it needs, from time to time, to look at them afresh. Art is a term with which we have perhaps become too familiar – we need to look at things we call art from a different perspective. In this chapter I explore the implications of another concept – agency. Agency here has a rather specialized meaning – I will be using it in Gell's (1998) sense, and in so doing will be adopting an approach that is intended to get as far away from text-centred 'readings' of Greek material culture as possible. Essentially Gell's approach is not about what objects mean but what they do; that is to say the ways in which objects work on and through human agents and thus have a kind of agency (or animism) of their own. The way in which objects are enmeshed in a wider network of relationships between humans and things has elsewhere been called human-thing entanglement (Hodder 2011), and I will argue that it is precisely such an analytical framework that will allow us to re-assert the centrality of material culture for our understanding of the Iron Age and Archaic Mediterranean. Moreover, I see Gell's emphasis on 'methodological philistinism' as a positive advantage in breaking down the arbitrary distinction between art and non-art. Both 'material culture' and 'art' are inescapably 'etic' terms. Of the two terms the first (material culture) has been used more or less scientifically, as meaning the sum total of material things used by humans. The other ('Art')

however retains notions of sanctity that reflect its function (along with other deities, such as Progress and the Markets) within that modern polytheistic system, metropolitan secularism. Of course, one could argue that such an onto-theological distinction is of course the very *raison d'être* of Classical (or indeed any other kind of) art history, but I think it is not one that can be supported by any kind of consistent philosophical or scientific principle. I will argue that these newer concepts – agency and material entanglement – can be used to characterise the relations and significance of two very different classes of object in the Archaic Mediterranean.

On the one hand there is the krater or mixing bowl. This vase shape has traditionally been seen as the quintessential 'art' object. Kraters are almost invariably painted in the black- or red-figure technique in Archaic times, and decorated with elaborate, often narrative, scenes. Whereas you will find kraters in almost every general book on 'Greek art', pithoi (large storage vessels) appear much less frequently. They only appear, as in the case of the example from Mykonos (Fig. 4.1), where they illustrate the early appearance of a myth. But large storage vessels are very common in the Greek archaeological record, and many of them are just not decorated at all. This lack of decoration does not mean that they did not have a particular significance for the people who used them. If we are interested in Greek material culture and what it can tell us about Greek culture and Greek history, and if we really want to 'take Archaic Greek regionalism seriously' then we have to look closely at pithoi.



Figure 4.1. *The Mykonos pithos (Mykonos museum 2240, first published Ervin 1963). Image courtesy Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports-Archaeological Receipts Fund.*

Pithoi in the Cyclades, pithoi in Crete

Though it has long been known that large, decorated storage vessels (pithoi) of late Geometric and Archaic date had been manufactured both in the islands of the Aegean and on Crete, systematic book-length studies of their form and iconography only really begin with Schäfer (1957). Even when some studies became more archaeological and contextual, iconography still dominates the discussion. So Ebbinghaus (2005) begins her important article with the pithos from Mykonos (Fig. 4.1), a vessel whose iconography (with its apparent reference to the *Ilioupersis* or sack of Troy; Ervin 1963, 51) inevitably raises questions of the connexion between *Bild und Lied* (Osborne this volume; Osborne 1998, 53–7; Snodgrass 1998, 88–9). Iconography dominates discussion of other relief pithoi from the same group, such as the one from Eretria re-used as a well-head around 500 BC (Themelis 2006).

This example, like several others (e.g. British Museum GR 1864.10–7.37 from Kameiros on Rhodes: Simantoni-Bournia 2004, 52), was ultimately used for burials (Ervin 1963, 38). But this cannot have been the primary purpose. The Mykonos pithos was decorated only on one side, which suggests that it was meant to be seen standing up with its back to a wall. Ebbinghaus argues convincingly that the original purpose of such vessels must have been to store grain, wine or olives and to do so within houses. She thus places this object in context, and so makes some other useful observations about this and other Archaic pithoi that belong to the Tenian-Boeotian group (Ebbinghaus 2005, 52–8; cf Schäfer 1957, 57–90; Simantoni-Bournia 2004, 63–122). The best contexts for such pithoi are to be found at Xobourgo on Tenos and Zagora on Andros. These contexts are unambiguously domestic – especially so in the examples from houses H24–41 from Zagora, which have stands for pithoi (Cambitoglou 1981, figs 8 & 9). The funerary context both of the Mykonos pithos

and of other examples from Attica, the Cyclades and Rhodes is therefore likely to be secondary.

The examples from Tenos were excavated some time ago, and the earlier reports have proven very difficult to interpret. Nota Kourou's re-examination of the find-spots of these relief pithoi (Kourou 2002, 265–6) seems to show that most examples found in Kondoleon's units V and VI are much earlier than the buildings in which they were found. The pithoi – such as an example showing the 'Minotaur' (Simantoni-Bournia 2013) – date to the eighth to seventh century BC, whereas the earliest architectural phase of these structures dates to the sixth century BC. These pithoi then must have been moved from an earlier structure. Now, of course, pithoi must have had a much longer 'life' than most other objects. They represent a substantial investment of skill and labour, required specialized manufacture, and for these reasons were often repaired (in the case of pithos E1 from this site, with lead clamps; Kourou 2002, 266). The material facts about storage vessels thus have social implications. We can infer then that a) pithoi are usually found in houses, do not move much, and are thus inevitably associated with the household; and b) that many of these pithoi last for a very long time – sometimes several centuries.

There are none the less several marked differences between Cycladic and Cretan pithoi (Schäfer 1957; Simantoni-Bournia 2004). Archaic pithoi in the Cyclades and in Attica are much more likely to be decorated with elaborate mythological scenes. In the Cyclades moreover this link between pithoi and households is weaker than in other regions. There are few Cycladic parallels for the long-used pithoi of Xobourgo. When, for example, the inhabitants of Zagora on Andros (see Coucouzeli this volume) abandoned their settlement they also abandoned their pithoi (McLoughlin 2011; Cambitoglou *et al*. 1988, 181–3;cf Cambitoglou 1981, 42–5 nos 42 and 43). Of course, there are practical reasons for this – pithoi are very large storage vessels, with capacities of around 210–270 cubic litres, that are hard to move. But it is interesting to note that the elaborate decoration of such pithoi – a fact which might lead some scholars to classify them as 'art' – had no bearing on whether they stayed or went. When the settlement of Zagora was abandoned the pithoi (whether plain or decorated) stayed exactly where they were.

This is just not true for Crete. Cretan pithoi differ from Cycladic in several ways. Those with figured scenes – such as this daedalic example now in the Ashmolean (Fig. 4.2; Brisart 2011, 245 fig. 12) – were decorated using repeated motifs derived from moulds rather than the *appliqué* method used for Cycladic pithoi. The use of mould-made external decoration implies a close relationship between the production of pithoi and the production of terracottas (Pilz 2011, 73–8). This Cretan technique is (technologically) more sophisticated though it diminishes considerably the potential for visual narrative. Moulds in Crete were used rather like stamp seals. While it is possible to make impressions using a 'roulette' method (following the model of a Near Eastern cylinder seal rather than a stamp seal), and while 'l'estampage à la roulette' does have a certain narrative potential (Coulié 2000, 130–5 and 143–9) this particular technique seems to have been confined to Thasian workshops in Archaic times. Most known examples of Thasian pithoi with this decoration date to the sixth century, and 'l'estampage à la roulette' never spread elsewhere in the Aegean.

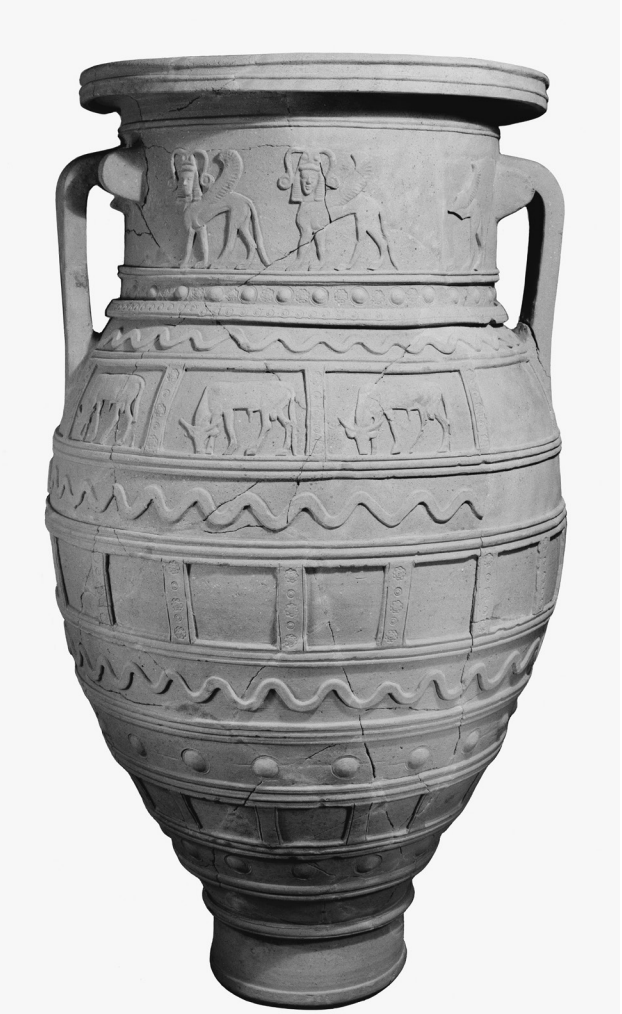


Figure 4.2. *Pithos from Crete (possibly from Afrati), now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford AN1969.251 (illustrated in Brisart 2011, 245 fig. 12). Photo courtesy Ashmolean Museum.*

Archaic Cretan pithoi were the products of one or two specialized workshops that served the whole island. The products of the Afrati workshop in Central Crete (Brisart 2007; cf Brisart 2011, 239–53) were used in the far east of the island (see below), and there is petrographic evidence to suggest that this specialization (and internal trade) in pithoi was well established by the end of the eighth century BC (Boileau and Whitley 2010, 240). Cretan pithoi also differ from Cycladic examples both in their conservatism and in their longevity. The daedalic style for decorated pithoi seems to have persisted throughout the sixth century, to judge by the finds of granodiorite examples from Azoria (Haggis 2015, 235–44; Haggis *et al*. 2004; 2007; 2011). While some Cycladic pithoi may have lasted from the eighth century until the sixth, Archaic Cretan pithoi often remained in use until Hellenistic times. Fragments of sixth-century pithoi, some with elaborate figured decoration, have turned up in levels dating to the third century BC at the Hellenistic settlement of Arkalochori (Galanaki *et al*. 2015, 326–8 & figs 11.16 and 11.17). An 'Archaic' pithos was noted from the Little Palace Well at Knossos (Callaghan 1981, 36), a deposit filled largely with pottery dated to the third and early second centuries BC. Elaborately decorated daedalic examples have been found in the late third to mid-second century BC destruction horizons of some of the major central Cretan cities – two from Lyktos, Koutela (Lebessi 1971, 494–6), probably associated with a destruction around 220 BC (Polybius 4.53–4) and one from the Chalara area of Phaistos (Levi 1967–8, 94–5 figs 44 and 45), associated with a destruction that took place probably around 150 BC (Strabo 10.4.14). From this same abandonment/destruction horizon at Phaistos comes the Late Geometric plain pithos inscribed Ερπετιδαμοπαιδοπιλαϛοδε' 'This [is the pithos/property] of Erpetidamos [son?] of Paidopila' (Levi 1969, 156–9, plate 1b and 1gamma 1; see Jeffery 1990, 468 no. 8a.). Another respect in which Cretan pithoi differed from Cycladic is then that they were often inscribed. Examples include some early inscriptions from Kommos (Csapo *et al* 2000, no. 30) and a late sixth-century inscription from Azoria (Haggis *et al* 2011, 57–8 no D346.1; see now West 2015). Pithoi, then, seem to have been one of the few Cretan shapes to be regularly inscribed in Archaic times – which makes them very unusual objects indeed in a region where the practice of inscribing anything at all seems to have been very restricted (Whitley 1997; 2009; 2017).

Longevity of use is not confined, however, to inscribed or highly decorated pithoi. Plain pithoi too remained in use for several centuries. In Eastern Crete we have two second-century BC destruction/abandonment horizons similar to those from Lyktos and Phaistos. At Trypetos, near Sitia, Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan (2011a, 555) has noted at least one plain Archaic pithos (no.48, see Vogeikoff-Brogan 2011a, fig. 237) from the Afrati workshop (Brisart 2007) that was simply left in place when the site was abandoned. Ceramic evidence of associated Hellenistic pottery puts this around the middle 175 BC. The abandonment of Trypetos thus pre-dates the forced abandonment of the nearby city of Praisos, which we know took place somewhere between 145 and 140 BC (Strabo 10.4.12; Guarducci 1942, 4.9 lines 41–4; 4.10 lines 22–3). The distinctive pendent tongues of this group of plain pithoi – also to be found on the example from Trypetos – had been noted by earlier investigators of Praisos (Savignoni 1901, 409 fig. 2.b). Excavation close to the 'Almond Tree House' at Praisos in 2007 revealed a stratum that must date to the abandonment horizon of 145–140 BC (Whitley 2011, 20–33). On one of the abandoned floors in trench 200 at least two plain Archaic pithoi were recovered, one of which (pithos 2; A 216.10 and A.216.13) was also clearly a product of the Afrati workshop (Brisart 2007, 129 fig. 5 – Lyttos 1.1).

These pithoi, then, are much older than the houses in which they were found. Trypetos is a settlement only established around 300 BC, and the Archaic pithoi must have come from some earlier settlement. When the household moved, then so did the pithoi. These pithoi – whether decorated or plain – are therefore heirlooms in the true sense of the term. Of course we cannot be sure of the precise mechanism by which they were passed down from one generation to the next. It may be that they were passed on as dowry. Whatever the mechanism of their transmission they were objects which had come to *embody* the household. They were only abandoned when the household as a social unit – and as a constituent part of the *polis* – in turn ceased to exist (hence their occurrence in abandonment/destruction horizons). And the pithos is not the only domestic object that might have had such associations. Lin Foxhall (2012, 199–205) has argued that inscribed Archaic loomweights recovered in fourth-century BC contexts in Greek houses in Southern Italy were also heirlooms. Mothers passed down loomweights to their daughters – these are objects that had a particular kind of *matrilineal* agency. But if pithoi were domestic heirlooms in Crete, the surviving inscriptions (Erpetidamos in Phaistos, Panson in Praisos; Guarducci 1942, p.154 6.25) are ambiguous as to whether they were passed down exclusively through the female line – the Erpetidamos inscription might be read as indicating bilateral descent (through both lines, if Erpetidamos is Paidophila's son). Figure 4.3 provides a graphic picture of the longevity of these Cretan storage vessels.

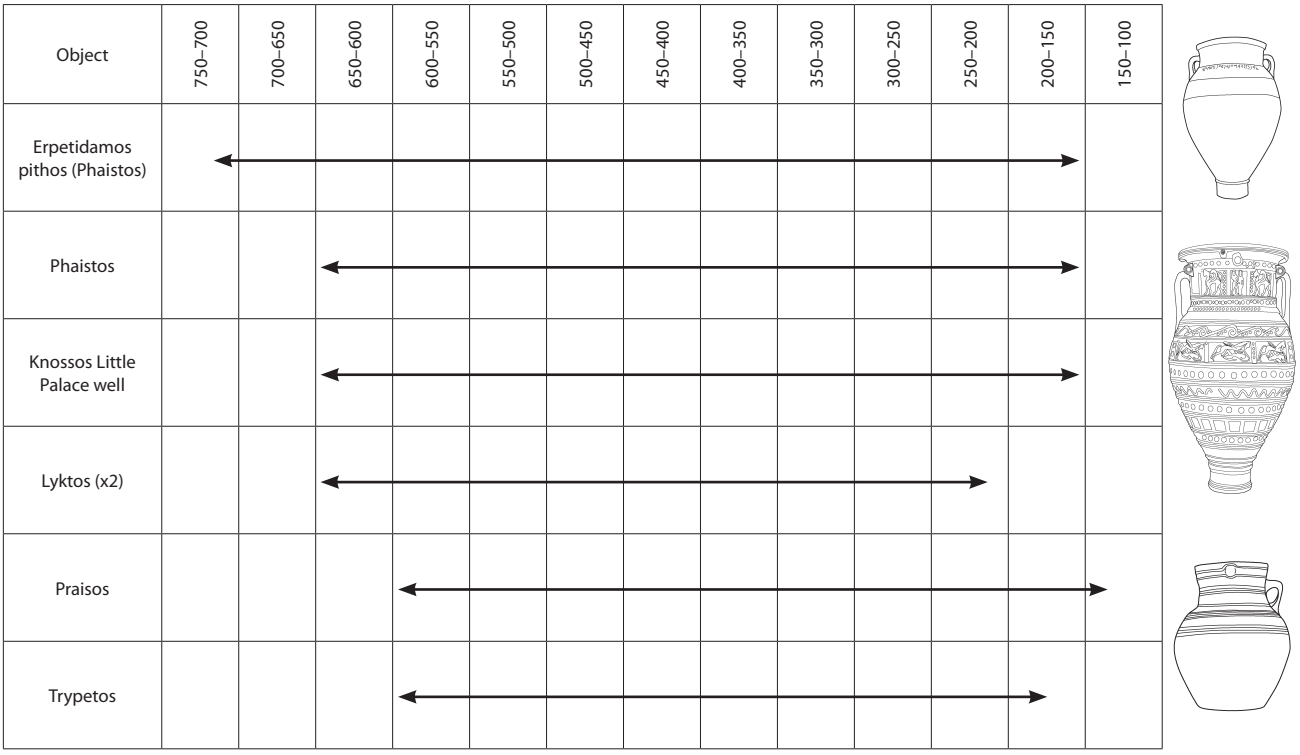


Figure 4.3. *Diagram showing the longevity of Cretan pithoi (whether plain or decorated, whether large or small) from Late Geometric through to Middle Hellenistic times. Diagram produced by Kirsty Harding. Information from Callaghan 1981, 36; Lebessi 1971, 494–6; Levi 1967–8, 94–5 figs 44 and 45; Vogeikoff-Brogan 2011a, 555; Whitley 2011, 20–33.*

Cretan and Cycladic pithoi were then used differently, and so had different forms of agency. In the Cyclades, while some pithoi remained in use as storage vessels for several generations, other pithoi ended up as containers for child burials. This does not happen in Crete. So, while the association between pithoi and households exists in both regions, it seems to have been much stronger in Crete, and is sustained over a much longer period of time. This is then part of the *diverging* tendency within the Archaic to Hellenistic Mediterranean – Crete's tendency to mark itself out from other regions of the Greek-speaking world, and to do so more markedly as we near the end of the Archaic period (see now papers in Pilz and Seelentag 2014). So, while all pithoi were associated with households, this association – and the agency of pithoi both as heirlooms and as embodiments of this fundamental social unit – went much further in Crete. This observation applies to both highly decorated and undecorated pithoi – there is no discernible difference between pithoi that have been decorated, inscribed or left plain in this regard. Plain pithoi were then objects of as much social significance in Archaic to Hellenistic Crete as any 'work of art'.

The other distinctive feature of pithoi is how much they travelled. Cycladic pithoi hardly seem to have travelled at all – though there is a case for arguing that the pithoi from Tenos were products of an Attic workshop, it is not a strong one. Cretan pithoi did travel within the island (from Afrati to Praisos) but did not travel outside it. In brief, pithoi did not move very much – given the centuries over which they were used they hardly travelled at all. This is not true for that other object we are to consider – the krater.

Travelling kraters

Like pithoi, kraters must have been quite complex objects to put together. They cannot be made from one piece of clay, but must be made from separate parts. Not all of the painters of black-figure and red-figure vases seem to have worked with potters who had the requisite skills successfully to assemble a krater. Kraters came in a variety of forms in the Archaic and Early Classical period: volute, bell, column, calyx and dinos. Of these shapes, the calyx and volute kraters are (from the potter's point of view) the more challenging pieces to put together. The column krater is

originally a Corinthian shape developed in the late seventh century, soon adopted by early Attic black figure craftsmen, such as the potter who worked with the Polos painter; the calyx krater is an invention of Exekias, the first example coming from the Acropolis North Slope (Broneer 1937; Beazley 1956, 145–6 no. 19); the volute krater first appears in Italy in the form of the François vase, the work of the Athenian craftsmen Kleitias and Ergotimos (Beazley 1956, 76 no.1).

As this last example shows, kraters travel, and travel much further than pithoi. Not all do, of course. Many continue to turn up close to where they were made in the sixth and early fifth centuries – fragments of black-figure and red-figure kraters of all types are common in the Athenian Agora (Moore and Philippides 1986, 22–7, 33–35, 151–69 and 178–80; Moore 1997, 157–221). Their original context may often remain unclear, when (like the calyx krater by Exekias) they turn up in fragments in wells and other secondary deposits. The majority (219) of the 333 Attic kraters listed by Beazley (1956; 1963; 1971) that have secure provenances are to be found in contexts outside of Athens and Attica. Of those found in Athens and Attica (114, 34 per cent), a large proportion (52, 15.6 per cent of the total) come from the Athenian Acropolis. Other kraters travel further: 154 (46.2 per cent) are found in contexts across the Mediterranean and Black Sea, and 65 (19.5 per cent) in specifically Etruscan funerary contexts.

This pattern is not, then, one where Athenian products are simply consumed by other Athenians. Many scholars have tried to account for this Etruscan preference for Athenian products (most systematically Reusser 2002a; 2002b). The art historical consensus remains that the shape and iconography of these vases remains purely Athenian. Many classical art historians seem happy with the idea that the social and economic mechanism that took kraters from Athens to Etruria is a market for second-hand painted pottery (e.g. Neer 2002). In this view, the agonistic competition between painter and painter and potter and potter, and the local social demands of a culturally literate Athenian consumer are the driving forces behind the rapid changes in technique, shape and decoration in this high point of Athenian vase painting between 550 and 450 BC. Or, if it is conceded that this movement of complex, highly decorated vessels might represent 'trade' it is trade in commodities whose ultimate consumers had neither knowledge nor say in what they got.

Problems with this theory begin as soon as we take a closer look at the vessels that reached Etruria. Let us take one Etruscan city, Cerveteri. Between 520 and 470 BC, tombs in Cerveteri were the recipients of two calyx kraters by Euphronios and one by Epiktetos; a calyx-krater and a volute-krater by the Kleophrades painter; a volute krater by the Berlin painter (Fig. 4.4); and finally a calyx krater by the Eucharides painter. This information is summarized in Table 4.1.

These vases are among the finest and most frequently illustrated examples of late Archaic and early Classical Athenian red-figure vase painting. They could be used to illustrate any major aspect you choose in the artistic developments that took place between 520 and 470 BC: the increasingly successful depictions of human male anatomy; the more convincing, and convincingly detailed depictions of myth, especially those relating to the cycle of tales on and around the Trojan War. Why then are these images to be found in Etruria and not in Athens?

Some scholars have tried to address this question systematically. Osborne (2001, 278) has characterized it as being a choice between 'Etruscan demand determining Athenian production rather than Etruscans buying into *Athenian* culture' or, more starkly, whether 'Etruscans were blindly indiscriminate or voraciously critical consumers of *Greek* images' [emphasis mine] (Osborne 2001, 283). His answer is that Etruscan interest in Greek visual culture was in part a function of the poverty of their own stock of myths and legends.

Table 4.1. *Late Archaic Athenian red-figure kraters found in Cerveteri (Caere). Information from Beazley 1963; Boardman 1975, 33.*

Painter	Type of krater	*ARV*² (Beazley 1963)	Museum number
Euphronios	Calyx	n/a	Once New York, now in the Villa Giulia, Rome
Euphronios	Calyx	13–14 no. 2	Louvre G103
Epiktetos	Calyx	77 no. 90	Villa Giulia, Rome
Kleophrades painter	Calyx	185–6 no.36	New York 08.258.58
Kleophrades painter	Volute	186–7 no.50	Cab.Med. Paris 385
Berlin painter	Volute	206 no. 132	British Museum GR 1848, 0801.1
Eucharides painter	Calyx	227 no. 12	Louvre G 163

While he is wary of the old theory that Athenian painted pots in Etruria represent a trade in second-hand goods (Athenians only trading their old crockery to Etruria) he finds that 'the small degree of variation between the iconographies of the two assemblages of material [the Athenian Agora and sites in Etruria] is extremely striking' (Osborne 2001, 284). Both groups are dominated by scenes of myth.

This last point touches on another interest of Anthony's – the relationship between *Bild und Lied*, especially those depictions on painted pottery that may tell us about the nature and date of the composition of the Homeric poems. The iconography of the Mykonos pithos (Fig. 4.1) refers, apparently, to the *Ilioupersis*. The central depiction on the first of our Cerveteri kraters (illustrated in Whitley 2012, 590 fig. 20.2; cf Boardman 1975, fig.22) also refers to the Trojan War cycle. But the scene itself does not seem to derive from the version we have in the *Iliad* (16.676–83), where it is Apollo, not Hermes Psychopompos, who presides over 'Sleep and Death carrying off Sarpedon'. Images on red-figure vases in this period allude not so much to Homer's *Iliad* in particular but to the Trojan War cycle in general. So on the frieze around the neck on the volute krater by the Berlin painter from Cerveteri now in London we see two scenes from the Trojan War only one of which relates the *Iliad*. On one side, Achilles is about to slay Hector, each hero being supported by a divine patron (Athena for Achilles, Apollo for Hector); on the other, Achilles slays Memnon, king of the Ethiopians, while their respective divine mothers (Thetis for Achilles, Eos [Dawn] for Memnon) look on (Fig. 4.4). While the death of Hector is the climactic moment in the *Iliad*, nothing ties the scene on this vase down to the version we have in *Iliad* book 22 (where Apollo is, at best, a shadowy figure); and the scene with Memnon comes from a later epic in the Trojan cycle, the *Aithiopis* (not by Homer). And this pairing is perhaps not about the death of either Memnon or Hector – rather it is an anticipation of the death of Achilles himself (see Burgess 2009).

I may have given the impression here that I am endorsing the established practice of 'reading' images, rather than describing how these images manifest a particular form of agency. Before I answer this charge, I want to emphasise three points. First, neither of these sets of images are direct transcriptions of Homer, as we understand the text. The lack of unambiguously Homeric references is consistent (see also Osborne this volume) with the Nagy (1997; cf Snodgrass 1998) thesis that the emergence of a canonical text of Homer is very late; the images we have on vases represent alternative, or parallel, versions of the Trojan War cycle



Figure 4.4. *Volute krater by the Berlin painter, from Cerveteri, now in the British Museum (British Museum GR 1848, 0801.1). Achilles fights Memnon, while Thetis and Eos look on. Image courtesy British Museum.*

of tales, versions which appear in multiple oral and visual forms. This fact, if anything, makes the images less textual, and so less susceptible to reading – not in the sense that they cannot be interpreted, but rather that the act of interpreting images in their material context is quite distinct from the act of reading a text. Second, in both kraters, figures are not just represented iconographically but through inscriptions. I argue elsewhere (Whitley 2012, 588–91; 2017) that these inscriptions are not there simply to identify figures but to animate them – to endow them with their own agency, as characters within a story that is not fixed but which, by the images' very nature, cannot ever be. There can be no definite, or even intended, 'reading' of such images.

Another consequence of the Nagy thesis is that Homer's descriptions of kraters become relevant to our understanding of the agency of such objects, not only in the world of the Early Iron Age or the eighth century, but in the late Archaic world too. Both the silver krater that Menelaos gives to Telemachos (*Od*. 4.613–9; 15. 113–19) and the one that Achilles sets up as a prize in the funeral games of Patroklos (*Il*. 23.740–9) are entangled objects with multiple owners and extensive genealogies (see Whitley 2013, 399–402). Ceramic kraters reference such Homeric descriptions,

Table 4.2. *Summary of ceramic finds from Agora well J.2.4 (information from Lynch 2011).*

Pot type	Symposium related	Cups (kylikes) and skyphoi	Total vessels	Cups/drinking vessels as %	Symposium related as %
Black figure	6	50	79	63%	7.6%
Red figure	3	17	20	85%	15%
Black-glazed	16	20	55	36%	29%
Household & cooking wares			17		
Lamps, terracottas, loomweights, etc.			24		
Transport amphoras			35		
Totals	25	87	230	37.8%	10.8%

not simply in the sense of alluding to metal vessels (as skeuomorphs), but in the expectation that such objects are made to go on a journey, and in doing so acquire a kind of cumulative agency.

It is very difficult to support such a thesis with further contextual study of kraters found in Etruria. Some indirect light on the agency of such kraters can however be thrown by a study of the contexts of other kinds of black and red figure pottery of the same period in Etruria and Athens. Much of the Athenian material comes from the Agora, and has been found in wells and other secondary deposits. Fragments of kraters found in the Agora are exactly that however – fragments. None has a complete profile, and none comes from a deposit that clearly relates to the *symposium*. To compare Etruscan and Athenian contexts of use and deposition – to see if there are significant differences in general between painted pots found in Athens and those found in Etruria – we have to turn to another common Late Archaic – Early Classical shape closely linked to the symposium – the cup.

Recent scholarship (e.g. Bundrick 2015) has taken a much closer look at the contexts of Athenian black- and red-figures cups to be found in Etruria, and reached conclusions very much at variance with those of Neer (2002). Equally Kathleen Lynch's (2011) recent thorough contextual study of the late Archaic pottery from a well (J2:4) in the south west of the Agora sheds some light on how Attic red-figure cups were used in a domestic context. First, there is clearly a spike in the number of kylikes in use in late Archaic times (Lynch 2007). Her well contains many, many decorated red-figure and black-figure drinking cups, several pelikai – but no kraters (Lynch 2011, 68–9, 170). These finds derive from a clean-up of debris from a very modest Archaic house, destroyed by the Persians in 480 BC. If there was then a krater and it was of metal, it may then have been looted. Table 4.2 summarizes the evidence.

It may of course be objected that this is primarily a household or domestic assemblage, not a sympotic one. But if symposia did not take place in houses, then where did they take place? Some iconography (e.g. the tondo of the black-figure Bomford cup; see Osborne 1998, 133–5; cf Lynch 2007) points to an outside setting, but literary evidence (or at least Plato's *Symposium*) and the frequency of *andrones* in Classical houses indicates that many symposia must have taken place in or around houses (Nevett 2010, 50–62). The frequency of drinking vessels (37.8 per cent of the whole assemblage) in this deposit suggests that something like the symposium did take place in an Athenian house by the end of the Archaic period. Of course, this 'sympotic' deposit is not quite as grand as either literary evidence or the iconographic evidence collected by Lissarrague (1990) might suggest. Actual 'sympotic' assemblages from domestic deposits from Athens differ in significant respects from the image we have of the 'symposium' derived largely from tomb deposits in Etruria. These differences are clear when we look at the size of these cups.

First, the diameters of the red-figure cups found in well J.2.4 in the Agora are as shown in Table 4.3 (average 0.181125 m). These dimensions seem to be in keeping with red-figure cups of late Archaic and early Classical date found in the Agora deposits generally (information from Moore 1997, summarized in Table 4.4). Table 4.4 yields some interesting averages. Overall, the average diameter of known Late Archaic red-figure cups from the Agora is 0.1732. Only very few cups in use in Athens between 520 and 480 BC were much larger than this – no 1408 is very much the exception.

While some of the cups that turn up in Etruscan tomb deposits are of this size (or at least 0.18–0.19 m in diameter), many of the better-known examples painted by well-known late Archaic cup painters are considerably larger. The majority of the late Archaic

Table 4.3. *Late Archaic red-figure cups from Athenian Agora well J.2.4 (information from Lynch 2011).*

Lynch 2011 catalogue number	Painter	Rim diameter (m)	Scene	Inscription
87	Euphronios	0.195	Male	καλος
88	?	0.219	Male jumping	καλος
89	Ambrosios painter	0.192	Man with cup	Ο παις καλος
90	Ambrosios painter	0.192	Youth with meat	Ο παις καλος
91	Manner of Euergedis Painter	0.182	Youth in bath	προσαλορενο
92	?	0.18	Owl	ελοχοσεν
93	?	0.161	Star	unreadable
94	Pithos painter	?	?	?
95	Painter of Munich 2562	0.128	Man inside tondo, warriors on exterior	?
96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103	?	?	?	?

Table 4.4. *Late Archaic red-figure cups from other Agora deposits (information from Moore 1997).*

Number (from Moore 1997, 316–50)	Name/painter	Rim diameter (m)	Date (BC)
1407	Gorgos' cup	0.18	510–500
1408	'Manner of Epiktetos painter'	0.29	510–500
1411	[not Kleophrades painter]	0.185	500
1422		0.239	480
1514	Epiktetos	0.19	500
1518		0.17	510–500
1519		0.235	510–500
1554	Epiktetos	0.178	510
1555		0.177	510
1556	'Manner of Euphronios'	0.16	510–500
1560		0.161	510
1561		0.13	510
1562		0.172	510–500
1563		0.16	510–500
1565		0.16	500
1567		0.13	500
1570		0.17	480
1571		0.125	510
1572		0.132	510
1573		0.129	510
1574		0.187	510–500

and early Classical Attic red-figure cups now in the British Museum can be traced to tomb deposits in the Etruscan city of Vulci (Williams 1993). Table 4.5 summarizes this evidence, giving cup diameters.

Now of course it could be objected that we are not here comparing like with like (something that Anthony has always insisted upon). The Agora deposits are properly excavated deposits, where almost everything was kept; they are almost certainly representative of what was found and what was there. The Vulci cups in the British Museum have gone through multiple processes of selection – they are not a proper archaeological deposit. We know that the British Museum did not buy everything from Vulci, and that the excavators destroyed smaller and less highly decorated cups to maintain the value of those they did excavate and sell (Cook 1972, 293–7). Even so it is clear that not all plain or small vessels were destroyed (Reusser

Table 4.5. *Late Archaic red-figure cups found in tomb deposits in Vulci, now in the British Museum (information from Williams 1993, cross checked with the British Museum's website).*

Painter	Date (BC)	Museum number	*ARV*² (Beazley 1963)	Diameter (m)
Dokimasia Painter	*c.* 480	GR 1836, 0224.173	412 no. 10	0.226
Dokimasia Painter	490–480	GR 1952, 1202. 10b	414 no. 2	0.24
Dokimasia painter	480	GR 1896.6-21.1	409 no. 42	0.225
Dokimasia Painter (attributed to)	490–480	GR 1952, 1202. 10a	414 no. 2	0.24
Castelgiorgio Painter	490–480	GR 1836, 0224.131	386 no. 3	0.29
Onesimos	500–490	GR 1836, 0224.25	318, no. 2	0.336
Onesimos	510–500	GR 1836.2-24.101	316 no. 8	0.297
Makron (attributed to)	490–480	GR 1843, 1103.44	471 no. 194	0.332
Makron (attributed to)	490–485	GR 1867, 0508.1063	468 no. 145	0.327
Makron (attributed to)	495–490	GR 1883, 1208.1	467 no. 133	0.292
Douris	480–470	GR 1843, 1103. 94	449 no. 4	0.287
Douris	490–480	GR 1843, 1103. 45	435 no. 87	0.291
Douris	480–475	GR 1843, 1103. 4	436 no. 96	0.33
Douris	500–490	GR 1860, 0508.1060	430 no. 29	0.271
Douris	485–480	GR 1843, 1103. 13	431 no. 47	0.329
Douris	470	GR 1843, 1103. 61	441 no. 180	0.324
Douris	485–480	GR 1843, 1103. 15	432 no. 52	0.315
Douris (attributed to)	485–480	GR 1843, 1103. 53	432 no. 59	0.302
'Manner of Douris'	480–470	GR 1843, 1103.16	449 no. 3	0.29
Briseis Painter	485–480	GR 1843, 1103.54	406 no. 2	0.304
Briseis painter (attributed to)	480	GR 1843, 1103. 92	406 no. 1	0.30
Carpenter Painter	510–500	GR 1836, 0224.231	179 no. 1	0.205
Ashby Painter	500	GR 1867, 0508.1061	455 no. 9	0.296
Foundry Painter (attributed to)	490–485	GR 1895, 0513.1	405 no. 2	0.296
Foundry Painter	490–480	GR 1850, 0302.2	401 no. 3	0.318
Euphronios (attributed to)	520–500	GR 1837, 0609.58		0.3302
Brygos painter	490–480	GR 1866, 0805.4	372 no. 29	0.237
Brygos painter	490	GR 1848.6-19.7	371 no. 24	0.319
Brygos painter	490–485	GR 1843.11-3.11	369 no. 2	0.327
'Brygan Circle'	490–480	GR 1836.2-24.131	386 no. 3	0.29
Painter of the Paris Gigantomachy	490–480	GR 1836, 0224.212	421 no. 78	0.33
Proto-Panaetian group	510–500	GR 1865.11-18.36	315 no. 2	0.227
Proto-Panaetian group	500	GR 1865.5-8.1061	455 no. 9	0.296
Apollodoros group	*c.* 500	GR 1836.2024.230	120 no. 9	0.195
Akestorides painter (near Douris)	470	GR 1843.11-3.10	449 no. 7	0.325

2002a, 49–55), since in some cases complete tomb groups can be reconstructed. It is certain that large numbers of large cups were recovered. It is, I think, inconceivable that something like the 'Gorgos cup', if found in Vulci, would not be kept simply because it was smaller than other examples. The figures may exaggerate differences between the Athenian Agora and Vulci, but they also point to something real.

For such large and elaborately decorated cups as these do not turn up close to the Athenian Agora. The statistical differences between the Athenian Agora group (combining information in Moore 1997 and Lynch 2011) and the Vulci group can be expressed in terms of average diameters – 0.176 m for the Athenian Agora, as against 0.2802 m for the 'Vulci' group. More graphically, the differences between the two assemblages can be expressed as a histogram (Fig. 4.5).

The differences between the two assemblages are significant in statistical terms. Using the Mann-Whitney test, cup rim diameters from the Vulci tombs are significantly larger than those from the Agora (Mann-Whitney, P <0.001, MWU=17.0). It seems, then, highly unlikely that red-figure cups found in Etruria can be the products of trade in second-hand or used objects. Rather the size of a cup is related to its intended destination – that is to its (Etruscan or domestic) market. And size matters. A larger cup, with a larger exterior, provides a much better field for the elaboration of visual narrative than does a small one (such as 'Gorgos' cup). The figured decoration on the Vulci cups more closely aligns with our ideas of 'Greek mythology'; hence it is these cups (rather than Athenian ones) that have come to be used in illustrations of 'Greek Art' (as in Osborne 1998).

The differences between the two assemblages are not simply those of size. With one important exception (Kleophrades painter; Moore 1997, 92–3) the products of the 'big-name' late Archaic red-figure painters have not been found in Attic domestic contexts. As Lynch (2011, 175) puts it:

> The work of some prominent, innovative red-figure painters is absent from the pottery in the Persian destruction deposits. For example, the Brygos painter, Makron, Douris and the Berlin Painter are only tentatively associated with fragments found in the Agora excavations, and not at all in the Persian destruction material. Instead, the painters serving the households of Athens are second-tier craftsmen, working in the wake of their more creative and technically ambitious colleagues.

Needless to say, Makron, Douris, the Brygos painter and the Berlin painter are all represented either by red-figure kraters found in Cerveteri or by red-figure cups found in Vulci. Osborne's (2001) conclusions need therefore, at the very least, extensive qualification. Etruscans and Athenians clearly had different preferences. Etruscans liked big cups with elaborate narrative scenes. Athenians, in a domestic context, preferred smaller ones, ones which are, in 'artistic' terms, far less ambitious. This observation is I think fatal to the 'art-historical' presumption that runs through the work of Richard Neer (2002) that the assemblages we encounter in Etruria are simply reflections at one remove from an essentially Athenian

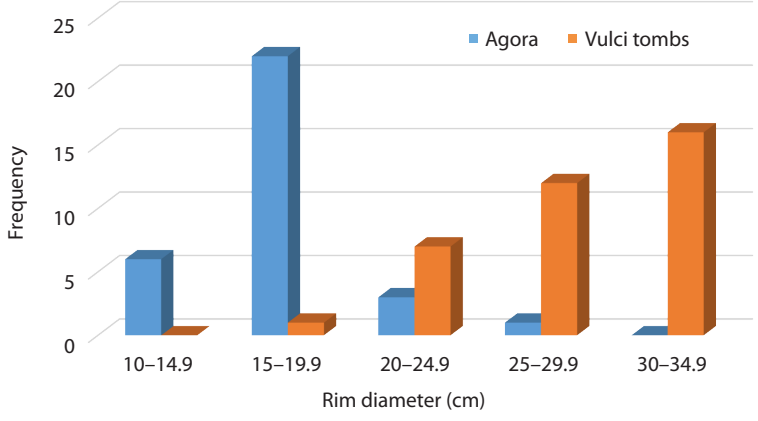


Figure 4.5. *Histogram showing differences in the diameters of Late Archaic red-figure cups found in the Athenian Agora as distinct from those found in tomb deposits in Vulci. Calculations made by Richard Madgwick (from information given in tables 3, 4 and 5; Moore 1997; Lynch 2011; Williams 1993). Number of Agora examples 29, number of Vulci examples 35.*

social, cultural and political milieu. As Lynch goes on to say (2011, 175):

> ...painters are choosing images based on the destination of their products, and that some painters have an exclusive relationship with the export market. Products of the first-tier painters are, indeed, found in Athens, but as dedications on the Acropolis [and not in houses].

Larger late Archaic Athenian 'sympotic' vessels were, then, made to travel (either physically to Etruria or metaphysically to the sanctuary of Athena on the Acropolis). If this is true of cups, it is even more so for kraters. Attic red-figure kraters (including those found in Cerveteri) were made with the intention of going on a journey either one to the gods (as in a dedication to Athena on the Acropolis); or a journey further West, where, like the kraters in Homer, they would acquire yet further entanglements. The images and inscriptions are there to animate stories whose meaning cannot be read because they cannot be fixed.

Summary and conclusions

Large pithoi, made in Crete, do not travel much, but do last a long time (up to 400 years). However plainly or elaborately decorated, they remain strongly linked to the household. As such they are perhaps more likely to have descended as heirlooms through the female rather than the male line. Kraters on the other hand are associated with the male realm of the symposium, an institution of 'diacritical' feasting (*sensu* Dietler 2001) that creates bonds between men of equivalent status. Kraters, unlike pithoi, can and do travel, and travel far from their place of production. Their elaborate decoration is linked to their status as objects which have the potential for multiple and multiplying entanglements across the Mediterranean interaction sphere. This means that kraters can rarely if ever be heirlooms.

Table 4.6 sums up the differences in the kinds of agency possessed, on the one hand, by large storage vessels (pithoi) and on the other by elaborately decorated painted kraters.

One could, I suppose, argue that the concepts of agency (Gell 1998) and human-thing entanglement (Hodder 2011) are not essential to such a dichotomy – Ebbinghaus (2005) was already moving in this direction. But Ebbinghaus' article does not go as far as it should, precisely because she retains a habit of mind accustomed to 'reading' images. The stark contrast between pithoi (however decorated) and kraters does not become apparent within this iconological frame of reference. Of course, in a subject as text-centred as Classics it is not surprising that the metaphor of 'reading' has taken hold for all kinds of interpretation. It is a habit that has become ever more deeply embedded since the early 1990s (cf Sourvinou-Inwood 1991), to the exclusion of other approaches. Attempts at truly interdisciplinary research *within* Classics do not go as far as they should, because scholars fall in to the easy habit of 'reading' material culture as they would a text. This is the presumption of textuality, the theoretical paradigm that cannot speak its name. So, to the objection that I am comparing two different classes of material from different regions (which were produced over different, if overlapping, time periods) I would say that I am comparing and contrasting types of *agency* possessed by different classes of object, ones which have particular and distinct forms of entanglement within distinct regions of the Greek-speaking Mediterranean. This is as valid approach as any.

Table 4.6. *Differences in 'agency' between pithoi and kraters.*

Type of vessel	Pithos	Krater
Context	Household	Sympotic
Social relations	Matrilineal/female	Between male peers
Type of antique	Heirloom	Entangled object
Spatial scope	Local/regional	Mediterranean wide/gods
Type of agency	Cumulative ancestral agency	Cumulative and fractal agency
Manufacture to deposition	Up to 400 years	10–30 years

As an approach however it does run counter to what has become common sense in Classical studies of late. Allied with the habit of 'reading' images is the idea that the objects of the Classical scholar's gaze have to be exemplary. As one of the characters in Frederic Raphael's 1976, Cambridge-based television series 'The Glittering Prizes' puts it 'Classics is an endless subject with a totally definitive set of texts'. If Classical literature has a definitive set of texts, then Classical Art has to encompass an equally definitive set of objects.

Archaeology however is relentlessly destructive of any attempt to canonise (and so confine) the material culture of the ancient world. It is constantly throwing up new material whose significance is often not clear. Classical scholars, used to re-interpreting and re-re-interpreting a finite and canonical set of exemplary texts, are clearly not comfortable with this state of affairs, and this in part explains the appeal of 'Classical art history' to many classical scholars. Archaeology by contrast – and especially the variety of approaches to archaeology that Anthony has supported and

encouraged – is not concerned with the exemplary, but with finding ways in which our understanding of the material aspects of the ancient world can be improved. Archaeology is like history, only better because its data is much fuller and more varied. One of the further advantages of the approach pioneered by Gell is that it breaks with the currently dominant 'textual' approach to material culture. Methodological philistinism is intellectual liberation. And the notion of material entanglements is also relevant to a wider historical and archaeological question that has always interested Anthony. As he recounts in his inaugural lecture, one of the reasons he came to Cambridge from Edinburgh was to work with David Clarke (Snodgrass 1977). One of Clarke's (1978, 245–327) pioneering insights was that material culture groups (Childe's 'cultures') and linguistic groups ('the Greeks') are rarely isomorphic. The material aspects of culture we routinely call Greek (such as kraters) are often found in Italian contexts, and the material culture of some clearly Greek-speaking communities (such as those in Crete around 450 BC [Wallace 2010; Whitley 2009] or Cyprus in earlier times) do not resemble Athenian (or 'central Greek') material culture at all. Indeed, some other non-Greek groups, such as the Apulians around 400 BC, have a much stronger Athenian tinge to their material practices than any Cretan. Attempts to understand increasing connectivity within the Archaic and later Mediterranean (e.g. Broodbank 2013, 506–84) do not sufficiently acknowledge this fact. A Cretan pithos derives from a very different universe of material cultural practices than does an Athenian krater.

Moreover increasing connectivity within the Mediterranean between 800 and 500 BC did not necessarily result in increased convergence between regions. 'Common sense' might lead one to expect that convergence would be quicker and easier within linguistic groups – Greek-speakers would come to resemble other Greeks in their material practices. But this is clearly not true either in the ancient or in the modern world. In the Iron Age Mediterranean, Crete and Cyprus diverged ever more sharply from a central Greek 'norm'. In the modern world, English-speaking Texans and Londoners differ greatly in their attitudes to guns and 'socialized medicine', matters on which the Welsh, English, Danes and Dutch tend to agree. Patterns of material entanglements (Childe's cultures) remain as important as linguistic divisions in both the modern and the ancient world.

Understanding the agency of pithoi helps in turn with understanding the particular constellation of material entanglements characteristic of Archaic Crete – it gives us a better insight into material culture groups. Understanding the agency of the krater, on the other hand, provides a key insight into perhaps the most important process of convergence that took place within the Archaic Mediterranean – that between the symposium- and sanctuary-centred culture of the citizen states of Central Greece (*sensu* Morris 1998) and between the communities of Latium and South Etruria. By 450 BC, Athens, Rome and Cerveteri had, in material terms, come to resemble each other quite closely, while Athens and Gortyn (or Athens and Praisos) resembled each other not at all. And it is agency – not art – that helps us to explain this. Ancient history is archaeology or it is nothing.

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