

Pottery in the Archaeological Record: Greece and Beyond

Edited by Mark L. Lawall
& John Lund



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Pottery in the Archaeological Record: Greece and Beyond

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& John Lund

**POTTERY IN THE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD:
GREECE AND BEYOND**

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Tondo of black-figured kylix.
London, British Museum B 432,
Courtesy the British Museum.

Back cover:
Repaired Ionian cup from the
Pabuc Burnu shipwreck, early
6th century BC, photo Mark
Lawall (AJA 112, 2008 698
fig. 24); jetty constructed from
amphorae at Mons Claudianus.



*Amphora attributed to the painter
Syriskos, Athens 500-470 BC,
Collection of Classical and Near
Eastern Antiquities, The National
Museum of Denmark, inv.no. Chr.
VIII 320.*

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Preface

BY PER KRISTIAN MADSEN
 DIRECTOR GENERAL
 THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF DENMARK

The study of classical antiquity and languages may seem a luxury when considering the more practical needs and issues of present day societies. However, knowledge of the foundations of our common European past is necessary in order to understand present day history and to secure the preservation of the remains of earlier times for the future.

This is why the Danish National Museum has from its establishment more than 200 years ago consistently aimed at being an “international” National Museum. The present volume is an embodiment of this ambition. It is the first in a new series intended to publish the results of “Pots, Potters & Society in Ancient Greece”, a research programme launched by the National Museum in 2008 thanks to a generous grant from The Foundation of Consul General Gösta Enbom.

The initiative focuses on two central themes within this potentially huge subject: 1) the societal and economic aspect: the production of – and trade in – pottery as a source for understanding the ancient economy, and 2) the ideological/iconographical aspect: vase paintings and other iconographical evidence as a source for understanding the life and thoughts of the ancients.

“Pots, Potters & Society in Ancient Greece” seeks to further our knowledge of both themes and if possible to develop new theoretical approaches by combining existing expertise with fresh ideas. To realize this objective, eminent scholars are invited to do research in the National Museum, and in 2008 a PhD scholarship was established in collaboration with Aarhus University – hopefully the first of more such ventures. Furthermore, international thematic colloquia are held at regular intervals as venues for discussions of relevant issues.

“Pottery in the Archaeological Record: Greece and Beyond” comprises the proceedings of the first colloquium, which was hosted by the Danish and Canadian Institutes in Athens in June 2008. The contributors all aimed at making sense of the pottery appearing – mostly as innumerable sherds – from excavations throughout the Mediterranean,



*Consul General Gösta Enbom
 (1895-1986).*

seeking to further our understanding of the “life cycle” of ancient pottery and in particular of its re-use. Many such instances were discussed, and more might be added, for example that of coin hoards hidden or kept in pottery vessels which were often buried, rapidly it seems, in times of war. This pottery is normally in rather good condition and may seem fairly well dated by the coins. Still, this class of evidence raises questions, not least why some treasure owners, who actually survived, seem to have let their capital rest in the ground without using it or telling about it to their heirs? Did they really prefer to end their life without divulging the whereabouts of their hidden money? Like the issues highlighted in these proceedings, this is a question which has a relevancy that reaches well beyond classical antiquity in space as well as time.

The new series is appropriately named after the remarkable man who made it all possible: Gösta Enbom, a Swede who served for many years as Danish Consul General in Greece, making his fortune there as agent of the leading Danish diesel engine producer Burmeister & Wain. Enbom supported the Swedish excavations at Asine in the 1970s, and later set up his foundation in Denmark to enable the National Museum to carry out research in the world of ancient Greece.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to those who made all of this possible, not least to the Danish and Canadian Institutes in Athens which hosted the colloquium, to Mark Lawall, who kindly consented to co-organize it and co-edit the proceedings, and to the contributors to this volume.

Introduction

BY MARK L. LAWALL AND JOHN LUND

Archaeologists in general and ceramics specialists in particular often hope for a close relationship between the periods of production, use and discard of pottery. The latest date indicated by the pottery in a given context is generally assumed to approximate the closing date of the deposit. In the quintessential closed context, the shipwrecked cargo, there is the further assumption that all (or most) of the pottery will be of approximately the same date of manufacture (and that all or most pieces were in some state of use when the ship sank). There are, of course, various generally recognized aspects of the presence of ceramics in the archaeological record that complicate this relationship. Old sherds may continue to appear in much more recent contexts as 'residual' pottery. Old pots may be repaired and remain in use for many decades; old amphorae may be refilled and reused for various purposes. But by and large there has been a tendency to minimize the impact of these complications in interpreting the ceramic record.

Over the past decade or so in Classical Archaeology, attention to the processes creating archaeological deposits has increased dramatically. A conference in Padova in 1995 was devoted to the study of drainage facilities created by amphorae (and hence creating some of our best preserved large assemblages of amphorae).¹ In 1996 a conference in Rome addressed the problem of residual pottery in independently datable contexts.² More recently, the papers from a conference held in Poitiers in 2002 significantly integrated analyses of faunal and botanical deposits with study of ceramic discard.³ And in 2007, a supplement to the *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* was dedicated to the problem of both ancient and modern repairs of Greek fine ware pottery.⁴ This volume began to draw attention to the details of how even thin-walled ceramic vessels might stay in use for many years or decades.

In his 2007 monograph, *Roman Pottery in the Archaeological Record*,⁵ J. Theodore Peña brought many of these threads together by offering the first extended consideration of how ceramic vessels were made, used and stayed in use serving various secondary purposes, before finally entering the archaeological record. He highlighted

the importance of both the physical characteristics of the vessels and their socio-economic circumstances in shaping the observable patterns in ceramic use, re-use, and ultimate discard.

In describing these paths from production to discard and how the archaeological record will be affected, Peña was clearly influenced by work on site formation processes in other fields of archaeology, especially the work of Michael Schiffer and others working outside the realm of Classical Archaeology.⁶ Their goal was to arrive at rules to describe the transformation of artifacts from their state of use in the past to their appearance in the archaeological record. Such rules were intended to replace the simplistic view that the archaeological record was simply past life frozen in time with artifacts simply dropped near where they were used. This research identified many different natural and cultural factors or processes that created the archaeological record we study today.⁷ Even in the area of the ceramic record (much of this research is not limited to ceramic artifacts), the range of potentially significant factors is quite wide including variables such as artifact size, shape, hardness, and quantities originally in use. A wide range of culturally-based behaviors will have also affected the use-lives of vessels, the treatment at the point of discard, and the many different possible motivations for discard.⁸ Use-life has become a complex concept including production, intended use, later re-uses and recyclings, initial discard, possible recovery and further use,⁹ and subsequent re-deposition episodes. Such studies of artifact lives, including many aspects of production, but also wear-patterns from

1 Pesavento Mattioli (ed.) 1998.

2 Guidobaldi *et al.* 1998.

3 Ballet *et al.* (eds.) 2003.

4 Bentz & Kästner (eds.) 2007.

5 Peña 2007.

6 Schiffer 1972; 1983; 1996; Shott 1996 and 1998; Sullivan 2008.

7 While much of the interest has been on cultural forces creating the archaeological record, natural processes may also be significant, see Wood & Johnson 1978 and Hilton 2003.

8 For a case comparing artifact distributions with expectations raised by various hypotheses concerning their reason for discard, see Sullivan 1989. On the impacts of cultural beliefs (as opposed to purely practical matters of efficiency), see Gumerman 1997; Hutson & Stanton 2007.

9 For an example of the recovery and reuse of sherds at Jerash, see Kehrberg 1992.