Ceramic versus Metal

The impact of the 1980s debate on the value of pottery versus metal in today's museums

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S0709220

MA Thesis

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June 2012

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Chapter 1 Introduction

On the auction day of June 12th 2000 at Christie's, one hundred and forty five items were put up for sale. They were all ancient Greek vases which had belonged to the private collection of Dr. Elie Borowski. The vases were sold for a total amount of 7,053,906 US dollars, the individual prices ranging from 588 dollar for a fragment to an astonishing 1,766,000 dollars for a kylix painted by Douris. The high prices paid for these objects, raise some questions. The main one would be, why people would pay so much money for a ceramic vase. The answer to this most probably lies in the fact that Greek decorated vases are seen as beautiful objects with high value. They are considered to be a form of art. This raises another question: why are these Greek vases considered to be of high aesthetic value?

Scholars studying the ancient Mediterranean and especially Greek world, have taken the point of view of the high value of Greek decorated vases in their research. Because of the growing interest in archaeology in these times, these developments in the status improvement of ceramics were very convenient for the people trying to sell their antiquities. One of those people was Sir William Hamilton. He received eight thousand guineas from the British Museum for his collection of antiquities. In order to try to sell his second collection of antiquities for as much money as possible, Hamilton asked Pierre d'Hancarville to write a publication on the pottery in his collection. D'Hancarville attempted to enhance the status of the painters and the pots themselves and it worked. The volumes had set standards and served as a ideal example for the publication of Greek vases (Vickers & Gill 1994, 8-11, 25).

How scholars perceived the value of Greek vases and how this value of vases has developed in the eighteenth century, depends mainly on their point of view. Until the 1980s, no one had questioned the aesthetic high value of these vases. It was only then that, since the eighteenth century, this view was being disputed. Those believing in the importance and aesthetic value of Attic vases in ancient times, see these objects as valuable in our time. Others consider pottery as cheap imitations and of no value. Both sides show different reasons that have led to how Attic vases are understood today. Most scholars were convinced of the high value of Greek decorated vases. Michael Vickers and David Gill had a very

opposing opinion, considering pottery to be of low value and a cheap imitation of metal vases. This was not accepted by other scholars and it led to a huge discussion in the academic world. The subject of this discussion has a great influence on how classical archaeology is perceived. Whether fine decorated pottery is seen as valuable or as a cheap material, can have very different effects on our views of the ancient world. This is because pottery does not only give us information about the use and manufacture of it, but also about the economic and social environment the ancient Greeks lived in. Ordinary pottery was available to all people and is considered not being expensive. Decorated ceramics are believed to be used during occasions where other people would see these pieces, like a symposium, in which they must have represented the high status of the owner. If, due to this discussion, general opinions on the value of pottery change, it can have great influences on the conceptions of the ancient Greek world and the basic principles where classical archaeology is founded on.

Most scholars have formed an opinion on this discussion and have expressed this in their publications. To get a full understanding of the debate, this thesis will discuss what has been said and written about it from the beginning of the debate until now. This research will be focused on the question what kind of influence this debate has had on our current view of Greek archaeology and how this is presented to others, mainly the public. This presentation of knowledge and opinions can be found in recent publications, but also in the most important context in which many objects from the Greek material culture are in nowadays, which are the museums exhibiting them. How scholars look at the remaining material culture, can have a large impact on the way these items are displayed and explained to the public. A curator who considers pottery to be very valuable, will exhibit these objects very differently than a curator who does not really care about them. Therefore, it is important to look at the influence this discussion on pottery and metal vases has had on the perceptions of scholars and how they convey this information to the visitors of museums. This will be done by the analysis of the Greek exhibitions of the Ashmolean museum – where it basically all started with Michael Vickers as the curator – the Fitzwilliam museum, the Allard Pierson Museum, the National Museum of Antiquities, the Meermanno-Westreenianum Museum and the Royal Museum of Art and History.

The passion for Greek vases of art lovers, connoisseurs and collectors has

grown since the eighteenth century. Greek vases attracted attention due to their large amount of different shapes and the scenes painted on them. Their popularity did not arise three centuries ago. Since large numbers of vases have been excavated, it can be said that they were regularly in use in ancient times and were quite popular. Ancient writers mention and praise Athens for the invention of the potter's wheel and the pottery. Pliny remarks that, in his time, a large part of the population used earthenware vases. After antiquity however, Greek vases were forgotten and left to be rediscovered in the eighteenth century. During the 1730s and 1740s, the popularity of the vases raised again by the discovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum. These discoveries unearthed complete cities with the objects still in their original context, which increased the interest in archaeology (Watson & Todeschini 2006, 33-34).

There are various reasons why Greek vases are seen as valuable. First of all, the production of ceramics is considered to be one of the characteristics of civilization. Since various types of shapes were made, the technique used to make these vases was considered brilliant. The second aspect is the decoration on the vases. Some art historians and archaeologists presume that Greek vase painting is the greatest accomplishment of art until the emergence of the cathedrals of the Middle Ages. Thirdly, the passion for Greek vases emerges from the fact that Athens was first in a number of things; they had the first civilisation, democracy, philosophy, systemic written history, lyric poetry, comedy, tragedy, naturalistic art and more (Watson & Todeschini 2006, 37-39).

Completely different reasons for the high value of Greek vases have been given by other scholars. Michael Vickers searches for the answers in eighteenth century Europe. Europe, with the exception of Holland, was poor compared to England in these times. However, the rulers and elites wanted to keep up appearances, which they did by means of objects that looked luxurious, but were relatively inexpensive. Porcelain was one of the materials used. It was imported from China at great expense and was highly prized. People believed that Greek vases were made with the same care as porcelain and therefore considered the vases being valuable (Vickers & Gill 1994, 19-20). Vickers rejects the assumption of Greek vases being valuable in antiquity and finds the arguments weak and even misleading. The foundation of the conception that simple decorated Greek vases are preferred over ornate decoration in modern times, was formed in the

eighteenth century during a raising reaction to absolutism, which can apparently be clearly seen in the Modern Movement. Vickers considers this as an "uncertain tool for reconstructing ancient value systems, or even the history of Greek art" (Vickers & Gill 1994, 32).

This is not the only argument Vickers mentions. The perception of high value of Greek decorated vases, which was formed during the Enlightenment, was still considered valid in the 1980s. As noted above, the high status of decorated pottery was developed around three centuries ago, and not in the ancient world. Vickers regards the texts written by d'Hancerville as being "fraudulent arguments in support of the view that Greek pots were valuable in antiquity and was composed with a view to enhancing the status of the pots Hamilton wished to sell" (Vickers & Gill 1994, 80). Also, it was thought that in fifth century Greece no metal items was used in a private domestic environment. The elites were considered to eat and drink from fine decorated pottery. According to Vickers and Gill, gold and silver before the eighteenth century were seen as a characteristic of the lower classes of society, such as road-menders, weavers and garbage collectors, which did not make plate attractive for people of higher status. A second notion is the fact that ceramics had come to replace silver as the material for drinking cups during the eighteenth century. This was caused by the growing habit of drinking coffee and tea, since drinking this from a silver cup would cause burning of the mouth (Vickers & Gill 1994, 77-80).

Vickers blames students and scholars, who research the ancient Greek and Mediterranean world, of focussing too much on pottery and still using the eighteenth century point of view on the value of it. He feels that literary and epigraphic sources from ancient times represent a different story. Temple inventories mention thousands of vessels made from precious metals and rich men are said to show off their drinking sets made of silver. He wonders why so much attention has been given to ceramics and so little to metal vessels, even though texts do refer to them. An unfortunate fact is that most of this metal ware has been lost, usually in the melting pot. The abundance of ceramics makes it a useful material in the study of Greek everyday life and is most frequently used. Vickers argues that archaeologists depend too much on pottery alone, which leads to deceiving conclusions. He suggests that scholars should use ceramic wares to reconstruct ancient history that is recorded in literary sources. But this can only

be done when Attic pottery is seen in its, according to Vickers, right value of low status (Vickers 1985a, 128; Vickers 1985b, 7).

These ideas of Vickers, together with contradictory opinions of other scholars, have lead to a heavy discussion in the 1980s on the value of ceramic and metal vases and their relationship. One end of the spectrum believes in the low value of Greek painted pottery and a very high value of metal vessels. They assume that the ceramic vessels are cheap versions of the metal ones, which can be seen in shapes and decoration. The other side considers ceramics as having high value and not being cheap imitations. This discussion has not yet been ended and there are still differences in opinions.

In order to get a clear view of all information, this thesis will be divided into three parts. The first part covers Michael Vickers' and David Gill's arguments for the low value of painted pottery, followed by arguments of other scholars showing contradictory statements. The second part consists of a short summary of Vladimir Stissi's thesis, who has collected a large amount of information on this debate and has written an influential piece of work contributing to this discussion. This will be supplemented by some relevant publications of the last decade. The third part consists of a small research done in several museums on what impact this discussion has had on museums and how this is presented in their exhibitions.

Part I

Chapter 2 History of Attic vases

Greek women relied on utensils made of clay in their households. These consisted of fine tableware with a black gloss, which is said to be the pride of the Athenian potters and unglazed, coarse ware utensils used in the kitchen, such as storage pots, casseroles, ovens, stoves and frying pans. These types of tools were not the only ones made of clay. Water pipes, bathtubs and lamps were also made of this material. The different types of shapes show the skills and inventiveness of the Attic potters. A probable reason for the presence of so many different ceramic objects, is that although metal was preferred, clay was cheap. Ceramic vessels have been found in abundance and there is plenty evidence showing us the daily use of the ceramic vases. Paintings on black and red figured vases from the fifth century B.C., which are made at the same time as the pots, are one of those sources. Another source is the literary evidence from the fifth and fourth century B.C., which describe the use and sometimes the names of household equipment (Frantz et al. 1958, 1).

Athens had established to become the primary centre of pottery production in the Mediterranean by the middle of the sixth century. Their Attic ware, decorated in black and red figured style, had become the main pottery kind since their enemy Corinth had been eliminated and, other wares, usually without figure decoration, which had flourished during earlier centuries, were now only produced locally. These Attic vases are widely distributed and are found in the whole of Greece including the islands, Italy, North Africa, Asia Minor and as far as France, Crimea and Spain. This distribution emphasizes the political and economic significance of Athens and also shows the high quality of this ware. Gisela Richter feels that Attic vases, found in tombs and sanctuaries all over the Mediterranean world, has shown that these vases "have taken their place" (Richter 1959, 305), suggesting they played an important part in the lives of the ancient people. A large number of Attic vases have been found in Etruria. For a long time it was thought that these vases were Etruscan, since the quantity unearthed here was far greater than similar pieces found in Athens (Spivey 1991, 132).

We know that the fifth century B.C. Athens was a city of wealth, which came from the silver mines at Laurion, loot from the Persian wars, and revenues of empire (Robertson 1992, 4). There is literary evidence for the use of silver and gold plate, and a few pieces survive. Unfortunately, not many vessels of precious

metals have survived the passing of time. The metal pieces we do have mainly come from burial tombs in Scythia, Thrace and some in Etruria. There are some silver vases and even fewer gold ones. Quite a number of bronze vases have survived and consist of large and small types, such as kraters, hydria, amphorae, plates, cups and bowls. Some have been preserved very well and are examples of fine craftwork. They have been decorated with applied ornaments (Richter 1959, 199). The silver vases, which have been preserved, are perfect examples of expertise. The whole surfaces of these vessels have been decorated with embossed reliefs. Most objects of precious metals have been found in the area of South Russia. These consist of weapon casings such as sword sheaths and quiver cases, a golden comb, silver vases with embossed reliefs and other items. The shapes and subjects of decoration are for the most part in Scythian design, but the style of decoration is purely Greek. This suggests that these items must have been imported from Greece or Greek artists travelled to Russia to work for Scythians. In Bulgaria, fine pieces of Greek metal ware have also been unearthed. These objects have incised decorations and shapes. The decoration and style are pure Greek, which would mean that these items were imported by the Thracian elite (Richter 1959, 205-207).

2.1 A different point of view

Since the beginning of archaeology in the eighteenth century, it has been thought that fine decorated Greek pottery was of high value. As seen in the introduction, decorated vases were considered as having high status and aesthetic value and were collected by many people from the eighteenth century onwards. Even today, numerous of decorated Greek vases are being sold to collectors for astonishing amounts of money. Classical archaeology is based on these ideas of great value and never questioned the true merit of decorated ceramics. This is mostly due to the facts that pottery, plain and decorated, have survived in huge amounts and that other materials have barely or even not survived at all. There was not much evidence to tell another story, and if there was any, it was not enough to convince the Classical scholars.

Michael Vickers feels (Vickers 1985a, 128) that most scholars and students in Classical archaeology focus their attention too much on the pottery and neglect the existence of metal vessels and therefore do not see the whole picture.

He also believes that the ancient Greek society is viewed from the perspective of the less wealthy people, which leads to the current perception we have of this civilization. In 1985, Michael Vickers wrote his article 'Artful crafts' to express his opinion on the value and status of pottery of the ancient Greek society. He urges that scholars should adjust their point of view and look from another perspective, that of the wealthy. Academics and students should keep in mind that ceramic vases imitate the metal ones in shape and decoration. In combination with the literary and scarce archaeological evidence, this would give a completely different perception of the Greek world (Vickers 1985a, 128; Vickers 1985b, 7). In his publications, Vickers introduces several arguments which plead for the high status of metal vessels and regards pottery as having low value, since he considers this to be a cheap material which imitates the metal ware.

Ninety per cent of the Attic decorated pottery, which is now in museums all over the world, originates from Etruscan burial grounds. These pots were used in a funeral to make it look luxurious, without the high costs. They were used instead of the objects made of expensive materials, in particular gold and silver, which were passed on to their heirs (Vickers & Gill, 1994, 71). In Greek burials, gold and silver vessels are not present either. Literary sources, like Demosthenes, tell us that this was not because of poverty, but because the metal vases were left to the descendants instead of taken into the grave. Gold and silver were passed on from father to son. In areas across the Greek boundary, completely different grave goods have been given to the deceased. In Scythia, Thrace and Macedonia, vases and plate made of gold and silver were placed in the tombs. These are the few pieces of precious metal that survive from the classical period (Vickers & Gill 1994, 71-72). Vickers judges the Scythians of "being so careless of gold and silver that they even placed vessels made from them in the grave, rather than keeping them for the use of the next generation" (Vickers & Gill 1994, 73). What Vickers forgets to mention, is the possibility that other cultures can have very different perceptions on the value of gold and silver. For instance, the Egyptians had no silver mines and had to import it from southwest Asia. Gold mines were available in Nubia and came under Egypt's control. This meant that silver was considered more valuable that gold in Egypt (Bard 2008, 64-65). Apparently, it has been claimed that in the fifth century B.C., metals were not used to make vessels for the utilization in the domestic environment. Literary records mainly

mention plate used in religious contexts, but there is some indication that in prosperity the wealth of rich people was turned into plate for domestic use. Unfortunately, other metal vessels have not survived, since they were lost into the melting pot, due to severe wear, looting or less prosperous times (Vickers & Gill 1994, 113-117). Thus, it is due to the "careless" Scythians, we have a little piece of this material category.

Vickers tells us that it is generally assumed that the shapes of pottery closely resemble those of metallic forms. Ceramic vases show the same characteristics as their metal equivalents. He mentions the concept of skeuomorphism, developed by Sir Gordon Childe. With this concept, an artefact is made in a new material, in which characteristics of the original are inherited that serves little or no purpose in the artefact of the new material, but was essential to the object made from the original material (Vickers 1985a, 7). Besides shapes, decorations of ceramic and metal vases are similar to each other. Some of these similarities are the handles, fluted decoration and black gloss surface (image 1). Precious metals, gold, silver and bronze, were used by the wealthy, while the poorer people were bound to ceramic vessels. The skeuomorphic elements were applied to the clay wares to imitate the metal versions and to make the pottery look more luxurious.

A common feature of pottery is the presence of a black glaze. David Gill does not see this as a degenerate feature, but as a technological improvement. He suggests that this glaze is meant to imitate the impression of tarnished silver. In one of the sparse documentations on the technique of painted decoration from antiquity, Athenaeus, writing at the end of the second century A.D., mentions the potters in his home town of Naucratis, who 'baptized' their ceramic vessels to make them look like silver. This suggests that they probably applied a layer of slip which would turn black after being fired. Apparently, silver items was not cleaned that often, since it would damage the decoration on it and hence, the silver would turn black (Gill 1985, 9). But why make or buy a silver items to let it turn black and therefore not being able to enjoy the shiny surface of silver. Wouldn't it be easier and perhaps better spend money to buy an already black item?

The black glaze is the same on decorated and undecorated vessels. However, decorations itself display more colours than black: orange-red, white and purple are used in painted adornment. If there is an explanation for the black

colour, found in precious metals, Vickers and Gill assume that there could be a similar one for the other appearing colours. They argue that the orange-red colour is not the colour of the clay, but is the effect of an applied separate slip. The orange-red is claimed to be used to imitate gold. Purple quite often appears on Attic figured pots. It is suggested by Vickers and Gill that this is to copy the copper inlays. An example of such an addition of copper are figures on black figured vases, who have purple bands tied around their head. These bands are also found in sculptures, where these are made of copper. Copper was not only applied to silver as decoration, but also to strengthen the silver vases. The purity of silver was very high, 98 per cent, which made vases very weak, so pieces of copper were added to make it stronger. The purple on ceramic vases was applied to imitate the copper on silver vases. This colour is present at places where metal vases most probably need strengthening. On black figured vases, a purple band is present at the point where there is a change in the colour design. In a metal vase, these points are the locations where parts of a vessel would be joined together and thus needed strengthening. The white colour is not taken from a kind of metal, but originates from ivory, which is also an expensive material, because it is rather scarce and hard to get (Vickers 1985a, 108-111; Vickers 1985b, 144-146; Vickers & Gill 1994, 128-129).

Vickers supports his statements with evidence of the introduction of the red-figured decoration on Attic ware and the abrupt decline of this technique. The black figured pots were imitating the work of metalworkers who applied silver figures on bronze vessels. The progression to red figures on pottery represents the practices of metalworkers who began using gold as a background for black figures and as figures on black backgrounds. Examples of the application of silver figures on bronze, which are suggested to be the prototype for the black figured pot, are found in the decorated cheek pieces of archaic bronze helmets. Examples on vessels are however not mentioned, which makes this argument weak. The "principle of the hierarchy of metals", where silver is decorated with gold and bronze with silver figures, is almost never the other way round, which to Vickers means that this supports the arguments given above (Vickers 1985a, 118-119). The technique of applying silver and gold figures on metal vases lead to another imitation on pottery. The design of the figures would be engraved into the silver. Once this was done, a thin sheet of gold was laid on top of this and pressed down

very hard with a tool causing the lines to appear in the golden plate. Then, these lines could be redrawn in the gold plate and the parts which were not part of the figure would be removed. Attic red figured vases show incision lines just like those mentioned above. These were probably copied by the potter from the work of a metalworker (Vickers & Gill 1994, 130). The possibility of different explanations for these lines are not given by Vickers and Gill, probably to strengthen their option for these incised lines. But these lines are found in many other mediums, such as paintings where the picture was drawn first and sometimes adjusted and then painted. On some occasions, the lines could remain visible.

Not only these signs of imitations show that vessels of precious metals were for the prosperous and ceramics for the poor. Huge differences in prices also show this contrast. Plate was worth its weight in gold or silver. An according to Vickers and Gill simple but clear example is a silver kantharos with gold figures from Duvanli. Its weight is 2,5 minae or 2500 drachmae and would presumably have cost this price. The highest recorded price of an Attic decorated vase is three drachmas. However, this is concerning a red figured hydria of 47 centimetre high, which was most probably more costly than other, smaller shapes. The reason for this could be the higher cost to ship these vessels, since they could not contain other pots (Vickers 1990, 616-618; Vickers & Gill 1994, 85). What Vickers and Gill forget is the fact that the silver kantharos is from Duvanli, where metal was widely available and they compare this object with an Attic vase. These items are form two different cultures with different aesthetic and monetary values. It has to be considered if these two items can be compared at all.

This bring Vickers to yet another argument for the low value of ceramics. According to him, pottery traded by sea was a by-product of trade in raw materials and other commodities. Evidence from shipwrecks suggest that trade by sea included transportation of goods that were not of high value, but were worth shipping if other more valuable commodities went the same or opposite direction. With this statement, he wants to prove that more expensive items were present in these shipwrecks, not only pottery, which could strengthen his theory. From this he concludes indicates that pottery was shipped as a saleable ballast. An analysis of cargoes of shipwrecks has revealed that pottery, with the exception of transport amphorae, represent around twenty per cent of the whole shipment. Vickers

reminds us that pottery is easier to discover in harsh water conditions and therefore appears to be more noticed than the others commodities, which probably have sunk to the bottom (Vickers & Gill 1994, 90-92).

Michael Vickers has come up with a solution for the problem of this discussion. “If we can see both Etruscan and Athenian elites using fine gold- and silverware in daily life, and passing it on to their heirs when they died, and the pots in their tombs used simply to provide the appearance of a respectable funeral without the expense, then the problem goes away” (Vickers & Gill 1994, 104). This is very easy to say, but is it the truth or as close as we can get to it, because that is what archaeology is about.

David Gill has some more arguments to support Vickers’ theory. He remarks that the imitation of metal vases has been recorded in ancient literary records. Thericleian vases of the Greek classical period are interpreted as being the imitations Athenaeus mentions in his writings. However, none of these vases have been found, due to the material they were made from. These vases are said to be made of expensive materials, such as terebinth wood, silver and occasionally gold. These objects were imitated in the cheaper material of clay. Theophrastus posits that the luxurious vases were undistinguishable from their ceramic equivalents and no one was able to tell them apart (Gill 1985, 9). But if no one could tell them apart, how could Theophrastus? Other literary sources tell us that precious metals were used daily during symposia and an example is given by Plutarch, who describes the invasion of Alcibiades on Anytus’ house, where the tables were full of gold and silver plate (Gill 1985, 10). These literary sources are great, but in how far can we trust them? Writers do not always tell the truth and do like to add some details. Besides, it is the aim of archaeology to verify these ancient writings with the remains we find. But without these remains, we will never be sure how much of these stories are true.

Chapter 3 Different scholars, different opinions

3.1 Value

John Boardman is one of the main scholars providing evidence against Michael Vickers' statements. Boardman regards that a large amount of the Attic decorated vases were made for the use at feasts and not particularly for the eating and drinking at a symposium (Boardman 1989, 5). He agrees, like most scholars, that metal vases were of more value than their ceramic equivalents. Because the silver, gold and bronze pieces were more valuable, they were more rarer and even rarer in the archaeological record. Vessels made of these precious metals were easy to be re-used and since they are made of luxurious materials, they are treated as a luxury.

Michael Vickers claims Greek painted pottery to be nothing more than saleable ballast, which would be used by the poor as tableware and by the rich as a substitute in the graves for the precious metal vases, so that the expensive vessels were passed on and used by the heirs (Spivey 1991, 134). Brian Sparkes has put forward some reasons for the large number of pottery being found in graves. He mentions that ceramics played an important part during the funeral and mourning time and vases were needed for the rituals performed at the burial. According to him, there was a tradition of burying ceramic vessels with the dead (Sparkes 1996, 68). This could suggest that pottery was not only put in the graves as replacements for metal vases, but also had a function in this context. This function of replacement has however been ascribed to the ceramic ones. Metal vases from preserved tombs show differences in styles, which means differences in dates. This could indicate that some vases were bought later or kept above ground longer than others as a bequest to be buried later with the dead (Sparkes 1996, 144). It was also not the tradition from the sixth to third century B.C. to place vases of precious metal in graves when they could have been preserved. Apparently, the richer a society becomes, the less elaborate the grave goods. When a society develops, they become more careful in their use of resources. Precious metals were used by the living and in less prosperous times melted down and refashioned. In peripheral areas such as Macedonia, Thrace and Skythia, it was more common to bury objects of precious metal along with the dead. Their

tradition has provided us with a large part of the few objects of precious metal that have survived and therefore giving us a little glance at their daily life (Sparkes 1996, 146).

Nigel Spivey mentions Michael Vickers' case against the high value of Attic vases in his book, but shows some other evidence. He admits that Vickers' case is based on common sense and that not many scholars would contradict the statement that the value of Greek vases has been overrated. This is not only due to the fact that Greek vases have become collector's items, but also the invisibility of wood, metal, grain and slaves in the archaeological record. However, Spivey feels Vickers has over exaggerated his case (Spivey 1991, 134).

Spivey shows that it is still impossible to prove that Greek Attic vases were exported to Etruria to serve as a cheap replacement for metal ones. The reason for this is the fact that it is uncertain how many gold and silver vessels were buried along with the dead. Most tombs were raided from their valuable metal objects, long before they were discovered by archaeologists. Ceramic vessels only became popular to be taken, when these objects were seen as valuable collectables. Only a few Etruscan tombs were found intact. One of these is the Regolini-Galassi burial tomb at Cerveteri. It had not been disturbed until the excavation of 1836 and over two hundred gold and silver pieces were discovered. These objects consisted of jewellery, shields, different types of vessels and other pieces. Spivey does mention that these objects date to the mid seventh century B.C., a time when precious metal was widely available. A century later, the noteworthy import of Attic ware was taking place and socio-political pressure perhaps caused less precious metal items to be given as grave goods (Spivey 1991, 134).

Spivey refers to a piece of evidence, which has not been incorporated by Vickers. This is the so-called kylikeia – the cabinets of vases used for the making of merry – which is portrayed in some symposia scenes on the painted decoration of Etruscan tombs. When regarding these depictions, Vickers has to be proven right that metal vases were used during symposia, but he is also wrong to demote pottery as low as he does. In some cases, it is hard to distinguish whether depicted cups are made of metal or clay, since they are usually dark coloured. This is coherent with the notion of black glazed pottery said to imitate tarnished silver, which will be explained later on. However, in certain tombs paintings, metal and

ceramic vases are placed side by side, which could suggest "virtual parity of value". An example is the Tomba dei Vasi Dipinti, where two black figured amphorae are placed on either side of a metal krater (Spivey 1991, 135). Spivey does not explain how the ceramic and metal vases can be differentiated, but has provided a drawing of the scene, which makes it a little more clear (Image 2).

Spivey also reminds us that it should be considered that the Etruscans placed more vases in graves than the Greeks and therefore the picture can be distorted. This is also the case for Thrace. This is the result of funerary traditions that vary in time and place. The examples he provides us, is that in Tarquinia the rich people decorated their tombs with paintings, while in Vulci, they adorned them with black and red figured vases. However, the crude manner of the excavation at Vulci makes it impossible to judge if these vases were imported for funerary use alone or if they had multiple functions. Vases were put in graves to serve as decoration, but they were also used to hold the cremated remains. Unfortunately, it is not known how many vases were used as ash containers, since some excavators did not care what the vases contained. Greek vases were not only used for burial purposes, which is shown by evidence from the sanctuary at Pyrgi, where vases were used in non-funerary events (Spivey 1991, 147-149). He has more evidence to advocate for the prominence of ceramic vessels. If these objects were considered to be nothing more than simple ballast, their large present quantity is curious. Another curious aspect is that owners of these vases made a lot of effort to repair them when they were broken. A third point is that the wells and midden areas of settlements, which usually contain lots of impasto pottery used in domestic environments, seldom include fragments of black or red figured pots, which is odd when following Vickers' statement that the common people used this kind of ware (Spivey 1991, 138).

Because many Greek Attic decorated vases have been discovered in Etruria, it is seen as the part of the ancient world that imported the most painted pottery from Greek production centres. But it should not be forgotten that there was a broad range of other markets, even though they are not always very clear. Alan Johnston has written an important book on the prices of pottery and wages – the only one on this topic – which is too much to summarize here (Johnston 1979). He mentions the large number of vases found in Etruscan tombs, but also says that due to the lack of excavations of contemporary settlements, we cannot

determine whether or how these vases were used in daily life. Some insights come from Spina, Italy, where prestigious vases seem to be older that the more modest ones, which could suggest that these were used during Etruscan diners before being buried. Another indication is that a number of vases have an inscription of the owner's name, which have more meaning than only a funeral message. These two points show evidence against the proposition that these vases were no more than cheap clay imitations of metal vases, in either the Greek or Etruscan world (Johnston 1991, 213-214). Alan Johnston reminds us that in general local kilns made plain and semi-decorated pottery in most parts of the Greek world, while Athens mainly produced the finely decorated ceramics. Excavations on sites dating to the sixth and fifth century B.C. show that the greater part of the ceramic finds consists of locally produced pottery. Often, the assumption is made that the reason for this is that these local products were cheaper than their equivalents that were imported. However, people usually stayed loyal to their local pottery producers, who always produced kitchen ware and pots for storage, which did not need to look luxurious and therefore, did not need to be imported (Johnston 1991, 230).

Vickers mentions ceramic vessels to have had very low prices of only shillings at most (20 shillings = £ 1 sterling). There is some evidence about the daily wages from antiquity, which suggests that the wage of a working day was one drachmae in the fifth century B.C. Boardman considers this to be a minimum of £25 a day, which he sees as quite a lot of money, since this is, approximately, the price of a red figured lekythos with two figures. For a simple, plain cup a price of £2 was paid and a volute crater with a number of figures would have been purchased for £100s. This proves Vickers statement of low prices to be wrong and were not cheap at all (Boardman 1988, 31). But with this statement, Boardman could also be suggesting that a figured lekythos was not that expensive, only a day's work.

Many Greek ceramic vases show signs of repair. This was often done by lead clamps which were fastened through holes of both sides of the break. It is probable that the break was also made impermeable by using a wet mixture of fired clay, egg white and quicklime or bitumen. Stems were reattached by pouring lead into the foot and in the drilled holes in the stem, which would result in a firm cone of lead (Hemelrijk 1991, 254). This suggests that pottery was considered by

the owners to be valuable. Valuable enough to repair it, instead of buying a new vessel (Clark, Elston & Hart 2002, 140).

3.2 Shapes

Some scholars agree with Michael Vickers' statement that shapes from ceramic vessels are derived from metal prototypes. However, there are plenty scholars who disagree. As early as 1947, Dorothy Hill had written an article showing arguments against the hypothesis that all ceramic shapes are derived from metal examples. Hill claims that, in the time of writing, the old statement of shapes of Greek pottery being descendent from their metal equivalents, is diminishing. It was agreed that some details of decoration have been copied from metal vessels, but it is now argued that the shapes, which were continuously used in ceramics, had been developed by potters for pottery (Hill 1947, 248). To prove this new thoughts, Hill shows three examples to strengthen them. The first is the kantharos, a drinking cup with large handles. The few metal forms that have survived, were hammered and therefore usually had simple shapes, since the angles were difficult to make. For the kantharos, this was so troublesome that it resulted in lop-sided vases. This makes Hill wonder why archaeologists want to see ceramic kantharoi to be derived from metal ones. She suggests that it would be more tenable to say that the occasional metal kantharoi are derived from the ceramic ones (Hill 1947, 254). Hill is supported in this argument by D.E. Strong. He finds that details of the kantharoi from Duvanli are not well suited for metalwork. The knobs and satyr heads are not integral parts of the handles and the necessary construction in ceramic vases, the cross-braces, are present on the metal equivalent, but have no function here (Strong 1966, 78).

The second example is the lebes – a bowl with round bottom that requires a stand – which is said to imitate the metal technique. Continuing the previous argument, Hill protests against this attribution of ceramic imitating metal, since there would be no reason to assume that a stand of such size could have been made of metal in the sixth century B.C. Not even small metal prototypes of a same form would be possible. The only stands of this kind which have survived, were found in Pompeii and were dated to centuries later than the sixth century B.C. According to Hill, this means that either the shape was invented by potters

for pottery, or it was taken from an object in a different material, like stone or wood, which was turned on a lathe and cut.

The third motivation is derived from the Attic volute kraters. Adolf Furtwängler argued in his *Griechische Vasenmalerei* that the handles of the François volute krater were imitations of hammered metal handles. Hill, however, claims that the ceramic volute handles cannot possibly imitate metal ones, since vase handles, and particularly those of volute kraters, were cast and not hammered. She adds that after the production of the first group bronze volute kraters, this shape was rarely produced in metal, but were actually developing in ceramic versions. In the fourth century, a second group of metal volute kraters emerged, which were more similar to the contemporary ceramic equivalents than the earlier metal ones. This could be an indication of cross influence and that the early metal types are not the prototype of the ceramic kraters (Hill 1947, 255-256). Hill had provided good arguments for some shapes, which are hard to dispute. Unfortunately, statements on different shapes are missing, but considering the time of writing, her arguments are very convincing.

Dyfri Williams mentions that ceramic vases from the early seventh century B.C. imitated their metal equivalents. The clay volute krater and neck amphora are remarkable shapes and probably originate from metal examples (Williams 1985, 21, 34). Brian Sparkes also regards that the vases of precious metal that have survived, seem to suggest that many ceramic vessels received their inspiration from these metal examples. Features like thin walls, sharp edges, acute angles, rivets and studs and decoration such as ribbing, stamping and incising are most probably derived from their metal equivalents. Impressed and applied decorations are seen by Sparkes as taken directly from metal pieces. He mentions Vickers' arguments on the influence of metal and the transfer from the more expensive material to clay and concludes that this has "important consequences for our understanding of both shapes and decoration, and in a wider context, of the social standing of the potters and their clients, and of the value and purpose of pottery" (Sparkes 1991, 70-71). But he does not mention exactly what consequences.

Nigel Spivey argues that Attic vase shapes are not only derived from metal ones, but could also be from Etruscan bucchero vases. One particular shape is the late sixth century black figure amphora, called the Nikosthenic amphora, which has flat handles and a conical mouth. These characteristic are seen in metal

examples and the ceramic vase probably imitated this prototype. However, no metal vase like this has survived, but it has survived in Etruscan bucchero. Other shapes found in Attic ware, which were borrowed from Etruscan bucchero or metal vase, are the carinated kantharos, small kyathos and one handled kantharos (Spivey 1991, 140).

By the end of the fourth century, Greek potters were using most of the techniques used by the silversmith with the exception of those used in mass-production. Silver had become more frequently used in the domestic environment, which increased the variety of shapes and function. Some objects used by women, like the pyxis and mirror, appear not to have been made out of silver in the classical period, which could indicate that these shapes were not taken form metal examples (Strong 1966, 89).

John Boardman says that metal vessels were also influenced by other materials, just like ceramic ones were influenced and that there are almost no basic clay shapes which are primarily derived from metal examples. Only some, like the phiale and rhyton, are probably inspired by shapes from the east in the early days. Many fine pots have thin walls, which could be a characteristic taken from metal examples. But there are also some observations suggesting the use of wood, stone and animal skins for vessels. Although almost all of these have not survived the passing of time, they should still be considered. Clay shapes were not only derived from metal examples, but also from wooden archetypes, which had been used for a much longer period before the use of metal. This is traced back in the names Greeks gave to some shapes, such as the pyxis and skyphoi, which have nothing in common with metal forms. Pyxides from the Minoan period have been found in Crete, resembling wooden types (Boardman 1987, 289-290; Sparkes & Talcott 1970, 15).

Most scholars agree that metal vases were more valuable than ceramic ones. But quite some arguments by Vickers and Gill have been disproven with evidence that is hard to dispute. Not many believe that all shapes are derived from metal examples. But the rhyton and phiale – the two shapes that most probably have been influenced by metal equivalents in the east – are not mentioned by the writers, which could mean that they agree with the argument that these are imitations of metal ones.

3.3 Decoration

According to Vickers, not only the shapes of ceramic vases are copied from metals examples, but also decoration would have been imitated. He claims that gold is being represented by red, silver by black and copper by purple. Apparently, purple details on black figured vases were pieces of copper used to strengthen silver vases, but these characteristics have not been found on any silver vessel (Boardman 1987, 286).

At the end of the fifth century B.C., some painters started to concentrate on the decoration of larger vessels, while others narrowed their expertise down to smaller vessels. More and more pots appeared with a white background. A common shape to be decorated with this white slip was the lekythos. It was made to contain oil, which was used during funerals and has been found in many tombs. Dyfri Williams (1985, 50) finds it a "suitable vessel to be given the special and probably expensive white slip". Given the fact that these lekythoi were placed in the graves of the dead, and the presence of the possible expensive white slip, it can be assumed that these containers were of more value than was thought before. He notes that in the second half of the fifth century B.C., fine vases with a black gloss became popular. Unfortunately, Williams does not mention what he assumes to be the origin of this influence. At the end of the fourth century B.C., the technique of red figure painting was ceasing. However, this was not the termination of Greek vase painting. A new and different way of decorating pottery was the production of pots, which were mould made. Williams acknowledges that this introduction of moulds in clay was influenced by vessels made from precious metals and believes that these mould made pots were the "most radical and damaging aspect to the future of Greek vases" (Williams 1985, 67). Williams shows evidence against the argument that silver figured bronze and gold figured silver vases have influenced the black and red figured Attic pottery. He mentions that no examples of silver figured bronze vessels have survived and that of the preserved gold figured silver vessels, none is dated earlier than the late fifth century B.C. This would, according to Williams, suggest that these vases could perhaps be understood as imitation of ceramic vases and that metalwork fails to consider the long tradition of vase painting (Williams 1991, 106).

According to John Boardman, Vickers' claims about the "deliberate

blackness of silver are demonstrably false" (Boardman 1987, 280). Vickers refers a number of times to oxidized silver. However, "silver is turned black not by oxidation, but by the presence of sulphur compounds. Oxidation actually barely affects silver" (Boardman 1987, 280). Silver tarnishes and turns slightly black, but it still shows its reflecting surface. Dark corrosion spots on silver have a non-reflecting surface, which are in no way comparable to the black glaze on pottery which Vickers mentions. In literary references, silver is mostly compared with light and bright things. Vickers mentions only one source to prove silver was thought to be dark. However, as Boardman shows, Vickers has taken this statement out of context from a paradox and is thus not valid (Boardman 1987, 282). This evidence from Boardman shows that the black glaze on pottery is not derived from silver and thereby rejects some of Vickers' arguments.

Archaeological evidence contradicts Vickers statements. The Etruscans had access to a large amount of metals and are known for their bucchero vases, made of black clay. These vases are not only said to copy shapes of metal examples, but also their colour. Pots were covered with a yellow or light pale slip to imitate gold or silver. Some pots were silvered, which would be "a meaningless exercise if the result was intended to look black" (Boardman 1987, 285).

Vickers' arguments on the tarnishing of silver and the derived black gloss had already been disproved in the 1960s, long before Vickers wrote his articles. D.E. Strong shows that objects of silver were wanted for the shining surface which was given to them by the silversmith. This polish needed constant maintenance, since sulphur in the air rapidly dulls and blackens the silver. According to Pliny, not all objects had this shiny surface, but the best pieces were supposed to have it. He also wrote that chalk and vinegar were mostly used for cleaning silver items. The writer Theophilus suggested to use charcoal to remove the tarnish and chalk for polishing. Pieces that do have a tarnished look, have probably laid in sulphurous conditions for a long time (Strong 1966, 14). Strong has some solid evidence for a few arguments, but agrees on some points with Vickers, Gill and Sparkes. He finds that other ways of decorating ceramics vessels, such as applied reliefs, are copied from metal examples (Strong 1966, 83).

Martin Robertson is grateful that Vickers reminds us how little evidence there is where we have to base our research on. However, he finds Vickers' new

statements based on even less firm evidence and feels that the new picture given on the development of Greek art is "bizarre, even to the point of incredibility" (Robertson 1992, 4). Robertson is also grateful for the fact that Vickers reminds us of the important craft of metalworkers, of which so little remains that it is sometimes forgotten and the important function it had for Attic potters. But, in his case Vickers goes so far, that Robertson is unable to follow him. Vickers believes that in the mid sixth century B.C. Attic workshops of potters were taken over by silver and goldsmiths. Not only black and red figured vases were imitated from silver and gold examples, inscriptions were copied too. This would mean that the signatures of vases were not the names of the potter, but of the gold or silversmith (Robertson 1992, 4).

Greek metalworkers started decorating their work with engraved lines from the middle of the fifth century B.C. onwards. Particularly drinking cups were decorated with figured scenes and ornaments by this fashion, which lasted till the fourth century B.C. Strong regards these as the expensive counterparts of red figured ceramic vessels, which have been decorated with lines for a longer time. Only a few metal shapes, such as the kylix, kantharos and other cups, were decorated like this. Strong argues that some details of the shapes and decoration on metal vases seem to "follow the clay versions, a reversal of the more normal dependence of clay upon metal". Robertson has made additional observations that argue against Vickers' statements. Some vase paintings show alterations in the pictures; changes in design of the primary sketch or between the sketch and the finished painting or even both. This cannot be explained as corrections of mistakes made during copying and has to be seen as the work of an original artist improving his painting. Robertson finds that the similarity between clay and metal vases is far less than Vickers insinuates. The black does not really look like silver and the orange clay even less like gold. The intrinsic picture Vickers presents of Greek ceramics is not right, according to Robertson. Painted pottery had been a thriving craft in Athens since the Geometric period, which suggests to Robertson that such a craft could not be taken over by another. He credits Vickers for starting his arguments with some truths. He is right that there is a similarity between metal and ceramic vases and that gold and silver were valuable and bronze, although much cheaper than these, was still more expensive than ceramics. However, the rest of his hypothesis, that the influence of one medium to

another only works from a more expensive to modest one and never the other way round, seems to Robertson to be arbitrary and demonstrably false. Craftsmen look with interest at other peoples work. It is true that Attic potters borrowed from silver and goldsmiths, but they modified it to fit their own craft. There are even cases where potters imitated details from even more cheaper materials and transmitted it to metalworkers (Robertson 1992, 5).

Vickers says that the change from black figured to red figured pots was caused by the increased reflection of wealth: bronze vessels with silver figures were replaced by silver ones with gold figures. Besides the reasons Robertson has given above, he has evidence to reject this hypothesis that red figure is derived from gold figure. Gold figures are made by incising the design in the silver and pressing a thin leaf of gold on it. Examples of this have survived, but none has been dated as early as the first appearing red figured pots. Robertson notes that the "technique may have begun as early, but such resemblance as there is between these two products of different crafts does not make me feel that one has to postulate the existence of gold-figure before red-figure could be invented". The silver figured vases are seen as only a hypothesis by Robertson, since if it did exist – no vessels like this have been found yet – it must have been made in a different way that the gold figured vases, because silver cannot be beaten into thin leafs (Robertson 1992, 9).

The statement made by the different scholars on the decoration of ceramic vessels are very convincing and should be hard to deny by Vickers and Gill. The only way on decorating that is hardly mentioned by the scholars is the use of moulds. Brian Sparkes is the only one who writes something about, but he does not explicitly say why or how this has derived from metal examples. But he is on the side of Vickers and Gill, so to them that probably does not matter.

3.4 Ballast

John Boardman has proven the theory of David Gill of pottery just being space-fillers to be wrong. Gill used a quote of M. Fulford that "there is no evidence that fine wares were traded long distances on their own. They occur as space-fillers in more valuable cargoes, often of oil- or wine-carrying amphorae" (Gill 1991, 30).

What Gill does not mention is the fact that this quote is taken from an article dedicated to Late Roman pottery. This kind of pottery was plain and for the most part undecorated. Greek fine ware is completely different from this and should not be compared in this manner (Boardman 1988, 27).

The perspective of Greek pottery as space fillers has been the result of previous studies trying to prove the importance of precious metal vessels. It is obvious that silver has more value than clay. But it has to be said that the way to determine the value of silver is by means of its weight and decoration – engraved silver was very valuable – whereas clay is being valued by the time spent on making and decorating it plus the amount the buyer is willing to spend on certain items, especially those only available at a single production centre. This shows that clay and silver are not that easily comparable when it comes to value or cargo. The value of clay vessels should be determined by comparing them to commodities and utensils of everyday life. Silver was not commonly traded in the shapes of vessels, because this did not add much to the value of the item. The amount of silver is usually overestimated and most of it was turned into coins. When precious metal was shipped, it could be considered to be the most valuable cargo, but not necessarily the most profitable. Cargoes of most ships would have consisted of everyday commodities and "it is with these that the commercial value of decorated clay vases has to be compared" (Boardman 1988, 28).

Merchants would ship goods that were demanded overseas and would be profitable. The master of the ship would primarily be interested in the nature and quantity of the goods, since his main concern would be to make a safe and timely arrival. Too many goods could cause a ship to not being able to enter a harbour, run aground or in the worst case, sink. Too little cargo could make the ship hard to handle and give problems with steering (McGrail 1989, 354). The right amount of goods on a ship depend on different factors, such as the type of ship and time and place. Gill (1988, 369) mentions that "volume is the main factor in maritime trade", but McGrail (1989, 356) notes that "not just the volume of the constituent elements of cargo, nor its weight, but the relationship of weight to volume i.e. cargo density" is the most important element. This is explained in his article by use of stowage factor, which is too complicated to summarize here, but can be seen as the amount of space it takes in a ship. The point made by McGrail is that goods with a low stowage factor, such as tin ingots and marble, were used as

saleable ballast, because these did not only lower the ship, but also could be sold somewhere else, unlike "untradeable ballast such as rubble, stone or sand. The relatively high stowage factor of pottery and its delicate nature necessitating special handling and stowage, mean that it is unlikely to have been used as ballast in antiquity" (McGrail 1989, 357). This means that the statement of Vickers and Gill about pottery being saleable ballast has been disproven by John Boardman and Sean McGrail.

An important term in this debate is profit, which is something completely different than value. Unfortunately, there is no evidence concerning profits made in the trading industry, but it is possible to deduce quite relative figures. It is considered that pottery was at least of comparable value to other commodities such as wine, olive oil and wheat, so the port taxes were probably around the same amount. This excludes pottery from being ballast. The profits too will probably have been around the same as the other products, although there are variations in the factors involved. Boardman notes that "the production of food commodities and therefore the price at which they had to be offered for trade depended on a complex of background expenses which involved ownership and farming of fields, processing equipment etc." (Boardman 1988, 32). For pottery, these background expenses were the material and tools: clay, a turning wheel and a kiln are all that is needed to make pottery. It is difficult to determine to actual prices of the vessels, but according to Boardman "they certainly seem to go beyond expense of materials and man-hours" (Boardman 1988, 32). This would mean that the pottery makers would indeed make a profit and considered it profitable enough for shipping and selling it abroad. Another reason for considering pottery as profitable is the fact that the fragile vessels had to be packed carefully for transport. This would not have been done for saleable ballast in ships. Other items were more easily transportable, which suggests that the efforts taken to transport pottery indicates it was considered profitable (Boardman 1988, 32). John Boardman has thus provided evidence that pottery was not used as saleable ballast, but was a valuable and profitable item. But this does not mean pottery was part of the luxury trade. But then again, what is considered to be luxury?

Part II

Chapter 4 Current view

In 2002, Vladimir Stissi wrote his thesis on the complete life of Archaic Greek pottery, from the potter to the people who used and discarded it and everything in between. He has discussed all aspects involved in the making and distributing of the pottery, from "the clay pit to abandoned sherd" (Stissi 2002, 2). The goal of his thesis was to research the "reciprocal interconnections and influences of production, distribution and consumption in the framework of society" (Stissi 2002, 2). The reason for this is that many scholars paid most of their attention to the pottery and especially the fine decorated ones, which were popular among art lovers, and did not see the people behind these pots. The study of Greek pottery was mainly concerned with the style and iconography of the decoration and when people were considered, scholars usually only looked at the interpretations of the figured scenes and it was not even questioned whether people from ancient times actually understood these scenes (Stissi 2002, 2-5). Stissi has done an extensive research, in which it should be considered that some important evidence of transport and use is sometimes not available, which makes research more difficult. Another important point mentioned by Stissi, is the fact that "case studies remain highly coloured by scholars' theoretical backgrounds and their positions in the debate" (Stissi 2002, 8). Vladimir Stissi has written a great piece of work with convincing arguments that reject previously made arguments by Vickers and Gill and Boardman and shows some good evidence relating to the discussion of the value of pottery. Stissi's concluding remarks can be seen as the conclusion of this discussion that has been going on for two decades.

Stissi mentions that not many scholars – with the exception of Alan Johnston – have tried to relate prices of pottery to wages and prices of other products. Usually, pottery is called cheap or expensive, not mentioning why or what is concerned cheap. And those who do try, do not present objective results, caused by the "selective application of data and suggestive calculating" (Stissi 2002, 198). He shows that both John Boardman and Michael Vickers made a wrong calculation. John Boardman's conclusion that decorated pottery was not cheap is not right, due to the evidence he used. For his starting point, he used a very high priced lekythos, costing – according to him – one drachme. He compares one drachme with a daily wage of 25 pounds nowadays. The highest

graffiti prices for hydriai are two and three drachmae and for kraters half a drachme or three obols to a maximum of ten obols. This would be consistent with £12.50 to £41.75 today. Considering that hydriai and kraters are much larger than lekythoi, this would mean that the price of a lekythos of £25 cannot be right and thus means that Boardman's calculations are clearly biased.

The same goes for Vickers. He made his calculations based on the price of gold in 1989 and compared these to price graffiti on pots from ancient times. From this, he concluded that decorated pottery was used by most of the poor Athenians and the really poor made use of wooden bowls and undecorated, coarse ware pots. This calculation "lacks any reference to the purchasing power of money, and takes no account of the inflation of the price of gold" (Stissi 2002, 198). Something that has to be expressed, is that it is just impossible to compare items and materials from ancient times with those of the present day. Values, manners and traditions are very different in these times and cannot possibly be used in arguments like these.

The fact that case studies are often 'coloured by scholars' can be seen in the collected data. These often show an over-representation of decorated pots and sherds. This is caused by the fact that for a long time, scholars focused their research on temples, other public places and graves, where decorated pottery would have been used instead of plain ware, to show off the wealth of the owner. Excavations in domestic areas have been carried out with the attention emphasized on architecture, still leaving the simple pottery sherds to serve only as chronological markers. Nowadays, this is changing, but the archaeological record is still biased and cannot give a reliable representation of the pottery used in ancient times (Stissi 2002, 213).

Even though it is thought that decorated pottery was a fairly exclusive product, pieces of it are found in all excavations in the Greek world. Sites with only plain wares are not found yet. This does not mean that everyone had access to these materials. But it does suggest that "every household with enough means to leave archaeological traces had, simultaneously, plain wares, black gloss and decorated pots, at least in Athens during the 6th and 5th centuries, and apparently in other towns as well" (Stissi 2002, 228).

The large absence of metal vessels in the archaeological record makes it difficult to establish their position in comparison with pottery. Literary sources

and the few pieces of evidence found at Olynthos, Greece, "seem to suggest that the range of metal ware in the domestic environment was largely confined to drinking vessels, mainly phialai, a few containers and buckets, and furnishings like lamp stands and incense burners" (Stissi 2002, 229). Considering the wide range of pottery types, this could mean that metal was not used very often for utility objects in the fifth century B.C. However, small objects used at symposiums, like cups, are more and more being made of bronze and seem to replace the ceramic ones (Stissi 2002, 229).

Vladimir Stissi provides us with good evidence against the statement of Vickers and Gill of pottery being cheap. They say that ceramic vessels found in graves were cheap imitations of their metal equivalents, which were present in the household, but were too expensive to be buried in a grave. Stissi dismisses this with the fact that the types of pottery found in burials were not used in daily life; they were connected with ritual traditions. The number of metal vases found in burials is higher than Vickers and Gill imply. The mere fact that these items were found in burials suggests that they were thought to be fitting as gifts. It also shows that not all grave goods were imitations and replacements of metal examples, which is indicated by the presence of jewellery that adorned the dead. An additional fact is that the types of metal vases found in graves are the same as those found in sanctuaries (Stissi 2002, 281).

The funerary context in which metal vases are found, can give some insights in the thoughts of the Greeks. Evidence shows that it was no problem to place valuable metal items next to ceramic ones. It is also noteworthy that many graves containing valuable vessels and other gifts, contained large amounts of pottery. This could suggest that "the extensive complementary pottery sets containing many more or less identical vessels cannot be regarded as a replacement for metal ware, but were themselves part of the more prestigious grave gifts" (Stissi 2002, 281). Moreover, the large number of items in graves suggests that the amount of goods was an important aspect in funerary display, even in times of financial decline. The evidence provided by Vladimir Stissi seems to suggest that the items placed in burials and sanctuaries were specifically chosen for this purpose: they had to have the appropriate status, be associated with ritual and not with domestic situations and be linked with social life. It is clear from archaeological research that in some periods, pottery was not placed in

graves or sanctuaries. This could mean that “in these consumption contexts, pottery is not a necessity but a commodity which can easily be replaced by other objects, made of different materials” (Stissi 2002, 281, 286).

Vladimir Stissi concludes his thesis with the acknowledgement that the evidence he has used, proves that “fine pottery was a commodity within most people's reach” (Stissi 2002, 284). The fine wares with figured decoration were presumably too expensive for most people to use in their daily life. But the main part of the Greek population had the means to buy imported black gloss and simply decorated items for dining and feasts and could afford some figure decorated vessels for specific events. The presence of these decorated wares, which were available to many, also means that these items were not regarded as objects of disdain. Considering that the figure decorated vessels are mainly present in graves and sanctuaries and largely absent in private houses, means that these objects were of relative luxury. The decorated items that are found in domestic houses are associated with drinking parties, which was the best way to show your wealth to others. This all suggests that the decorated wares were used in activities, where the items were visible and could show off the status of the owner. In private spheres, simple pottery was sufficient (Stissi 2002, 284).

Stissi’s answers the question of the value of decorated pottery with the statement that it should be considered as a semi-luxury. It is “a relatively simple and not very expensive product which, in its basic form, is a necessity, but which also offers a possibility for display. It could be made locally, but it was nevertheless often exported over long distances, in considerable quantities, for no obviously practical reason” (Stissi 2002, 287).

Vladimir Stissi has written a very clear thesis, providing answers and arguments for almost all the issues of the pottery debate. He refutes some arguments by Vickers and Gill, but also makes it clear that Boardman had sometimes gone too far in his arguments in defending pottery. It can be said that Stissi could have provided an end for this discussion. Presumably, everyone can agree with these arguments and with the conclusion that decorated ceramic wares should be considered a semi-luxury.

The discussion seems to have died out a bit in the last ten years. Most general publications on Greek archaeology do not mention the debate or quickly summarize the main arguments of Michael Vickers and David Gill, but leave it with that.

Vinnie Norskov does react against a statement of Vickers and Gill. She discusses the history of Greek vases in her book, from not being interesting in the Roman period to the great work of Sir John Beazley on the painters of these vases. She mentions that no one had questioned the work of this man, until he died. From the 1970s onwards, "the state of the study of Greek vases became the subject of an intense discussion"(Norskov 2002, 79). Norskov notes that this so-called traditional school of study was "most thoroughly attacked" by Michael Vickers and David Gill:

"They claimed that the traditional study of Greek painted pottery has led to a false perception of the meaning of ceramics in antiquity. They argue that the black- and red-figure vases are mere imitations of the more valuable metal vases, and thereby challenge the fundamental premise of connoisseurship and the achievements of Beazley and his followers. They stand, however, quite isolated in this fundamental rejection, and most scholars recognize Beazley's work as a starting point for further research" (Norskov 2002, 79).

Norskov is not the only one defending the validity and value of Beazley's work. Anthony Snodgrass mentions the arguments Vickers and Gill collected against the accepted view of decorated pottery being very valuable, which was advocated by Beazley. Snodgrass calls this "an attempt to undermine the very corner-stone of Beazley's work, his belief in the vase-painter as an artist, the belief to which he had largely converted the professional world, and which the art market had long taken for granted" (Snodgrass 2007, 22). For a defense of this, he refers to John Boardman's publication of 2006. Snodgrass quickly mentions the main point of view by Vickers and Gill, that the high value for Greek pottery is constructed in modern times and that people from ancient times admired metal vessels and considered pottery to be cheap imitations. He ends with his statement that "this venture has received a chilly reception: it threatens not only Beazley's achievement, but the whole underpinning of the subject, at least as practiced in the 20th century" (Snodgrass 2007, 22).

John Boardman has agreed on some arguments, but still brings evidence forward that would prove the higher status of pottery. In one of John Boardman's recent publication, he admits that ceramic vessels were "among the cheapest of the products of ancient craftsmen"(Boardman 2006, 8). But he also emphasizes that their study is "most rewarding" (Boardman 2006, 8). He mentions that most shapes, except the kitchen wares and storage vessels, were available in other materials and sometimes also imitated these materials. But there is a difference between pottery and other media. Since clay is easily made or changed, shapes and details are devised while making, whereas metal and wooden items have to be thought out before manufacturing since these have to be carved, cast or hammered. Another important detail which supports Boardman's statement on the decoration of ceramic vases is the fact that metal vessels are only decorated with figures on the neck or with cast handles and similar things. The bodies are not decorated like ceramic types, which does not change until the Hellenistic period. This substantiates the arguments that figured decorations on ceramic vessels are not derived from metal examples. Boardman does say that rivets were sometimes imitated in clay, but this is a different type of ornamentation (Boardman 2006, 268). He also researched the reason for copying and making certain ceramic vessels. He suggests that shapes and decoration were chosen by those for whom these items were made. Therefore, it would be pointless to copy shapes and ornaments that had no function or were not desired by the buyers (Boardman 2004, 149). He concludes with the remark that "the potters and painters were exercising a craft which had more to offer than utility, even if they seldom competed in terms of extravagance, and no other craft served such a wide range of activities at all levels of society" (Boardman 2006, 268).

Andrew Clark, Maya Elston and Mary Louise Hart (2002) have written a guide to styles, terms and techniques of Greek vases. It does not mention the relation between pottery and metal or the value of pottery. Neither do the authors show what their opinion is on this quite important aspect of Greek archaeology. However, they do refer to metal and ceramics while showing new evidence that has not been researched extensively yet. Clark, Elston and Hart have observed that many ceramic vessels have been repaired. If these were considered to be of low value, this would not have been done. Broken items were repaired by holes drilled on both sides of the break and were then hold together by metal pieces. The only

time the connection between metal and ceramic vessels is mentioned, is the statement that the phiale and rhyton are derived from metal examples. But they do stress that there is a difference between the metal and ceramic rhyton (image 3 & 4). The ceramic version does not have an opening at the bottom, which means it was not used in the same way as the metal equivalent (Clark et al. 2002, 140-142).

Vladimir Stissi has certainly convinced me that Greek decorated pottery could or maybe should be considered as a semi-luxury. It was available for those who had the means to buy them. Like most people, I agree that some shapes – the phiale and rhyton – could be derived from metal examples. Details on some vases, like handles are probably derived from metal items too. I do not believe the arguments that the figure decorations are also taken from metal vases. Perhaps the moulded decorations can be imitated, but these mainly date to a later period and therefore not really matter in this discussion. Silver smiths and potters could have influenced each others, just like it happens nowadays, which could be an explanation for some resemblances between these two materials. Other statements by Michael Vickers and David Gill have been convincingly dismissed by the evidence of multiple scholars. Stissi's most convincing argument is the archaeological record, which gives us great insights in the daily life of the ancient Greeks. We know some of it by literary sources, but excavations reveal – part of – the actual prove.

Part III

Chapter 5 Impact on people and museums

Discussions and debates are subjective. People's opinions are being influenced by their backgrounds, interests, visions and many other aspects. It is embedded in every part of our life, and particularly in research. Archaeology is considered by many to be an "interpretive practice, which is an ongoing process: there is no final and definitive account of the past as it was" (Hodder & Shanks 1995, 5). Interpretations will always be very diverse, since people can see things very different and therefore, many different interpretations can occur about the same aspect. Especially in archaeology, a manifold of interpretations are presented on all sorts of topics for various reasons.

But interpretation should not be seen as merely subjective. Everything in archaeology is involved in the creation of the past in the present or as Shanks and Tilley (1987, 103) put it: "archaeology in this sense is a performative and transformative endeavour, a transformation of the past in terms of the present". This means that the past is translated within a contemporary framework, which is influenced by creative, but critical responses to interests, needs and desires (Hodder & Shanks 1995, 5; Shanks & Tilley 1987, 103).

But where did this interpretive method come from? It all started with the processual archaeology of the 1960s, which is known by the name 'New Archaeology'. This new direction had been formulated as an alternative to the traditional cultural historical approach and had a large influence on the methodology and theory used in archaeology (Renfrew & Bahn 2005, 213). One of the mains aspects was that the principal goal of the discipline should be "the understanding of the causes of culture change in varying environmental and cultural settings" (Renfrew & Bahn 2005, 212). This meant that material culture had to be studied in long-term adaptive processes. Besides this, archaeologists were expected to shift their goal form describing to explaining (Renfrew & Bahn 2005, 207, 214).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, certain aspects of processual archaeology were criticized, which resulted in the rise of post-processual archaeology. The critique was focused on three main aspects. The first being the so-called processual concern with adaptive technologies, the second the loss of the historical context to cross-cultural anthropology and the last, the restrictive

definition of archaeology as 'positivist', which is used in archaeology as "the belief that arguments are built by testing theories against independent and objective data" (Renfrew & Bahn 2005, 207). Another point of critique was that material culture was considered to be passive and a tool to respond to the environment. Post-processualists saw material culture as active. "It was used and manipulated by people to effect social change, and that it could transform the ideologies through which people understood their world" (Renfrew & Bahn 2005, 208).The main focus points of this post-processual archaeology are symbolism, agency and critical approaches.

During the 1990s, several archaeologists who used a post-processualist approach, started to shift to a more positive approach. They moved away from critique and started rebuilding the theory and methods used in the discipline and encouraged the use of diverse approaches. While processualists had focused on explaining, this new movement laid its emphasis on interpretation. Therefore, this view was called interpretive archaeology. With interpretation, they meant that "different people with different social interests will construct the past differently" (Renfrew & Bahn 2005, 209).This would mean that there is "an uncertainty and ambiguity in the scientific process that cannot simply be resolved by appeal to objective data" (Renfrew & Bahn 2005, 209), because what people consider to be objective data also differs. To try and solve this issue, a fitting process called 'hermeneutics' was introduced. With this theory, interpretations functioned as an alternating element between data and theory as more information was put together to form a coherent statement, where the best fitting arguments and interpretations were used for this (Johnson 1999, 98; Renfrew & Bahn 2005, 209).

Julian Thomas (2000, 3) remarks that the so-called 'hermeneutic circle' cannot be avoided, which means that we should always consider the position of the interpreter, "who is the means through which any understanding of a situation is to be achieved". This can be accomplished by looking at their background, ideas, interests.

But why do we interpret things? We try to interpret things if we do not exactly know what they are. This means that identification is involved with interpretation. Also connected to this is classification, which is one of the main principles on which archaeology is dependent. However, "not all classification is interpretative work" (Tilley 1993, 2). Another aspect involved in interpretation is

experiencing. When interpreting material culture with a certain method, you learn how to experience this from different perspectives (Tilley 1993, 2-3). The interpretation of archaeological material creates information and stories. Whether these are accepted by others, is influenced by several factors. The acceptability is dependent on the context. This context is the actual context of the material culture in the past and it's connections with other objects and places, but also the "contemporary event of its understanding" by the scholars (Tilley 1993, 8-9). "Interpretation in archaeology is the business of making sense of material culture, and if something appears to make no sense, it is the business of the archaeologist to make sense out of it through different forms of interpretative operations" (Tilley 1993, 10). It should be reminded that interpretive archaeology tries to fill the gaps in the past. But as Shanks and Tilley (1987, 21) mention: "these gaps are always already there". This is not only due to bad preservation or not enough excavations. The authors explains this by "like a metaphor, the past requires interpretation".

5.1 Research

John Boardman admits in one of his recent publications that "clay vases were among the cheapest of the products of ancient craftsmen" (Boardman 2006, 8). However, this does not say anything about the value these objects had for the people who used them. But that discussion will never be completely solved. Leaving this behind, Greek decorated vases are very valuable to us, in the sense that they produce a manifold of information we can use in different ways. These objects have been found in large numbers in excavations, and therefore can provide a very useful chronology. Their iconography show us the many and diverse aspects of their daily lives, a valuable resource that has not been exceeded by other visual or literary sources (Boardman 2006, 8).

These Greek vases are displayed in all museums to show their beauty. At least, in most cases. Apparently in Oxford, "most are now exhibited only in a back room rather like cans of peas in a super-market, to disguise their individual appeal and a curator careless of what he regards as the 'detritus of antiquity' or 'unrecyclable junk' " (Boardman 2006, 9). And by this curator, he means Michael Vickers.

Discussions and debates are subjective. People's opinions are being influenced by their backgrounds, interests, visions and many other aspects. People have their own opinion on how things should be. This is also the case for a museum curator in all his tasks, including the making of an exhibition. They are guided by their opinions and values when thinking about and designing an exhibition. This means that exhibitions are largely subjective and could be representing the interpretations of the curator. But it could also just give a standard overview of the history of a culture, since this is what quite a lot of museum do. It can also give insights in how and what kind of information a museum wants to deliver to their audience. Making a nice show case with similar types in different materials or not showing or being able to show some material categories can make a big difference in how people see the material world of the ancient Greeks and other cultures.

The time when these exhibitions were made, can have an influence on the way objects are displayed. In the 1980s, the discussion on the value of metal and ceramics was very active, and many people were convinced that decorated Attic vases were very expensive. These objects were found all over the Mediterranean world and were useful as chronological indicators. This opinion has not changed that much to alter exhibitions and that is most likely why so many are on display. Exhibitions made in more recent times are more likely to show a diversity in objects and materials and maybe even inform the audience about them by use of texts.

It is clear that John Boardman and Michael Vickers still do not agree with one another. But has this clouded their judgement, or are the Greek vases really stored away in a back room? If the latter one is true, and we know how Vickers feels about Greek decorated vases, does the curator's opinion on certain objects have such a great influence on the exhibition in the museum and the way information is presented to the public?

To search for an answer, I have analyzed the Greek collections of six museums, focusing my attention on vases. The first museum of this research has been the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, which is the main character in this discussion, since Michael Vickers was the curator here. I have visited another museum in the United Kingdom, the Fitzwilliams Museum in Cambridge, because they have recently refurbished their Greek department. It will be interesting to see

if the discussion has had any influence on the new exhibition. The Dutch museums I have chosen are the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam and the Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum in Den Hague. Collections of Greek vases are not very common in museums in the Netherlands. Therefore, I have also visited the Royal Museum for Art and History in Brussels, which has a large collection of Greek pottery. To see if and how the debate on the value of pottery in contrast to metal has affected exhibitions, I will be looking at what objects are on display; what kind of objects are placed together; is there a connection between the objects and what kind; what does the information on the objects tell; what message does the exhibition deliver; are metal items displayed; is there a connection made between the ceramic and metal vessels? These aspects all have an influence on what information and how this is presented to the public. As we will see, these can be very different.

5.2 Ashmolean Museum

The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford as we know it today, was created in 1908, when the original Ashmolean Museum and the University Art Collection were combined. The start of the collection was already in the 1620s, consisting of portraits and curiosities. The museum was opened in 1683 for the public for a small charge and was the first university museum. The collection of the museum grew and a new building was necessary. This was found at Beaumont Street, where it opened in 1845 and were it still is today. The museum is named after Elias Ashmole. He donated his collection to the university in 1683 and had demanded that his collection of curiosities and antiquities were placed in a museum (http://www.ashmolean.org/about/historyandfuture/, as of June 12, 2012). Nowadays, the collection of the museum is very widespread, ranging from prehistory, antiquity in Greece, Rome and Egypt to China, the Islamic world and modern art. The Greek and Roman collection of the Ashmolean museum was formed by Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, already in the 17th century, which was the earliest in Britain. The great collection of Greek decorated pottery was collected by Sir Arthur Evans (http://www.ashmolean.org/departments/antiquities/about/AGreece, as of June 12, 2012).

The museum has been refurbished in 2009. Michael Vickers was

responsible for the new Greek gallery. The Greek collection has been displayed according to theme, including myths and legends, women and children, hunting, welfare and citizenship, craftsmen and slaves, death, ritual and sports and theatre. When entering the room, a text panel gives the visitor already some hints of their point of view: "Our displays are rich in pottery but materials that the ancients really prized – textiles, ivory and precious metals – have perished or been recycled". Here it is already suggested to the public that ceramics were not that valuable. The show case on the right draws immediate attention. The background of this part is white, while the rest has a dark purple colour. The title of this white part is 'from silver to ceramic' (image 5). The statements from both Thrasyalces 'silver is black' and John Boardman 'silver is white' are placed beneath the title. The white background shows images of vessels made of precious metal and in front of these, ceramic equivalents have been placed. The following text is accompanying the objects: 'Some believe that Greek pottery was intrinsically valuable and decorated by great artists. But rich Greeks dined from silver vessels, and others believe that painted pottery was made to resemble precious materials, with black-gloss to evoke patinated silver, red for gold ornament, purple for copper, and white for ivory. Ancient writers rarely mention pottery, still less potters. Silver objects represented wealth and were seldom placed in the grave. Fine pottery seems to have been used instead. But this is all highly controversial. What do you think?' The way this text is written is very convincing in making you think that precious metals were much better than ceramic objects. The statements are not explained with arguments and only those statements are used that advocate the value and importance of precious metal. Arguments in favour of ceramics are not present. This is even more enhanced by the descriptions of the objects. These include: the fluted surface is a metal-working feature; the black surface is an indication that the potter probably had patinated silver in mind; this is a very cheap evocation of contemporary gold vessels; a handle in the form of a snake is not a natural form for pottery; in a world where the black on pottery evokes silver and the red gold, white evokes inlaid ivory. For me, these texts are not convincing, but that is because I have researched this discussion and am not convinced that ceramics are cheap imitations of metal examples. But visitors can be highly influenced by these statements and see ceramics as not valuable.

The other show cases display different themes mainly by the images on

pottery. The texts describe the decorations on the vessels and do not mention anything about value or resemblances in other materials. A surprising aspect of the exhibition is that broken objects are displayed too. Not many museums display broken items, so this is actually a nice feature to see. But could this be connected with the view of the curator, who does not really appreciate pottery?

Two show cases have to be mentioned. The first is the one with the theme Dalboki, a place located in central Bulgaria, which is the burial site of a Thracian chieftain. It contained a bronze armour, a gold breastplate, iron fragments from spears, four silver and three bronze vessels and five made of clay. The objects have been displayed in such a manner, that the attention is drawn to the metal objects (image 6). The ceramic vessels are placed at the highest position in the show case. The two bowls on the top left are even placed on top of each other, which gives the impression they are stored away like ordinary kitchenware of today. The second show case particularly worth mentioning, is the one a little away from the gallery and at the bottom of the stairs. Here, a large show case is placed, which is literally filled with lekytoi (image 7). It is almost unbelievable how many lekytoi are on display here. The texts in this showcase suggest the imitation of metal vases: 'the white background is perhaps designed to evoke ivory. Pottery lekytoi were normally decorated in black or red figure, as a way of evoking silver and gold decoration'. I wondered why all these lekytoi were displayed here like this. That answer was provided by Michael Vickers: "The mass display of lekythoi came about from a combination of reasons. In part, it was a nostalgic hangover from earlier museum displays, where we had far more material on show than now. In part, it was to provide a focus at the bottom the staircase where they are situated. And in part, it was a solution to the problem with which we were faced by the architects when they presented us with a huge case away from the main gallery. The lekythoi have been the focus of a good deal of research as a direct result of this new permanent exhibition: they have all been photographed, and all have been studied for a forthcoming volume of the CVA which will be devoted to them. There are also plans to put all the information online accessible from a mobile phone, so that the visitor can be rather better informed about each piece than might have been the case if they were all labelled (and we wanted to avoid the "snowflake" effect of a vast number of labels)" (Personal communication, Michael Vickers, June 12, 2012). Before this answer,

this show case reminded me about John Boardman's expression that "most ceramic vases are now exhibited only in a back room rather like cans of peas in a super-market, to disguise their individual appeal" (Boardman 2006, 9), and I could agree with him. But Vickers' answer plus considering his point of view on pottery, makes some sense on why it is displayed like this.

It is very clear that Michael Vickers has made this exhibition. The texts and descriptions accompanying the objects say enough. He has used Greek decorated vases to tell stories with different themes, but has also made room from a part of his life's work, the discussion on the value of pottery and metal. He clearly puts his argument forward and leaves no room for arguments in favour of ceramics.

5.3 The Fitzwilliam Museum

The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge was established in 1816, when Richard VII Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion left his collection of art and books to the University of Cambridge. He also provided them with money to house his collection, which made it possible to open the museum for the public in 1848. The collection consisted of Dutch and Italian paintings, engravings and medieval manuscripts. More objects were added to this collection by gifts, acquisition and bequests during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The Greece and Rome gallery has been rearranged many times due to growing collections, structural changes and different opinions of curators and directors. The department has been completely refurbished by a project team in 2010. They had decided to present the objects by "highlighting the different people who had shaped the life of each ancient artefact, which are: the craftsman who made it; the ancient customers who bought and used each object, and who left them to be discovered centuries later; the 'modern' excavator who found the object and the collector who owned it, restored it, or brought it to the museum; the conservators and curators who have shaped the appearance of each object and the way it was displayed since it came into the museum"(http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/ant/greeceandrome/display/display.html). Unfortunately, it is not allowed to make photo's in the museum, but the website has an excellent database, in which you can find all the items.

The Greek department is set up in a large room. The collection consists of all sorts of items made from ceramic, marble and metal. When entering the room, it is somewhat confusing where to start, since there are multiple showcases you can go to first. The objects have been arranged chronologically, but "each section tells its own story, so you can choose your own route "(http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/ant/greeceandrome/ onlinegallery/pdf/Greece_and_Rome_Gallery_Guide_pdf.pdf, as of June 13, 2012).

The showcases all have text panels on them, with titles like 'Expanding horizons: the Greek world 400-1 BC' and 'Gods and mortals'. The text panels are the best elements in the exhibition. They are very clear providing good information and each panel highlights two of the main pieces of that showcase. The next examples will show the good use of texts, which are associated with the discussion about the relationship between metal and ceramics. A show case displaying Roman objects contains a bronze jug dated to 100 A.D. The description mention this piece to be similar to earlier Greek examples. In a different show case, an Etruscan oinochoe and kantharos are positioned, accompanied by the text 'the wide strap handles suggest the influence of metal vessels'. A separate standing show case has as theme the connection between Greek red figured vases and the Etruscans. A large text mentions that 'some vases seem to have been especially designed for export to Etruria'. An amphorae which is highlighted, was found in Etruria and dated to 530 B.C. The texts indicated that 'the clay comes from Etruria, but the subject is Greek. The friezes of birds, leaves and flowers resemble those on vases produced in the islands of Aegan and on the west coast of modern Turkey. The styles and subjects of this vase may have been brought to Etruria by Greeks form the eastern Mediterranean'. This show case also contains a bronze wine bowl (inventory number GR.3.1939), of which is said that 'bowls of this type were made and used by both Greeks and Etruscans. The ribbed side and styles of the horses suggest this one was made by a Greek.

A show case nearby displays red and black figured vases, lekytoi and bucchero. The texts inform the visitor about the making and decorating of Greek vases. Special attention is given to lines on a figured vase. It says that 'slight indentations in the surface show where a stick of charcoal was used to

sketch the figures. These are preliminary sketch lines' and the image shows that the artist had changed his mind on certain details.
The rest of the exhibition mainly shows objects that are telling a story or theme. The vases have been chosen for their figured decoration or function.

The texts in this exhibition are one of the most important components of the gallery. Many thoughts has gone into them: "the labels are the result of a long process of research, consultation and debate. We asked a great many people how much information we should include and what sort of things they wanted to know. What did we ourselves want to say? What worked well in other museums?"(http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/ant/greeceandrome/onlinegallery/pdf/Greece_and_Rome_Gallery_Guide_pdf.pdf, as of June 13, 2012). The texts not only tell the stories we see in many museums, but also provide additional information, especially on the relationship between ceramics and metalwork. The information does not show a clear preference for either side of the discussion, but gives several arguments. They show that some details, like handles and specific types of decorations can be derived from metal examples. But others, such as incised lines, are shown to be the work of the painter. Displaying information in this manner, is a great example for other museums.

5.4 National Museum of Antiquities

The first items of the large collection of the National Museum of Antiquities were owned by Gerard van Papenbroek (1673-1743). He bought manuscripts, portraits and antique statues at auctions. When he died, the portraits were transported to Amsterdam, while the rest of his collection was donated to the university of Leiden. Van Papenbroek had insisted that the objects of his collection would be accessible for the public. Therefore, it was decided to place the items in a new building in the botanical garden (Halbertsma 2003, 16-17).

In 1818, Caspar Reuvens became the first Professor of Archaeology in Leiden and the director of the archaeological cabinet, which comprised of the objects still located in the botanical garden. This cabinet, which would be called the National Museum of Antiquities, was set up by King Willem I to compete with other countries as Germany, France and England. Reuvens visited museums

in England to gather ideas for his own. In 1819, he bought plaster casts of the Elgin marbles to use in his lectures. These and the objects from Van Papenbroek were housed at the Houtstraat in Leiden. In 1821, antiquities from the Theatrum Anatomicum were moved to the museum of Reuvens (Halbertsma 2003, 25-33). The collection of the museum kept growing by acquisitions of the Dutch state and king, advised by Reuvens. B.E.A. Rottiers had collected many things in the course of time, including grave reliefs, coins, pottery, bronzes, Egyptian objects, statues and busts, which he sold to the Dutch state (Halbertsma 2003, 49-50). Jean Emile Humbert travelled to Tunisia, where he started excavating in 1817. He found Punic stelae, which were bought for the museum in 1821. Between 1822 and 1824, he bought statues of Roman emperors, destined for the museum in Leiden. In 1826, he had to return to North Africa to buy more objects, but he stayed in Italy, where he bought six urns from Volterra. These were the first Etruscan objects in Reuvens' museum. The museum was further enriched with the collection of bronzes from Corazzi and the Egyptian collection from Jean d'Anastacy containing over five thousand items. This lifted the museum to the same level as London, Paris and Turin (Halbertsma 2003, 78-80, 90, 93, 105-106).

Reuvens died in 1835 and was succeeded by Conrad Leemans, who was appointed the first curator and later the director of the museum. A new building at the Breestraat in Leiden was bought to house the collection. Even though the museum already had a large collection of objects, Greek vases were scarcely represented. This changed 1839, when vases from Lucien Bonaparte were put up for sale. Some vases were already sold to private collectors, such as Willem van Westreenen, but the remaining part was bought by Leemans (Halbertsma 2003, 145, 149-150). In 1918, the National Museum of Antiquities moved to the building on the Rapenburg, where it still is today.

The Greek collection has been divided mainly by themes. It starts with different places and people, from Mycenae and Corinth to the Cyclades and the 'barbaric north'. The department has five different themes, each accompanied by a god or goddess. One example is 'Greeks in motion', which is accompanied by Nike. The goddess is represented on a large banner and a show case with that depiction on the actual vase is displayed below it. The larger part of the collection is divided into themes associated with everyday life. These include festivals, sports, comedy,

tragedy, the life of women and many more. The themes are told by vases and their depictions, statuettes and other items.

Two themes have been visually supported by showing their context; the symposium and the workplace of the potter. The symposium represents two men lying on a couch, both holding a drinking cup and a servant standing between them (image 8). On the table in front of them and on the ground, objects are displayed that are used during symposia, such as drinking cups, a krater for mixing the wine and oil lamps. Presenting objects in such a manner gives a very clear picture of how and in what situations these items were used. Besides this, it is very amusing to look at. The workplace of the potter shows a man decorating a vase (image 9). He is surrounded by other finished vases of different shapes, sizes and decorations. Additional information is provided by a computer program called "A visit to the Greek potter" , which tells you all about Greek pottery. It begins with how the pottery is made, informing you about the clay, the potter's wheel, types of decoration, firing process and that there were expensive and inexpensive items available in ancient times. It compares tableware with the present day, saying 'Greek pottery, like present day tableware, comes in different qualities and prices. The potters make impressive pots that are richly decorated and unique, but they also make simple pots that can be mass produced'. Other subjects in the program tell about for whom the pottery was made, what it was used for and what is depicted on them. There are a few games that can be played, such as repairing a pot and guessing where pottery belongs in a house. It is a very informative program, which gives a lot of additional facts and available and interesting for everyone.

The curator of the Greek department, Ruurd Halbertsma, has followed the discussion, but this did not have an effect on his opinion or on the way he has designed the exhibition. He agrees with the semi-luxury conclusion, drawn by Vladimir Stissi. Halbertsma regards pottery has always been cheaper than metal, but there certainly are more expensive ceramic items that were not available to everyone (personal communication, Ruurd Halberts, June 12 2012). This can been seen in the exhibition. Large figure decorated ceramic vases are displayed, but also smaller items with hardly any decoration. There are no metal vases on display and rhere are no texts referring to the use of metal and the value of pottery and metal. Plain wares are not available in large numbers, but this is caused by the

fact that “coarse wares were thrown away” when they were discovered or excavated (Halbertsma 2003, 150). A nice thing to see, is the display of some misfires, which shows that the production of decorated vases was not that easy (image 10).

5.5 Allard Pierson Museum

In 1934, the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam was opened with a mission to show the original antiquities to students during their education. It was mainly focused on ancient Greece and Rome and consisted of some six thousand objects. The museum was named after Allard Pierson (1831-1896), who was the first Professor in Classical Archaeology at the University of Amsterdam. In 1929, his son Jan Lodewijk Pierson established a foundation carrying the name of his father. The goal of this foundation was to buy Dutch collections, which were otherwise doomed to be sold abroad. Most of the objects had come from the collection of C.W. Lunsingh Scheurleer. He was a banker and a collector of Greek art. His favorite items were decorated vases and terra cotta statuettes. In 1901, he travelled to Egypt and Greece, where he bought a number of objects. He had a small museum for his collection positioned at the Carnegielaan in Den Hague. The Greco-Roman items from Egypt, belonging to the collection of Professor dr. F.W. Freiherr von Bissing were also displayed here. The approximately five thousand objects were displayed to demonstrate the connection between the ancient Greek and Egyptian world. In 1929, Lunsingh Scheurleer was forced to sell this collection due to the financial crisis. The Allard Pierson Foundation bought his collection, under the condition that it would be open for the public. The objects were donated to the University of Amsterdam and five years later, the doors of the museum on the Sarphatistraat were opened. In 1921, Jan Six, the successor of Allard Pierson, had donated his collection of Greek vases and sherds to the University of Amsterdam that was celebrating its 25th anniversary (Brijder & Jurriaans-Helle 2002, 8-9).

Donations and loans expanded the collection. Especially director J.M. Hemelrijk managed to acquire quite a number of objects. This made it necessary to search for a new building, capable of holding the many objects. This new location was found in the former building of the Dutch Bank, located at the Oude

Turfmarkt in Amsterdam. Dick Elffers, a designer and artist from Amsterdam, was asked to design the interior of the new museum, which was opened by Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrix in 1976. The objects in the new displays were put central as 'witnesses of the civilizations in which they were once created'. The expressiveness of the objects and their mutual coherence had to be the most important with texts only fulfilling an additional role. The collection of Greek ceramics was enriched by the collection of 52 Greek vases of dr. J.L. Theodor from Brussels. More was added by loans from the Den Hague Gemeentemuseum. These objects were a nice addition to the existing collection, since some of these had belonged to the collections of Lunsingh Scheurleer and Von Bissing (Brijder & Jurriaans-Helle 2002, 13, 14, 18).

The collection of the Greek department of the Allard Pierson Museum has been set up in the 1980s and 1990s and includes different sorts of objects, but the main part of it consists of figure decorated pottery. Especially in the 1990s, the collection on display was extended with more types of materials by the director H.A.G. Brijder. First, only ceramic vases were exhibited, but these were later accompanied by terracotta's and metal items (Personal communication, René van Beek, June 13 2012). The collection has been set up chronologically and thematically. It starts with the earlier ceramic wares and other objects from the Bronze age and Geometric period. Each of these periods are displayed in separate show cases. Other show cases display different themes and have been arranged according to these, such as sport activities, oil flasks, the life of women, Sparta, Corinth and Boeotia. A large section of the rooms is devoted to Attic figure decorated pottery. These objects have also been put together according to themes. For example, a large glass show case has the title 'Athens black figured pottery 6th and 5th century'. The objects are categorized by subject, like gods, satyrs, Heracles and other. Large ceramic vessels are placed on pedestals in their own show cases. There are text panels, giving information on different sorts of subjects. The panels next to the black figure provide information on the technique of making Attic pottery and the baking process. The objects are accompanied with little text labels, describing the items with varying levels of the amount of information.

The Greek collection includes a few metal objects. These are displayed next to the same types in other materials and therefore show their resemblances

and connection. A large show case with the number 228a, shows what is called the ‘store of cups’, where an overview is presented of Attic black figured drinking cups and bowls, dating between 580 and 480 B.C. (image 11). The objects have been arranged according to subgroups, such as Siana cups. Almost all have been displayed in such a way that the decoration on them can be properly looked at. In the lower left corner, one object stands out from the rest and draws your attention. It is a spoon made of bronze. Next to this, a bronze drinking cup is placed (image 12). Both these objects have been dated to the second half of the sixth century B.C. To the left of these bronze items, two ceramic drinking cups are displayed, the one placed nearest to the bronze one being a rather special example. This cup has been dated to circa 550 B.C. and shows an antique repair of the foot with a piece of lead. An unfortunate thing is that the text only describes the objects, but nothing more. It would have been nice to read something about the use of these items and especially some information on the metal objects and the one with the ancient repair, since these are not common.

A part of a show case displays objects connected to the carrying of water. A ceramic kalpis used as a water jar is displayed, with its equivalent in bronze next to it. This bronze example is a large object, dated to circa 430 B.C. and is still in quite a good condition (image 13). These items are displayed for their function and not because of their decoration on it, which is the case with many themed show cases.

Another example that shows objects for their function, are three phialai. These round shallow bowls without handles or a foot were used for making libations of wine or oil and were made of different kinds of material. Here, examples are displayed in ceramic, alabaster and bronze. The last one has been found in Thrace and dated to the fifth century B.C. This show case is a nice illustration of an object being made from different materials (image 14).

The best show case concerning the comparison of ceramics and metal objects, is number 246 (image 15). It displays ceramic and bronze items from Greece dating between the fifth and third century B.C. It has been set up very clearly. The same shapes have been put side by side, in most cases one made of bronze and the other of ceramic. This shows that the same shapes were executed in different mediums, making them available for everyone. The only text connected to this show case, is the description of the objects. In one case, the texts

suggests that the ceramic jug is an imitation of the bronze equivalent (image 16). A remark that has to be made, is that the bronze object is dated to circa 450-400 B.C. and the ceramic one to the third century B.C., which is quite a large gap for an imitation. Nonetheless, this show case is a perfect example to display the resemblances between metal and ceramic items.

The Etruscan department of the museum has more text panels placed on the wall, explaining certain subjects. One concerns the Etruscan black pottery called Bucchero. It is said that it started being produced from about 675 B.C. The first vessels were thin and fragile, making them costly and exclusive. Thicker and cheaper items were made later, making them available to everyone. The text says that 'the early thin-walled bucchero imitates metal ware' and that 'exactly the same shapes occur in both bucchero and bronze'. The display next to this text panel shows different types of Bucchero pottery, with a description of the types beside it. This in one of the few places where pottery is being described as an imitation of metal objects. But this is because the curators a quite sure that this type of pottery has been imitated from metal examples (Personal communication, René van Beek and Geralda Jurriaans-Helle, June 13 2012).

The Greek collection of the Allard Pierson Museum has been set up clearly. Periods, places and themes are nicely displayed. The decorated vases are partly displayed for their decoration and partly for their function. Different materials are displayed besides each other, showing differences and especially similarities. Something that is missing, is the frequent use of texts. Some text panels are present, but they only give information on a restrictive amount of subjects. Some themed show cases have a small piece of text explaining the subject, but that is only the case for a limited part of the exhibition. But this could be caused by the motivation behind the creation of the exhibition, where the expressiveness of the objects and their mutual coherence had to be the most important with texts only fulfilling an additional role. Apparently, this view has not changed since. This is confirmed by curator René van Beek who said that they are not going to place texts with references to the possible imitations of metals in ceramic vases, because it still has not been proven that this really is the case (Personal communication, René van Beek, June 13 2012).

René van Beek agrees with Michael Vickers that some shapes, bucchero and black gloss vases are imitations of metal examples. But he does not agree with

the statement the red and black figured vases are derived from metal ones and he would actually place these decorated vases at the same level as the metal vessels. He considers less decorated items to be for the less wealthy, but disagrees that the white lekytoi would have been derived from ivory. Geralda Jurriaans-Helle said that figure decorated vases were probably available in some way for many people. As an example, she mentions the marriage dowry, where a figure decorated vase could be given to the new couple and which could be their only vase with this kind of decoration. The curators have placed metal objects in the exhibition and one case shows the resemblances between metal and ceramic. But this are not figure decorated objects, but have a black gloss, of which they assume it has a connection with metal and therefore have displayed it like this. On the question if the curators have considered the discussion in the design of the exhibition, they answer with a firm no. (Personal communication, René van Beek and Geralda Jurriaans-Helle, June 13 2012).

5.6 Meermanno-Westreenianum Museum

The Meermanno Westreenianum museum in Den Hague started as a private collection. It consists of a very large number of books, manuscripts and ancient artefacts. Gerard Meerman started collecting in the eighteenth century. He had studied law in Leiden and was a chief municipal magistrate. Most of the year, he lived in Den Hague, where he had close ties with the book world. He developed an interest in the history of printing books, in which he also undertook research. He made his collection of books available for others, who wanted to do research. When Gerard Meerman died in 1771, his son Johan took over his collection. Johan was a scholarly regent and had made a two year Grand Tour in Western Europe. He catalogued, reorganized and expanded the library. His interest lay in topographical and travel accounts and the medieval history of Holland. He died in 1815, leaving his collection and house to the city of Den Hague, but the city did not accept this bequest. Willem van Westreenen was the second cousin of Johan Meerman and had been his junior for thirty years. When Den Hague did not accept the bequest of Meerman, the objects of his collection were sold at auctions. Willem van Westreenen tried to buy the complete collection, but could only save parts of it. He was interested in antiquarian books and numismatics. He expanded

his part of the Meerman collection with many books and manuscripts. His focus was not on contents of book, but on acquiring different editions and versions of them, to show the development of the written and printed book. He owned around 1500 books that were printed before 1501. Besides the books and manuscripts, Van Westreenen had put together a collection of Greek, Roman, Egyptian and German objects and coins. The whole collection was closed for other people, even those close to Van Westreenen. The objects could only be seen during a few, very small scale exhibitions in his house. Willem van Westreenen died in 1848, leaving his house and collection to the Dutch state under the condition that it would be called Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum (Van Heel 1998, 10-15).

The Greek collection consists mainly of vases. Some of these were part of the collection of Lucien Bonaparte. He discovered them on his property in Italy, but was more interested in money and therefore sold the vases. In 1792 and 1793, Johan Meerman started collecting all sorts of objects. The story goes that already excavated Greek vases were buried again on the site, so that Meerman could excavate them himself. He bought the vases to decorate his house. He probably chose the vases for their mythological depictions in which he was interested.

The museum is arranged like a nineteenth century museum. The furniture in the rooms date to the time of Van Westreenen's death (Van Heel 1998, 15). Museums in this period were places where objects were displayed, stored and could be studied at the same time. The current exhibition has been made by curator Jos van Heel in 2000. Since the museum is organized like a nineteenth century museum, he decided not to display the Greek objects as modern museums do. Objects in these institutions are usually set up according to chronology or genealogy. He did not like the idea of this and arranged the objects according to collection (personal communication, 24 February 2012). Because the Meermanno-Westreenianum Museum has chosen to display the objects in a nineteenth century museums setting, modern discussions on Greek ceramics do not have an influence on the way on displaying objects. The curator Jos van Heel has followed the discussion, but has not formed his own opinion on this debate, because he finds it is not important for his collection and the way it is displayed (Personal communication, Jos van Heel, June 11 2012).

Even though this museum could be viewed as not really connected to the

research of the way objects are presented in a museum, it does show something quite important. The Greek collection consists of a rather small number of object, compared to other larger museums. However, the Meermanno-Westreenianum museum is one of the few museums in the Netherlands with a collection of Greek decorated vases. Usually Greek vases are displayed chronologically and thematically, but this museum shows a different manner of exhibiting. Choosing to display the objects according to collection, shows a different view on these objects. They are not presented to show their subject of decoration or the changes through time in pottery, but it shows how they were viewed in the past and how they were arranged in these times.

5.7 Royal Museum of Art and History

The Royal Museum of Art and History is located in the Cinquantenaire palace in Brussels, which had been built by order of King Leopold II. The assembling of the collection had already started as early as the fifteenth century. Between the fifteenth and seventeenth century, diplomatic donations and curiosa from Burgundian dukes were on display in the Royal Arsenal. In 1835, Belgium wanted to show their independency in historical perspective by establishing a museum with a collection of ancient armours, objects and coins. These were placed in the so called Hall Gate, which was part of the surviving defensive wall around Brussels and where the donations and curiosa had already been relocated to. The amount of objects kept rising, causing insufficient available space in the Hall Gate. In 1889, it was agreed to separate the collections and objects from Classical antiquity were transferred to the Cinquantenaire palace. It was first named the Royal Museums of the Cinquantenaire, but was changed to its current name in 1926 (http://www.kmkg-mrah.be/nl/historiek-van-het-museum, as of April 23 2012). The museum has developed into an important national museum, containing objects from all over the world. It has large departments covering the national history of Belgium, from the Merovingians to modern art, European decorative arts, antiquity and non-European civilizations, such as America, Asia, Oceania and even Easter Island. The department of antiquity has been divided into sections about Egypt, Greece, the Etruscan world, Roman Empire and the Greco-Roman era.

The Greek collection, consisting mainly of pottery, has been set up in a very large space with a limited amount of show cases in it (image 17). The objects of the first part of the exhibition have been arranged chronologically, starting with the Bronze age and Geometric period. Subsequently, objects are displayed that are connected to Corinth and Boeotia. The larger part of the room is dedicated to figure decorated wares. These seem to have been arranged according to type. As can be seen in image 18, to the left volute kraters are placed together. The same is true for the rhytons and oinochoes on the right side of the show case. Other show cases are dedicated to lekytoi, drinking bowls and Panathenaic amphorae. This placing together of types occurs throughout most of the exhibition. Some show cases contain all sorts of objects with no obvious connection to each other. I phrase it like this, since there were no texts to inform the visitor. Only three separate small show cases containing one to five vases were accompanied with a description of the objects. The mere part of the room lacked any texts, not even an inventory number. This made it very difficult to understand how the objects have been organized and for many visitors, it is unclear what the objects are in the first place.

There are no metal vases displayed in the Greek department. The only metal items presented are pieces of bronze that were part of a hydria vase (image 18). A clear depiction of where these pieces would have been positioned, is placed next to them, giving a good impression of what it would have looked like. Besides this, these parts are not very common to be recovered, making them fairly important. But then again, since there is no information provided at all on these pieces, can we be certain on their antiquity? The base of the vase shows signs of corrosion, but the handle in the middle seems to be in perfect condition. Maybe too perfect.

Even though there are no metal vases in the exhibition, there are some ceramic ones that could be considered to be imitating them, both in colour and particular shapes. Image 19 shows a ceramic cup with many attention spend on its shape and colour decoration, which especially at the foot could look like gold. This cup is positioned on the right side of the show case of image 17. The other objects placed alongside this one, are all kinds of shapes and decoration. There is no coherency or similarity between these objects, which is unfortunate. Three other ceramic objects that could resemble metal equivalents are displayed in the

same show case, positioned to the left of the large volute kraters (image 17 & 20). The inside of the bowls have incised and stamped decoration and the whole objects have been polished and have a very shiny surface. This makes them seem to have been made from metal. Image 21 is a part of a show case displaying the same type of cups, which have many resemblances to metal examples, such as the handles, ribbed decoration and shiny surface. Apart from the black gloss objects, there are no plain wares on display.

There is one peculiar thing. In one of the corners of the Egyptian department, a show case with all kinds of objects is placed with a banner above it saying Greco-Roman. Votive statuettes, objects of faience and glass and large dishes from the Christian period are displayed here. These objects do have small information card accompanying them. Between the faience and glass objects, a bronze kantharos cup is displayed (image 22). The only information available on this objects is that it is dated to the Greco-Roman period, which is not specific at all. The provenance is not known and there is no connection between this items and the others in the show case. So what is this objects doing in this show case? It would have been better off in a more profound place in the museum, not in the corner of the Egyptian department. Besides this, it is a bronze cup in a good condition, which is fairly rare for a museum to own. It also has resemblances with a few ceramic cups in the Greek department, which could make a nice comparison if they were placed next to each other. The biggest downside of the Greek department is the lack of texts. There are also no books or leaflets providing information, nor does the internet provide any details.

5.8 Remarks

All museums, except for the Meermanno-Westreenianum museum, are organized chronologically and thematically. They are showing objects from Cyprus, Corinth and Boeotia, which are all dated before the sixth century B.C. The main part of the Greek collections is showed by black and red figured vases, dating to the sixth and fifth century B.C., displayed to tell a story about a certain theme. The museums hardly display any metal vessels, but this can be explained by the fact that so little metal vases have survived. The Allard Pierson does have a very nice show case with metal and ceramic vessels of the same type placed next to each

other, showing their resemblance. However, as explained, texts are not present to explain why these objects are placed like this or mentioning the value of metal in contrast to ceramics. The National Museum of Antiquities does not display metal vases in the Greek department. The Roman department shows the tableware of a rich family and a poor one besides each other, showing a clear contrast. Unfortunately, something similar to this is missing in the Greek part. The Royal Museum of Art and History has a couple of ceramic vases, that can be interpreted to be imitated from metal equivalents. Their shapes are similar and their surface has been painted and polished to look like silver and, in one case, even gold. But in this exhibition, any form of information is lacking.

There are quite some differences between the museums in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands – leaving the museum in Brussels out, because it is difficult to compare this one with other exhibitions. The Ashmolean Museum clearly shows arguments for the importance of metal, which is obvious since Michael Vickers was responsible for this exhibition. The Fitzwilliam Museum has incorporated several arguments – some in favour and some against the suggestions of imitations – into their text panels. The visitor can decide for themselves what they believe to be true. In the Netherlands, metal objects rarely displayed and the imitating of metals in ceramics in mentioned ones. These differences can be explained by the fact that the discussion on metal and ceramics has mainly taken place in the United Kingdom. The curators in the Netherlands have followed the discussion, but have not been influenced by it or incorporated details of it in their exhibitions.

Conclusion

The focus of the thesis was to research what kind of influence the debate on the value of pottery versus metal has had on our current view of Greek archaeology, its material culture and how this is presented to others. This presentation of information was focused on publications and exhibitions in museums. First, we looked at the arguments presented by scholars on how they perceived the status and value of pottery and metal vessels and what kind of evidence they used to strengthen their statements. Second, a summary of the thesis by Vladimir Stissi was given, who had written an important piece that provided arguments and evidence against some statements made by others and came to a more or less accepted conclusion. The last part consisted of a research of exhibitions in six museums with a collection of Greek archaeology, including black and red figure decorated vases. The focus was on how ceramic and – if present – metal vessels were displayed, if they were connected with each other and what message and how that was conveyed to the public.

Michael Vickers and David Gill considered the view of pottery being very valuable to be a modern construct. They disagreed, having the assumption that people from ancient times were impressed only by precious metal objects and that pottery was for the poor. Ceramic vases were made to imitate metal equivalents. With these statements, Vickers and Gill started a heated discussion, in which many scholars had something to say. The biggest opponent was John Boardman, who regarded pottery as valuable and a special craft. Many scholars provided all sorts of evidence, both for and against the arguments of Vickers and Gill. These ranged from the shapes and decorations to the statement of pottery being saleable ballast. After many years of debating, it was more or less agreed that shapes and decorations of ceramic vases, such as bucchero and black gloss wares, were sometimes derived from metal equivalents. The red and black figured decoration are not likely to have come from metal examples. The saleable ballast theory was disproven by John Boardman and Sean McGrail. The value of pottery will always be point of disagreement, since this is highly influenced by the interpretations of the scholars.

In 2002, Vladimir Stissi has written a very clear thesis, providing answers and arguments for almost all the issues of the pottery debate. He refutes some

arguments by Vickers and Gill, but also makes it clear that Boardman had sometimes gone too far in his arguments in defending pottery. It could be said that Stissi has probably provided an end for this discussion. Presumably, everyone can agree with these arguments and with the conclusion that decorated ceramic wares should be considered a semi-luxury. New researches, like Clark's (2002) can provide new evidence that can contribute to the discussion. Whether it has dried out or not, it will always help us try and reach an 'acceptable truth'.

My research has had a few outcomes. Five out of six museums have arranged their objects chronologically. The Meermanno-Westreenianim has intentionally chosen not to do this, since most others museums have already done this.

The Ashmolean Museum clearly shows a preference for metal vases. Arguments in favour of them are very obvious in the text panels, with no sign of appreciation for ceramic vases. One show case is filled with lekytoi and quite a few broken items are on display. But this is not surprising, since Michael Vickers was the curator of this department.

The Fitzwilliam has thought very carefully about their new design and especially their text panels. They have incorporated some of the arguments of the debate into their exhibition. Some ceramic objects are suggested to have details that could be imitations, but other arguments like the incised lines are explained in favour of ceramics. At the end, you can decide for yourself what the relationship between pottery and ceramics is.

The National Museum of Antiquities has no metal vases on display, but this is caused by the fact that it was very difficult for collectors of the earlier centuries to get their hands on metal items. Besides this, metal can be brittle and may not survive the passing of time. Plain ceramic vases are also not common. This can be explained by the fact that collectors did not like these items and only wanted nice examples with decorations. A nice feature of the Greek exhibition is the display of misfires. This shows the visitor that the production of vases was not always as successful as the potter wanted and that decorated vases were not that easy to make. Two themes have had more attention, which gives a good idea of how ceramic objects were used in the lives of the Greeks.

The Allard Pierson Museum has presented metal objects next to the same types in different materials, mainly ceramics. This makes it easier for the visitor to

compare these items and consider the possibility that in ancient times, people could use and choose different materials for items. Unfortunately, there is hardly any text accompanying these objects. This is too bad, since additional information can explain so much more on objects, uses, materials and also value and status.

The museums exhibitions tell their stories mainly through the display of decorated ceramic vases. Themes are explained through the depictions on these vases or their function. Metal vases are rare in most museums. The reason why so few metal items and especially vases are on display, is caused by the fact that these items are very rare. In antiquity, many of these objects have been melted down to serve a different purpose. Objects that did remain in their original shape, were preserved very badly, were taken by grave robbers or were not found at all. So, we should be very lucky with the few metal example we do have.

But why only look at metal vases? Michael Vickers and David Gill have focused their attention on metal, which they assumed to be only available for rich people. In their view, this meant that pottery was for the poor. They mainly focused on the figure decorated objects, but never really considered – or in any case never mentioned – the presence of other materials, such as wood and leather. But plain wares were not considered either. Taking these into account of the available materials, stretches the range people could choose from. The really poor people would choose the most inexpensive materials or if they had a little money to spend, choose for plain ceramic items. This brings the figure decorated vessels in a different light than Vickers and Gill have done. But why don't we see plain wares in museums? These objects were considered worthless in the era when collections were established. They were plain and boring and not nice to look at, so why collect these sort of items, if other prettier vases are available?

These unfortunate facts have caused a distortion in the way we look at the material culture of the ancient Greeks. Parts are missing or are not fully represented. But this can never be entirely solved, since metal items and figure decorated examples are becoming rarer in excavations or are not found at all. Nowadays, the archaeological record is still biased and cannot give a reliable representation of the pottery used in ancient times (Stissi 2002, 213). However, we can make a little amends by focusing some or maybe a lot more attention to the plain wares, which have been neglected for many years or perhaps almost all

years of archaeology.

But this new perspective has to be applied in all areas of archaeology. This means that museums should reconsider the message they want to convey to the people. If they want to show the daily life of the Greek people, they should try to include every possible material used in ancient times. This way, they can show all social layers of the people from the past. This can not only be achieved by displaying different kinds of objects, but also by the use of texts. Usually, texts provide some information on certain themes from the daily life, but not much or nothing is said about their wealth. Explaining the differences between people then and how this is expressed in their material culture, could bring modern people closer to the ancient ones. Maybe, museums should take an example from the Fitzwilliam when it comes to information about the objects. They have considered very well what to display, how and with what message. Their exhibition does not just display the Greek collection chronologically and thematically, but also considers the values, uses and ideas about their objects, from the moment when they were made till now.

On the other hand, should we see this museum as our example? The discussion about ceramics and metal was very active in the United Kingdom, where it indeed has had an effect. It has been followed by the Dutch curators, but it did not have an effect on their opinions or on the way objects are displayed in museums in the Netherlands.

Decorated ceramic vases have been the main part of Greek collections and are considered to be very beautiful. It is what the public expects to see in an archaeological museum. So changing this is not the obvious choice.

But in the end, a discussion will always be subjective and it is up to you what to do with it. And since a part of the archaeological record is missing, we will never exactly know the truth. But by continuous research, we can try and get closer to that truth and present it to the public.

Abstract

The focus of the thesis is to research what kind of influence the debate on the value of pottery versus metal from the 1980s has had on our current view of Greek archaeology, its material culture and how this is presented to the public in museums. By reviewing literature from the last three decades, an overview is given of what different scholars' opinions are and where this debate is standing now. A summary of the thesis of Vladimir Stissi will provide answers and arguments for most of the statements used in the discussion. He offers a possible solutions for the problem of the value of pottery, calling figure decorated wares a semi-luxury. Finally, a small research is done, analyzing the Greek collections of six museums to find out how ceramic vases are displayed. Most objects are arranged chronologically and themes being told by depictions on vases. Metal or plain examples are absent in most museum, due to the fact that these items were difficult to collect in the earlier days or were not considered valuable or pretty. Museums play a large part in how the public sees the ancient Greek culture. Displaying different sorts of material, connecting them and making more use of texts, will change the way how ancient times were considered by the present public.

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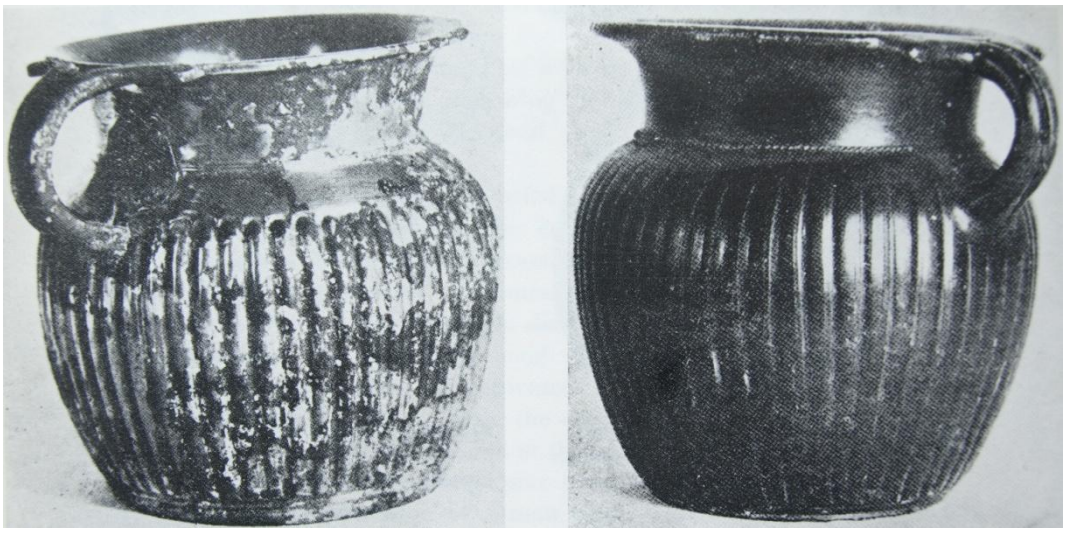

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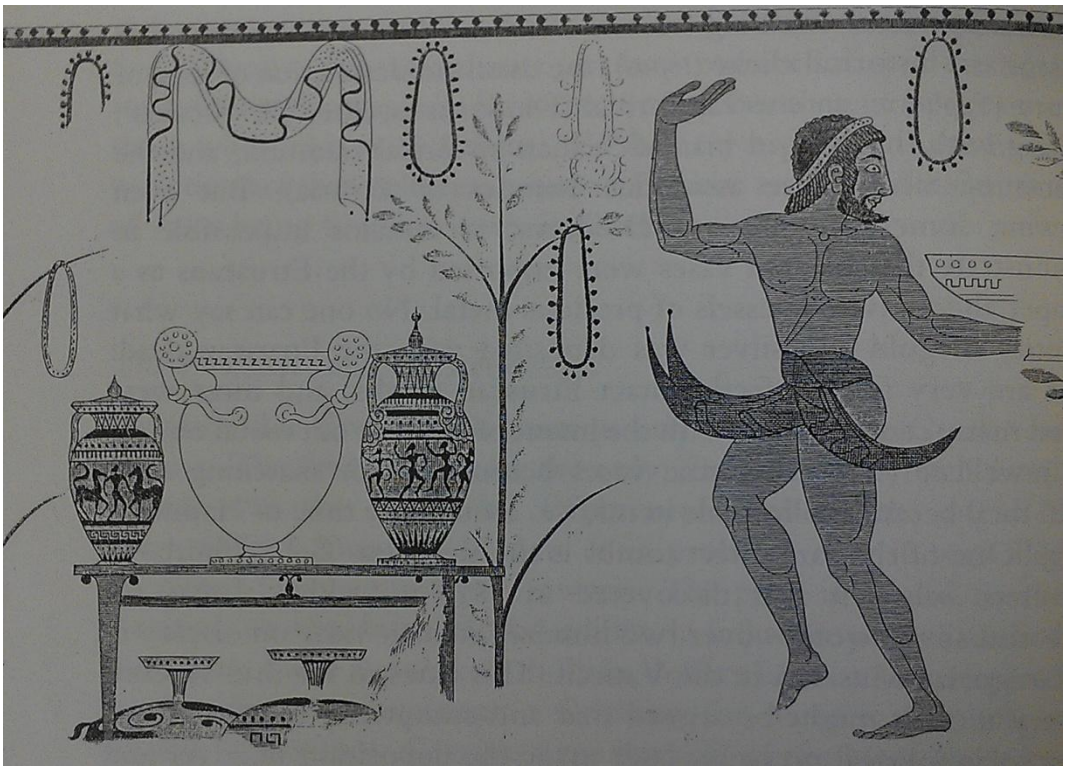

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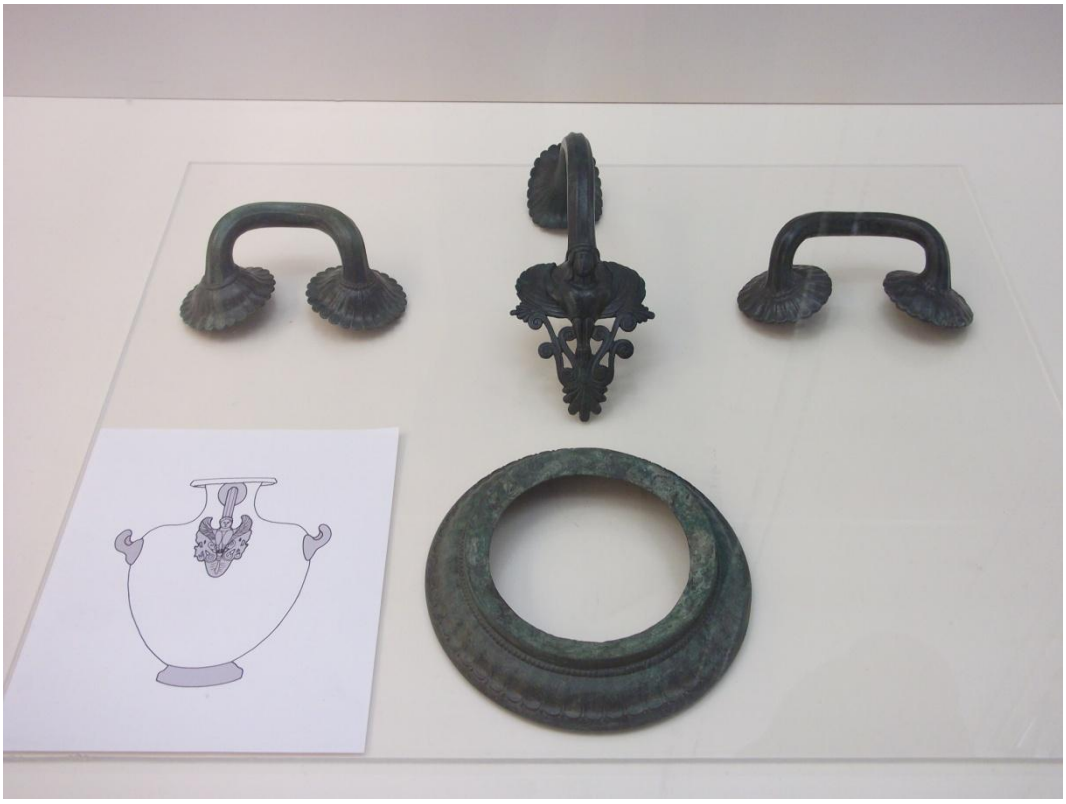

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