

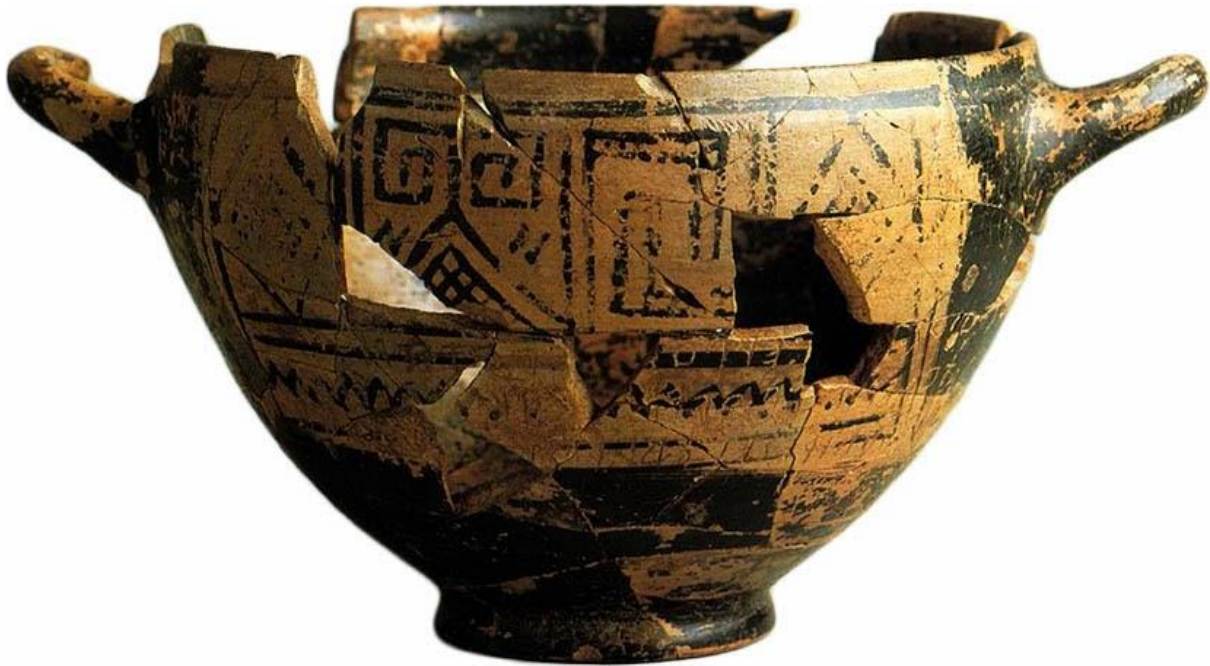
## Ideas in Motion: A discussion on cultural intersections in the archaeological record, inspired by music

When cultures collide the impact of their meeting has the potential to extend into all spheres of society. However, it is perhaps most visibly expressed through artistic mediums; the evolution and fluidity of language, to incorporate terminology and vocabulary from 'foreign' influences is a particularly clear example of this. Like language, music has hallmarks and rubrics which are identifiable as stemming from specific cultural groups. An audience can hear these cultural identifiers within music and recognise them, both consciously and unconsciously, as being distinct, thus facilitating understanding and engagement with the emotional expressions of an alien culture. As music and art transcend borders it seems almost essential to understand this engagement when exploring intersections of culture in the ancient world. The obvious problem with this, however, is the fact that most artistic mediums fail to survive in the archaeological and literary records which are currently available to us. Yet this does not prevent us from attempting to emulate and understand the processes of cultural interaction and exchange taking place in the ancient world through modern settings. In conjunction with Refugee Support Devon, we therefore decided to bring together a relatively diverse group of musicians, ranging in both ethnicity and age in order to explore further such ideas surrounding cultural intermingling. These musicians were invited to a jam session at a recording studio on University of Exeter's Streatham Campus on 4th February 2019, with the aim of attempting to communicate through music. The results of this session, which are available to listen to on YouTube, provided an incredibly inciteful perspective and laid the foundations to the ideas outlined in this discussion.

In the late 1970s the UK experienced an increase in its population of Afro-Caribbean citizens. Prior to this one of the most culturally identifiable forms of art coming out of the Caribbean was Reggae music. This incorporated syncopated and laid-back grooves with the characteristic 'one-drop' style of drumming. When this energy and culture reached the UK, it had to adapt to the fast paced, more industrial way of life that came with living in Britain. This intersection can be heard in the music that stemmed from the communities who had migrated, who incorporated the sounds and experiences they encountered into their music. Thus, Drum and Bass and Jungle music were born, playing at a much higher BPM (Beats Per Minute) than Reggae music and incorporating more modern breakbeats while retaining the laid-back grooves and syncopated rhythms of the instruments traditionally associated with the community's heritage. Examples such as this clearly demonstrate the ability of music, and by extension artistic expression, to act as a marker of cultural intersections.

How then can we study cultural intersections in the ancient world, given the evidence which is available to us? We cannot reconstruct the music of the Greek and Roman worlds with any certainty so must turn to other forms of artistic expression as bodies for capturing cultural identifiers. Perhaps one of the best objects to demonstrate the use of artefacts in such a way was recovered from a funerary context in Pithekoussai and is commonly known as 'Nestor's Cup' (Figure 1). This artefact, a Rhodian ceramic kotyle, dates circa 750 BC and may be viewed as a physical manifestation of the contemporary rise in socioeconomic and cultural exchange around the Mediterranean which stemmed in part from expeditionary migrations of native 'Greeks' westward. Pithekoussai, which sits on the island of Ischia, was likely an *emporion*, thus the foreign provenance of the ceramic is demonstrative of the extent of trade which passed through the site. Most interesting, however, is the inscription borne by the ceramic. Written in a western Euboean dialect of Greek, and postdating the manufacturing of the kotyle by thirty years, the inscription demonstrates the use of pottery as means

of recording one's own cultural traditions whilst indulging the aesthetic preferences of another; just as musicians might add techniques or sounds to their repertoire which stem from 'foreign' methods of expression which they have encountered.



*Figure 1 - Nestor's Cup. Inscribed: "I am Nestor's cup, good to drink from. Whoever drinks this cup empty, straightaway Desire for beautiful-crowned Aphrodite will seize him."*

The inscription of the ceramic is incomplete but has been reconstructed with a very high level of accuracy. Seemingly, it alludes to the legendary Nestor, King of Pylos, providing a case for the early canonisation of Homeric epic and placing the ceramic as a vessel for the recording of contemporary oratory traditions. There is a great deal of scholarship dealing with the intention of the inscription, with one major line of argument being that the inscription was a crude joke which played on the juxtaposition of this simple cup and the magnificent drinking vessel of Nestor described in the Iliad. This is a fair assumption to make given that the cup is usually assumed to have been used in the context of a symposium, during which there was a long tradition of wine acting as an aphrodisiac. It is satisfactory to see the enhancement of the ceramic through engraving as demonstrative of the processes of lateral cycling and reuse outlined by Schiffer's life-cycle of durable elements (Figure 2), and assumptions can be made as a result that the cup went through multiple stages of use and ownership. Further, it is supposed that the epics of the Iliad and Odyssey had not yet been canonised by the time of the cup's inscription, yet it seems highly likely that the author and audience of the text likely shared a common culture which indulged such stories.

Schiffer's 1972 paper 'Archaeological Context and Systemic Context' asked how a cultural system produced archaeological remains by presenting the framework initially used to contextualise Nestor's Cup as an example of lateral cycling (Figure 2). The framework presents a basic flow through which durable objects would cycle: procurement, manufacture, use, maintenance, and discard. It must be appreciated, however, that a process may consist of one or more stages. For example, in the process of manufacture in the context of a ceramic vessel, throwing and firing are two distinct stages. In addition to these main processes, Schiffer outlines opportunities for storage and transport as activities which result in the temporal or spatial displacement of an element, as well as three less common processes: recycling, lateral cycling and maintenance. It must be noted that Schiffer does emphasise

that not all elements follow a unilinear path through the system and that some may not go through every stage.

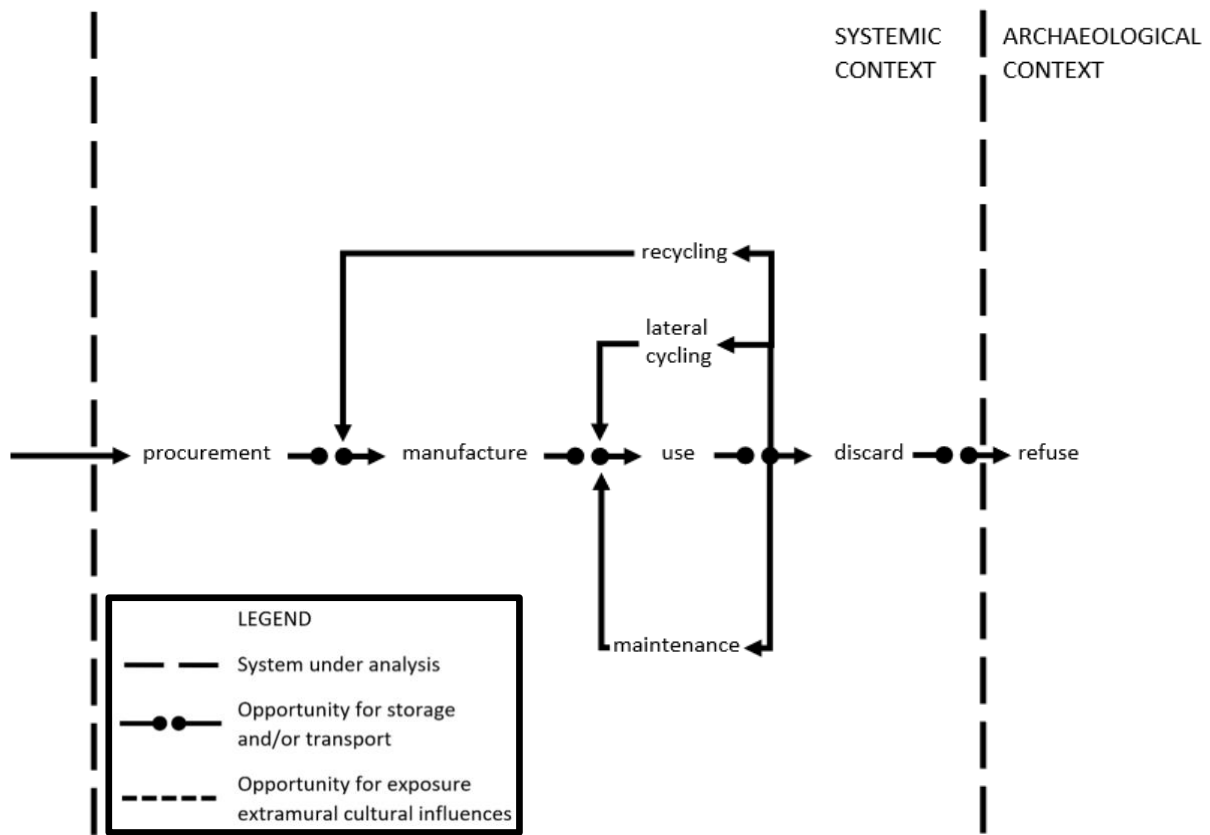


Figure 2 - Schiffer's lifecycle of durable elements.

Schiffer's original intention was to create system from which further hypotheses could develop. Indeed, it is not the aim to move away from such a philosophy – the accessibility of such a model is reflected in its longevity and enduring influence in archaeological theory. However, it quickly becomes clear that there are shortcomings in Schiffer's model when using it to emphasise the role of mobility in the systemic contexts of an element. As such, a new perspective on such models has been proposed (Figure 3). This is in no way intended to replace Schiffer's model; after all, his is concerned with the formation of the archaeological record, whereas the chief concern here is to address the processes surrounding the enhancement of elements through cultural interactions. Through this model, the emphasis of the flow model is shifted from the creation of archaeological context to systemic context, with the impact of extramural influence on the development of material culture highlighted. The model is by no means perfect and is only a simplification of an infinitely more complex reality, intended to prompt consideration of the impact of cultural intermingling in the enhancement of material culture.

This new model introduces two new processes: conceptualisation and exchange. The first, conceptualisation, cannot be placed within the systemic context of the model because it exists outside of the material world. The introduction of this process emphasises the agency of existent socioeconomic structures in conceptualising an object prior to manufacture. The second process, exchange, is somewhat inferred through areas which Schiffer outlines as opportunities for storage and transport. However, the issue in these contexts is that such processes are often assumed to be

relatively localised in their scope. If, however, we outline exchange as a wholly separate process, we begin to see it as a potential gateway to exposure to extramural influence through transformation of ownership. Such influences can then lead to modification of an element and the transformation of an element's use. In the case of Nestor's Cup this would see the addition of the inscription on the ceramic as a process of manufacture resulting from likely exchange and exposure to extramural influences. The process of exchange may also be the only part of this system to impact the element physically, without the object itself going through the process. In other words, extramural exchange, be it of other elements or ideas might lead the element in question through a process of manufacture without the element itself being an item of exchange as it introduces new ideas to processes within the remit of static influence. For example, the exchange of oratory traditions and spread of knowledge surrounding Homeric epic undoubtedly influenced the formation of the inscription on Nestor's Cup.

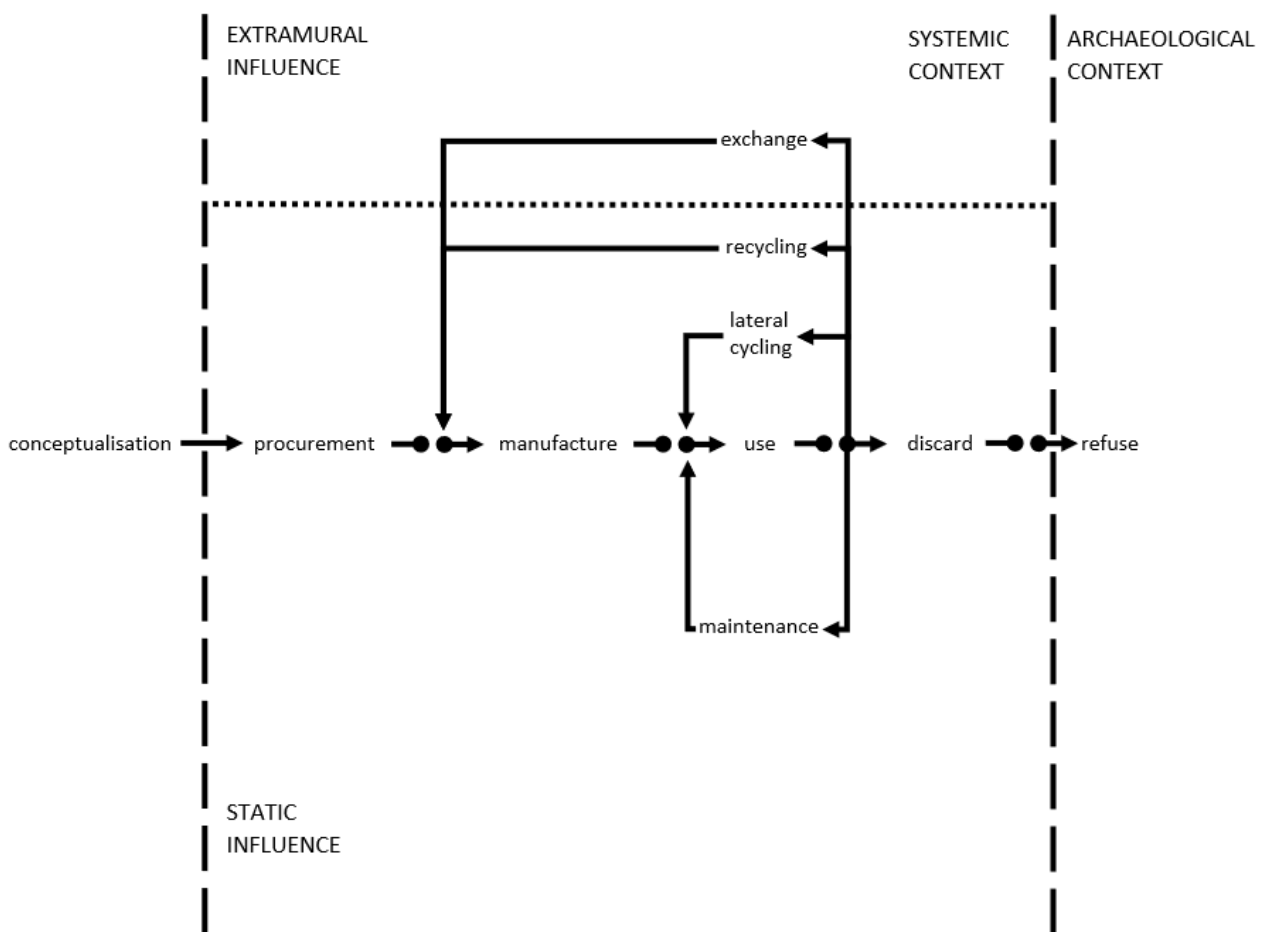


Figure 3 - Proposed lifecycle of durable elements, emphasising the role of extramural influence in the enhancement of material culture.

### A note on the musical workshop

It was both incredibly reaffirming and emotionally rewarding to participate in a collective expression that included those of a variety of different backgrounds and cultures. It demonstrated that while there might be some difficulty, negotiation and moments of tension in such scenarios, it is certainly possible for people of all creeds to collaborate effectively to produce something worthwhile and honest. Our thanks go to those who participated in the workshop and made the collaboration possible. Including: John Ewings on acoustic guitar, Ramiz Kai Chi Ahmed-Man on electric guitar, Henrique Rosário on bass, James Storm Otieno on Percussion, Alex Rafael Rose on vocals and Stan Glendinning on drums and production. A link to the recorded jam can be found below as well as a small taster so that a listener can get an idea of the project.

[https://soundcloud.com/afgan\\_is\\_stan/intersection-jam-full-version?fbclid=IwAR3v0N-fW4bP3P-Q9mA8GvUyQ9yF1jwGwWWqd04QhNEsZO3JtgA802xCVaU](https://soundcloud.com/afgan_is_stan/intersection-jam-full-version?fbclid=IwAR3v0N-fW4bP3P-Q9mA8GvUyQ9yF1jwGwWWqd04QhNEsZO3JtgA802xCVaU)