

PREFACE

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN in the making for a long time, mainly because I have tried to study at close quarters as many of the artifacts discussed in the following chapters as I could. From the very beginning, I decided to focus on materials from excavated contexts, leaving aside unprovenanced holdings in various museums and collections or casting a questioning eye on dealers' purported proveniences. In antiquity, griffin cauldrons, the wondrous bronze monsters of the book's title, were distributed in a wide swath of the Mediterranean stretching from Egypt and Cyprus to northern France (Burgundy and the Loire Valley). The same holds true today. However, the fascinating histories of discovery or cultural treatment of their remnants have resulted in even more dispersal in several countries and museums of the contemporary world. For example, finds from the Samian Heraion are in Samos, Berlin, and Athens. Finds from Olympia are at Olympia and Athens. Finds from the Athenian Akropolis are divided between the National Museum at Athens and the Akropolis Museum. This state of fragmentation and wide dispersal speaks volumes about the tendency of our contemporary world to re-create the relics of antiquity in its own bizarre terms even as it complicates attempts for synthesis and comprehensive understanding of the phenomena entangled in the social lives of these objects.

My interest in the Mediterranean of the seventh century was sparked in a series of seminars by Professor William A. P. Childs at Princeton University in the early 1990s CE. Griffin cauldrons from the Samian Heraion and Olympia had been treated in magisterial studies by Ulf Jantzen (1955 CE) and Hans-Volkmar Herrmann (1966, 1979) that answered as many questions as they generated. More recently, important studies by Winfried Held (2000), Ulrich Gehrig (2004), Andreas Scholl (2006), Gudrun Klebinder-Gauss (2007), and H el ene Aurigny (2019) have made available data that enable new approaches within a wider Mediterranean paradigm exceeding the default boundaries of regional or ethnocentric approaches. Each one of them adds a piece in the puzzle of pan-Mediterranean phenomena of connectivity and mobility that only recently scholars have started to untangle. Without these indispensable studies, to which this book owes a great intellectual debt, my attempt at a panoptic view and interpretation would have been impossible. I also owe a great debt to the magisterial restorations of cauldrons from the Barberini and Bernardini tombs, whose marvelous assemblages have been put on display in an exemplary way at Villa Poniatowski (Museo Etrusco Nazionale di Villa Giulia, Rome). Equally magisterial are the recent restorations of the griffin and lion cauldrons from the Cir-

colo dei Lebeti in Vetulonia (Rafanelli 2015; Cianferoni and Venturini 2016). These important museological developments enable valuable insights in the materiality and visuality of seventh-century cauldrons, themes I have pursued in depth in the pages of this book.

This book expands on ideas that have already appeared in numerous scholarly publications (Papalexandrou 2003–2004, 2010, 2011, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017). In the last ten years I presented aspects of my research to various academic audiences in Greece, Italy, and the United States whose formative feedback informed my ideas, method, and approach. Most fruitfully influential has been my participation in the wonderful workshop “Material Entanglements in the Ancient Mediterranean

and Beyond,” organized by Marian Feldman (The Johns Hopkins University) and Antigone Zournatzi (National Hellenic Research Foundation) under the auspices of the Connecting Art Histories initiative of the Getty Foundation (2018–2019 CE).

The manuscript was revised in the difficult months of spring and summer 2020, when I had minimal or no access to library resources. Two important publications, Aurigny 2019 and Walter, Clemente, and Niemeier 2019, reached me very late in the process; as a result I have not been able to engage with them as much as I would have under normal circumstances.

All dates in this book are BCE unless otherwise indicated.