

## IX. Summary and Conclusions

9.1                   The main object of this work was the exposition and assessment of what I believe to be an essentially new approach to the study of art styles in anthropology. In order to clarify the theory, the historical background of some relevant studies of art in art history were discussed in Chapter 2. In that chapter, Benedetto Croce was seen to be in some ways a precursor of "generative" treatment of art. Other theories of art and style were discussed, including Wölfflin's polar treatment of stylistic modes and evolutionary treatments of art. While certain aspects of these theories were seen to be useful here, they serve largely to define negatively an area of research which has not been widely exploited - that of structural and systemic analysis. On the positive side, Hauser is of importance both for his extremely valuable discussion of the social background of styles and for his rejection in effect, of "typological" treatments of style and the recognition of the "systemic" nature of styles.

                          An increasing conjunction of art history and some aspects of anthropology has been noted. All in all, the theoretical background for the study of art and art styles developed in art history and criticism cannot be ignored by anthropologists, especially in the study of the historical aspects of art styles.

                          Early treatments of art in anthropology were concerned with the "origin of conventional design" and similar questions which have little interest for modern anthropologists. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, interests shifted to the analysis of specific arts and styles. The degree to which Franz Boas was the central figure in this

new approach is unclear, but some of the finest analyses of styles, in anthropology at any rate, were done by his students and associates.

Alfred L. Kroeber turned toward emphasis on form, however, and away from the incipient structuralism present in the work of Boas and many of Boas' other students. At the same time, Kroeber was also interested in total-culture styles much broader than those discussed here.

Although analysis of styles continued as a method in some areas, revival of style as a theoretical issue can be seen in the work of Rowe and his students at the University of California at Berkeley. A major interest of this "school" is in the utility of style for dating. Although the relationship to Kroeber's theories is uncertain, the Berkeley school shares Kroeber's emphasis upon form. However, studies such as Roark's (1961) analysis of some aspects of the Nasca style(s) show the move toward so-called "synchronic" analyses of the type which Rowe (1959) had suggested as a second step in analysis.

Style, then, can be seen as a system which can be described in terms of formal and structural rules. These rules can be formulated in what is called a "generative" statement which consists of a set of ordered "rewrite" rules in the proper order and by making use of optional replacement of symbols, it would be possible to create an artwork in the style so described. Several levels of structure may be noted -- from the technical order of manufacture and surface structure to the "deep" or derivational structure indicating kinds of structural relationships.

Although certain problems arise in treating

archaeological art styles from this viewpoint, the benefits to archaeology of such an approach outweigh the difficulties. Not the least of these advantages is the insight into social factors which may be gained, particularly since styles exist within the context of social groups.

Three styles were analyzed both as a test and an example of the methods and theories suggested. These styles were selected because of the sharing of a single theme and the number and variety of specimens. On the basis of the analyses, which are of importance in their own right, it was also possible to suggest certain possibilities for direction of change and the nature of relationships. That this analysis does not exhaust the field so far as eastern North American archaeology is concerned is shown by the brief discussion of other possible styles in the same medium.

9.2 In conclusion, an assessment of the approach is in order. Most of the problems inherent in the method of analysis have already been discussed in Chapter 4, but it will be useful to review some of these here. The question of applicability of methods of analysis more directly suited for sequentially-ordered forms remains a serious problem. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated that such methods can be used to good effect when applied to the "creation" rather than the perception of "non-sequentially" ordered or presentational forms. It has been explicitly recognized, however, that such an approach may not prove feasible with all media or with all kind of art, particularly in archaeological studies where recourse to informants is impossible.

The limitations put upon the study of style in an archaeological context extend to other aspects of the analysis as well.

Thus, it is difficult to achieve a great degree of descriptive adequacy when there are no informants to accept or reject the products of the generative statement. For this reason, the immediate limitation of the archaeologist's analysis is the achieving of observational adequacy. It is clear that the mere absence of a particular combination does not necessarily indicate that it was unacceptable as a treatment within a particular style. The vagaries of archaeology make negative evidence of limited utility. However, most of the problems relating to combinational rules apply to form, rather than to structure, a fact which allows many of the elaborate contextual restrictions to be concentrated in the form listings rather than in the rewrite rules and transformations.

The inability to distinguish clearly in archaeology the unacceptable alternatives from the acceptable, but unused, possibilities directly affects the elegance of the statement. The situation, however, is not entirely hopeless. Surely, for example, it is significant that of all of the Citico gorgets not one has cross-hatching used as a filler below the mouth. The analysis of the structural function of fillers also supports the conclusion that this restriction is probably no accident. Even here, of course, absolute assurance is not attainable. At the same time, popularity and style should not be confused. Statistical treatments of popularity can be very valuable where possible, but saying that the "average" treatment is a particular form is a little like saying that the average American is more than half female. In any case, the statements for the three styles analyzed are certainly not as elegant as would be possible without the need for many contextual

restrictions. It is also likely that generalizations are possible which would contribute significantly to the elegance of the stylistic statement, but I do not pretend that the analyses above are the last word on these styles. For example, a more elegant ordering of the rules may be possible other than the use of the technical structure. Perhaps the use of complex structural symbols such as "filler" will provide alternative approaches to some of these problems.

Other problems exist in the using of stylistic analyses for archaeological purposes. While there is no need to be so negative as many have been about the possibility of inferences from stylistic analysis alone about time, society, and culture, caution is necessary. This need for caution is of the same degree and kind as in other uses of archaeological data. As Rowe has pointed out in a discussion of seriation of design features and stratigraphy (1961:329) which may be extended to the topic of style as a whole:

. . . the chances of attaining credible results depend on the nature of the archaeological evidence available, the alternative method chosen, and the degree to which the theoretical limitations of the method are kept in mind in the course of the work.

There are, to be sure, many kinds of situations where both archaeological data proper, in terms of stratigraphy and so on, and stylistic analysis are necessary. For example, though some fairly good hypotheses for the distinction of style phases from normal variation or substyles can be achieved through study of the style alone, other kinds of information can be of significant assistance in accepting or rejecting a particular hypothesis. Similarly, research into social groupings,

trade, and contact can be substantially aided by stylistic analysis.

Despite some problems, there are real values to a generative and systemic treatment of style. First of all, such a treatment allows the achievement of greater adequacy at the same time as promoting greater elegance of statement. Admittedly, such statements do require some initial accommodation for the reader. Yet, the advantage of greater accuracy of description and analysis makes this effort worthwhile. Close analysis of art materials can yield new understanding and, thereby, significant generalizations into the principles of styles. The insights into a culture which are thereby afforded are of great value. When coupled with the information which this kind of analysis can provide about social factors, the importance of the concept of style can well be appreciated.