

The Southern Italian *Lebes Gamikos*: its unique features and their cultural relevance
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Analysis of physical artifacts can provide interesting insight into the daily lives of the individuals who resided in the communities in which the objects were found. An in-depth examination of *lebes gamikoi* or wedding vases offers a glimpse into one of the most basic of human relationships, the one between husband and wife. It also provides information regarding the expectations placed on the new bride by the society in which she lived. This paper will examine the features of a specific Southern Italian wedding vase, paying special attention to the ways in which these images aid in the transference of societal values and marital customs to the young bride. The piece discussed is a 4th C BC Paestan pot, which is housed in the Indiana University Museum of Art.

As with all *lebes gamikoi*, the Paestan wedding vase exhibits nuptial imagery. One side boasts the image of a winged Eros along side a young couple. Eros is depicted presenting a fillet and other gifts to the pair. Located on the shoulders, just above the scene, one finds two female heads, which appear to be keeping watch over the exchange. The opposing side of the vase depicts a half-nude woman, who seems to be displaying gifts for a young man. The shoulders on this side of the vase hold two conical shapes. Iconographical evidence from Paestan temples and tombs will be analyzed in an attempt to explain the functions of the heads. Similarly, I will draw from traditional Greek imagery to analyze the potential purpose of the cones. This overall analysis will focus on the ways in which these specific Paestan features demonstrate the high level of informal social control exercised within the ancient Paestan community.

The view that a *lebes gamikos* reflects a community's view of marriage is not new. Boardman, for example, asserts that the Athenian wedding vase was regularly decorated with nuptial scenes, which depict either a ceremonial procession or the preparation of the bride (Boardman 2001). It is also believed that Athenian wedding imagery carried with it a propagandistic message for the young wife. Beard suggests that images of women on Greek vases reinforced the ideal woman's role within the home, and especially with reference to her domestic duties and fertility (Beard 1991). However, my analysis does not focus solely on standard wedding imagery. By focusing on specific features of the vase, and not the wedding scenes alone, I will attempt to seek deeper meaning in the messages used to convey expectations to the young bride.

Finally, recent studies on the artistic heritage of the Lucanians and their cultural melding with the Greeks will aid in our understanding of Paestum culture in the 4th C BC. Therefore, this paper will not only examine the messages conveyed by the vase, but also how the iconographical program of both Lucanian and Greek appear to work in consort to promote and thereby preserve the values that the society placed on the role of women as wives and mothers.