The Lawrence Room lekythos with graffiti, LR 825

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The uncertainty around the graffito on the object is perhaps the most interesting starting point for studying it.

The figure certainly looks as though it could be a child's drawing, but I would be cautious about taking that for granted. Simplicity alone can't securely distinguish a child's drawing from an untrained adult's – an interesting point in and of itself. The "headdress" – which I'm still puzzled by – may therefore be particularly worth pursuing, if parallels could be found for that form in later popular imagery, costume, etc, it might provide a clue to the date or cultural context of the drawing. I am not yet convinced that it represents an ancient type of headdress at all.

The placement of the drawing may also be significant – it's not an afterthought. It seems largely to occupy an area where the original white surface (with its presumed decoration) has already been lost. If microscopic examination confirms that the scratches were made through or across an already deteriorated surface, that could help establish the sequence.

The other question is one of access. White-ground cylindrical lekythoi became very strongly associated with burial in fifth-century Athens – how would an ancient viewer get access to this object, presuming a funerary use was intended? But then again, if the scratched figure is modern, who could have gained access to the vessel post-excavation but before it was placed on the market? Was it kept in a house, used for teaching, passed around, or left somewhere accessible enough for somebody to scratch a large figure onto it?

You can take that in several directions. Even if the figure is modern, it likely belongs to a period when ancient objects could be handled and displayed in ways very different from a museum treatment.