

The arrangement of artifact types in a sequence is based on two simple ideas: first, that products of a given period and place have a distinctive style or design; and second, that changes in style are gradual, or evolutionary. Gradual changes in design are evident in the history of the automobile (top) and of the prehistoric European axe (above: (1) stone; (2-5) bronze). However, the rate of change (a century for the automobile, millennia for the axe) has to be deduced from absolute dating methods.

Death's Head



Cherub



Urn and Willow



1820-29

1810-19

1800-09

1790-99

1780-89

1770-79

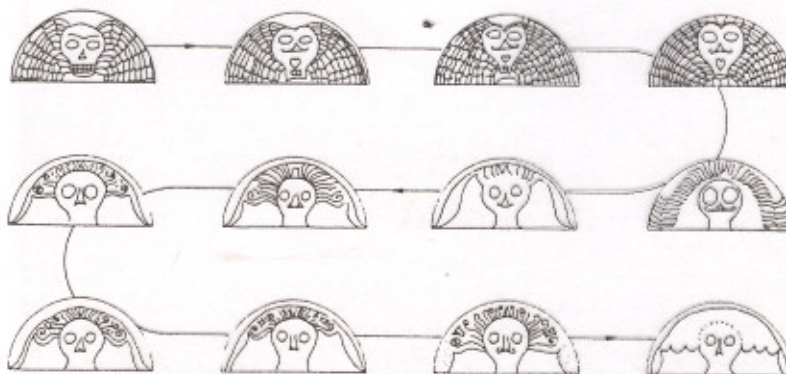
1760-69

1750-59

1740-49

1730-39

1720-29



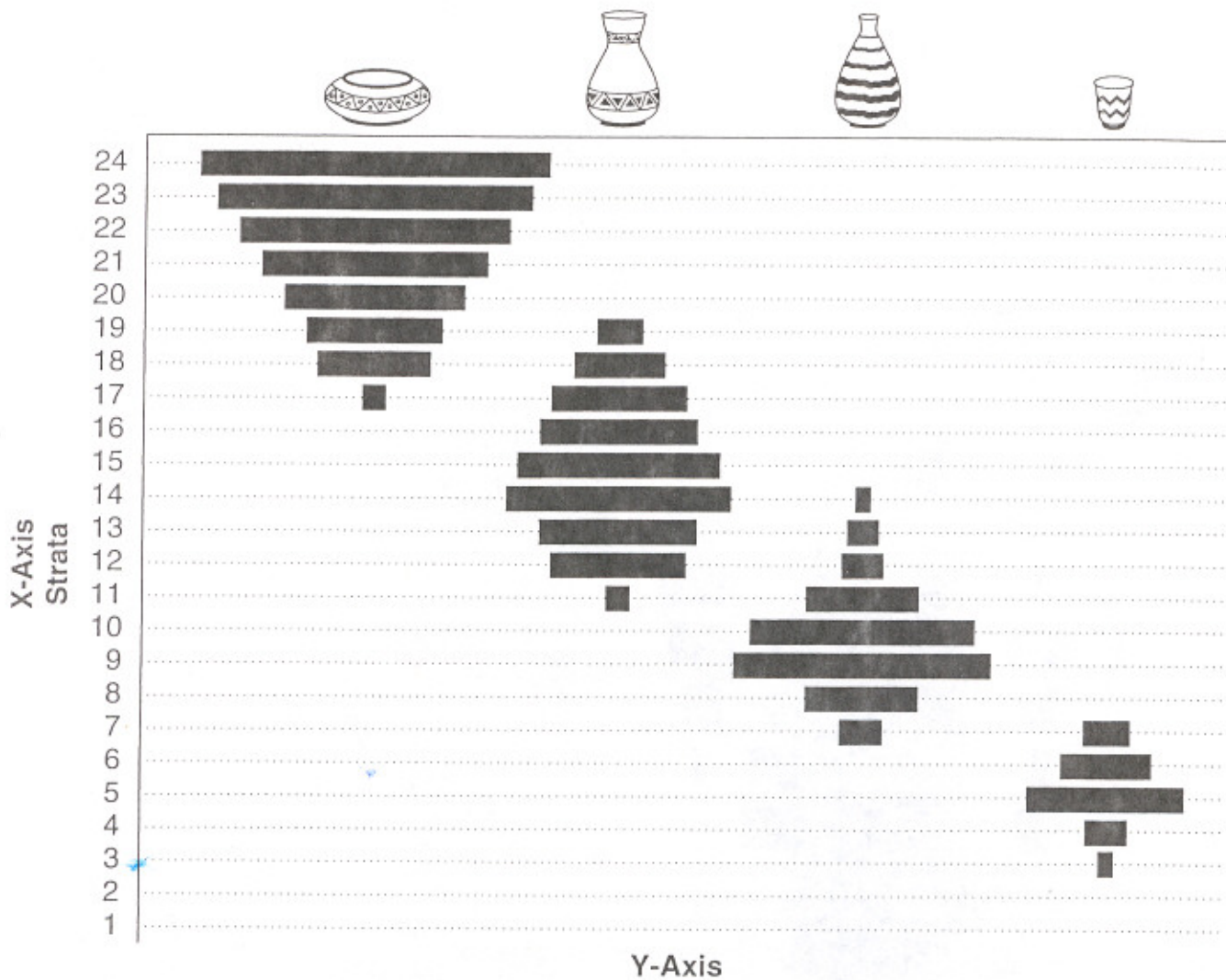


figure 7.1

Seriation Frequency Curves. The x-axis represents time, and the y-axis represents frequency. This format offers a quick means of immediately recognizing the popularity of style of certain artifacts over time. You can see why these plots are called "battleship" curves.

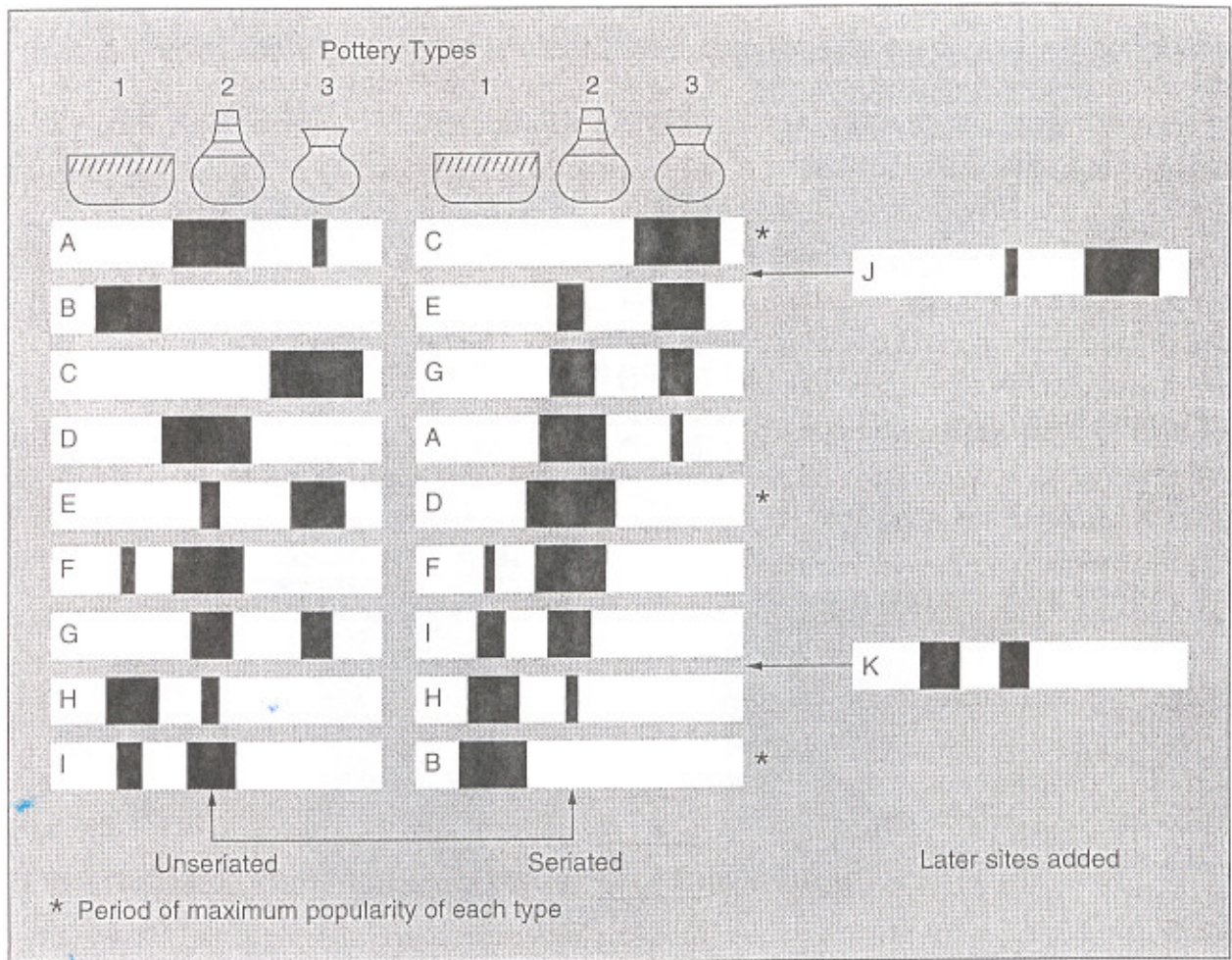


Figure 7.7 Seriation. At the left, nine excavated sites (A to I) contain different percentages of three distinct pottery types. At the right, the nine sites have been seriated by rearranging the bars of type percentages into battleship curve order. At the far right, later excavations are eventually fitted into the sequence.