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Sarah James. *Hellenistic Pottery: The Fine Wares. Corinth VII.7*. pp. 360, with 45 ill., 44 plates, 3 plans, 3 tables. 2018. Princeton NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens. ISBN 978-0-87661-077-0, hardcover £150.

The latest edition in the Corinth volumes, *Hellenistic Pottery: The Fine Wares* by Sarah James, is the seventh instalment of the pottery volumes, initiated by Saul Weinberg in 1943. It provides a much-needed extension and revision of the chronology of Hellenistic pottery posited in Roger Edwards' book

Corinthian Hellenistic Pottery, which was published as the third volume in this series in 1975.

James has extensive experience studying the Hellenistic pottery of Corinth, starting as the topic of her Ph.D. dissertation awarded from the University of Texas in 2010. Since 2004 she was part of the excavation team in Panayia Field at Corinth, which yielded the main contexts used as the backbone of the book. From 2004 onwards, she also acted as the Field Director of the Corinth excavations. She therefore has the relevant background experience to complete such an ambitious undertaking as reshaping the chronology of Hellenistic pottery at Corinth.

The book discusses the fine wares of Corinth, with a particular focus on the local Corinthian production. Based on an integrated analysis of the local pottery and its accordance with external chronological evidence (coins, amphora stamps and imports) in the Panayia Field contexts, James argues that local production continued well beyond the 146 BC destruction event, and stayed constant throughout the so-called 'interim period'. The book thus covers the Hellenistic pottery assemblage from the late fourth to early first century BC.

The book follows a traditional structure consisting of eight expository chapters, which introduce the scope and methodology of the research, describe the relevant contexts, detail the fabrics, decoration, production organization and vessel shapes, and discuss the chronological evolution of the assemblage. These eight chapters are followed by a catalogue, three appendices and a series of illustrative material consisting of plans, figures and plates.

The first chapter relates the general historical background against which the material under discussion should be considered. It particularly focuses on the build-up to the so-called '146 dilemma', referring to the destruction of Corinth by the Romans under consul Mummius in 146 BC. It has been traditionally assumed that local ceramic production ceased after the destruction of Corinth, and was not resumed until the foundation of the Roman colony in 44 BC. This perceived hiatus forms the core issue of this first chapter. James discusses the limits of the previously established pottery chronology of Corinth, highlighting in particular the lack of chronologically secure deposits. She moreover extensively shows how the *a priori* assumption of a production hiatus inherently skews the chronological interpretation of this pottery. She convincingly argues that the presence of imports

securely dated to the interim period, in association with local pottery, strongly indicates that the idea of a production hiatus must be discarded.

Even though great weight is allotted to the presence of these imports in the argument for continued local production, these imports are not included and described in detail. James herself indeed notes that the current volume omits the imports as these are covered in another publication currently in preparation. Still, it would have been very informative and would have strengthened the argument even more if imports had been included in the catalogue as well. That being said, I understand that practical considerations might have made this rather difficult. In general, the chapter does a good job in providing the necessary chronological and political background while still being concise and to the point.

The second chapter describes the methodology of quantification used to establish the Panayia Field chronology. James' statement at the beginning of the chapter that 'an analytical method was chosen that is well suited for describing and summarizing data derived from large amounts of pottery, namely quantification' feels somewhat amusing given the ubiquity of quantitative methods these days in archaeological research in general, and pottery studies in particular. Still, her decision to use frequency seriation based on the percentage by weight of each shape in proportion to the overall functional category is a sensible one. It reduces the risk of overrepresenting thin-walled vessels as would be the case when using sherd count data, standardizes data to account for differences in deposit size, and allows comparisons between different contexts. In addition to the relative ordering by frequency seriation, all contexts were given a depositional date based on external evidence from coins, amphora stamps and imports. The choice to focus on secure primary contexts as the foundation of the frequency seriation with large quantities of material, in addition to the external dating arguments, provides a strong base to build chronological arguments.

James explicitly argues for the use of a simple method as the best way to deal with the very rich and diverse dataset of Hellenistic pottery at Corinth. She states that the usage of quantitative analyses for 'quantitative typologies' would not have been well suited for the large amounts of data present in this study, and that more complex statistical analyses are only needed to generate meaningful patterns for interpretation of comparatively smaller datasets. In one of the footnotes (p.21, no. 12) she goes on to

say that 'the results [of more sophisticated types of statistics] would only serve to reinforce existing conclusions, not to modify them'. This I find a rather problematic statement. On the one hand, one could not know the results of such an analysis beforehand, especially in the case of a 'very rich and diverse data set'. It is often those unexpected patterns obtained during the exploration of our datasets which yield the most rewarding results. On the other hand, even if the main results would not have been modified, additional analyses should not be considered as superfluous work with little added value. On the contrary, the analysis would even add significant weight to the arguments and conclusions presented in the volume.

The third chapter details the primary deposits that yielded the bulk of the material discussed in the volume. The Panayia Field excavations yielded six major deposits (denoted as Deposits C, D, G, H, K and M) that contained large amounts of Hellenistic pottery, covering a wide range of shapes and constituting a discrete chronological sequence. To these six, 12 deposits from elsewhere in Corinth were added, and together, these 18 deposits formed the core of the Panayia Field chronology. Individual deposits in these contexts provide discrete snapshots of 25-year periods. Additionally, 41 secondary deposits from all over Corinth were included as well. These are described in Appendix 1. For each of the deposits – both the primary deposits discussed in chapter 3 and the secondary deposits described in Appendix 1 – a set of standardised information is given: the location, excavation date, earlier publications, context date, total weight of pottery, coins and catalogued objects. For the primary deposits, drawings of a relevant selection of vessel shapes and pie charts with the distribution of the main fabrics (cooking, coarse and fine wares) are given as well.

In the fourth chapter, James discusses the decoration, fabrics and production organization of the pottery included in the volume. As a whole, this chapter feels like the weak link compared to the rest of the volume. All three aspects are described rather summarily, as can be directly gathered from the mere nine pages length of this chapter. Clearly, the focus of this volume is on vessel shapes, which are discussed far more extensively in subsequent chapters. Discussion of the decoration covers the standard plain-glazed pottery characteristic for Hellenistic pottery, with some chronological resolution given based on the quality and application of the glaze. Leaving aside the plausible temporal difference in full versus partial glazing, chronological assessments based on quality of slip

is a doubtful strategy. While it is a prevalent practice in much of Hellenistic pottery studies, too often, material specialists do not sufficiently take into account the impact of taphonomic processes and weathering in their assessments. To what extent this is the case here, however, is difficult to assess as considerations of taphonomy do not feature strongly in the book. Other forms of decoration included are the typical stamps, *miltos*, and West Slope decoration. Each is discussed rather summarily along with its potential chronological implications. Especially for the changes in West Slope decoration motifs, the chronological sequence proposed by James appears convincing.

Study of the fabrics is limited to macroscopic descriptions of four distinct types of clay used in the fine wares. Elemental descriptions of the fabrics include colour and inclusions. Other elements such as hardness are not always given (only for fabrics C and D) and even there not in a systematic manner. Regarding the inclusions, shape and colour are listed, but no specific identification is given. While conclusive identification of inclusions ideally draws from petrographic analysis (and such analysis is available as mentioned by James herself on page 72), it is also possible to macroscopically identify the main inclusion types. Unfortunately, this information is missing here even though it could have been a useful additional argument in the assessment of the locality of production.

The discussion on production organization of Hellenistic pottery at Corinth is fairly limited, in part owing to the lack of archaeological evidence for kilns or workshops from the Hellenistic period. Still, the argument for a decentralized ceramic industry in Hellenistic times is rather superficial. That is not to say that the conclusion is wrong, but merely that the arguments drawn in to support the conclusion carry little weight. For example, James highlights a passage in Plato's *Republic* as the main brunt of the argument for families as the main social units behind production workshops in antiquity. Again, there is good reason to assume that this conclusion is correct. However, not including at least some of the mass of other historical sources and archaeological data available to support such an argument is regrettable.

In chapters five to seven, the main focus of the volume is finally coming to the fore. In these three chapters, extensive descriptions of the vessel shapes are given, respectively, for drinking vessels, serving vessels and pouring vessels. With 75 pages of detailed descriptions, this part undoubtedly forms the core of the book and comprises its strongest

component. The added value of the mass of data included in the volume is emphasized particularly in the chronological trends displayed in the frequency seriations of the shapes throughout these chapters. A clear example is the clear chronological sequence of preferences for various types of drinking vessels from the fourth to first centuries BC. The sequence shows an initial decline of Classical shapes (e.g. the one-handled cup and kotyle) and the quick rise of kantharoi in the third century BC, followed by their decline in the second century BC, associated with the emergence and rising popularity of the mouldmade bowl. It is also interesting to note that bowls and pouring vessels are rather conservative, their shapes stay stable throughout the Hellenistic period, whereas drinking cups, plates and kraters display far more rapid developments, especially during the third and second centuries BC.

James logically follows for a large part the canonical repertoire of Greek and Hellenistic vessel shapes, drawing in particular from the typology established in Edwards' earlier volume. James frequently points out the influence of Attic shapes in the local repertoire, in addition to the many Attic imports found at Corinth. Earlier, I already raised the point that it would have been informative to see these imports discussed in more detail given their importance for the local assemblage. James also points out that the Corinthian assemblage of the late third and early second centuries BC became increasingly influenced by the Hellenistic *koine*, noting in particular the presence of conical bowls, rolled-rim plates, plates with offset rims and bolster kraters found elsewhere in the Mediterranean at that time. The presence or absence of a cultural, material and ideological *koine* is another topic that is prevalent in Hellenistic studies. Yet, too often, these studies do not properly define such a *koine* nor do they properly problematize it by situating this perceived macro-level phenomenon in the specificities of the local context. On the level of material culture, one way to properly contextualize a material *koine* is by not only indicating those types present in the assemblage, but also identifying the shapes that are notably absent, and linking these to their functional counterparts in the assemblage. Combined, presence and absence give a better perspective on the choices made by people in the past that could potentially inform the participation in wider patterns of social and cultural practices related to the phenomenon of *koine*.

Relatedly, James states that comparanda in vessel shapes were sought from a wider area covering: Attica, Aigina, Boiotia, Macedonia, Cyclades, Crete, Asia Minor and the coastal islands, Cyprus and the

Levant, the Peloponnese, central/northern Greece and the eastern Adriatic coast. Such a wide range is commendable, but it should be noted that these comparisons are interspersed throughout the volume. There has been no clear effort to present a coherent overview of the situation of Corinthian pottery within the wider Mediterranean world, which would have lent more credence to the argument of participation in a Hellenistic *koine*.

The final chapter brings together chronological arguments made in earlier chapters to present a concise chronological evolution of the Corinthian Hellenistic fine ware assemblage. The chapter can be read as the conclusions of the volume and presents a useful short overview of the main chronological patterns.

The catalogue presents a systematic overview of mostly complete vessels, in the main from the Panayia Field deposits. Each catalogue entry includes previous bibliography, dimensions (diameter and height), fabric, shape description, and context date. The only remark regarding this part is that the choice to give all measurements in meters but up to three decimal places seems rather odd in the context of vessels which are mostly small in dimension.

The first appendix provides additional information on the secondary contexts included in the study, following the same standards as the primary contexts in chapter three. Appendix 2 contains a matrix of similarity coefficients used to refine the relative position of contexts in the frequency seriation. The results of this analysis are described only very summarily. It would have been more interesting to see these types of analyses included in the main body of the argument presented in the volume. Finally, the third appendix consists of a table with concordances between the dates of vessel shapes in Edwards' Corinth VII.3 and the Panayia Field chronology. This provides a useful overview of the results of the study, and will surely turn out to be one of the most consulted pages of the volume.

To conclude, James' study on the fine wares of Corinth is a monumental work which will undoubtedly become one of the seminal volumes in Hellenistic pottery studies. It provides a much-needed update of the pottery chronology of an important centre in antiquity. The unequivocal focus on vessel shape at the expense of detailed fabric analysis, as well as the lack of detailed study of the imports, are regrettable, but are only minor faults in light of the merits of the volume. Once the follow-up work with a more detailed study of

the imports of Corinth is published, these volumes will contribute enormously to the establishment of more reliable chronological sequences across the Peloponnese and the wider Hellenistic world.

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D. Graham J. Shipley, *The Early Hellenistic Peloponnese: Politics, Economies, and Networks 338-197 BC*. pp. xxxii+355, 1 ill., 9 maps, 7 tables. 2018. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 2018978-0-521-87369-7, hardback \$120.

The 'decline' of the *polis* in the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods numbers among the stock elements of historical narratives of ancient Greece. In the conventional rendition baked into old textbook descriptions of Greek civilization, the aftermath of the Peloponnesian War marked the end of a golden age as city-states devolved into a downward cycle of power play, hegemonic contest, and warfare that ended only with the conquests of Philip II and Alexander. The *polis* thereafter lost its autonomy, political directive, and ideological essence. As one popular textbook of western civilization put it recently: 'With the advent of Macedonian control, once-independent *poleis* became subject cities whose proud political traditions were no longer relevant.'¹ This picture of decline, decay, and irrelevance remains common today despite a range of recent scholarship reappraising the early Hellenistic period in Greece.

The Early Hellenistic Peloponnese: Politics, Economies, and Networks 338-197 BC (hereafter *TEHP*) is an important and compelling historical revision of this common picture of decline. The heart of the book is an analysis of continuity and change in the social and political conditions and interactions of Peloponnesian *poleis* under Macedonian dominance over the 'long third century' (338-197 BC). Shipley approaches the problem through a synthetic survey of the development of dozens of city-states in the core of the Greek peninsula, examining a variety of evidence that includes literature, inscriptions, coins,

¹ Cole, J. and Symes, C. 2020. *Western Civilizations: Their History & Their Culture*: 130. Twentieth edition. Volume A. New York, W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 2020.