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We can expect this volume to become a fundamental resource for scholars working on Hellenistic pottery and, indeed, more generally the archaeology and history of Corinth and the Peloponnese. For this very reason, the stakes are high for any new account of the development and chronology of Corinthian pottery. J. frames her study in an historical context in Chapter One. The turbulent political history of the northeastern Peloponnese in the 3rd century and the frequently changing balance of power as Corinth fell under Macedonian control and then joined the Achaian League before falling to Macedonia again provide a general frame for historical analysis. Here she makes the case that a more nuanced historical picture of Hellenistic Corinth – a fuller political, social, and economic history – will require a more robust engagement with archaeological evidence. We are still in the early stages of these efforts, and pottery has played less of a role than coins and inscriptions so far. The poor publication record for Hellenistic pottery in this region and the difficulty establishing reliable ceramic chronologies is partly to blame. Graham Shipley's recent book embraces a more expansive view of evidence that includes coins and inscriptions but shows the longer road ahead for a fuller integration of pottery and other classes of archaeological information².

1 EDWARDS 1975.

2 SHIPLEY 2018, 7–8. 215–224.

Corinth and has good grounds to do so, following among others the publishers of an important deposit from a drain underlying the South Stoa and therefore laid before the construction of the building³. This deposit (revisited as deposit A in J.'s study) dates to the end of the 4th cent. and lacks typical Corinthian Hellenistic shapes, suggesting they were introduced later and requiring a significant adjustment to Edwards's chronology.

If the Hellenistic period begins in ceramic terms later than Edwards thought, the next question is when does it end. This is an exceedingly thorny topic and demands consideration of historical events. The conventional view is that the attested destruction of Corinth by Mummius in 146 BCE devastated the town, with local production of pottery ceasing until the refoundation of Corinth as a Roman colony in 44 BCE – what is known as the ›interim‹ period. For Edwards, the latest deposits of material in the wells of the South Stoa should date to this destruction and provide a terminus for Corinthian Hellenistic pottery production as a whole. But this can now be seen as a questionable assumption as Greek archaeologists apply a more critical lens to literary accounts describing military devastation and ruined cities. J. weighs the literary accounts and employs archaeological evidence to suggest some sort of presence in the interim period. The evidence previously available consisted entirely of imports and had been explained as foreign merchants (perhaps Italian) accommodating a greatly reduced Corinthian population (pp. 8–9). J.'s contribution comes in her argument that local pottery production continued after 146 BCE; in particular she assigns a date of 120–75 BCE to one of the new deposits from the Panayia Field (deposit M). This could herald a paradigm shift in our understanding of Corinthian history, raising expectations of continuity in religious, social, and other spheres of life, whereas a past generation of scholars have emphasized a sharp break.

But can we date deposit M so late? Unfortunately, the crucial evidence on which the late date rests – imported Eastern Sigillata ware and a local lamp from this unpublished deposit – are not sufficiently documented here or elsewhere to allow the reader to form an independent judgment (here pp. 10–12. 53–55 ill. 19)⁴. Raising further concerns, another Corinthian pottery expert, Kathleen Slane, disagrees that the imports in question date after 146 BCE or are even Eastern Sigillata, a conclusion J. cites but does not address (p. 54 note 98). Greater documentation of the deposit might change minds, but for now those who see a gap in the local sequence after 146 BCE have as good a place or better to stand. The degree of continuity J. envisions in local pottery production is left rather murky – did it continue unabated all the way to the Roman colony or was deposit M a blip in a tenuous existence of Corinth as a village, town, or something else? Indeed, the fact that local pottery in deposit M so closely resembles the contents of deposit L, dated to around 150 BCE, seems a good reason for dating deposit M before 146 BCE. The South Stoa wells, J. suggests, contain interim period material, including some moldmade bowls (such as cat. no. 118, p. 16), but this is a hard case to make without the anchor of an unequivocally dated context within the interim period.

The third chronological issue J. faces is the pace of developments in the Corinthian repertoire between the introduction of Hellenistic shapes after 310 BCE and the end point of 146 BCE (or later). The new evidence from the Panayia Field comes into play here in a more significant way, prompting J. to conduct a thorough review of the chronological underpinnings of the Corinthian fine-ware sequence. This leads her to make significant adjustments to the accepted chronology, with generally later dates than found in Edwards. A better understanding of Attic Hellenistic pottery is partially responsible for the discrepancy between their dating systems, for we now know from Susan Rotroff's work that Attic imports found in Corinthian deposits should themselves be dated later than originally thought⁵. But there is a methodological difference as well that separates the two approaches, for J. employs frequency seriation to date the local wares. Seriation basically assumes, as James Deetz put

3 McPHEE – PEMBERTON 2012.

4 Cf. SANDERS ET AL. 2014.

5 ROTROFF 1997.

it in a classic work, that cultural traits »will have small beginnings, grow in popularity until a peak is reached, and then fade away«⁶. As an example, J. charts the popularity of one cup type, the articulated kantharos, as a percentage of all drinking cups and fine ware totals in each deposit, where the deposits are ordered chronologically (p. 24 ill. 5). This parabolic graph recalls Deetz's »battleship-shaped curves«, with the bulge in the middle reflecting the period of greatest popularity. The ceramic signature of each deposit—the relative percentages of various shapes – can serve as independent evidence for dating, with different signatures seen as representing different points in time. J. calculates »similarity coefficients« for each deposit, an amalgamated score averaging the ratios for every fine ware shape as a proportion of the fine ware total (pp. 229–230).

Driven largely by her seriation studies, J. embarks on a systematic downdating of deposits and creates a revised pottery chronology. But this is often difficult to reconcile with the dating evidence provided by imports, as the following examples will show. Following the South Stoa drain deposit (discussed above) comes the fill of a cistern from the Forum South Central area (deposit B), dated by its publishers to the late 4th cent. but pushed down by J. into the early 3rd on the basis of »similarity coefficients«, a reference to seriation methods applied to the local wares (p. 32). The absence of typical Hellenistic drinking cup forms such as the one-piece cup, cyma, and calyx kantharoi from this or the next context (deposit C), dated by imports to the second quarter of the 3rd cent., suggests that these shapes have not yet entered circulation at Corinth. The discrepancy with the import derived dates for these deposits is not much (around 20 years) but troublesome nonetheless. No explanation is given for the failure of imports to give an accurate measure of time, such as an argument that Corinth no longer received a steady flow of imports. We see a determined effort to push down the pottery dates also spreading into other areas such as the construction of the South Stoa, highlighting the importance of this building in efforts to define the Hellenistic transition. In a separate study documenting a 2015 excavation, J. downdates the South Stoa from the late 4th cent. as suggested by coin evidence to the 280s BCE based on the worn condition of several examples and an inferred lag between their production and deposition, but this is not a necessary conclusion⁷.

With the next deposit D, we enter the third quarter of the 3rd cent. and cross an important threshold from no representation to the full-blown appearance of characteristic Hellenistic cup shapes, a pattern seemingly in contradiction to the smooth growth assumption of seriation. Next in the series, deposit E presents an even more discordant note with respect to chronology and seriation. The method of dating by the latest imports should place this in the first quarter of the 3rd cent., but the local pottery signature as determined by seriation pulls the date down to the last thirty years of the 3rd cent., a difference of half a century (p. 41). The result is a severe discrepancy between import dating and seriation methods. Here we have not just a deposit dated later than it would be otherwise but one that actually leapfrogs in the series past another with later imports. If deposit E really belongs in the first quarter of the 3rd cent., as the import record suggests, the proper sequence should be A-B-C-E-D and the introduction of typical Hellenistic shapes such as the cyma kantharos would have occurred by around 275 BCE, not a quarter century later as J. would have it. Seriation exerts its strongest downward pull at this point, with deposits F and J brought down to around 200 BCE, fifty years later than the date suggested by imports (pp. 42. 47). The dates for these deposits fundamentally matter because they become the basis for the new pottery chronologies.

Seriation can work in an archaeological setting if the different ceramic signatures of the deposits can be understood as a function of time and not some other factor(s). Each deposit must be seen as essentially comparable, giving an accurate measure of what was in circulation at a given moment in time. But the more we view the archaeological record as malleable and shaped by different social processes in the past and decisions in the present about what to

6 DEETZ 1977, 67. See also DETHLEFSEN – DEETZ 1966.

7 JAMES 2019, 176–179.



save, it becomes more difficult to attribute such patterns to chronological variation alone. J. concludes that most of the Corinthian deposits are essentially comparable because they are the same type, domestic as defined by a ratio of 10 % fine ware, 10 % cooking, and 80 % coarse ware (p. 26). Yet the precise context – a floor, a well, a cistern – even if we label it domestic, might differ in content at the detailed level of analysis where seriation operates. Moreover, the decision to include material from the South Stoa wells in rooms interpreted as shops (deposits N-S) runs the risk, as J. acknowledges (pp. 27. 59), of creating a distorted pattern with higher concentrations of cups than expected in a domestic context. It is difficult to see these deposits as straightforward snapshots of circulation patterns at Corinth, especially since many of them seem to have taken a long time to accrue and contain material of different dates.

Another issue raised by seriation is what to make of smaller deposits that do not lend themselves to quantitative comparisons. Should this material be excluded from efforts to revise the pottery chronology? J. excludes them but risks ignoring valuable information from smaller associations such as deposit S-37, a grave containing a coin and other material dating to the early 3rd cent. (p. 325). Since this grave also contains a cyma kantharos, it should contribute to the question of when the Hellenistic ceramic repertoire appeared at Corinth and lead to an earlier date than postulated by J.

Another way to evaluate seriation is to look at the results themselves and ask whether the graphs for individual shapes conform to smooth cycles of growth, peak, and decline. The kantharoi arguably come closest to meeting these expectations (p. 84 ill. 24), but there are countless examples fluctuating widely in incoherent patterns with sharp peaks and valleys, such as the Hexamilia cups (p. 91), and nearly all the bowls and most of the plates (pp. 102–119). More could have also been made of Corinthian exports to other sites where they appear in chronologically meaningful contexts and offer a test of the new chronology, such as at Lerna⁸. These point to a problem with seriation assumptions and suggest we need to think differently about how new innovations gained a foothold in a past accessible to us only through archaeology. Few have addressed these issues explicitly for Hellenistic Greece, but an exception, Rotroff's study of the moldmade bowl in Athens, relies on a different theory of innovation and growth to posit a lag in time (approximately 40 years) between invention and profitable production on a significant scale, suggesting a more complicated life cycle than encapsulated by seriation⁹.

These reservations prevent me from uncritically accepting the revised chronology for fine wares in Corinth 7, 7, but that should not overshadow the achievement of what will become the new starting point for those working with Corinthian pottery in the Hellenistic period, whether their interests lie in production and consumption patterns, pottery as dating evidence (with the cautions expressed above), or pottery as an aid for historical reconstruction. Some of the other strengths of Corinth 7, 7 are that it includes a full discussion of production techniques, revealing changes such as a shift from full gloss to partial dipping of vessels in the 3rd cent. (p. 65). We also have a noteworthy discussion of Corinthian fine-ware fabrics, one that incorporates Guy Sanders's unpublished work and reveals at least one fabric (Type C) that is a chronological marker of the late 3rd cent., when it appears alongside the introduction of new vessel types (p. 71). In the shape studies, J. pays close attention to manufacturing details and identifies traits signaling outside influence, predominately in the Attic series, but stops short of a comprehensive account of stylistic development for individual shapes with discrete stages. The catalogue entries provide a rich record of written descriptions, drawings, and photographs for others in search of parallels or attempting to construct a more refined typology.

J. is also attuned to the social significance of changes in pottery design, as illustrated by her discussion of the advent of plates without central depressions for sauce and what this development means with respect to changing dining practices at Corinth (p. 114). Her case for

8 ERICKSON 2018, 280–282 no. 629 fig. 262.

9 ROTROFF 2006.

a Hellenistic ceramic koine emerging at Corinth in the 3rd cent. sets the introduction of new shapes against the background of Attic influence and Mediterranean connectivity, a case that can be made more forcefully once we have the publication of imports from the Panayia Field. Attic imports are the most reliable indicators of foreign influence, with the exception of an apparent break in the second half of the 3rd cent. that implies a degree of Corinthian autonomy in a crucial phase of ceramic innovation (pp. 72. 77. 88. 152). J. sees a second transformation in the late 3rd or early 2nd cent. as the Corinthian line shifted focus to plates and moldmade bowls that served as functional equivalents to cups (pp. 77. 151–153). In the end, further study of the ceramic records of Corinth and other Peloponnesian centres, including Argos and Stymphalos, can be expected to lay a firmer foundation for a more integrated approach to history, one that combines textual and archaeological sources and addresses a wider range of political, social, and economic issues.

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