Michela Spataro & Alexandra Villing (eds.), Ceramics, Cuisine and Culture: The Archaeology and Science of Kitchen Pottery in the Ancient Mediterranean World

Oxbow Books, Oxford 2015
278 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations
ISBN 978178979470 (Hardback Edition) and ISBN 9781782979487 (Digital Edition)

Review by Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom

The excellent volume under review, presenting twenty-three papers and covering diverse periods, geographical regions, cultural and ethnic identities, is the fruit of the conference »Ceramics, cuisine and culture: the archaeology and science of kitchen pottery in the ancient Mediterranean world«, held at the British Museum in December 2010. It is a masterly interdisciplinary research volume with the participation of forty scholars, and the editors deserve our honest admiration and gratitude. After a comprehensive introduction by the editors (Chapter 1 – Investigating ceramics, cuisine and culture – past, present and future), referred to in John Tidmarsh's review, the papers are grouped under three main headings – How to make a perfect cooking pot: technical choices between tradition and innovation (Part I); Lifting the lid on ancient cuisine: understanding cooking as socio-economic practice (Part II); New pots, new recipes? Changing tastes, culinary identities and cross-cultural encounters (Part III). The last paper is a postscript by Y. Kyriakopoulos on Aegean cooking pots in the modern era (1700–1950), followed by an index. Each paper is provided with an extensive bibliography.

It is impossible to do justice to all contributions and their wide range of topics discussed; hence the reviewer focusses on ceramics from the Hellenistic period. In Part I papers deal with cookware production and the role of raw materials in Greece and the Aegean (Chapter 2, I. Whitbread), Bronze Age cooking pots from Akrotiri, Thera (Chapter 3, N. S. Müller – V. Kilikoglou – P. M. Day), with models and simulations of heat transfer (Chapter 4, A. Hein – N. S. Müller – V. Kilikoglou), with four modern potters of cooking vessels on Mallorca (Chapter 5, P. M. Day – M. A. Cau Ontiveros – C. Mas Florit – N. S. Müller), with fabrics and manufacturing techniques at Aegina during the Bronze Age and the Archaic-Classical Period (Chapter 6, W. Gauss – G. Klebinder-Gauss – E. Kiriatzi – A. Pentedeka – M. Georgakopoulou) and with the evidence for four phases of patterns of production and consumption of cooking wares at Knossos in the Early Iron Age and Archaic periods (Chapter 7, J. Whitley – M.-C. Boileau). Chapter 8 by K. Winter-Jacobson surveys cookware manufacture on Hellenistic Cyprus. The analysis of archaeological data shows that in the Early Hellenistic period highly specialized though not heterogeneous fabrics were introduced, resulting in the production of thin-walled cooking vessels with probably quartz-tempered fabrics in urban centres by the late 3rd century. Such fabrics, already noted at Tel Anafa in Upper Galilee[1], exhibit particular crack stability, as proven in experiments[2].

In Part II seven papers discuss cooking as socio-economic practice. Based on work at the Mycenaean site of Mitrou in Central Greece, B. Lis (Chapter 9) wants to break a lance

1 A. M. Berlin, The Plain Wares, in: S. C. Herbert (ed.), Tel Anafa II 1. The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery, *JRA* Suppl. Series 10 (Ann Arbor, MI 1997) 12–14.

2 V. Kilikoglou – G. Vekinis – Y. Maniatis – P. M. Day, Mechanical Performance of Quartz-tempered Ceramics. Part I: Strength and Toughness, *Archaeometry* 40, 1998, 261–280.

for increased interaction and exchange of ideas between various specialists when analyzing cookware. The analyses should comprise the study of morphological features like wide mouth, deep capacious form, stability and tripod cooking pots as well as the examination of assemblage and context and the study of specific forms in a diachronic perspective. Furthermore, archaeozoological, archaeobotanical and residue analyses contribute important information on food processing and culinary practices. Related topics are discussed in a paper on Late Minoan I cooking technology with the focus on the experimental aspect of cooking (Chapter 10, J. E. Morrison – C. Sofianou – T. M. Brogan – J. Alyounis – D. Mylona) and in a contribution on variegated residues present in Roman kitchen and other domestic vessels; for example, cooking pots from Late Roman Sagalassos contained high concentrations of saturated fatty acids in distributions indicative of animal products (Chapter 11, L. J. E. Cramp – R. P. Evershed). A. J. Donnelly (Chapter 12) offers insights into the function of cooking pots based on textual evidence from three authors of cookbooks, *Apicius*, *Vindiarius* and *Anthimus*, each representing a different cultural background with Greco-Roman, Romano-Gothic and Frankish dietary preferences. E. Langridge-Noti (Chapter 13) explores the correlation of the evidence for food preparation and consumption in ancient Laconia, based on literary sources and archaeological evidence from Hellenistic Geraki. Noteworthy is the prevalent occurrence of a particular form of flat-bottomed pan with a single high-swung strap handle, likely to have been used for preparing flat bread and / or preparing an egg dish or perhaps a fish dish, although Geraki is far removed from any source of fish. While a typical component of cooking assemblages in Laconia, it is concluded that flat-bottomed pans are rare in the Greek world and more common in the Roman period[3]. L. M. Banducci (Chapter 14) describes the ceramic stands in central Italy from the 1st millennium BCE and focusses on vessel morphology and thermal properties, cooking fuel and food preparation times. L. G. Meulemans (Chapter 15) documents the widespread consumption and breeding of the dormouse in Roman Italy, including pre-Roman finds and Greek and Roman literary references.

In Part III seven papers investigate kitchen vessels and customs of food preparation and consumption among different cultural and ethnic communities. In Chapter 16 S. I. Rotroff relates to the documentation of 450 cooking vessels from the Athenian Agora, covering the time span from ca. 1050 BCE to the end of the 1st millennium BCE. Two primary forms are recorded: first, a deep and capacious closed pot, at first flat-bottomed and jug-like (termed cooking jug) and later round-bottomed (the chytra); second, a shallower more open vessel (the lopas). A third less common vessel is a wide shallow flat-bottomed pan, attested in the second half of the millennium. Chytrai were in use throughout the millennium and the only form during the first half. The statistical evidence revealed that in the second half chytrai were nearly twice as numerous as lopades and more than four times as numerous as pans. The cooking jug had disappeared by the early 6th century and by that time must have been replaced by the round-bottomed Aeginetan chytra, subsequently imitated by Athenian potters. During the Hellenistic period a greater variety of chytrai, lopades and pans were manufactured, and imported flat-bottomed dishes from Asia Minor and Italy occur.

A.-M. Curé (Chapter 17) presents the evidence for the introduction of Mediterranean-type cookware in southern Gaul (6th to 3rd centuries BCE), and A. Quercia (Chapter 18) deals with cookware in southern Italy (8th to 3rd centuries BCE). The Roman period is represented by a paper on the cuisine in Roman Tuscany (Chapter 19, G. Schörner) and on the adoption of Roman culinary practices by the indigenous population at Castro do Vieito in northwestern Iberia (Chapter 20, A. J. Marques da Silva). In two papers on kitchen pottery, the first from the

3 The exceptions mentioned in the paper comprise a single specimen from the Athenian Agora from a Late Hellenistic – Early Roman context (S. I. Rotroff, Hellenistic Pottery. The Plain Wares, *Agora* 33 [Princeton, NJ 2006] 186. 315 no. 675) and pans from Paphos with a date from the 2nd century BCE onwards (J. W. Hayes, The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery, Paphos 3 [Nicosia 1991] 81–82). However, in the Athenian cookware production flat-bottomed pans are recorded from the mid-first millennium onwards, albeit without the high-swung handle (see chapter 16, figs. 16. 3 and 16. 6–8 of the volume under review).

southern Levant during the Bronze Age, the Iron Age and the Early Islamic period (Chapter 21, A. Fantalkin), the second from Iron Age Cyprus (Chapter 22, S. Fourrier), the authors present diachronic perspectives.

All told, this volume presents the reader with a chock-full of varied archaeological data, discussions, interpretations and questions relating to ancient cookware and culinary practices. Well-illustrated with colour photos, drawings, diagrams, thin-sections and maps it is a true treasure-trove and an invaluable research tool for every ceramist and anthropologist and in particular a trend-setting stimulation for young scholars.