



fabrics which turns the definition of the place of production into a difficult problem. Therefore in this chapter SR gives priority to the goal to identify local products. To this end she filters out several groups of fabrication which she then defines. Based on visual appearance of the clays she isolates and defines a dozen fabrics within the Plain Wares which in part fall into sub-groups (e.g. ›pinkish buff fabric‹ and ›pinkish temper fabric‹). The extensive and very precise descriptions of each individual fabric deserve special attention, since they provide the reader – short of autopsy – with the best possible idea of a clay and its characteristics. And, naturally, the author did not neglect to have as series of samples of the individual fabrics analysed with different methods of the natural sciences, nor did she shy away from a discussion with this field, alien to archaeologists<sup>1</sup>.

It is a compliment to the decades of experience and to the author's excellent powers of observation that the groups defined merely through optical analysis fall congruent with those formulated by the scientist as a result of their laboratory tests investigating the chemical-mineralogical composition of the clays. The test produced commonalities for four of the fabrics (›pinkish buff fabric‹ and ›pink temper fabric‹, ›micaceous cooking fabric‹ and ›schist cooking fabric‹) with regard to their composition; together with the older ›classical cooking fabric‹ and the ›attic fine fabric‹ they contain certain ingredients which allow for them to be anchored in the local workshops of Athens. Still missing is an analysis of the ancient clay-quarries since the area carries modern buildings, but the author substantiates the local provenance with some observations of her own: for one, vessels of this make constitute the largest percentages of the entire lot, while the other fabrics occur in small amounts only; the other is that those shapes that are typical for Athens in their majority are made from these materials.

One might caution that the prevalence of a certain ware does not connote its local production as the situation in Hellenistic Berenice-Benghazi demonstrates<sup>2</sup>. But one may assume that Athens which still maintained an important position as a centre of production during the Hellenistic period could still satisfy its needs to a large portion on its own. Taken together, the sum of the arguments collected with great care, sensitivity and the necessary caution lends the workshop-assignments of SR weight and convinces one that they are correct.

The study of the fabrics, in addition, demonstrates also very clearly the limits of scientific clay-analysis on Plain Ware. Also impossible remains pinpointing the provenance of fabrics which are only recognizable in the general sense as imports, since no counter tests are possible from production centres of which most could not yet be identified. Here the observers skills of observation, experience and the specific knowledge of the specialists remain absolutely essential to arrive at a more geographically correct pinpointing of the workshops of certain products. A good example for the application of the conventional method is Rotroff's argument for an Attic provenance of the grey spindle shaped unguentaria; the discussion that must be conducted here is out of necessity highly complex and it touches upon a multitude of aspects of ceramic research<sup>3</sup>: the fine fabric of the unguentaria resembles neither in its optical nor in its scientifically analysed composition with that of Attic table wares. But some factors like the find of a number of misfirings and the concentration of early samples predominantly upon Attica and neighbouring regions, furthermore their massive occurrence in Athens both together with the literary sources recording the production of potential contents (perfume oils) at location – all this speaks for the fact that they come at least from a regional workshop. An additional point of support for this thesis is Rotroff's reconstruction of the development of the shape from the Corinthian pseudo-Cypriote amphorae.

<sup>1</sup> The results of the analyses appear in appendices (appendix A–D, pp. 379). They ought to be judged by other colleagues more familiar with these matters.

<sup>2</sup> s. Ph. Kendrick, *RCRFacta* 25/26, 1987, pp. 139. Here the largest portion of the table-ware is imported, during period 2 (100–25 BCE) the local wares are even less frequent than ESA.

<sup>3</sup> The description of the fabric of the unguentaria and the discussion of its provenance for the sake of argument takes place within the frame-work of the typological studies (pp. 141).

A further reaching result of the study is that in one production centre several clay-fabric were in use at the same time. It is, indeed, a single work-shop not several in the same location as Rotroff demonstrates unequivocally by pointing to the use of several different clay-fabrics on one and the same vessel<sup>4</sup>. This is a very important aspect which should be observed when working on comparative materials from other find-places. As reason for the vessels production using a variety of clay-mixtures SR could clearly demonstrate a connection with the function of the vessels that placed specific requirements upon their production. In this context the author also dealt intensively with several admixtures and their influence upon the consistency of the clay<sup>5</sup>.

The verification of conscientious adding minerals to manipulate the clay-body also throws new light onto the potters of antiquity who must have had a profound knowledge of their raw-materials. And under this aspect it appears that the actual production of functional ceramics posed a much greater – and in any case a different – challenge than the making of table ware.

The distribution of the vessel-shapes according to fabric brings as a result that cooking vessels, for example, were made only from specific fabrics, while water jugs and storage jars were formed from yet others and a third one apparently was used exclusively for pots for perfume and oil. Following the logic of this observation and for the sake of greater clarity, SR sorted the materials into three categories: ›cooking ware‹, ›vessels for oil and unguents‹ and ›Household ware‹. Vessel-shapes, which were produced from fabrics of different categories such as an item addressed as a ›serving dish‹ which exist in a ›cooking ware‹ and a ›household ware‹ version are the exceptions which confirm the rule<sup>6</sup>.

The tripartite division of the materials also proves to be helpful to the effect that this unambiguously keeps together vessels-shapes from related functional areas. Consequently, the crockery in this second and largest section of her work in which SR investigates the individual shapes, has been arranged under the viewpoint of its general function<sup>7</sup>. This structuring principle makes more sense when applied to Plain Wares than organizing it along strictly typological criteria, bearing as a consequence that some individual shapes, such as the lids, are not represented as a formal group: but when contemplating the vessels from a cultural-historical perspective the overview gained from this structuring over objects of daily life from the same living- and household area can be very informative.

In this part of her work SR discusses about 100 defined shapes as well as countless singular pieces and thus she impressively presents the rich diversity of Hellenistic Plain Wares. She also reflects the status quo of research for each shape in its entirety, and where-ever necessary her own corrections and comments are added resp. amplified with her own observations. A central theme of discussion for each shape is its relevant chronological frame of reference. The chronological placement of vessels and shapes is – almost exclusively – based upon the numerous, well-dated deposits of the Agora which already for the Fine Wares have served as a stable and tightly knitted foundation. The new chronology for Rhodian amphora stamps developed over the last years by G. Finkelsztejn which provide a chronological element for numerous Agora-deposits has been taken in addition by SR to revise the context-dates vis-a-vis Agora vol. 29<sup>8</sup>. The resulting differences in the dates are relevant especially

<sup>4</sup> Observed on some pseudo-Cypriot amphorae in Corinth and within the materials from the Agora whose handles are of a different fabric than the pots's bodies (p. 145).

<sup>5</sup> For example the discussion about calcite in the ›Hellenistic water-jug fabric‹ p. 32).

<sup>6</sup> p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> For the Hellenistic table-ware S. Rotroff thus follows the same proven organisational principle as she also orients herself, for the sake of consistency, in the further listing of shapes on that established by Sparkes and Talcott (Agora vol. 12).

<sup>8</sup> p. 7–8; cf. G. Finkelsztejn, *Chronologie détaillé et révisée des éponymes amphoriques rhodiens de 270 a 108 av. J.-C. environ: Premier bilan*, BARIntSer 90 (Oxford 2001).

for the chronology of the Fine Wares, meaning for researchers of those materials the perusal of the ›deposit summaries‹ in Plain Wares becomes indispensable<sup>9</sup>. Additionally, the chronological frameworks for each individual shape have been placed side by side in graphic form<sup>10</sup>; thus it is easy to recognize how long a form was in use and which vessels-shapes were contemporaneous to each other and what their sequence were. Additionally, typological changes of individual shapes are also considered if they were discernible<sup>11</sup>. Consciously the author – in her chronological and typological analysis – widened her outlook beyond Hellenism to built bridges into the preceding Classical period as well as into the following, more recent ones – thus illustrating the development of the production in Athens, together with the shape spectrum. It had to be registered that the transitional periods for Plain Ware as already known for Fine Ware pottery lie dis-congruent to the historically defined epoques; neither the conquest of Alexander nor of Sulla influenced the evolution of pottery<sup>12</sup>. Rightfully SR emphasizes the far-reaching importance of this observation which sends a reminder to proceed with caution when using ceramics as fundament for chronology. It also serves as a reminder that different evolutionary sequences are quite possible for other areas of ancient life as well. Therefore an examination is necessary as to what degree the results gained from the materials of the Agora could be valid beyond the borders of Athens<sup>13</sup>.

In her further discussion of the individual shapes SR canvasses the materials very detailed and in a multifaceted manner, presenting numerous observations and individual results. Limited space does not permit an all-embracing presentation of the results, instead we selected some especially interesting exemplary studies in details.

Rotroff's reflections touch upon issues of the vessels function, their production techniques and their distribution and nomenclature as well as each shape's geographical or typological roots. She gives the reader a huge fill of exact observations and descriptions of formal details and details of the modelling which allow the reconstruction of different manufacture processes. This, in turn, enable the distinction workshops and contribute to a chronological differentiation of stages of development<sup>14</sup>. Hellenistic Plain Wares are clearly distinguished from that of earlier epoques. The investigation into shape distribution also elucidates the interconnection of workshops, such as the ›Hellenistic jug, form 1‹ whose spread reflects the relations between Athens and Lemnos which is known already through the Megarian Bowls<sup>15</sup>. With the grey unguentaria, through, the typological analysis gives reason for debate of a Phoenician resp. Cypriot influence upon production and shape-development<sup>16</sup>.

In addition, the discussion of shapes provides the context for debating various aspects of economics, history and cultural studies. A fine sample for this is provided by the numerous clay beehives, found around the Agora. This, according to Rotroff's plausible argument, is evidence for a quite substantial bee-keeping and honey production amidst an urban environment<sup>17</sup>. Such an unusual phenomenon raises a number of questions which the author discusses extensively, including for example the set-up locations of the hives in the city, resp. in the houses as well as

<sup>9</sup> pp. 341.

<sup>10</sup> Chart 25–36, pp. 226.

<sup>11</sup> e.g. ›Hellenistic jug, form 4‹ in Chart 23, p. 226.

<sup>12</sup> p. 65–66.

<sup>13</sup> The investigation of the Fine Wares at Knidos indicates at least for the 1st c. BCE congruous results (own studies, in preparation). Comparative studies from other find places seem not to exist.

<sup>14</sup> The production-techniques were summarized in part I ›Introduction‹ (pp. 56).

<sup>15</sup> p. 74.

<sup>16</sup> p. 149.

<sup>17</sup> pp. 124.



the possible existence and identification of further vessel-shapes which could be connected with such a production. The identification of the chronological limits then leads to the assessment that such clay-basket appear at the earliest in the last quarter of the 5th c. BCE. Therefore the author considers a connection between the introduction of bee-keeping within Athens and the Peloponnesian war and the conquest of Attica by the Spartans: rendering inaccessible the rural environment for Athenians seems to have triggered the development of a ›honeyed autarchy‹ for in-house consumption<sup>18</sup>.

Craters pose another cultural-historical problem. Their disappearance from within Hellenistic table-wares Rotroff links in her thesis with a fundamental change in symposium customs of the post-Classical period<sup>19</sup>. The frequent appearance of the shape – and with quite noticeable decoration at that – within utilitarian ceramics gives here a fresh reason to reconsider this topic critically<sup>20</sup>.

When structuring the typological section of her book, S. Rotroff consciously decided against debating the materials along the lines of separate fabrics. This enables a comparative consideration of both imported as well as locally produced samples of the form. And thus it can be established that in many cases one finds first imported samples of non-Athenian production which later on then are imitated by Athenian workshops until one finally finds local substitutions<sup>21</sup>. Besides simple vessels such as amphorae, lopades, mortars and pans charcoal braziers form a particularly noticeable set of samples<sup>22</sup>. Here imitation is not merely confined to the shape *per se* but includes as well – proven through a thorough analysis of the attachments with relief-decoration – the figurative decorations and even inscriptions; direct impression from attachments have also been demonstrated.

With regards to imports S. Rotroff made an important observation which will be of significance well beyond the find-spot Athens: within the utilitarian pottery one finds an import-rate of 25–30%, significantly higher than in the Fine Wares which are dominated by local products<sup>23</sup>. Reasons for this phenomenon Rotroff sees in a well established, strong trade-network which could manage swift supplies of large quantities of merchandise.

This may explain the large amounts of imported utilitarian pottery, but fails to do so for the drastic difference in percentage among the Fine Wares. Therefore the question remains whether this trade-network did maybe provide for a larger import-rate of non-Athenian Fine Wares. It stands to reason that this phenomenon is based upon a much more complex process which in turn still contains several more, thus far unrecognised factors. Of interest seems here the recognition of a centre for imports during the later Hellenistic period, which, according to Rotroff applies to both species of pottery. At about the same time, around the middle of the 2nd century BCE one notices a strengthening of production centres in the East whose products are from then on appear throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. At least for Fine Ware – which is better researched – one might suspect a production-scheme oriented towards export which is intimated by the large quantities of the Syrian-produced Eastern Sigillata A at numerous locations.

Ceramics from Pergamon, Ephesus and Cnidos is distributed widely. Supportive for this wide spread development of merchandising was most likely the freeport status of Delos from 166 BCE. For the segment of Fine Wares with its exacting and often specialized methods of production one also has to reckon with specialised workshop possessing a high productivity and access to the special raw materials; only thus can one explain the relatively large amounts

<sup>18</sup> pp. 131.

<sup>19</sup> Agora 29, 14–15. 135–136..

<sup>20</sup> pp. 195.

<sup>21</sup> Summarized p. 64: see also p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> pp. 200, especially pp. 214.

<sup>23</sup> On the relation between imported and local materials see pp. 61.

of finds of foreign pots in Athens as well as elsewhere. For some of these fabrics – e.g. ›quartz cooking fabric‹ researchers already consider an origin in Asia Minor or the Near East and also for some shapes, such as the charcoal brazier<sup>24</sup>. In the end, the underlying processes concerning the trade in ceramics and their production can only be illuminated once research in the above mentioned Eastern centres has intensified and the materials have been fully published.

Next to the critical and problem-conscious, but always stimulating discussion of the materials and the associated issues the ›Plain Wares‹ shine with its user-friendly organization. Thus, classical scholars will appreciate the difficult chapter which uses numerous tables and graphics to demonstrate in a clear manner which vessels and shapes existed in which fabric and to what percentages of the inventory these amounted. In addition, the author has made visible the spectrum of shapes for each individual fabric by means of small-scale profile illustrations.

In the same manner we find the second part which deals with the typology: the explanation of each shape is accompanied by an extensive summary which lists the most important characteristics of each shape, its size, its chronological time-frame and, where appropriate, decoration and published comparisons. Next to it figures a small illustration of the prototype. Graphics present the frequency in which the individual shapes occur in the materials from the Agora. Here the author differentiates precisely between well documented, representative contexts (›deposit samples‹) from more recent excavations as opposed to those – earlier ones – where the (inventoried) shapes come from older diggings whose handling of materials is considered more problematical.<sup>25</sup> A detailed catalogue of the same quality as one is accustomed from her earlier publication rounds out the volume.

With the publication of ›Plain Wares‹ S. Rotroff has won the joust over the utilitarian wares which for such a long time were underestimated. Now, however, their scholarly value can no longer be denied when looking at the results presented here. The analysis of Plain Ware, as with the related Fine Wares have led to results and observations which – for the Hellenistic period – reach far beyond the context of mere questions of the pottery alone. Results, however, as the one presented in vol. 33 can be gained only by considering the complete and entire materials as one which presents the only way which enables the scholar to recognize connections and developments<sup>26</sup>. This makes Rotroff's publications of the Hellenistic pottery from the Athenian Agora thus far unique. In particular ›Plain Wares‹ set a new standard regarding the scholarly analysis of such ceramics; and it will be for everyone dealing with such materials a methodological guide and an indispensable handbook for a long time to come.

<sup>24</sup> p. 45. 216.

<sup>25</sup> See pp. 9. This is especially important for the statistical analysis of the materials, since in the case of those inventoried finds the selection criteria remain either unknown or were not uniform and where the original amount of the finds retrieved can no longer be ascertained. Taking Athens as a sample case, the author points at a problem which is present at other excavation sites as well. It is the source for an immense loss of information that is hardly justifiable. On the other hand, this problem would be easily alleviated through the establishment of a well organized system of find-recording and treatment executed by trained and competent personnel which continues to conduct this work over the course of the excavation campaigns. The results S. Rotroff produced for the Agora materials demonstrate quite clearly that fundamental research in this area is quite rewarding (and necessary) and that the extra efforts are more than worth what the investment might cost.

<sup>26</sup> The results of Rotroff's work speak very decidedly against that wide-spread custom to split ceramic-finds into compact groups – as small as possible – and to distribute those among a multitude of researchers. Information which might enable a deeper understanding of the processes of ancient production, economics and developments can hardly be noticed if extensive assemblages are investigated like the individual colours of the spectrum, each with its own researcher who also lacks broad oversight. Hence, misinterpretation or oversight are all too common (see e.g. above on the problems of the craters).