

Archaic to Hellenistic

Ian McPhee and Elizabeth G. Pemberton. *Late Classical Pottery from Ancient Corinth, Drain 1971-1 in the Forum Southwest. Corinth VII.6*. pp. 400, 80 ills, 4- plates, 18 charts. 2012. Princeton NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens. ISBN 978-0-87661-076-3, hardcover \$150.

Volume VII.6, late Classical Pottery from Corinth, is another fine addition to the American School at Athens Corinth Excavation series. McPhee and Pemberton present in this volume the ceramic material (plus other artefacts) associated with Drain 1971-1 excavated in the southwestern area of Corinth's Roman forum. The material attested in this deposit has been dated to the latter part of the 4th century BC and is expertly presented by the authors. Corinth VII.6, therefore, further enhances our understanding of ceramic developments at Corinth during the late Classical/early Hellenistic period, a timeframe of great geo-political change, not necessarily reflected as McPhee & Pemberton assert in the use of ceramic utensils by Corinth's inhabitants.

Corinth VII.6 is composed of 3 chapters, eleven pottery catalogues, 8 appendices, figures and plates. Chapter 1 provides a general introduction, discussing the nature and specific context of Drain 1971-1 and providing the argument for its dating. Chapter 2 focusses on the various pottery fabrics and decoration attested. Chapter 3 serves as an introduction to the eleven pottery catalogues, the real meat of the book. The eleven catalogues present in turn the various functional categories of ceramic vessels attested, from shapes used for transport and storage to vessels used for the service and consumption of food. Miscellaneous shapes and earlier and later pottery attested in Drain 1971-1 are also discussed. The volume closes with a series of appendices incorporating, for example, reports on attested coins and neutron activation analysis. As is usual with publications of this nature, the book is lavishly illustrated with line drawings and photographs of the ceramics in question.

One of the most interesting chapters of this volume, especially for the more general reader, is chapter 1, general introduction. It is in this chapter that the authors introduce the archaeological context focussed on in this work, drain 1971-1. They

very importantly point out that all the pottery excavated was kept, weighed and counted, making quantification and statistical analysis a realistic prospect. Throughout this chapter important observations are made that illuminate the nature of ceramic production and consumption at Corinth during the latter part of the 4th century BC. We learn, for example, that relatively few tableware imports are identified amongst the ceramic material of drain 1971-1. McPhee & Pemberton also convincingly show that the material attested in the drain was deposited at one particular moment in time and most likely came in majority from a building in the immediate vicinity. They argue that the ceramic material reflects communal dining and activities associated with the symposium, potentially in a cultic context.

The next section of chapter 1 addresses specifically the deposit date. It is argued by the authors that the material was deposited between 325-300 BC, the mostly likely date being around 310 BC. In the discussion of the chronological significance of the attested ceramics they convincingly show that most pottery predates the 3rd century BC, the latest version of certain shapes chronologically falling within the 4th quarter of the 4th century BC. However, this brings me neatly to what according to the reviewer is one of the difficulties of the book. The chronology discussed in chapter 1 focusses exclusively on the date of deposition of the ceramic material in question, which is both clear and convincing. However, in order to get a better sense of the dating of the pottery itself, the reader needs to proactively trail through the various pottery categories. With regard to the Attic skyphos, for example, it can be appreciated, from the discussion in the catalogue section dealing with vessels for the consumption of liquids, that in drain 1971-1 an Attic skyphos with a parallel at Athens dated 350-340 BC is attested. Other skyphoi have parallels dated to 330-320 BC and a small skyphos is comparable to an Athenian example dated to 325-300 BC. The echinus bowl can serve as another example: the attested representatives of this shape are amongst the drain material dated to 340-300 BC. This range in dating, clearly late 4th century as demonstrated throughout the book, begs the question, however, as to why the authors label the ceramic material attested as solely late Classical. Although the character and nature of the pottery is indeed very much late Classical, in terms of their period of use, it appears that there is significant overlap with the early years of the Hellenistic period. It is important, according to the reviewer, to recognise this, as it clearly illustrates the continuity evident (and perhaps to be expected) in the early years of the Greek world after Alexander.

McPhee & Pemberton do indeed illustrate this when they discuss the impact of Macedonian domination on the Corinthian ceramic corpus, for which there is very little evidence. The point can be made more explicit, however: we are dealing here with a ceramic corpus late Classical in nature and character, but chronologically straddling the late Classical/earliest years of the Hellenistic period.

As indicated earlier, the real meat of this volume is in its series of pottery catalogues. A helpful introduction (Chapter 3) sets out how the ceramic material is organised. The decision to organize the pottery by function is a sensible one, enabling a clearer overview of how the catalogued vessels were most likely used and were related, in terms of use, to other shapes. Interestingly the authors mention here that, with a few exceptions, no dates are assigned to individual shapes. They opted to focus on the discussion of the deposit as a whole, which they argue contains pottery mostly belonging to the second half of the 4th century BC. This is, indeed, a valid approach, but as indicated earlier raises the question as to why the material in question is labelled as late Classical and its occurrence, potentially, during the earliest years of the Hellenistic period not explicitly highlighted.

The catalogues themselves expertly discuss the various shapes in question, focussing specifically on the shape development visible within the drain material and where relevant its chronological associations. The series of catalogues appears primarily intended for the specialist reader, although the more general reader can take much away from the brief summarizing paragraphs tucked away in the individual shape discussions. With regard to the saucer, for example, we learn that its introduction, simultaneous to that of the echinus bowl, signifies a change in dining habits. Sadly, it is left up to the reader to find such attempts at wider interpretation of the ceramic material presented amongst the various shape discussions. There is no one chapter/section devoted to contextualizing the pottery presented. It would have been helpful to have included a more detailed discussion as to how this deposit relates to contexts of similar date elsewhere and how it fits into the wider narrative of Corinthian pottery production and consumption during the late Classical/early Hellenistic period (although in their defence, the authors highlight the lack of comparable deposits at Corinth for the late Classical/early Hellenistic period).

In sum, there is a tremendous amount of information and detail encapsulated in this volume. The long list of individual pottery catalogues and appendices

incorporated in this work are exemplary. Corinth VII.6 indeed expertly succeeds in presenting and discussing in detail the ceramic material of an archaeological context deposited in the latter part of the 4th century BC. The work is a treasure trove for ceramicists working in the field and significantly advances our understanding not only of the shapes represented in the catalogue but more importantly the nature and character of a fairly homogenous assemblage datable within the second half of the fourth century BC. Where the book is somewhat lacking, is in its accessibility to the more general reader. No overview section detailing the nature and character of the material and its implications for eating and drinking at late Classical/early Hellenistic Corinth is apparent. Instead, this information is buried within the various pottery catalogues and therefore, more difficult to access by a non-specialist audience.

Overall, however, the positives significantly outweigh the negatives. *Late Classical Pottery from Ancient Corinth, Drain 1971-1 in the Forum Southwest* is a vital contribution to the field of Classical and Hellenistic ceramics, providing important new information on the nature and character of late Classical/early Hellenistic pottery production and consumption at ancient Corinth. It reinforces once again the apparent disconnect between geo-political changes and ceramic production and consumption by showing us how an assemblage deposited around 310 BC is still decidedly late Classical in nature and character.

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Carol L. Lawton. *The Athenian Agora XXXVIII: Votive Reliefs*. pp. 248, with 12 col. ills, 3 col. and b/w plans, 60 plates. ISBN: 978-0-87661-238-5, hardcover £130.

This beautiful volume is more than up to the high standard of Agora sculpture publications, first set by Evelyn Harrison's study of Roman portraits (*Agora* v.1, 1953), which appeared some 66 years ago. This, the latest volume to appear in the Agora series, is the fourth devoted to sculpture, following Harrison's on Archaic and Archaistic Sculpture (v.11, 1965)