

ceramics for construction of their chronological frameworks need to be mindful that the 'periodicity that emerges from the ceramic record may not coincide with that of the historical one.' Wise words indeed!

Part II of the book, beginning with chapter 4, is devoted to the shape studies. Rotroff rigorously examines each shape identified in the material under consideration. She discusses its chronology and makes observations about the possible function of the vessels in question. Each shape entry follows a similar format and provides at a glance key information like dating and comparanda elsewhere. What is very helpful also is that each shape is illustrated by a representative line drawing. One, therefore, does not have to go back and forth to the pottery drawings at the end of the book to get a sense of what a particular shape looked like. Bar charts outlining the frequency of occurrence of the various shapes are also a helpful addition to this chapter.

It cannot be emphasised enough what a visually pleasing book this is. The illustrations, tables and bar charts really enhance the contents of the book and its accessibility to the reader. The shape studies, for example, are followed by a graphic and visual summary of the vessels discussed and their chronological range, very helpful indeed for specialists working in the field and something which more publications of ceramics should consider if practicable.

In sum, Rotroff's *Hellenistic Pottery, the Plain Wares* is another excellent publication from one of the greats in the field. The book not only focusses on presentation of the ceramic material but also presents a significant amount of contextualisation and discussion. Like its predecessor *Agora XXIX* and despite the primarily local/regional character of the Athenian material, the book is surely already handbook for pottery specialists working on Hellenistic Greece and beyond.

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H. Reinder Reinders et al. *The City of New Halos and its Southeast Gate*. pp. 205, with col. ills. 2014. Groningen: Barkhuis (Groningen Archaeological Studies Vol. 27). ISBN 978-9-49143-168-5, hardcover €70.

The existence of openings in the city wall determines the very essence of the city: gates are both the weakest and the strongest spots of a town, and they form the connection with the outside world, affecting the character of the inner space. In this volume, the description itself of the city of New Halos, the examination of its urban layout and its surroundings, moves towards, and at the same time culminates in, the detailed description of one of its gates, the Southeast Gate, systematically excavated during the period 1995–2006.

Gates, as H. R. Reinders, the main author of this volume, correctly states (p.12), are not only part of the circuit wall and the defence system, but they also give access to the city and relate to the circulation lines within the built-up area. It is therefore an interesting idea to describe the city, while keeping the walls and its gates as a common thread. Following this thread, we can trace the biography of the city itself, explicated through its archaeological remains rather than explicitly narrated.

New Halos is located 'in a narrow strip of level ground between the foot of the Othris mountains and a salt marsh along the shore of the Pagasitic Gulf', straddling the passage between the Almiros and Sourpi plains (p.15). The town was protected by natural barriers on three sides and it was founded around 300BC as a new foundation of the Classical city of Halos, located in the backswamp located northeast of New Halos, on an old beach ridge near the present shoreline (p.14, fig.1.2), at the site of Plataniotiki Magoula (recent excavations on the site are being carried out by the University of Amsterdam and the local Ephorate – Stissi et al. 2015 and 2018). As described by the author, the walled town of New Halos comprised a lower town in a plain and an upper town between two walls running uphill, with a battery at the apex (p.42). The city was abandoned around 265 BC, due to an earthquake. New Halos belongs therefore to the new foundations of the Hellenistic period which can be found over the whole Greek area, along with the structured expansion of existing cities.

The long term landscape research and archaeological surface survey carried out by Dutch research teams in collaboration with the local

ephorate offers the ideal framework for the analysis of the city in its landscape settings, and would allow for a meaningful reconstruction of the settlement history of the *chora* centered on Classical Halos first, and then New Halos, gravitating around the Sourpi and Almiros plains (Efsthathiou et al. 1991; Stissi et al. 2015). In this respect, a map with the surveyed areas would have contributed to the clarity of the survey results involved in the analysis.

The settlement history of the area, marked by the shifting of the main nucleated settlement, can be followed in the first chapters of the volume and can be summarised as such: 1) up to 346 BC: the main nucleated settlement of the area is Classical Halos, a small town of ca. 11ha, with about 2000 inhabitants, located at the site of Plataniotiki Magoula. The town was taken by Parmenios in 346 BC. 2) from 346 up to 302 BC ca.: in this *interim* period the former citizens of Halos presumably lived in the countryside in hamlets and small villages. A small group possibly continued to live among the ruins of the old city (p.15) and in the vicinity of the destroyed town (p.21). The author mentions the fortified hill of Kastraki as a possible place where the inhabitants of the destroyed Halos would have settled, but this sounds less probable as the archaeological data seem to point to a cult place at Kastraki site or rather a large rural site (p.21). Once again, the nature of the Kastraki hill finds would have been clear if the survey grid had been plotted and some periods maps had been displayed. 3) from 302 BC ca. up to 265 BC: less than 50 years later, around 300 BC, the city of New Halos was founded (p.15). New Halos was destroyed by an earthquake around 265 BC (the chronology is based on the coin finds from the excavated houses). 4) from 265 up to 220 BC or later: in the late Hellenistic period the South East Gate of the city wall was turned into a large farmstead and other structures were erected against the city wall, as the excavations carried out by Reinders and his team have demonstrated. 5) Afterwards, the large fortified site at Vrinena (dated to the Hellenistic-Roman period – p.23-25) could have served as the main centre of habitation in the ER period, as the ceramic survey carried out at the site in 2012 seems to attest, but inhabitants of the area could have even returned to the site of Classical Halos, where Late Hellenistic layers have been excavated (p.23).

The volume is structured in seven chapters, neatly summarized one by one in the seven extensive chapter abstracts included in the book (pp.131-139). To the main subjects of the work, the city and the Southeast Gate, are devoted chapters 3 to 7 (with only chapter 3 devoted to the city itself and its inner layout), while the first ones (chapter 1 to 2)

constitute an introduction to the history and the landscape of New Halos.

Chapter 1 ‘presents the available evidence about the historical development of Halos in the Classical and Hellenistic periods and the question of who founded and designed the city’, the latter referring to New Halos. Historical sources and archaeological evidence are examined, in this chapter and throughout the book, in order to discern the matter concerning the founder of the city. The attribution of the foundation of New Halos to Demetrios Poliorketes, proposed by the author of the volume, is based on a coin hoard found during the excavation of the Southeast Gate in 1995, on adjusted dies, and on the character of the city’s architecture defined as ‘*imponierarchitektur*’ (imposing architecture), which can be linked to Demetrios’ gigantomania (p.18). It can be linked to the missing mention of the city in Diodoros Sikoulos’ account of Demetrios’ campaign (before 302 BC) counting against the other potential founder Kassandros, Demetrios’ rival. The author seems particularly keen to prove Demetrios Poliorketes as the founder of the city in 302 B.C. by *synoikismos* (p.18), before his departure from Thessaly to Asia Minor, although others would prefer Kassandros as New Halos’ founder (Stefanidou-Tiveriou 1998) and would move the foundation date to the year 310 BC. There is a lack of discussion, even if only summarized since the focus is on the city itself, on the regional context of Phthiotis, but the author has dealt with it in detail in his other works and here he inserts only a few notes.

Chapter 2 ‘presents an overview of the geology and geomorphology of the area, followed by a description and analysis of the layout of the city’, in the authors’ words. The results of the geomorphological work carried out within the wider archaeological project on the area are well summarised here. On the other hand, the inner city layout is not systematically analysed in the chapter, despite the neat pictures included in it, nor it is in the volume, but can be inferred reading through the pages of the 1st and the 2nd chapter, as well as of the 3rd (gates and circulation lines). Interest is devoted here to the fortification and its setting over the morphology of the terrain. The city has a walled lower town, joined to a walled upper town culminating in a small keep. The city wall was fortified with 120 towers. Several gates gave access to the different parts of the city. The lower town was a residential space, which housed ca. 9000 inhabitants; it had a regular plan, structured in unusually elongated housing blocks, defined by Avenues (*plataiai*) and Streets (*stenopoi*). The upper town, in contrast, was occupied by public

buildings. According to the author, the new city was designed and built by Demetrios Poliorketes' military engineers and craftsmen with the help (and this would be a very interesting information in terms of settlement shifting within a *chora*) of the former inhabitants of Classical Halos who still lived in the former city territory.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the gates of the city circuit and the communication lines within the city and with the outside world. The description of the gates had already led the author (since the 90s) to reason about the access points from the outside and the internal circulation within the city. This interest explains the early need of a systematic excavation of the Southeast Gate, which was started already in 1995. A larger number of comparisons with Greek cities newly founded or re-planned in the Hellenistic period would have been appreciated here, even in a summarized version of previous work of the author and his team on the subject. A wider reference to the comparative framework including other Greek cities newly founded, re-planned or enlarged in the Hellenistic period would have enriched the entire work, especially considering the fact that the author and his team had dealt with the subject in previous works on the city of New Halos.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of the excavation campaigns on the Southeast Gate, eight in total, from 1995 up to 2006. Damage to the archaeological deposits, before and after the excavation, are thoroughly examined. The excavation method is discussed in detail, even in its failure or difficulties. A very interesting paragraph (4.4) concerns the site-formation processes, and analyses exhaustively the history of the site of the Southeast Gate after the end of its use as a gate, read through the excavated archaeological layers. After the abandonment of the city, the former surface in the Gate area was levelled and the gatehouse was converted into a farmstead; a series of buildings or workshops were built around the former gatehouse, which served for the processing and storage of agricultural produce. Later the farmstead was destroyed by a fire, according to the excavator who produces archaeological evidence for it.

Chapter 5, jointly written by Chris Dickenson, Lana Radloff and H. Reinder Reinders is a detailed description and analysis of the layout of the Southeast Gate and the building techniques employed. Graphic and photographic documentation is wide and highly informative, and the content is very well organized. The work on the individual limestone blocks of the wall sections and on the transportation techniques employed is very valuable. Of much

interest is the reasoning on the planning schedule of the new city, for which the authors believe that the city wall was built earlier than the houses, since the transportation of the building material for the supposed 1400 houses through the narrow gates is hardly feasible.

Chapter 6, devoted to the dating evidence for the Southeast Gate, is quite interesting and offers insights on the brief history of the city. Coin finds from houses in the lower town and from the gate are examined thoroughly.

Chapter 7 concerns the development of artillery towers and includes comparisons with other urban circuits and city gates in the Greek mainland. I may point out here that the layout of the Gate is very similar to a city gate found and excavated recently in the Thessalian city of Skotoussa (see La Torre et al. 2017 and more recent research still unpublished).

The appendices to the main text, written by several authors, are particularly rich, and complete the book with a neatly structured documentation.

In conclusion, it can be pointed out that in New Halos from a methodological point of view the research on the city layout (although not discussed explicitly by the author unfortunately) is mainly related to the information coming from the excavated areas (1976 saw the first excavation of a series of houses in the lower town – pp.39-43; in 1980 the excavation of the Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone in the upper town – pp.38-39) and to topographical research carried out on the fortification, which is also the main subject of the volume and is treated accurately and extensively. Surface architectural remains, such as the foundations of houses in the built-up area, have been removed or destroyed by farmers, due to the intensive cultivation of the area, and a systematic ceramic survey of the city site is not mentioned. Nevertheless, the volume can and must be included among the monograph studies on Greek cities that more and more use innovative research methods and technologies, involving artifact surface surveys, archaeological, aerial and geophysical prospections, in order to narrate city biographies, with a special eye on their landscape and historical context (see Vermeulen et al. 2012 and many more recent urban survey projects).

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