

POTTERY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

ARRINGTON (N. T.) *Athens at the Margins. Pottery and People in the Early Mediterranean World*. Pp. xiv + 328, figs, ills, maps colour pls. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2021. Cased, £35, US\$45. ISBN: 978-0-691-17520-1.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X22001718

In contrast to recent scholarship's tendency to emphasise the importance of wider and long-term perspectives in the study of ancient societies, particularly in the analysis of the Mediterranean world, A.'s new book is focused on a limited period (c. late eighth to late seventh century BCE) and a single region, Attica, where and when a new style of vase painting, usually known as Protoattic pottery, was produced. The aim of this thought-provoking and ambitious book is, among many others, 'to loosen Protoattic from an Orientalizing paradigm and to recover the importance of the margins and the marginalized' (p. 2), 'to intervene in the ways that we use material culture to approach two important areas of study: the Mediterranean and social history' (p. 2), but also – on a larger scale – 'to change our views of what Greek art looked like and, just as importantly, what it did' (p. 3). To achieve these goals, A. focuses primarily on pottery since it 'provides the most abundant and important body of evidence' (p. 12), especially when there is a lack of textual sources. Although the use of ceramics – and the reference to 'pottery and people' in the title, a long-criticised paradigm – may imply a traditional approach, A. adopts a complex and fresh theoretical framework. A. not only considers current debates and concepts, as evidenced by the presence of many recent buzzwords in archaeological studies (e.g. connectivity, consumption, marginality, networks, object biographies), but also succeeds in proposing new or usually underplayed research paths, such as the contribution of the western/central Mediterranean to the so-called Orientalising phenomenon or the possibility that culture changes in antiquity should not necessarily be ascribed to the elites.

Apart from a preface and acknowledgements, the book consists of seven chapters, a table assembling the published data on burials that are coeval with Protoattic pottery's production, detailed endnotes, a rich bibliography and a well-structured general index of people, places, concepts and terms.

In Chapter 1 A. clarifies what arguments will be addressed in the book, the traditional readings that he expects to challenge, how he intends to do so and what new theses will be offered. Furthermore, he explains his theoretical and terminological assumptions, starting with the concept of margins (p. 5), which – as A. González-Ruibal noted in the introduction to a recent collection of papers ('Subaltern Assemblages. The Archaeology of Marginal Places and Identities', *World Archaeology* 53 [2021], 369–83) – has lately become particularly popular, despite being known and used for quite some time. Finally, A. explains the reasons behind his micro-regional perspective and provides a definition of style, an overview of the historical context and a synopsis of the book.

The three types of margins that A. focuses on – historiographical, geographical and social – are the subject of the following chapters and represent the core of his analysis. Chapter 2 addresses 'the intersecting historiographies of Protoattic and Orientalizing' (p. 28), with the aim to outline the main approaches that have been adopted in the discussion of Protoattic pottery and how they developed and changed over time. A. observes that the current interpretative framework – as it emerges to be crystallised – requires a change of perspective, which he proposes to achieve by placing 'production

and consumption in dialogue' (p. 61). Chapter 3 puts Athens/Attica into the bigger picture through the lens of networks and horizons by examining its relationship with the rest of the Mediterranean. Aiming 'to disorient the east-west paradigm' (p. 64), A.'s analysis of imports, exports and artistic styles is used to emphasise that Attica was at the margins of seventh-century BCE Mediterranean networks, showing little evidence of interaction with the Levant/Egypt (p. 73), but rather varied connections with Sicily and peninsular Italy, which may have been potential alternatives if not primary sources – through objects, people and sites – for the Greek/Attic encounter with Near Eastern-type elements, ideas, techniques and practices (p. 98).

Chapter 4 analyses the interaction between Protoattic pottery and persons during burial practices 'beyond the moment of final deposition and outside of questions exclusively of social status' (p. 129). By drawing on the corpus of tombs listed in table 1, A. illustrates the variability in the funerary record and the absence of consistent ways of displaying status, emphasising the multiple links that can be observed through the human–object interaction between the house and the burial, the living and the dead, the family and the community. At the same time he challenges traditional scholarly narratives, such as the low visibility of seventh-century BCE burials (p. 142) or the association between elite and Protoattic pottery (p. 145), which A. prefers to see – based on the early evidence from the Phaleron cemetery – as the result of a change from below prompted by people of multiple backgrounds living at the margins (p. 148), only adopted by the elites at a later stage.

Chapter 5 explores the development and expression of artistic subjectivity through the style and organisation of production. Although contexts of use and patrons provided some limitations to the creativity of Protoattic artists, the variety of solutions that can be observed in the shape, size and function of the vases as well as in the adoption and adaptation of several decoration techniques and motifs hints at an age of experimentation, which may have been nurtured by 'a high degree of horizontal [artisan] mobility' (p. 166).

Chapter 6 investigates how people engaged with objects 'to participate in group activities and to shape their subjectivity in two ritual contexts: the symposium and the sanctuary' (p. 183), two practices fostering personhood and group membership that have been traditionally associated with elites and Near Eastern cultures. Contra this perspective A. points out that the existence of plain drinking vases implies that wine consumption was not confined to an elite class, suggesting instead a broader definition of this practice, as an activity that could have occurred in a variety of contexts (e.g. houses, sanctuaries and cemeteries) and involved people from diverse social backgrounds. Particularly captivating are A.'s observations on how bowls – through the different and alternatively directed motifs on the two sides of the vase, the high handles and (sometimes) the inscriptions – were instrumental in creating a movement among attendees and in facilitating conversations on and through objects, with myth and storytelling playing a part in the individual/group dynamics at these commensal social gatherings. According to A., these features do not necessarily imply a debt towards Near Eastern cultures, and, even when this connection must be recognised, as for the practice of reclining, other sources of inspiration – Lydia in this case – could be suggested. The part on the sanctuaries is less detailed, although – precisely during the seventh century BCE – they replaced cemeteries as preferential arenas for display, and cult activities were open to a wider group of people.

Chapter 7 provides a useful summary of the main arguments, includes a reference to their applicability beyond seventh-century BCE Attica and ends by returning to the cemetery of Phaleron, where Protoattic pottery was first differentiated, thus giving the book a circular structure.

This unconventional volume – beautifully phrased and engagingly written – is very clear and well structured, with numerous high-quality images helping readers to follow A.’s descriptions and readings of the vases. Overall, this work is an example of how – while addressing a chronologically and geographically limited issue – an original contribution can be made to a plurality of research fields. It is not difficult to predict that many scholars will find it inspiring, although not all of them will be persuaded by the changes of perspective that A. suggests, and some of his interpretations will be challenged. His discussion of how to define elite/non-elite (pp. 143–5), which perhaps comes too late in the book given its importance, is problematic. One may wonder if cultural background may have affected the understanding of who were the non-elite, especially when immigrants are included in this category (p. 148). Not always convincing is A.’s overplaying of the central Mediterranean as a source of inspiration. An example is the bowls with handles crowned by lotus flowers (p. 101), especially when considering H. Matthäus’s seminal account of this group (‘Studies on the interrelations of Cyprus and Italy during the 11th to 9th centuries BC: a Pan-Mediterranean perspective’, in: L. Bonfante et al. [edd.], *Italy and Cyprus in Antiquity* [2001], pp. 153–214). Notwithstanding, this book will certainly find a place on the shelves of most archaeological libraries.

Pompeu Fabra University

ADRIANO ORSINGER
adriano.orsinger@upf.edu

ASPECTS OF FIFTH-CENTURY ATHENIAN ART

NEILS (J.), PALAGIA (O.) (edd.) *From Kallias to Kritias. Art in Athens in the Second Half of the Fifth Century B.C.* Pp. x + 380, colour figs, b/w & colour ill., b/w & colour maps. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Cased, £109, €119.95, US\$137.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-068092-8.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X22001925

What remains to be said about Athens in the fifth century BCE? Plenty, according to this new volume, which brings together eighteen essays that were originally part of a 2019 conference at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens (ASCSA). ‘From Kallias to Kritias’ serves as a bridge to a 2017 symposium at the Acropolis Museum that covered the last quarter of the sixth century and the first half of the fifth century BCE (published as: Palagia and E. Sioumpara [edd.], *From Hippias to Kallias: Greek Art from 527 to 449 B.C.*). This new volume augments the former with essays pertaining to the period when Athenian imperial power reached its apex and then decline, forming a robust and detailed picture of the visual and material culture of Athens from roughly the stable period that followed the Persian Wars to the political and social upheaval brought about by the Peloponnesian War.

The eighteen essays provide exciting and intriguing new perspectives on Athenian art during the second half of the fifth century BCE and confirm that these decades were anything but stagnant. The topics at hand are not limited to art, as the title suggests, and include a multitude of other subjects related to the archaeology, history, architecture and