

Pia Guldager Bilde & Mark L. Lawall (eds.), *Pottery, Peoples and Places. Study and Interpretation of Late Hellenistic Pottery* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2014)

The volume hereby reviewed springs from a conference held at the Sandbjerg Manor in Denmark in late November 2008, dealing with the study of ceramics in the second-century BC Mediterranean and Pontic regions, hosted by the Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Black Sea Study. It comprises seventeen essays, plus a preface, an introduction, an extensive bibliography and a detailed analytical index. The essays, authored by a number of scholars from several different countries, are organised in three fairly broad but to most appropriate sections.

The first one is called "chronologies" and it includes five studies pivoting around the complex technical issue of dating pottery, in this case Hellenistic artefacts, the provenance and typology of which cover the whole eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea region and part of the western Mediterranean. In particular, the essays of this section of the book tackle Rhodian amphora (Badoud, 17-28), the lower city of Pontic Olbia (Lawall, Guldager Bilde, Bjerg, Handberg and Højte, 29-45), Corinth during the interim period between Roman general Mummius' destruction of the city in 146 BC and its re-foundation as a Roman colony in 44 BC (James, 47-63) as well as in previous times back to circa 330 BC (Sanders, Miura and Kvapil, 65-81), and first-century BC deposits in Athens and Delos associated with Sulla's campaigns in Greece (Rotroff, 83-109).

The second one is called "typology" and it is by far the bulkiest of the three. It includes nine studies addressing the current state of research in the varieties and distribution of, chiefly, mould-made bowls from Hellenistic times. In particular, the essays of this section of the book discuss the Hellenistic production and trade of pottery based in, or retrieved at the deposits of, Ephesos (Rogl, 113-39), Priene (Fenn, 141-56), Knidos (Kögler, 157-73), Pontic Olbia (Lomtadze & Žuralev, 175-97 & Krapivinia, 287-94), Pontic Mesambria i.e. today's UNESCO-protected Nesebar (Bozkova, 199-214 & Petrova, 215-31), the north-western Black Sea region at large (Lungu & Dupont, 233-54), and Pantikapaion (Žuralev & Žuraleva, 255-86).

The third one is called "ceramics and culture" and comprises three essays, the last one being the only contribution to the book in a language that is not English i.e. French. These concluding essays focus upon broader historical and cultural considerations that can unfold

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from the study of ancient pottery. In particular, the first essay (Lund, 297-305) investigates whether it is true that the circulation of pottery in the eastern-Mediterranean region during Hellenistic times reflects the political divisions between the territories under Ptolemaic and Seleukid control, and it draws from this investigation more general observations on the many factors affecting such a distribution that go well beyond sheer borders between kingdoms and empires. The second essay (Berlin, Herbert & Stone, 307-21) reconstructs, *via* the study of local deposits of tableware and relevant written sources, the living and social conditions in the settlement of Kadesh, in the southern Levant, during Hellenistic times. The third essay (Morel, 323-35) explores the analogies between the globalisation of ancient times, brought about under the familiar categories of “Hellenisation” and “Romanisation”, and today’s understanding of this intrinsically vague notion, which underplays both the way in which local realities can adapt to or resist the pressure coming from the outside and the way in which central standards and centrally located productions can emigrate to developing regions and come back into the hollowed centre as foreign imports; as the editors remark in the introduction, it is a study in “glocalisation” (14).

The volume edited by Guldager Bilde and Lawall is aimed at specialists in Hellenistic archaeology and particularly those who excavate and investigate in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea region. Specialists in Hellenistic studies and archaeologists at large may find this book of some interest too. Interesting insights in matters of method and historical recurrence can be found in this volume, but it is overoptimistic to expect other members of the academic community to purchase this volume because of them. Still, this is no drawback: the volume reviewed hereby is a token of specialist research for a specialist audience. Any field of serious scholarly and scientific research requires this kind of literature.

It must be noted, finally, that this volume is the last one edited by [Pia Guldager Bilde](#), who has been the main force behind the activities of the Danish National Research Foundation Centre for Black Sea Study in the 2000s and the extensive, high-level and beautiful book series in Black Sea studies published by Aarhus University Press since 2003 (*Nordicum-Mediterraneum* has carried reviews of six of the sixteen volumes published so far). Sadly, Pia Guldager Bilde passed away in 2013 and we wish to commend her as a splendid example of Nordic scholarship in the history and culture of the Mediterranean world. It is thanks to committed individuals like her that the ancient-born yet fragile thread of learning endures in its depth, breadth and refinement, in the face of destructive, short-term and single-minded barbarism, whether this comes in the ancient form of head-chopping savages marauding over

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foreign soil or in the modern form of budget-axing public managers fulfilling the desiderata of transnational financial raiders.

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