

Frauke Heinrich, **Das Epinetron. Aspekte der weiblichen Lebenswelt im Spiegel eines Arbeitsgeräts.** Internationale Archäologie, volume 93. Publisher Leidorf, Rahden 2006. 204 pages, several illustrations.

›Das Epinetron‹ is an impressively thorough and well-illustrated study which is both rich in detail and innovative in its approach to its topic. Frauke Heinrich sets out to catalogue and analyse all known examples of the epinetron, a fascinating shape in antique pottery which, because of its connection with wool-working, has attracted considerable attention as a source of evidence for women's lives in archaic and classical Greece. The author not only documents and categorises the extant epinetra of Attic, Rhodian and other Greek production, but also subjects them to an exhaustive archaeological and iconographic analysis, engaging with recent debates about the use of pottery in its archaeological context, and the modalities of interpretation. This allows her to

draw strong and novel conclusions about the meaning and purpose of these objects.

After a survey of previous publications the study sets out a convincing argument to establish that painted epinetra were not objects of everyday use, as they are often interpreted to be. Undecorated pottery epinetra, or possible leather or textile examples, were used in practical wool-work, and the painted epinetra must thus have a different purpose. Heinrich then examines first Attic and then Rhodian epinetra systematically, beginning with an analysis of form and style; while this section is thoughtful, it is not clear that the discussion of workshop attributions adds very much to the survey. The second chapter, however, presents evidence about the find contexts of epinetra, and this has much more to offer; the author explores in detail the context of finds from sanctuaries in Attica, graves and domestic contexts. She concludes that painted epinetra, even when they appear in houses, should be interpreted as votive offerings which played a symbolic role in female rites of passage in Attica. They were rarely exported and are thus closely linked to Athenian ideologies of the feminine.

By far the longest section of the book follows: an analysis of the iconography of black- and red-figure epinetra. Heinrich establishes first that the imagery of Athenian vase-painting represents an idealised and imaginary world, not a facsimile of everyday life, and then works from the structuralist principle that the images chosen to decorate the pots represent a single system of thought, at the heart of which she identifies the figure of the parthenos. The scenes most commonly found on epinetra, depicting wool-working, preparations for marriage and dance, are easily encompassed in this schema, while others, such as scenes of interaction between men and women, are read as ›ideal‹ images, dramatising courtship and the attraction of the parthenos. The female busts which appear on the closed ends of epinetra are likewise identified as images of the parthenos herself. While the author is undoubtedly right in her nuanced interpretation of the imagery, rejecting the tendency to project female roles from literary sources onto the scenes, she does, by attempting to encompass all scenes on epinetra within a single schema, create a group of problematic ›other scenes‹ depicting male life or myth. Images of symposia and chariot-racing can to some extent be brought within the theory as aspirational visions of aristocratic lifestyles, but the Dionysiac scenes and other images of gods or heroes are less amenable to explanation. A focus on women as users of pottery is helpful, but the nature of iconography is inevitably to be polysemic, rather than to offer a single reading. The iconographic study concludes with a restatement of the ideological link between the parthenos and wool-work.

A similar treatment is given to the Rhodian epinetra, the only significant non-Athenian production of the shape. Heinrich documents the development of their decoration from imitation of Attic originals to their own distinctive forms, such as the multiple busts of mothers and children on the closed ends, relating to *kouroutrophos*

cults. Finally there is a short note on the few epinetra from other parts of Greece, which are mostly imitations of the Athenian type, providing a salutary reminder of the very localised nature of the form which is often absent from studies which make use of vase iconography.

With this study Heinrich has gathered a very valuable catalogue, and offers a rich analysis with conclusions which will need to be taken into account in future studies of female life in Greece.

St. Andrews

Sian Lewis