

Virginia R. Anderson-Stojanović, *Stobi 1. Results of the Joint American-Yugoslav Archaeological Investigations, 1970–1981. The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1992. XXXV, 218 Seiten, 35 Abbildungen, 191 Tafeln.

The Hellenistic and Roman city of Stobi, on the Vardar river in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, has been the focus of a decade-long, international and interdisciplinary archaeological project. Directed by Professor James Wiseman of Boston University, the project sought to investigate a variety of aspects of the site, ranging from the traditional concerns of chronological development in architecture, city planning, the arts and other material culture, to burial customs, demography, and the ecology of the region. Although many preliminary reports on this work have appeared, both in periodicals and in the series "Studies in the Antiquities of Stobi", the book under review is the first in a projected multi-volume final presentation of the results of the excavations.

Like all excavations on Classical sites, this one produced what can only be described as a mountain of pottery. On most Classical excavations, the realities of limited storage space have forced archaeologists – or have given them the excuse – to discard a large percentage of the ceramics and to retain only 'diagnostic' sherds – rims, perhaps bases and handles, and decorated body sherds. The rest may or may not be counted or weighed before discard; but it is usually not saved beyond the end of each excavation season. This weeding process is rarely carried out by the ceramic specialist who will ultimately be responsible for the publication of the material, with the result that, by the time that scholar begins the analysis of the material, the data have been drastically reduced. The excavators of Stobi, however, starting in the second year of their project, retained *all* the ceramics, with an eye to eventual quantitative studies. Furthermore, the ceramic specialist responsible for the publication of the material was a part of the excavation team from the beginning. The result is this publication, one of the most comprehensive and solidly founded works on Hellenistic and Roman ceramics to come out of an archaeological excavation.

Stobi was inhabited for close to 900 years, from the late 4th century BCE to the 6th century CE. The city was located at an ancient crossroad – on the Vardar (the ancient Axios), whose valley provides a natural route south to the Aegean and north to Europe, and on a road leading eastward from Heraclea Lyncestis,

on the Via Egnatia, to Serdica, in what is today Bulgaria – and the site was thus open to imports from all points of the compass. Consequently the ceramic assemblage is exceptionally rich and varied and offers considerable challenges in terms of the identification and organization of the material.

Two brief chapters introduce the reader to the site and to the goals and methods of pottery analysis employed, and give an overview of local fabrics and the evidence for ceramic production at Stobi. The methodology followed, and particularly the system of quantification, based on numbers of rims, handles, and bases (RHB) which serve to approximate the number of vessels present, is described briefly; a more extensive discussion of the nuts and bolts of the work may be found in ANDERSON-STOJANOVIĆ's earlier article, "Computer-Assisted Analysis of Pottery at Stobi, Yugoslavia". *Journal Field Arch.* 9, 1982, 335–348. Although it was clearly impossible for the author to study every piece of pottery from the site, she was able to base her work on an astutely chosen sample of rich deposits and to examine, through both traditional means and computer-aided statistical analysis, the complete ceramic content of each deposit – some 58,000 sherds, including over 9000 rims, handles, and bases. A catalogue drawn from those contexts has been augmented by the addition of previously inventoried examples from other deposits. Particularly useful among this material is the pottery from the graves, which furnish most of the complete vessels.

The results of this work appear in Chapter 3, the presentation of the wares and forms, illustrated by a catalogue of 1292 objects. The chapter falls into two sections. The second of these is devoted to the more common slipped, plain, and cooking wares that dominated local production; the first section includes everything else – mostly imported wares, but some distinctive local fabrics as well. For wares that have been previously identified and described, Anderson-Stojanović has used the existing typologies and form numbers; new typologies have been devised for local products. The most important of the latter to be treated in the first section is the Macedonian Gray Ware that occurs in heavy concentrations in deposits of the later 4th through the mid-6th century CE, and which Anderson-Stojanović therefore posits was made at the site. Other probably local or regional wares presented in this section are unguentaria (treated briefly; a fuller discussion of Stobi unguentaria has already been published elsewhere: V. R. ANDERSON-STOJANOVIĆ, *The Chronology and Function of Ceramic Unguentaria*. *Am. Journal Arch.* 91, 1987, 105–122) and moldmade bowls. This organization, which groups some local wares among the imports, runs the risk of clouding the relationship between local and imported materials; but that relationship is amply discussed and graphically illustrated through many charts and tables in the fine concluding chapter (5).

The imports are many and varied; Campana and thin-walled wares of Italy, the various sigillata and red slip wares of east and west, lead-glazed wares, and transport amphoras, among others. Concise introductions to each ware provide up-to-date summaries of research and scholarship; this will be helpful to those who are less conversant with the field and particularly useful for reference at the sherd table, where excavators are often confronted with new and unfamiliar material. Although many of the Stobi imports perforce remain unidentified, careful description and good illustration will make further identifications possible in the future, when good parallels come to light.

Most of the pottery found by the Stobi excavators is of local manufacture. Potters have left evidence of their activities in the form of stamps, molds, and kiln furniture (presented in a separate catalogue in Chapter 2) and traces of a workshop (described in Appendix 1). The local ceramics of the region have never before been systematically studied, and consequently the classification presented here is truly groundbreaking work. Anderson-Stojanović has divided the material into two ware categories (color-slipped and plain wares, and cooking wares) and, within those, into four broad chronological blocks: Hellenistic (2nd and 1st centuries BCE); Early Roman (1st century CE); Middle Roman (2nd to mid-4th centuries CE); and Late Roman (mid-4th to 6th centuries CE). The evidence is best for the Middle and Late Roman periods, scantiest for the Early Roman period. Within each category, the author describes a series of forms, which she has numbered separately within each category; vessels that do not conform to any of the forms are described in a catch-all "other" section within each category. This is a logical system but does lead to some confusion in the proliferation of forms with the same number, and it is important to remember that the chronological limit and the ware category must be quoted as well as the form number: e.g. Hellenistic color-slipped and plain ware Form 1 as opposed to Middle Roman color-slipped and plain ware Form 1. Another disadvantage is that the same forms have different numbers in different chronological periods. So, for example, among the color-slipped wares, Early Roman Form 15 is the same as Middle Roman Form 32, and one loses a sense of the continuity of some of these shapes. But these are minor inconveniences that do

not substantially detract from the book's achievement. Many of the forms are illustrated by several examples, which show considerable variation within the form; a discussion of the criteria used in drawing the boundaries between forms would have been welcome, but the resultant classification is sensible and easy to follow. The relative frequency of the most common forms is illustrated by bar graphs and pie charts.

Study of a series of eleven "core deposits" has enabled Anderson-Stojanović to suggest firm chronological limits for each of the forms. At first sight the contextual evidence from the site seems unpromising: no long, stratified series of the sort that demonstrate the evolution of an assemblage; no wells or cisterns preserving closed deposits of complete pots. But other deposits, although not sealed in the sense that a grave or well deposit may be sealed, provide a large body of material that can be dated by reference to the coins and, more importantly, to the imported pottery that they contained. Chapter 4 gives a description of each of the core deposits, with a complete listing of its contents, as well as lists of all other lots used in the study, and their dates. Since each catalogue entry records the lot in which the vessel was found, it is very easy, through these lists, to find the date of the context of any catalogued object.

While the avowed aim of the book is the establishment of a ceramic typology and chronology for the site, a final chapter of summary and conclusions goes beyond this goal, making clear the contribution of the ceramics to an understanding of the historical development of the city. The literary record preserves little information about the site (although much can be inferred from accounts of the general region), and the insights provided by the archaeological record are thus all the more precious. The changing pattern of imports that can be traced through Anderson-Stojanović's statistical studies throws light on Stobi's relationship to the wider world, while the evolution of the local ceramic industry reflects the city's own economic vicissitudes. To cite one example, historical studies have dated significant Roman influence in the area no earlier than the Augustan period; but substantial amounts of Italian imports in the first half of the 1st century BCE bear witness to a Romanizing effect considerably earlier than texts and events have suggested.

The volume ends with a presentation of the results of thin-section analysis of twenty samples of purportedly local pottery which were studied and compared to local clays, sand, and sandstone (Appendix 2, by Georgeana Little). Clearly there is more work to be done here, and many more samples are needed before any firm conclusions can be drawn. The study did, however, support the thesis of local production for most of the pottery. It also detected the presence of a distinctive but as yet unidentified inclusion, "rose" mica, that might, with further study, serve as a hint to provenience for some Macedonian wares.

The volume is illustrated by 147 plates of excellent drawings; the 39 plates of photographs, however, are of very uneven quality. Sometimes this is merely distracting and ugly, as when scales and sherds cast heavy shadows, or rims are not horizontal, or backgrounds are dark and grainy; but sometimes one cannot see the details that should be illustrated. The scale devices, which are not uniform, also detract from the appearance of the plates. Furthermore, the scales at which the photographs have been printed within each plate vary widely, making the material less readily comprehensible to the reader. It comes as a surprise that an excavation that embraced a progressive, multidisciplinary approach did not include on its team a photographer capable of producing clear and attractive images in a consistent format; it is also a great disservice to the scholar who spent so many years preparing this otherwise exemplary publication. Most of the objects in the catalogue have been illustrated, either in drawings or photographs, sometimes in both. Forty objects, however, receive no illustration; it is hard to see the point of this small economy, since neither description nor comparanda can present these pieces adequately and thus they add little to the catalogue.

This work has been a long time in the making. An enormous amount of material has been studied in a painstaking, rigorous, and exhaustive program of research. The results have been presented concisely and seamlessly, without reference to the years of tedious counting, coding, and preliminary analysis that form their foundation. Without traveling that long road, however, Anderson-Stojanović could not have produced this solid and authoritative book. Excavators and students of ceramics will be grateful for her patience and endurance as well as for her judgment and scholarship; they have generated a lasting contribution to the field of Classical Archaeology.