

Stefan Brenne, **Die Ostraka vom Kerameikos**. Kerameikos. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen, volume XX. Publisher Dr. Ludwig Reichert, Wiesbaden 2018. 1396 pages with 10071 figures in black and white, 397 plates.

Scholars have waited half a century for this publication, and it is the fruit of more than two decades of labour for Stefan Brenne himself; what we have here fulfils even the most exalted expectations. As Brenne explains in the preface, ostraka from the Kerameikos were first published in 1915 by Alfred Brückner, with a subsequent larger group found in 1932 and published by Werner Peek in 1941. But it was in the nineteen-sixties that a massive group of 8500 ostraka, stemming from a single occasion on which Megacles, son of Hippokrates, was ostracized, were excavated. Although further ostraka have been found in more recent excavations, it is the ostraka from the sixties that form the core of this publication of all 9367 of the Kerameikos ostraka.

This book sits beside Mabel L. Lang's publication in 1990 of the 1337 ostraka from the Agora (Ostraka. The Athenian Agora XXV [Princeton 1990]); ostraka found more recently in the Agora are published in James P. Sickinger's 'New Ostraka from the Athenian Agora' (Hesperia 86, 2017, 443–598), which appeared too recently to be referred to by Brenne. Comparison immediately reveals how much more thorough Brenne has been than Lang. The fundamental organization is the same in both volumes: discussion of the material, writing and language of the ostraka precedes a discussion of groups of ostraka and then of the individual ostraka, ordered by alphabetical order of those ostracized. However, Brenne not only adds to Lang a careful discussion of the archaeological contexts in which the ostraka were found, but is much more detailed in every category. So, where Lang gives two paragraphs on 'Material' and remarks that 'The ostraka found in the Agora include every possible

sort of sherd, from the coarsest kind of pithos to the finest black-figured vase«, Brenne spends forty-one pages detailing every shape of fine and coarse pot, and indeed roof-tile, from which ostraka come. Similarly, issues of writing and language take up ten pages in Lang, thirty-four here, and this despite the fact that Brenne, in contrast to both Lang and Sickinger, has no interest in the development of letter forms.

These crude comparisons of length are, however, somewhat misleading. Brenne's is a very purist publication, seeking in general to provide information, not to interpret it. So, whereas Lang gives us the relative proportions of single and double lambda, pi and rho, in the relevant names, Brenne simply lists all the cases of single lambda, pi, rho and tau and gives an overall proportion. Lang draws some chronological conclusions from the different patterns; Brenne draws no conclusions. The reluctance to draw positive conclusions means that when Brenne is drawn to remark on a pattern he does so in negative terms. Compare, for instance, Lang's 'Some voters seem to have chosen their sherds with considerable concern for appearance, as the many kylix bases and rim fragments testify' (Lang op. cit. 8) with Brenne's 'bilden die wenigen gut handhab- und beschreibbaren Gefäßteile wie Ränder, Henkel oder profilierte Füße keine Ausnahme' (p. 45).

This reticence notwithstanding, the importance of this linguistic evidence is hard to over-emphasise. These ostraka, for all their restricted content, offer us the widest range of individual Athenians writing that we have access to in any context. We have evidence here for the extent, and limits, of orthographic variation among ordinary Athenians, and so important evidence for the extent, and limits, of education. This material offers a reference collection against which we can compare, for instance, the writing practices of the painters of Athenian pottery. It also provides us with further evidence for some issues that have been much discussed with relation to inscriptions on stone, notably the introduction of the Ionic alphabet. On ostraka, omega is quite widely used already in the four-hundred seventies, eta is little used until the forties; xi (as opposed to $\chi\sigma$) appears for xi only once, and on an ostrakon cast against Phaiax in the last ostracism of all. The systematic presentation of the evidence here should significantly advance our understanding of Athenian linguistic use and the acquisition of writing skills at Athens.

What of the material evidence? Important here is surely the fact that the material used was to hand. That is, the range of pottery used gives a good picture of the range of pottery that was used in households. Brenne does indeed classify a range of shapes and fabrics as 'household ware', and the number and range of sherds from lekanai stands out, but the very many shapes of fine pottery is also to be noted – every shape of fine pottery barring only very small vessels, was brought into use for ostraka. In one sense this is merely to echo Lang ('every possible sort of sherd'), but the painstaking listing of shapes by Brenne adds considerable force to Lang's claim.

Both Lang and Brenne are rightly interested in cases where a number of ostraka have been found in the same archaeological context, and both exhaustively list what was found where. Brenne usefully tabulates the proportions of ostraka cast against a particular individual in cases where more than twenty ostraka have appeared together. There are some particular patterns in these proportions (e.g. a frequently recurring pattern with two thirds of the ostraka naming Megakles and a fifth Themistokles, and another pattern occurring a couple of times with two thirds Menon and one fifth Kimon). These patterns suggest that a number of different groups may be products of the same ostrakophoria. However, there are contexts, which stand out for discrepant patterns too. The greatest number of ostraka, recovered from the fill of the Eridanos, belong, as has been established, to the ostracism of 471 BCE. Nevertheless there are also groups that derive from the ostracism of 443, when Thucydides, son of Melesias, was ostracized, (though in the Kerameikos groups, half or more of the ostraka from that occasion name Kleippides, son of Deinias of Acharnai, and only a quarter or so name Thucydides). Only a few ostraka must belong to the final ostracism of 416.

The Kerameikos has yielded ostraka that are linked in another way – in coming certainly, plausibly or possibly from the same pot. This is certain in some 750 cases. There are many cases here where the ostraka coming from the same pot bear different names, including cases where the different names are plausibly written by the same hand. There are, in addition, twenty-eight cases where ostraka are linked only by what is more or less certainly the same hand. In all these latter cases, the link is between ostraka bearing the same name – although it is obvious when the same thing is written that the identity of hand can most plausibly be detected. Brenne provides an invaluable ›Analytical index‹ which lays out all the links, as well as a diagram which shows which names are linked to which in this way.

More or less well known already are the various ostraca which carry some message in addition to the name of a person or some graffiti. The graffiti include a picture of a Persian archer, a rider on a horse, a profile head with long hair, an owl, a fox (alluding to Alkmaionid cunning), a snake and another four-legged animal. The messages range from simply the verb to ostracise (but used only when what is ostracized, λυμός (Hunger), might make it questionable whether this is an ostrakon), or some phrase to identify the particular individual (›who was archon‹ of Menon, ›the kitharode‹ of Xanthias) or what they had done to deserve ostracism (›because he was a traitor‹, of Leagros), to various sorts of abuse (Kimon told to take Elpinike and go, Kallias son of Kratios referred to as a Mede, Megacles associated in various ways with the Alkmaionid curse, Menon repeatedly referred to as ›simple‹ [ἀφελές]).

Every ostrakon is illustrated (normally in a line drawing, some by photographs) in the second half of the first volume and then catalogued in the second volume.

There is a concordance to Kerameikos inventory numbers and to other publications, but there is no index. The absence of an index is a measure of the degree to which Brenne has interpreted the task as simply presenting the evidence – as if one could find everything through the detailed sub-headings of the contents pages. It would be a bold reviewer who checked every one of the thousands of references; I detected no errors, but on page 121 in 4.15.3.1 recording cases where the patronymic is preceded by the article ›ho‹, the ostraka from 1255 to 1483 should have been noted as belonging to Kimon Miltiadou, not ascribed to Kallias Kratiou. One curiosity of the epigraphic presentation is that angle brackets are used not, to quote the *Sylloge* formula, to indicate ›letters added by the editor which the inscriber of the text has either omitted or for which he has by error inscribed other letters‹. Here they are used to enclose letters which were initially, in Brenne's view, left out by the writer but which the original writer then added in.

The primary interest of scholars in ostraka has been in who was named on ostraca, as is reflected in the organisation of the catalogue by individual names. But Brenne does not treat this as the place to discuss those individuals – he has already done so in ›Ostrakismos und Prominenz in Athen. Attische Bürger des 5. Jhs. v. Chr. auf den Ostraka‹ (Vienna 2001). What are we to make of the distribution of names across ostraka? Should we be more surprised at how many names there are, or at how few? All attempts to answer this question run up against the problem that the period best represented by ostraka, and in particular by these ostraka, is not a period for which we have significant other evidence for the working of Athenian democracy. How fast was Athens changing? Were charismatic individuals more important, and so more divisive, in the first third or so of the fifth century than they were again? Although it is easy to convince oneself of this in the light of this evidence, we simply know too little of the actions of those voted against – either those who attracted many detractors or those who attracted only a handful – to be able to tell much of a story here.

Different readers will no doubt take home different messages from seeing this massive collection of ostraka together, and find different features striking. For me, Brenne's thorough examination of the nature of the sherds used is particularly notable, revealing the way in which Athenians really did use any scrap of pottery going (some perhaps more than once, as one finds the same sherd with more than one name written on it). These scraps of pottery include two Protogeometric sherds, nineteen Geometric and one Protoattic – that is sherds between one hundred fifty and five hundred years old. There is also a number of ostraka from Corinthian skyphoi, oinochoai, louteria and mortars. This gives a very strong impression of Athenians individually taking ostracism very seriously, picking up whatever pottery came to hand or was being made available, and painstakingly writing the name of the person they wished to see removed from Athenian life – an impression further

supported by the breaking up of pots into sherds that were then inscribed with different names, the relative infrequency of the same hand, the number of corrections (886 according to Brenne, so approaching ten percent) and of false starts. Despite the publicity given to the production of 191 ostraka found in the Acropolis North Slope deposit by just fourteen hands (a claim disputed by Anna Missiou in ›Literacy and Democracy in Fifth-Century Athens‹ [Cambridge 2011] 60–70), and the attempts by scholars to find further such examples, it is the rarity of multiple production by a single individual that is most notable (cf. Sickinger *op. cit.* 463).

Ostracism has always been a fascinating institution, and the ostraka have always promised to take us to the heart of democracy in action. This publication only makes ostracism more fascinating and the sense of being there as ordinary Athenians engaged in democratic politics still stronger.

Cambridge

Robin Osborne