

VERENA GASSNER, *Das Südtor der Tetragonos-Agora: Keramik und Kleinfunde*. Forschungen in Ephesos, Band 13,1,1. Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 1997. 265 Seiten, 93 Tafeln, 1 Plan.

In 1979–81 and 1984, excavations were carried out in the “Südtor”, at the southeast corner of the great Agora of Ephesos, in preparation for the reconstruction of that building. The volume under review is the first of a series that will present the results of this research; analysis of the excavation and the architecture will appear in future fascicles. Thus we have here only the partial results of a larger project that cannot be fully evaluated until all the awaited volumes appear. Directors of large projects like this one, with some justification, tend to see ceramics as simply a tool for the investigation of stratigraphic and architectural questions. Researchers to whom the ceramics have been assigned are expected to do little more than provide identifications and dates. The ceramicist, on the other hand, wants to say something meaningful about the pottery itself, even perhaps to use the pottery to draw conclusions about the society in question. The organization of the present project, then, puts the ceramicist in a difficult position. It would clearly be inappropriate to draw sweeping conclusions from a body of material that can hardly be representative of the Ephesian ceramic assemblage as a whole. What, then, is left for the ceramicist to do? In a rather disarming foreword, the author expresses reservations about this situation and also apologizes for other blemishes: a lack of quantification and close linkage between pottery and stratigraphy. The worth of the volume, she says, is to be found, first, in its presentation of material from a large and well dated deposit of the later 2nd century B.C., and secondly in making more of the little-published ceramics of Ephesos available to the scholarly public. It is in the framework of these limited goals, then, that the volume should be evaluated.

The book is divided into five chapters; most were written by the principal author, but six other scholars also contributed. A short first chapter deals with the small collection (62 pieces) of ceramics dating between the 7th and the 4th centuries B.C. There follows a long catalogue (367 entries) with discussion of pottery from a single Hellenistic fill in a drainage channel; a small addendum covers Hellenistic pottery from other contexts (39 items). A third chapter, almost as long, presents Roman pottery from various contexts, ranging in date from the 1st to the 7th century A.D. (310 entries). A discussion of the 75 lamps, 56 pieces of glass, and 42 small finds (not including terracottas, which will

appear in another study) from all contexts comes next, the section on small finds authored by S. Jilek. Finally, an afterthought added to the project in 1994, some of the pottery and lamps from a sounding in the nearby “Neronische Halle” is presented. Authorship here is shared among the author and five students, who undertook this work as part of their studies at the University of Vienna. This addition is a little puzzling. More of the Hellenistic filling of the drainage channel was found in the course of the excavation of the “Neronische Halle”, but that material has been integrated into the author’s catalogue of finds from the drain in chapter 2. The remainder is a miscellany, but one supposes that its true import will only emerge with the publication of the excavation and the building with which it was associated.

Within each of these sections the material is further broken down by type and fabric, with a short discussion preceding each chunk of catalogue. The text is mostly descriptive, but the author occasionally expands upon questions of local and regional ceramic production. In the context of a careful presentation of extensive variants of Hayes Form 3 of Late Roman C Ware, for example, she examines the likelihood of Ephesos as a local center for the production of this ware (pp. 138–140). Catalogue entries are sensible, giving the basic information without wasting words on unnecessary description. The illustrations are generous; virtually all of the objects have been drawn, and 16 plates of photographs further document moldmade bowls, lamps, stamped motifs, and painted decoration. Both drawings and photographs are of high quality. As a visual presentation of the material the book could scarcely be surpassed.

The author is certainly correct that the publication of the large Hellenistic deposit is the chief contribution of the book. Although the absence of anything but the most general of plans makes it impossible to envision the precise stratigraphic position of the deposit, the material apparently filled a gap between the east wall of the Agora and a drain wall 50 cm to the east (p. 39). The author dates the fill to the last third of the 2nd century on the basis of the following evidence: parallels with objects in Thompson’s Groups D and E, benchmarks for the ceramics of the middle and late 2nd century (H. A. THOMPSON, *Two Centuries of Hellenistic Pottery*, *Hesperia* 3, 1934, 369–427); the predominance of red and metallic gray gloss; the presence of flasks bearing stamps that resemble Ephesian gold staters of the last third of the 2nd century; and the almost complete absence of Eastern Sigillata A (ESA), a ware that became widespread in the 1st century. These are all excellent reasons for the date, and I do not doubt that the material was laid down at about that time. The author sometimes seems to assume, however, that this is a uniform fill with a narrow range of date and, having established that date, she goes on to use it as evidence for the date of all the objects in the fill. Several datable objects, however, are quite a bit earlier. The latest of the six Rhodian amphora stamps, for instance, dates between ca. 175 and 146, and two apparently date no later than ca. 240. It is true, as the author argues, that amphoras often enjoyed a long secondary use as water containers; nonetheless, if six objects can be dated so early, it is dangerous to consider the deposit chronologically homogeneous. And, in fact, some even earlier pieces can be identified; for example, two large gray-ware unguentaria with handles (nos. 343 and 344) are of the hollow-footed variety typical of the early 3rd century. It therefore seems unwise to maintain, on the basis of this context, that the shallow bowl with interior decoration, which went out of production in the mid-2nd century at Pergamon, continued to be used in Ephesos (p. 66) – or that Ephesian potters were conservative in the profiles of their lekanai because profiles like those of 3rd-century Attic lekanai occur in the deposit (p. 90). The fact that the author sometimes adduces comparanda that date much earlier than the late 2nd century suggests that she is aware of the heterogeneity of her deposit – otherwise what is the point of the comparanda? – but she never addresses this issue.

While this book is a substantial achievement, covering as it does such a large body of diverse material, a number of small errors dictate caution in its use. The author and her colleagues have sometimes been insufficiently rigorous about what constitutes a “parallel”, and many comparanda are very different in form or fabric from the pieces to which they are compared. For example, a series of bowls (nos. 77–79), distinctive in their deep form, hard, thin fabric and partial gloss are compared to Thompson’s E 46, a shallow, nearly hemispherical bowl with which they share neither fabric, shape, nor gloss pattern. A delicate black gloss plate (no. 105) is referred to a rolled-rim plate in Athens that in no way resembles it. Black-gloss plates (nos. 112, H 8) are compared to an ESA plate of rather different profile in Thompson’s Group E. A medium-sized jug with a relatively narrow mouth (no. 460) seems to have almost nothing in common with a small, widemouthed chytridion from Athens. Such imprecise comparisons are of no value in establishing date or provenience, and they add nothing but bulk to the book.

There are a few minor lapses in the commentaries, particularly in matters of chronology. The author places the beginning of the moldmade bowl impossibly early (first third of the 3rd century [p. 76]). She writes that the network-pattern is first documented on moldmade bowls in Athens at the beginning of the 1st century (p. 82), citing in her footnote my comment that they were being produced there by ca. 140 (S. I. ROTROFF, *The Athenian Agora* 22. Hellenistic pottery. Athenian and imported moldmade bowls [1982] 39). Similarly, she places the first bulbous unguentaria in Athens in Robinson’s Group G (p. 171), ignoring the example in the earlier Group F (H. S. ROBINSON, *The Athenian Agora* 5. Pottery of the

Roman Period. Chronology [1959] F 50, p. 15, pl. 2). Her discussion of the chronology of Eastern Sigillata B is somewhat puzzling, since she gives as its terminal date the generally accepted 150 A. D. (p. 126), but dates two of her examples (nos. 509, 510) between 150 and 300. One might also remark, with respect to Jilek's comments on jewelry, that the crescent bangle can be traced back, not just to the 2nd century (p. 219), but at least to the 4th (see, for instance, an example from Bau Z-3 in the Kerameikos, firmly dated before the end of the 4th century: U. KNIGGE / W. KOVACOVICS, Kerameikos. Tätigkeitsbericht 1979. Arch. Anz. 1981, 387, fig. 5).

A final problem concerns the contexts. Except in the long section on pottery from the drainage channel, typology rather than context is the organizing principle of the book. In order to allow the reader to investigate the contexts of the material, however, the find spot of each piece is given in the catalogue entry and a concordance of find spots is printed at the back of the volume. Each find spot is identified by a code number as belonging to one of 16 dated strata, which are also listed, and the stratum-list contains reference to the objects found in each stratum. In principle this is an excellent system, but it seems to break down in practice. Many objects have been omitted from the stratum lists. For instance, 22 objects are listed under Stratum 5, but others from find spots assigned to Stratum 5 are absent from the list. There is no way of knowing whether this is an oversight or a deliberate omission and, if the latter, what the reason for it might be. One begins to think that one does not, after all, really understand the system. These doubts grow as one tries to work from the catalogue entries to the contexts. For instance, an amphora fragment from the "Neronische Halle" (H 102, p. 252) is described as coming from the drainage channel. Its find spot, however, is assigned to Stratum 8, dating in the time of Nero. Similarly, P. Lindenberger prefaces the catalogue of Ephesos lamps from the "Neronische Halle" with the comment that they come exclusively from Sondage 2/81 and therefore must date in the last third of the 2nd century (p. 253). But only one of the find spots of the six examples is associated with Stratum 4 (last third of 2nd century); the others are assigned to Stratum 8 (Neronian). It is difficult to know, then, whether the lists have been carelessly compiled, or whether one is simply not reading them correctly. The problem may, however, be ephemeral, to be resolved by the appearance of the other fascicles, where stratigraphy will presumably be addressed at some length.

There are a few instances of carelessness, most notably the brief discussion of an ESB rim fragment, no. 498, that has been removed from the catalogue. Other small mistakes: the decoration on no. 192 is a necklace, not a garland; and no. 375 is a beehive, not a bowl. I counted fourteen abbreviated titles in the footnotes that are not listed under the bibliographic abbreviations. I imagine it was the editor's decision, not the author's, to omit infrequently cited titles from that list; it shows a touching faith in the reader's willingness to page through the book in search of the single complete citation.

Although I feel duty bound to correct the small errors alluded to above, I want also to stress the very real achievement of this book. The material is massive: the catalogue includes nearly 1100 objects of considerable variety. The range in date – 1400 years – is equally daunting, and no one person can reasonably be expected to negotiate all parts of this large span with equal ease. Most of what the author and her collaborators have written is accurate and useful, even if the way in which the material was assigned has not allowed them to draw any earthshaking conclusions. The author writes in her foreword that, if she could start all over again, she would do things differently. She decided to compromise in the interests of making the material available, and I believe she made the right decision. Together with V. MITSOPOULOS-LEON's publication of pottery from the Basilika (Die Basilika am Staatsmarkt in Ephesos. Kleinfunde 1. Keramik hellenistischer und römischer Zeit. Forsch. Ephesos 9,2,2 [1991]), the author's study offers us a substantial and welcome sample of the city's ceramics. Thanks to these two industrious scholars, Ephesos is no longer, in V. Gassner's words, a "weißer Fleck" in the history of Hellenistic and Roman pottery.