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Early Painted Pots (E.) Rystedt, (B.) Wells *Pictorial Pursuits. Figurative Painting on Mycenaean and Geometric Pottery. Papers from Two Seminars at the Swedish Institute of Athens in 1999 and 2001.* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, 4o, 53.) Pp. 313, figs, ill, maps. Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen, 2006. Paper. ISBN: 978-91-7916-053-1.

James Whitley

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found at Leptis Magna about the honours paid to a *principalis* from Alexandria. Silvia Orlandi ('Le iscrizioni del Colosseo') analyses how the inscriptions used to allot seats at the Colosseum offer valuable material for the understanding of the transformation of the elites in Rome. A new emphasis attached to titles denoting privileges of rank (e.g. *clarissimi*, *spectabiles*, *inlustres*), together with the presence of foreign names (due to growing numbers of African and Gallic aristocrats who were abandoning areas where barbarians had settled), reveals how the composition of the Roman senatorial elite changed between the third and the sixth century.

Pierfrancesco Porena ('Trasformazioni istituzionali e assetti sociali: i prefetti del pretorio tra III e IV secolo') explores the role of the *praefecti praetorii* who became important figures in the administration of the provinces. With the emperor Constantine, a new 'breed' of *praefecti* like Iunius Bassus vied with the senatorial elite in the display of wealth and acquisition of power.

The volume, well produced with only a handful of typographical errors, provides a useful overview of social changes in both the Greek and Latin parts of the Roman empire.

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EARLY PAINTED POTS

RYSTEDT (E.), WELLS (B.) (edd.) *Pictorial Pursuits. Figurative Painting on Mycenaean and Geometric Pottery. Papers from Two Seminars at the Swedish Institute of Athens in 1999 and 2001*. (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, 4^o, 53.) Pp. 313, figs, ills, maps. Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen, 2006. Paper. ISBN: 978-91-7916-053-1.

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This volume brings together the papers from two successive conferences held at the Swedish Institute in Athens, the first (in 1999) on Mycenaean, and the second (in 2001) on Geometric and Protogeometric pictorial pottery. Though the papers themselves are on diverse subjects and employ widely different approaches, there is a clear purpose, made explicit by R. in her introduction, in bringing both sets of papers together: to compare the range of images first at the beginning and then at the end of the so-called 'Dark Ages' between 1200 and 700 B.C. This clarity of purpose, and the fact that many contributors give papers in both sections (Crouwel, Günter, Hiller, Rystedt, Dakoronia), makes for a fairly coherent volume. But the comparison itself raises some very old questions, principally the question of cultural continuity between the Mycenaean and early Archaic worlds. Is there sufficient new evidence, or novelty of approach, to add something substantial to this old theme?

Well, inadvertently, yes, though this is not a question that many of the contributors to the first set of papers try to explore in any explicit manner. The main theme here is whether Mycenaean pictorial pottery is a coherent category of evidence. Most contributors, especially those who take the opportunity to publish finds from recent excavations (Demakopoulou from Midea, Hiller from Aegina, Günter from Tiryns

and Dakoronia from Kynos in E. Lokris), as well as Crowel in his introductory paper, R. herself, and Mountjoy in her useful overview of the Anatolian evidence, assume that it is, and generally take a fairly standard iconographic approach, where the images take primacy over the objects on which they are painted. This approach is taken to extremes in Hiller's second paper, which tries to derive Mycenaean iconography from Egyptian art of the Amarna period. Several attempt a more rigorous examination of pictorial pottery, particularly kraters, in their archaeological context. French looks at the new evidence for the functional contexts of pictorial kraters from Mycenae, but without looking at the associated finds (are these kraters found with kylikes; and, if so, how are the kylikes decorated?). Alison South provides a detailed discussion of the Mycenaean pictorial kraters found in tombs at Kalavassos in Cyprus, relating them explicitly to their associated finds and the bodies they are found with. Louise Steel takes this evidence further in her examination of gender, though she mainly concerns herself with the problem of distinguishing between male and female figures in Mycenaean imagery.

The outstanding papers are by Nicolle Hirschfeld and Christine Morris. Hirschfeld's study of vases marked for exchange in Cyprus not only throws interesting light on trade and exchange relations between Cyprus and the Greek mainland at the very end of the Mycenaean period, but it also casts serious doubt on the fundamental assumption that it was the imagery on pots that marked them out as distinctive; that is, of higher status to their contemporaries, and so of greater significance to the modern scholar. If these marks are anything to go by, it was the shape of the vessel, regardless of its decoration, that seems to have made it more valuable in exchange. Kraters, however decorated, seem to be the socially and economically significant objects. Morris takes forward an argument she has put before: that attribution, Beazley-style, of painted and particularly figured pottery still has lots to offer the Aegean scholar who is interested not merely in iconography but in society and exchange. Her closely argued paper concentrates on the imagery on Mycenaean amphoroid kraters, made in the Argolid but found for the most part in Cyprus. But both these excellent papers duck one perhaps more central question. Were these kraters actually kraters? Were they vessels designed as the centrepiece for some kind of communal eating or drinking ceremony, significantly similar to the later Greek symposium?

The second section kicks off, appropriately enough, with J.N. Coldstream's discussion of the 'long, pictureless hiatus' of the Dark Ages. Greece was not however entirely devoid of pictures on pottery in this period (1100–800), and there are distinct regional patterns: more images turn up in Lefkandi and at Knossos than in Attica. What is odd is that the same narrow range of images (ships, fighting, chariots, prothesis scenes) turns up at either end of the Dark Ages, with few if any intermediate examples. Coldstream, unlike R., is sceptical about there being any continuity in the production of pictures, though his explanation for the similarity ('a continuity of feeling') disappoints. Two papers deal explicitly with two images: Crowel with chariot depictions, and Hiller with prothesis scenes. In both, there is a fundamental problem of distinguishing between the heroic and the contemporary. Hiller's discussion of prothesis takes us back again to New Kingdom Egypt, but it simply does not occur to him that the similarity between Late Bronze Age and Geometric imagery here is best explained, not by continuity of iconographic, but rather funerary practice (as suggested by Mee and Cavanagh). Other papers explore, rather than simply publish, the evidence from particular places or regions: Dakoronia returns to Kynos, and Günter to Tiryns; Zaphiropoulou looks at one vase from Paros, while

Morgan explores the range of factors and contacts determining the figured repertoire of painted Geometric pottery from Ithaka. Pappi takes the exploration of regional patterns further, first emphasising the differences in the universe of images between Attica and the Argolid (and what this might tell us about Argive and Attic society respectively in the eighth century), then discussing in some detail examples which seem to break with Argive conventions.

Four papers deal with broader issues. Iacovou's is the only one to take the Cypriot story further, dealing with the complex interaction between the various ceramic and iconographic traditions on Cyprus in the earlier part of the Dark Ages. Hers is a truly archaeological, rather than simply iconographic, study, which should serve as a useful cautionary tale in any discussion of the 'hellenisation' of any other part of the Mediterranean in later times. In a closely argued paper, Langdon persuasively re-interprets many of the so-called abduction scenes on Late Geometric pots, diadems and seals as images of betrothal. Stansbury-O'Donnell deals with the long-standing question of interpreting Geometric figured scenes in terms of narrative, where we lack the clear iconographic and epigraphic clues of later vase painting, while attempting to explain what social purpose such narratives served. Finally, Wedde provides an invaluable overview of the numerous images of ships in the Early Iron Age. His updated catalogue, and his typology of ship images that relates them to ship types, is in itself a very useful addition to our knowledge, but he goes on to argue that this kind of continuity of imagery demonstrates 'partial system survival'. That is, only societies of a certain level of complexity (and social stratification) could continue to produce ships, with all the manpower costs and technological expertise that this entails. Here he underestimates the capacities of ranked societies, such as those we find in Melanesia in the 'ethnographic present', to mobilise resources to build quite complex war canoes without having anything in the way of social stratification.

What then of the volume as a whole? It certainly takes the whole 'continuity' debate further, even if resolution of outstanding problems was not to be expected. None of the papers is bad, and five or six are exceptional. But the collection does highlight the limitations of iconographic study. That images straightforwardly 'mean' something, that they are there to be 'read' as if they were akin to texts in a largely semiotic fashion (albeit in accordance with the longstanding conventions of iconographic study and iconological interpretation) with little regard for the objects they are painted on or the contexts in which they were found and used, is a view strangely at odds with developments in what must now broadly be called 'material culture studies'. Such studies avoid the issue of social agency. We shall never fully understand the meaning of images until we deal seriously with the social lives of things.

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