

KORONI: THE HELLENISTIC POTTERY

THE historical importance of the attribution of the fort on the peninsula of Koroni at Porto Raphti to Ptolemaic forces in the Chremonidean War in 265-261 B.C. put forward by the excavators¹ and its significance for the chronology of Hellenistic pottery prompt a few comments from the point of view of the Hellenistic pottery found, comments not fully in agreement with the statements (pp. 56-60) that the pottery "is a very consistent lot," and that the site "has supplied . . . a much needed fixed point," and providing question of the statement that the site "was occupied only for a short time."

With regard to the consistency of the pottery attention is called to examples of two shape series, rolled rim plates (**12**, **13**, and **58**) and fish plates (**18-22**), illustrated conveniently in profile drawings in figure 8. Comparison of the examples of these two series shows in both series differences in proportions, several gradations in the breadth of the feet, and differences in the degree of elevation of the wall. Of the rolled rim plates **58** is widely set apart in these respects from its fellows, in the fish plate series **18** is even more strongly isolated. Students of Attic pottery of earlier times will recognize in these gradations the workings of the process known as shape development, a process of transformation of a pottery shape from its first adoption in the repertoire through the hands of successive generations of potters to its final abandonment. In a given shape the transformation usually proceeds from an original generous, broad shape toward constriction, the component parts being proportionately affected. Students of Attic pottery of earlier times would also, I think, be inclined to suspect that the range of shape development exhibited in these two series indicates a very appreciable range in time of production for the individual pieces, from the low and broad **12** and **13** to the constricted and elevated **58**, from the broad and shallow **22** through the deeper and more elevated **19-20** and **21** to the extreme **18**.

Shape development as here broadly and too simply sketched is obviously an important criterion for archaeological dating of pottery. I would like to express here the belief, based on accumulated evidence, with counterchecks, from studies of Hellenistic pottery found in Athens and Corinth, that this criterion is likely to be one on which excavators and students may rely in dealing with Attic Hellenistic pottery.² I would also like to state the corollary that on this basis a very considerable range in date of production is represented in the examples of the two series of plates from

¹ Eugene Vanderpool, James R. McCredie, and Arthur Steinberg, "Koroni: a Ptolemaic camp on the east coast of Attica," *Hesperia*, XXXI, 1962, pp. 26-61. References in the present text to catalogue numbers, pages, and illustrations are to this publication.

² That the process of shape development is also operative in Corinthian Hellenistic seems likely. Corinthian Hellenistic will appear in a forthcoming study in the *Corinth* series.

Koroni, amply sufficient to require modification of the statement that the pottery is a consistent lot.

How much time is required for a shape to proceed from one stage through others is a matter of estimate requiring examples with dates fixed by absolute chronology for control, too often not at hand in the Hellenistic period. At present, in these slowly developing forms the difference in time of production between **12** and **13** of the series of rolled rim plates and **58**, and between **19-22** of the fish plates and **18** is apparently very great indeed. In this view the pottery cannot be considered consistent and this lack of consistency indicates reservation toward the thought that the site was occupied for only a short time. Literal consistency would require examples of particular shape series closely alike in stage of shape development, such as, for instance, we see often in grave groups. Such a degree of consistency would normally be expected of the pottery from a site occupied for only a short time.

The early stages of the rolled rim plate and the fish plate are seen in examples from Olynthos³ antedating the destruction of the city in 348 B.C. Examples of late stages of both series, produced in the vicinity of 150 B.C., are also known.⁴ Two of the rolled rim plates, **12** and **13**, and four of the fish plates, **19-22**, fall well within these extremes. At present an estimated dating for these prior to the Chremonidean War seems probable. The four fish plates may well be thought to cover a range in time of production of perhaps 50 years, conceivably more, coming down to the time of the Chremonidean War. I do not see reason at present to suspect that the pottery of other shapes need fall beyond this range.

The definition of a "fixed point" in chronology requires that all the material brought forth from an excavation providing a fixed point be anterior to that point in time. Open to question here are the third of the rolled rim plates, **58**, and the fifth of the fish plates, **18**, whose extreme stage of development is well advanced beyond those of the middle of the 2nd century cited. The implication which they provide is that activity of some sort took place in the fort at a much later date than the time of the Chremonidean War.⁵

The above comments do not tend to question on present evidence the thesis that the fort on Koroni was occupied by Ptolemaic forces in the Chremonidean War. They do tend to question that this was the only occupation of the site for that brief moment in history, and to provide indication that the pottery from the excavations must be used with discrimination for purposes of dating Attic Hellenistic pottery in general.

³ Rolled rim plates: David M. Robinson, *Olynthus* V, 611-619, 621-622, 625; XIII, 861-865. Fish plates: *op. cit.* V, 1044-1047, 1049-1058; XIII, 76-79, 79A, 721, 891-904.

⁴ Rolled rim plate: Athens, Agora, P 19784, from a filling immediately antedating the construction of the Stoa of Attalos (159-138 B.C.). Fish plates: Corinth, inv. nos. C-33-1463, C-47-400, C-47-809, from fillings associated with the destruction of Corinth by Mummius in 146 B.C.

⁵ Pertinent here is the question of the dating of the two coins of Megara, **73** and **128**, to 223-192 B.C.

The estimate of 50 years or more in time of production among the four fish plates, **19-22**, if we assume that **21** was produced close in time to the Chremonidean War, would suggest activity in the fort at least as early as the last quarter of the 4th century.⁶ The gradation in shape in this series would suggest if not continuous, then sporadic activity from that time to and including the Chremonidean War.⁷ Rolled rim plate **58** and fish plate **18** (and the coins of Megara, **73** and **128**?) indicate still further activity at a much later date. The picture is perhaps not inconsistent with a structure of a type presumably occupied only occasionally, in time of need, nor with an exposed site with neighboring inhabitation.

If the data of the archaeological contexts seem to contraindicate the above suggestions, it is perhaps pertinent to ask ourselves how many of us could distinguish with ease stratigraphically the fillings resulting from sporadic occupation and occasional disturbance on an exposed site. One would like to see further, more extensive probing of the site supplemental to the short season of three weeks productive of the important and provocative interpretation which the excavators have offered.

It is with considerable regret that I offer the above observations. Endorsement of the excavators' conclusions that the site represents activity of one brief moment in Hellenistic times, that its pottery is consistent, and that the site provides a fixed point for the chronology of Hellenistic pottery would be a pleasure indeed, as all students of Hellenistic pottery and artifacts can appreciate. As the excavators, so any archaeologist would like it to be so.

G. ROGER EDWARDS

UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
PHILADELPHIA

⁶ Strictly and stratigraphically speaking, the evidence now available is slender for the determination of the date of construction of the fort and for attribution of its construction to a specific agency. Further testing of fillings pertinent to the construction of the fort would be most desirable.

⁷ The excavators have provided an attractive alternative (p. 59) that "some of these furnishings may have been obtained by requisition from the houses of the various demes."