

CHIARA TARDITI, RITA SASSU, *Offerte in metallo nei santuari greci. Doni votivi, rituali, smaltimento. Atti del seminario internazionale online 29 ottobre 2020*, THIASOS. Rivista di archeologia e architettura antica 10, 2, Supplementum V, Roma, Edizioni Quasar, 2021, 68 p., ISSN 2279-7297

The idea of a one-day online seminar tracking the latest developments in the study of the metal objects dedicated in Greek sanctuaries – put into practice on the 29th of October 2020 through the coordinating efforts of Chiara Tarditi and Rita Sassu and the positive answers to their call given by several other scholars – deserves praise. The prompt publication of the contributions in a thematic volume in the Thiasos supplementary series should also be warmly welcomed, even though, as a consequence of the tight schedule, Valeria Meirano's and Stavros Vlizon's papers on the metal finds from Delphi and the Amyklaion were not published and the others seem to be restricted to the essential lines of argument.

The opening paper, "Ritual Killing, Melting down, Re-use – fragmented Objects in the Sanctuary of Olympia" (p. 5-14), is an inquiry conducted by Holger Baitinger into the nature of the bronze fragments discovered at Olympia, most of them originating from large bronze vessels, statues and arms and armour, with only a few cases when their provenance can be traced to small offerings, such as Geometric votive animals. Drawing on archaeological observations from Olympia and written sources, as well as on parallels with Bronze Age scrap hoards and votive practices documented in Sicily, the author lists six possible interpretations for the bronze fragments found in the sanctuary: 1. metal scrap meant to be melted down and recast in the local workshops; 2. remnants from offerings that had been melted down, still preserved as votives, based on the principles of *pars pro toto* and *ouk ekphora* (regulations stating that offerings shall not be removed from the sanctuary); 3. "pre-monetary" dedications probably made by Western Greeks; 4. damaged objects of practical use, accidentally lost or intentionally discarded by their owners; 5. items reused with wholly different functions than the initial ones; 6. remnants from "ritually killed" objects. He emphasizes though that choosing the right explanation for most of the bronze fragments faces major practical limitations.

Raimon Graells i Fabregat's contribution on the arms and armour from the same sanctuary of Olympia ("Weapons of Olympia: some observations",

p. 15-22) starts with a vivid summary of the current knowledge on the practice of dedicating weapons to the Greek gods (p. 15-16) and the main challenges faced in the study and publication of the finds from Olympia (p. 16-17). They are followed by some astute remarks on the spatial distribution of the martial offerings, demonstrating the purposeful optimization of this dedicatory practice whose ultimate aim was political propaganda (p. 17-18). It ends with a discussion on the underlying causes of the imbalance between the large number of shields and helmets and the relatively low quantity of spears, greaves, cuirasses and armguards recovered from the excavations, as well as on the changes in the associations of weapons dedicated throughout time, from ca. 800 to the 5th century BC (p. 19-20).

The third paper "Offerte metalliche e non per le divinità egizie a Cos in età imperiale" (p. 23-32), signed by Elisabetta Interdonato, is a useful reminder, based on the careful analysis of a 2nd century AD Koan honorary decree for a rich female benefactor of the yet unidentified *Iseion* or *Serapeion* on the island (IG XII, 4, 2, 853) that each cult needed its own specific paraphernalia and that metal objects were the most expensive, if not the most important, among them. The article provides a convenient account of some of the religious objects required for performing the rituals due to the pan-Mediterranean Egyptian deities, such as knives, lamps, βωμίσκοι, etc. and the materials which might have been used for their manufacture, depending on the wealth of the groups or individuals who donated them to the sanctuaries.

The fourth paper, "The Spartan lead votives: new data from archival and scientific analysis" (p. 33-44), presents some of the latest results of James Lloyd's renewed study of the 100,773 lead votives discovered in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta between 1906 and 1910³. The first part of the paper is devoted to explaining the recording system used by the excavators for this type of finds in two notebooks preserved at the British School at Athens and how a thorough analysis of the archival

³ See also Lloyd (forthcoming).

data might shed new light on the Spartan dedicatory practices of lead votives. The author rejects the historical explanations that attempted to connect the lead votives with the renowned Lycurgan austerity reported by the written sources but hardly traceable in the archaeological record. Instead, the archival data on the contexts and the exact tally for the distinct categories of votives (wreaths – 59,981; goddesses – 4,354; women – 10,362; warriors – 8,129) allow him to suggest “a deliberate consideration in the creation of a religious custom that could involve the Spartiate community in a shared act of worship paired with the highly personal act of dedicating a miniature votive” (p. 38). While I found his conclusions to be interesting and I concur with his opinion that the Spartan lead votives should not be tied with the largely delusive concept of Lycurgan austerity, I would point out that the high frequency of miniature lead votives should still be partly explained through their large availability, as shown by the hundreds of miniature lead *bucrania*, ram-heads and *labryes* similarly deposited in funeral and sacred contexts in Olbia, Odessos and Apollonia Pontikē⁴. The second half of the paper contains the results of Pb isotope and pXRF analyses conducted on 19, respectively 58 objects from the Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology, Reading, which add to some previous similar investigations on other sets of Spartan lead votives. The most important conclusion is that several lead sources were probably employed for casting the figurines, both from Laconia and abroad.

In the fifth paper, “Doni preziosi per gli dei: offerte d’oro e d’argento nell’Acropoli di Atene” (p. 45-58), Rita Sassu draws mainly on epigraphic and literary sources to emphasize the economic and political importance of Greek sanctuaries as they stored significant amounts of objects made of precious metals. Taking the Athenian Acropolis as a case study, Sassu shows how the sanctuary gradually developed its economic role starting from the Archaic period and became an actual public treasury already in the time of the Peloponnesian War. Whereas the chronological narrative on the development of the Acropolis as a treasury (p. 48-50) is definitely interesting, I would be more cautious about the interpretation of the sources dealing with the early

Archaic period and particularly the *naukraroi* (p. 48-49), who, in my opinion, cannot be considered anymore “membri di quello che sembrerebbe essere il primo collegio incaricato della protezione degli *hiera chremata* del santuario dell’Acropoli, verosimilmente sede delle loro operazioni” (p. 48), in the light of the recent thorough analysis of Hans van Wees on this institution: I find very persuasive his reconstruction that portrays them as officials combining financial and military duties connected first and foremost with the provision of ships for the Athenian navy⁵. The paper also contains a useful synthesis of the information provided by the Athenian inventory lists and the treasurers’ accounts on the gold and silver objects dedicated on the Acropolis (p. 50-52).

The last paper, “Modalità di smaltimento del vasellame in bronzo nei santuari greci: il caso dell’Acropoli di Atene” (p. 59-68) might be deemed a fortunate continuation of the previous one, as it deals too with metal objects from the Athenian Acropolis, but with those made of bronze. Harnessing on the data collected in her celebrated book where she inventories 1141 fragments of bronze vessels out of the total amount of more than 2000 found on the Acropolis since the 19th century⁶, Chiara Tarditi tries to answer the tantalizing question of why the quasi-totality of finds are represented by full-cast handles and feet. Following a helpful discussion on their archaeological contexts and the several phases of reconstruction on the Acropolis (p. 59-64), she concludes that two major practices for the disposal of damaged or obsolete bronze vessels may be distinguished (p. 64-66). The first one, up to the mid-5th century BC, consisted in preserving the most illustrative parts of the bronze vessels, such as handles, feet and bases (*pars pro toto*), when the rest of the objects were disposed of through melting and recasting of new votives. Subsequently, it is replaced by a second practice similar to that recorded in the case of gold and silver objects, which consisted in fully melting down the vessels. This new practice explains why there are no finds of parts of bronze vessels dating after the middle of the 5th century BC. Nonetheless, in the case of the first practice, the question of why some full-cast attachments are additionally dismembered still does not get a wholly satisfying answer.

⁴ Olbia: Zajceva 1971; Wąsowicz, Zdrojewska 1998; Zajceva 2004; Odessos: Minčev 2012; Apollonia Pontikē: Venedikov 1963, p. 319-320, cat. nos. 1097-1099, pl. 169; Konova 2002.

⁵ van Wees 2013, p. 44-61, not mentioned by Sassu.

⁶ Tarditi 2016.

Overall, this short book is enjoyable and helpful as it revisits some of the most important questions on the use of metal objects in ancient Greek sanctuaries. Even in the absence of two papers presented at the original seminar, which cannot be but regretted, it will certainly find much use by Classical archaeologists working on branches of study such as ancient sanctuaries, economy, weapons and metals, in general. In addition, it is not unreasonable to think that prehistorians who study depositional practices will also find this book perfectly serviceable.

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