

PREFACE

Driving down the main road from Saida to Beirut one sees the remains of ancient Porphyreon, hidden today under the modern town of Jiyeh/Nebi Younis. Dynamic urban growth has put Porphyreon on the long list of archaeological sites on the Levantine coast threatened with extinction. The present publication takes on even greater importance in view of this. The book by Urszula Wicenciak, based largely on her doctoral dissertation submitted successfully to the University of Warsaw, is the fruit of extended studies on the finds from archaeological excavations conducted since 2003 by a Polish–Lebanese project from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology University of Warsaw and the Directorate General of Antiquities of Lebanon at the site of Porphyreon/Jiyeh. Discoveries made during this salvage work, necessitated by building investment that annihilated traces of the ancient settlement in this area, led to regular excavations that reopened trenches dug in 1975 by the Lebanese archaeologist Roger Saidah.

The volume presents the analysis of pottery production in Porphyreon in two periods: in the late Hellenistic (mid-2nd century BC–first half of 1st century BC) and early Roman (mid-1st century BC–early 2nd century AD). The author's knowledge and the potential of the thousands of ceramic sherds which she has analysed ensure that her book will become an important reference for specialists in material culture, chronology, culinary habits and cultural transformation in the ancient Levant. Especially as it strives to fill a gap in the archaeological research in this part of the Mediterranean coast, including pottery studies that are in many instances the foundation of developing site chronologies, as well as describing the historical inhabitants from a cultural perspective.

The repertoire of the Porphyreon workshops encompassed more than 20 forms of kitchen pottery and 10 amphorae forms in the described two periods. Wicenciak has addressed this rich material in her studies, subjecting it to a comprehensive analysis in the context of regional history and archaeology, considering the identification of Porphyreon and its administrative affiliation, and ultimately the context and stratigraphy of the finds and her research methodology. She then presents the production of local pottery workshops in Porphyreon separately for the two selected periods, that is, the late Hellenistic and early Roman times. Finally, she offers her observations on the administrative and cultural dependence of Porphyreon and particular regions, extremely interesting and valuable for a definition of the organisation of pottery production.

Mapping sources of inspiration with Greek prototypes of the ceramic forms from the town is a fascinating exercise, linking the Phoenician coast with Greece and the Greek islands as well as Asia Minor, southern Italy and North Africa, the lattermost showing strong cultural ties with the modern Lebanese coast as a result of Phoenician and Punic settlement. The pottery of the late Hellenistic period is known from salvage excavations to the north of the ancient settlement, the early Roman assemblage is a homogenous set, including wasters, found by chance and in unusual circumstances in an ancient well at least 7 m deep. The pottery repertoire in this period was subjected to greater unification, the dominant forms being containers for storing and serving liquids — table amphorae, jugs, lagynoi, but also kitchen pots like casseroles and pans. The potters continued to draw inspiration from the Aegean, Asia Minor or Cyprus. The other important direction from which inspiration arrived was the western Mediterranean, especially

Campania and southern Spain. The North African direction remained operational to some extent; it can be seen in some of the amphora forms and kitchen pots.

The author's synthetic views presented in chapters 5 and 6 contribute significant new data to studies on the region and will surely intensify the scholarly debate on the nature of administrative and cultural relations between different parts of the Phoenician coast and the interior. Central Phoenicia appears to have been under the overwhelming dominance of Sidon in the Hellenistic period, gradually coming under the growing influence of Berytus, especially in the Roman period. Wicenciak has also demonstrated persuasively the break with the Phoenician pottery tradition of the region. Initially, central and southern Phoenicia betrayed a far-going regionalisation of the ceramic production. By late antiquity, the regions appeared to be much more united and drawing inspiration especially from the south. The ceramic repertoire became even more standardised than before.

The present publication is the effect of the author's long and dedicated research, supported by many members of our archaeological team, to whom I am grateful for their time and assistance. I am also deeply aware of our debt of gratitude toward representatives of the Lebanese Ministry of Culture. I would like to thank in particular successive General Directors of the General Directorate of Antiquities: Camille Asmar, Frédéric Husseini and Sarkis Khoury, for their continuous support of our project. We received generous assistance from the DGA office heads in Saida: Renata Ortali Tarazi, Bahija Traboulsi and Myriam Ziadé. The archaeological investigation of Porphyreon/Jiyeh and efficient organisation of the work was supported by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I also wish to acknowledge the authorities of the University of Warsaw over the years and thank the successive directors of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology and the Centre's staff for their unfailing help. To all our Lebanese, Polish and French friends and colleagues my heartfelt thanks — without you we would never have achieved as much as we have. As Director of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw, and as head of the Polish–Lebanese Archaeological Project in Porphyreon/Jiyeh I would like to congratulate the Author on this important study and express the hope that it will initiate a series of monographs dedicated to the publication of the results of excavations by Polish archaeologists in Lebanon.

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