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LONDON, GLORIA (2020) **Wine Jars and Jar Makers of Cyprus: The Ethnoarchaeology of Pitharia.**

Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature PB 188. Nicosia: Astrom Editions. ISBN 978-9925-7455-5-5. pp. xxii, 218; 134 b/w figs and plates. Hardcover.

The great *pitharia* or wine-jars of Cyprus are made up of successive thick coils of clay that need to dry before the next is added. They have to be built up slowly and patiently, and the finished jar has to dry evenly for 20 days before it is gently rolled down the slope and into the kiln. The products of this long process are monumental: they can hold anything between 800 and 2000 litres, and stand up to 140 cm high and 140 cm in diameter.

In the same way, this book has slowly built up over the decades. Much of the material comes from the observations of the Danish rural policeman Knud Jensen, who combined his United Nations duties with his passion for Cypriot pottery and ethnography during his visits in the 1960s and 1970s. More comes from the many months spent by the author since the 1980s observing and documenting local women making and firing pottery in several Cypriot villages. Underlying both of these are the centuries of skill, experience and knowledge of the jar makers and potters themselves, passed on to the next generation and then to both Jensen and London in long interviews and discussions. This book, like a good wine jar, ferments all of this knowledge and experience and serves us a mature and full-bodied wine of insight and understanding.

Jensen's unpublished diaries, manuscripts and photographs lie at the heart of the book. The account of the wine jars and their makers uses long quotes and close engagement with Jensen's material. The author carefully explains the methodology of the data collection, both Jensen's systematic recording and extensive interviews, and her own long observation and documentation of the pottery-making process. The analysis of the manufacture, style and historical importance of the wine jars is based on 66 that Jensen recorded and a further 39 that the author studied in the village of Agios Demetrios in the 1980s.

The account of how the wine jars were made, fired, decorated and prepared for use (Chapter 9) is detailed, interesting and well-documented. It also ranges beyond the mechanics of production to include details such as blessing and smoking each jar with smouldering olive leaves in a pottery censer, the sound made by smacking a well-fired jar and the pitch used to line the jars.

The additional ethnographic material from Jensen's diaries goes well beyond the 'wine jars and jar makers' of the book's title (Chapter 10). Much of this is rather well-trodden ground, such as threshing, basket weaving and funerals, though there are some valuable hitherto unpublished photos. With some of the material there is a sense of a timeless 'ethnographic recent past', before industrialisation and the import of refined clay; Jensen often comments that he was 'going back in time' by entering a village house. In her own discussion, the author explicitly focuses on 'traditional' pot-making, glossed as using local materials, turntables and wood-fired kilns. What her analysis shows, however, is a society that is always dynamic and changing, with settlement patterns, social relations and the role of material culture changing along with political and economic developments.

The second part of the book is a wide-ranging study of the ethnoarchaeological value of all this material. The author starts with a case study of the Marathasa village of Agios Demetrios, where she worked in the 1980s (Chapter 12), and then addresses a host of specific issues where studies of modern pottery can cast light on pottery in antiquity (Chapter 13). This last chapter is wide-ranging, covering questions ranging from the significance of the names, signs and decorations on the finished jars to the organisation of pottery production in village communities and across the wider landscape.

So what can this depth of ethnoarchaeological engagement tell us about the production and use of pottery in antiquity? There is a simple answer to this question: 'it varies'. Sometimes Cypriot potters and jar makers in the recent past used porous red clay for their coil-made vessels; sometimes they mixed it with less porous white clay (p. 151). Some users of incense burners say that the three dots on the handle represent the Trinity; others say they are just decorative (p. 183). Ethnoarchaeology is wonderful for generating questions, possibilities and challenges, but only rarely can it give archaeologists of much earlier periods actual answers.

All this rich material on 18th–20th-century wine jars and jar-makers, however, is not just ethnoarchaeology: it is also an archaeology of the recent past, and the author's discussion shows just how valuable this can be. Clusters of jars dated to the 1860s in both Jensen's material and the author's own, for example, suggest a move to new settlements in more discreet locations in the mountains to avoid conscription following the Ottoman Land Code of 1858 (p. 147). The fascinating account of the manifold and elaborate ways in which wine jars and sherds can be reused show how effectively and creatively village societies could reuse, recycle and adapt local materials (p. 179–82).

The final chapter on the 'archaeological implications' of the study (Chapter 13) reads rather like a compendium of interesting but very varied material, with no clear narrative or progression of the argument across the chapter. To an extent this can apply to the book as a whole, with its diverse chapters on general cultural background, Jensen's work, the author's own analysis, and material relating to ethnographic practices beyond the production of wine-jars. Some readers will choose to dip in and read chapters of most interest.

For me, the most engaging aspect of this book is that we are constantly meeting named individual jar makers and potters, not just from the last 50 years but those working in the villages of the Troodos Mountains from the 1760s onwards. The book comes across as collaborative and attentive: individual jar makers and potters appear constantly throughout, in the photos, in their explanations and of course in their wine jars. At its heart is the work of the supreme pot detective, the Danish rural policeman Knud Jensen: methodical and careful, sometimes lonely, but always friendly, curious and respectful.

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