

THE CYPRIOT BRONZE AGE POTTERY FROM SIR LEONARD WOOLLEY'S EXCAVATIONS AT ALALAKH (TELL ATCHANA)

BY CELIA J. BERGOFFEN. PP. 106, FIGS. 3, B&W PLS. 45, COLOR PLS. 5, TABLES 9. VERLAG DER ÖSTERREICHISCHEN AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN, VIENNA 2005. €49. ISBN 3-7001-3245-X (PAPER).

Bergoffen's work is part of the international project on the *Synchronization of the Civilizations in the East Mediterranean during the Second Millennium B.C.* (SCIEM 2000), promoted by Professor Manfred Bietak. Ancient Alalakh (modern Tell Atchana), lying on a 22 ha mound located at the Amuq Valley's southern end, is well suited to inquire into chronological and cross-cultural issues, since it is one of those sites where archaeological, historical, and textual data converge, involving the major Bronze Age cultural spheres of the Near East as well as of the Aegean. The archaeological relevance of the site is complicated by the excavation method and by the way Sir Leonard Woolley registered the finds; slips, misattributions, and discrepancies in the recorded findspots make it a hard task to deal with the Alalakh's documentation.

The book focuses on the Cypriot ceramic imports, which make up a significant part of the archaeological record. The book is organized in three main sections: the first provides a description of the architectural remains (levels VII through II) and sketches out the local contexts in which the pottery was found; the second contains a detailed analysis of the Cypriot imports; the last one incorporates the evidence of the Cypriot pottery into the general discussion on the history and problematic chronology of Alalakh's levels.

Chapter 1 (11–13) describes the book's organization and presents the contextual problems inherent in the findings from the site.

Chapter 2 (14–35) focuses on the archaeological contexts of the Cypriot pottery, providing a detailed picture of its on-site distribution, with

particular attention paid to Palace IV, where the bulk of imports was found (19–26).

Chapter 3 (36–54) centers on the analysis of the Cypriot pottery. Vessels are arranged by fabric, and each one is fully discussed in relation to contextual data and typology. Close attention is paid to parallels from Cyprus and Canaan as far as relative and absolute chronology of vessels' type and fabric is concerned. As clearly stated in the introduction (13), the main goal of this section is to build a sequence of the imports and to tie it to the problematic stratigraphy of the site. Apart from the handful of wares that have parallels in Canaan during the MB IIC–LB IA (e.g., Black Slip III and Black Lustrous Wheelmade Ware), other fabrics allow cross-links between Alalakh and the Cypriot and Levantine sequences.

Chapter 4 (55–67) is devoted to the textual and archaeological evidence related to the history and chronology of Alalakh. It is intriguing, especially in relation to the site's major imports, how stratified was Alalakh's society at the time of level IV, the period that corresponds to the Mitannian ascendancy under Saushtatar (63–64). As far as chronology is concerned, the repertoire of the imports becomes a valuable tool for pinpointing (among other things) the destruction of Palace IV. The Cypriot ceramic assemblage as a whole points to a date early in the 14th century B.C.E., or, in Levantine terms, between LB IB and LB IIA (65). The event may be perhaps correlated with the contemporary conquest of Aleppo by Tudhaliya I/II (64).

Finally, in chapter 5 (70–3), the author provides a summary of the relevant topics highlighted in the book, tying even more

closely the archaeological evidence and the historical data. An appendix (74–6) is devoted to the correspondence between Woolley and Joan du Plat Taylor about the Cypriot pottery and is followed by the bibliography (ch. 7) and catalogue (83–106).

In Palace IV, there is a contrast between the official wing and the residential section in terms of the quality and quantity of pottery types—and the peculiar typology of some of the vessels from the official wing. Base Ring (41) and White Slip kraters (51) stand out among the imported assemblages from there. Bergoffen's analysis makes clear the relationship between these vessels, rarely exported outside Cyprus and rightly considered to be showpieces, and the social status of their users. The presence of those particular shapes in that particular sector of the palace is consistent with the social function of beverages and their related ceramic sets (cf. L. Steel, "A Goodly Feast . . . A Cup of Mellow Wine: Feasting in Bronze Age Cyprus," in J.C. Wright, ed., *The Mycenaean Feast* [Princeton 2004] 169–77). It has to be kept in mind that at Alalakh, the krater (with chariot decoration) also appears in the repertoire of Mycenaean imports, where it makes up 23% of the total of Mycenaean vessels, a proportion that is higher than that registered at Ugarit (J.H. Crouwel and C.E. Morris, "Mycenaean Pictorial Pottery from Tell Atchana [Alalakh]," *BSA* 80 [1985] 85–98; R.B. Koehl, "Preliminary Observations on the Unpublished Mycenaean Pottery from Woolley's Dig-house at Tell Atchana [Ancient Alalakh]," *Aegaeum* 25 [2005] 415–21). This evidence leads one to wonder (but beyond the book's purpose) about the relation between the two classes of imports, in both a contextual and synchronic/diachronic standpoint, especially since the bulk of Mycenaean vessels seems to belong to levels (I–II) later than the peak of Cypriot imports (T.L. McClellan, "The Chronology and Ceramic Assemblages of Alalakh," in A. Leonard Jr. and B.B. Williams,

eds., *Essays in Ancient Civilization Presented to Helene J. Kantor* [Chicago 1989] 209, fig. 38). It has to be kept in mind, however, that the upper levels are indeed the most disturbed of the site (Crouwel and Morris 1985, 85).

With regards to the class likely to have access to these exotica, Bergoffen suggests the *ehelena* (a class of specialists and craftsmen) (73), and she finds an intriguing parallel at Ugarit, where imported vessels (namely Mycenaean pottery) were used by a highly diversified group living in the capital, called "people of the king" and composed mainly of specialists (G.J. van Wijngaarden, *Use and Appreciation of Mycenaean Pottery in the Levant, Cyprus and Italy (ca. 1600–1200 B.C.)* [Amsterdam 2002] 73). Finally, on the use and appreciation of foreign wares, Bergoffen touches on a fascinating subject: the appearance of imitations of Cypriot vessels, namely jugs and (more rarely) juglets (44) (see C.J. Bergoffen, "Canaanite Wheelmade Imitations of Late Cypriot Base Ring II Jugs," in E. Czerny et al., eds., *Timelines: Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak* [Leuven and Paris 2006] 331–38). Relying upon the Alalakh data, consistent with that from other sites in Canaan, she rejects the view that the imitation was a substitute for unavailable items.

In conclusion, scholars will welcome Bergoffen's book. Its lucid and well-structured organization, its richness of new data, and the willingness to closely tie archaeological and historical data (balancing the intractability of documentation with a clarity of argumentation) all make this book a pivotal acquisition and a starting point for further speculations on the backdrop of Mediterranean cross-cultural links.

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