

Introduction

Chronology may not always be considered the most exciting subject by archaeologists and ancient historians, but its importance can hardly be overestimated, and recent years have certainly witnessed a renewed interest in chronological problems. When the Danish Research Foundation's Centre for Black Sea Studies was established in February 2002, it was decided that the Centre's first international conference should have as its theme the chronology of the Black Sea area, with special focus on the period from 400 to 100 BC, a period which has indeed had its share of chronological debates and revisions. Thus the destruction of Olynthos in 348 BC as a chronological fixed point has been challenged; the tentative chronology proposed by H. Thompson for Athenian Hellenistic pottery has in recent years been corrected by S. Rotroff; and the chronologies of Hellenistic transport amphoras originating in Black Sea workshops such as Herakleia Pontike, Sinope and Chersonesos, as well as the precise datings of a number of local coinages, are still hotly debated. It goes without saying that the chronological framework established for the Greek colonies on the shores of the Black Sea is also of crucial importance for the dating of the nomad cultures of the steppes during the first millennium BC.

The purpose of the conference was a closer examination of the elements on which the chronologies used in Black Sea archaeology and history in the relevant period are built – and the overall chronology, if such exists.

The present volume presents 13 contributions from the conference. Broadly speaking, they can be divided into papers presenting the chronological basis on which we currently operate, and papers on specific case studies, where the dating of a site, a group of sites or deposits, and the reasons for the suggested dates are presented. Central issues are coins, amphora stamps and imported fine-ware pottery, together with the written source material.

An important objective of the conference was to bring together researchers working in different disciplines and different fields, i.e. both researchers whose focal point is the Mediterranean, and colleagues whose expertise is concentrated on the Black Sea area itself.

The volume opens with Rotroff's contribution on the chronology of Hellenistic pottery from the Athenian agora. She draws particular attention to

the fact that this chronology has been built up over a long period and has undergone a number of revisions; that there is a danger of circular argumentation, such as the use of the new Athenian coinage, the introduction of which is in itself based on pottery chronology. One cannot but agree that at the moment the Attic chronology provides one example of how a model of diachronic development can be built and maintained, and that Athens currently provides the finest-grained chronology existing for pottery of the 4th to the 1st centuries BC.

Lawall's paper covers much of the same ground, but from a different perspective, and with emphasis on the often overlooked fact that creating chronologies involves negotiating a web of relationships between groups of artefacts. One might consider such efforts as hopelessly circular and subjective. Lawall, however, adopts a more positive approach, offering the reader a brief "state of the art" as to the late Classical and Hellenistic amphora stamps in the Aegean, and goes on to present the present situation as to the chronology of the most important of these, i.e. the Thasian.

Monachov uses a different perspective than the eponym stamps to examine the chronology of Rhodian amphoras by tracing the development of the shape of the Rhodian amphora through time.

The following contribution by Conovici focuses less on the chronology of one or more amphora productions than on fluctuations in the import patterns of the three most securely dated amphora production centres, i.e. Thasos, Sinope, and Rhodos, in some of the cities on the west coast of the Black Sea, in particular Istros, Kallatis, and Tomis. Despite differences in the distribution patterns, coincidences in the peaks reached by the imports to the west Pontic cities, especially Kallatis, may also point to the present chronologies of these three production centres as being correct, at least when considered in decades instead of years.

Callatay's contribution takes us to a different field, i.e. that of numismatics. If one sometimes wonders whether a chronological precision within less than a five-year horizon is worthwhile, Callatay's contribution on the chronology of the Mithridatic bronze coins offers a case for how much can actually be at stake. Callatay proposes considerable changes to the traditionally accepted chronology for both the Mithridatic and Bosporan issues, which gave rise to the historical interpretation that Mithridates Eupator began as a friendly ally of the Bosporan cities and later acted very brutally towards these cities. Callatay offers a very different scenario.

Højte re-examines the dating of the inscription from Chersonesos with Pharnakes' decree, carefully reviewing the evidence, or rather lack of evidence, for the date traditionally accepted as to this decree. He concludes that at present no definite proof exists for the two proposed dates, but that the Seleucid calendar is the most probable for determining the date of the inscription, in which case the history of Chersonesos during the first half of the second century BC needs to be reconsidered.

The Pharnakes decree and its date is also at the centre of Stolba's contribution, which presents a new chronology for Chersonesean amphora stamps. Having reconsidered the anchoring points of the local stamp chronology, he proposes a long break in the production during the third century BC.

The contributions of Hannestad, Zolotarev, Bylkova, Krapivina, Mordvinceva, and Zajcev present case studies from Olbia and Chersonesos, their *chorai* and the inner Crimea, discussing the means by which a deposit, a site, or a cluster of sites have been dated.

In her contribution Hannestad re-examines the elements on which the dating of the so-called Monumental Building U6 have been built up, and demonstrates how the end date c. 270 BC is based on Kac's chronology for Chersonesean amphoras, whereas the date of the erection relies on Rotroff's dating of the black-glazed Athenian pottery of the early Hellenistic period, together with Stolba's chronology for Chersonesean bronze coins.

Zolotarev presents a recently excavated deposit found in Chersonesos, which offers us an impression of the affluence which characterized the city in the third century BC.

Krapivina carefully examines all the evidence that has so far been brought to light concerning the city of Olbia in the Late Hellenistic period, which is one of the least known periods in the history of the city. The material presented includes a recently found inscription (2002), which provides evidence for a *strategos* of Mithridates Eupator and his governor-general in Olbia building a defensive wall in the year 220 of the Pontic era (78/77 BC). The available evidence also clearly confirms that by the middle of the 1st century BC, life ceased to exist in the city for several decades, due to the invasion of the Getae.

Archaeological field work, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, has enabled Valeria Bylkova to draw up the settlement development on the lower Dnieper in the period from c. 400-100 BC. Amphora and tile stamps together with imported pottery are the most important elements for establishing an overall chronology for changes in settlement patterns in both the Greek and the Scythian settlements.

During the conference the revised chronology of Rhodian amphoras recently proposed by G. Finkielsztejn was an often-discussed subject, and the participants were convinced of its validity. Perhaps Zajcev's contribution on the chronology of Scythian Neapolis in the second century BC most clearly shows how this chronology fits in with evidence from a combination of the stratigraphy of a site and the written evidence concerning this monument.

The volume ends with a presentation by Mordvinceva of the chronology of the richest Sarmatian barrow - Nogajčik - in the Crimea. The barrow contained a female burial with a large number of luxury grave goods. Among the pieces are a "millefiori" (mosaic) glass cup that provides a *terminus post quem* to the first century BC, and a fusiform unguentarium that suggests that the burial can hardly be later than the middle of the first century BC.

It is our hope that the contributions in this volume will prove useful for reopening discussions on dates and chronologies which may long have been taken for granted, and ultimately contribute to establishing a firmer chronological framework for the Black Sea region in the last centuries before our era.

Lise Hannestad
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Vladimir Stolba