Anastasia Drandaki: Late Antique Metalware. The Production of Copper-Alloy Vessels between the 4th and 8th Centuries. The Benaki Museum Collection and Related Material. Turnhout: Brepols 2020 (Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité tardive 37). 410 p., 250 colour ill., 5 b/w tables. € 85.00. ISBN: 978-2-503-56941-3.

"Late Antique Metalware" is a study and catalogue of the collection of Late Antiquity copper alloy vessels and utensils dated between the fourth and eighth centuries in the Benaki Museum of Athens. The museum houses a large collection of Islamic and Byzantine period objects that have been donated or purchased since its foundation in 1930. Anastasia Drandaki's work on the collection is a welcome and timely addition to scholarship of Late Antiquity metalware, which has often focused on rare, luxury and ornate items but is sadly lacking for objects that could be considered more commonplace. Copper-alloy ware is arguably more representative of the daily rhythms of life in antiquity where it functioned in numerous social domains as vessels, utensils, and equipment. There is increasing research interest in base-metal production and use, and the present work is a timely addition covering morphology, as well as technical considerations of the Benaki collection.

The book has a well-structured narrative and employs an engaging and easy style that takes the reader through the author's research rationale, evidence and conclusions. At the same time, it is a practical, clearly presented, and easy-to-navigate reference volume. This can be an important element for those who scour research publications of objects for comparanda, often searching by image or characteristics before delving into more detailed information and interpretation. Part I is devoted to the function and morphology of the objects grouped by vessel or utensil type, alongside manufacturing and chronological details. The author explains that she has classified the material on the basis of form, which determines function (p. 305). Thus, Part I: chapters 1–9 are focused on tableware and utensils ("Small Bowls", pp. 19–31; "Three-Footed Bowls", pp. 33–44; "Pedestalled Bowls", pp. 45–54; "Bowls with Horizontal Handle", pp. 55–72; "Spouted Bowls", pp. 73–82; "Bowls with Moveable Handles", pp. 83–101; "Ewers and Bottles", pp. 103–120; "Ladles", pp. 121–134; "Dining Implements", pp. 135–143), and Part I: chapters 10–14 are on objects for cosmetic or personal purposes, lighting, and censers or burners ("Buckets", pp. 145–

154; "Amphoriskoi", pp. 155–171; "Flasks", pp. 173–181; "Lighting Devices", pp. 183–235; "Censers", pp. 237–270). Part II: chapters 15–17 include technical information, consideration of production workshops, and shapes and decorative techniques. The conclusions (pp. 305–306), illustrated catalogue (pp. 307–367), a bibliography (pp. 371–393), a useful index (pp. 395–406), and résumé (pp. 407–410) follow. The book is generously illustrated with full-page and smaller images, the majority of which are in colour and presented with a scale, as well as illustrations, graphs, and tables. The inclusion of an illustrated catalogue is to be highly commended as it allows the reader easy reference of the material for comparative research. The drawn figures complement and clarify both textual descriptions and associated photographs.

Introduction and Part I (chapters 1–14). As Dr. Drandaki readily acknowledges, the majority of the wares in her study were purchased by Antonis Benakis on the Egyptian antiquities market while he lived in Egypt and in the early decades after his relocation to Athens in 1926. The British collector Robert G. Gayer-Anderson and three well-known Cairo antiquities dealers – Maurice Nahman, Phocion Tanos, and Dionysios Kytikas – are cited as the chief sources of the material (p. 14). Where known, the author includes the acquisition details in the catalogue. In other words, much of the Benaki copperware is presumed to have originated in Egypt, where the objects were acquired. Thus, the book's rationale is two-fold: 1. to contextualize the Benaki copperware within the broad Late Antiquity corpus (p. 13); 2. in turn, for the Benaki copperware to contribute to characterizing the nature and role of Egyptian copperware, particularly in the debate over so-called Coptic ware (p. 14). 'Coptic ware' is a contested term and concept for copperware found in Western Europe that was initially attributed to Coptic culture, the implications being that independent production centres in Egypt supplied or influenced copperware in a large area of Western Europe throughout the Late Antiquity period. Dr. Drandaki presents the theses and key references concerning this issue (e.g. p. 14, n. 12; p. 301, n. 39).[1] In the past, the research of these wares focused on morpho-

1 See also A. Drandaki: From Centre to Periphery and Beyond: The Diffusion of Models in Late Antique Metalware. In: A. Eastmond/L. James (eds.): Wonderful Things: Byzantium through its Art. Papers from the Forty-Second Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, London, 20–22 March 2009. Farnham 2013 (Publications of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies 16), pp. 163–184.

logical-functional typologies[2] or compositional groupings[3] to describe and/or explain synergies and variations between Eastern- and Western-sourced finds. Recent work on patterns of production, distribution and use suggests there were multiple production centres and middle-distance sea trade within Western Europe, but weaker evidence for contact with the Eastern Mediterranean than first thought.[4] So, what is the Benaki collection's place in such narratives? This question, then, represents both the major challenge and opportunity of Dr. Drandaki's research.

The author energetically examines the spheres of influence on the collection of Benaki copperware in the context of a continuity of metalworking traditions with the earlier Roman Empire, and following trends which emerged from the art of the period, to those which extended to the medieval Byzantine and Islamic periods. Questions of production origin, functionality, and dating are deliberated alongside evidence from contemporary papyrus sources, as well as comparisons with stylistically similar finds from other collections and finds with archaeological context, in particular burial sites in the Aswan region. Comparative research, however, can be challenging when one is working with what Oscar Muscarella calls "orphans",[5] i. e., objects without archaeological context. Archaeology is concerned with the contexts of objects because they embody a rich network of associations and contrasts that helps induce meaning.[6] When these dimensions of variation are absent, the capacity to explore an object's historical and sociologi-

2 For example, J. Werner: Italisches und koptisches Bronzegeschirr des 6. und 7. Jahrhunderts nordwärts der Alpen. In: J. F. Crome (ed.): Mnemosynon Theodor Wiegand. München 1938, pp. 74–86; P. de Palol: Bronces hispanovisigodos de origen mediterráneo. I: Jarritos y patenas litúrgicos. Barcelona 1950; K. Werz: "Sogenanntes Koptisches" Buntmetallgeschirr: Eine methodische und analytische Untersuchung zu den als koptisch bezeichneten Buntmetallgefäßen. Diss. Frankfurt am Main 2000. Konstanz 2005.

3 For example, H. Dannheimer: Zur Herkunft der „koptischen" Bronzegefäße der Merowingerzeit. In: BVBl 44, 1979, pp. 123–147.

4 M. Beghelli/J. Pinar Gil: Cast Bronze Vessels in the 6th–9th Centuries: Production Centres, Circulation and Use in Ecclesiastical and Secular Contexts. In: AKB 49, 2019, pp. 413–442.

5 O. W. Muscarella: Bronze and Iron. Ancient Near Eastern Artifacts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York 1988.

6 I. Hodder/S. Hutson: Reading the Past. Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology. 3. ed. Cambridge/New York 2003.

cal meaning can be seriously impaired. For the Benaki pieces under consideration, this means their original environment and chronology cannot be objectively confirmed because the objects were acquired from the antiquities market. The author does not shy away from describing examples that were altered in later periods, sometimes by antiquities dealers endeavouring to make a sale (p. 55). It is known, for instance, that Gayer-Anderson would 'restore' objects he acquired and sold, including adding non-original components to enhance their beauty and raise their value.[7] It is important, therefore, that studies of museum collections set out the low-level inferences and assumptions used in presenting results of research. To her credit, Dr. Drandaki acknowledges the inherent problems, writing "[the Benaki objects] can offer no information apart from their morphological and technical characteristics; dating them or even attributing their production to a geographical area is entirely dependent on the subjective criteria devised by the researcher" (p. 13). Yet, the majority of objects are described as having an Egyptian provenance (about a third of the objects are described as having an unknown provenance). Thus, we arrive at a fundamental difference between the characterization of provenance for objects in an art history or antiquarian sense, contrasted with that for archaeological artefacts: that is, 'provenance' as a record of ownership of a work of art or antique (the chain of custody, if you will), versus 'provenance' as the object's complete documented history, including where it was found ('provenience' is sometimes used for the latter). The matter can be baffling for the uninitiated. There is no dispute that most of the Benaki copperwares in the book were acquired in Egypt, but an unwary reader might assume on the basis of the 'provenance' attributions that there is more precision and certainty about an object's original context than is currently the case.

Nevertheless, an object associated with a known culture can yield certain knowledge of its past with proper study and analysis.[8] To this end, there is a significant amount of meticulous research behind each item in the catalogue. Various lines of inquiry are explored to investigate potential technological and societal linkages, trends, and developments in relation to the material. The depth of this type of research is showcased by the stimulating

7 L. Foxcroft: Gayer-Anderson. The Life and Afterlife of the Irish Pasha. Cairo/New York 2016, pp. 116, 216–217.

8 J. Wiseman: Scholarship and Provenience in the Study of Artifacts. In: JFA 11.1, 1984, pp. 67–77.

and wide-ranging commentary on the Benaki ewer (inv. no. 44/MM11512, pp. 109–117, fig. 84), which was acquired in Egypt and is said to come from Sakha (Xois) in Lower Egypt. Epigraphic, iconographic, stylistic and manufacturing elements are explored in detail. Dr. Drandaki identifies the ewer's structural characteristics among copper alloy, silver and ceramic forms found in Western Europe, North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean, which help to consolidate interpretations of its c. sixth century chronology and potential function. Examination of the meaning and epigraphy of the inscription on the lid provides additional information about chronology and functionality. Detailed investigations of the punched and engraved hunting scene on the ewer body are provided, not only in terms of the iconographic tradition represented, but also an art-historic appreciation of the method of production and execution in comparison with contemporaneous engraved hunting scenes. Manufacturing elements are also covered. This is only one of many examples of what the book does particularly well: bringing together diverse threads of information to explore the items in the collection. Evidence from contemporary papyri and epigraphic styles are employed throughout to illustrate functionality. Comparative typology is used for dating and provenance, including detailed examination of decorative trends, shapes and features – such as the regional trends of bowls with Vandyke openwork (pp. 94–98) – which later inform the conclusions about the Benaki-ware's role in contemporary metalworking. More broadly, Dr. Drandaki considers the collection in the context of wide-ranging developments in Late Roman imperial iconography such as stylizations of the human form and the use of zoomorphic motifs, finding clear alignment with them, yet reflecting enduring links to Hellenistic, Roman and eastern traditions. The author also compares the bulk composition ratios of numerous Benaki wares with the results of other relevant Eastern Mediterranean and Western European chemical studies seeking confirmation of East–West metalworking traditions (pp. 280–282). The diverse research approaches provide a rich and abundant discourse on the nature of the Benaki collection in the context of general Late Antiquity copperware features and trends. Having established the morphological credentials of the Benaki copperware, the author proceeds to address the issue of 'Coptic ware' in the final chapter.

Part II (chapters 15–17) of the book brings together the threads and arguments that the author had introduced in the Part I-chapter discussions.

These are presented in a series of focused theses divided into chapters on alloying and production methods, evidence of workshops, and decorative compositions and treatments. I will spend a little time discussing these chapters as they constitute the seminal parts of Dr. Drandaki's interpretations and findings about the Benaki copperware.

Chapter 15 ("Technical Data from the Study of Vessels in the Benaki Museum", pp. 273–285) focuses on the technology of the copperware, especially alloying and production. The book presents information about the important extraction, production, and fabrication processes, and how they potentially shape and influence the metalworking environment. Among other things, chapter 15 explores the hypothesis that in Late Antiquity there were different traditions of comparable European and Eastern Mediterranean wares based on alloy composition. The argument of regionally distinguishable alloy characteristics of Late Antiquity copperware emerged from late-1970s and early-1980s analytical work on relevant museum objects and archaeological finds.[9] Dr. Drandaki argues that the Benaki-ware's chemical-composition results are consistent with these earlier analyses in that the Benaki wares fall into a category of Eastern Mediterranean vessels that have lower levels of lead (Pb) and higher levels of zinc (Zn) than those of European provenance (pp. 280–281, p. 305). These conclusions are used as additional support for the burgeoning narrative that the Benaki wares represent an Eastern Mediterranean tradition of metalworking that was nevertheless part of a broader group of copperware styles and variants circulating around the same time throughout the empire.

While I am eager for evidence of regional alloying traditions involving Late Antiquity copperware, it would be remiss not to mention certain methodological concerns in chapter 15 that must temper this excitement. Before doing so, I recognize that the chapter represents somewhat of a work-in-progress and that further archaeometric investigations are planned (p. 275, n. 18).

My first concern is about the quality of the data. This is essential for comparing the results of analyses that were clearly made using different equipment and analytical protocols, and which occurred under different condi-

9 For example, Dannheimer (note 3). P. Richards: Byzantine Bronze Vessels in England and Europe: the Origins of Anglo-Saxon Trade (Unpublished Diss. University of Cambridge 1980).

tions. For the present work, an explicit description of the analytical methodology, including the X-ray fluorescence (XRF) device(s) and sampling procedures employed, ought to have been included. I found a little information about sample preparation: parts of the patina of 83/MM11511 were cleaned for the XRF analysis (p. 185); sample 39070 is listed as "unprepared" (fig. 233); in several cases, exposure patches (related to XRF sample preparation?) were visible in some images (e. g. fig. 125). The reason why it is important to be clear about the analytical methodology for every specimen in a comparative study such as this is because there are quantification differences between analysers. XRF is popular for the surface analysis of high-value objects, particularly as a point-and-shoot device, because one can minimize disfiguring and permanent damage to the object that might otherwise occur from extractive sampling. XRF can be quite useful for identifying the bulk composition of surface (or near-surface) material. However, it has certain technical limitations, and factors such as sample heterogeneity can significantly affect quantification.[10] The surface of an ancient copper-based object is not the homogenous, smooth, and representative surface needed for high-integrity XRF characterization. Deposited in the earth for a long time, objects made of reactive metal usually undergo significant change. Electrochemical reactions of metallic constituents exposed to ground moisture and salts can result in precipitates and segregated layers of vastly varying composition; likewise, preferential leaching of one alloy element over another can result in events such as dezincification or tin enrichment, belying the chemical values of the core. Different analytical methods can, and often do, produce substantially different results.[11] We do not have formal information about the sampling procedures of the Benaki-ware analyses but it seems likely that surface or near-surface sampling was conducted. The existing historical analyses to which the Benaki results are

10 A. N. Shugar: Portable X-ray Fluorescence and Archaeology: Limitations of the Instrument and Suggested Methods to Achieve Desired Results. In: R. A. Armitage/ J. H. Burton (eds.): Archaeological Chemistry VIII. Washington 2013 (ACS Symposium Series 1147), pp. 173–193.

11 H. W. Nørgaard: Portable XRF on Prehistoric Bronze Artefacts: Limitations and Use for the Detection of Bronze Age Metal Workshops. In: Open Archaeology 3, 2017, pp. 101–122. Dannheimer (note 3) declared the incompatibilities between certain different quantification methods used in his study, pp. 131, 141, 144. Dr. Drandaki herself acknowledges that in the case of censer MM11469, earlier atomic absorption spectroscopy results differ from those of the XRF analysis conducted in the present work (p. 135, n. 1; cf. fig. 233).

compared were conducted using (variously) optical emission spectroscopy with/or atomic absorption spectrometry, quantitative spectral analysis, or unknown methods. Details of their respective analytical protocols and conditions are not presented but some of these methods would likely have required extractive sampling of the bulk, especially if the sample were prepared as an aqueous solution. But, without knowing more about all the analyses involved in this comparative research, we cannot be assured of the quality of the data. To quote an oft-used idiom, we could be comparing apples with oranges.

My second concern is that the methodology for the statistical analyses of the chemical results in chapter 15 is also not clear. Dr. Drandaki explains that, for the statistical analyses, she considers "only objects that correspond to the time frame under examination" (p. 278), and that the medieval Islamic and Byzantine vessels are included in the chemical-composition-results table (fig. 233) "for the purposes of comparison" (p. 275). However, the compositional data of this much later material seems to have made its way into the relevant statistical aggregates. For example, one could reasonably infer from the text (p. 278) that ten brasses are represented in the "proportions of alloy types" pie chart (fig. 234). There are exactly ten brass specimens listed in the results table of fig. 233, one of which is the surely out-of-scope eleventh to twelfth century censer from Nicaea. I was also hoping to understand the seeming inclusion of unprovenanced objects into the statistical account. Using the same example, of the ten brasses listed in the results table (fig. 233), five are classed as unprovenanced. Are they included in the statistics used for comparing regional alloying traditions and, if so, how does the unprovenanced material affect the interpretation?

These issues potentially affect the robustness of Dr. Drandaki's arguments in the key section of chapter 15 entitled "The Problem of Provenance and Lead/Zinc Content" (pp. 280–282). In this section, Dr. Drandaki lays out her arguments of a "difference between the metallurgical traditions" of finds from European tombs and those which come from Egyptian/Eastern Mediterranean contexts, which may signify a "difference in the conditions in which they were produced" (p. 281). Based on the aforementioned analyses, Dr. Drandaki concludes that the Benaki wares have lower levels of lead (Pb) and higher levels of zinc (Zn) than European comparanda, thus being consistent with Dannheimer's 1979 and Richards's 1980 results

for Egyptian/Eastern samples.[12] For the sake of brevity, I focus on Dannheimer's results as they are the most prominently used in the section. The author summarizes Dannheimer's results as follows: "in the majority of vessels in the Western European finds [Dannheimer] discovered concentrations of lead in the region of Pb: < 22 % and levels of zinc between 1 % and 5 %, while by contrast the Egyptian vessels contained Pb: 4–15 % and Zn: < 11%" (p. 280). Because the upper bound for Pb (< 22 %) and upper bound for Zn (< 11 %) quoted here include the ranges of the respective other geographic groups, a clear distinction is not immediately obvious unless one consults the original paper. Having done so, I summarize my understanding of Dannheimer's results: from 22 (valid) specimens tested, he found the copper (Cu), Pb and tin (Sn) levels were similarly variable in the comparable European and Egyptian specimens examined, but he observed a trend of lower Zn levels in European specimens (n = 13, Zn 0.08–5.2 %) and higher Zn in Egyptian ones (including an item from Izmir) (n = 9, Zn 8.2–11.5 %).[13] I was not able to ascertain from the elemental distribution pie charts presented in figs. 235 and 236 of the present work, or the related text (pp. 280–281), which of the 85 specimens listed in the results table (fig. 233) were included in the comparison with Dannheimer's results. In any case, no matter if I included all 85 specimens or excluded obviously out-of-scope specimens, I was unable to recreate the same results as Dr. Drandaki in that I found almost half the Benaki specimens conformed to Dannheimer's 'European alloy' profile with a Zn composition of no more than 5.0 %.

What does this mean in terms of the hypothesis of identifiable trends in alloying? Frankly, the question is still open. To summarize: 1. in terms of the chemical analyses, until there is clarification of the methodologies, we must assume apples are being compared with oranges; 2. more transparency is needed regarding which of the results were in scope for the statistical analyses; and 3. the comparisons with Dannheimer's results should be reconsidered once 1. and 2. are settled. To be clear, the present issues with

12 See note 9.

13 Dannheimer (note 3), table 1, p. 141, and p. 145. Dannheimer analysed 26 samples, but excluded from his conclusions sample 6b as modern, and samples 6a, 6c, and 7 because their complex mouldings may have necessitated composition that deviated from the prevailing practice and which also came from objects that were assembled in modern times from parts that did not originally belong together.

chapter 15 are ones of ambiguity: they do not negate Dr. Drandaki's broad arguments and conclusions about the Benaki ware. Moreover, it is conceivable that the author intends to refine her conclusions as part of further scientific work planned for this group.

In general, I found chapter 15 less polished than the rest of what is an otherwise very thorough and high-quality book. The XRF-results table (fig. 233, pp. 276–277) displays a good summary of the details, but it required tighter editing to advance its uses as the key reference point for the analytical work. For example, it would have been very helpful to present the results in catalogue order rather than by alloy. At the moment, plural samples from the same object are displayed in different parts of the table. In other cases, multiple samples were not included in the table, contradicting the statement that "all the analyses [...] are included in figure 233" (p. 275). It is important to understand how specimens with multiple and/or divergent sample results were treated for the purposes of the statistical analyses. Finally, there are a number of referencing and mislabeling issues in the table.

In chapters 16 ("Copperware Workshops", pp. 287–291) and 17 ("Shapes and Decoration", pp. 293–303, the focus turns to regional and diachronic traditions of copperware industry, and representations in terms of decorative motifs, iconography and design. In these chapters, Dr. Drandaki does a remarkable job of considering the Benaki finds in the context of societal and political developments of the Later Roman Empire, and pondering their effects on specialization, workshops, as well as copperware traditions in art and design. This part of the book provides fresh insights and arguments based on a variety of sources of evidence. For instance, Dr. Drandaki points out that we have very little information about the crafters of these wares, as the primary sources scarcely provide accounts of coppersmithing. Moreover, there is little to indicate the location of contemporary copper workshops in Egypt, and how they fit into the urban fabric, although evidence emerging from the artisanal quarters of fifth to sixth century Elephantine may provide new insights (p. 290). Nevertheless, in chapter 16, the author extracts details about craft specialization and guilds from contemporary papyri, supported by pictorial representations, including the Megalopsychia mosaic from Daphne near Antioch. The latter shows a coppersmith's shop attached to a martyrion that may have been engaged in making pilgrim-badges (p. 289). Dr. Drandaki correlates this with roughly contemporary evidence of workshops in urban areas focused on producing

very specific items, as well as ambiguities in the literature concerning contemporary references to coppersmithing. The emerging picture is one of product-based specialization, which may call into doubt previous thinking that specialization was based on the type of raw materials worked (p. 291).

This notion of fluidity or a continuum between crafting traditions and materials is explored in more detail in chapter 17, which looks at the Benaki pieces from a design perspective. Here, it is argued that the copperware was mass-produced in organized workshops, with highly standardized shapes and decorations, but within the context of prevailing silverware models and earlier Roman artistic traditions that influenced a design continuum in not only base metals, but glass and ceramic (pp. 296–301). The artistic *koine* of the period is also explored – one of intense stylization and impersonalization of the human form, and a tendency to present scenes that are simple, symbolic, and whose meaning might be accessible to anyone (p. 297). In the case of zoomorphic motifs, however, the author argues there is an unbroken linkage to earlier Greco-Roman decorative traditions, appropriated in a Christian context, and which continued in Sassanid and early Islamic metalwork (p. 299). Having explored the adaptations and traditions of shapes, functions and designs from earlier periods, we come to the thematic report and conclusions addressing one of the key matters of the book. This is presented in the section of chapter 17 titled "'Coptic' Metalware and the European Finds" (pp. 301–303), which contributes important deductions to the debate on so-called Coptic ware. Building on earlier research as well as the present work on the Benaki ware, Dr. Drandaki proposes that basic types of copperware and their variants were circulating at the same time throughout the empire and beyond in regions or among social groups that were part of its immediate sphere of influence. She remarks that Nubian and European burial copperwares have similar but not identical morphologies, and she shows, through specific features such as the style of the feet on bowls with movable handles (chapter 6), for example, that these designs developed in parallel, drawn from types and table customs dating to the earlier Roman period (pp. 302–303). On the basis of morphological and chronological data from the literature, other collections, and archaeological evidence, therefore, Dr. Drandaki suggests there was no single centre of copperware production in Egypt, on the contrary there were likely multiple centres of production following dominant trends across the empire and its spheres of influence. These final chapters

provide a satisfying discourse of the entire corpus of material, and a segue to the short and succinct conclusions (pp. 305–306).

Dr. Drandaki is to be commended for her meticulous, wide-ranging research, and her skill in finding and interpreting evidence from virtually every conceivable angle, despite the lack of contextual, archaeological precision of the material. In this work, she deftly synthesizes numerous complex threads of iconographic, textual, archaeological, and morphological evidence into a cohesive picture. Hopefully, the methodological concerns in chapter 15 can be addressed in the further archaeometric investigations planned for the Benaki ware. Nonetheless, this is a well-presented, beautifully illustrated, and utterly navigable book, which will become a valuable and important resource for Late Antiquity copperware research in the future.

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