

*Greek History*

In 1854, the Senior Greek Class at John Owens College (the forerunner institution to the University of Manchester) read Demosthenes 20 *Against Leptines* as a set text. At the end of term, students were faced with such examination questions as ‘How much corn did the Athenians annually import from the Euxine?’ and ‘What calculations have been in part founded on this passage as to the population of ancient Attica?’ The study of this text was topical, as it coincided with British involvement in the Crimean war. At the time of writing (April 2008), the American President’s visit to Kiev is indicative of the revival of Western interest in this part of the world. A parallel scholarly development is suggested in Moreno’s book on the Athenian grain supply, which shows the fruitfulness of looking beyond the Mediterranean basin and towards the Black Sea area when writing Athenian history.<sup>1</sup> Moreno concludes that, in the fourth century BC, Athenian aristocrats, posing as democrats, promoted the royal economy of the Spartocid dynasty in order to secure the passage of their grain to Athens. Moreno makes a clear case for the reliance of the Athenians on imported grain in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Some of the analyses are controversial, in particular those which are based on notions such as self-sufficiency (see Foxhall below), carrying capacity, and the portrayal of Athens as a consumer city (a concept problematized by Vlassopoulos [see below]). Contentious also is the interpretation of some archaeological evidence (such as that at Agios Vasileios on the north-east coast of Euboea [131]), the portrayal of an elite-controlled Athenian democracy, and the sweeping use of the term ‘demagogue’. Nevertheless, this is a highly stimulating formulation of an old question.

Challenging the scholarly tendency to pronounce the eclipse of the *polis* in this period, Graham Oliver<sup>2</sup> shows how the Athenians confronted the challenges of an era in which the fragile commercial relations of the fourth century had been destabilized, in which the Athenians struggled to maintain control of the Piraeus (and periodically their own countryside), and in which the population fell in many parts of Attica. Oliver demonstrates how the Athenians developed a military strategy and command structure that protected areas of Attica (in particular Rhamnous, Eleusis, Vouliagmeni, and the area around Porto Rapti) that were important in the exploitation of the Attic countryside. Against the old belief that Hellenistic warfare was dominated by mercenaries, Oliver demonstrates the reliance of the Hellenistic *polis* on its citizens’ performance of military obligations. He shows how the civic institutions of the *polis* both encouraged the residents of Attica to contribute to the security of the city and negotiated with overseas donors in order to guarantee the food supply: Athens’ interaction with the rest of the Mediterranean is attested in the epigraphic evidence for honorific decrees. Oliver’s reading of ancient economics highlights the role of state interventionism. The book shines light on important but obscure institutions: the discussion of Athenian *sitonai* is the most detailed in any language. It also demonstrates the close correlation between the history of economics and that of political and military events. Oliver’s book is one that presents itself as ‘bottom-up’ history, which starts with the perspective of those ‘relatively unknown people who worked the land’ (5), and achieves this through a detailed

<sup>1</sup> *Feeding the Democracy. The Athenian Grain Supply in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC.* By Alfonso Moreno. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. 440. 3 maps, 5 tables. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-0-199-22840-9.

<sup>2</sup> *War, Food, and Politics in Early Hellenistic Athens.* By G. J. Oliver. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xxiii + 360. 7 maps, 8 figures. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-19-928350-7.

deployment of archaeological and epigraphical evidence. Eidinow's is another book that successfully pursues history from below.<sup>3</sup> Focussing on the question tablets directed at the oracle at Dodona and curse tablets deposited in wells, graves, or rubbish-pits across the Greek world, she demonstrates the ways in which divination and cursing served as tools for risk management: oracles, she suggests, were used by uncertain individuals who sought assurance that they were making the right choice; curses were used by those who were in a dangerous situation or position of conflict as a way of reducing the powers of their enemies. We are drawn away from the scholarly focus on the role of the Delphic oracle as a device for collective decision-making or justifying state-sanctioned decisions. Eidinow, deploying laconic and fragmentary material with skill, emphasizes personal (as opposed to collective) aspirations: the ways in which individuals dealt with the risks and uncertainties of health, business, love, travel, and rivalries of all kinds (especially choregic [Chapter 8] and litigious [Chapter 9]) demonstrate Eidinow's wider point. But the evidence for binding curses reminds us that high politics permeated every form of discourse in ancient Athens: her catalogue of curse tablets includes one curse directed against Demetrius of Phaleron, leader of Athens 317–307 (SGD 14, p. 408) and another which may be Lycurgus of Athens (NGCT 5, p. 438). Harding's *The Story of Athens*<sup>4</sup> translates, in one affordable volume, the complete fragments of the Atthidographers. The introduction is extremely useful, and presents Harding's own view of the Atthidographers as chroniclers whose accounts reflected not just the communal memory of the different communities that populated Attica. His Atthidographers made use of archaeological remains in their reconstructions of the past and, against Jacoby's interpretation, deployed documentary evidence with increasing sophistication. An underlying theme of this publication is that Atthidography, which started in the fifth century BC, with Hellanikos of Lesbos, as a study of mythography, chronography, and ethnography, developed into contemporary historiography in the hands of fourth- and third-century practitioners such as Androtion and Philochorus. Harding wants his readers to appreciate the extent to which the Atthidographers worked upon specific themes: this position informs the arrangement of material, which is ordered according to personality (e.g. Kekrops and Theseus) or topic (the Areopagus, the Persian Wars). This makes the volume particularly useful (and sometimes revealing) as a tool for investigating different traditions or historical events. The ordering of the material makes the shape of the publication distinct from Jacoby's author-by-author presentation in *FGrH* (which is followed by *Brill's New Jacoby*, which will offer, in both print and electronic form, translations and new commentaries on all the authors in *FGrH*). While the Athenian *polis* is at the heart of the Atthidographers' view of history (and also of that of Oliver and Moreno), the central concern of Vlassopoulos' monograph is to think beyond the *polis*.<sup>5</sup> He challenges the orthodoxy that privileges the city-state as the most important form of

<sup>3</sup> *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks*. By Esther Eidinow. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xvi + 516. 6 figures, 3 maps. Hardback £80, ISBN: 978-0-19-927778-0.

<sup>4</sup> *The Story of Athens. The Fragments of the Local Chronicles of Attika*. Edited and translated with an introduction and commentary by Phillip Harding. London, Routledge, 2008. Pp. xvi + 272. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-0-415-33808-0; paperback £18.99, ISBN: 978-0-415-33809-7.

<sup>5</sup> *Unthinking the Greek Polis. Ancient Greek History beyond Eurocentrism*. By Kostas Vlassopoulos. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 288. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-521-87744-2.

association in the classical Greek world. Vlassopoulos shows that modern scholars have used the notion of the *polis* as a way of understanding Greek history that made it reproduce the narrative of the nation state. This point leads him to highlight the limits to *polis*-bounded approaches to history (the notion of the consumer city is neatly problematized in Chapter 5). Vlassopoulos offers a novel interpretation of Aristotle's concept of the *polis*, reading it not as a 'bounded entity', but rather as 'the agglomeration of a variety of associations and relationships' (96). Such associations have varying aims and configurations that might not coincide with those of the *polis*: the upshot of this is to make the *polis* seem less of an independent and self-sufficient entity than modern scholarship widely assumes. His concluding proposal, that ancient methods of reconstructing the past (Aristotelian analyses of political philosophy, the travel narrative, and invented dialogue) can still offer value to modern analyses of the Mediterranean world-system, suggests wider implications not just for the writing of history but also for the meta-disciplines of historiography and the history of scholarship.

Pébarthe's monograph<sup>6</sup> reassesses the relationship between Athenian political culture and the public uses of writing in ancient Athens. Setting aside the question about the links between democratic ideology and the public use of writing, Pébarthe demonstrates the great extent to which the inhabitants of Attica would have been exposed to writing. Engagement with written documents would not have been restricted to those involved with the politics, jurisdiction, and central administration of the city but extended also to those involved in the administration of demes, temples, and phratries, and those who used written communication in private or commercial contexts. He suggests that Harris' estimate of 5–10 per cent literacy is an underestimate of the true engagement with writing: he argues that not only literates but also those with a more rudimentary understanding of writing would have dealt with written documents. Pébarthe shows how writing was central to the functioning of both domestic political activity and also Athens' relations (hegemonic and otherwise) with other states. The lack of thorough engagement with the commemorative and dedicatory deployment of writing means that this is not a comprehensive study of the phenomenon, but anyone interested in literacy or the use of writing will need to take into consideration Pébarthe's take on the subject alongside the works of Harris, Thomas, and Sickinger.

Sommerstein and Fletcher's *Horkos*<sup>7</sup> is the first volume deriving from a Leverhulme-funded project, which began in 2004, on the oath in the archaic and classical Greek world. The significance of the oath, a ritually reinforced declaration (2), is manifest to any reader of Greek literary or epigraphical texts: even Thucydides, who does his best to take religion out of history, refers to them 269 times. The project is lending a long-overdue focus to the subject: it has already produced an open-access, online, fully searchable database of oaths;<sup>8</sup> a two-volume monograph, which will be a comprehensive study of the phenomenon, is in preparation. The present publication derives from a conference and contains seventeen papers exploring the nature and function of oaths in Greek society, a set of case studies exemplifying historical or literary moments when oaths are the centre of attention, and the connections between phenomena related to Greek oaths and those

<sup>6</sup> *Cité, démocratie et écriture. Histoire de l'alphabétisation d'Athènes à l'Époque Classique*. By Christophe Pébarthe. Paris, De Boccard, 2006. Pp. 398. Paperback E/45, ISBN: 2-7018-0204-0.

<sup>7</sup> *Horkos. The Oath in Greek Society*. Edited by Alan H. Sommerstein and Judith Fletcher. Exeter, Bristol Phoenix Press, 2007. Pp. xii + 304. Hardback £50, ISBN: 978-1-904675-67-9.

<sup>8</sup> (see <<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/classics/oaths/database.php>>, accessed 15 May 2008).

of the near-eastern, Italian, and Roman societies with which they engaged. Some important distinctions are drawn, such as the division between assertory and promissory contexts; the differences between religious, rhetorical, informal, regular, and specific oaths are made clear. The picture that emerges is that oaths were important in political life (Rhodes, Shear, Wareh), international relations (Bolmarcich), cultural activities (Perry), and the law courts, where they could be used to reinforce claim rights (Carter) or to settle disputes (Carawan). But at the same time, we are led to see that, when it was convenient, the Greeks were able to manipulate them either by using them to make moral points, in the construction of literary tropes (Fletcher, Allan, Sommerstein, Garani), or even by ignoring them (Hornblower, Wareh, Perry).

Kinzl's *Companion on the Greek world in the classical period* is a work of unrivalled geographical and conceptual scope.<sup>9</sup> The papers are up to date, with excellent bibliographies, and will be of use to students and professionals. The opening essay traces the origins of the notion of a 'classical' epoch and makes a case for its coherence and usefulness. Three essays on the sources treat literary, epigraphical, and archaeological evidence with balance. Next follow seven studies of the Greek world according to area: Brock's essay on the relations between Sparta, Athens, and the wider Greek world and Brodersen's analysis of 'third Greece' are followed by papers on areas often thought of as the peripheries of the Greek world: Archibald's contribution on the Balkan peninsula is a novel way of introducing Macedonia to the history of Greece. The next twelve contributions bring together expert studies of topics ranging from the natural environment to economic reality and from ethnicity to democracy. Chronological narrative is saved for the last four of the twenty-seven chapters. The volume demonstrates that Greek history consists of much more than political institutions and great power conflicts; it integrates literary and material evidence; it amounts to one of the most successful attempt at creating a non-Athenocentric history of classical Greece. Moreover, the arrangement of the volume suggests an editorial decision to think of Greek history not just in terms of the chronological narrative but also in terms of spatial and thematic accounts, though the all-too-short editorial preface misses the opportunity systematically to explain this move.

Foxhall provides us with one of the best recent discussions of the ancient economy.<sup>10</sup> Her focus may be the 'place of the olive tree in the agricultural regimes and economies of classical . . . and archaic Greece' (1) but this excellent book has much more than this. Chapter 2, in particular, sets out the framework of Foxhall's understanding of the ancient economy as the economy of the household. But, as the author reassures us, this is not to subscribe to any kind of primitivist view. Rather, the economy of the household is understood as a very elaborate system of interdependence, risk avoidance, and profit-seeking strategies. Foxhall sees the production of wealthy households as *domestic production*, rather than subsistence production, mostly characterized by opportunism and flexibility and determined by the sociopolitical-cultural context of the Greek *polis*. She makes an excellent case for mixed farming being the norm in classical Greece and shows convincingly that olive oil (but not olives) had the status of a 'semi-luxury' food, which is not what most of us would

<sup>9</sup> *A Companion to the Classical Greek World*. Edited by Konrad H. Kinzl. Oxford, Blackwell, 2006. Pp. xix + 606. 1 map, 53 illustrations. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-0-631-23014-4.

<sup>10</sup> *Olive Cultivation in Ancient Greece. Seeking the Ancient Economy*. By Lin Foxhall. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xvii + 294. 66 figures, 8 tables. Hardback £65, ISBN: 9780198152880.

expect when thinking of olive oil in a Mediterranean context. Her careful analysis of the relatively few archaeological remnants of olive presses from classical and early Hellenistic Greece shows that oil pressing was not undertaken on a large scale (compared to, say, Spain under the Roman Empire). But her biggest achievement is to demonstrate one way in which discussions of the ‘economy’ can move beyond the ‘primitivist’ versus ‘modernist’ debate, or indeed the emphasis on ‘subsistence’ or ‘self-sufficiency’, be that of the *polis* or the household. By examining olive production and consumption, Foxhall produces a convincing understanding of the ancient economy embedded in the mentalities and social structures of the Greek world.

‘A full investigation of the “Greek custom” and all its ramifications . . . in the end would resemble something not very far from a full-scale social, cultural and political history of that loose cultural federation of politics that we call “ancient Greece”’ (466). So states Davidson in his new book on Greek love;<sup>11</sup> this may be a bold statement, but he achieves nothing less. This is a *tour de force* that takes us from the world of mythology and stellar constellations to the history of scholarship (and its obsession with sodomy) via Dover and Foucault, to an analysis of peculiar institutions throughout the Greek world. There are many strengths in the book: the writing style is simply delicious (Dover is the ‘Grand Ayatollah’ of studies on sex in ancient Greece [107]); there is meticulous and innovative interpretation of customs that had mostly evaded the attention of scholarship (e.g. the Cretan institution of abduction in Ephorus); and there is a breathtaking range of knowledge of the world beyond Athens (Sparta, Crete, Elis, Macedonia, Samos, Lesbos, to name a few). Some of the conclusions reached may prove to be controversial, as, for example, the suggestion that there was such a thing as a *syzygy*, or same-sex wedding, in ancient Greece, which was formally recognized by the communities involved, or indeed that the origins of Greek homosexuality may well be discovered among the Aryans. Davidson, however, is very convincing in his arguments. And certainly, his claim that we need to move away from the modern obsession with penetration and look at homosexuality in its cultural context will be central to any future discussion on homosexuality in the ancient Greek world.

*Persian Responses*<sup>12</sup> throws light on the great variety of interaction between the Achaemenids and their empire. It examines the often problematic relationship between the Greeks and the Persians through the looking glass of classical Greek authors, but it also attempts to move beyond the limitations of Greek authors. While inevitably many classicists will find the contributions on Thucydides’ (Hyland), Xenophon’s (Danzing), or Athenaeus’ (Lenfant) treatment of the Achaemenids useful, more interesting conclusions are reached in the contributions that move beyond an emphasis on Greco-Persian relations. Lloyd examines Darius’ building work in Egypt, while Maffre uses the example of Phrygian elite members participating in the administration of the empire as a case study of integration. Integration and acculturation is also the focus of Raimond’s contribution on Lycian cults. Achaemenid use of local peoples is exemplified in the publication of a new document attesting to Babylonian workers at a royal site in Persia (Henkelman and Kleber).

<sup>11</sup> *The Greeks and Greek Love. A Radical Reappraisal of Homosexuality in Ancient Greece*. By James Davidson. London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2007. Pp. xxii + 634. 58 figures, 3 maps. Hardback £30, ISBN: 9780297819974.

<sup>12</sup> *Persian Responses. Political and Cultural Interaction with(in) the Achaemenid Empire*. Edited by Christopher Tuplin. Swansea, Classical Press of Wales, 2007. Pp. xxv + 372. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-1-905125-18-0.

'Greek' readings of the Achaemenids inform the contribution by Vasunia on the philosophical borrowings of Zarathustra, while Root revisits the Apadana relief from the viewpoint of an upper-class Athenian. Lane Fox, meanwhile, attempts to dismantle Briant's argument that Alexander the Great was the 'last of the Achaemenids'. The two final contributions, on the reception of Persian ruins in European thought (Allen and Simpson), show us how fruitful discussions on the Achaemenid empire can be when integrated into the history of European scholarship.

The last two decades or so have seen a proliferation of interest in Sparta. The Centre for Spartan and Peloponnesian studies in Nottingham is perhaps its most visible manifestation. *Sparta and War* is another stimulating volume within this trend.<sup>13</sup> The papers focus on the impact of warfare on Spartan society, a subject which, surprisingly considering the importance of military affairs for Sparta, has not received adequate attention. There are three thematic units: war and society (Ducat, Figueira, Low, and Hodkinson), military and civic geography (Christien, Lupi) and military practice and policy (Humble, Millender, Ruzé, and Powell). Ducat demonstrates that the Spartans had no consistent means with which to deal with those judged guilty of cowardice in battle, while Low, in an excellent contribution, shows how commemoration of the Spartan war dead depended on location: memorials outside Sparta were used as a basis for interstate relations; inside Sparta they constituted 'bottom-up' commemorations. Lupi suggests that the 'Pitanate *lochos*' in Herodotus was based on Sparta's three tribes. Millender offers an interesting investigation of Sparta's use of mercenary forces, seeing them as an essential component of the Spartan empire-building. Finally, Powell provides an intriguing explanation of why Sparta did not destroy Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian war: Sparta was afraid that, by destroying Athens, the vast Athenian wealth might have ended up in the pockets of individual Spartans, harming, in this way, the *ethos* of the Spartan society.

The *Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare* is an impressive overview of current research into warfare and its place in the classical, Hellenistic, and early Roman world.<sup>14</sup> This is the first volume of a two-volume series, the second of which will concentrate on warfare in the Roman Empire. Rather than providing a narrative of warfare, this excellent volume provides us with a thematic approach. The first part examines the historiography of ancient warfare, both in the modern period and also in ancient literature. The rest of the volume is divided into roughly chronological parts but, within these sections, we get thematic chapters: international relations, military forces, forms of battles (land and naval), warfare and the state, and war and society. This volume bridges the divide between approaches to warfare as primarily a social institution (e.g. the French structuralist view) and looking at the practicalities of warfare and the battlefield. Recent handbooks on warfare have already combined the two approaches (see, for example, Chaniotis' *War in the Hellenistic World* or van Wees' *Greek Warfare. Myths and Realities*), so, in some ways, it is hard to understand Hanson's anxiety about the emphasis in recent scholarship on the social aspects of warfare. This is an essential work for anyone working not only on warfare but also

<sup>13</sup> *Sparta and War*. Edited by Stephen Hodkinson and Anton Powell. Swansea, Classical Press of Wales, 2006. Pp. xxii + 310. Hardback £50, ISBN: 978-1905125111.

<sup>14</sup> *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare. Volume 1. Greece, the Hellenistic World and the Rise of Rome*. Edited by Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. 694. 67 figures, 10 maps. Hardback £120, ISBN: 978-0-521-78273-9.

on any aspect of Greek and Roman history and historiography. Sourcebooks: The second edition of Rhodes' *Greek City States* sourcebook,<sup>15</sup> in improved format, makes available once again an extremely useful resource for the teaching of Greek history at all levels. The focus is on social and political institutions and practices of Greek city-states but there is also a chapter on federations and interstate relations. New chapters on women and children, and on economic life and religion, which reflect the broadening out of the academic approach to the city-state, widen the appeal of the book. Rhodes now accepts 420s dates for the Cleinias and Standards decrees (nos. 426–7). One merit of the book is the closing chapter on 'The Hellenistic and Roman Periods': this serves as a reminder to teachers and students using this book that the history of the *polis* is not completed without integrating evidence from the Hellenistic period, when cities reacted to the challenges of the era in sometimes surprising ways (Dyme, in Achaia, for instance, raised money by selling its citizenship [no. 471]). Within that section, a new heading ('Variations on a Theme') introduces readers to the practices linked to the enactment of, and procedures surrounding, decrees and includes a novel section on quorum and voting figures in cities other than Athens (nos. 513–5). It is also worth saying that, at the time of writing, this is the best collection of the disparate testimonia for Spartan politics, institutions, society, and decline (Dillon and Garland, Chapter 6 is also useful). There are highly useful indexes (of texts, names, and subjects) and the clear typographical distinction between ancient texts and Rhodes' interventions makes the book very user-friendly and a tool for all undergraduates of Greek history. Nagle and Burstein's sourcebook for Greek history<sup>16</sup> is also very broad in its coverage, starting with Mycenaean documents and closing with Sallust's view of Roman expansion in the east. There are some strengths, such as the clarity of the maps and the successful integration of near-eastern material with more familiar Greek literary and epigraphical texts: a section on the 'international connections' of the Greek aristocracy combines Pedon's dedication at Priene, the inscription from Ramses II's temple at Abu Simbel, and an ostrakon from the Negeb with passages from Strabo and Sappho. The book combines narrative with attention to social and cultural issues: a chapter on intellectual developments in the classical age provides a useful background to the history of Socrates. The commentaries are succinct and simple: it is a sourcebook aimed at the newcomer to Greek history.

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<sup>15</sup> *The Greek City States. A Source Book*. By P. J. Rhodes. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xiii + 339. 2 maps. Hardback £45, ISBN: 978-0-521-85049-0; paperback £16.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-61556-3.

<sup>16</sup> *Readings in Greek History. Sources and Interpretations*. By D. Brendan Nagle and Stanley M. Burstein. New York, NY and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xix + 314. 12 maps, 19 figures. Hardback £41, ISBN: 978-0-19-517824-1.