

The fall of Sparta is the key issue of Chapters 8 to 10. As in the other chronological chapters, K.'s account of the reign of Agesilaus II is a combination of his domestic and foreign policy motivated through his personality. Agesilaus, 'a competent but not a brilliant general' according to K., had to deal with increasing military threats on multiple fronts and a decreasing availability of manpower. The combination of short-term solutions and inflexibility towards the now freed Messenia could not turn the tide. Sparta's 'navelgazing' (K.'s word) continued during subsequent regimes from Archidamus II to Nabis. The last chapter treats Sparta's troubles under the Achaean League and its partial recovery under the Roman Empire.

K.'s overview of Spartan history is an insightful and refreshing read. The first two chapters can be demanding and the structure of the book as a whole is occasionally confusing, but the persistent reader is well rewarded with the entertaining narratives of the chronological chapters.

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## LANGUAGE AND DEMOCRACY IN COLONIAL SICILY

WILLI (A.) *Sikelismos. Sprache, Literatur und Gesellschaft im griechischen Sizilien (8.–5. Jh. v. Chr.)*. (Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana 29.) Pp. xviii + 477. Basel: Schwabe, 2008. Cased, €47.50. ISBN: 978-3-7965-2255-0.

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Colonies continue to haunt our postcolonial imagination, even when the setting is in the future. The 'off-world colonies' in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick (1968) or the semi-mythical 'twelve colonies' of *Battlestar Galactica* have a notable political significance for those who live in the homelands, or 'non-colonies'. The Greek colonial experience is the centre of attention of W.'s *Sikelismos*.<sup>1</sup> The work focusses on four Sicilian literary figures, Stesichorus, Epicharmus, Empedocles and Gorgias. However, in locating the authors in their context the work acquires more significance for our conception of many linguistic, literary, social and political aspects of Greek colonisation. There is more politics here than meets the eye.

The theme of the work, as defined by W. in Chapter 1, is the Sicilian *Sprachkultur* from the eighth to the fifth century (p. 2), that is, how Greek developed in Sicily and how it was put into use in the literary evidence of Sicilian culture (p. 9). The methods of philology and linguistics are used, as well as those of literary criticism and cultural history. The decision to focus exclusively on Sicily seems well founded, as there is no reason to see Magna Graecia and Sicily as an undifferentiated area. Of the methods of literary criticism, some useful concepts of structuralist (postcolonial) literary theory are presented and used occasionally throughout the work. W. emphasises at the outset (pp. 8–9) the ambivalent position of the colonists between the centre (the homeland) and the indigenous natives

<sup>1</sup>The title word, not attested in Greek, is a plausible form coined by W. (compare *σικελίζειν* and *Ἑλληνισμός*).

with a very relevant quotation from R.J.C. Young's *Postcolonialism* (2001). Besides the Introduction, W.'s work contains an overview of the linguistic situation on the island (pp. 16–50), one or two chapters on each of the four authors, a concluding section ('Schlussbetrachtung', pp. 323–30), an Appendix on the pre-Hellenic languages (pp. 331–49), a comprehensive bibliography and a set of indexes. All illustrate W.'s encyclopaedic knowledge.

Chapter 2 focusses on the linguistic situation in Sicily from the Greek angle, especially on the consequences of the contact between Greek and the other local languages. The chapter contains a detailed catalogue of loanwords in Sicilian Greek, and these are grouped thematically in order to illustrate the forms of contact between the speakers of Greek and the other languages. In his discussion of language attrition, W. analyses the Sicilian situation with the aid of the useful typology of communities by M. Ross ('Diagnosing Prehistoric Language Contact', in R. Hickey [ed.], *Motives for Language Change* [2003], pp. 174–98), which could find wider applications in research on ancient multilingualism. In his overview of the Sicilian varieties of Greek, W. makes it very clear that Sicilian Greek was innovative and had a dominating tendency locally (pp. 49–50). He also emphasises the centrifugal – from the homeland's perspective – and integrative (koinising) characteristics of Sicilian Greek. The arrangement of Chapter 2 and the Appendix on the pre-Hellenic languages of Sicily leaves room for criticism: some of the contents of the Appendix could have been incorporated in a condensed form into Chapter 2. On the other hand, as it stands, the Appendix is a brilliant brief introduction to Sicanian, Elymian, Sicel and Punic in Sicily. Omissions of relevant bibliography are rare, but the work of Nicola Cusumano comes to mind here.

In his chapters on Stesichorus (3 and 4), W. analyses carefully the poet's surviving works: the linguistic form, the performance-related issues, and certain literary characters, notably Geryon and Jocaste. Colonial identity comes to the fore. In an inspiring treatment, W. sees Stesichorus as a representative of linguistic relativism and a critic of Homer and Hesiod, a 'mythbuster' who replaces the canon with an alternative epic. Particularly interesting is the fact that according to W. (pp. 114–15), Stesichorus opposes in his *Palinode* reality (*ἔτυμον*, *Realität*) and fiction (*οὐκ ἔτυμον*) rather than truth (*ἀλήθεια*) and falsehood (*ψεῦδος*).

The main points in the two chapters on Epicharmus (5 and 6) are the colloquial character of Epicharmus' dialect and his innovative contents. W. emphasises the extent to which expressions and lexical items of the colloquial registers are present in the surviving fragments: the Doric of Epicharmus reflects the spoken Syracusan of his time, with few exceptions. This has significance for the representation of characters in his works, of which *Ὀδυσσεὺς αὐτόμολος* is discussed. Like some scholars before him, W. sees the work as 'doubly subversive': an epic hero appears in an unheroic situation and his characteristics are those of a mortal (p. 191). Epicharmus appears as a follower of Stesichorus, because he too questioned the epic canon of the homeland.

The chapters on Empedocles (7 and 8) focus on the life and work of a person who underlined his own godlikeness. At the outset, W. adheres to the view held by most scholars, considering *On Nature* and *Purifications* as separate works. He explains in a lucid way Aristotle's ambiguous comments on the writings of Empedocles – in the *Poetics* (1447b18–20), he is a *φυσιολόγος* rather than a poet, but in *On Poets*, according to Diogenes Laertius (8.57), he is called *Ὀμηρικός*. W. discusses Empedocles' lexical innovations and argues that he represents a break in the tradition of hexameter poetry. According to W., Empedocles intentionally used

ambiguity and semantic shifts to underline his position as an oracle-like teacher, a *μάντις* whose teaching was not comprehensible to everyone. However, the new elite to whom Empedocles addressed his teaching did not consist of an aristocracy of birth but of a 'spiritual' upper class.

Rhetoric connects Gorgias, the theme of Chapter 9, with Empedocles, whose method is now compared with that of Gorgias. Since his own times, Gorgias has been considered an elitist: the contents of his speeches were hidden behind extravagant diction. However, in W.'s view, Gorgias' elitism continues the strategy of Empedocles: the new elite is not necessarily the aristocracy, but consists of those who have dedicated themselves to rhetorical training. Although seemingly paradoxical, it is thus understandable that W. calls Gorgias' style democratising: Gorgias is seen as a person who makes the art of writing available to sections of society who had previously had no share in it.

The final Chapter before the concluding remarks, Chapter 10, delivers the promise of its title, 'A Sicilian Enlightenment' ('Eine sizilische Aufklärung'). The arguments developed in the previous chapters are now presented in full. W. argues for a pre-democratic egalitarianism ('vordemokratischer Egalitarismus') in Sicily. In support, the Sicilian curse-tablets (*defixiones*) are brought into play; they originated, in W.'s view, in the linguistically Doric colonies, where writing was confined to an especially small literate elite. He goes on to claim that such skills soon became more common, and thus there was more variation in the social background of the authors of the *defixiones*; this is somewhat contradictory and not entirely convincing. However, it does not negate the validity of W.'s argumentation. In Chapter 10, W. connects in an inspiring way the phenomena of Sicilian *Sprachkultur* to the democratising developments in three domains: poetics, mantics and justice (following Marcel Detienne's distinction). The discussion is fascinating and full of thought-provoking material, and it shows how linguistic and literary analysis can be used to illustrate the social and political history of Greek colonisation.

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## CATTLE AND CULTURE

McINERNEY (J.) *The Cattle of the Sun. Cows and Culture in the World of the Ancient Greeks*. Pp. xx + 340, ills. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010. Cased, £30.95, US\$45. ISBN: 978-0-691-14007-0.

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Reviewing *Pastoral Economies in Classical Antiquity*, edited by C.R. Whittaker, in 1988, R. Osborne concluded by underlining the need for a 'parallel volume exploring the place of animal husbandry in ancient social history' (*CR* 39.1 [1989], 97). Several articles appeared but this is the first book-length treatment of the subject.

Indeed, McI. goes beyond Osborne's suggestion by proposing 'to explore not only how and under what conditions stock breeding was practiced, but also the place of cattle in the Greek *imaginaire*' (p. 4). He sees both registers as 'recursively linked' (p. xi) and conceives this rapport using P. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* (p. 5). This is a focal point because as a 'system of internalized schemes' that is able to produce 'all thoughts, perceptions, and actions characteristic of a culture',