

identified as the result of different national schools of thought, and, importantly, they provide valuable suggestions and approaches for how we may develop methodologies to examine the historical and archaeological traces of early Greek colonisation. Although the majority of the chapters focus on southern Italy, the discussions of chronology and suggestions that we should view the migrations, settlement formations and cultural interactions as long-term processes rather than identifiable events of colonisation are important ideas for discussions of antiquity across the Mediterranean.

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MATTHEW FITZJOHN  
UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL  
Mpf21@liverpool.ac.uk

**Josiah Ober. *The Rise and Fall of Classical Greece*. pp. 448, photographs, 14 line illustrations, 18 tables. 9 maps. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2015. ISBN: 978-069117-314-6 paperback \$18.95/£14.95 hardcover \$35.00/£27.95.**

This book has already achieved major publicity both within Ancient History and also with a wider educated public, since it clearly takes a different tack from preceding summaries of Classical Greek history. Its historiography helps to account for this. Josiah Ober was well-known for research into the fortifications and defence of Classical Attica and also for studies of Athenian democracy. However when he came under the influence of a particular trend in Economic History, especially moving from the east of the States to Stanford, this source of inspiration grew into an ideological flood. Ober now significantly possesses a Chair in Political Science and Classics at Stanford and works closely with luminaries such as Ian Morris and Walter Scheidel. These latter colleagues have favoured the approach known as the New Institutional Economic History on the one hand, and on the other a broadening out into high-profile Global History (notably in books such as Morris' *Why the West Rules* of 2010, and Scheidel's *Rome and China* of 2009).

'NIEH' is an approach to Economic History privileging quantification, economic performance, life expectancy and other contemporary aspects of modern economic analysis, and thus departs clearly from a Moses Finley-esque view of an archaic, 'Substantivist', socially-maintained ancient economy in the clear direction of the 'Formalist', ancient economy worth comparison with today's in structure and performance. This particular movement has strong ideological links to Right Wing politics and a favourable view of Capitalism. Hence a well-written, approachable volume explaining the Rise and Fall of Classical Greece in new terms, yet terms familiar to contemporary global discussions on political institutions and their connections to citizen welfare, is bound to be a publishing success.

Now NIEH has as many, maybe more, critics in History than fans and practitioners, so one would think that the book would have either provided ammunition for readers of a certain political persuasion or been a red flag to a bull. In actuality the outcome has been quite different. One reason is surely that quantification of historical data is more widely seen as a 'good thing', since it allows us all to evaluate ideas and theories on the basis of published evidence. Another reason is that so daring a book as this is offers an excellent opportunity for those who approve of its ideology and those who disapprove to debate their arguments. This reviewer was fortunate enough to participate in a seminar series at Edinburgh University when Josiah Ober was visiting professor. Each week a different chapter was summarised by the author then the discussion began, a very open one, where staff were clearly critical but engaged with the data. I since heard of another seminar series based on a

reading of the book in Augsburg University, where likewise the ancient historians were sceptical of its conclusions but found that the book was an ideal basis for discussion and debate.

What then about its arguments? Basically Democracy is a 'good thing' and it fosters technical innovation and free market economics (which are assumed also to be 'good things'). Since Greece pushed way ahead of the rest of the world in inventing, and elaborating on, democracy, we should all pay homage, and it is worthwhile inspecting how such a society emerged out of a quite different Archaic world and then fell back into a more oligarchic or dynastic world during Hellenistic times. As usual, the devil is in the detail. The case is not helped by the fact that the book essentially focusses on the unparalleled world of Classical Athens, of course almost all our sources are there, but also imperial high democratic Athens is unique in the Aegean world. It is true that perhaps some half of the Greek states at one time or another had a moderate democratic constitution (ie the upper half at least of the male citizens had political power), but indeed it also seems likely both from the sources and archaeological survey that states with a democracy had higher population levels per sq km and a greater GDP.

However in a classic and provocative paper Michael Jameson had argued decades ago, that in essence the Athenian state was basically organised in socioeconomic reality like its complete opposite – the Spartan state. In both some half of the population or less were citizens, and they built their wealth on a lower half of society: the latter were agricultural serfs (helots) or unenfranchised craftsmen or traders (perioeci) for the Spartan state, and for the Athenian state these were agricultural and other slaves and metics (non-citizen resident aliens) (Jameson, M. H. (1977-78). 'Agriculture and slavery in Classical Athens.' *The Classical Journal* 73, 2: 122-145.) The fact that Athens invested its wealth in art as well as war, whereas the Spartans focussed primarily on militarism, is correct, but at the same time it is hard to argue that Greek art is a creation of democracy (especially when we consider its elite aristocratic origins and the undeniable achievements of Hellenistic art).

Innovation is also hard to track in this volume. It remains the case that Roman technology is a more dramatic set of changes, notably in the sphere of practical applications, while Late Iron Age Gaul seems to have had more advanced agricultural tools and machines than either Greek or Roman society when it came to be conquered by Rome.

As for health and demography, one questions the wisdom of the parallels drawn. Is it sensible to compare the physical state of army recruits of

19th century North-West Europe with Classical and Hellenistic individuals? The state of the European peasantry and the urban proletariat in that stage of Early Modern Europe (despite the wonderful 'innovations' being introduced in technology) is notoriously poor, but doesn't that support Ober's case, that Greek democracy was ahead even of that recent age when universal suffrage was still far off? Unfortunately a quick glance at the height and health of Anglo-Saxon males from excavated cemeteries in Britain reveals that they are in better physical shape than our ancient Greek males, and no-one would class them as free-market democrats.

One can go on in this vein with all the themes in this stimulating book, but in fact I hope to have shown that this well-written and provoking book is 'good for thinking with', and challenges you to engage with its approach, data and viewpoint.

JOHN BINTLIFF  
EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY/ LEIDEN UNIVERSITY  
johnbintliff@gmail.com

### **The Banquet God. Fifth Century and After**

**Alexander Heinemann. *Der Gott des Gelages. Dionysos, Satyrn und Mänaden auf attischem Trinkegeschirr des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* pp xiv+787, 450 b/w figures, 20 colour figures. 2016. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter. ISBN 978-311022-223-4 hardcover €129.95 / £97.99.**

Heinemann's lavishly illustrated book aims first and foremost to study the images of Dionysos and his cortège on symposium ware during the 5th century BC in their social and ritual contexts. The *rationale* behind the research is the belief that the decoration deployed on figured pottery is not arbitrary but is intimately and meaningfully intertwined with the use of the vase. Furthermore, the meanings of such imagery are not *a prioristic* but need to be retrieved by the viewer every time s/he interacts with the object, in an everlasting 'battle' between object and subject. Retrieving the potential resonance of such iconography to a given viewer requires in turn an examination of the communication processes—i.e. rituals, plays, etc.—in which the symposium ware is inserted and the particular needs it helped fulfill, which are, unfortunately, lost to us.

Focusing this research on the images of Dionysos and his *thiasos* as well as on scenes of worship of the god makes methodological sense because this material