

Format de citation

Robin Osborne: Rezension von: Johannes C. Bernhardt / Mirko Canevaro (eds.): From Homer to Solon. Continuity and Change in Archaic Greece, Leiden / Boston: Brill 2022, in sehepunkte 24 (2024), Nr. 5 [15.05.2024], URL:
<http://www.sehepunkte.de/2024/05/37312.html>



copyright

Cet article peut être téléchargé et/ou imprimé à des fins privées.
Toute autre reproduction ou représentation, intégrale ou substantielle de son contenu, doit faire l'objet d'une autorisation (§§ 44a-63a UrhG / German Copyright Act).

Johannes C. Bernhardt / Mirko Canevaro (eds.): From Homer to Solon

This volume stems from a panel on 'Mass, Elite and the Order of the Polis in Archaic Greece' that took place at the Celtic Conference in Classics in 2014 - except that two papers given then do not appear, five papers have been added, and the title has been changed. The changes are all rather mysterious - one of the additional papers brings a comparative history approach (with medieval Iceland) to a volume not otherwise interested in comparative history; three introduce aspects of Homer to a set of papers not otherwise particularly interested in Homer; two of the papers, by the two editors, offer discussions that go over essentially the same Solonian ground in slightly different ways. The title suggests a cut-off date with Solon which the majority of papers ignore, and the 'Continuity and change' subtitle is the last resort of historians whose volumes don't really have a theme. The editors claim that the papers 'showcase the most advanced lines of research', but if they do that it is more by piggy-backing, sometimes critically, sometimes uncritically, on work done by others than by striking out in new directions. This is not a volume that is more than the sum of its parts. It is also a volume where the editorial touch seems to have been extremely light - there is no consolidated bibliography, inconsistency in the spelling of names, and the indexes are limited to passages cited and ancient proper names (e.g. 'Athens' followed by 80 pages numbers, with no sub-entries).

What does the reader learn? Part 1, 'Approaching Early Greece', proves particularly heterogenous. Bintliff's opening chapter, just six pages long, apparently a mildly updated version of the conference paper, 'summarises [...] the most significant recent trends'. Zeller's comparison of medieval Iceland and Homeric and Hesiodic *basileis* offers much on Iceland that will be unfamiliar to Greek historians, and the conclusion that *basileis* had to perform their role actively to maintain position. Lewis shows how in a situation without a continuous supply of slaves from outside, where agricultural labour was the main demand and where Spartan life was concentrated on Sparta, a helot system could develop out of the sort of slave system visible in the Homeric poems. How Sparta originally got hold of slaves and what happened to earlier residents of Messenia is never explained. Zanovello traces manumission by payment and (potentially) by marriage in Homer to suggest that manumission was not new in the classical period. Meister revisits the Hesiodic 'peasant' to make sense of *Works and Days* 405-6, though curiously with no reference either to Millett's classic paper on 'Hesiod and His World', in *PCPS* 30 (1984) 84-115, to Edwards' *Hesiod's Ascra* (Berkeley, 2004) or, even more remarkably, to L. G. Canevaro's *Hesiod's Works and Days: How to Teach Self-Sufficiency* (Oxford, 2015).

Part 2, 'Citizens and City-States', has more focus. Duploux adds to other ways in which he has indicated that archaic citizenship is a matter of

performance, the performance of *hippotrophia* (with particular reference to the *hippobotai* of Chalkis). That the ability to turn out a horse for community purposes was a way of showing that one was a contributory part of the community is well shown; whether 'citizen' is a helpful label for that is less clear. Seelentag's paper on participation in early Cretan poleis challenges such notions of citizenship and talks instead of 'participation in circles of integration', offering four detailed examples from different Cretan cities and stressing that the privileges granted in the four cases are different, involving variously land, meals, taxes, the gymnasium and sacrifice. Seelentag valuably emphasises that 'the polity' only manifested itself as an intersection of different circles of integration' (195). Itgenhorst explores political thinking in Theognis and other archaic poets, omitting Homer (!) and engaging very selectively to stress some shared characteristics (e. g. distancing from both tyranny and the lower social classes). Harris and Lewis look at laws from circa 650-450 B.C. to stress, against many scholars but particularly against me (*Greece in the Making* , London, 1996/2009, 187/175), that early law (I specified law before 600 but noted it to be true for law before 500) is interested in substance, not procedure, and that early law was not about elite self-regulation (they treat these claims as if demonstrating one was to demonstrate the other). They claim that the only way to do this is to look not at a 'small and unrepresentative sample' but at everything - and then immediately dismiss both Draco's law and Solon's laws. They wrongly consider the selection of laws inscribed necessarily representative - not everything was inscribed on stone and all sorts of factors determined what survived. It is true, of course, that if one dismisses laws that establish procedure and turns instead to decisions that presuppose procedure, procedure does not appear to the fore. It is also true that what counts as procedure is open to interpretation (clauses such as 'If anyone pronounces judgement contrary to the regulation, this judgement shall be void' are not, as far as they are concerned, procedural). The material is not examined in chronological order, most post-dates 500 and only two or three might antedate Solon, of which all but one discuss procedure. There is certainly scope for debate, but misrepresenting views against which one is arguing and the evidence provided are not good ways of progressing our understanding.

Part 3 also opens with a paper engaging with me, over abandoning the term colonisation. Rather than ban the word, Scharff would have us put it into scare quotes, and his paper on plural oikists strongly reinforces the argument that Greek settlement abroad in the archaic period was not like modern imperial colonisation. Taylor's paper on tyrants provides a nice review of Homeric *basileis* and archaic tyrants and their similarities, but the force of observing that both used similar methods to gain and maintain power is unclear when there is no demonstration that other methods were available. Hübner has no problem showing that traditions of Peisistratid and Hipparchan determination of Homeric performance at Athens are fragile, but the dismissal of the relevance of Athenian painted pottery (on the basis that Giuliani has shown that Attic potters knew the *Odyssey* already in the seventh century) undermines the whole paper. Part 3 closes with the two treatments of Solon by the two editors. These

contain much that is sensible, methodologically and substantively, but a single paper, and one more willing to acknowledge the degree to which both method and substance have been anticipated by other scholars, would have been both shorter and more effective.

One might possibly (though I doubt it) consider it reasonable to limit consideration of relations of 'mass and elite in archaic Greece' to evidence culled only from literary and epigraphic sources, but consideration of 'continuity and change in archaic Greece', from Homer to Solon, cannot sensibly be analysed without taking the archaeology seriously. The complete absence of archaeology from this book means that at the most it contributes to our understanding of some randomly chosen particular problems.