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The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia. The Chorus, the City and the Stage by P. Wilson

Review by: S. D. Lambert

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WILSON (P.) **The Athenian Institution of the *Khoregia*. The Chorus, the City and the Stage.** Cambridge UP, 2000. Pp. xv + 435, ill. 052155070. £55.

This is the first major modern account of the Athenian *choregia*, the institution whereby wealthy men paid for choral and dramatic performances at Athenian festivals. It originates in Wilson's Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, developed over several subsequent years of post-doctoral research. It is not a flawless work, but it is an impressive one and it makes a valuable contribution to the study of ancient Athenian culture. It is in three parts: broadly descriptive (Part I); interpretative (Part II); beyond Classical Athens (Part III).

Part I is in two chapters, which deal with (ch.1) the early history of the *choregia* and its major festival contexts: Dionysia, Lenaia, Thargelia, Panathenaia; less well-known festivals and extra-Attic ones; (ch.2) appointment of *choregoi* and allocation to poets; the recruitment and training of the chorus and of other personnel; material requirements; amounts of money expended on dithyramb, tragedy and comedy; the procession; judgement of the performance; the prizes.

Part II explores the socio-symbolic aspects of the *choregia*. In ch.3 W. contends (not wholly convincingly) that the *choregia*, like the tragedies which it funded, represents a tension between past ('aristocratic', 'individualistic', 'transgressive') and present ('democratic', 'public', 'normative'). He traces the early history of the *choregia* in the Archaic period (e.g. in Sparta) as an aristocratic institution; characterizes the *choregos* as a patron not only of his audience, but also his *choreutai*; persuasively interprets the *choregia* as part of a continuum of activity and relations extending beyond the theatrical and involving 'real' world politics (e.g. in Antiphon 6); as an expression of prestige and an opportunity for display and the winning of *charis*. In ch.4 W. has acute observations on the intense competitiveness of the *choregia* as witnessed by the practice of formally cursing rivals and in the choregic disputes between Alcibiades and Taureas, and between Demosthenes and Meidias. He stresses the importance of the *phyle*, which the *choregos* represented and which might honour him, if victorious. He discusses the rhetorical *topos* whereby liturgical service is represented as deserving the *charis* of the jury, and brings out very well its double-edged character. On a positive view the *choregia* served the *demos*, on a negative one it served the *chore-*

*gos*; positive *philonikia* shaded easily into negative *philoneikia*; *philotimia* too had its dark side; from an oligarchic perspective, the *choregia* could be represented as oppression of the wealthy by the *demos*; again, the tensions, in Wilson's view, reflect those present in tragedy itself.

Ch.5, 'Monumentalizing victory', presents a helpful, well-illustrated survey of surviving choregic victory dedications; of the *choregia* in the demes; of *choregia* portrayed on vases. Ch.6 is a similarly useful (if necessarily brief) survey of *choregia* and related institutions in Hellenistic and Roman Athens and outside Athens. As with much that is regarded as characteristically 'Athenian' (including democracy), while the Athenian model may have been most influential, *choregia* did not obviously originate there and many variations on the theme were possible.

W. displays a good grasp of the range of relevant secondary literature (especially that within his own tradition); it is surprising, however, that the 1994 Oxford D.Phil. thesis of A. Makres on the same subject as W.'s is scarcely referred to. W. has an acute nose for interpretative subtlety; there are very perceptive discussions of longer texts such as Antiphon 6, and deeply considered explanations of difficult aspects of the evidence, e.g. the apparent high profile of dithyramb in the city and (in contrast) of drama at the deme level. There are excellent and well-chosen illustrations.

The book is too long. This is partly due to W.'s style, which strives for (and occasionally achieves) sophistication, but is often laboured; partly to a desire to wring symbolic significance out of every fact. Most of Part I, for example, intended to 'rehearse the facts' (107), is actually occupied by more or less speculative interpretation, unnecessarily discursive, especially in relation to the very early (and obscure) history of the *choregia*. W. underestimates the extent to which, outside his academic thought-world, practical considerations are significant. For example (46-9), for him the absence of naval events from the *choregia* is a product of the ideological awkwardness of the navy, manned by 'the lowest socio-economic tiers of society' in the context of an 'élite' *choregia*. He does not consider the possibility that staging naval events in Athenian theatres was simply not practicable.

There are two main traps into which books emphasizing the interpretative typically fall. Inadequate grasp and presentation of the evidence is one. By and large W. acquits himself well on this score. His work is well documented and foot-

noted; but some caution is in order. I give one example (admittedly not central to his argument). W. precedes me (*ZPE* 135 (2001) 56) in suggesting that the *eutaxia* liturgy was ephebic (44 with n.184) and supplies an interesting parallel in *IG* xiv 2445, from Massilia (310); but he has missed the most important discussion of the key text, *IG* ii<sup>2</sup> 417, D.M. Lewis, *Hesp.* 37 (1968) 374-80. Much of what W. says about this document is accordingly incorrect: it is probably not a decree but a law; it probably dates not to soon after 330, but shortly before; there were not two liturgists per *phyle* (Hippothontis has only one); the relief, Lawton no.150, almost certainly did not belong with this stone, etc. That one can identify such slips, however, is a mark of good scholarly presentation.

The second pitfall is that interpretations are only as good as the writer's underlying assumptions. Here W. is more vulnerable. He is under the influence of the unsatisfactory view that history can best be explained in terms of 'ideology', Classical Athenian society in terms of a 'mass' and an 'élite'. The latter suits his subject in a simplistic way, as it would suit almost any differentiated human society; but it is founded in no thorough analysis of social, political and economic realities or perceptions (I avoid the term 'ideology' in this context as it implies, often inappropriately, something conscious and systematic). W. uses terms like 'aristocratic', 'élite', 'privileged', 'wealthy', as if they were synonyms; shows insufficient awareness that Greek terms relating to social status require careful analysis (e.g. he falsely believes that *eugenes* means 'aristocratic'); and has not fully engaged with aspects of fourth-century Athens (e.g. the use of the lot for appointment to key political offices, the large number of successful decree-proposers) which undermine analysis in terms of a dichotomy of 'mass' and 'élite'. Satisfactory social history must concern itself not only with ideas, but with realities of wealth distribution, institutional structures, political systems. Prosopography and statistical analysis are indispensable. Greek literature is relevant, but the key source is Greek epigraphy: and not only laws and decrees, but accounts, leases, dedications, funerary monuments, name lists. There is much to be done. The extent of inequalities of wealth distribution within the citizen-body in Classical Athens, for example, is still an open question.

The book is well indexed. CUP's policy of placing footnotes at the end of the book is irritating and inconvenient to the serious reader and

gives an (in this case unjust) impression of lightweight. But it would be unfair to end on a low note. The author has reflected deeply on his subject and has given us a stimulating book.

S.D. LAMBERT

*University of Liverpool/British School at Athens*

HESK (J.) **Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens.** Cambridge UP, 2001. Pp. viii + 336. 0521643228. £40/\$64.95.

As befits a work on deception and trickery, this is a book that is full of surprises. Who would have thought that anyone could find similarities in the rhetoric of Pericles, Demosthenes and John Major's government? Or that the Oliver North trial could pose such philosophic dilemmas? However, perhaps the greatest surprise is the discovery that the function of deceit (*apate* and its associates) in democratic Athens has not had a detailed treatment before. In 1966, Karl Popper put the relationship between truth and democracy firmly on the academic agenda. Even before this, discussions on the special place that truth occupies in Greek thought were legion. Yet throughout all of these studies, deceit has been strangely neglected. This is especially odd given, as H. ably shows, that falsehood is not merely the opposite of truth, but that it has an important life of its own. It insinuates itself into every genre, it horrifies heroes, inspires generals, confuses orators, and snuggles up to philosophers. As one would expect of a child of the Night, Deceit turns out to be a shadowy and slippery character.

The work opens by focusing on the un-Athenian nature of deceit. Through analysis of key cultural moments (the eulogy of the war-dead, adolescent rites-of-passage, drama, and forensic oratory), we see the way in which Athenian openness is contrasted with Spartan slyness and duplicity. Here the collocation between deceit and Sparta highlights the foreignness of deceit to Athenian normative values. It is just not 'the done thing'. This alienness is only strengthened by the fact that H.'s game of collocation could be played with numerous other anti-types of Athens (Persia, Egypt, Boeotia, Thrace or Crete, to name a few). Time and again, deceit always seems to be the practice of someone else.

However, before we can get too comfortable with this notion, H. shows that such claims about the alienness of deceit were only ever contingent and were always open to negotiation. Athens was