

Pastoral Politics: Animals, Agriculture and Society in Ancient Greece. By TIMOTHY HOWE. Publications of the Association of Ancient Historians 9. Claremont, California: Regina Books, 2008. Pp. x + 143. Paper, \$19.95. ISBN 978-1-930053-54-0.

Timothy Howe, who previously published an illuminating study of pastoralism in the Delphic context, has contributed this volume to the Association of Ancient Historians series, analyzing the "interdependencies between land use, animals, agriculture and politics in ancient Greece." The scope of the book is narrowed to "politicized land *non-use*," and three specific questions are posed: (1) why did ... people in a dry, mountainous region like Greece prioritize the production of animals to such a degree that they removed some of the best land from cereal or other food cultivation; (2) how did these people justify taking much needed land away from subsistence food production in order to raise non-food animals such as horses; and (3) how did these animal production choices affect those individuals directly and indirectly involved in animal production? The rationale of the book is further clarified as presenting "an overview ... to ancient historians who had little or no knowledge of the subject." The practical implementation of the project is broken up into five chapters and an Afterword.

In the first chapter, H. surveys previous scholarly encounters with the economy, agriculture and animal management in Greek antiquity, and presents his own theoretical and methodical tenets. H. denounces the older "fossilized" debate for or against transhumance and agropastoralism on the ground that recent research actualizes a new approach. Hence, as a methodical principle H. combines the "regionally and chronologically sensitive approach" of Christophe Chandezon and of Hamish Forbes, who seeks to "explain animals" by understanding the social and political choices that motivated animal production strategies in the first place. Thus, in Greece H. presupposes the existence of a spectrum of animal management levels, which embraces and combines the two "extremes" of the previous debate (transhumance and integrated agro-pastoralism) with intermediary forms of management (estate-based animal husbandry and semi-mobile herding).

Subsequently, H. clarifies his primary concern, which is to discuss and identify the "politics," i.e. the "network of human choices, values, and behaviours" that constitute the rationale behind animal production. In effect, this perspective directs attention toward the wealth-generating activities of the "elite" (p. 24). H. assumes that two distinct rationales of animal husbandry were practiced by specific classes of society: the subsistence production of the "masses" and an "elitist" mode aimed at wealth accumulation and consolidation or further enhancement of

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status. The terms “mass” and “elite” are not defined, and subsequent discussions display some potential circular argumentation (because use of animals for display and status are reserved for the elite, evidence on animal display suggests elite involvement).

In Chapter 2, Aristotle’s survey of wealth production (*Pol.* 1258b12–21) is taken to support the general idea that “large animals ... became naturally exclusive symbols of wealth,” and that animal husbandry held priority over agriculture. But Aristotle’s advice concerning “wealth production” on the basis of farming is not unproblematic. The text explicitly recommends that entrepreneurs have expert abilities to match animals and land; and the nature (and scale?) of land available to individual farmers was a vital element of Aristotle’s argument. In Athens, numerous references suggest that (marginal) land constituted an important part of gentlemanly wealth and status (e.g. *X. Oec.* 10.22–4; the gigantic *eschatia* of Phainippos in *D.* 42), and epigraphic material suggests a 4th-century BCE Athenian interest in land that had the potential for marginal farming and pasturage (*eschatia* and *phelleus*). [[1]]

In Chapter 3, H. discusses how individual elites organized different modes and purposes of animal management to satisfy social, political and economic agendas; examples are drawn from Athens, Sparta, Thessaly and Arcadia. After an instructive introduction to the literary evidence for animal management, H. concentrates on Attica and the supply of locally raised animals to “the sacrificial market,” connecting Attic animal production to the liturgical commitments of the Athenian elite. The important question of the organization of Athenian animal husbandry is partially confined to footnotes that repeat the view of previous studies, and no precise diagnosis is presented. [[2]] In conclusion, however, H. envisions Attic animal husbandry as varying considerably from one locality to the next. Although he refers to Stanton’s interpretation of the so-called *rupestral horoi* (boundary markers in marginal tracts of Attica, interpreted as measures to protect marginal resources, including pasturage), the more elaborated interpretations of Merle Langdon would have been useful, and the new edition of the *Rationes Centesimarum* by Lambert should have been considered as well. [[3]] Finally, the order and potency of Athenian animal production must be weighed against contemporary evidence suggesting massive trade and traffic with animals in the Classical Period (and potential elite interests in this activity?). The nearby island of Euboea, for example, was renowned for raising *probata*, and Athenian involvement with this activity may be borne out by the literary evidence (e.g. *Th.* 2.14, 16; 7.28; 8.92).

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The analysis of the objective of Spartan animal management strategies focuses on the group meal as a forum for elite conspicuous consumption, but H. overlooks the epigraphic evidence that actually proves Spartan involvement in the display of (elitist?) virtues on horseback. [[4]] Xenophon's retreat at Skillous (pp. 67–8) is also contemplated as a "model" for Spartan animal husbandry, but whether this was the case remains unverified. In comparing Athens and Sparta, H. displays some uncertainty as to the nature and organization of their respective practices of animal husbandry. [[5]] The presentation of the Thessalian and Arcadian contexts is illuminating, and the Arcadian example in particular serves to indicate the complexity induced by the exchange of animals and animal produce between different social groups from different communities. Potentially in defiance of the methodical principle of the book, however, it appears that (elite?) Arcadians exploited animals to fulfill subsistence requirements.

In Chapter 4, H. demonstrates how warfare and border disputes originated in elite desires to maintain or expand pasturage. But few of the cases are explicit about the connection between pasturage and warfare. One example involves disputes and reorganization of the border zone between Megara and Athens prior to the Peloponnesian war and again in the mid-4th century. Concern for the cultivation of the range is attested in the mid-4th century (*IG II² 204*), [[6]] and in both instances religious and ideological concerns are implied by allusions to the complexities of piety and violation of sacred space. Border zones were thus complex entities that held a variety of economic (not only animal-related), military, ideological and religious concerns for any polis, and these concerns may have been "activated" in response to any change in this vital part of polis-territory.

The final chapter discusses the politics of display and includes important observations on the acceptance of elite ideology and power when expressed through animal involvement. H. identifies a number of vital and interesting peculiarities, and suggests that social ambition was promoted by engagement with animals. A more precise account of individual societal reactions toward elite involvement with animals in this context might have been useful. In particular, it seems important to consider how and when societies of different constitutional orders (democratic, oligarchic, etc.) dealt with questions of "pastoral politics."

The approach H. has chosen makes one wonder why proponents of agro-pastoralism and transhumance disagreed in the first place. H. is correct, I believe, to surmise that specialized forms of animal husbandry were confined to specific geographic, environmental and socio-

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economic contexts. But the negative outcome of the original debate was due in part to the fact that partisans of both positions argued on the basis of inconclusive evidence. The approach H. employs does not in itself neutralize this fundamental problem; we must still struggle with the question of how various forms of animal husbandry differed, and the only way to do that is to confront and challenge the evidence again. In this regard, H. focuses on the literature, but ignores much epigraphic evidence.

At the end of the day, H. should be complimented for taking on a complex and challenging field of research, for coining the concept of “pastoral politics,” and for presenting good readings of those parts of the evidence that support elite use of animal husbandry. It is my sincere hope that this book will spur further debate and as such fulfill one of H’s most obvious ambitions. [[7]]

JENS A. KRASILNIKOFF

*Institute for History and Area Studies
Aarhus University*

[[1]] A substantial number of *eschatai* are discussed in S.D. Lambert, *Rationes Centesimarum: Sales of Public Land in Lykourgan Athens* (Amsterdam, 1997). On *phelleis*, see e.g. SEG 24.152; IG II² 2492; Ar. Nu. 71.

[[2]] Compare the opinion that “Attika experienced the highest level of intensive farming coupled with animal production.” in the 4th century BCE, while transhumance became dominant only in the Hellenistic age (p. 60 n. 37) with p. 61 (with nn. 42 and 43), where previous studies are cited to the effect that semi-mobile herding dominated (in the Classical period?).

[[3]] Lambert 1997 (n. 1).

[[4]] On the Damonon stele, and Spartan animal husbandry in general, see S. Hodkinson, *Property and Wealth in Classical Sparta* (London, 2000), esp. 303–33.

[[5]] Compare p. 67 with pp. 68–9: “Yet as with Athens, the degree of integration between arable farming and animal husbandry remains elusive” and “...the abundant well-watered plains of Messenia and Laconia, with their large amounts of farming and grazing land, worked by servile helots, witnessed a greater separation between agriculture and animal husbandry than existed anywhere in Attika.”

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[[6]] See text and commentary in P.J. Rhodes and R. Osborne, eds., *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404–323 BC* (Oxford, 2003) 272–81.

[[7]] Full bibliographic information is provided in the reference list as well as in footnotes, although these contain multiple errors and list one title I have been unable to verify: Stanton, G. "Some Attic Inscriptions." *ABSA* 92 (1997): 178–204. H.'s use of the article seems to refer to another piece by G.R. Stanton: "Some Inscriptions in Attic Demes," *ABSA* 91 (1996) 341–64.