



Le Soleil et le Tartare: L'image mythique du monde en Grece archaique

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ancient Near East, they tend to set forth more theory than useful information.

Morris Silver is well aware of these problems and offers what is in many respects a pioneering enterprise. His book has two main purposes. One is to demolish the hypotheses of Karl Polanyi, who proposed that ancient Mesopotamia, not to mention the rest of the ancient Near East, lacked markets for products and consumer goods. Polanyi's work is not widely known among Assyriologists, although some have consulted his volume *Trade and Market in the Early Empires* (1957). Thus, Silver's polemic against Polanyi will prove of more interest to economic historians than to Orientalists, few of whom will need to be convinced that Polanyi's thesis is without merit.

The real interest of Silver's book to the general historian lies in its demonstration that modern economic theory can be applied successfully to ancient Near Eastern evidence. Taking as its point of departure "transaction costs," Silver's survey offers numerous valuable and stimulating analyses of ancient Mesopotamian economy. His remarks on the "temple economy," "gift trade," the role of women and family structure in commerce, "community ownership," transport costs, interest rates, to name a few topics, are both original and important and should stimulate continued, fruitful investigation of the sources.

Silver has read assiduously in the technical literature of ancient Near Eastern studies and has carried on a vigorous correspondence with several specialists. This has given him a grasp of the evidence and the controversies surrounding its interpretation that removes his work from the level of purely theoretical discourse and reassures the specialist reader. This is not to say that important publications have not been overlooked or that obsolete ones have not, unfortunately, been used here and there. Nor will every reader feel comfortable with Silver's occasionally dizzying juxtapositions of data from different periods and places. But his work is firmly grounded in the known and is filled with interesting suggestions and new insights.

Silver earns the reader's gratitude by writing clearly and avoiding jargon (one pauses over "productive factor endowments" [p. 67]). He explains his terms well. The "economically naive" (p. 141) can read this study with ease and understanding, yet economic historians will find the level of sophistication they expect from a colleague and that is absent in Near Eastern specialist literature on the topics Silver discusses.

Every scholar interested in the economy of ancient Mesopotamia should read this book. It shows how much a measured dose of theory can help the decipherer of evidence who opines that the words in the sources alone will tell all that can be known. At

the same time it proves that economic theory alone, when sources are available, is liable to be barren and misleading.

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ALAIN BALLABRIGA. *Le Soleil et le Tartare: L'image mythique du monde en Grèce archaïque.* (Recherches d'histoire et de sciences sociales, number 20.) Paris: L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. 1986. Pp. 298. 230 fr.

In a comprehensive and compelling exercise in intellectual history, Alain Ballabriga seeks to recover the Greek geographic or, rather, cosmographic world view in the archaic period. He does this by a series of detailed investigations into relevant passages in Greek literature, especially Homer, Hesiod, and Stesichorus, and also draws on evidence from later authors, including Herodotus and Thucydides, the tragedians, and such geographical authorities as Strabo and Pausanias. Ballabriga commands modern secondary literature, from technical textual commentaries on Greek authors to intellectual, social, and religious histories by R. B. Onians, Marcel Detienne, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, and Mircea Eliade.

The underlying arguments (most directly formulated in the section "Results and Generalizations" [pp. 59–74]) are as follows: modern scholars generally exaggerate the state of geographical knowledge among the Ionian philosopher-scientists of the archaic period. Concomitantly, knowledge attained only in Hellenistic times has been unwarrantedly assumed for earlier periods as well. Further, Hellenistic expertise in scientific geography has itself also been overrated. But, even assuming a relatively high level of knowledge of geography in the archaic era, that knowledge would have belonged to a coterie of specialists without affecting the beliefs and opinions of the mass of people. For insight into the latter, we must therefore turn to mythopoetic rather than protoscientific sources.

The book has four chapters: "Imaginary Cosmology and Archaic Geography," "Variations on the Coincidence of Opposites at the Western and Eastern Boundaries of the Universe," "The Solstitial Horizon," and "The Universe and the Abyss." Numerous subdivisions are devoted to description and discussion of passages apparently presenting knotty geographical problems. Examples range from the locating of Bronze Age Pylos in the western Peloponnese (no less than three possible sites) to the ambiguities surrounding the "double Ethiopia" and a host of geographical and cosmographic puzzles in *Odyssey* 9–12 and Hesiod's *Theogony*. Throughout, Ballabriga shows that we must not apply the catego-

ries of scientific geography to issues of another order of thought. As he puts it, in reconstructing the archaic Greek view of the world, we have to do with a *carte-image* rather than a *carte-instrument* (see George Kish's *La carte, image des civilisations* [1980]). The *carte-instrument* is an actual graphic rendering of a specific, precisely delimited, and relatively familiar area marked by natural boundaries. The *carte-image*, by contrast, is a notional model of the universe as a whole, fixing in space the (often imaginary) regions beyond the horizon, in this case, beyond the outer limits of the Aegean world. The orientation of those regions and the nature of the frontier between the familiar and the fabulous are Ballabriga's principal interests. The result is a useful elucidation of Greek ideas about such phenomena as *axis mundi*, the path of the sun and its night course, and the location of the underworld in the scheme of the natural order, among many others. The book is also a forcefully persuasive assertion of the distinctive and overarching value of mythopoetic evidence in the history of ideas.

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K. ADSHEAD. *Politics of the Archaic Peloponnese: The Transition from Archaic to Classical Politics*. Amersham, U.K.: Avebury; distributed by Gower, Brookfield, Vt. 1986. Pp. 142. \$24.95.

The starting point of this small volume is the contention that a network of roads unified, geographically, the northeast Peloponnese. In the archaic period this geographical unity presented an opportunity for political unification; at the same time, however, political differences between the city-states situated in the area worked against political unification. Political differences are, for K. Adshead, synonymous with religious differences, for archaic politics was dominated by religion. Throughout the fifth century B.C. the old politics of religion gradually gave way to the new, more secularized politics of the classical period; in the transition from the one to the other the years 480–460 B.C. were crucial. In these decades, Corinth, in response to the growth of Athenian naval power, attempted to unify the area, or at least its northern reaches, by using the old politics of religion, as reflected in the Corinthian takeover of the Nemean games and the change from a crown of pine to a crown of celery at the Isthmian games. The Corinthians failed, in part because they “seem to have been disinclined to maintain the Dorian mode” (p. 76), and in part because at precisely this time a wave of new politics was sweeping over the region. Behind this wave was Themistocles, who in the brief space of two years, 471–469 B.C., was instrumental in bringing democ-

racy to Argos, Elis, Mantinea, and Tegea, creating in the process a solid anti-Spartan, anti-Corinthian bloc. With Themistocles' departure from Argos, however, support for the new politics quickly evaporated, and the Argives were thus no more successful than the Corinthians had been.

Adshead has read widely and taken many of his ideas from modern historical literature as well as the literature of geography, religion, and anthropology. He is familiar with a variety of ancient evidence drawn from the literary sources, myth, religion, epigraphy, numismatics, and archaeology. Yet the ancient evidence provides little direct support for many of the arguments presented here. It is, in fact, so vague and incomplete that it can be interpreted at will. No interpretation thus far advanced has pleased everyone, and Adshead's effort is not likely to alter that condition. Nor is the case presented as lucidly as it might have been. The meaning of phrases such as Dorian mode, Dorian spirit, and “hieratic obscurantist world order” (p. 103), to mention just a few, is by no means clear, and this lack of clarity is exacerbated by a penchant for lengthy sentences.

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L. B. CARTER. *The Quiet Athenian*. New York: Clarendon Press of Oxford University Press. 1986. Pp. xi, 211. \$45.00.

In his preface L. B. Carter says he wanted to write about classical Athenians who “were out of tune with the democracy” and organized his book through an exhaustive study of the word *apragmosyne*, translated as “quietism” (p. vii). Chapter 1 sets out to show what the quietist reacted against. Carter maintains that “the pursuit of fame and honour was the foremost preoccupation of any Greek who could afford it” (p. 2). The chapter ends by stating the book's object as the examination of the countermovement, *apragmosyne*, or “minding one's own business.” Carter looks, then, for persons who disapproved of the Athenian democracy, its empire, and the continuing tradition of striving for fame and honor.

Chapter 2 begins by asking whom Pericles had in mind when he referred to an *apragmon* in his Funeral Oration and concludes by suggesting three broad groups, discussed further in chapters 3–5: a disgruntled upper class, peasant farmers, and “rich quietists.” Chapter 3 identifies a group of “noble youths” who disliked democratic politics, opposed the empire's expansion, and gradually became more active. Carter credits this group with the mutilation of the Herms, which he terms an “organized demonstration” against the Sicilian expedition (p. 74); he blames the same men for the oligarchical revolu-