REVIEWS

(p.xiv), 'if ... I at least succeed in helping a new breed of ancient historian to find his or her footing in a new and ... essential aspect of ancient social history, then the effort will have been worthwhile.' And if the old breed wants an estimate of how many people lived where in the ancient world, there's always Beloch.

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Aphrodisias had a stadium, a theatre and an odeon. Through the centuries these venues, particularly the theatre, were covered with wave after wave of inscribed lettering, from crude graffiti (έγώ πυριστης είμε, 'I am a bugger', p.113) through slogans and signs reserving seats, up to records of sporting heroes' careers and lists of the nine Muses. In Performers and Partisans at Aphrodisias Charlotte Roueche publishes this corpus, focusing on private and informal texts.

An introductory chapter sets parameters: Aphrodisias' stadium, theatre and odeon were typical buildings for a large city of the eastern provinces to have, and were put up at the same period as many other buildings of this kind elsewhere. Roueche summarizes types of contest (athletic, musical, chariot-racing) and refers to the περίοδος, the performers' tour. She explains distinctions in status: money prizes and 'stephanite' games, and the system for granting international status to games in the Roman period. She comments on the patchwork of foundations which funded festivals from interest on capital investments. Third-century currency instability wiped out much of this investment, except where it was in land, and in the later period the trend was to a
smaller number of shows, financed by central government. There is enough in this chapter to give a start to a reader who is new to this area.

In Chapter II, Mimes and Pantomimes, a unique series of inscriptions from backstage at the Aphrodisias theatre is published (pp.16-19). They label the doorways to the six small windowless rooms on the backstage corridor. Though the wordings are brief, ranging from ‘Equipment of Philistion’ (Room 1, i) to ‘Unbeatable equipment of Kapyras and of Philologus, Olympic victor’ (Room 4), the texts are informative, particularly about the importance of props and stage furniture in performances by mimes. One of the performers, Bassus (who kept his equipment in Room 5), was not only an Asian Games victor but (probably in the third century) also a gymnasarch: a success worth noting, considering that mimes were practitioners of an art earlier looked down on in comparison with the grander and more tragic pantomime.

The Factions and their role in theatre at Aphrodisias form the focus of Chapter III. From the fifth century, the Blues and the Greens, now much bigger organizations than the chariot-racing teams of the early empire from which they grew, took over virtually all public entertainment. Roueché questions Alan Cameron’s explanation of the faction takeover as a state takeover, and accounts for it in terms of a move to maintain proper competition at festivals - i.e. with at least two entries in each category - in circumstances where there were diminished resources available (pp.45-7).

The absoluteness of state control in the later period (from the fifth and sixth centuries onwards) is questioned further in Chapter IV, where Roueché deals with performers’ organizations. She traces their existence down to the late fourth century and postulates that in the fifth century they were absorbed into the Factions (p.57). This, she says, was not a product of imperial policy: ‘it is far easier to understand it as an arrangement originating with the performers themselves’ (p.58). There were fewer cities on the tour schedule (Aphrodisias kept its shows because it was a provincial capital), so a streamlined system made sense: whether the change was effected by state intervention or market forces is not clear. Roueché’s points against Cameron are shrewd but not conclusive.

Roueché is at her best in the chapter on Gladiators and Wild Beast Fighters (V), producing parallel attestations for nearly all the nomenclature in the large number of texts published (pp.61-73). For the first time it is proved that a palus (‘brigade’) of gladiators is an organization of which there could be more than two in a city: Aphrodisias had at least six,
probably eight (pp.64-5). Roueché argues for comparability between gladiators and other ‘heavy athletes’ (p.74), noting that gladiators could be free men as well as slaves or convicts. Not everyone will want to be quite so sanguine about the gladiatorial career: an assessment should perhaps be made of the risk of death. But this chapter is a high point in the book: thorough work of permanent value.

Part II, The Audience, begins with two chapters (VI and VII) headed Spectators (VI) and Partisans (VII). This reflects a distinction Roueché makes (particularly in relation to the late period) between people who sat in the Green or Blue area of seating because their trade-association or whatever had its seats there and so was Blue or Green as it were by mere convention, and people who were followers of their Faction con amore and would seat themselves in blocks assigned to Blues or Greens as such (p.132). Roueché has been through the whole of all three venues seat by seat, and gives the inscriptions cut on individual seats, or across rows of seats, in each of them. Some generalizations can be made: women’s seats are normally towards the back, higher up the tiered seating. Where a person’s name is given, a whole row may in some cases be reserved: Attalus, a senator, lays claim to all of Block 33 row H in the stadium (p.95). There are market-gardeners, goldsmiths, butchers. Seating was not random: Roueché gives special attention to the social control element implicit in allotting seating to the young men’s associations (pp.135-9).

In the auditoria late inscriptions predominate, often because they have been cut over earlier material. So Chapter VIII, The ‘Factions’ of the Later Empire, is designated as the book’s conclusion. Roueché details carved acclamations of Greens and Christian emperors at Aphrodisias. Comparable texts from elsewhere involve the Blues. A final summary refers to urban property-owning by the factions in the sixth to eighth centuries and to factional officials. Appendices deal with Contests and Shows at Aphrodisias, Victors and Competitors, the Synods, and (by Nathalie de Chaisemartin) Agonistic Images on Aphrodisian Sarcophagi.

Roueché writes well and gets her enthusiasm across - as for example at p.32, commenting on an inscription: ‘less regularly aligned, but still elegant, elegant forms.’ Yet there are places where tighter editing and proof-reading would have helped: ‘the audience, or, as they are described in Greek, the spectators...’ (p.129) should not have escaped the editorial eye, and ‘no gymnasium has not yet been excavated at Aphrodisias’ (p.135) ought to have been spotted. Accentuation of Greek is suspect from time to time. From plenty of examples I draw attention only
to διασκεύως (p.20), which (accepting Roueché's argument that is existence is proved) should be accentuated proparoxytone διασκευος. Consideration of (e.g.) p.271 will reveal the dimensions of the problem. Νίκη δ δεινος (sic, p.134) would perhaps have appealed to the gladiators who are being discussed, but is a painful slip (the phrase comes out right on p.3); and loci cit. (p.200) will not do. The name Perpetua, spelt in French, has an acute on the second letter e, not the third (p.61 nn.1 and 3, p.62, p.129 n.1, p.256). These failings take away a little of the polish that might be hoped for, but will not obscure the fact that this book is a substantial scholarly achievement.

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