

Peter W. Rose, *Class in Archaic Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013. Pp. xii, 439. ISBN 9780521768764. Hardback; list price \$114.

This book marks the culmination of a half-century's study of classical Greek literature from a Marxian perspective. In a country always tempted by McCarthyism, "Marxian" may leap from the page. Equally important, however, is the reminder of what our fields gained from a golden era of the Harvard Department of Classics: this book reveals the continued impact of Cedric Whitman, Eric Havelock, and particularly Adam Parry. Rose's philological acuteness, ability to work outside his specialty on historical and archaeological topics, and capacity to absorb and use large bodies of scholarship, testify to the quality of that training and give heft to this study.

Writing to his East German friend Detlev Lotze a year before his death, Moses Finley suggested another reason to welcome this book:

I have never reached sufficient assurance in my view of Solon to publish the article I foolishly promised a generation ago. (The article on debt bondage was not intended to be a direct statement of all aspects of the Solonic crisis.) I am still uncertain of too much.... Like Aristotle, I see Solon as a semi-revolutionary figure despite his insistence that he refused redivision of the land¹

"I am still uncertain...." This is an emblematic moment: like Solon, the whole archaic era is undertextualized, an enigmatic smattering of narratives and data points, "desperately foreign," as Finley would put it, but appealing to skilled and creative interpreters. Rose's important observations on wealth inequality, "class," and other topics force us to think harder about the period, widening our intellectual horizons.

In his Introduction, Rose explains his eclectic use of Marx and his reliance on Althusser, Frederic Jameson, and G.E.M. de Ste Croix, three scholars who insist that "class struggle" need not be overt. Rose's philological and literary talents become clear as he teases out the signs of implicit class struggle in the poems he studies.

Rose here criticizes Finley, though he candidly reveals his debts to Finley at later points. Full discussion is impossible here, but the differences between Finley's approach and Jameson's (for instance) may be partly historical, the result of Finley's coming of age in the quarter-century dominated by Stalin's notorious *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.² Finley's early friendship with Karl-August Wittfogel and long association with the Frankfurt School also shaped his thinking about class, modes of production, and historical change. Finley used Marx throughout his life, particularly in *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, and worked closely with Eastern bloc scholars. But his approach to Marx certainly differed from Althusser's. We benefit from both.

¹ Finley Papers, Cambridge University Library. February 23, 1985.

² Moscow: International Publishers, 1938.

Chapter One begins a broad narrative arc that will conclude with Cleisthenes. Down to 850 BCE or so, villages were controlled by “big men” who provided protection and led raids. Rich oligarchic followers overthrew these leaders, bringing territorial integrity, “more intensive collectivity,” fortifications and common cult.

Chapters Two and Three move from archaeology to literature, brilliantly foregrounding the “alienation” of epic heroes. Odysseus slaughters the cocky oligarchic suitors and Achilles challenges the *Iliad*’s aristocratic paradigms of success, in both case capturing the resentments of economically marginalized groups.

The next two chapters treat social changes in the eras of Hesiod (“passionate indictment of the emergent aristocracy”), insisting that the Hesiodic audience, like the Homeric, included threatened farmers. The aristocratic “double agenda” insisted on the innate superiority of the wealthy as a warrant for control while promoting an ideal of “citizen solidarity” to build a following. Solon’s property classification, according to Lin Foxhall, brought “abandonment of aristocratic birth as a criterion for ... membership in the ruling class which constituted the state....”³ Rose relies on Foxhall’s important findings about inequality in Athenian landholdings, but does not review arguments on the other side, developed primarily at Stanford University during the book’s composition.⁴ As Finley suggested, our “knowledge” of the sixth century is built on inference. Though this frustrates the historian’s search for absolute truth, the quality of argumentation on each side enriches historical understanding.

Solon and the Athenian tyrants provide the transition from earlier aristocracy to the explosion of Athenian democracy. In this period, festivals, colonization, and building programs were promoted, helping to foster the rule of law, state institutions and citizen identification with the *polis* as Athens became a “state.” Rose usefully invokes Althusser’s analyses of the “apparatuses” of domination and ideology, arguing that tyrants used laws to control the “internal contradiction of a ruling class” and portray themselves as “just.”

Chapters 6 and 7 turn to Sparta and Athens respectively, noting the role of class conflict in creating the Spartan class system and, again, the Althusserian “ideological state apparatuses” that sustained unequal property and social relations. In Athens, the growing political awareness of the *demos* helped Cleisthenes seize, though neither he nor Solon introduced substantial economic change. (See Rose 242, 263, 360–361, all of which bear on his introductory remarks on “change”: 12).

³ Rose 240 citing Foxhall 1997: 128.

⁴ Rose 211–213. Josiah Ober, “Wealthy Hellas,” *TAPA* 140 (2010) 241–286, especially 257–260 summarizing Kron, Morris, and Scheidel and Friesen. Lin Foxhall, “The Control of the Attic Landscape,” in B. Wells, ed. *Agriculture in Ancient Greece: Proceedings of the Seventh International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 16–17 May, 1990*. Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen, 1992: 155–59. Lin Foxhall, “A View from the Top: Evaluating the Solonian Property Classes,” in Lynette G. Mitchell and P.J. Rhodes, editors, *The Development of the Polis in Archaic Greece*. London: Routledge, 1997: 113–136.

In sum, *Class in Archaic Greece* is a welcome addition to the rich scholarship on archaic Greece, particularly powerful as philology and intriguing as history. Rose has ranged widely, probing ancient texts and referring to contemporary scholars with considerable care and detail. Like all good books, this opens up further topics, one of which is the desirability of further specification of Marxist topics, especially “class” and “mode of production.” How is “class” produced, and when and how does it actually bring about historical change? Should we push “mode of production” further, with specificity about the “slave” mode and possible crises in modes of production? These topics will reward further exploration.

DANIEL P. TOMPKINS
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY