

ATHENIAN MICROHISTORY

ACKERMANN (D.) *Une microhistoire d'Athènes. Le dème d'Aixônè dans l'Antiquité.* (Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome 379.) Pp. vi + 588, b/w & colour pls. Athens: École Française d'Athènes, 2018. Cased, €60. ISBN: 978-2-86958-292-7.

As part of a recent increase in scholarship on non-urban demes of Attica, we can now count A.'s monograph devoted to the deme Aixone. A revised version of A.'s doctoral dissertation submitted at the Universities of Neuchâtel and Lorraine in 2010, this voluminous book comprises an introduction and conclusion, seven chapters, five annexes and fifty-two figures. These are mainly images of epigraphic documents and maps; particularly worthwhile is a map of the distribution of the archaeological remains of Glyphada, the modern suburb in south Athens where the ancient deme Aixone was identified (Fig. 7). Fig. 1, a map of Attica and its demes, shows an inaccurate location for some of the demes (e.g. Upper and Lower Lamptrai are in an inverted position). One would have expected a reproduction of the famous map from J.S. Traill's *Demos and Trittys* (1986), which remains authoritative and has become the standard in studies on the demes of Attica.

The chapters are arranged in two parts: the first (Chapters 1–3) describes the geographical, historical and archaeological framework within which Aixone developed, while the second (Chapters 4–7) delves into the heart of the deme ('Au cœur du dème') and explores its political life (4), economic activities (5), religious life (6) and the deme's demography and migratory movements (7).

In the introduction A. briefly illustrates the essential role of the demes in the political, administrative and institutional life of the Athenian *polis*, thus emphasising the importance of the field of research the book contributes to. As its title suggests,

the study of Attic demes offers the unique opportunity to shed light on Athenian microhistories: the demes were the smallest and more peripheral units of the Athenian city-state, yet each deme was ‘tantamount to a polis in microcosm’, as D. Whitehead put it (*The Demes of Attica* [1986], p. xviii). Thus, the history of Aixone or of any other deme is at once local history and a constitutive component of the history of the Athenian *polis* as well as, more broadly, of ancient Greece.

Building on and updating an existing monographic treatment of the deme by E. Giannopoulou-Konsolaki (*Γλυφάδα* [1990]), A. focuses on Aixone, one of the epigraphically best-documented demes. Inscriptions are central to her study and are used in concert with literary and archaeological evidence. Chapters are built around the sources, in accordance with a solid methodology that ‘part des sources primaires et se laisse guider par elles’ (p. 16).

Chapter 1 presents an overview of Aixone’s geographical setting and primary resources. Chapter 2 offers a detailed history of the ‘rediscovery of Attica’ by travellers to Greece, from Cyriacus of Ancona to the nineteenth century, as well as of the general localisation of Aixone thanks to these early explorations, followed by an equally meticulous account of the archaeological investigations that were carried out in the area since 1819. Aixone’s ‘points névralgiques’ – A.’s alternative expression to describe what scholarship has (equally) conventionally referred to as ‘deme centre’ – are now fairly securely identified in the area of Agios Nikolaos of Pimari in Glyphada.

Chapter 3 traces the history of occupation of the site from prehistory to the present – an astonishingly long-term approach for a book that claims to focus on antiquity. It also discusses Aixone’s boundaries, its archaeological remains as well as a few ‘neuralgic points’ of the deme, which are known from inscriptions but cannot

be located with certainty on the ground, and the question of the disappearance of Aixone qua deme, which A. places in the third century CE.

The second part of the book is organised thematically and seeks to answer ‘une multitude de petites questions ... qui ont été suscitées par l’étude des sources aixonéennes’ (p. 14). In Chapter 4 A. looks at the demesmen’s participation in politics, at both local and city level. Six long-known honorific decrees passed by the deme in the second half of the fourth century BCE have been pivotal in shedding light on the political activity of the Aixoneans. They allow A. to discuss a variety of broader topics, including the role of certain deme officials, dramatic contests in the demes, the shift from *choregia* to *agonothesia*, which A. argues occurred in 316 BCE, and the historical circumstances surrounding the figure of Demetrios of Phaleron. Using a range of epigraphic evidence from Athens, A. examines the engagement of Aixoneans in city politics and focuses on the career and activity of a few individuals who feature prominently in the sources.

A. devotes Chapter 5 to the economic activities of the Aixoneans. Thanks to epigraphic evidence, agriculture, husbandry and real security are considerably better documented than other activities such as trade and handcraft, while literary and archaeological sources attest fishing and beekeeping as two further sources of significant income. Our knowledge of Aixonean agriculture is largely due to an inscription that sets out the lease of the landholding called *Phelleis* by the deme. Dated to 346/5–345/4 BCE, the document indicates vines and olive trees as the main focus of local agriculture and also shows that Aixone used to loan the proceeds from the sale of olive wood. Another important inscription (c. 330–320 BCE) is a regulation for grazing land, which confirms that the deme owned pastures, whose use was subject to the payment of the *ennomion* tax. Finally, A. considers the evidence for the

engagement of private individuals in economic activities provided by a number of security *horoi*. ‘Security markers’ are widespread throughout Attica and, as A.’s review of previous scholarship on the subject illustrates, they contribute greatly to illuminating the practice of lending between individuals in fourth-century BCE Athens.

The reconstruction of religious practices and of the local pantheon in Chapter 6 relies essentially on the analysis of two informative inscriptions originating from the deme. A religious regulation dating from the first half of the fourth century BCE details the remuneration of a series of priests and priestesses, who each year presided over the festival of the deity they served. This is an exceptional document that throws light not only on the sacrificial and cult practices of the deme as well as on ancient Greek religion more broadly, but also on certain aspects of the economic and institutional history of the Athenian *polis*. Another remarkable inscription is an honorific decree issued in 320/19 BCE on the occasion of the festival of Hebe, who was ostensibly the main deity of Aixone. Thanks primarily to these two inscriptions, we know of a dozen gods and heroes worshipped in the deme. A prominent role in the Aixonean pantheon was played by an anonymous Heroine; A. identifies her as the eponymous heroine of the deme, but that is merely a hypothesis. Hagne Theos is another anonymous deity that received a cult at Aixone. The idea put forward by A. that she was the goddess of some local mysteries is intriguing yet based on flimsy grounds.

In Chapter 7 A. uses the prosopography of the Aixoneans, which appears in Annex IV, to explore the deme’s demography and the migratory movements of its members. With all the necessary caveats about the limitations of our evidence for the study of the population of demes, the analysis of a range of epigraphic sources, especially funerary inscriptions, leads A. to draw some conclusions. She estimates a

population of *c.* 600 demesmen in the fourth century BCE. Aixone was apparently among the most populated demes, and this situation seems to have remained stable at least until the end of the following century. The picture that emerges from the sources is that of the Aixoneans as a decidedly mobile society. Cases of mixed marriage, i.e. of Aixoneans who married Athenians from other demes, are frequent. Thanks to the use of the demotic, we also learn that a remarkable number of demesmen are found outside of Aixone, both elsewhere in Attica (especially at Athens and Piraeus) and beyond the limits of the *polis*.

This is a monograph that betrays its origin as a doctoral thesis. Nonetheless, the volume has the merit of offering informative discussions of a wide range of questions that result from a thorough analysis of a variety of sources, primarily inscriptions. This is a valuable contribution to an important yet relatively understudied topic, which should be read by anyone interested in Athenian microhistories as well as in the broader history of the *polis*.

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