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**The Trojan Cow H. Derks: *De Koe van Troje. De mythe van de Griekse oudheid*. Pp. xii + 330, 32 ill. Hilversum: Verloren, 1995. Paper, Hfl. 57.50. ISBN: 90-6550-519-9.**

Hans Van Wees

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## THE TROJAN COW

H. DERKS: *De Koe van Troje. De mythe van de Griekse oudheid*. Pp. xii + 330, 32 ills. Hilversum: Verloren, 1995. Paper, Hfl. 57.50. ISBN: 90-6550-519-9.

It all starts so promisingly: a snappy title (*The Trojan Cow*), a memorable cover illustration of a plastic cow on wheels, and an opening chapter which holds out the prospect of a radical reinterpretation of ancient Greece as a civilization shaped in all economic, social, and political essentials by a pastoral, rather than agricultural, way of life.

The second chapter just about sustains one's interest with a historiographical survey which tries to explain where the idea of an agricultural, household-based society came from, though the overwrought tone is beginning to make one wonder. In D.'s view, a long line of German scholars, nationalists, and, indeed, Nazi-sympathizers (pp. 43, 48) is to blame. Their anti-capitalist and anti-English biases inspired a misguided 'Sacred History' of 'oikoidal' Greece, which was adopted by Karl Polanyi and passed on by him to Moses Finley, and hence to all of us.

Alarm bells are beginning to ring when we take the first step towards establishing a new pastoral paradigm. References to horses and animal sacrifice in the *Iliad*, and Akhilleus' comment that the Trojans had never raided his flocks or cut his crops, are taken as sufficient proof of a largely pastoral society, c. 800 B.C. (pp. 65–6); if the *Odyssey* is less clear on the matter and even shows signs of hostility to the 'nomadic' Cyclops, that is because this poem was composed by 'an oikoidal urban woman' (pp. 69, 73). Hesiod may tell us all about agriculture, but 'there is no doubt about it: Hesiod was probably no farmer' (p. 78), and if Herodotus is critical of nomadic tribes, this is to be attributed to xenophobia; in any case he is not as negative as Aristotle or Gibbon (p. 88). Whatever else is dubious about these arguments, they simply do not show what D.'s programme requires him to show, namely that animal husbandry was the *predominant* livelihood of the Greeks. Instead, he is content to conclude that the Greeks were 'aware' of animal husbandry and that it was 'present' in early Greece (*ibid.*). This, of course, has never been doubted by anyone.

The same slide is evident in the next five chapters, which seek to establish that large parts of Greece were in fact suitable for livestock holding, and which offer calculations to the effect that 13,930 persons were involved in some form of animal husbandry in Attica (12% of the population, or less, by his own reckoning, p. 164), while over the whole of Greece only 23% of the population was engaged in nomadic or sedentary pastoralism (p. 192). The addition of another 23% who are imagined as combining agriculture with some animal husbandry still is not quite enough to produce a pastoral majority, so D. tacitly moves the goalposts and sets about arguing that self-sufficient grain-producing households were a minority. This is achieved by positing large numbers of non-farming city dwellers, and equally large numbers of farmers who produced only olives, figs, and wine for sale in the market. The reader is required to swallow wild inferences drawn from the evidence (e.g. Perikles allowed the Spartans to ravage Akharnai, therefore cities were economically independent of the countryside, pp. 185–6), and to take the author's word for the staggering claim that *pentakosiomedimnoi* owned 2%, and *thetes* 75%, of agricultural land in Attika (p. 164), as well as a host of other calculations, if that is the word, for which barely any justification is offered.

In the final part of his work, blithely ignoring the fact that on his own figures

livestock breeders remain a minority, D. proceeds to argue that Greek society displayed all the hallmarks of pastoralism: it was stateless and classless, characterized from the very beginning by democratic decision-making, equality of the sexes, and an absence of slavery. The overwhelming evidence against all this is attributed to a 'class of deviants' who tried, but failed, to establish themselves as a ruling class (pp. 207–9): thus Polybios may say that vast numbers of slaves were employed centuries before his time, but he is a 'prototypical deviant'; Timaios tells the truth when he claims that slaves used to be few (pp. 260–1). Timaios, presumably, is just a regular guy. Having at a stroke rid himself of all inconvenient evidence, D. finds support for his contentions in myth. If the exclamation marks which litter this part of the discussion are anything to go by, our author is astounded at his own cleverness, and I have to concede that his reading of the Battle of the Gods in the *Iliad* as an account of the shift from nomadic to sedentary pastoralism (pp. 248–50) goes well beyond anything even Robert Graves could have come up with. Where not even mythological support can be found, bald assertion is supposed to convince us that, say, Solon and Kleisthenes did their damndest to *reduce* the degree of democracy in Athens (pp. 274–5).

It is a pity that D.'s book has spun so far out of control, for it does contain potentially interesting lines of argument—about the rôle of the market, relations between the sexes, the nature of early Greek political communities, for example—which have been pursued in other recent research. As it is, *De Koe van Troje* appears to have modelled itself on the work of Martin Bernal in presenting a striking revisionist agenda and commendable historiographical introduction only to undermine itself fatally through an excessive reliance on mythology and a quite irresponsible and selective use of other sources. May I suggest that any future English translation be given the title *Bovine Athena*?

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HANS VAN WEES

## THE AREOPAGUS

O. DE BRUYN: *La compétence de l'Aréopage en matière de procès publics: des origines de la polis athénienne à la conquête romaine de la Grèce (vers 700–146 avant J.-C.)*. (Historia Einzelschriften, 90.) Pp. 226. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1995. Paper, DM/Sw. frs. 80; ÖS 624. ISBN: 3-515-06654-3.

The Areopagus is the most paradoxical institution in Athenian politics. Aristotle considered it an aristocratic body, yet it was the most respected court in the Athenian democracy. Aristophanes appears to have considered the Areopagus too dignified for ridicule. Despite its excellent reputation, however, it appears to have had little or no influence in politics—Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon do not mention it once. How could such an institution enjoy so much prestige without appearing to exert any power in public affairs?

Faced with this paradox, some scholars have argued that the Areopagus' powers in public affairs were greater than our sources might lead us to believe. In her study of the Areopagus de B. sets out to test whether this view is justified. She focuses on the extent of the Areopagus' powers in public trials, a subject 'presqu'entièrement négligé' by R. W. Wallace in his recent study of the council (p. 12). She divides her study into four parts, each of which covers one of the major periods of the Areopagus' activity.