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Athenian Democracy at War by David M. Pritchard (review)

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David M. Pritchard. *Athenian Democracy at War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xxiv, 287. \$105.00. ISBN 978-1-108-42291-8.

In this work, Pritchard brings together the fruits of fifteen years of research on Classical Athens. The result is a loose collection of chapters based on his earlier publications—some of them summarised, some reprinted, some substantially revised and brought up to date.

The title expresses its general theme but should not be taken too literally. There is little discussion of military tactics or strategy and only the most cursory account of Athens' many wars. Pritchard's insistence that Greek land warfare was a ritualised contest (193-194) suggests that he has little interest in new interpretations of such matters. He explicitly distances himself from a version of Athenian history that rests on military determinism (22-27). Instead, his focus is on "war and society": the socio-political origins of armies, the status and values of warriors, and the place of warfare in Athenian cultural and political life. The studies of different forms of military service that take up the first half of the book are primarily concerned with social background, muster, and pay. After these, there is a chapter on attitudes to trireme crews, followed by multiple shorter chapters on state finance and the abstract association of sport with war.

Since the origin of the work is in a range of other books and articles, there is no central argument or conclusion, and a great deal of overlap between chapters. There is much repetition of claims and phrases; Pritchard reminds the reader again and again of the meaning of relevant Greek words and of the abbreviations used for monetary values, despite the presence of a glossary at the end. But this repetition makes the book particularly useful as an introductory reference work, since it allows each chapter to be read in isolation. Under each heading, Pritchard lays out the ancient evidence in clear language—paying due attention to epigraphy as well as literary sources—and guides the reader through several modern controversies. Nearly every claim is backed by a footnote. The relevant scholarship is all there in the twenty-six page bibliography. Since there is no other monograph specifically devoted to the armed forces of Classical Athens, having all this material concentrated in one easily accessible place makes the book a valuable resource for both new and experienced students of the subject.

If there is no new overarching thesis, there are nevertheless some themes that recur throughout the work. Pritchard repeatedly makes the points that democracy helped make Athens more successful in war; that Athenian wealth and military experimentation transformed Greek warfare; that Classical Athens spent many times more on war than on anything else; that the Athenians held their rowers in as high regard as their hoplites.

Not all of these larger points (and many smaller ones) may be equally persuasive. For example, the argument that Old Comedy saw the hoplite as the default citizen warrior because it was "simply traditional" (120) seems facile, while the claim that Athenian sources had nothing bad to say about athletics (184-185) ignores the widespread notion that it was no good preparation for war. The work aligns itself with the more celebratory side of modern scholarship on Athenian democracy, and readers may question whether this ancient society is indeed "rightly revered" (4) for anything, or that its ability to wage war should be a further cause for admiration. But in such cases, this book will still serve as a useful point of departure for further debate.

Pritchard set himself the ambitious goal of producing an aid to future interdisciplinary comparative studies in ancient history and political science (19-22). Time will tell if he will succeed in that goal. But for students of Athenian democracy and Greek warfare in their own right, this is already a helpful contribution.

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