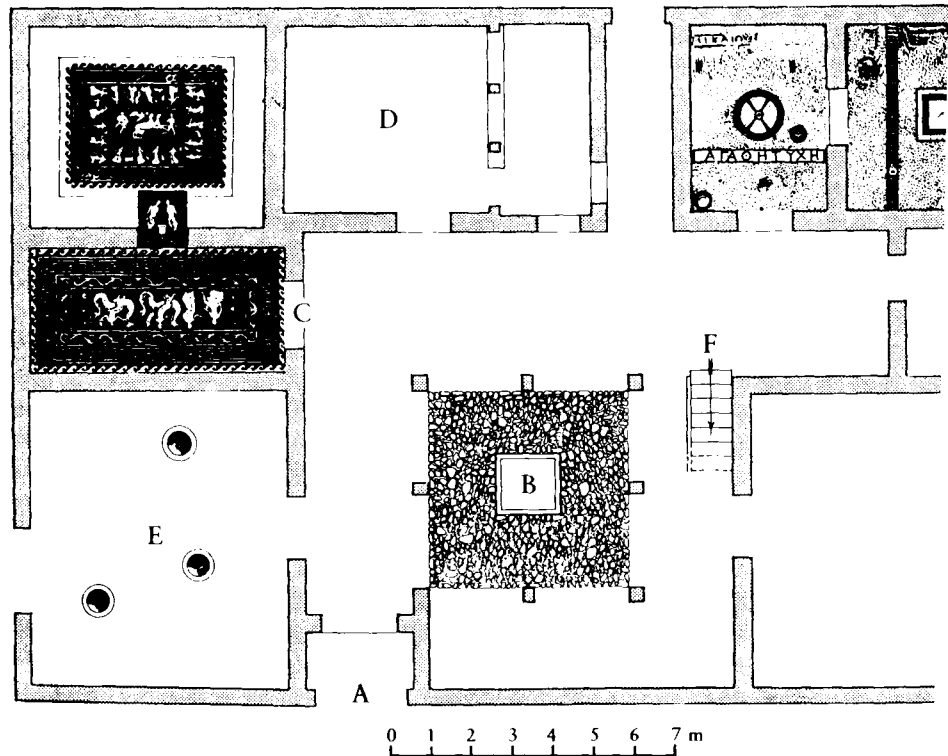


A STREET 'BLOCK' OF FOURTH-CENTURY BC HOUSES AT OLYNTHUS IN NORTH GREECE. There is some variety in the basic scheme of entrance to a courtyard from which there is direct access to the living rooms, bedrooms (upstairs), and the men's dining room (*andrōn*). Compare the more elegant villa shown in the next illustration.



THE VILLA OF GOOD FORTUNE AT OLYNTHUS, fourth century BC. The main entrance verandahed courtyard with a central altar (B). The men's dining room (*andrōn*) is reached from anteroom (C), both with mosaic floors. The kitchen is adjacent (D) and the sunken store-room (E) can be reached from a side street. At the east are workrooms and the stairs (F) to the upper floor (the women's rooms). This area also has access from a back door, while the main door leads directly to the dining room, leaving the women's quarters separate, though not secluded.

woman in places where they tell stories about love' (83-93). Such attitudes compound fear of the irrational and passionate nature of women with an exaggerated belief in their value and the importance of protecting them from the public eye. In agrarian societies these attitudes are held in check by the need for women's labour in the fields; with the advent of urban life the woman is confined to the house, and increased wealth brings with it aspirations to liberate her even from domestic duties. In a dialogue of Xenophon, Socrates confronts the problem of a friend who, because of the political turmoil, finds himself with fourteen female relatives living in his house, all well brought up and therefore unused to any form of work: Socrates persuades him that he should nevertheless provide them with suitable work such as spinning; their tempers are much improved, and the only problem is that they now complain of the idleness of their protector—but, says Socrates, his duty is to protect, as the sheepdog cares for the sheep (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2. 7).

At a quite different level similar attitudes emerge among intellectuals. Philosophers (with the honourable exception of Plato) agreed that women are less endowed with reason than men—as Aristotle put it, 'the deliberative faculty is not present at all in the slave, in the female it is inoperative, in the child undeveloped'; the family is a natural relationship involving ruler and ruled and 'as regards male and female this relationship of superior and inferior is permanent'.

Tragedians and comic poets may portray women with greater vividness and character than men: the most powerful figures in Greek tragedy are women. But the reason for this is precisely that women are believed to be more liable to extremes of emotion and to consequent violent actions. The tragedians show great insight into the predicament of women:

But now outside my father's house I am nothing; yes, often I have looked on the nature of women thus, that we are nothing. Young girls, in my opinion have the sweetest existence known to mortals in their fathers' homes, for innocence keeps children safe and happy always. But when we reach puberty and understanding, we are thrust out and sold away from our ancestral gods and from our parents. Some go to strangers' homes, others to foreigners', some to joyless houses, some to hostile. And all this, once the first night has yoked us to our husband, we are forced to praise and say that all is well. (Sophocles, *Tereus*, fr. 583)

But these very insights are embedded in stories of appalling violence: in this lost play of Sophocles, Procne is preparing to kill her son in revenge for her husband's seduction of her sister. In the religious sphere, too, women were seen as different from men in their suitability for the blacker, less rational, more orgiastic aspects of belief and ritual. Despite the many signs of empathy with the female condition, the result was a reinforcing of social attitudes that women needed protection from themselves and from the outside world.

Such attitudes relate only to Athenian women:

For this is what having a woman as a wife means, to have children by her and to introduce the sons to members of the phratry and the deme, and to betroth the daughters

to husbands as one's own. Call-girls (*hetairai*) we have for the sake of pleasure, mistresses for the daily refreshment of our bodies, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to look after the house faithfully.

Thus did an Athenian speaker appeal to an Athenian jury to remember the distinction between Athenian women and others.

It is an outrage if a stranger enters a house where women are or may be present, unless invited by the master. The layout of Athenian houses in fact suggests even within the house a strict segregation between women's quarters and the public rooms for men: in larger houses the women's quarters are situated away from the street entrance which is well guarded by a slave porter. In the country the characteristic shape of the farmhouse is a courtyard where the women and children live during the day, surrounded by single storey rooms; in one corner stands a strong storage tower, into the upper floors of which the women retreat if strangers come. In smaller city houses the men's quarters are on the ground floor, the women's on the upper: in a famous murder trial the defendant claims that his young wife persuaded him to swap sleeping quarters so that she would be near the well to wash the baby—and so that her lover could visit her. But how had this lover even made contact with a married woman? He had noticed her at a funeral, he had bribed her slave-girl to run messages, he had met her under cover of the women's festival of the Thesmophoria: only on such occasions would she have left the house. It was of course legal for the husband with a gang of neighbours to kill the lover caught in the act: the prosecution could only claim that the murder was planned beforehand for other reasons. Women normally left the house accompanied; and the fact that a woman worked in public was either a sign of extreme poverty or evidence that she was not a citizen.

It is not easy to come to terms with such attitudes, however common they may be in peasant societies, if only because we idealize the Greeks as the originators of western civilization. But we should remember that (polygamy apart) the position of Athenian women was in most important respects the same as that of the 200,000,000 women who today live under Islam, and that in the history of the world only communism and the advanced capitalist societies have made any pretence of treating men and women equally.

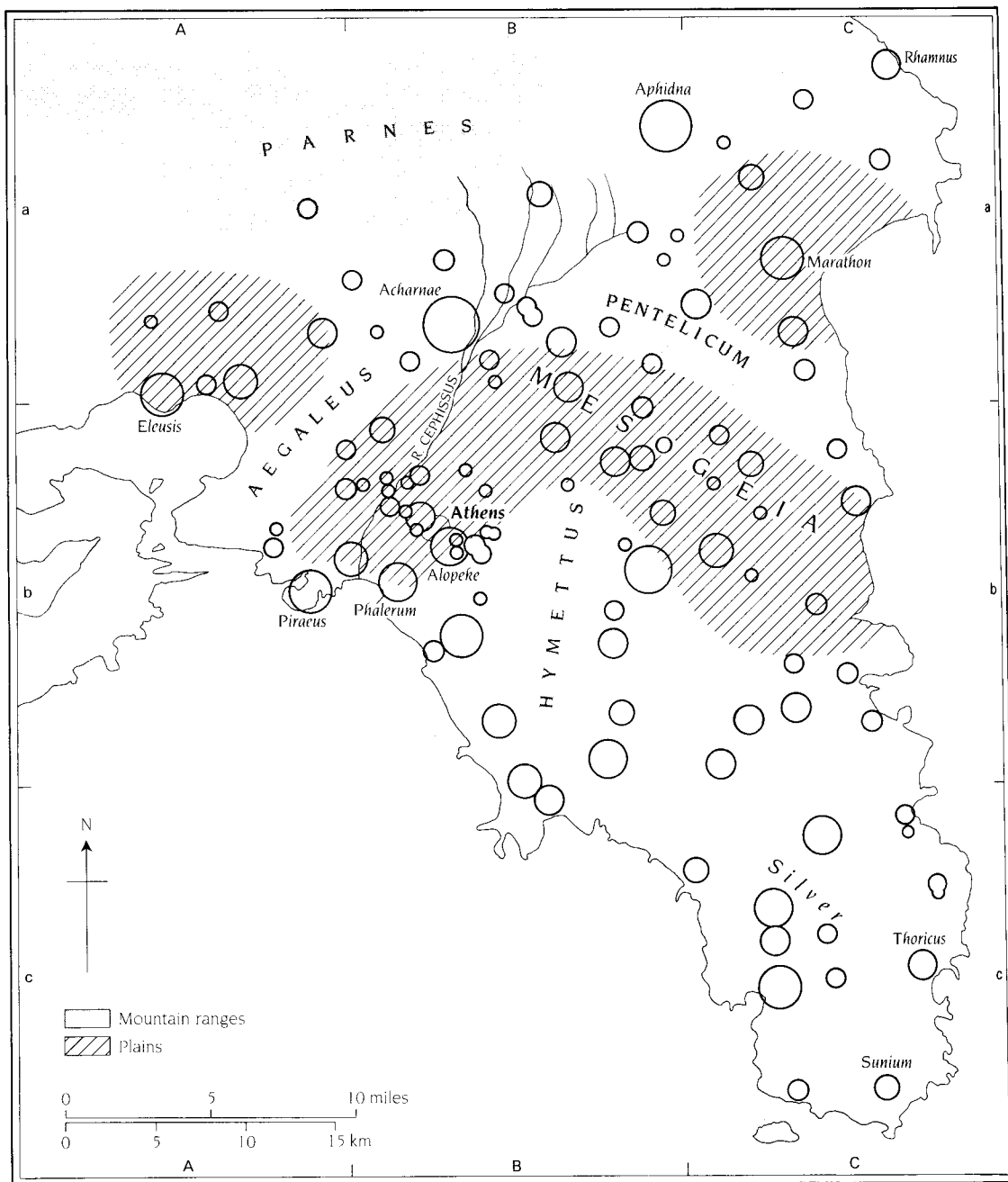
The consequence of these attitudes in Athens, combined with the importance placed on male social groupings, was to establish public life as the centre of the *polis*: the balance in ancient Athens was shifted away from the family and towards the community: hence the magnificent festivals and displays, the great public buildings for religious and political purposes. It was surrounded by these buildings, in the *agora*, that the Athenian male spent his time. In contrast his home was mean and unimpressive: it was not safe in a democracy to display a lifestyle different from that of other citizens, and anyway a man's life was lived in public not in private. Here lies a fundamental reason for the achievement of Athens in

exemplifying the ideal type of the ancient city; the erosion of the family was the price to be paid for her success in escaping from the ties of tribalism and kinship to create a new type of social and political organization.

### *Economy*

It is all too easy to compare and contrast ancient economies with modern ones, and fall into the trap of believing that the ancient economy was primitive and agrarian, as if agrarian economies are naturally simple. The example of Athens is a useful corrective. The land of Attica is fundamentally unsuited to a simple economy: it consists of about a thousand square miles of mountain, upland forest and grazing, with only small pockets of cultivable land, most of that suitable only for olives; such geographical constraints imply a number of quite different and highly specialized agricultural activities, co-ordinated by a central settlement for exchange. One of the curious consequences of recent study of the political system established by Cleisthenes at the end of the sixth century is our ability to plot the population distribution in Attica at the start of the classical period, since each deme provided a number of city councillors proportionate to its population. The richest lands were the plain of Eleusis, the valley of the Cephissus river, and the plain of Marathon: here arable farming and viticulture must have been dominant; the next most fertile area of the Mesogeia is still the centre for *retsina* production. Not surprisingly these areas account for about two-fifths of the population. The city itself, where manufacture, trade, and service activities will have been concentrated, comprises a further fifth. What is perhaps remarkable is the evidence for large settlements in the uplands, and in the rocky Laurium peninsula: here the main activities will have been olive-growing where possible, but otherwise pastoral, centred on sheep and goats for wool and milk products (meat at all times in the Greek world being reserved for festival occasions and the eating of the sacrifice), and also forestry: even today Attica is still heavily wooded. As a result, although the overall population density is naturally lower in these areas, they contain many of the largest individual settlements; the largest of all, with roughly double the representation of other comparable demes and more than half that of the city of Athens itself, is Acharnae, famous for its charcoal industry: charcoal was, before coal, the main domestic and industrial fuel, required in huge quantities for smelting metal, and for cooking and heating under urban conditions. Nor should such activities as fishing in the coastal areas be forgotten.

There is no such comparable evidence for the classical period; but already, before the full development of urbanization in Attica, a complex and diversified agricultural economy existed. It is also clear that the conurbation of Athens required from a very early date the importation of cereals in large quantities; evidence of serious interest in corn imports goes back to the late seventh century, and the protection of the corn routes, especially from the Black Sea, was a major



MAP 4. ATTICA. Attica, the territory of the city of Athens, comprises about 1,000 square miles, and is one of the largest city territories. The fertile agricultural areas are in the Cephissus valley and the Mesogeia, together with the plains of Eleusis and Marathon. Upland pastures and woodland cover the rest of the area, together with the bare mountain ranges of Hymettus, Pentelicum, and Parnes. This map shows the population distribution at the start of the Classical period (509 BC): the circles are graded according to the population of the settlements. Note how in the lowlands the villages are often located just off the plains, and also the evidence for large centres of population in the uplands.

determinant of Athenian public policy throughout the classical period. The adult male citizen population rose from about 30,000 to about 40,000 in the fifth century, and then dropped to the 21,000 shown in a census of 317 BC, largely during the Peloponnesian War; the same census reveals 10,000 resident foreigners. These figures may very approximately be multiplied by four to account for freeborn dependents, and we should add around 100,000 slaves. Figures available for the corn yield of Attica in the fourth century suggest that in order to feed this population at least half and probably nearer 80 per cent of corn, the staple food, had to be imported. Trade was therefore a vital component in the Athenian economy. The corn trade was strictly regulated: it was forbidden for Athenian residents to ship corn except to the Piraeus; there were laws preventing the re-export or stockpiling of corn, and special officials to regulate the market. The system of mixed loan, profit sharing and insurance, by which individuals lent capital at a very high rate of interest to shipowners for particular voyages, the loan to be repayable only if the voyage was successfully completed, seems to have been primarily designed for the corn trade. But Athens encouraged the development of other areas of trade by quick and easy access to her courts, fair treatment of foreigners, and encouraging foreigners to settle in Athens (below p. 222). The basis for the trading supremacy of Athens was laid by Themistocles in the early fifth century with the fortification of the Piraeus and the establishment of a proper port; and the unification of the old city and the port was completed in 457 BC by the building of the Long Walls between them. By the end of the century Athens was the leading trade centre in Greece; her position was scarcely affected by her defeat in war and the collapse of her empire, and she began to lose it only with the shift of economic focus as a result of the conquests of Alexander and the unification of the eastern Mediterranean with the Middle East around the new Hellenistic city foundations.

A second type of economic activity in Athens resulted from the public works programme initiated by Pericles in the mid fifth century (below, pp. 298 f.). The records of accounts that survive relate to the later stages of building, the finishing work and the activities of skilled craftsmen on the sculptural decoration: it emerges that the labour force is mixed Athenian and foreign, free and slave, and that the wages for each type of work are identical regardless of social category. Earlier there must have been a large demand for unskilled labour in the digging of foundations, levelling of sites and the main stages of the building; equally the building programme itself used for the first time on a large scale the marble quarries of Mount Pentelicum, and created a great demand for labour both there and in the transport of stone to Athens (always the costliest part of an ancient or medieval building operation). In the absence of large gangs of slave labour it is virtually certain that the poor citizen population benefited most from this work. There is a well-established continuity between the public sculpture of the fifth century and the private grave monuments of the fourth century: when temple building stopped, sculptors moved either elsewhere in Greece or into the private

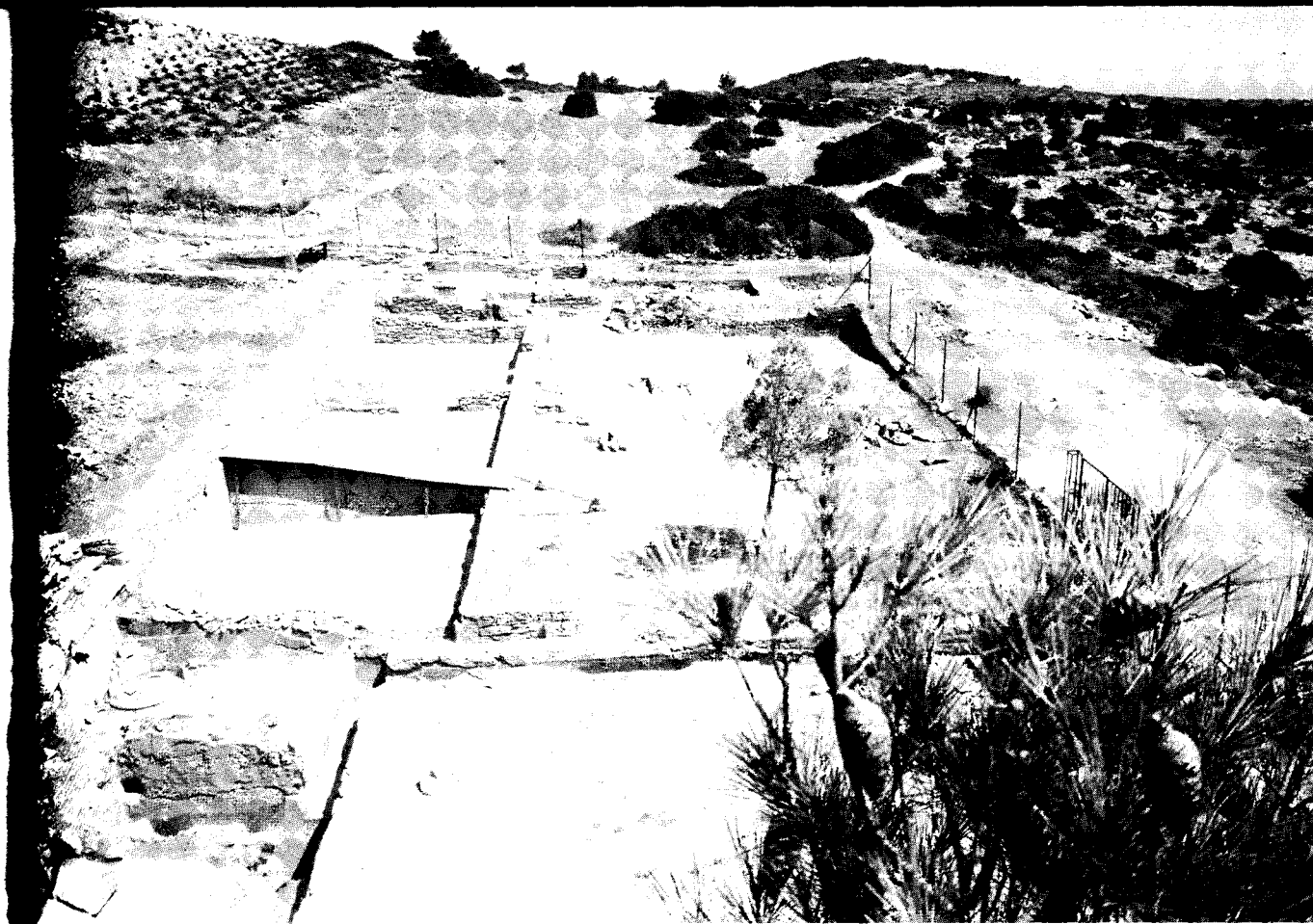
WORK IN THE CLAY PIT. A small clay plaque, one of hundreds dedicated at a shrine near the potters' quarter at Corinth in the sixth century BC. Many bear scenes of the potters at work, this one the quarrying for clay with refreshment being lowered to the workmen in the pit.



sector. Similarly with unskilled labour: it is noticeable that the democratic state at Athens at all times, except during war and periods of financial crisis, supported a major public works programme; the great frontier forts and the building programme of Lycurgus in the fourth century are the direct continuation of a policy of providing state employment on public works, which had begun as early as the sixth century under the Athenian tyrants.

Other economic activities rested mainly on craft skills, and did not therefore employ large numbers; nevertheless in total they were of considerable importance in creating a lively and varied market. Athens had become the main centre for high-grade painted pottery in Greece in the fifth century, and she remained dominant until the late fourth century, when the increased availability of precious metals from Alexander's conquests removed the need for art pottery. A famous part of the city was known as the *Kerameikos*, the Potters' Quarter. It has been calculated that the number of actual master vase-painters working at Athens at any one time was no more than a hundred, and some at least of these were also potters; nevertheless, taking into account every stage of the process, from the clay digging and fuel suppliers to the workshop staff, and finally the network of merchants who distributed the results as far away as Etruria and Spain, it is clear that this was a major economic activity.

Other crafts had developed beyond the workshop stage towards the factory, largely through the use of slave labour: the father of the politician Demosthenes owned two manufactories, one making swords with over thirty slaves, the other making couches with twenty; the shield factory of Lysias (below, pp. 222 f.) is the largest establishment known, with 120 slaves. A number of prominent politicians of the classical age seem to have drawn considerable revenues from such enterprises, to judge from remarks made in the comic poets about their professions (to the comic poets the wealthy Cleon, for instance, was a tanner); the development is to be explained in part by the existence of government contracts, espe-



THE SILVER MINES AT LAURIUM IN ATTICA. A view looking east over part of a fourth-century industrial complex at Agrileza, including a washery for silver ores uncovered in recent British excavations.

cially in the armaments sector, and in part more generally by the needs of a large city.

A final source of wealth must be mentioned, the mining of silver. In the early fifth century a new deep vein of silver was discovered in the Laurium hills, and silver mining continued intensively, with intermissions in times of disturbance, throughout the classical period. Concessions were leased by the state to Athenian entrepreneurs and syndicates, who worked them with slave gangs. The profits were enormous; the total state revenue was of the same order as the total cost of the corn trade, and individual concessions could make as much as 100 talents over three years. The fifth-century politician Nicias profited in a different way, by supplying the labour: he had a gang of 1,000 slaves whom he let out for work in the mines, drawing an income of 10 talents a year, a return of 33 per cent on his capital. Plato's *Protagoras* and Xenophon's *Symposium* are set in the house of the aristocratic Callias, who belonged to one of the most prominent political families of the fifth century, whose immense wealth was largely derived from the silver mines.

The rich have always preferred to live off rents and profits rather than engaging



in direct economic activity; but it is only the prejudices of ancient philosophers which deceive us into thinking that the ownership of land was the only respectable source of wealth. The declarations for tax and inheritance purposes demonstrate a variety of sources; the categories are listed in a standard form: agricultural property, town property let out, manufactories and craft workshops owned, private possessions, money in hand, money deposited or out on loan. Those declarations known to us list capital and income in all or most of these categories.

Among ordinary Athenians, it is true that those who had land were primarily engaged in agriculture; but there were many at all levels of prosperity whose livelihood depended on other activities, and there is little evidence for social barriers: some of the most prominent dedications on the archaic Acropolis were those of craftsmen; potters and sculptors especially had a high social status. One prejudice did however exist: with the exception of state employment, wage labour was despised, and only under exceptional circumstances or in extreme necessity would Athenians work for others on a permanent basis. This was perhaps the chief consequence of the existence of slavery, that no man would willingly work for a master, since to do so was to put himself in the position of a slave; thus slavery both caused and filled a gap in the labour market.

One-third of the free population was non-citizen. The resident foreigner was called a metic (*metoikos*). At Athens he must find a citizen protector and register with the authorities, paying a small annual tax; in return he acquired effectively full protection at law and most of the duties of a citizen, such as contributing to public funds and financing expenses at festivals as well as military service: he was merely not allowed to marry a citizen or to own landed property in Attica. The boundary between citizen and metic was crossed only under exceptional circumstances, and later writers often contrasted the exclusiveness of Greek cities with Roman liberality, claiming that this was why Greek empires were so short lived and unpopular. However in practice, throughout the classical period, the metic population in Athens was large and prosperous, loyal to the city, and proud of its status; it was concentrated in the Piraeus, and its members were naturally especially prominent in the non-agricultural sectors, in manufacture, skilled crafts, trade, and commercial enterprises such as banking. One example will show how integrated the metic could become. Cephalus the Syracusan was invited to Athens by Pericles: he owned a large shield factory clearly fulfilling government contracts; his house in the Piraeus is the scene of Plato's *Republic*, and the dialogue begins with a discussion between him and Socrates on his attitude to his enormous wealth. His sons Polemarchus and Lysias were strong supporters of the radical democracy; Polemarchus was executed and they lost their property under the pro-Spartan oligarchy of 404 BC. Lysias fled into exile, and on his return was rewarded with citizenship for his loyalty, though the grant was soon annulled on legal grounds. Lysias then became the leading composer of legal speeches until his death about 380 BC; the fact that as a non-citizen he could not speak in court mattered little, since all litigants had to speak for themselves, and employed

professionals merely to write the speeches. It is clear that Cephalus and his family mixed freely with the aristocratic and intellectual élite of Athens; they were themselves leading members of Athenian society and unswervingly loyal to it, even if they did not possess citizenship.

Unlike wage labour, slavery was a natural form of exploitation in the ancient Mediterranean; and, though we have no precise figures, it is likely that the number of slaves in Attica was roughly equal to the number of free inhabitants, or around 100,000. Slavery as a social status is unproblematic: the slave is in Aristotle's phrase 'a living tool' whom the master can treat as he wishes, though only a fool would maltreat his tools; damage to a slave by others involved compensation to the owner. It was, however, a rule of Athenian law that a slave's evidence was only admissible if procured under torture, for the obvious reason that, in order to liberate a slave from fear of his master, one must substitute a greater fear.

To begin with numbers, there is ample evidence that, while the very poor possessed no slave, this was considered a grave misfortune, and all aspired to own at least one slave: one might compare the modern European's attitude to owning a car. However, as with other consumer durables, possession increases the need up to the limit of what one can afford. Every soldier on campaign was accompanied by a slave, which would normally imply others left at home. Towards the top end of the scale a really rich man might own more than fifty slaves, and employ them in manufactories, as well as possessing household slaves. Larger numbers were exceptional outside the special case of the silver mining gangs. The evidence of the titles of the different jobs we find slaves performing (porter, nurse, tutor, maid, cook, and so on) suggests a comparison with the numbers of servants in Victorian households of various social classes. Agricultural slavery was limited by economic considerations: it is unlikely that the average peasant working his own land with his family could support more than one or two slaves; but those with enough land to choose to live without working would immediately require a slave overseer and a minimum of four or five farmhands, perhaps as many as fifteen.

The question of numbers is important, because it serves to demonstrate how, in most areas of the economy, slave and free worked alongside each other and under the same conditions: indeed one category of slaves actually worked independently as craftsmen, paying a part of their earnings to their owner. This working relationship explains why in many respects, while Athenian society was definitely a slave-owning society, it lacked the characteristics of a slave economy, in that special modes of exploitation had not evolved: in a real sense slavery was a substitute for wage labour, implying the same sort of social conditions. The situation is caricatured by a reactionary Athenian critic:

Now as for the slaves and metics in Athens, they live a most undisciplined life; one is not permitted to strike them there, and a slave will not stand out of the way for you.

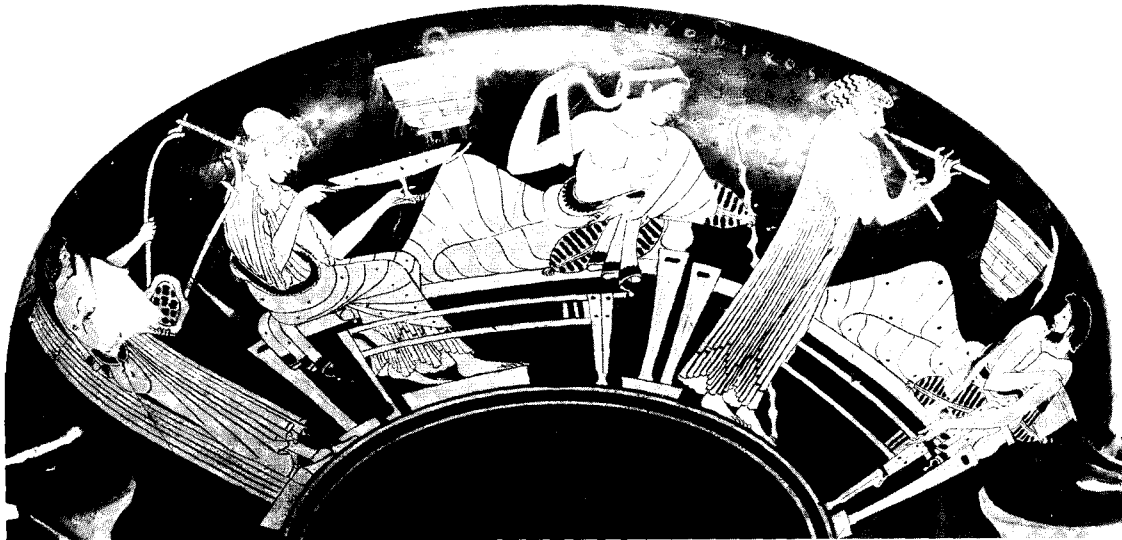
Let me explain why. If the law permitted a free man to strike a slave or a metic or a freedman, he would often find that he had mistaken an Athenian for a slave and struck him, for, so far as clothing and general appearance are concerned, the common people look just the same as the slaves and metics. (Pseudo-Xenophon, *On Athens* 1. 10)

In only one area had a true slave economy developed: the silver mining gangs were organized to obviate the need for free labour in conditions which no free man would tolerate. The slave-owner's contract protected him against loss by insisting on the replacement of all slaves who died, but this scarcely offered much protection to the slave, for the owner's profit was such that he could afford a new slave after three years. The skeletons and evidence of living 300 feet underground in tunnels fed with air through downdrafts created by fires halfway up the shafts, the niche for the guard at the mine entrance, and the fact that the tunnels were so small that the face workers must have crawled and knelt at their work while all portage was carried out by pre-adolescent children, reveal the truth. Few Athenians cared to visit their investments in the Laurium mines, and special overseers were employed; even on the surface miners were kept chained. It is indeed an appalling indictment of Athenian indifference that Nicias, whose money was made from child labour of this sort, could widely be regarded as the most moral and religious man of his generation.

### *Culture*

Culture requires leisure and occasion: leisure is not usually a problem in the pre-industrial world, or where one works for oneself rather than another. There were two main types of occasion in the classical world, private and public, the *symposion* and the festival.

The *symposion* or male drinking group belongs to the world of social groups already described, and embodies essentially an aristocratic form of culture still practised in the classical age, but no longer dominant. Earlier much of Greek poetry, Greek music, and Greek pottery had been created for such groups, whose character was remarkably uniform across the Greek world; if artistic creativity had diminished, the *symposion* was still a main focus of social life. The *symposion* took place in a room called 'the men's room' (*andrōn*), often specially designed, with the door off-centre to accommodate the couches on which the participants lay, one or two to a couch, propped on their left arm. Before them were light snacks on low tables. The size of the rooms varied from three to twelve or more couches, so the groups were relatively small. In the room stood a large *kratēr* or mixing bowl, in which the wine was mixed with water in proportions usually of two or three of water to one of wine: the alcoholic content was therefore less than that of modern beer; the wine-pourers were young male or female slaves, often chosen for their beauty. The participants drank occasionally out of metal, but more often out of the fine painted pottery which was an Athenian speciality,



SYMPOSION, on an Athenian cup by the Brygos Painter of about 490–480 BC. Reclining at a feast—an eastern habit—was adopted by Greeks before 600 BC. The furniture is as that for the bedroom, but often more elaborate, and the couches determined the size of the room in the house (the *andrōn*) set aside for banquet and *symposion*. Women attend only to entertain, boys to provide music or bring wine. The artists dwell on the lighter-hearted aspects of the *symposion*, but it could serve more serious social and even political purposes as a private gathering of men from different families—like a club.

and followed complex social customs in their behaviour, under the direction of a leader. Poetry continued to be performed; although there are no great names like Anacreon or Alcaeus, and those anonymous drinking rounds (*skolia*) which can be dated are mostly earlier, the collection of short elegiac poems attributed to Theognis seems to go back to sympotic song-books of this period. There were games (*kottabos*, flicking wine at a target, was one of the most developed), and increasingly professional entertainments performed by slave girls and boys. Our literary evocations of the classical *Symposium* by Plato and Xenophon illustrate two basic features. The first is the element of order and succession: the speaking, like the drinking, is ordered—each man talks in turn on a chosen theme. The second is the importance of love and sex: excluded from the family setting, these natural emotions found their place in the drinking group. Here is the main reason for the importance of homosexuality in ancient Greece; for the *symposion* provided the focus for liaisons of both ‘earthly’ and ‘spiritual’ type, whether in relation to fellow drinkers or the slave boys: the idealization of these emotions inspired some of the highest expressions of love in European literature. Athenian women never attended the *symposion*; but ‘call-girls’ or *hetairai* were common, slaves often owned by one or more men and accompanying them as part of the entertainment: ‘the defendant Neaera drank and dined with them in the presence of many men, as an *hetaira* would do’—therefore she cannot be an Athenian citizen. Vase-painting illustrates most clearly the range of behaviour which resulted; in literature Xenophon is the best guide, with his informal account of conversations about love, of Callias’ infatuation with the son of one of his guests,

and of the entertainment provided by two professional slave performers, both acrobatic and erotic. After the evening was over, the party often ended with a drunken riot through the streets, in which innocent bystanders might get beaten up, or sinister events might occur, such as the smashing of the herms outside the doors of Athenian citizens one dark night in May 415 BC. It was even alleged that the Eleusinian Mysteries had been deliberately profaned behind closed doors at a number of parties.

These activities were aristocratic: the social gap is exemplified in the scene in Aristophanes' *Wasps* where 'aristocratic' son tries to teach his 'working-class' father how to behave:

Come and lie down, and learn how to behave at *symposia* and parties.

How do I do it then? Come on, tell me.

Elegantly.

You mean like this?

Oh no.

How then?

Straighten your knees and pour yourself over the cushions, flowing like an athlete.

Then praise one of the bronzes, inspect the ceiling, admire the hangings in the hall.

Needless to say, the old man ends up behaving disgracefully, stealing one of the flute-girls and pursued by outraged citizens threatening writs for assault.

The *symposion* was part of a youth culture which also found its expression in the *gymnasion*. Greek society was the first known to us to take sport seriously. The circuit of international festivals where top athletes competed (the Olympic Games being only the most famous) was set up in the sixth century; and athletes were famous figures in their own cities, feasted and celebrated in victory odes by men such as Pindar: rather surprisingly, given the importance of the group in these and so many other activities, team sports did not exist. Young men spent much of their day at the *gymnasion* where they exercised naked, pursued their loved ones, or passed the time in conversation. It is no accident that two famous *gymnasias*, the Academy and the Lyceum, gave their names to two famous schools of philosophy, those of Plato and Aristotle; for these philosophers had established their activities deliberately in proximity to the exercising grounds.

Festivals were the focus of democratic culture, where the people could enjoy displays which were a combination of public feast, religious experience and great art. Other chapters explore the theatrical (Ch. 7) and religious (Ch. 11) aspects of the festival; here it is enough to remember that the different aspects cannot be separated. At the Great Dionysia the theatrical performances were preceded by a day in which perhaps as many as 240 bulls might be ritually slaughtered and eaten, there was drunken revelry, and many people spent the night sleeping in the streets: part of the experience of the tragic audience must have been the reek of dried blood and a monumental hangover. In cultural terms the important aspect is the shift in patronage that public festivals imply. It is no longer the

tyrant or the aristocrat who commissions great art, but the *dēmos* as a whole. The art produced responds to the demands for a more public, more colourful display: building on the traditions of choral dance appropriate to religious festivals, it creates a truly public art. But there was still a place for that close relationship between artist and patron which seems essential to great art, for the people 'realize that, where it is a matter of providing choral or dramatic festivals or athletic contests or of equipping a naval trireme, it is the rich who put up the money, while the common people enjoy their festivals and contests and are provided with their triremes.' The rich were in fact required by law to undertake these public 'liturgies', and competed to display their generosity before the people.

#### Education

The Greek alphabet, which is essentially our alphabet, was adopted from the Phoenicians in the eighth century, and created the preconditions for widespread literacy. By the fifth century the ability of male citizens to read and write is taken for granted, which makes it difficult for us to determine how widespread literacy actually was. But certain facts are clear. Literacy in Greece was never a



A READING LESSON. On the interior of an Athenian cup of about 430-420 BC. The boy stands reading a folding wooden tablet, the leaves of which would have been waxed, while the man reads from a scroll. The scene is contemporary Athenian, but the figures are given mythical identities with the names Musaeus and Linus, a poet and a teacher of the Heroic Age.

craft skill, possessed only by experts; from the start writing was used for a great range of activities, from composing poetry to cursing enemies, from displaying laws to voting, from inscribing tombstones or dedications to writing shopping lists. To be completely illiterate was to be ignorant, uncultured; but our evidence shows that there existed all levels of skill in writing, spelling, and grammar: only a society in which literacy is widespread can offer such a range of evidence from semi-literacy to illiteracy. There is of course no sign that women were expected or encouraged to read, though many of them could. To be cautious, we may say that in a city like Athens well over half the male population could read and write, and that levels of literacy in the Greek cities of the classical and Hellenistic periods were higher than at any period in western culture before this century. Yet it is important to remember that for many purposes Greek culture remained an oral culture, in which the preferred forms and means of communication were oral not written.

Widespread literacy implies widespread schooling: organized schools are first heard of at the end of the sixth century. Education had to be paid for, but the cost was low, since schoolteachers were generally despised. Athenian law laid down the hours of opening and closing of schools, the numbers of boys permitted and their ages, and established state supervision of teachers, apparently in the interests of the moral protection of the children from their teachers; those who could afford it were accompanied to school by a slave. Schooling began at the age of seven, and doubtless for many did not continue beyond the three or four years necessary to learn the basic skills. But the next stage in life was thought of as starting about eighteen, so we must assume that many had as much as ten years of schooling. Education was traditionally divided into three areas, under three different types of teacher: literature, physical education, and music. Literature began with reading and writing, grammar and language work, and included learning poetry by heart (especially Homer), imbibing its moral content, and discussing a limited range of literary and other questions raised by the authors; there was a great deal of emphasis on mechanical exercises and rote learning, and teachers made up for their low social status by imposing discipline through corporal punishment. Prose authors were not studied, nor were mathematics or any technical subject: the general Greek view of the usefulness of the poets for practical instruction and their moral value reflects their educational practice. Physical education was carried out at the *palaistra*, some at least of which were public, under special teachers, and included the basic sports practised in Greece, which were again individual rather than team sports. Music seems to have been losing ground in the classical period; it included choral dancing as well as performing on instruments.

It is easy to see that this education is essentially aristocratic in origin, providing the basic cultural and physical skills needed to shine in the *gymnasion* and the *symposion*; but in classical Athens there are signs that it was being made available to a far wider group, which may explain some of the tension between styles of

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education evident in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Towards the end of the fourth century the Athenian system was sufficiently standard and universal to be completed by a state system of youth training, in which all young men from the age of eighteen spent two years in the *gymnasion* and in military training under specially appointed officials: this institution, called the *ephēbeia*, became in the Hellenistic period the mark of a Greek city, and the chief distinction between citizen and non-citizen.

The main point of Aristophanes' *Clouds* is, however, a different conflict, that between lower and higher education. By the 420s, when that play was written, there was becoming available a systematic form of higher education intended to train young men for public life. The travelling lecturer, displaying his knowledge of esoteric subjects such as antiquities, anthropology, mathematics, or linguistics, and more especially his skill at public speaking, was an established part of fifth-century life, reflecting ease of communication and a premium on intellectual showmanship; the development of Athens caused these lecturers to converge on the city, and Plato captures well the excitement caused by the visits of men such as Gorgias of Leontini, Protagoras of Abdera, Prodicus of Ceos, Anaxagoras of Lampsacus, Hippias of Elis, or (we may add) Herodotus of Halicarnassus. Plato also sets up an antithesis between these figures, the so-called 'sophists', and Socrates the Athenian: they profess knowledge of all sorts, he professes ignorance; they parade skill in public speaking, he can only ask questions, and rejects the elegant prepared answer; they offer to teach, to make men better, he merely offers to confirm man's ignorance; they charge high fees, his teaching is free. But the great confrontations in such dialogues as the *Protagoras* or the *Gorgias* do not reflect contemporary opinion, which did not distinguish the activities of Socrates from those of the sophists. Sophistic ideas are discussed elsewhere (below, p. 236); but to Aristophanes, reflecting the prejudices of the ordinary Athenian, these men were all pretty similar in their scepticism and moral relativism, their love of money and pretentious intellectual claims: they made people question the basic values of society like the existence of the gods and the duty to obey the laws; some of them even seemed to encourage their pupils to think that the political constitution was a matter of indifference. If they taught anything useful, it was 'the ability to make the worse seem the better cause': skill in public speaking implied the development of a rudimentary theory of argument and an understanding of the psychological springs of persuasion, together with a willingness to regard the art of rhetoric as separable from belief in truth. The results of this set of techniques might seem mildly useful, as for instance the lists of arguments and counter-arguments in the anonymous late-fifth-century text called the *Dissoi Logoi* (Opposite Arguments), or Antiphon's *Tetralogies*, pairs of speeches on opposite sides of imaginary murder trials; but if a man learned to argue both sides of a case, how would he know which was right?

The impact of the sophists on the aristocratic youth of the late fifth century was enormous: a whole new generation of politicians emerged, more sophisti-



cated and more cynical, to counter the plebeian attitudes of the demagogues; their involvement in the various oligarchic coups of the period discredited the attempt to claim politics as an art, at least in the practical world. But the sophistic educational system developed in two directions, notably under the two great fourth-century educators, Plato and Isocrates. Behind the informal fifth-century world of Plato's dialogues lies an increasingly efficient fourth-century educational establishment attempting to create leaders for a new philosophical age, and studying more or less systematically the various branches of what we know as philosophy, from mathematics to metaphysics. Isocrates was a born educationalist, the most tedious writer Athens ever produced, who unfortunately lived to the age of ninety-eight. He took the sophistic movement forward to offer a training in technique without content: rhetoric became a universal art, suitable for all verbal occasions, not just public speaking. He also offered an education in general culture, and numbers of competent speakers and literary figures are said to have studied under him; but his theories lacked any incentive to serious thought. They were therefore eminently suited to become the standard pattern for organized higher education. This conflict between Plato and Isocrates developed the systematic theories of logic and of rhetoric which we find in Aristotle; it also developed a polarity between philosophy and rhetoric as two forms of mental activity suited to the adult mind, which was to dominate culture for the rest of the ancient world.

The development of the profession of medicine is a phenomenon parallel to the development of rhetoric and philosophy, and subject to many of the same tendencies. Greek doctors were already famous for their skills in the sixth century, and could command high salaries at the courts of Greek tyrants or the Persian king, or significantly as publicly paid city doctors; their scientific theory was drawn from the Ionian philosophers, their skills were acquired by apprenticeship, heredity, and practice. In the fifth century more stable identifiable groups begin to emerge, in south Italy, and in the two Ionian cities of Cos and Cnidus; by the end of the fourth century these last two had become established medical schools with specific traditions: the parallel with the contemporary development from itinerant sophist to philosophical and rhetorical school is plain. The process can be followed in the so-called *Hippocratic Corpus*, a collection of medical treatises attributed to Hippocrates of Cos, contemporary of Socrates, and mostly belonging to the period 430 to 330 BC. These works reveal already an established body of empirical data on most aspects of medicine—atomy, physiology, gynaecology, pathology, epidemiology, and surgery; most of the observations are related to general physical theories such as that of the four humours. There is a lot of emphasis on diet and regimen, not surprising in a science where pharmacology and surgery necessarily played a smaller role. Many of the early treatises show attempts by doctors to distinguish their profession from the activities of natural philosophers, sophists, and 'irrational medicine'—magicians, sorcerers, and quacks; although they regarded themselves as a guild under the protection of



AN EAST GREEK GRAVESTONE FOR A DOCTOR, about 500 BC. Two metal 'cups' hang in the background. Heated and applied to the flesh, they drew evil humours and pains from the body: a commonly applied remedy in antiquity and not forgotten to the present day.

Asclepius, there is virtually no recourse to divine explanations for illness or cure, and one is left puzzled about the relationship between the medical profession and the various healing cults (involving incubation, dream therapy, incantation, prayer, holy water, and various non-rational types of cure), which are usually associated with Asclepius or other healing gods: perhaps the two attitudes to medicine coexisted in much the same way as orthodox medicine and homeopathy today—the more rationally, since it is surprising that scientific medicine could survive at all in a world where it must have seemed so much less effective than belief.

The Hippocratic Oath embodies the principles of that new medicine, and reveals its organization:

I will pay the same respect to my master in the Science as to my parents and share my life with him and pay all my debts to him. I will regard his sons as my brothers and

teach them the Science, if they desire to learn it, without fee or contract. I will hand on precepts, lectures, and all other learning to my sons, to those of my master, and to those pupils duly apprenticed and sworn, and to none other. . . .

The conception of medicine as a craft to be learned by apprenticeship or heredity has fused with the conception of medicine as a body of scientific knowledge and as a moral way of life; it is not surprising that this oath and the attitudes it enshrines have remained central to the practice of medicine down to our own day.

Society is composed of interrelating phenomena, and there is a fascination in seeing how they fit together; perhaps that aim is sufficient justification for this chapter. But social history may also be seen as the background against which man creates his art, his literature, and his systems of thought; it is essential to understanding them, and yet it does not explain them. What is unique about the classical Greek world is its cultural achievements. If we may pause to ask how these came to be, I would suggest that there was, at least in the case of Athens, a crucial conflict between a traditional society and the complexities of its public and private life, which can be traced in the social, economic and cultural developments of the classical age; these complexities liberated the individual from the constraints of tradition without causing him to lose his social identity. **The conflict is potentially present in the Greek city-state, and actualized in the case of Athens: Athens is the paradigm of the latent forces of the polis.**

#### *Further Reading*

The various authors mentioned are available in the Loeb Classical Library; the most interesting individual texts are Xenophon's *Symposium* and *Oeconomicus*, the first book of Aristotle's *Politics*, the murder trial in Lysias, *Oration 1*, and Demosthenes, *Oration 59* (against Neaera). The Gortyn Law-code is discussed in R. F. Willetts, *Aristocratic Society in Ancient Crete* (London, 1955). For the evidence of Aristophanes see V. Ehrenberg, *The People of Aristophanes* (2nd edn. London, 1951). The death of Socrates and the evidence for the effects of hemlock are discussed in C. J. Gill, 'The death of Socrates', *Classical Quarterly* 23 (1973), 25-8.

There is a lively general account of *Athenian Culture and Society* (London, 1973) by T. B. L. Webster. For Spartan society the best discussion is W. Den Boer, *Laconian Studies* (Amsterdam, 1954), part III; see also E. Rawson, *The Spartan Tradition in European Thought* (Oxford, 1969).

H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (London, 1977), describes the Athenian religious year; D. M. Macdowell, *The Law of Classical Athens* (London, 1978), is the best introduction to the complexities of Athenian law. Athenian social values are described in K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1974). On kinship, women, and the family see W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece* (London, 1968); S. C. Humphreys, *The Family, Women and Death* (London, 1983). On women the best general book is Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves* (New York, 1975); see also *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt (London, 1983: essays by Ruth Padel and Susan Walker); David M. Schaps, *Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 1979).

On the economy of Athens the best general account is S. Isager and M. H. Hansen, *Aspects of Athenian Society in the Fourth Century B.C.* (Odense, 1975); for a very different account, see M. I.

Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (London, 1973). On special topics see A. Burford, *Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society* (London, 1972); J. S. Boersma, *Athenian Building Policy from 561/0 to 405/4 B.C.* (Groningen, 1970); C. Conophagos, *Le Laurium antique* (Athens, 1980; an excellent account by a professional mining engineer who has also excavated); D. Whitehead, *The Ideology of the Athenian Metic* (Cambridge, 1977). For slavery the only up-to-date general account is in French, Y. Garlan, *Les Esclaves en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1982); there are excellent essays in *Slavery in Classical Antiquity* ed. M. I. Finley (Cambridge, 1960), and in his own collection on the history of modern scholarship, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London, 1980).

For sport see H. A. Harris, *Greek Athletes and Athletics* (London, 1964), and the same author's *Sport in Greece and Rome* (London, 1972). There is an interesting lecture by Michael Vickers on *Greek Symposia*, published by the Joint Association of Classical Teachers, London, no date. Homosexuality is discussed by K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London, 1978). On education see H. I. Marrou, *History of Education in Antiquity* (English trans. New York, 1956); G. B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, 1981). The extent of literacy in Athens is discussed in an important article by F. D. Harvey, 'Literacy in the Athenian Democracy', *Revue des Études Grecques* 79 (1966), 585-635. For the consequences of the change from oral to literate culture, see J. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968); E. A. Havelock, *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton, 1982). There is an excellent collection of the *Hippocratic Writings* (Penguin, London, 1978), ed. G. E. R. Lloyd; see also his essays, *Magic, Reason and Experience* (Cambridge, 1979); E. D. Phillips, *Greek Medicine* (London, 1973).

Any discussion of the fundamental questions of freedom of thought and religious belief in ancient Greece begins from the work of E. R. Dodds, notably *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), chs. VI and VII; *The Ancient Concept of Progress and other Essays* (Oxford, 1973).

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# OXFORD HISTORY OF THE CLASSICAL WORLD



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