‘Kosmos’ is the word the ancient Greeks used for human social order. It has therefore a special application to the Greeks’ peculiar social and political unit of communal life that they called the ‘polis’. Of the many hundreds of such units in classical Greece (c. 500–300 BCE) the best documented and the most complex was democratic Athens. The purpose of this collective volume, which is based closely on a seminar series held in the Faculty of Classics in Cambridge, is to re-evaluate the foundations of classical Athens’ by-and-large highly successful experiment in communal social existence. Topics addressed include religion and ritualisation, political friendship and enmity, gender and sexuality, sports and litigation, and economic and symbolic exchange. The book aims to make a major contribution, theoretical as well as empirical, towards understanding how the social order of community life may be sustained and enhanced, a subject currently of primary interest to a wide range of disciplines – history, sociology, political theory, and cultural anthropology – as well as to classics and ancient history.
KOSMOS
KOSMOS

*Essays in order, conflict and community in classical Athens*

*edited by*
PAUL CARTLEDGE
PAUL MILLETT &
SITTA von REDEN
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Notes on contributors

ILIAS ARNAOUTOGLOU is an assistant editor with the Lexicon of Greek Personal Names. He has published articles on Athenian associations, on homicide and on marital disputes in Greco-Roman Egypt, and has compiled a sourcebook on ancient Greek law (forthcoming).

PAUL CARTLEDGE is Reader in Greek History in the University of Cambridge, and Fellow of Clare College. He was a co-editor of Nomos: Essays in Athenian Law, Politics and Society (1996). He has published widely on Greek history and historiography, most recently The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others (revised edition 1997), and is the creator and editor of The Cambridge Illustrated History of Ancient Greece (1997).

NICK FISHER is Senior Lecturer in the School of History and Archaeology, University of Wales, Cardiff. He has written Social Values in Classical Athens (1976), Hybris (1992) and Slavery in Classical Athens (1993) and several articles on Greek political and social history. He is currently preparing a translation and commentary on Aeschines’ speech Against Timarchos.

LIN FOXHALL is Reader in Ancient History in the School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester. She has edited volumes on law in ancient Greece, masculinity in classical Antiquity (with J. Salmon), and written a monograph on ancient Greek olive cultivation. She is currently working on a book on the study of gender in classical Antiquity.

SIMON GODDHILL is University Lecturer in Greek Literature and Fellow of King’s College, Cambridge. He has published widely on Greek literature and culture, including Reading Greek Tragedy (1986), The Poet’s Voice (1991) and Foucault’s Virginity (1995).

PAUL MILLETT is University Lecturer in Ancient History and Fellow of Downing College, Cambridge. He was a co-editor of Nomos: Essays in Athenian Law, Politics and Society (1996), and is the author of Lending and Borrowing in Ancient Athens (1991).
Notes on contributors

ROBIN OSBORNE is a Professor of Ancient History at the University of Oxford, and Fellow and Tutor of Corpus Christi College. His work ranges over the history and archaeology of ancient Greece and his books include *Greece in the Making, 1200–479 BC* (1996) and *Archaic and Classical Greek Art* (forthcoming 1998).

SITTA VON REDEN is Lecturer in Classics and Ancient History at the University of Bristol. Her book *Exchange in Ancient Greece* appeared in 1995. She is currently working on a book on economic and non-economic uses of money in classical and hellenistic Greece.

P. J. RHODES is Professor of Ancient History at Durham University. His many works on classical Athens include his *Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia*; he has recently published (with the late David M. Lewis) *The Decrees of the Greek States* (1997).

JIM ROY is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Nottingham and has written on various aspects of classical Greek history, often in connection with Arkadia. He is currently working on studies of the history of Elis in collaboration with the Copenhagen Polis Centre.

LENE RUBINSTEIN is Lecturer in Classics at Royal Holloway, University of London. She is author of *Adoption in IV Century Athens* (1994) and is currently working on the activities of *syngesoroi* in the Athenian courts.

MALCOLM SCHOFIELD is Reader in Ancient Philosophy in the University of Cambridge and Fellow of St John’s College, and has published widely on presocratic and hellenistic philosophy as well as on Plato and Aristotle. He is the author of *The Stoic Idea of the City* (1991) and with Christopher Rowe is editing *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (forthcoming).

STEPHEN TODD is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Keele. He was a co-editor of *Nomos: Essays in Athenian Late, Politics, and Society* (1990), and is the author of *The Shape of Athenian Law* (1993) and of *Athens and Sparta* (1996).
Preface and acknowledgements

Kosmos: Essays in order, conflict, and community in classical Athens is out of the same stable as Nomos: Essays in Athenian law, politics, and society (Cambridge University Press 1990) and will, we trust, prove to be no less of a stayer and winner. This new collection of specially developed and thematically linked essays arose out of the second Cambridge Ancient History Seminar series co-directed (in the Lent and Easter Terms 1994) by Paul Cartledge and Paul Millett. As before with Stephen Todd, so here with Sitta von Reden, the seminar co-directors were most fortunate in being able to harness onto the editorial troika a third member sympathetic in general intellectual formation and approach but blessed also with a distinctive outlook and expertise. All the original seminar speakers, happily, agreed to publish their papers in a more or less, and usually more than less, revised form.

The seminar’s aim was to explore the range of relationships that bound together the individuals and groups of which the polis was composed – or that threatened to tear the polis apart. As in the case of Nomos, seminar contributions were originally invited to address the entire wider Greek world in the period from c. 700 to 150 BCE, and it was especially hoped that papers would be not only comparativist in method but also interdisciplinary in orientation. Actually, and realistically, most of the offers of contributions that we were disposed to accept chose to focus on the city and community of Athens, and even more specifically on the Athenian democracy of the fifth and fourth centuries. Hence the subtitle of the book.

The title Kosmos, apart from its euphony and the parallel with Nomos, recommended itself as constituting the ideal of interpersonal social conduct – good behaviour, decency, honour, and trust in the interests of an ordered and orderly society – towards which Greek civic communities aspired in both their public and their private self-presentations. Further discussion of the term’s aptness may be found in Cartledge’s Introduction, chapter 1, below.

Coincidentally (perhaps), in July 1993 the University of Exeter had hosted an international conference on ‘Reciprocity in Ancient Greece’, the
Preface and acknowledgements

proceedings of which are forthcoming as we write. Even closer to our
concerns were the papers delivered to a conference held at Brown Uni-
versity and published as Boegehold & Scafuro 1994: see General Bibli-
ography, p. 230. Clearly therefore we were hitting a common chord in our
choice of interpersonal relations and social order as the seminar’s twin
themes. Nevertheless, our conception and treatment differ appreciably
from others: the Exeter conference did not apply its study of the ethical
and economic dimensions of reciprocity specifically to the polis; the Brown
conference did not address in as rounded a manner either the philosophi-
cal or the spatial dimensions of Athenian civic ideology.

The explanation of this coincidence of scholarly concern probably lies
more in our surrounding society than it does within purely disciplinary
confines. We live in an era of galloping atomisation at home and im-
personal globalisation abroad. As the distinguished American playwright
Arthur Miller has graphically put it, ‘We are now one individual and
another individual and another in the face of the fact that it is perfectly
obvious that there is a society, that we are all in the grip of various forces
that are raging around us.’ Or, in the words of Noam Chomsky, we are
experiencing an unprecedentedly ‘general effort to privatise aspirations, to
eliminate solidarity, the sense that we’re all in it together, that we care for
one another’. Contemplation of classical Athens, a complex and sophisti-
cated ancient society that not only was but saw itself as a strong commu-
nity, has its own powerful attractions.

Finally, all such books arising out of seminars are likely or even bound to
result in heterogeneity of subject-matter and approach, lacunae, and a
certain unevenness in execution. Our readers, too, will have a variety of
alternative agendas to promote. We do not in any case believe it to be
either possible or desirable to produce a volume with definite, let alone
definitively agreed, ‘conclusions’ on the nature of Athenian society and the
modes of its personal interaction and social (dis)integration. Rather, this
volume is consciously intended to be exploratory and heuristic. We thus
value positively, and wish to make a virtue of, the diversity that is on offer
here, and we remain sanguine that the whole will be found to be as great
as, or greater than, the sum of its parts.

It remains only for us to thank all those (too many to name individually)
who have made this volume possible: first, of course, our ever-patient con-
tributors; next, those who attended, intervened at or otherwise participated
in the original seminar series, especially those who officially responded to
the paper-givers but whose responses have for one reason or another not
found their way as such into the published volume; penultimately, our two
notably frank but rarely less than bracing anonymous referees; and lastly,
though not least, the Cambridge University Press Syndicate.

P.C., P.M., S. v. R.
Abbreviations

Note: Abbreviations of periodicals follow the convention of the relevant volume of L’Année philologique, the scholarly annual of record.


IG  Inscriptiones Graecae (1873–)


SEG  Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum (1923–)