



Review: [untitled]

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Source: *The Classical World*, Vol. 87, No. 6 (Jul. - Aug., 1994), pp. 501-502

Published by: [Classical Association of the Atlantic States](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4351561>

Accessed: 15/01/2011 23:19

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at long last correctly interprets the Athenian ship scene on the famous François vase. And Hurwit, exploring landscape in this essentially anthropocentric art, is simply inspiring.

Metropolitan Museum of Art
CW 87.6 (1994)

BETH COHEN

Denise Schmandt-Besserat. *Before Writing, Vol. I: From Counting to Cuneiform*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992. Pp. xv, 269, incl. 175 b/w photos, 43 line drawings, 6 tables, 16 charts. \$60.00. ISBN 0-292-70783-5. Foreword by William W. Hallo.

This book is the culmination of Schmandt-Besserat's career-long involvement with "tokens," small clay objects found in numerous excavations all over the Middle East. She interprets them as accounting tools that preceded and influenced the development of writing. Her often disputed theory has matured over the years and states that there were three stages of accounting before the appearance of clay tablets with pictographic writing. These stages were: 1) the use of simple tokens from ca. 8000 to ca. 4000; 2) the use of complex tokens, i.e. decorated with incisions or painting, held together in clay bullae or with strings from ca. 4000 to 3500; 3) the impression of these tokens on the surface of clay tablets, from ca. 3500 to 3000.

The author answers two major objections to her theory in an indirect way, providing explanations that are not equally convincing. The enormous geographical spread of the token system of accounting is said to have been the result of the diffusion of a simple and easy to reproduce idea. But, the place of origin and the context of this diffusion is never explained. The large variety of token shapes is accounted for by the plausible theory that each token stood for "one measure of grain" or "one sheep" etc. Yet, the variety is too large to be part of one system, and it seems that other possible uses of the objects (e.g. as amulets or gaming pieces) have been ignored.

The book is extremely rich in detail and abundantly illustrated. The first, and longest, section on the evidence is not an easy read, as we are overwhelmed with information that belongs in the accompanying volume containing a catalogue of all extant tokens (not reviewed here). It is difficult to determine what the intended audience for this volume is. The lengthy discussion of the evidence will discourage many readers, and the interpretative section presupposes awareness of the theories provided there. Anthropologists and ancient historians should take note of Schmandt-Besserat's thesis, but she will need to express it more concisely for it to gain widespread acceptance.

Columbia University
CW 87.6 (1994)

MARC VAN DE MIEROOP

Richard Janko. *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume IV: Books 13-16*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Pp. xxv, 459, incl. 1 b/w map. \$84.50 (hb.), \$29.95 (pb.). ISBN 0-521-23712-2; 0-521-28174-1.

Janko has made a most distinguished contribution to the Cambridge *Iliad* commentary. His introductory essays (the aggregate of these for the six

volumes will constitute an excellent "Companion to Homer") are dedicated to "The Gods in Homer: Further Considerations," "The Origins and Evolution of the Epic Diction" (the author's scholarly forte), and "The Text and Transmission of the *Iliad*." Janko on the gods is astute and sensible, especially on double motivation and the question of fate vs. free will in the poem. His remarks here will be more useful to the novice reader than to the professional scholar. The reverse is true of his discussion of diction and text transmission; here the issues are technically thorny and sometimes quite controversial. It is good to have in brief compass the results of research presented more extensively in his *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns*.

Janko's answers to the Homeric Question, like Kirk's and Edwards', are essentially revisionist versions of Milman Parry's. With Albert Lord, he believes that "we are dealing with two oral poems dictated by a single, no doubt illiterate, poet," but warns against a too mechanistic conception of oral composition by cautioning that "improvisation and adaptation were always vital to the tradition, which was clearly more fluid over a vast period than Parry thought, since he greatly overestimated the extent to which the poems consist of formulae." He is at some pains in his commentary to demonstrate (in my view, successfully) this fluidity and innovation in Homer's art.

In the commentary proper, Janko is closer to Edwards than to Kirk in stressing details of plot progression and narrative technique. He carefully elucidates the point of individual episodes both in their immediate narrative environs and in the context of the poem as a whole. While the literary qualities of the epic are thus properly highlighted, its linguistic properties and peculiarities are also attended to, and in rather more detail than in previous volumes. Janko's masterly command of metrical, morphological, etymological, and semantic facets of Homer's language is suitably displayed throughout. Finally, the author adeptly controls and deploys both ancient and modern scholarship.

As the successive volumes of this commentary see the light, I can only say "better and better!"

Eastern Michigan University
CW 87.6 (1994)

JAMES P. HOLOKA

Paul A. Rahe. *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992. Pp. vii, 1201. \$49.95. ISBN 0-8078-2021-0.

Not for the weak-wristed, this book is 3 1/8 inches thick and weighs 4.28 pounds. Neither is it for the timid: it is based on a wide reading of classical and modern authors and contemporary critics; of its 1201 pages, nearly a third are devoted to notes. While not all will accept his conclusions, all students of ancient and modern politics will be stimulated by Rahe's foray into the literature of republican government. Rahe rejects the fashionable view that reality is fabricated by linguistics and social construction and that the "greatest of our predecessors were the witless captives of inherited institutions and conceptual frameworks." His comparative method allows him to establish the basis of political and social differences. It reveals the nature of modern values at the same time that it preserves the 'pastness' of the past.

Like all Gaul, *Republics Ancient and Modern* is divided into three parts. The first, based on analysis of classical writers, deals with the first republics