

Sian Lewis's edited volume is more intriguing than the stock title suggests. In July 2003 a conference on 'Tyrants, Kings, Dynasts and Generals...' was held at Cardiff University, with contributors invited to offer new perspectives on the autocratic rulers and dynasties of classical Greece, Rome and beyond. The objective then was to open out the discussion on ancient tyranny; considering a greater range of autocratic positions in a wider variety of locations than has perhaps become standard. Fifteen of the sixteen papers presented here survive, in revised form, from the Cardiff conference.

Lewis's own introduction gets the collection off to a solid start, providing an outline of key themes and a brief review of influential works by modern scholars. The rest of the volume is then arranged into four thematic sections. Part 1, 'The Making of Tyranny', considers the way in which tyrannies came into being and their presentation in the ancient sources. Part 2, 'Tyranny and Politics', has three chapters on the social and political circumstances in which tyranny arose. Part 3, 'The Ideology of Tyranny', examines the presentation and ideology of tyrants in literature and history. The final section, 'The Limits of Tyranny', considers the sustainability of narrow regimes established, and maintained, through the use of violence and fear.

The third part of the collection may attract most attention, given its focus on ideology and the distinguished contributors to be found there. And with two papers (directly and indirectly) on Plato's representation of the tyrant, and another two on Athenian political discourse, there is much there that is quite familiar. However, some essays, such as Lynette Mitchell's 'Tyrannical oligarchs at Athens', do revisit old territory to good effect. Offering a reassessment of the enduring importance of the idea (if not the actual experience) of tyranny in Athenian politics, Mitchell links this to "the demonisation of oligarchy" in Athens from the mid-fifth to mid-fourth century BC, noting that as oligarchy grew to threaten the 'legitimate' democratic constitution in Athens the presentation of the form increasingly began to conform to old tyrant stereotypes. This piece can be set usefully alongside a similar article by Robin Osborne on the changing discourse of tyranny (see his contribution to *Popular Tyranny: Sovereignty and its Discontents in Ancient Greece* (2004)); both articles offer a nuanced view of Athenian politics in turbulent times. Also of note in this section is Simon Hornblower's 'Pindar and kingship theory'. Developing arguments first proposed in *Thucydides and Pindar* (2004), Hornblower considers the 'good ruler/bad ruler' paradigms that we find in Pindar and the influence those models had on kingship theory in the fourth century. This is a paper sensitive to its subject; a paper that refuses to reduce elegant and elaborate poetry to a series of simple (and servile) political messages, even as it seeks to establish the telling influence Pindar had on Plato.

Overall, however, given the broad scope of each section and a lack of dialogue between papers, the internal divisions in this volume are a little spurious. For example, Matthew Trundle's fine contribution, 'Money and the Great Man in the fourth century BC', does not sit comfortably alongside the other pieces in Part 1. Essentially a paper on the nature of power in the Greek world after the fall of the Athenian Empire, it stands apart from other essays in the section. And to my mind, it may have been worthwhile in an edited volume to bring together the papers by Trinity Jackman ('Ducetius and fifth-century Sicilian tyranny') and Stephen Ruzicka ('The politics of Persian autocracy') in one section and explore some of the key points they raise in further detail. These entries, considering the nature of the 'barbarian' engagement with tyranny, are among the most provocative in the collection and offer real diversity. They also show that the worth of this volume lies in individual essays by key contributors – essays such as Christopher Smith's '*Adfectatio regni* in the Roman Republic', a considered piece that restores tyranny as a real and relevant phenomenon in early Rome, and also as a key part of later discourse that strained to resolve tensions between personal power and communal responsibility. It is a thoughtful and wide-ranging piece that will both prompt and guide future enquiry.

In conclusion, although this volume suffers from some faults often found in conference collections, there is still much to praise and recommend. Certainly, the best papers in this volume offer either a considered re-evaluation of ancient tyranny or a change of focus that is most welcome. It is an ambitious collection that will do much to stimulate debate on an important subject.