



**Kernos**

Revue internationale et pluridisciplinaire de religion  
grecque antique

**25 | 2012**  
**Varia**

---

## Paulin ISMARD, La cité des réseaux. Athènes et ses associations, VI<sup>e</sup>-I<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C.

Esther Eidinow



### Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/kernos/2057>

DOI : 10.4000/kernos.2057

ISSN : 2034-7871

### Éditeur

Centre international d'étude de la religion grecque antique

### Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 26 octobre 2012

Pagination : 351-355

ISSN : 0776-3824

### Référence électronique

Esther Eidinow, « Paulin ISMARD, La cité des réseaux. Athènes et ses associations, VI<sup>e</sup>-I<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C. », *Kernos* [En ligne], 25 | 2012, mis en ligne le 01 octobre 2012, consulté le 21 septembre 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/kernos/2057> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/kernos.2057>

---

Ce document a été généré automatiquement le 21 septembre 2020.

Kernos

---

# Paulin ISMARD, La cité des réseaux. Athènes et ses associations, VI<sup>e</sup>-I<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C.

Esther Eidinow

---

## RÉFÉRENCE

Paulin ISMARD, *La cité des réseaux. Athènes et ses associations, VI<sup>e</sup>-I<sup>er</sup> siècle av. J.-C.*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2010. 1 vol. 16 × 24 cm, 522 p. ISBN : 978-2-85944-653-6.

- 1 Mustering extensive evidence, literary, epigraphic and archaeological, to support its wide-ranging and compelling exploration of certain 'associations' of Athens, this book is learned, provocative, and a worthwhile achievement. It comprises an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion, with six appendices largely laying out epigraphic evidence, but also supplying relevant maps. Altogether, it covers an enormous amount of ground, summarizing, synthesizing, challenging and elaborating on much recent work on a variety of different aspects of Athenian social history in its intention to see the city 'non pas de « haut en bas », mais depuis une échelle médiane' – that of associations (p. 34).
- 2 The book starts with a brief consideration of Aristotle's reflections on *koinonía* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1160a), which highlights the difficulties of defining this elusive concept. Ismard (P.I.) analyses past studies of it, drawing attention to the inadequacy of modern heuristic concepts, such as private vs public, and voluntary vs obligatory participation, and traces the intellectual development of these conceptual approaches, from German historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. Although he notes the efforts of individual works, he observes that altogether they retain these modern concepts, along with a tendency to work within the large time periods – Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic – without paying attention to the development of community life in Athens. He advocates a different approach: in light of the recent deconstruction of

these concepts, and new perspectives on the Archaic and Hellenistic periods, the traditional picture of community structure should be made more complex and dynamic. Using a definition of association that rests on identifying the presence of an organizational structure (e.g., officers, laws or decrees, the possibility of collective goods, and regular cult practices), as well as locating a certain feeling of solidarity, his study focuses on *gene*, demes, *phratries*, regional associations, *orgeones*, *thiasoi*, *eranoi* and *synodoi*; he also includes the philosophical schools.

- 3 Chapter 1 examines the changing roles played by different Attic communities in the processes of creating both an integrated citizen body and the idea and proof of citizenship, and the ways in which associations and civic bodies interacted during these processes. It posits three particularly decisive episodes: the Archaic period, the Cleisthenian reforms, and, finally, the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, which saw a new conception of the centrality of the city. Chapter 2 investigates the question of the legal presence and role played by associations in Athenian law during the Classical period, with particular reference to land transactions; this chapter includes useful discussion of the property arrangements of the philosophical schools (on which O'Sullivan 2005, not cited, raises some further interesting points).<sup>1</sup> In Chapter 3, P.I. sets out to restore the complexity of ritual activity in classical Athens, by studying the communal cult practices at different levels, local and regional, that made up the ritual landscape. He pays particular attention to the cult systems of the '*genos*' of the Salaminians (surprisingly he does not mention the apparent development, in *Agora* 19 L 4a-4b, from two branches to two distinct *gene*, and in the appendix both inscriptions are labeled as '*entre les deux branches du genos*') and the Marathonian Tetrapolis; accompanying annexes provide relevant sources, along with a map illustrating his conclusions about the '*horizon*' (local, regional, civic) of each sanctuary involved in the cult activity of the Marathonian Tetrapolis. The chapter also gives extensive analysis of the cults of Asklepios and Bendis at Athens. Chapter 4 is intended to clarify the role of associations in the context of John Davies's work on associating networks of different economic clusters, and covers the financial practices of associations, which took them beyond the strictly local. The fifth and final chapter traces the evolution of community life during the Hellenistic period, arguing that epigraphic material (both created by, and relating to, demes and city) indicates a vast recomposition of Athenian society during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, and exploring the way that the role of demes in city politics was replaced by private organisations and *gene* (membership of the latter becoming a mark of social distinction in a context of increased competition). The conclusion returns to a number of the issues raised in the introduction: on the question of Athenian civic identity, it argues that there was a multiplicity of levels that expressed Athenian collective identity; in place of public vs private, it presents a new division between public and civic, in which the two levels overlap, challenging the modern idea that state and civil society are separate. (This actually seems to agree with Hansen 1998/2001, despite the footnote, p. 409.)<sup>2</sup> Finally, he presents the many different affiliations of one Simon of Aphidna.
- 4 As this summary suggests, this is an ambitious and timely volume, setting up a challenging and significant vision of the ancient city. However, linked largely, no doubt, to its size and range, there are a number of frustrating aspects: I will highlight three. The first is mundane, but necessary: the navigation of such a large volume. Although there are indices of literary and epigraphic sources, there is no subject index. Without adequate cross-references, relevant supporting evidence can be lost (e.g.,

reference to the material on the financing of local and civic festivals in Chapter 4 would have supported the arguments of the previous chapter).

- 5 The second aspect concerns certain elements of the style of argument, which sometimes tends towards putting forward points of view already established by other scholars, setting up straw men in support of an argument, and giving insufficient space to the arguments made by other scholars. An example of all three occurs in the discussion of the legal collective identity of associations in Chapter 2, which has been analysed, as P.I. observes, by Lene Rubinstein (2000, he cites p. 80-87, but see also p. 43-44 where she discusses Jones 1999, p. 12-13, not cited by P.I.).<sup>3</sup> His description of her approach as 'insistant sur la dimension défensive' of collective legal responsibility (p. 152), rather overlooks the nuances of her arguments (she restates David Whitehead's opinion that a deme 'could both sue and be sued collectively' p. 81). Nor is his attempt to argue against the position he attributes to her, by establishing prosecutorial roles for associations, wholly convincing: he elides the difficulties of translating *epheis* by offering citations (p. 155) of Paoli 1938 and Gernet 1937.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in his detailed discussion of Lambert's reading of the Marathonian Tetrapolis (Lambert 2000), he (p. 242) dismisses Lambert's argument that lines 13-15 could refer to a calendar set up elsewhere, on the grounds that it does not accord with our knowledge of Attic cult calendars, but does not discuss Lambert's evidence, or explain how he translates ὡς γέγραπται (A, col. 1, l.15); a little further (p. 242, n. 167) he deals too briefly with Lambert's argument concerning the sacrificial cycles (Lambert favours a biennial cycle, but explicitly raises the possibility of other sequences).<sup>5</sup> This method of setting up an argument means that opportunities for in-depth and convincing engagement with scholars that may be closer to his own views may be missed: for example, the statement that (p. 311) 'La majorité des études sur l'économie culturelle de la cité classique reposent sur le présupposé d'une distinction radicale entre le financement des fêtes civiques et celui des activités propres aux associations' is supported with citations of Boeckh 1817, Mikalson 1977 and 1982, and Rosivach 1994; but, as P.I. seems to acknowledge further on (p. 313), later studies such as Parker 2005 do not make such a distinction (see p. 59-63, esp. p. 62 where Parker uses the term 'networks' to describe the activities of the deme Plotheia as evoked in decree IG I<sup>3</sup> 258.7, 28-33).<sup>6</sup>
- 6 The third aspect relates to the use of theory, in particular the claim, implicit in the title and explicit in the introduction, that this is a book concerning network theory. Although there is certainly plenty here to inform such an approach, disappointingly, the book never settles on a particular theory, of networks or anything else. By the end of the volume, the theoretical baton has passed from citations of Scott 1991 and Gribaudo 1998 in the introduction (two different network approaches; P.I. does not provide analyses of them or indicate which one he will use); via Latour 2006 and brief mention of Actor Network Theory (ANT) at the end of Chapter 3 (puzzlingly alongside a description of levels, which ANT seeks to flatten, and lacking examples or discussion of ANT's non-human actants); to Rancière 1995, and his description of *désidentification* (political subjectification) in the conclusion.<sup>7</sup> In each case, little if any discussion of these theories is provided, and so how they relate to the topic (or, indeed, interrelate) is not made clear. Although the account of the work of E. Perrin-Saminadayar and K. Karila-Cohen in chapter 5 does introduce some analysis of kinship networks, there is

otherwise little reference to material on the use of network theory in ancient history elsewhere (particularly surprising is the omission of Vlassopoulos 2007).<sup>8</sup>

- 7 As a result the nature of the networks of the title remains opaque: rather than describing ties between groups, P.I. tends to evoke the 'spaces' and 'levels' of and between city and associations, and associations and associations, (e.g., 'un espace *koinon*', end of Chapter 2, p. 204 and 'la pluralité et l'éclatement des échelles du *koinon*', end of Chapter 3, p. 274). When the discussion of networks in the conclusion turns from the group to an individual's multiple affiliations – creating 'une identité irréductiblement plurielle' (p. 411) – the issue of identity that this introduces is discussed neither at length, nor in terms of relevant network theories; and, although alluded to, no attempt is made to analyse possible conflicts or interactions between these different identities or levels of allegiance. Some discussion of previous attempts to characterize the complex nature and multiplicity of roles played by associations could have made apposite additions to this part of the project: e.g., Lambert (1993, p. 107-119) on processes of fission and fusion in organizations, or Jones (1999, p. 29-33) on the scales of characteristics of associations.<sup>9</sup> It might also have helped to clarify the use of some of the other heuristic concepts: e.g., after criticizing the use of 'public/private' in the introduction, P.I. continues to use the term 'public' into the conclusion ('l'extension de la sphère du public', p. 408). In contrast, the nature of the private sphere is left open, even in the interesting but brief elucidation of the relationship of civil society and state in the conclusion. Lack of attention to the private realm may be why P.I. does not mention the role of women at any length (cf. Jones, 1999, p. 123-135 on women in demes), not even when they start to appear in Hellenistic organisational inscriptions (e.g., IG II<sup>2</sup> 2358, discussed p. 348-349), although it would presumably bear on his argument. In his summary of the social changes he is describing (p. 354-357), society comprises citizens and strangers.
- 8 In the absence of a clear theoretical framework, the relationships of associations within, and to, 'the city', becomes harder to track, and this is made more difficult because of a certain lack of clarity around the meaning of 'the city' and how it is understood to relate to or comprise constituent parts of government (local government/civic bodies/the Athenians). Two examples to illustrate: the first concerns the judicial role of 'the city'. In Chapter 2 it is said (p. 161) that we look in vain for a rigorous judicial existence for the *polis* that distinguishes it from the associations that comprise it – although on the opposite page is a quotation from the Athenian grain tax law of 374/3 BCE that begins ἡ πόλις πράξει. P.I.'s discussion in this chapter of the role of associations in land transactions, and the nature of 'public land', is detailed and illuminating, but since other chapters describe the changing relations between civic bodies and associations, for example, regulating membership or cult activities, his concluding description of the city as a 'figure juridique bien fantômatique' (p. 204), although provocative, seems insufficient, and does not do justice to his own analysis. The second example concerns cult practice: in Chapter 3, a detailed examination of deme cult celebrations culminates in the statement that (p. 223) 'tous les chemins ne conduisent pas à la cité!' But it is generally accepted that there were local cult celebrations; and there is no reference to the idea that, for some theorists such as Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood (not cited anywhere), deme festivities were still a part of 'the city'.

- 9 By the end of the volume, the city has disappeared altogether: ‘la cité apparaît en réalité comme un faisceau d’entités composites, un ensemble de réseaux de multiples dimensions’ (p. 409) and ‘c’est l’ensemble des déplacements et des circulations entre les multiples niveaux du *koinon* qui seraient dès lors essentiels à l’apparition du politique’ (p. 411). And yet, there are indications that we are still meant to understand the existence of some centralising power of some substance. The sudden and extremely fleeting reference to Rancière’s theory of *désidentification* as the book draws to a close (p. 411) is accompanied by a quotation in the footnotes on the formation of a political subject. In its original context, this sentence occurs in discussion of ‘le tort fondateur de la politique’, and (in full) describes the formation of the political subject around a ‘wrong’ that reveals an incompatibility or contradiction in *l’ordre policier* (see Rancière 1995, p. 64-65).<sup>10</sup> These are complex ideas – not simply an evocation of the plurality of identity as seems to be implied by their use here – and require elucidation to show how they apply to the ancient city, and in what ways they may align with the other theories P.I. employs.
- 10 As this suggests, a more careful delineation and implementation of the theoretical component of the book would have helped to clarify the details of what is a broad and bold picture of the evolution of Athenian society and the role played by associations. Nevertheless, this is a very stimulating book, engaging energetically with a multiplicity of debates across a number of different areas, and painting a dynamic and complex picture of Athenian society, which revivifies the role of associations. Its invocation of networks is inspiring and more focus on this aspect would have deepened the discussion: as Rancière says, at the end of the chapter of *La Mésestente* (p. 67) from which P.I. quotes at the end of his conclusion, ‘La politique n’est pas faite de rapports de pouvoir, elle est faite de rapports de monde’.

---

## NOTES

1. L. O’SULLIVAN, ‘The Law of Sophocles and the Beginnings of Permanent Philosophical Schools in Athens,’ *RhM* 145 (2002), p. 251 sq.
2. M.H. HANSEN, *Polis and City State: An Ancient Concept and its Modern Equivalent*, Copenhagen, 1998 [French edition, Paris 2001], states (p. 120) that the distinction between state and society is ‘blurred and can never be clearly drawn’.
3. L. RUBINSTEIN, *Litigation and Cooperation: Supporting Speakers in the Courts of Classical Athens*, Stuttgart, 2000 (*Historia*, Einzelschr. 147); N. JONES, *The Associations of Classical Athens: The Response to Democracy*, New York, 1999.
4. U.E. PAOLI, *La ΕΦΕΙΣ ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΔΙΚΑΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ en droit attique*, *Altri Studi di Diritto Greco e Romano*, Milan, 1976 [1938<sup>1</sup>] and L. GERNET, ‘Sur le discours pour Euphilètos attribué à Isée,’ in A.-M. DESROUSSEAUX (ed.), *Mélanges offerts à A.-M. Desrousseaux par ses amis et ses élèves en l’honneur de sa cinquantième année d’enseignement supérieur (1887-1937)*, Paris, 1937, p. 171-180.
5. S. LAMBERT, ‘The Sacrificial Calendar of the Marathonian Tetrapolis: A Revised Text,’ *ZPE* 130 (2000), p. 43-70.

6. A. BOECKH, *Die Staatshaushaltung der Athener*, Berlin, 1817, 4 vol.; J.D. MIKALSON, 'Religion in the Attic Demes,' *AJPh* 98 (1977), p. 424-435, and 'The Heorte of Heortology,' *GRBS* 23 (1982), p. 213-221, and V.J. ROSIVACH, *The System of Public Sacrifice in Fourth-Century Athens*, Atlanta, 1994; R. PARKER, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, Oxford, 2005.
7. J. SCOTT, *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook*, London, 1991; M. GRIBAUDI, *Espaces, Temporalités Stratifications: Exercices sur les réseaux sociaux*, Paris, 1998; B. LATOUR, *Changer de société. Refaire de la sociologie*, Paris, 2006 [1<sup>st</sup> 3e. Oxford, 2005]; J. RANCIÈRE, *La Mésestence. Politique et philosophie*, Paris, 1995, esp. p. 60 ff.
8. E. PERRIN-SAMINADAYAR, 'Traditions religieuses et stratégies familiales. Sur quelques familles sacerdotales athéniennes de l'époque hellénistique,' in M.-F. BASLEZ, F. PRÉVOT (eds), *Prosopographie et histoire religieuse. Actes du colloque tenu en l'université de Paris XII-Val-de-Marne les 27 et 28 octobre 2000*, Paris, 2005, p. 51-67, and K. KARILA-COHEN, *Les pythaïstes athéniens et leurs familles. Étude sur la religion à Athènes à la basse époque hellénistique (II<sup>e</sup>-I<sup>er</sup> siècles avant J.-C.)*, 2 vol., thèse soutenue à l'Université de Paris 4, 2003; K. VLASSOPOULOS, 'Beyond and Below the Polis: Networks, Associations and the Writing of Greek History,' *Mediterranean Historical Review* 22 (2007), p. 11-22.
9. S. LAMBERT, *The Phratries of Attica*, Ann Arbor, 1993.
10. Not the police force, nor the state, but 'la loi généralement implicite qui définit la part ou l'absence de part des parties... un ordre des corps qui définit les partages entre les modes du faire, les modes d'être et les modes du dire, qui fait que tels corps sont assignés par leur nom à telle place et à telle tâche...' (J. RANCIÈRE, *La Mésestence*, p. 52).

---

## AUTEURS

ESTHER EIDINOW

University of Nottingham