



Poiesis: Manufacturing in Classical Athens

Peter Acton

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Poiesis brings together archaeological finds, ancient texts and inscriptions, recent scholarly analysis, and the expertise of modern craftsmen to investigate every known facet of Athens' manufacturing activities. Despite the fact that Athenians consumed great quantities of manufactured goods, and around half of the residents of classical Athens can be shown to have been dependent for survival on manufacturing in some form, the subject has been almost completely neglected by historians. The book draws on the analytical techniques of contemporary business economics--supply and demand, competition theory, and risk-return analysis--to explain events and choices. Manufacturing operations are classified in an original framework that explains why certain segments were suited to the sole craftsman and others to teams of slaves, and deduces earnings potential based upon barriers to entry and competitive differentiation. The result is a new and refreshing angle on how Athenian society operated that complements political, military, and literary perspectives, with important and often surprising implications. Among other insights the analysis shows how fragmented industry structures were fundamental to the workings of Athenian democracy by enabling citizens to supplement their income through casual manufacturing activity.

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