

Book Reviews

Anderson, J. K., *Hunting in the Ancient World*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1985. xiii + 192 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, indexes. \$32.50 (cloth).

Anderson, with a well-founded reputation based upon his works on Greek equestrian and military matters (*Ancient Greek Horsemanship* (1961) and *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (1970)), lives up to our high expectations in this insightful yet charming book intended for both scholar and general reader.

Anderson's approach is both professional and personal in this much needed work ". . . concerned with hunting for sport among the ancient Greeks and Romans, especially the practical details described in the texts and illustrated by the archaeological evidence" (xi). Anderson discusses selected topics in Greek and Roman hunting from the Bronze Age to the Late Empire following the evidence and pursuing points of interest or debate. Xenophon's and related works clearly form a thread; another comes with the history of the grand hunts from Assyria through Persian and Hellenistic monarchs to Rome. Anderson moves easily from one interesting issue to another. For example, we learn that the lion hunts in Homer and archaic art may have been drawn from traditional Greek lore and not just from Near Eastern prototypes. There were lions in Bronze Age Greece and Homeric lion hunts seem closer in spirit to the Mycenaean past than to the contemporary Near East (6). On the issue of female involvement in hunting, Anderson at different points argues that females participated and speculated in Mycenaean hunting but that huntresses were very unlikely in normal Greek and Roman contexts. Elsewhere Anderson shows that a Roman emperor's attitude to hunting could be used by authors such as Suetonius and Pliny as a metaphor for his rule: Domitian's hunting (with a bow in game parks) was as cruel and extravagant as the worst form of Asiatic royal hunt, but Trajan hunted game in the woods, giving effort to finding and chasing, not just killing the quarry (101-102). Throughout, the work is replete with technical points, as on the composition of nets and the breeds of dogs.

Beyond a brief Preface, Anderson has no need of an Introduction or Conclusion; there is no one thesis and the liveliness of the writing and the clarity of the argumentation carry the reader forward through seven well-balanced chapters. "The Heroic Hunt" shows that Greek hunting in the Bronze and Archaic Ages was an aristocratic sport followed on foot in the mountains. The quarry, generally boars or stags, chased with hounds but usually not horses, was hunted not purely for sport but for food. Combats with dangerous beasts were defensive; Mycenaean leaders defended their people and later Ionians defended their

flocks. "Hunting in the Greek City State" discusses both the literary ideal and the classical practice of hunting: "It was a sport, but one that made important contributions to the food supply, both directly and indirectly by protecting the fields from wild beasts. It was considered to have great educational value, particularly in training young soldiers; but the actual practice, both of hunting and of warfare, did not conform to the ideal described by the moral theorists" (29). "The Technique of Greek Hunting" takes us through Xenophon's *Cynegeticus*, especially practical parts of the treatise discussing the normal hunt on foot, the quarry (usually hare, with boars and deer on special occasions), hounds, nets, gear and more. "The Royal Hunt" starts with Xenophon's *Cyopaedia* and moves to Near Eastern art to discuss the grand royal hunts in which game was stocked in parks (or driven down from the hills to level ground) to be hunted by nobles on horseback for sport and exercise. Learning the custom from the Assyrians, the Persian nobles delighted in such hunts as symbols of empire and royal prowess; and Anderson sees continuity and compatibility with the Macedonian kings: "Alexander's successors and their descendents kept up the forms of the royal hunt and copied the great 'paradises' of the Persian kings" (80).

"Roman Hunting" shows that Roman nobles in the second century B.C., with increased wealth and land, and learning from contact with Hellenistic princes, took up hunting for sport. Evidence suggests that ". . . in the late republican and Augustan periods, hunting for sport generally meant hunting boar on foot with nets and hunting spears, and with the help of hounds, as Xenophon had done it, but on grander scale" (93). A discussion of Varro, Horace, Ovid, and Martial shows that, ". . . however seriously some members of the hunting set may have taken the claim that the chase was the school of morals and the martial arts, the attitude of society as a whole was more frivolous" (100). "Hunting in the Age of Hadrian" examines the influence of that Philhellenic emperor's love of big-game hunting on horseback on the symbolism of official art: "To the images of the commander-in-chief, and of the benevolent ruler he added that of the heroic hunter, the embodiment of manly virtue" (104). The chapter closes with a treatment of Arrian's *Cynegeticus*, which supplemented and updated Xenophon's work. Finally, "Hunting in the Later Empire" first shows from literature and mosaics that the tradition of big-game hunting on horseback usually continued at court and also among the nobles. The chapter also picks up a theme introduced earlier—the prevalence in funerary art of the hunt as a symbol suggesting the heroic status of the dead and the idea of victory over death. Such symbolism began with Greek and Macedonian ideas of benefactors and heroes, and Rome continued the tradition until eventually the hunt came to symbolize Christian virtue. The work closes by noting the transition in the fifth century A.D. to the use of archery and falconry in hunting.

Admitting in the Preface that a slim volume cannot be comprehensive, Anderson suggests that his work has "limitations," but the reader will find the work limited only in quantity not quality. We might only wish for more of the

same. Since Near Eastern hunting (Asia Minor but not Egypt) is treated only briefly for contrast and comparison with Greece and Rome, the work might have been entitled *Hunting in Greek and Roman Times*. Anderson explains from the start that he will not focus on fishing, fowling or professional hunting (supplying markets or spectacles). Hunting for Anderson means the pursuit by individuals of a quarry for sport (although the game could also be-and generally was-eaten)-not for profit, spectacles or blood lust. He therefore has little to say about hunts in which prey was driven to a ruler to be killed (Near East) or in which the animals essentially were slaughtered in an arena (Rome). Some shifts in the work may seem a little abrupt or unclear, as from Greek hare hunts for food to Near Eastern grand hunts as a demonstration of imperial virtue, but any such difficulties are due more to evidential lacunae or the complexity of the phenomena than to Anderson's research or writing. For more detailed information on various topics we can go, well-directed by Anderson's notes and bibliography, to scholarly works including Buchholtz et al., Hull, Webster, Delebecque, Aymard and Dunbabin; but Anderson certainly has made his book the place to begin the hunt.

This work is authoritative because of Anderson's scholarship and range as a classicist, archaeologist and horseman. Using evidence diverse in nature and provenance, he regularly cautions us about the ambiguity or difficulty of the sources, be it fragmentary art or Alexandrian composition. His sound arguments move from archaeological to literary interpretation and back again. Making good use of about 45 B&W illustrations, Anderson covers the physical evidence from Mycenaean shaft grave art to Greek vase painting, to Near Eastern reliefs and gems, to Roman coins, to late imperial sarcophagi and mosaics. He analyzes literary sources, and extensively quotes them in his own fresh translations, from the Homeric epics to Xenophon, Polybius, Vergil, Grattius and Arrian, Oppian and Nemesianus.

This work is delightful because Anderson lets his humane and 'sporting' personality enliven his writing without abusing his evidence. For example, he finds Xenophon's advice on how to hunt fawns and hinds "unworthy of a sportsman" (49). The dangerous and difficult boar hunt was "a much more sporting business" (51). Anderson agrees with and quotes Gibbon's condemnation of the spectacles of Commodus as ". . . an entertainment equally ridiculous for the prince and oppressive for the people" (125). Concerning Gratian, who followed Commodus in killing beasts in public, Anderson explains that ". . . the Romans, though they expected their rulers to possess the manly qualities of a hunter preferred the emperor himself to hunt like a gentleman, not like a circus performer" (148). Such a work should remind us all that honest enthusiasm and academic excellence are not mutually exclusive.