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Ioanna Kralli: The Hellenistic Peloponnese

The Hellenistic Peloponnese has become a prominent focus in recent scholarship in ancient Greek history. Its rich if uneven textual record, which attests to the interactions of a multiplicity of state actors - assertive poleis and dependent communities, federal states, Hellenistic kings, and Rome - has been examined from an increasingly wide range of different angles. [1] Indeed, since the appearance of the present volume, another study of the Hellenistic Peloponnese by Graham Shipley has been published which integrates archaeological material within a set of thematic historical analyses. [2]

The contribution which *The Hellenistic Peloponnese* makes is a lengthy, detailed, and up-to-date narrative of two and a quarter centuries of Peloponnesian history, from the battle of Leuctra (371 BC) to the Roman war against the Achaian league (146 BC). Ioanna Kralli's aim, briefly stated on the first page of the introduction, is to 'solve [...] or at least clarify' the 'Peloponnesian tangle', 'to provide a framework that embraces the general political history of Peloponnesian states' (xxi).

In these terms, Kralli's book is successful. In the eight chapters which comprise the main part of the book, readers will find a very detailed and judicious blow-by-blow account of Peloponnesian interstate relations, very much in the tradition of the *Cambridge Ancient History*. The narrative is closely tied to the surviving literary sources, with ample reference to recent bibliography on particular episodes. The number of different actors and potentially vast number of relations between pairs of states makes this material difficult, but Kralli's carefully thought-out and clearly signalled structure of sub-headings enables her to meet the challenge of narrating parallel events and perspectives in a lucid way. Particularly clear and helpful sub-sections, integrated within this chronological structure, deal with the history of the Arkadian *Koinon* (9-24) and Achaian federal institutions (152-6). New territorial settlements are singled out as an important recurrent theme in Peloponnesian history by Kralli and receive detailed treatment throughout (59-68, 245-51, 291-7, and 320-7). She highlights, especially in relation to the settlements carried out under Philip II (59-68), the issue of the relation of royal agency ('gifts') to formal processes of interstate arbitration which appear to have taken place. In this case I missed discussion of the documented arbitration between Melos and Kimolos, which, though not 'Peloponnesian' in the strictly geographic sense apparently applied by Kralli (for all that was carried out by Argives) is important for understanding the role of the *synedrion* of the League of Corinth in such settlements. [3]

Inevitably, in an extended analysis of events like this, there are points where the interpretation offered will prompt disagreement. More problematic is Kralli's decision not to engage explicitly with the wider theoretical literature on Interstate Relations, or even studies which relate the issues raised specifically to the ancient world (the omission from the bibliography of Polly Low's *Morality and Power* is particularly striking). [4] This is an issue in relation to the question of motivation. In spite of the emphasis in Kralli's opening statement, 'on presenting overall patterns of action rather than motives and psychology because the former are less speculative, given the nature of our sources' (xxi), the narrative is pervaded by judgements concerning the likely motivation of state actors. These judgements appear to be based on quasi-realist assumptions of state interests and action which merit examination.

The chapter for which the absence of this kind of explicit methodological framework arguably creates most difficulties, and the weakest chapter of the book, is the last. Chapter 9 is dedicated to a survey by site of the Hellenistic inscriptions of Peloponnesian states which cannot be slotted into the chronological narrative of the other chapters. Kralli attempts to read into this record - and, more problematically, into its apparent lacunae - the kind of narrative history of conflict and alliances which is the subject of her earlier chapters. However, the

assumption that an honorific grant for an individual indicates or could only be made in the context of good relations between the granting state and the state to which the recipient belongs is hard to maintain (an important distinction needs to be made here between grants to individuals and grants to groups likely to represent an inter-polis delegation). Similarly, the attempt to read lists victors at the Olympic games and other festivals as evidence for interstate relations involves a chain of reasoning based on two difficult assumptions - that participation was driven by 'foreign policy' and necessitated good relations and that modern, composite catalogues of known individuals who won particular events can give us an accurate picture of participation and non-participation. Where synchronic analysis reveals patterns which are potentially significant - for example, the absence of citizens of Hermione from lengthy extant fragments of proxeny lists of Epidauros (426) or the tendency for Argive decrees to honour Arkadians (439) - a complex range of factors are potentially involved. These include the frequency of interactions between citizens of the two communities and the euergetical behaviour and motivation of the honorand alongside the desire of the granting polis to forge links.

These remarks on the final chapter should not detract from the real achievement of the eight preceding chapters. In them the author has fulfilled her aim of producing a critical narrative history of the Hellenistic Peloponnese which will be one of the first points of call for students of these events for years to come.

Notes :

[1] Emily Mackil: *Creating a Common Polity. Religion, Economy and Politics in the Making of the Greek Koinon*, Berkeley 2013; Michael D. Dixon: *Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Corinth 338-196 B.C.*, London 2014

[2] Graham D. Shipley: *The Early Hellenistic Peloponnese. Politics, Economies, and Networks 338-197 BC*, Cambridge 2018

[3] P. J. Rhodes / Robin Osborne: *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404-323 BC*, Oxford 2003, no. 82.

[4] Polly Low: *Morality and Power. Interstate Relations in Classical Greece*, Oxford 2007.