

BOOK REVIEW

The Hellenistic Peloponnese: Interstate Relations. A Narrative and Analytic History, from the Fourth Century to 146 BC. By IOANNA KRALLI. Swansea, UK: The Classical Press of Wales, 2017. Pp. xxxiii + 556. Hardcover, \$95. ISBN 978-1-910589-60-1.

This 500-plus page volume on the Hellenistic Peloponnese, as the title promises, offers a detailed analytic study of interstate relations within the Peloponnese from the battle of Leuctra in 371, which dealt the first serious blow to Spartan supremacy, to the Roman dissolution in 146 of the Achaian Confederacy, which had partially filled the political void resulting from Sparta's decline (all dates are BCE). Ioanna Kralli's approach is methodical, and her coverage of the period thorough. This book ought to be of value to anyone interested in Peloponnesian political affairs, power struggles, alliances, animosities and their causes and consequences during the "Hellenistic" period, as Kralli qualifies it (xxi-xxii).

For the c. 225 years covered in this "narrative" history there is no continuous ancient narrative source. So by critically analyzing all available literary sources as well as hundreds of inscriptions, Kralli pieces together the main flow of events and admirably illuminates interstate relations. While the actions and influences of the "great men" of the period (e.g. Aratos, Lidiadas, Kleomenes, Nabis, Philopoimen) are discussed, her main concern is evidence for the major state powers within the Peloponnese: Sparta, Argos, Corinth, Sikyon, Elis, Megalopolis, Messenia, Arkadia (Mantineia, Tegea, Orchomenos) and their interactions, especially relations with and incorporation into the Achaian Confederacy, then its rivalry with Sparta and its ultimate failure as a political entity (e.g. 238, 311, 372, 495). In her view, the development of federal states (Leagues) in the 3rd and 2nd centuries is "rightly interpreted as the result of the need of the Greek *poleis* to establish a peaceful co-existence ... and protect themselves against pressure from very large external powers" (147). Keeping strictly focused on the Peloponnese, Kralli deals with these outside major powers only where their actions directly

impact the Peloponnesian states: Thebes (briefly, Chapter 1), the Macedonians (Argeads, Diadochoi, Antigonids, esp. Chapters 2, 3 and 7), the Aitolians (esp. Chapters 5-7) and later the Romans (Chapter 8); the Ptolemies and Athenians get only a few mentions.

Eight of the nine chapters present a loosely chronological narrative history: (1) the consequences of Leuctra; (2) the influence of Macedon during the reigns of the last Argeads; (3) the impact of the wars of the Diadochoi; (4) Spartan resurgence (c. 280-c. 250); (5) expansion of the Achaian Confederacy; (6) the Achaian Confederacy vs. Sparta under Kleomenes III; (7) the Social War (220-217); (8) the Achaian Confederacy's "Disastrous Unification of the Peloponnese" and troubled relations with Sparta (217-146). I say "loosely" chronological because the narrative crisscrosses and repeats itself as the author shifts from one major polis or region to another and covers the same events from that new perspective. The ninth chapter (it could be an appendix) is a discussion of the inscriptions, which, though the data is "terribly incomplete," (417) are valuable for their evidence of "collective action" and "attempts at peaceful coexistence" (xxix), sometimes contradicting or counterbalancing the literary evidence. Eleven of the sixteen Tables included in the book appear in this chapter as lists of victors and honorands named in inscriptions from the period. The remaining five Tables (Chapters 6-8) summarize events from 229-180 and 151-146. The book also includes two maps, one of which is a detailed map of the Peloponnese from the *Barrington Atlas*.

Kralli sets out to identify "patterns of action" and continuities: the origins of certain conflicts or liaisons, political attitudes, how much these can be traced back to the decline of Sparta and the ways in which Sparta, both in decline and in resurgence, "continues to shape policies and attitudes of Peloponnesian *poleis*" (xxii-xxiii). One of the main threads of argument emerging is that no Peloponnesian state—not Argos, which had a spotty military record and was plagued by civil strife (e.g. 49-50, 94, 126, 232), nor Corinth, which fell subject to a Macedonian and (briefly) Achaian garrison (104, 161, 210), not the "precarious unity" (8) of the short-lived Arkadian *Koinon* or its amalgamated offspring Megalopolis, nor the Achaian Confederacy with its "illusory hegemony/supremacy" (152, cf. 328-329)—could replace Sparta as leader of the Peloponnese. This is partly because they lacked the military and political experience and expertise (e.g. 65, 121, 148, 164, 208, 273, 378-9, 490) and partly because states often adopted a stance of "neutrality or even passivity" (52, cf. 105, 172). Consequently, the Peloponnese was ever subject to the dominance of outside powers, e.g. Philip V's "prac-

tice of treating Peloponnesian *poleis* as gifts to the Achaian Confederacy” (295) and Rome’s adoption of that same practice (322).

Kralli synthesizes, builds on and challenges earlier scholarship, from the old to the most recent, which has mainly focused on individual subjects and periods such as Sparta. As she states in the Introduction (xxi), she is attempting “to provide a framework that embraces the general political history of the Peloponnesian states over a long period” and in this aim the book succeeds. If it is less successful in clarifying the “Peloponnesian tangle” (xxi, citing Gruen 1984, 120), it may be because much remains speculative, this being dictated partly by the nature and lack of evidence. Perhaps also the author, in attempting to present every perspective, has presented some unnecessary or untenable hypotheses. The brief Conclusion is a summary of conclusions already made throughout, and many points are made more than once, nearly verbatim. The quotations from the ancient sources are not presented consistently; some have translations, others do not. Overall, though, Kralli’s book is a commendable achievement and a valuable contribution to our understanding of Peloponnesian politics in the Hellenistic period.

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