

H. Börm and N. Luraghi (eds.), *The Polis in the Hellenistic World*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2018. 264pp. EUR 54.00.

Over the past three decades the Hellenistic *polis* has gradually emerged from the shadow of its Classical predecessor to become a worthy object of enquiry in its own right. The advent of Macedonian hegemony along with the rise of first the successor kingdoms and later Roman influence are traditionally held to have marked the death of autonomous Greek civic culture, leaving the Hellenistic *polis* as a weak shell of its former glories. A great deal of research in various corners of the Hellenistic world, from the communities of the Peloponnese to the Greek foundations of Bactria and between has gradually chipped away at the old casual dismissal of Hellenistic poleis, demonstrating instead the vitality of civic culture throughout the Hellenistic world. The Hellenistic *polis* was not a carbon copy of the Classical city-state, but a somewhat different beast altogether – and this is not implicitly a bad thing.

In the midst of these far-reaching paradigm shifts, this volume edited by Börm and Luraghi makes an immensely important contribution to the field by pausing for a moment, carefully surveying the field, and considering the ramifications of many current avenues of enquiry into the Hellenistic *polis* as an analytical unit. It is sure to become required reading for those considering how best to trace the path of the Hellenistic *polis* in their own research endeavours.

Much of the volume emerges from a conference held at Konstanz University in June 2014 and a follow-up workshop at Princeton in February 2015, the proceedings of which have been carefully edited into a volume that deserves a great deal of commendation for its breadth, perspicacity, and insight. The eminent slate of contributors examines the *polis* in the Hellenistic world from a variety of angles that treat the subject in all of its diversity, rather than trying to force each contribution to conform to an overarching analytical framework. A brief survey of each chapter will have to suffice for this review, but as a whole the contributions to the volume sit remarkably well with each other.

The first two chapters of the volume re-examine our traditional classifications of the constitutional structures of Hellenistic cities. Clifford Ando (9–27) adopts a comparative approach and draws on contemporary political theory in a discussion of how the delineation of Hellenistic civic bodies. The loud proclamation of a city's democratic character served at once to gloss over and legitimise the profoundly exclusive and inegalitarian nature of a given political system. Democracy, in this light, becomes a vehicle for the consolidation of elite power in Hellenistic communities. Christel Müller then further examines oligarchy in Hellenistic communities (27–53) by challenging the old divide between oligarchy and democracy. Her study of the language of oligarchy and democracy in a variety of ancient *testimonia* argues against reducing the discussion to constitutional debates, and instead considering the symptoms of oligarchic societies – especially the concentration and preservation of wealth. Oligarchy and democracy are neither

incompatible nor polar opposites, rather Müller finds oligarchies operating within democratic regimes in Hellenistic cities. Hennig Börm continues this internal structural focus with a much-needed re-appraisal of *stasis* and the discourse of civil strife in the period (53–85). As in the Classical period, *stasis* was the worst disaster that could befall a citizen community, and despite the slim evidence for Hellenistic civic strife the problems that internal dissent posed remained at the forefront of political thought.

From here the volume shifts perspective over the next four chapters to the relationships among Hellenistic cities. Anna Magnetto considers how interstate arbitration among Greek cities evolved in the Hellenistic milieu, concluding that there are elements of Classical continuity but also some elements of innovation in response to the political landscape of the period (85–109). Peter Funke revisits the old assumption that membership in a federal state automatically entailed a loss of autonomy for a given *polis* by analysing how individual member states could and indeed did exert a great deal of pressure on the structure and policy of the *koinon* (109–131). In Funke’s convincing discussion, the *koinon* becomes the vehicle through which individual member states could achieve international influence and power, rather than a superstructure that deprived them of agency in the international sphere. Frank Daubner then examines the *poleis* of northern Greece through the lens of peer-polity interaction as a means of challenging the old distinction drawn between the democratic *polis*-culture of southern Greece and the tribal kingdoms of the north (131–159). He tracks the participation of northern *poleis* in the theoric networks of Argos, Nemea, Epidauros, and Delphi, and paints a picture of vibrant civic culture in the north of the Hellenistic Mainland. Graham Oliver then nuances the orthodox approach to *polis*-economies by treating them as being contingent on wider synergies and trade patterns in the Mediterranean (159–181). The urban economy thus becomes more a locus of contact for various individuals who drive local and regional economies, rather than an analytical unit in and of itself.

The final chapters of the volume adopt a more ideological perspective on the Hellenistic city. Angelos Chaniotis provides a fascinating look at the historical dimensions of night in the Hellenistic *polis* and argues that in general more interaction took place at night through gatherings, religious festivals, and organised associations in the Hellenistic city than in the Classical. Increased organisation of nocturnal activities perhaps represents an attempt to tame night in this period. Nino Luraghi then seeks to distil shifts in the political ideology of Hellenistic Athens from its epigraphic data, thereby compensating for the decrease in literary evidence for civic ideology in the period (209–229). Early Hellenistic Athens went to great lengths, he observes, to conceal foreign domination of the city, and generally seems to have trouble articulating the place of its civic order in the midst of monarchic domination. Finally, Hans-Ulrich Wiemer closes out the volume with an examination of Panaitios’ *On that which is appropriate* as a text intended for a Greek elite civic

audience rather than a purely Roman elite, arguing that his doctrines are ultimately contingent on the political realities of the Hellenistic *polis*.

There is precious little to criticise in this volume. The typesetting and editing are flawless, and Steiner has produced another lovely volume at a reasonable price point. The index could perhaps have been longer and more thorough, a list of figures would have been helpful, as would a concluding chapter to the volume laying the ground for future work. Perhaps there is a tendency to shift allegations of decline from Macedonian to Roman shoulders. But these *desiderata* are pedantic. The volume and the scholarship it contains are superb, with far-reaching insight and implications for the study of both the Hellenistic *polis* and the period as a whole.

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