

**Volker GRIEB, *Hellenistische Demokratie. Politische Organisation und Struktur in freien griechischen Poleis nach Alexander dem Großen***, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008 (Historia Einzelschriften 199), 497 pp., ISBN 978-3-515-09063-6, € 77.00.

This book is a revised version of GRIEB's (further G.) Hamburg dissertation of 2006. The author perceives it as a contribution to the long and heated discussion of the meaning of the word *demokratia* in the Hellenistic period. He proclaims to distance himself from the prevailing view of *demokratia* being deprived of its original sense and reduced to little more than the traditional republican rule of law combined with the effective government by the wealthy class (*honorati*). Conversely, he attempts to gauge the democratic nature of free Hellenistic poleis by studying both the position of the *demos* in the decision making process and the political praxis of four cities selected for various reasons: Athens, Miletus, Cos and Rhodes, assigning each a chapter in his book. Each enjoys a rigid structure with sections devoted to the study of the *demos*, the political institutions and practice (in a section called *demokratia*, *eleutheria*, and *autonomia*) and then to the changes brought about by Roman influence from the second half of the second c. BC on.

In the first chapter G. asserts the vitality of Athenian democratic institutions in early Hellenistic times (until the mid-second c. BC) and the will of the *demos* of Athens to reinstate them to the fourth c. standards past the periods of the royal ascendancy. The continuity of the fourth c. BC style of democracy is further shown by the exclusivity of the Athenian *demos* of early Hellenistic times testified by the citizenship grants, sparse and based on convincingly demonstrated services to the *demos*. G. shows, in opposition to some, that also demes and *phylai* continued to play their role in the political organization of early Hellenistic Athens. He equates dissolution of *demos*/democracy by regimes of Phocion and Demetrius of Phaleron, as charged by their opponents, with limits to Athens' foreign policy and imposition of census reducing the number of Athenian citizens. In later periods of Macedonian dominance under Demetrius Poliorcetes and Antigonos Gonatas, neither census nor a royal epistates are attested but the Athenians nevertheless perceived this situation as an encroachment on their freedom / democracy. G. shows that Macedonian supremacy in the third c. BC Athens manifested itself in the blossoming of official careers of known partisans of Antigonos Gonatas on the one hand and by the relegation of the *demos* to passing unimportant routine decrees on the other. G. further demonstrates (pp. 99–102) that for all affinity between freedom and democracy, for the Athenians the word *demokratia* meant a situation in which decision could be taken by the people free of external influence, while the term *eleutheria* applied to independence in foreign policy matters. In G.'s opinion Athens liberated from the Macedonian supremacy exercised vigorous democracy until the late second c. BC when a narrow elite of wealth started to monopolize magistracies and the *demos* agreed to abandon its earlier exclusivity by admitting non-Athenians to the *ephebeia*. G. thus agrees with those (S.V. TRACY, Chr. HABICHT) who see the evolution of the Athenian constitution in the late second–early first c. BC rather than the revolutionary change imposed by Sulla.

In chapters two and three G. investigates the exclusivity of the *demos* of Hellenistic Cos and Miletus and vitality of its institutions: *phylai*, demes and other subdivisions of the citizen body (pp. 147–153, 199–210). Then he proceeds to describe a fairly regular position of the *ekklesia* of Cos as the principal decision-making body of the polis in passing decrees, awarding honours, electing magistrates and debating foreign policy matters. G. shows the probouleutic responsibilities of the Coan council while arguing against the prevailing view (of S.M. SHERWIN-WHITE and P.J. RHODES) of the important role played by the *prostatai* in initiating decrees (pp. 160–163). G. perceives embassies and jury duty on request of another polis as a way of self promotion,

limited however by the powers of the *demos* to appoint citizens to these positions in the well attested circumstances of political competition in the polis. While relating examples of the Milesians active in the courts of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies, G. believes, without quoting evidence however, that their influence in the Milesian assembly was quite limited due to their near permanent absence and disengagement from every day politics (pp. 230–233). G. collects evidence proving the existence of open debate in early Hellenistic Cos, arguing against the hypothesis of the prevailing regime of the rich (*honorati*) at this time (pp. 170–174). Despite the prominent role of rich citizens in financial subscriptions and purchasing priesthood, early Hellenistic Cos was, according to G., a stable democracy (pp. 174–177). G. tries to explain a shift in the epigraphic habit in Cos, with the near disappearance of ‘political’ decrees and the proliferation of honorific inscriptions after c. the mid-second c. BC, by the stabilization of the Roman dominance in the East and resultant silencing of foreign policy debate in Cos, which had earlier resulted in a number of decrees marking major stepping stones of Coan foreign policy (pp. 194–197). In the case of Miletus G. returns, although with no fresh evidence, to the old hypothesis of the *prytaneis* as the presiding committee of the *boule* (pp. 216–218) and thus he tries to demonstrate the *boule*’s prominent position in legislation, gliding over the fact that its attested participation in legislative process is scant. G. shows intertwining between the political and the divine in Miletus with a pronounced position of Apollo and his two temples: Delphinion and Didyma (pp. 221–224). G. firmly believes in the existence of open debate and conflicting factions in early Hellenistic Miletus. The very nature of sources, decrees recording the winning position only, makes the evidence scant, but G. manages, nevertheless, to collect some from Milesian decrees (p. 235). G.’s analysis of Miletus’ position in early Hellenistic times leads him to showing Miletus as a basically independent polis manoeuvring between the Hellenistic powers and Rome. Robust democracy, with selection of jurors by lot attested well into the second half of the second c. BC, was underpinning its independent foreign policy (pp. 244–257). G. further believes that the Roman domination in the East in the second half of the second c. BC made a foreign policy debate in Miletus pointless thus leading to restricting democracy by a regime of pro-Roman elite (pp. 257–261). There is however very little, if anything at all, in our sources to support this attractive hypothesis.

In chapter four G. argues strongly again, as in the case of Miletus, in favour of the exclusivity of the *demos* of Hellenistic Rhodes, as opposed to the *plethos*, representing all inhabitants of the island, free and slaves alike (pp. 263–273). Again the evidence is not unquestionable. The unique structure of the polis of Rhodes with three territorial *phylai* springing from three poleis united by *synoikismos* in 408/407 and their locally influential families did not, in G.’s understanding, translate into limiting Rhodian democracy (pp. 273–276). G. shows working of the Rhodian polis which illustrates the vitality of Hellenistic democracy. Quite numerous sources, both literary and epigraphic, on Rhodian foreign policy help him portray the *demos* as the place of debate and decision in foreign policy matters (pp. 280–287). To the decidedly democratic nature of Hellenistic Rhodes attest, on the one hand, the superior position of the *demos* with regard to the *boule* and magistracies and the selection of jurors by lot combined with assembly / dicastic pay on the other (pp. 289–302). G. takes rather formalistic view on the power of the *demos* to control and decide on most issues as attested in decrees of the *boule* and *demos*, claiming, against the majority of scholarship (V. GABRIELSEN most notably), that there was not any aristocracy as the ruling class of Rhodes to speak of at least until the second half of the second c. BC (pp. 316–320). The change came after Pydna when the elite of Rhodes could no longer realize their ambitions in foreign policy, now subservient to Rome and devoid of importance. G. claims that the epigraphic evidence from the second half of the second and the first c. BC indicates a fast growing influence of the rich and the ensuing structural changes in Rhodes (pp. 339–344).

In the last part of the book (“Zusammenfassung und Ausblick”) G. goes beyond summarizing his four case studies, trying to describe the universal developments of the constitutional arrangements of Hellenistic poleis. He offers a classical definition of *demokratia*, as the form of government with universal participation of all citizens in the decision making process. Among the

principal political aims of the *demos* in Hellenistic poleis were the *demokratia* and the sovereignty (*eleutheria*). In his reconstruction the early Hellenistic polis is a democratic state with the central position of the *demos* and subservient that of the *boule* and magistracies. Despite fairly inadequate evidence G. tries to demonstrate that the competition between various factions within the citizen body, fuelled by needs of foreign policy, made the early Hellenistic polis a vibrant democracy. Thus he firmly rejects the notion of the regime of the rich (*honorati*) apparently typical of the Hellenistic polis. Another principal contention of this book is that removing of multifarious impulses from conflicting centres of power brought about by the Roman rule in the East led to the degeneration of Hellenistic democracy from the second half of the second c. BC on.

This book offers a refreshing approach to the constitutional history of the Hellenistic polis, with a commendable effort to disperse the perception of the demise of the democratic government, let alone the independent foreign policy of Greek poleis, after Chaeronea. G. has selected for analysis four major poleis with a comparatively rich source basis and all enjoying independence from kings for most of their early Hellenistic history. G.'s analysis is overwhelmingly based on the study of foreign policy issues, to which, regretfully, few good sources are extant, even in the case of Rhodes, the most active international player of the four poleis considered in this book. G. seems to overlook the fact that the very nature of his sources (decrees of the people) records only the formal outcome of the decision making process, amplifying the position of the *demos* and obfuscating the real position of other actors from among the citizen body. With so much stress put upon the link between independent foreign policy and the democratic nature of constitution, G.'s argument would have been more convincing had he included a case study of a polis which was non free for longer periods, like Ephesus, to check how this influenced its constitutional development. G.'s passing reference to non free cities in the last part of his book does not constitute a proper control group which would be of great importance to test his hypotheses drawn upon the four case studies. Having made most of his argument on foreign policy issues, G. pays much lesser attention as well to the widely discussed issue of euergetism and its consequences for the social fabric and political structure of Hellenistic polis. Nevertheless, every student of the Hellenistic age will certainly appreciate G.'s effort to rehabilitate the study of foreign policy of Hellenistic poleis, not in the shadow of Macedonian kings, but as a valid independent research topic with implication for constitutional history as well.

Krzysztof Nawotka  
University of Wrocław