

## A HISTORY OF ELEA

BOURKE (G.) *Elis. Internal Politics and External Policy in Ancient Greece*. Pp. xii + 247, ills, maps. London and New York: Routledge, 2018. Cased, £105, US\$140. ISBN: 978-0-415-74957-2.  
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In this book, B. undertakes the ambitious task of providing a comprehensive history of the Peloponnesian region of Elea and its main city, Elis, from the Archaic period to the Roman conquest. A brief introduction sets the aims and methodology of the volume. B. expresses his intention to reassess a series of scholarly assumptions about the history of Elea. These include the picture of Elis as an almost exclusively rural society, the belief of an Elean expansion during the Archaic and early Classical period analogous to Sparta's acquisition of Laconia and Messenia, and the idea of a conflict between Elis and Pisa over the control of Olympia.

Chapter 1 provides a reconstruction of the geography, economy and ethnicity of the Eleans. B. highlights the importance of agriculture, manufacturing and commerce on the side of pastoralism, and argues that the Eleans descended from two ethnic groups: an original Mycenaean stratum and Aetolian immigrants. Chapter 2 is an overview of the cult sites (with a focus on Olympia) and human settlements of Archaic Elea. B. stresses that, among such settlements, the site of the historical city of Elis was not yet prominent. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the issue of Pisa. B. concludes that no political entity known as Pisa existed in the Archaic period and that the tradition of a war between Elis and Pisa for the control of Olympia was fabricated during the 360s BC, when the Arcadians created a democratic polity known as 'Pisatans' to oppose Elean oligarchy. B. argues that such a tradition was inspired by a conflict taking place around the turn of the fifth century BC between the 'official', aristocratic Eleans and the democratic faction of the Omphalionids. Chapter 5 argues that this conflict ended with a reconciliation that resulted in the Elean synoecism of 471 BC, which gave birth to the democratic city of Elis.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on Elean foreign policy during the fifth century. B. makes the case that the Eleans did not actively take part in the Persian Wars because they were busy taking care of their internal conflict with the Omphalionids. He then suggests that the Eleans fought on Sparta's side in the Archidamian War because of their shared interests with the Corinthians in north-western Greece, but that their relationship with the Spartans deteriorated even before the signing of the Peace of Nicias due to Elean fear of Spartan expansion in the Peloponnese. In Chapter 8 B. reviews the causes and events of the Elean War (402–400 BC) and concludes that as a result of their defeat the Eleans were forced to adopt an oligarchy and become allies of the Spartans. The character of this new constitution is briefly examined in Chapter 9, which also surveys the independent states created by the Spartans in the territories of the former *perioikoi* and allies of the Eleans. Chapter 10 focuses on the aftermath of the Battle of Leuctra. B. argues that in 368 BC the Eleans, now free from Spartan hegemony, replaced their oligarchy with a *politeia*, which was in turn replaced with an oligarchy during a war against the democratic Arcadians in 365–362 BC. After concluding that democracy was restored in Elis between 351 and 348 BC, in Chapter 11 B. investigates the several changes of regime experienced by the Eleans during the Hellenistic period, including the tyranny of Aristotimus in 272/71 BC. Chapter 12 focuses on the last decades of the independent history of the Eleans before the Roman conquest, which definitively put an end to Elean democracy. A short conclusion summarises the main findings of the book.

B. does a good job in assembling literary, epigraphical and archaeological evidence to provide an introduction to the history of Elea. Here, I will focus on two aspects of the volume that I found problematic. His assumption that conflict between oligarchic and democratic factions was the main driving force in Greek international relations (pp. 2–3) sometimes leads B. to stretch the interpretation of the evidence. B.'s hypothesis of a conflict between the aristocratic, 'official' Eleans and the democratic faction of the Omphalionids at the dawn of the fifth century BC is a case in point. The ideological opposition between democracy and oligarchy originated during the Peloponnesian War (see E.M. Harris, 'The Flawed Origins of Ancient Greek Democracy', in A. Havlicek, C. Hom and J. Jinek [edd.], *Nous, Polis, Nomos* [2016], pp. 43–55), and one may wonder whether it may be anachronistic when applied to the Archaic and early Classical periods. That such a paradigm does not fit the evidence collected by B. to support his hypothesis is clear. Based on a fragment of Heraclides Ponticus that describes Pantaleon, son of Omphalion, as a hybriistic king, B. concludes that Pantaleon was a popular leader of the late sixth/early fifth century whom fourth-century writers turned into a tyrant because he challenged the nobility (pp. 77–8). Pantaleon's hybriistic characterisation, however, cannot be taken as proof of democratic tendencies – Megabyzus, who supports oligarchy in Herodotus' constitutional debate (Hdt. 3.80–2), agrees with Otanes' characterisation of the Persian king Cambyses as a hybriistic tyrant, but one would hardly interpret this as an indication that Cambyses was a democrat. B. also interprets Pantaleon's choice of naming his son Damophon as a way of courting favour with the *damos* (p. 78); yet the Spartan king Ariston similarly named his son Demaratus, and Herodotus makes it clear that this choice had no ideological implications (Hdt. 6.63.3). Finally, B. takes Demaratus' flight through Elea after his deposition as evidence that the former Spartan king and certain areas in Elea shared popular sympathies (pp. 79–80), but the fact that Demaratus had opposed Cleomenes' campaign against Athens in the wake of Cleisthenes' reforms (Hdt. 5.74–5) is not sufficient proof that Demaratus had any popular sympathies in the first place.

B.'s use of the notion of *politeia* also needs to be addressed. In Chapter 5 B. discusses evidence of the existence of democratic institutions in some areas of Elea prior to the synoecism of 471 BC, but then concludes that these institutions 'are likely to have been components of a mixed constitution, or *politeia*, rather than an actual democracy' (p. 93). B., however, does not back up this statement with evidence of any aristocratic institutions that were supposed to balance the democratic institutions within this hypothetical *politeia*, nor does he explain how he understands the notion of *politeia* itself. B.'s description of the regime adopted in Elis in 368 BC as 'a *politeia* in which both democrats and oligarchs could compete for office and influence policy' (p. 190) is similarly vague, and a brief discussion of Aristotle's treatment of the *politeia* would have helped to clarify the matter.

The book is well produced and clearly written, even though the choice to include separate bibliographies for each chapter rather than a single bibliography for the whole volume is rather counter-intuitive. B. is successful in bringing together relevant international secondary literature and making it accessible to an English-speaking readership, and some of his most challenging conclusions (most notably his hypothesis about the Omphalionids) will certainly spur scholarly debate. For these reasons, the book will be beneficial to any scholars interested in the history of Elea and the Peloponnese.

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