

RECONSTRUCTING THE ROMAN REPUBLIC: AN ANCIENT POLITICAL CULTURE AND MODERN RESEARCH. By K.-J. HÖLKEKAMP, translated by H. HEITMANN-GORDON. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. 2010. Pp. xiv, 189.

THIS BOOK IS A TRANSLATION of the author's earlier German work.¹ Its English incarnation makes two principal contributions. First, it provides a convenient summary, discussion, and bibliography of old and new research in German concerning the political culture of the Roman republic. It will therefore assist Anglophone scholars as they set out on the advanced study of the republic, since it offers a roadmap to the rich German-language tradition in the field. Secondly, the author suggests that several methods and theories drawn from other disciplines can help illuminate certain features of the republican political landscape. These methods and theories are normally beyond the ken of Roman historians working in English. Engagement with the book will therefore potentially add nuance and depth to future studies of the politics of the republic.

The author also has a third aim: to provide a highly critical response to Fergus Millar's influential contributions on the political world of the middle and late republic.² There is rather less that is novel here. Some criticisms are established features of the debate sparked by Millar. Others really are Hölkeskamp's own, but most of these will already be familiar from an English review article published in 2000—an article which presents the core of these criticisms with great clarity and without distasteful polemic.³ Some of the charges levelled in the book serve a merely rhetorical purpose, especially the allegations that Millar has not responded in detail to his critics, and that he neglects various items of bibliography.

Still, the critique of Millar does supply a structural device that allows the author to discuss a range of issues and their treatment in earlier historiography. For example, Hölkeskamp criticizes Millar's view of the republican "constitution" as too rigid and formalist (cf. Hölkeskamp 2000: 204–206, 212–215). This provides an opportunity to survey approaches to this question from Mommsen onward. There is approving discussion both of Christian Meier's attempt to discern a "grammar of politics" with many informal, extra-legal rules, and of Wieacker's emphasis on the centrality of moral norms to political action (Chapter Two). This leads naturally to a discussion of how the political process operated in practice, and where real power lay (Chapter Three), with the focus again being on Meier's analysis. On this view, the senate was the central organ of government. Clients could not be mechanically mobilized to control voting assemblies, but vertical (and also horizontal) social bonds were still politically relevant, since they helped to determine a senator's position on a given issue, whilst also being so ephemeral and contradictory as to preclude his long-term adherence to a single "faction" or "party". Moreover, during certain periods, discussions and decisions regarding some aspects of the political order were forbidden by general consensus.

This alleged consensus between aristocracy and plebs becomes a leitmotiv in the following chapters. Oddly enough, though, the author does not feel the need to discuss

¹ K.-J. Hölkeskamp, *Rekonstruktionen einer Republik: Die politische Kultur des antiken Rom und die Forschung der letzten Jahrzehnte* (Munich 2004).

² See especially F. G. B. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (Ann Arbor 1998), together with his initial articles on the subject (*JRS* 74 [1984] 1–19; 76 [1986] 1–11).

³ K.-J. Hölkeskamp, "The Roman Republic: Government of the People, by the People, for the People?," *SCI* (2000) 203–223.

systematically the precise contents of this consensus, or evaluate the actual evidence for its existence and depth. Nevertheless, consensus is offered as a possible cause for the longevity of the republican system, and its existence is presented as a fact in need of explanation. Two chapters therefore focus on providing such an explanation. For this endeavour, Hölkeskamp advocates the use of the methodologies of the new type of *Begriffsgeschichte* ("history of concepts"), methodologies which have been developed by German historians for a variety of societies, ancient and modern (Chapter Four). This project has sought to chart the semantic and conceptual worlds of several past societies, including Greece and Rome. It thus offers a set of tools with which to analyze the political culture of the Roman republic. Chapter Five then discusses some of the features of republican political culture that helped to augment consensus and collective identity: civic rituals, the physical infrastructure of the city, and coinage. The public, face-to-face nature of political interactions is also stressed. The most unconventional section of this chapter outlines various anthropological and sociological concepts of the "state" and "institutions" and suggests that these approaches can be used to shed light on the *mos maiorum* and its function in legitimating and stabilizing the Roman city-state.

The final three substantive chapters then examine the republican aristocracy, and especially concern the issues of membership, continuity, and competition. Unlike Millar, Hölkeskamp does not doubt that the republican élite was an "aristocracy" (cf. Hölkeskamp 2000: 215–220). To be an "aristocracy," a group need not be formally closed, with strictly heritable privileges; a strong inclination toward exclusivity suffices. Although the families comprising the republican élite did change somewhat with time, this élite still tended toward the exclusive. Further, republican aristocrats competed aggressively for position within a strict internal hierarchy. In this context, electoral assemblies, far from being expressions of the people's sovereign will, should be seen as mechanisms for determining hierarchy within the aristocracy while averting catastrophic conflict (Chapter Six; cf. Hölkeskamp 2000: 219–220).

In Chapter Seven, the author builds on this observation, profitably deploying insights drawn from the work of the German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918). Republican aristocrats' struggles to obtain high rank within the élite can be seen as examples of what Simmel called "conflicts that consist of the parallel efforts" of competitors to win prizes that are allocated by third parties (in this case, by the *populus*). When viewed in this light, voting assemblies and *contiones* can be interpreted as creatures of an aristocratic political culture. Furthermore, for such parallel competitions to be successful there needs to be a high degree of consensus about the rules of play, competitors need to believe that success rests entirely on merit, and (Hölkeskamp adds) losers need to believe that they could perhaps win another day. Not that merit was purely a personal thing. There was consensus that what Bourdieu would call the "symbolic capital" or "social capital" of one's *gens* was relevant to determining one's status and rank within the aristocracy. This leads to a discussion of how such "capital" was built up and preserved, and how it could be depleted by the effluxion of time (Chapter Eight).

Although the author has "augmented" the English version by adding some passages, the fundamental argument of the book remains almost entirely unchanged. The new material mainly aims to clarify, expand, or contextualize aspects of the discussion. Especially judicious are the augmentations that explain to an Anglophone audience certain recondite features of German intellectual culture, and those that orient the reader by

referring to some additional English-language literature; in fact, even Clifford Geertz and Shakespeare now have cameos. On the other hand, some of the new passages have been rather roughly spliced into existing sentences; the results are not always happy. The translation is technically quite competent, although its close adherence to various features of the original prose does not make for a book that readily gives up its secrets. In the end, though, once one overlooks the somewhat awkward and polemical packaging there is a good deal in this book that is useful, sophisticated, and creative.

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THE POLITICS OF ETHNICITY AND THE CRISIS OF THE PELOPONNESIAN LEAGUE. Edited by PETER FUNKE and NINO LURAGHI. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press (Hellenic Studies 32, Center for Hellenic Studies). 2009. Pp. x, 258.

PETER FUNKE AND NINO LURAGHI HAVE COMPILED in this volume a set of essays which explore the centrifugal forces that undermine attempts at federation and political unification. Most of the papers were originally delivered at a conference held in 2003 at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität in Münster, a conference that focused on ethnic movements in the Peloponnese in the fourth century B.C. and the impact of such movements on Sparta's control of the Peloponnesian League. The volume as a whole explores the extent to which a putative upsurge in ethnic sentiment in the fourth century B.C. contributed to the collapse of Spartan domination in the Peloponnese. The book thus makes an important contribution to scholarship by challenging the conventional view, which tends to ascribe the downfall of Spartan power wholly to Spartan mismanagement of its own hegemony after the Peloponnesian War and to the stunning Theban victory at Leuctra in 371 and Epaminondas' subsequent invasion of the Peloponnese. By examining factors internal to the various regions of the Peloponnese and by tracing questions of ethnic identity back to periods prior to 404, the various essays add considerable nuance to the picture of Peloponnesian affairs in the fourth century B.C.

The papers in this volume fall broadly into two categories: the majority of them examine particular ethnic regions, such as Elis, Messenia, Arcadia, and so on, while a smaller group of papers analyzes thematic issues such as the role played by religious or political practices and beliefs. Peter Funke's introductory chapter sets the stage by offering some general reflections intended to give shape and context to the collection as a whole. He reassesses historical accounts of the role played by Thebes in reshaping the Peloponnesian world after Leuctra, arguing that Thebes' claim to be the powerbroker is an inflated one and that tensions—including regional impulses towards autonomy—were present in the Peloponnese decades before Leuctra.

Papers on individual regions include Achaea (Klaus Freitag), Elis (James Roy), Triphylia (Claudia Ruggeri), Pisatis (Maurizio Giangiulio), Arcadia (Maria Pretzler), and Messenia (Nino Luraghi). These papers feature a variety of approaches and demonstrate the unique characteristics of ethnic construction in each of the regions under consideration. The individual studies, while exploring the depth and impact of ethnic loyalties and desires for self-determination, also reveal the fragility of many of these attempts. As Pretzler argues in her essay on Arcadia, while the foundation of the Arcadian state in 370 B.C. was "a crucial factor in the disintegration of the Peloponnesian League"