

## BOOK REVIEWS

Nino Luraghi, *The Ancient Messenians. Constructions of Ethnicity and Memory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. xiv + 389 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-85587-7.

This book is the outcome of careful and extended reflection on how we should understand ancient Messenia, from the archaic period to the Roman Empire. The numerous entries in the bibliography under Luraghi (henceforth L.) show the extent and depth of the preparatory work: it should be noted, however, that the various earlier publications are now reshaped into a clear, coherent, and radically innovative thesis about the perceptions of Messenia and the Messenians by ancient Greeks, varying across time and often contradicting each other. The chapters present aspects of Messenian identity in a roughly chronological order, but in any chapter the argument is likely to be about views expressed over many centuries following the historical context. Reconstruction of events is secondary, for the good reason that our sources offer accounts that are heavily dependent on the historical contexts in which they were written, and reveal changing attitudes to the Messenian past much better than they convey hard information about that past. L. has thus produced a work that makes a major and fascinating contribution both to Messenian studies and to the currently flourishing field of research into ancient Greek ethnogenesis and ethnic identity.

A short introduction (Chapter 1) makes important observations on theoretical approaches to ethnicity: L.'s approach is essentially instrumentalist, relating in a sophisticated and nuanced way expressions of Messenian identities to historical developments. Chapter 2, on 'Delimiting the Messenians', analyses three case-studies — Dentheliatas with the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis, Thouria, and the Dryopes — to illustrate the varying factors that could be used to generate identities and to modify them across time. Chapter 3, 'The return of the Heraclids and the mythical birth of Messenia', is devoted to the myth of a three-part division of Messenia, Lakonia, and Argos among descendants of Herakles. The myth recognises Messenia as a territory in its own right, separate from Lakonia, and L.'s views on it are very important for his book as a whole. He sees the myth as originating at Argos (as do others) and dates its origins in the early fifth century (a more controversial view); later the independent Messenians necessarily adopted this myth as a charter for their claim to their land.

Chapter 4, 'The conquest of Messenia through the ages', examines how accounts of war between Spartans and Messenians changed over time. (L. — surely rightly — takes it more or less for granted that our surviving literary sources are wholly inadequate for any detailed reconstruction of how Sparta won control of Messenia.) L. suggests that for Tyrtaios, like Homer, 'Messene' meant a limited area, not the classical region, and that for fifth-century historians such as Antiochus of Syracuse and Thucydides there was only one archaic Messenian War. In the fourth century an account with two archaic wars was established, and subsequently developed until Pausanias produced a highly idiosyncratic and colourful version. Important in these developments were changing views of what happened to 'the Messenians', and whether fourth-century helots were their descendants. Chapter 5, 'Messenia from the Dark Ages to the Peloponnesian War', analyses the archaeological evidence from Messenia from the Late Bronze Age to the fifth century BC, concluding that archaic Messenia had no obviously predominant central settlement, and was not developing as other Greek regions were. Culturally Messenia was very similar to Lakonia, save for an intermittent Messenian practice of offerings in Bronze Age tombs. It is very difficult archaeologically to identify separately *perioikoi* and helots, even if it may be assumed that larger buildings or more valuable offerings belonged to *perioikoi*. Chapter 6, 'The western Messenians', looks at the Sicilian city founded as Zankle and refounded c. 490 BC as Messene by Anaxilaos, tyrant of Rhegion, who considered himself Messenian by descent. L. finds (against recent arguments by J. Hall, 'The Dorianization of the Messenians' in N. Luraghi

and S. Alcock, *Helots and Their Masters in Laconia and Messenia*, Cambridge Mass., 2003) little evidence for a conscious Messenian identity at Messene/Zankle, and argues that it is not of great importance for the development of Messenian ethnicity in the Peloponnese. In Chapter 7, 'The earthquake and the revolt: from Ithome to Naupaktos', L. first presents arguments against the historicity of a Messenian War at the time of the Persian Wars, and then argues that the rebels of the 460s chose for themselves the name of Messenians. In this choice, he suggests, *perioikoi* in Messenia, some of whom took part in the rebellion, played an important role, though this tended to be effaced in later centuries. Those rebels exiled at the end of the war and settled by the Athenians at Naupaktos proclaimed their Messenian identity with very visible dedications at Delphi and Olympia, and the Spartans found them enough of a danger to expel them from Naupaktos at the end of the Peloponnesian War.

Chapter 8, 'The liberation of Messene', covers the liberation of Messenia in 370/369 and the creation of a new state Messene with a new city Ithome (later called Messene). Though its population would largely be, L. suggests, *perioikoi* and former helots of Messenia, the myth of a great return of Messenians from exile developed, in various forms depending on attitudes for or against the new state. New cults, notably of Zeus Ithomatas and (probably) Asklepios, were introduced, but the attested cults of liberated Messenia mostly resemble those of Lakonia, no doubt because — as L. argues — the culture of Messenia for some centuries had been Lakonian. However, evidence for cult in Bronze Age tombs, seen in Messenia before the liberation, is much more abundant afterwards, possibly as a distinctively Messenian practice. L. sets the development of a free Messenian identity in the context of other Peloponnesian identities developed in the period, notably in Triphylia and Pisatis, besides the politicisation of Arkadian identity.

Chapter 9, 'Being Messenian from Philip to Augustus', looks at Messenia from the mid-fourth century to Augustus. One problem was the identity of a state with effectively no history for centuries before its foundation, and versions of the Messenian Wars (of which two archaic wars were now recognised) were elaborated, notably by Myron of Priene and Rhianus, whose work Pausanias later adapted freely. Another problem was the structure of a state including pre-existing cities but massively dominated by the great city of Ithome/Messene, which seems to have increasingly appropriated elements of Messenian identity (including the name Messene). Chapter 10, 'Messenians in the Empire', takes Messenian history forward to the mid-third century of the Christian era, looking especially at how members of leading families of Messene projected themselves, and ending in 257 with Titus Flavius Polybius, described on a statue-base at Olympia as a Messenian and a Spartan. Finally Chapter 11, 'Conclusions', lucidly sums up the conclusions to be drawn from the arguments presented in the preceding chapters.

The book is immensely thorough and well-informed, not only on ancient evidence, literary, epigraphic, numismatic, and archaeological, but also on modern research, including current projects not yet published. It sets out arguments clearly, and freely admits that to some questions we have only conjectural or controversial answers. Its central thesis is presented lucidly and vigorously: it can be summarised, somewhat brusquely, as follows. When Sparta expanded into Messenia there was no Messenian ethnic identity, and Messenia was not perceived as a coherent geographical region, becoming one only under Spartan control. Messenian identity emerged in the fifth century: Messene in Sicily was of limited importance for this development, but the rebellion against the Spartans in the 460s was critical, generating a Messenian identity later maintained by the Messenian exiles at Naupaktos. The development at Argos in the early fifth century of the myth of a tripartite division of territory among the Heraklids was also of major importance, justifying Messenian control of Messenia. Later the liberation of Messenia in 370/369 created a free Messenian state and gave even greater urgency to the formulation of markers of Messenian identity. How that identity was manipulated is then traced to the mid-third century of the Christian era.

Naturally much in the book is controversial. For one thing, it challenges the view of Messenian ethnogenesis put forward by Hall in 'Dorianization'. More generally, several of L.'s arguments may well be challenged, such as the adoption of Bauslaugh's view ('Messenian dialect and dedications of the "Methanioi"', *Hesperia* 59 (1990) 661-8) that the 'Methanioi' who dedicated two fifth-century spear-butts at Olympia and at Longà/Ayios Andreas respectively were Messenian rebels in the war of the 460s, or the assumption that the myth of a tripartite division of territory among Heraklids originated in the early fifth century. After the liberation of Messenia the greatest part of our evidence comes from the city of Ithome/Messene, and developments in the other smaller cities are largely unknown, as L. admits: how far conclusions about the great central city can be generalised is uncertain. (The current remarkable excavations on the site of Ithome/Messene will, at least in the short term, make the imbalance even more pronounced.) However, much in the book is persuasive, and it has the very great merit of showing what needs to be discussed about ancient Messenia, with clear and compelling arguments on many of the central issues.

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Emily Greenwood and Elizabeth. K. Irwin (eds.), *Reading Herodotus: A Study of the Logoi in Book 5 of Herodotus' Histories*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xv + 343 pp. ISBN 9780521876308.

This volume represents a fresh and welcome approach to the reading of Herodotus, which should be adopted by future studies, namely, a literary analysis of the *Histories* which examines each of the work's books individually, but not as a commentary. Based on a Colloquium held in the Faculty of Classics at Cambridge University in July 2002, this volume contains twelve chapters written by different contributors, surveying a variety of *logoi* from Herodotus' Book Five and exploring their content, logic and language.

The position of Book Five in the middle of Herodotus' work and its role in marking a shift between the foregoing ethnographic accounts of non-Greek groups and the beginning of the Persian War narrative are the reasons why it was chosen to be the subject of the present volume (pp. 9-19). But this reasoning is somewhat compromised by the editors' reluctance to accept the traditional book partition as originating with Herodotus himself. This stance is somewhat puzzling, especially since both editors acknowledge that there is no positive evidence to prove that the divisions are not Herodotus' (p. 14 n. 31) and are aware of the book's thematic (pp. 17-8, 25-40) and stylistic unity (p. 47) and of its obvious literary closure (pp. 11, 16, 142). After all, Book Five begins with the description of a multitude without a leader in Thrace (5.3), and ends in the same region with the account of the death of Aristagoras (5.126), a leader without followers. The attempt to evade a decisive conclusion on the origin of the book division results in an apparently unnecessary apologetic remark on the allegedly artificial endpoint of Book Five (pp. 15-17, culminating with the note that 'Herodotus himself could hardly have been unaware of the format ... in which his work would be circulated' [p. 16]). Furthermore, this vagueness leads to a curious view that the unit analyzed in the volume has a tentative frame 'which some reader (not excluding Herodotus himself) at some time marked formally by a book division ...' (p. 19 n. 47). Here the editors might have clarified matters by taking a bold step further to claim that the book division is indeed Herodotean.

Consciously echoing the character of Herodotus' own endeavour (p. 13, 16), the volume aims to house many diverse voices, emphasizing the various contexts of the *Histories* (religious, historical and otherwise), thus making it possible to read and interpret the original text in varied manners. Book Five is thus divided into twelve parts of uneven lengths that are meant to represent