Urban Space in Historical Geography: Collective Perception and Territoriality

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Mariachiara Angelucci

Abstract: The city plays a key role in understanding Strabo's *Geography*, as it controls and influences the territory where it is located. In this paper I intend to deal in particular with Strabo's view of Arcadia from the way he represents cities and their origins, focusing on those for which he remembers the foundation by synoecism, namely Megalopolis, Mantinea, Tegea and Heraia, in order to highlight what information he provides and for what reasons the treatment of certain cities, whose birth is due to the fusion of several settlements, is approached in a certain way. The fact that the description of the urban centers in Arcadia does not do justice to the complexity and relevance of their foundation and development does not seem a mere coincidence. On the contrary it is the result of his negative opinion of the Arcadian Confederacy and of the Theban hegemony, two political realities united by the desire to weaken Sparta, which Strabo held in high regard for the stability and duration of its hegemony, creating a parallelism with Rome.

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Mattia Vitelli Casella

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Silvia Panichi

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– How are the cities represented on the *Tabula Peutingeriana?* Are they actually represented according to their meaning?

– Is it possible to distinguish cities from rural areas? Is it possible to identify different modes of representation in the drawings? What is the significance of scarcely populated regions compared to urban centres in the *Tabula Peutingeriana?*

These questions will be addressed by examining selected geographical areas (e.g. Egypt, Persia, Media, Germany and the North-Pontica-Caspian area).

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Cinzia Bearzot

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Francisco Javier Gómez Espelosín

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Marc Domingo Gygax

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seems to demonstrate the specifics of the cultural memory and historical situation in the 3rd century A. D., considering that the geographical and political priority of Rome is so clearly emphasized here. My paper analyses the content of the passage (Solin., I 1-52) and presents a conclusion about the political and geographical image of the Eternal City as the world capital in Solinus' work and in his time: Rome first was the head of Latium, then of Italy, and finally of the whole world.

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Giuseppe Muti

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Anke Breitung

Abstract: The article invites the reader to open his mind up to a contemplation of urban space that breaks up the dualistic relationship of human and urban space. For this purpose, the perspective of neo-phenomenology is used, which proclaims a subject-centered consideration of the intentional relationship between humans and the urban environment. Therefore, the concept of the body and its influence on the phenomenological conception of space are explained. Furthermore, the article goes into the importance of atmospheres and feelings for the perceptibility of space and finally focuses on the consideration of urban space framed as an individual situation. Examples from empirical research show how the relationship between humans and their environment can be better understood through the geographical-phenomenological approach.

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PREFACE

The volume *Urban Space in Historical Geography: Collective Perception and Territoriality* stems from the period of research that I carried out in Germany as a Research Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, where I dealt in particular with the urban world in Strabo's *Geography*. The development of this investigation has given rise to the desire to bring together international scholars of the ancient world to broaden the discussion on the theme of the city and address it from different perspectives, opening the field of inquiry to other issues related to the concepts of territoriality and urban settlement and also involving experts from the modern world.

The following authors have participated in this miscellany: Mariachiara Angelucci (Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt / Università degli Studi di Pavia), Cinzia Bearzot (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano), Serena Bianchetti (Università degli Studi di Firenze), Anke Breitung (Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt), Encarnación Castro-Páez (Universidad de Málaga), Gonzalo Cruz Andreotti (Universidad de Málaga), Daniela Dueck (Bar Ilan University), Francisco Javier Gómez Espelosín (Universidad de Alcalá de Henares), Marc Domingo Gygax (Princeton University), Ekaterina Ilyushechkina (Russian State University for Humanities, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration), Fabio Minazzi (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria), Giuseppe Muti (Università degli Studi dell'Insubria), Silvia Panichi (Università degli Studi di Perugia), Monika Schuol (Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel), Alexandra Trachsel (Universität Hamburg), Mattia Vitelli Casella (Alma Mater Studiorum-Università di Bologna).

This volume consists of five parts, thematically organized on the basis of the authors' contributions. Given the starting point and the inspiration behind the research, as well as the centrality of Strabo's work for those who deal with historical geography, the first part, entitled "Urban Space and the *Geography* of Strabo", is that which includes the largest number of contributions and is dedicated in particular to Strabo's work. The first contribution takes up the theme

of the representation of Arcadia and its cities, bearing paricularly in mind how the phenomenon of synoecism is treated in order to show how the description of space is strongly influenced by the political ideology of the geographer. The poverty of information in describing the foundation of the cities and their development does not do justice to their importance and this is not accidental but due to Strabo's negative view of the Arcadian Confederation and of the Theban hegemony. Alexandra Trachsel is specifically concerned with Thebes and its failed hegemony. The author makes a comparison between the ways in which Thebes and Troy are depicted and assessed by Strabo and how he links the two urban entities to Rome. The third, fourth and fifth contributions of this first session deal specifically with the parts of the *Geography* related respectively to Spain, Illyricum and Italy. Encarnación Castro-Páez analyses how cities are chosen and described in Book III, letting Strabo's criteria and perspective emerge, without neglecting to dwell on the characteristics of the chorographic depiction of the territory, essential to understand the author's approach to the Iberian Peninsula. Similarly, the urban settlements are the focus of the contribution of Mattia Vitelli Casella, who consistently takes into account the places mentioned by Strabo, focusing on the terminology used. The author emphasises how there is no systematic choice to indicate the sites with a specific term, although the urban reality is central to the *Geography* nor is there a desire to harmonise the data from different sources. It is precisely the centrality of the city as a territorial marker and the importance of the economic factor, necessarily linked to that of the road network, which leads Silvia Panichi to consider the theme of the *viae romanae*. They constitute the point of reference for the treatment of the cities of inland Italy, for which in particular the proximity to the road network is a crucial factor of importance. As Daniela Dueck points out in the following paper, there are no empty spaces in the *Geography*, which highlights in every part the signs of human action and presence on the territory. Her article considers how the geographer treats spatial gaps between inhabited regions and comes to the conclusion that uninhabited territories are not significant in his eyes. In fact, cities are the constitutive elements around which the description of the different regions of the populated world is structured.

The second part, as can be seen from the title "Urban Space in Cartography", is about urban centres in cartographic representations. Serena Bianchetti's article highlights the difference between the western and eastern parts of Eratosthenes' map. Because of the importance of the Mediterranean and of Egypt at the time of the Alexandrine, the meridians and parallels of the western part are identified by historically important cities, while the reference points for Asia, for which he had less information available, are mountains and rivers. Monika

Schuol deals with the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, considering how the urban centres are depicted and whether their importance plays a significant role in their representation. What emerges is that the map does not allow for the identification of less or more urbanised areas in many of its parts nor for the identification of a hierarchy within the categories "city" or "village", especially for the regions east of the Euphrates, while the development of infrastructure in the Imperial period is evident.

The third part, "Urban Topography and the Expedition of Alexander the Great", contains two papers dealing with topographical issues related to Alexander the Great's expedition. Cinzia Bearzot's article takes into account the information that ancient authors have handed down about the expedition in the lower course of Indus and discusses the possible identifications of the archaeological site of Banbhore with the places mentioned in the sources, concluding by touching on the problem of "Alexander's port", mentioned in Arrian's *Indike*. Although the Macedonian king's enterprise was essentially a military action, the places he encountered did not fail to impress the historians whom he took with him. Francisco Javier Gómez Espelosín seeks to bring out the impressions they left in their works. The towns appear as milestones that mark the advance of the troops but there is also no lack of curiosities and information about topographical characteristics of places.

The fourth part, entitled "Territoriality, Political Perception and Identity", opens with the contribution of Marc Domingo Gygax, who, starting from the epigraphic evidence of some decrees of the cities of Xanthus, Telmessus and Limyra, considers the issue of the distinction between citizens and *perioikoi*. The author analyses whether this is a geographical classification and whether it also has political implications in terms of institutions and citizenship rights, coming to the conclusion that behind this classification lies a complex political organization of the territory of the polis, in which local identities are preserved. The theme of identity is also the focus of the contribution of Gonzalo Cruz Andreotti, who stresses how civic and ethnic features are perceived as being part of the same identity structure of a political nature, aimed at ensuring administrative, territorial and military cohesion. Ekaterina Ilyushechkina deals with the geography of Gaius Iulius Solinus and analyses in particular its initial part, which is an *excursus* on the mythical origins of Rome and its history until Augustus, highlighting that the cultural memory has a political purpose and is intended to emphasise the role of Rome, now at the head of the whole world.

The volume concludes with a section of three articles devoted to "Urban Space in Modern Times". Fabio Minazzi presents the city as an ideal principle of history in Carlo Cattaneo's nineteenth-century work, in which Asian cities

appear as clearly differentiated from European and Western ones. The author stresses how, according to Carlo Cattaneo, Italian municipalities in particular played an essential role in the formation of modern science. The following contribution by Giuseppe Muti deals with the historical-geographical evolution of the city of Como and the Lake region through the study of the tourist phenomenon and the social production of space, dwelling on the moments of crisis and on those of growth and development. The last article, finally, by Anke Breitung deals with the theme of the relationship between man and the environment from a neo-phenomenological perspective, highlighting the importance of atmospheres and feelings in the perception of urban space.

I would like to thank the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for giving me the opportunity to carry out research in Germany, and Prof. Michael Rathmann for hosting me at the Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. My special thanks go to the International Association "Geography And Historiography in Antiquity" (GAHIA) and to the scientific committee of the series "Monografías de Gahia" for having welcomed and financed this volume, to Prof. Francisco J. Gonzáles Ponce, Prof. José María Candau Morón and Prof. Antonio Luis Chávez Reino of the University of Seville, Prof. Francisco Javier Gómez Espelosín of the University of Alcalá de Henares and Prof. Gonzalo Cruz Andreotti of the University of Málaga. Finally, I owe a dept of gratitude to all the authors who accepted, both enthusiastically and professionally, the invitation to participate in this miscellany throug their contributions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviated references to Greek authors and to collections of fragments and to epigraphic and papyraceous sources follow the usage of the Diccionario Griego-Español of the CSIC. For Latin authors, the abbreviations of the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* have been used. Abbreviated references to general works follow the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th edition). Journals and periodicals are cited according to the usage of *L'Année Philologique*.

ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischer Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, I-XXXVII, edd. H. Temporini, W. Haase, Berlin 1974-1994
BNJ	*Brill's New Jacoby*, ed. I. Worthington, Brill Online
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, 1863-
FGrHist	Felix Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, I-III (15 vols.), Berlin-Leiden 1923-1958; voll. IV-, edd. G. Schepens, S. Schorn, H.-J. Gehrke, Leiden/Boston/Köln 1998-
FHG	C. & T. Müller, *Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum*, I-V, Parisiis 1841-1870
GGM	C. Müller, *Geographi Graeci Minores*, I-II, Parisiis 1855-1861
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*, I-XIV, Berlin 1873-, 1913-2, 1981-3
RE	*Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, hg. von G. Wissowa, W. Kroll, K. Witte, K. Mittelhaus, K. Ziegler unter Mitwirkung zahlreicher Fachgenossen, voll. I-XXIV, I A – X A, Suppl. voll. I-XV, Stuttgart/München 1893-1980
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*, Leiden 1923-
Syll.^{3}	Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum, I-IV, ed. W. Dittenberger, Berlin 1915-1924^3
TAM	*Tituli Asiae Minoris*, I. *Tituli Lyciae lingua Lycia conscripti*, ed. E. Kalinka, Wien 1901; II. *Tituli Lyciae linguis Graeca et Latina conscripti*, ed. E. Kalinka, 3 fasc., Wien 1920-1944; III. *Tituli Pisidiae linguis Graeca et Latina conscripti*, ed. R. Heberdey, Wien 1941; IV. *Tituli Bithyniae linguis Graeca et Latina conscripti*, ed. F. K. Dörner, with the assistance of M.-B. von Stritzky, Wien 1978; V. *Tituli Lydiae linguis Graeca et Latina conscripti*, vols. 1-2, ed. P. Herrmann, Wien 1981-1989; vol. 3, ed. G. Petzl, Wien 2007

Part 1

URBAN SPACE IN THE GEOGRAPHY OF STRABO

REAL SPACE VS. PERCEIVED SPACE: THE REPRESENTATION OF ARCADIA AND THE SYNOECISM OF ITS CITIES IN STRABO'S BOOK VIII*

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Abstract: The city plays a key role in understanding Strabo's *Geography*, as it controls and influences the territory where it is located. In this paper I intend to deal in particular with Strabo's view of Arcadia from the way he represents cities and their origins, focusing on those for which he remembers the foundation by synoecism, namely Megalopolis, Mantinea, Tegea and Heraia, in order to highlight what information he provides and for what reasons the treatment of certain cities, whose birth is due to the fusion of several settlements, is approached in a certain way. The fact that the description of the urban centers in Arcadia does not do justice to the complexity and relevance of their foundation and development does not seem a mere coincidence. On the contrary it is the result of his negative opinion of the Arcadian Confederacy and of the Theban hegemony, two political realities united by the desire to weaken Sparta, which Strabo held in high regard for the stability and duration of its hegemony, creating a parallelism with Rome.

1. Introduction

Strabo places particular emphasis on the city, which was an essential element of Greek history, the founding nucleus of Hellenic civilization. The narrative of his *Geography* is marked by natural and ethnic features that fix the boundaries

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of the different regions, within which the author proceeds through the enumeration of the different cities. Although the author does not always follow the same pattern, it is possible to detect a basic structure in the exposition of the geographical matter, in the order and nature of the information supplied. The territory of each region described is presented first from a geographical point of view, providing data in particular on its orographic and hydrographic characteristics, which were especially relevant to viability and trade. These data are followed by the indication of the peoples who inhabit the territory. At this point the author inserts the quotation of urban centres: in some cases only the name is mentioned, in others more details are given on what makes a settlement worthy of note. Strabo thus takes into account the origin of sites, their historical and economic development in accordance with the pragmatic and utilitarian purpose of his work, and in some cases the decline and disappearance of such sites.

The origin of urban centres is one of the topics dealt with by the geographer, although he does not systematically analyse it for all settlements[1]. He affirms in VI 1, 2 [C253]: "ὅμως δὲ τῷ πραγματευομένῳ τὴν τῆς γῆς περίοδον καὶ τὰ νῦν ὄντα λέγειν ἀνάγκη καὶ τῶν ὑπαρξάντων ἔνια, καὶ μάλιστα ὅταν ἔνδοξα ᾖ"[2]. Again in VIII 3, 23 [C 348-349] he says[3]:

> οὐκ ἂν δ' ἐξητάζομεν ἴσως ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον τὰ παλαιά, ἀλλ' ἤρκει λέγειν ὡς ἔχει νῦν ἕκαστα, εἰ μή τις ἦν ἐκ παίδων ἡμῖν παραδεδομένη φήμη περὶ τούτων· ἄλλων δ' ἄλλα εἰπόντων ἀνάγκη διαιτᾶν. πιστεύονται δ' ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ οἱ ἐνδοξότατοί τε καὶ πρεσβύτατοι καὶ κατ' ἐμπειρίαν πρῶτοι, Ὁμήρου δ' εἰς ταῦτα ὑπερβεβλημένου πάντας, ἀνάγκη συνεπισκοπεῖν καὶ τὰ ὑπ' ἐκείνου λεχθέντα καὶ συγκρούειν πρὸς τὰ νῦν, καθάπερ καὶ μικρὸν ἔμπροσθεν ἔφαμεν.

The city plays a key role in understanding Strabo's *Geography*, as it controls and influences the territory[4]. It is, in a sense, its interpretive key: depending on the geographical location it can have a political, administrative, or religious function. There is therefore a need for Strabo to recall why an urban centre was founded and what events are linked to its origin. The foundation of cities often dates back to remote times and Strabo cannot help but remember them, especially when it is Homer, the great Poet, founder, according to him, of geography,

[1] On the method used by Strabon to describe cities, in particular in book III, see Castro Páez 2004, pp. 169-199.

[2] The Greek texts of Strabo's passages, quoted in this contribution, are from Radt's 2002-2012 edition.

[3] Cf. Str., VIII 3, 3 [C337].

[4] Cf. Pédech 1971, pp. 234-253; Dandrow 2015, pp. 438-454.

who recalls the names of cities and regions that then evolved significantly through the ages. The physiognomy of cities may change over time, new components may overlap or flank the original ones, in a dynamic that sometimes implies rupture, sometimes continuity. The final result may be very different from the initial reality, but if it is not known how a city was born, it is not possible to understand fully its development and current state. Similarly, an analysis of Strabo's presentation of an urban centre and how it appeared in the historical period contemporaneus with him sheds light on the choice of either dwelling on or glossing over its origins and the moment of its foundation.

In this paper I intend to deal in particular with Strabo's view of Arcadia from the way he represents cities and their origins, focusing on those which he affirms were founded by synoecism, namely Megalopolis, Mantinea, Tegea and Erea, in order to highlight what data he provides, what reliability they have and for what reasons the treatment of certain cities, whose birth is due to the fusion of several settlements, is approached in a certain way. The need for such an investigation arises from the observation that for some centres Strabo's description is rich in information, while for others, as in the case of the cities in Arcadia, it does not do justice to the complexity and relevance of their foundation and development, as one would expect – recalling the geographer's already quoted words – especially in the case of "those which are noteworthy" (μάλιστα ὅταν ἔνδοξα ᾖ)[5]. The lack of detail, in fact, does not seem to be simply due to the sources used or to the state of the Arcadian cities at the time of the geographer – a theme that must be appropriately taken up – nor to the geographer's desire to omit elements, already present elsewhere or which are of no use to a politician[6].

2. The synoecisms of Mantinea, Heraia and Tegea in the *Geography*

2.1. Mantinea

Regarding the synoecism of Mantinea, like that of Heraia and Tegea and unlike that of Megalopolis, Strabo provides the number of centres involved in the foundation process and a chronological reference, although not by all modern scholars considered to be attributable to this city. These data are not, however, given in the chapter on Arcadia, where the region and its cities are presented

[5] Str., VI 1, 2 [C253].
[6] Str., I 1, 23 [C13].

according to his usual scheme, but in the well-known passage of book VIII on the phenomenon of synoecism, placed at the beginning of the chapter on Elis in the context of the presentation of the region and its territories (VIII 3, 2 [C336-337]):

> Ἦλις δὲ ἡ νῦν πόλις οὔπω ἔκτιστο καθ' Ὅμηρον, ἀλλ' ἡ χώρα κωμηδὸν ᾠκεῖτο, ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ Κοίλη Ἦλις ἀπὸ τοῦ συμβεβηκότος· τοιαύτη γὰρ ἦν ἡ πλείστη καὶ ἀρίστη. ὀψὲ δέ ποτε συνῆλθον εἰς τὴν νῦν πόλιν Ἦλιν μετὰ τὰ Περσικὰ ἐκ πολλῶν δήμων. σχεδὸν δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τόπους τοὺς κατὰ Πελοπόννησον (πλὴν ὀλίγων), οὓς κατέλεξεν ὁ ποιητής, οὐ πόλεις, ἀλλὰ χώρας ὀνομάζει, συστήματα δήμων ἔχουσαν ἑκάστην πλείω, ἐξ ὧν ὕστερον αἱ γνωριζόμεναι πόλεις συνῳκίσθησαν· οἷον τῆς Ἀρκαδίας Μαντίνεια μὲν ἐκ πέντε δήμων ὑπ' Ἀργείων συνῳκίσθη, Τεγέα δ' ἐξ ἐννέα, ἐκ τοσούτων δὲ καὶ Ἠραία ὑπὸ Κλεομβρότου (ἢ ὑπὸ Κλεωνύμου)· ὡς δ' αὕτως Αἴγιον ἐξ ἑπτὰ ἢ ὀκτὼ δήμων συνεπολίσθη.

The interest in the foundation of the city of Mantinea, as well as that of Elis and the other cities mentioned in the passage above, with the exception of Heraia and Patras, is set in a context of Homeric exegesis, which leads the geographer to explain that this toponym in Homer actually refers to the region and not to the polis, formed at a later date by the fusion of several demes.

The evidence of Strabo, who has often been criticised for his lack of accuracy of the information, is in this case of great importance, albeit brief, to know the number of centres from which Mantinea originated and the characteristics of synoecism, which can be defined as regional, as indeed it can for the other urban centres mentioned. With regard to the date, some modern scholars believe that the indication μετὰ τὰ Περσικὰ should refer to the synoecism of Elis and not necessarily to that of Mantinea and of the other cities mentioned in Strabo's passage[7]. Moreover, the term συνοικίζειν and συμπολίζειν did not have a univocal meaning in the ancient world and could indicate not only the creation of an urban centre but also its enlargement, as was the case of the synoecism of Elis in 471 B.C.[8].

Here the impression is nevertheless that the geographer intends to speak of the real foundation of Mantinea. Although modern scholars do not agree unequivocally on the historical moment in which to place the creation of a unitary

[7] O'Neil 1981, p. 335; Bergese 1985, p. 1096; Demand 1990, pp. 61-62; Morgan–Hall 1996, p. 183. Cf. on the contrary Moggi 1976, p. 150. Nielsen 2004b, p. 518 affirms that "the synoecism cannot be dated".

[8] Nielsen 2002, p. 173. On the existence of Elis as a centre already existing before synoecism and endowed with functions of political centralisation see also Nafissi 2003, p. 24.

state[9], there is no archaeological evidence to date that allows us to establish the existence of significant urban centres in Arcadia in the Archaic period. Strabo's indication can thus be understood, albeit with due caution, as an indication of the establishment of urban agglomerations resulting from the union of several communities in the early fifth century B.C.[10].

The geographer, on the other hand, completely passes over in silence – and this, as will be seen, does not seem accidental – the second foundation of Mantinea of 370 B.C., which gave renewed prosperity to the city, reconfirming its leading role in the political maneuvering of Arcadia and the whole Peloponnese after the diecism imposed by the Spartans in 385 B.C.

As far as the original synoecism of Mantinea is concerned, Strabo appears to be the only literary source in our possession. He traces it back to the work of the Argives and speaks of the fusion of five demes, information that is confirmed by some data issuing from the diecism and from an inscription, linked to the later synoecism, which contains the names of five tribes. After its foundation, the city achieved a considerable level of power and prosperity, which enabled it to establish a power relationship with Sparta that threatened the authority and hegemony of this latter not only in the region but also in the rest of the Peloponnese. The reaction was not long in coming and the Spartans succeeded, as soon as circumstances allowed, in forcing a return to the *status* prior to synoecism, a clear sign of the strength that the fusion of several centres guaranteed and of its political significance. Our sources on this episode report, with a different degree of precision, that the inhabitants returned to live in villages: Xenophon records that Mantinea was divided τετραχῆ and that the

[9] Amit 1973, pp. 121-128, O'Neil 1981, pp. 338-339, Gehrke 1986, p. 110 place the synoecism of Mantinea in the 6th century B.C., while Demand 1990, p. 66 places it between 464 and 459 B.C. Moggi 1976, p. 150 believes, however, that a date after the Persian wars is preferable and discusses two possible hypotheses, both of which he considers valid. According to the earliest date, the foundation should be placed before the battle (473 B.C.) in which the Arcadians, allied with Argos, clashed with the inhabitants of Tegea, already forming a unitary state. If the synoecism of Tegea had already been achieved, it is likely that the same had happened in Mantinea. The second hypothesis proposes the period between 464 and 459 B.C. when Sparta was engaged in the Third Messenian War.

[10] Nielsen 2002, pp. 172-173 considers that Strabo's passage cannot be used to date the synoecisms of Arcadia. He states, however (p. 175) that "Archaeology cannot (yet?) prove the existence of *significant* sites in archaic Arkadia, but *some* Archaic activity is attested at a lot of sites; however, real urban centres seem – on present evidence – to develop only in Classical period. Strabo's evidence for synoecisms, if reliable, can easily be fitted into this overall pattern, since it is not impossible that these synoecisms belong to the fifth century and represent a concetration of habitation in fewer but bigger urban centres".

characteristics of the settlement returned to be καθάπερ τὸ ἀρχαῖον[11]; Ephorus and Diodorus speak specifically of five κῶμαι, while Pausanias uses the more general expression of a distribution κατὰ κώμας of the population[12]. If Xenophon's statement is read, bearing in mind that part of the population remained in Mantinea, it is possible to overcome the problem of the conflicting data with the versions of Ephorus and Diodorus[13]. The memory of the five centres, which originally merged to form the polis, remained alive over time, and it is not excluded, although it cannot be documented, that they continued to function as local administrative units[14].

With the defeat of Sparta at the battle of Leuctra and its subsequent crisis phase, the inhabitants of Mantinea once again reconstituted the city, recreating a strong urban centre and dividing the population into five tribes recorded in an epigraph, most likely corresponding to the demes of the diecistic division, thus corroborating the version of Ephorus and Diodorus.

The diecistic subdivision, which would reveal the territorial organisation of the phase prior to synoecism, therefore confirms, together with the epigraphic evidence, Strabo's assertion regarding the birth of the state of Mantinea from the union of five demes[15].

Strabo also provides interesting evidence on the type of synoecism that characterised Mantinea. This was a regional synoecism, marked out by the creation of an urban centre resulting from the union of several settlements, which were initially organised into a συστήματα δήμων[16]. Μαντινέια was hence, as Strabo states, the name of the region before the creation of the polis, where the inhabitants lived in villages scattered throughout the territory "each composed of several communities which were later joined into the known cities"[17]. It is debated whether there was an enucleated centre before this moment or whether it was the foundation of a new city, as the geographer suggests. Moggi's hypothesis

[11] Xen., *HG* V 2, 7.

[12] Ephor., *FGrHist* 70 F 79; D.S., XV 5, 4; XV 12, 2; Paus., VIII 8, 9; IX 14, 4. Cf. also Isocr., IV 126; VIII 100; Plb., IV 27, 6; XXXVIII 2, 11; Harp., μ 5; Aristid., *Or.* XLVI 287.

[13] See Moggi 1976, p. 152.

[14] Cf. Nielsen 2004b, p. 518.

[15] It is probable, although not explicitly stated, that the geographer draws on Ephorus when dealing with the number of communities that gave rise to the city of Mantinea, as is habit to do in particular when addressing the foundations of urban centres (cf. Str., X 3, 5 [465C]). See Prandi 1988, pp. 51-53; Filoni 2014, pp. 853-854.

[16] For an analysis of the expression σύστημα δήμων and its possible interpretations see Moggi 1976, p. 133; Id. 1991a, pp. 537-551. Cf. Fougères 1898, pp. 128-129; 334-336; Baladié 1978, p. 219.

[17] Str., VIII 3, 2 [C337] (Roller 2015[2]).

that the first common centre of the συστήματα δήμων of the χώρα of Mantinea in the pre-synecistic phase can be identified with the hill called Πτόλις by Pausanias (VIII 8, 4), now Gourtzouli, is meaningful[18]. The term would support the hypothesis that it served as a common reference for the other demes at the time of the polycentric organisation of the region to which Strabo refers.

2.2. Tegea and Heraia

Among the cities that Strabo mentions as part of the comparison with the Homeric past is Tegea, which is mentioned in the Catalogue of Ships. There are no earlier accounts of the synoecistic foundation of the city, which according to the geographer was the result of the fusion of nine communities. His work turns out, therefore, to be an important source for the recollection of how Tegea was established as a polis. Pausanias takes the same line, stating that the population initially inhabited κατὰ δήμους, divided into eight rural communities to which was then added that of the Aphidantes[19].

The hypothesis of placing the foundation of the city at an earlier date than the Persian wars, around the 9th century B.C., on the basis of a few finds from the Mycenaean period is not sufficiently well-founded: it is proof of Mycenaean frequentation of this place but not necessarily of its foundation[20]. Tegea as a region undoubtedly already existed at this time, as is clear from its citation in the Homeric poems, but it was an ethnic-regional union, only later to be replaced by a unitary urban centre, according to the same process to be found in Arcadia with Mantinea and Heraia. The sixth-century treaty with Sparta may also refer to the still inhabited κατὰ κώμας region[21], just as we know of the treaty between Heraians and Eleans in the second half of the sixth century B.C., when Heraia and Elis had not yet been founded[22]. We should understand in the same

[18] Moggi 1976, p. 149 excludes what Pausanias states, namely that there were two cities of Mantinea, one previous to the Persian wars founded by Mantineus in the place then called Πτόλις and a later one created by the intervention of Antinous who moved the inhabitants to the city of historical age following an oracular response. Cf. Dubois 1986, I, pp. 92-94; Aloni–Negri 1989, pp. 139-144; Moggi 1991b, pp. 46-61; Moggi–Osanna 2003, p. 326.

[19] Paus. VIII 45, 1.

[20] Moggi 1976, p. 134. Callmer 1943, pp. 67-70 believes that synoecism occurred in the 7th century B.C.; Demand 1990, p. 66 places it shortly after that of Mantinea, which occured according to him between 464 and 459 B.C. Hansen 2004d, p. 531 states that the date is uncertain.

[21] Bengtson 1962, no. 112.

[22] *Ibidem*, no. 110; *Syll.*[3] 9; Meiggs–Lewis 1969, no. 17 (5). Cf. Nielsen 2004a, p. 514.

sense the mention of the city of Tegea in an epigraph of 479/8 B.C.[23], which also quotes the inhabitants of the island of Ceos (Κεῖοι) which at that time had four autonomous cities, not forming part of a unitary state. Herodotus' mention[24] of the Tegeans at the battle of Thermopylae and at the battle of Plataea may also refer to the inhabitants of the region and not of the city, which was not yet synoecised, or can be understood as a projection into the past of a reality of his time[25].

A confirmation of Strabo's evidence is provided by a passage from Vitruvius, who recalls the severe punishment of the Karyatae by the Greeks for their pro-Persian attitude and, therefore, for treason, in 480 B.C.[26]. Since the Karyatae were one of the demes which, according to Pausanias, contributed to the realisation of synoecism[27], it must be inferred that at the time of Xerxes' military campaign the synoecism of Tegea had not yet been come into effect.

As far as the synoecism of Heraia is concerned, Strabo is the only source on this subject. Born from the fusion of nine demes like Tegea, the chronology of its foundation is uncertain. Strabo's expression ὑπὸ Κλεομβρότου ἢ ὑπὸ Κλεωνύμου manifests the geographer's uncertainty as to which individual is to be regarded as the initiator of the unitary process that led to the creation of the urban centre at the site of the present-day Hagios Joannis. Strabo is the only author to mention these two figures: Pausanias and Ps.-Apollodorus quote the eponymous son of Lycaon[28]. The aforementioned treaty between Heraians and Eleans of the 6th century B.C. confirms the existence in this era of a σύστημα δήμων, endowed with a primitive form of territorial organisation[29], but the timing of the outcome of the regional unification process has given rise to discussions among modern scholars, who have proposed two historical periods on the basis of the interpretation of the Strabonian text. According to the most widely accepted reading of the passage, that puts the geographer's uncertainty down to the moment of synoecism, which should be attributed to the time of Cleombrotus or Cleonymus, the first mentioned should be identified with Cleombrotus I, father of Cleomenes II[30]. Of the Agiades family, he ruled Sparta from 380 to 371 B.C.

[23] *Syll.*[3] 31.

[24] Hdt. VII 202; IX 26, *passim*.

[25] Moggi 1976, pp. 134, 138 n. 22.

[26] Vitr. I 1, 5. Cf. Hdt., VIII 26.

[27] Paus., VIII 45, 1.

[28] Paus., VIII 3, 4; Ps.-Apollod., *Bibliotheca* III 8, 1.

[29] Moggi 1976, p. 257.

[30] Roy 1968, p. 140; Ampolo 1981, p. 104; Biraschi 2000[2], p. 81 n. 53. For the complete list of scholars who are in favour of this proposal see Bergese 1987, p. 604 n. 3. On

and died at the battle of Leuctra. Cleonymus is not identifiable. After Boeck's emendation in Κλεωνύμου[31], Cleomenes II (370-309 B.C.), who was the immediate successor of Cleombrotus I, has been suggested.

The possibility, however, that the geographer was not sure of the authorship of the synoecism – perhaps Cleombrotus, Cleonymus or somebody else – has led some scholars to advance the hypothesis of a possible identification with Cleombrotus, the Spartan brother of Leonidas and Dorieus, and with Cleomenes I[32] who, according to Herodotus' account[33], was driven out of Sparta, against which he united the inhabitants of Arcadia, where he had taken refuge after a period in Thessaly. If so, the foundation of Heraia would be between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century B.C.[34].

Regardless of the preference for a more or less recent date, synoecism had in any case already occurred in 362/1 B.C. because an inscription, commonly attributed to this date, refers to the Heraians as already being part of the Arcadian Confederacy[35].

Strabo therefore presents himself as a significant source on the realisation of the synoecisms of Tegea and Heraia, as well as of that of Mantinea. On the contrary, his information proves to be very thin on the ground as to the synoecism of Megalopolis, which was one of the most important in ancient history. It should also be noted that when he deals more specifically with Arcadia he no longer returns to the subject of the origins of Arcadian cities, already dealt with in VIII 3, 2 [C337]. On the one hand, this may be due to a desire not to repeat what has already been said, but on the other hand, the analysis of the data provided about the synoecism of Megalopolis and those supplied on Mantinea, Tegea and Heraia in the part of the *Geography* devoted to Arcadia, suggests that this is not merly accidental.

identification hypotheses see the discussion in Moggi 1976, pp. 257-260; Trotta 1994, p. 172.

[31] Boeckh 1828, p. 27. Roy 1968, pp. 43-51, 43 n. 3 has suggested the identification with the homonymous Spartan who fell in the battle of Leuctra.

[32] Bergese 1985, pp. 1098-1099. Cf. Moggi 1976, p. 260.

[33] Hdt., VI 74.

[34] Bergese 1985, pp. 1095-1101 believes that the coinage of Heraia at the end of the 6th century B.C. can be considered as supporting the synoecism in a period close to the Persian Wars and would confirm the hypothesis of Cleomenes' identification with Cleomenes I.

[35] *Syll.*[3] 183.

3. The brief mention of the synoecism of Megalopolis

Strabo refers to the synoecism of Megalopolis at the beginning of the part of his *Geography* on Arcadia. The region is treated with the same approach as for all other parts of the Peloponnese: initially it is presented geographically, as being located in the centre of the Peloponnese and mountainous in nature; this statement is followed by a brief reference to the peoples here, including the Azanes and Parrasioi, considered to be the oldest in Greece and then moves on, as is customary for the geographer, to the subject of the urban centres of the territory and to the observation of the absolute desolation of the places in his time, which induces him not to dwell on them (VIII 8, 1 [C388]):

> διὰ δὲ τὴν τῆς χώρας παντελῆ κάκωσιν οὐκ ἂν προσήκοι μακρολογεῖν περὶ αὐτῶν· αἵ τε γὰρ πόλεις ὑπὸ τῶν συνεχῶν πολέμων ἠφανίσθησαν ἔνδοξοι γενόμεναι πρότερον, τήν τε χώραν οἱ γεωργήσαντες ἐκλελοίπασιν ἐξ ἐκείνων ἔτι τῶν χρόνων ἐξ ὧν εἰς τὴν προσαγορευθεῖσαν Μεγάλην πόλιν αἱ πλεῖσται συνῳκίσθησαν. νυνὶ δὲ καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ Μεγάλη πόλις τὸ τοῦ κωμικοῦ πέπονθε καὶ "ἐρημία μεγάλη ’στὶν ἡ Μεγάλη πόλις".

The reference to the time when "most of the cities united into what was called Great City" is the only very brief mention of a synoecism, which was, in fact, one of the most remarkable in the Peloponnese and also most documented by ancient sources. It is, therefore, seemingly strange that Strabo devotes only a few lines to it and does not dwell on its importance, although he himself justifies the brevity of the treatment with the degradation of the places under consideration.

Unlike what the geographer does for the synoecisms of Arcadia, for which he provides some interesting data, in this case he passes over in silence the historical moment of the foundation, which was well-known in the ancient world, although the sources do not agree on the exact date. He expresses himself in very general terms recalling the union of most of the inhabited centres in the so-called Μεγάλη πόλις. It is not possible to think of an absence of available evidence in this regard. Megalopolis was founded under the auspices of the Thebans and of Epaminondas, a military commander mentioned extensively by Ephorus, on whom Strabo relies several times in Book VIII. We should not forget that Polybius, well known to the geographer[36], came from Megalopolis and that the city played a fundamental role in the political history of Arcadia.

[36] Cf., among others, Aujac–Lasserre 1969, pp. XXXVII-XXXIX; Prandi 1988, p. 51; Prontera 1991, pp. 92-93; Clarke 1999, p. 264; Engels 1999, pp. 145-165; Dueck

As far as the chronology of the synoecism is concerned, we have three pieces of evidence, which unanimously place it after the Theban success of Leuctra: Diodorus, who sets it in 368/7 B.C.; Pausanias, who attributes it to 371/0 B.C., i.e. to the period immediately after the battle of Leuctra, corresponding to the archonship of the Athenian Phrasikleides, which can be placed in Ol. 102[37]; the *Marmor Parium* inscription that allows us to date it to the period between 370/69 and 369/8 B.C., although it does not enable us to determine an exact date, and keeps the battle of Leuctra, like Diodorus, rightly distinct from the time of the synoecism. The careful analysis of the political situation after this battle has led modern scholars to set the date, with arguments mostly accepted[38], at 368/7 B.C. after the victory of Archidamus, thus attributing greater reliability to Diodorus[39].

It was a foundation that involved a large number of centres as we know from Diodorus and Pausanias, who speak of twenty and thirty-nine centres respectively[40]. According to Pausanias, synoecism involved not only the villages of Mainalia and Parrhasia but also those of Eutresia, Kynauria, the Orchomenos area, Aigytis, Skiritis and Tripolis. This is not the place to recall the discussions and hypotheses of modern scholars to interpret or try to explain the two different versions[41]. It should be rather emphasised that it was a

2000a, pp. 46-47; Horst Roseman 2005, p. 31; Biraschi 2005, pp. 75-76; Cruz Andreotti 2006, pp. 77-96; Prontera 2007, pp. 52-58; Id. 2011, p. 241.

[37] Paus., VIII 27, 8.

[38] Niese 1899, pp. 527-542 part. p. 539; Moggi 1976, pp. 308-309; Moggi–Osanna 2003, p. 421; Hornblower 1990, pp. 70-77.

[39] Although Pausanias has handed down an extensive narrative on the foundation of Megalopolis and quotes the founding decree (VI 12, 8), the chronological determination given is not considered reliable. It is not known whether the perieget actually consulted the original decree or, as seems more likely, another document that, although based on it, enriched it with other information, modifying its content at least partially. Cf. Nielsen 1995, p. 133 n. 144; Maddoli–Nafissi–Saladino 1999, p. 260; Hansen 2001, p. 321; Moggi–Osanna 2003, pp. XIII-XIV; Hansen–Nielsen 2004, p. 118. It is also necessary to point out, following the indication of Moggi 1976, p. 308, that an archaic document would hardly have reported as a chronological indication that of the archonship of Phrasikles in Athens, expressed with the Olympic years. The error of the temporal collocation in the same year or a little later than the battle of Leuctra can therefore be attributed to the source used by Pausanias or to the perieget himself, who made a mistake in relating the date, present in the original document, to the system of the Olympiads, probably also because of the epochal significance of the battle of Leuctra.

[40] D.S., XV 72, 4; Paus., VIII 27, 8.

[41] See in particular Roy 1968, pp. 146-166; Moggi 1974, pp. 71-107; Lanzillotta 1975, pp. 25-46; Moggi 1976, pp. 293-325; Demand 1990, pp. 111-113; Nielsen 2002, pp. 414-428; Id. 2004c, p. 521. A possible explanation of Pausanias' version (Moggi 1976, p. 311;

foundation of considerable size and significance, which had a strong influence on the geopolitics of the area.

In spite of the impact of this phenomenon, which had a fundamental importance for the history of the region, Strabo, as we have seen, does not provide any data about it. It was one of the most complete and exemplary synoecisms of the ancient world, since it included the foundation of a new urban centre, the depopulation of the pre-existing communities due to the displacement of the inhabitants to the new reality and the creation of a new state[42]. Only in VIII 3, 12 [C343] do we find the mention of the village of Asea[43], which belonged to the territory of Megalopolis: "καλεῖται δὲ Ἀσέα, κώμη τῆς Μεγαλοπολίτιδος".

Strabo confines himself to deploring the desolation of the city, which is such that it is compared to a great desert, and implicitly recalls what he said immediately before, namely that it is inappropriate to dwell on it. The extent of this statement, which could justify the decision to overlook the foundation of such an important centre, must however be calibrated in the light of the other sources available, both literary, archaeological and epigraphic, and must be put in relation to what he says about Mantinea, Heraia and Tegea in the part of the *Geography* specifically about Arcadia.

The problem is, in fact, twofold: if the place is really so desolate, it is justifiable to wonder why Strabo chooses to ignore any information about its past which would allow it to be rehabilitated and put into a proper historical-political perspective an area that had played a far from secondary role in opposing the power of Sparta and thus in the conflicts for hegemony in the Peloponnese; if, on the other hand, the place was not at all as run-down as the geographer testifies, it is worth investigating why he chooses to propose it in this way, and all the more reason to present Megalopolis as a completely insignificant city.

Demand 1990, p. 113) can be to consider it as referring to an official tradition, based on a document that followed the original decree but was drafted by the inhabitants of Megalopolis at a later time in order to legitimise the expansion of the city, probably when Aigytis and Syrtis were attributed to Megalopolis in the time of Philip II (Plb., IX 28, 7; XVIII 14, 7; Liv., XXXVIII 34, 8. Cf. Paus., VIII 30, 6).

[42] On the condition of centres founded per synoecism see Nielsen 2002, pp. 443-456.

[43] Forsén–Forsén 1997, pp. 163-176; Drakopoulos 1997, p. 302.

4. The image of Megalopolis, Mantinea, Tegea and Heraia in Strabo (VIII 8, 1-2 [C388]): real space vs. perceived space

The desolation of the places is also confirmed by Pausanias who, together with Diodorus, is one of the major sources for the foundation of the city[44]. The perieget, however, does not neglect to describe in some detail the monuments and the urban layout of a city, which certainly appears to be decaying but still vital and functional in terms of institutions and civic structures[45]: there are undeniable signs of decline compared with the past, but there are still numerous architectural and sculptural works worthy of description. What is highlighted is the contrast between the present condition of places and the grandeur of the past, leading to reflection on the changing patterns of fortune to which all realities are subject, whatever their degree of power and development may be[46]. The observation of the contrast between the current state of places and the glory of the past is instead completely absent in Strabo, who summarises the condition of Megalopolis with the iconic expression of μεγάλη ἐρημία.

Although Strabo's assertion, of which Pausanias' considerations are deemed a confirmation, led to the consolidation of the image of Arcadia as a region in a state of total abandonment, there are relatively few other literary sources which comfort the geographer's statement. The Greek and Roman evidence that we have must be correctly interpreted and relates in general to Greece and not specifically to the city of Megalopolis. Dio Chrysostom, who lived under Domitian and therefore after Strabo, claims to have travelled in Greece during his exile and describes Thessaly and Arcadia thus[47]: οὐχ ὁ Πηνειὸς δι' ἐρήμου ῥεῖ Θετταλίας; οὐχ ὁ Λάδων διὰ τῆς Ἀρκαδίας ἀναστάτου γενομένης;

However, the author, who undoubtedly had the greatest influence on tradition, was Polybius, who in a well-known passage complains about the low birth rate that afflicts the whole of Greece to such an extent that the cities are

[44] Paus., VIII 33, 1.

[45] Paus., VIII 30-32.

[46] Cf. Ambaglio 1987, pp. 33-46; Prontera 1994, pp. 853-854. Lucian (*Charon* 23), a contemporary of Pausanias deals with the same theme of the fate of cities, which like men are destined to die, regardless of their size and power. Herodotus (I 5, 3) had already expressed himself on the equal dignity of large and small cities. Later, Thucydides (I 10, 1-3), in the context of the criteria for evaluating *poleis*, distinguishes between monumental size and actual power with the well-known examples of Sparta and Athens. If Sparta were to be devastated and only the temples and the foundations of the buildings were saved, no one could believe that its power was equal to its fame, unlike Athens, which, thanks to its monuments, would be considered twice as powerful as it actually was.

[47] D. Chr., *Or.* 33, 25.

deserted and the land ceases to bear fruit[48]: ἐπέσχεν ἐν τοῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς καιροῖς τὴν Ἑλλάδα πᾶσαν ἀπαιδία καὶ συλλήβδην ὀλιγανθρωπία, δι' ἣν αἵ τε πόλεις ἐξηρημώθησαν καὶ ἀφορίαν εἶναι συνέβαινε, καίπερ οὔτε πολέμων συνεχῶν ἐσχηκότων ἡμᾶς οὔτε λοιμικῶν περιστάσεων. Although the author, a native of Megalopolis himself, was probably referring to the elites around Megalopolis and thus to a localised phenomenon and a precise territory[49], his evidence influenced the general opinion about the state of Greece. An echo of this *oliganthropia* can be found in Plutarch, where the concepts of depopulation and lack of men in arms are amplified to such an extent that, according to the author, the whole of Greece could barely muster the three thousand men that Megara alone had sent to Plataea[50].

The theme of *oliganthropia* is actually, as Luigi Gallo has well shown[51], a well-established *topos* in Greek and Roman literature, in which we find the binomial "scarcity of population/urban decadence – political and military decline" as opposed to "abundance of inhabitants/urban prosperity – military success and political hegemony". A situation of loss of power such as that of Greece in Roman times was of necessity to be matched by a shortage of inhabitants – considered an absolute evil – and consequently of men in arms. Similarly, when it is not *oliganthropia* to be emphasised, it is the decay of city structures. It is the urban centres, in which either the city institutions are located or which are the seats of the Hellenistic rulers where political decisions are taken, that determine the events of history.

It is therefore no coincidence that when there is a situation of political decadence, cities are also perceived as places in ruins. For the Greeks, the loss of freedom is the end of an era and is reflected in their way of representing reality, as can also be seen in Roman authors, albeit from the perspective of the victors. Cicero, Horace and Ovid[52], and later Seneca[53], recall the desolation of Greece, once flourishing and full of famous cities. This contrast between the past glory and the present condition of places is very evident in Pausanias' description

[48] Plb., XXXVI 17, 5.

[49] Stewart 2014, p. 118. Cf. Walbank 1979. On Polybius see the recent volume by Thornton 2020.

[50] Plu., *De def. or.* 413f-414a.

[51] Gallo 1980, pp. 1233-1270; Id. 1984. See also Alcock 1993, pp. 24-32, 52-61.

[52] Cic., *Flacc.* 16, 62-64; Id., *Fam.* IV 5, 4; Hor., *Ep.* II 2, 81-86; Ov., *Metam.* 15, 430. On a depopulated Greece see also *Orac. Sib.* 3, 530-538. Famous are the words of Nero (*IG* VII 2713), who, when granting freedom and exemption from tributes to the province of Achaia, regrets that few will enjoy the benefits he has accorded them, given the depopulation of Greece.

[53] Sen., *Ep.* 91, 10.

of Megalopolis itself, where he emphasises the alternating fortunes of cities. As Alcock states: "The general concurrence of the sources in their negative presentation of Roman Greece does not necessarily prove its truth, but rather the degree to which a rhetoric was shared: depopulation and decline had become natural ingredients for representations of a defeated, inglorious Greece"[54].

The quoted passage from Dio Chrysostom should also be read in this perspective. Indeed, one should not lose sight of the context, which is that of a heavy criticism of both material and moral decadence: the state of ruin of the places is a metaphor for the decline in customs, which constitutes the lens through which reality is viewed.

The literary *topos* may be a first level of reading of Strabo's passage on Megalopolis, as well as that relating to the representation of the rest of Arcadia where significant cities had once flourished, but as will be seen, it is not the only one and indeed betrays a precise political idea of Strabo. The information that the geographer provides on this region is scarce and describes an absolutely degraded region, where once well-known centres, such as Mantinea, Tegea and Heraia, no longer exist and their remains can barely be found (VIII 8, 2 [C388]):

> Μαντίνειαν μὲν οὖν ἐποίησεν ἐνδοξοτάτην Ἐπαμεινώνδας, τῇ δευτέρᾳ νικήσας μάχῃ Λακεδαιμονίους ἐν ᾗ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐτελεύτα. καὶ αὕτη δὲ καὶ Ὀρχομενὸς καὶ Ἡραία καὶ Κλείτωρ καὶ Φενεὸς καὶ Στύμφαλος καὶ Μαίναλος καὶ Μεθύδριον καὶ Καφυεῖς καὶ Κύναιθα ἢ οὐκέτ' εἰσὶν ἢ μόλις αὐτῶν ἴχνη φαίνεται καὶ σημεῖα. Τεγέα δ' ἔτι μετρίως συμμένει καὶ τὸ ἱερὸν τῆς Ἀλέας Ἀθηνᾶς.

If the picture given of Arcadia corresponds to the idea of a generalised degradation of Greece that is also confirmed by other literary sources, archaeology and epigraphy actually point, at least partially, in another direction. It is unquestionable that the wars of the first century B.C. led to the destruction and devastation of some cities and areas of Greece and it is certainly not possible to disregard the analysis of literary sources or deny them any reliability. However, their import must be reduced. In particular, Strabo's description of Arcadia and its cities is exaggerated and does not do justice to the real situation of places. Moreover, nothing is said about the origins of the cities mentioned, as if to pass over in silence not only the present but also any information that might in some way recall the relevance of sites that until the age of Polybius had played a political role.

[54] Alcock 1993, p. 30. On the image of a depopulated Greece and its interpretation see Baladié 1980, pp. 316-321; Roy–Lloyd–Owens 1989, pp. 146-147; Stewart 2010, p. 220; Roy 2010, p. 59; Stewart 2014, pp. 118-119; Roller 2018, p. 491.

Archaeological studies are still in progress and the epigraphic remains, which testify to construction activities or can confirm the functionality of civic structures, are few, especially those related to Strabo's times. More evidence is available for the late imperial age, in which there is a significant increase in sites[55]. In the late Republican and early imperial age there was, compared with the last phase of the Hellenistic period, in all likelihood a real contraction of the population[56] and there is no evidence of development or expansion of sites. Nothing, however, suggests levels of degradation similar to those described in the literary sources. By way of example, in eastern Arcadia some 62.5% of the sites shows continuity from Hellenistic to Roman times, indicating a level of settlement far from the general desolation described by Strabo[57]. The sites showing the highest level of continuity are the largest ones. On the one hand, this is not surprising, given the greater probability of survival of a large centre compared with a small one, but on the other hand it may indicate a trend towards the merging of rural properties and a redistribution of the population, which does not in itself imply depopulation[58]. The growth in the size of rural sites, as evidenced by archaeological surveys, "can be hypothesized to represent *either* an increasing preference for nucleated settlement *or* the dominant presence of an élite landowing stratum in the countryside"[59] as shown by the discovery of large rustic villas[60]. The disappearance of scattered rural dwellings, which characterised the Classical and Hellenistic periods, should not therefore be considered in itself a sign of abandonment of the land as it may well be the consequence of the redistribution of property and economic resources[61].

This general trend in Arcadia is also found in the territory of Megalopolis. The city had enjoyed periods of expansion and wealth during the 4th and 3rd

[55] Alcock 1993, pp. 46, 72.

[56] Forsén–Forsén 2003, pp. 269-271.

[57] See Stewart 2010, p. 223 for the percentages of continuity of sites in different parts of the Greece and of the Peloponnese areas based on available data from archaeological excavations.

[58] On population density and sites size see Given 2004, pp. 13-21; Terrenato 2004, pp. 36-48; Keay 2007, pp. 509-513.

[59] Alcock 1993, p. 72. On local elites see Spawforth 2012, p. 37.

[60] Roy 2010, p. 67.

[61] Alcock 1993, pp. 53-80; Roy 2008, pp. 176-183; Stewart 2010, pp. 217-233. Stewart 2010, p. 229 at the conclusion of his article is emblematic: "The traditional historical narrative of a declining and depopulated Greece in Roman period requires emendation; the rural Roman Peloponnese, overall, does indees show a pattern of decline, but this numerical decline of sites number mascks a much more complicated situation. Simple loss of numbers does not automaticaly translate into depopulation or desolation. The rural Roman Peloponnese is typified by a series of vibrant communities".

centuries B.C. and continued its function as a polis even after it had lost the function of regional federal capital for which it had been created. Even in the 2nd century A.D. there is evidence of urban centres dependent on it[62]. The level of magnificence that the city had at the time of its foundation and in the period immediately following was undoubtedly never again reached and most of the monuments destroyed during the conquest of Cleomenes III in 223 B.C. were probably never rebuilt. A lower level of prosperity of the site than in the Hellenistic period is also noted by archaeology, which attests to signs of consistent revival only from late antiquity onwards, but certainly in Strabo's time it was not a great desert.

The main edifices appear to be operative[63]. The cults remained particularly vital, not only in the cities but also in the countryside, and we have evidence of restorations of religious buildings by members of the city's elites. Megalopolis controlled the sanctuary of Zeus Lyceus, where the cult of Zeus was assimilated into the imperial cult[64], and a second temple to the deity was built in the agorà. The sanctuary of Despoina in Lykosura, belonging to the enclave of the township, was still flourishing even in the early imperial age as evidenced by the dedications[65], with which benefactors guaranteed themselves perennial honours given the high attendance at the temple[66].

In Mantinea we have epigraphic evidence of some building activities such as the construction of a megaron (*IG* V 2, 266), a market place and other public buildings as well as of the order from Euphrosynos and Epigone to repair the temples at Antigoneia/Mantineia (*IG* V 2, 268, ll. 3-4, 7)[67]. Pausanias[68] mentions only one building in ruins, the temple of Aphrodite Symmachia, a cult that commemorated Mantinea's support for the Romans at Actium, such support being a major fact for understanding the vitality of the city in the Augustan age.

[62] Moggi–Osanna 2003, p. 452.

[63] Roy 2010, pp. 64-65. *IG* V 2, 515B and *SEG* XIV 347 attest to the presence of gymnasiarchs. For a list of the officials of Arkadian cities see Lafond 2006, pp. 95-100.

[64] On the imperial cult in Arcadia see Hoët-van Cauwenberghe 1996, pp. 207-214. Cf. Bowersock 1965, pp. 112-121.

[65] *IG* V 2, 515 (14 A.D.); 515B (14 A.D.); 516 (42 A.D.); 523 (27 B.C.-14 A.D.). *IG* V 2, 515B l. 28 also attests to the building activity desired by Xenarchus in the temple.

[66] Baleriaux 2017, p. 147.

[67] *IG* V 2, 266 is dated to 46-43 B.C., while *IG* V 2, 268, which attests also the presence of gymnasia, to 10 B.C.–10 A.D. *IG* V 2, 281, concerning the construction of an exedra in the centre and a peristyle with marble columns, is dated to 130 A.D. Cf. Baladié 1978, p. 319. The city of Mantinea was called Antigoneia until Hadrian's time after being destroyed by Antigonus Doson in 222 B.C. See Plb., II 56-58; Plu., *Arat*. 45; Paus., VIII 8, 12.

[68] Paus., VIII 9, 6.

Inscriptions of the first century B.C. also testify to cases of evergetism in favour of temples and cults in Mantinea: *IG* V 2, 265 (ll. 25-28) records the memory of Nicippa, a wealthy woman from Mantinea, who became priestess of Kore and financed the Koragia; Phaena, who financed the cult of Demeter after becoming priestess of the goddess (*IG* V 2, 266, ll. 26-27), also came from Mantinea[69]. The overall picture is that of a centre that retained a normal vitality, far from being among those cities that according to Strabo (VIII 8, 2 [C388]) "ἣ οὐκέτ' εἰσὶν ἣ μόλις αὐτῶν ἴχνη φαίνεται καὶ σημεῖα"[70].

Even better appears to be the situation at Tegea, which seems to be prosperous and is described in detail in Pausanias' *Periegesis* without any signs of ruin[71]. Some inscriptions, dated to the 1st and the 2nd century A.D., testify to building activity in the Roman period, attesting the dedication of an altar to the mother goddess (*IG* V 2, 87), a bath house and a stoà (*IG* V 2, 127) and a colonnade (*IG* V 2, 131)[72]. The organisation of the citizens into *phylai* was here still active in Roman times[73] as it was also in Megalopolis[74].

Heraia seems also to have enjoyed a solid state. An honorary epigraph found in Olympia mentions it as one of the cities that provided a contingent for a campaign against the Gauls led by the Roman consul Cn. Domitius[75]. The inscription was intended to honour the expedition leader Damon of Patras and testifies to a city still capable of providing soldiers. Furthermore, the Arcadian cities were deprived of the right to mint coins after 146 B.C., except for Tegea for which bronze coins are attested, but minting is found again in the Severan age for both Heraia and Mantinea, showing that the two cities had by no means disappeared[76]. Pausanias recalls that only the temple of Hera was in ruins, while the other public and religious buildings still appeared to be in function at his time[77].

[69] On the role of women as benefactors see Lafond 2006, pp. 228-232; Jost 1996, pp. 193-200. Cf. Loucas–Durie 1984, pp. 137-147.

[70] On Mantinea in Roman times see Tsiolis 2002.

[71] Paus., VIII 43, 1-6.

[72] *IG* V 2, 87: I/II cent. A.D. *IG* V 2, 127: 129-138 A.D.; *IG* V 2, 131: II cent. A.D.

[73] Paus., VIII 31, 8.

[74] *IG* V 2, 452; 464.

[75] The inscription is dated to c. 122 B.C. See Kunze 1956, pp. 160-164; Robert–Robert 1959, no. 170, p. 189; Schwertfeger 1974, pp. 27-40. Cf. Moretti 1967, no. 60.

[76] Baladié 1980, pp. 316-318.

[77] Paus., VIII 26, 1-2.

5. An interpretative key to Strabo's representation of Arcadia and its cities

While the geographer's discussion of the synoecism of Mantinea, Tegea and Heraia in the comparison of the Homeric past with the present situation provides interesting data to understand this historical phenomenon, he does not do justice to the real situation in Arcadia in the part of the *Geography* that deals more specifically with Arcadia. The cities are only mentioned, there is a complete silence about their past, both mythical and historical, and about the importance of this region at the time of the Arcadian Confederacy. The only information given about Mantinea and Heraia, namely that they no longer exist, does not correspond to reality. Similarly, the city of Tegea, which retained a considerable level of vitality even in the early imperial age, is described as being of modest importance. Megalopolis is exaggeratedly described as "a great desert". Although these places were no longer as politically important and flourishing as in the past, they were far from having disappeared or being in such a state of disrepair that their remains could hardly be traced. Certainly Strabo was never in Arcadia, but he had sources about it, especially about the role that Epaminondas played for the Arcadian Confederacy and thus for a far from insignificant phase of the history of this region which included the foundation of Megalopolis and the second synoecism of Mantinea[78]. He himself declares the necessity of dealing with events of the past especially when addressing important localities and events[79].

Much of the historical and geographical information for the Peloponnese depends on Ephorus, who is also used by Polybius and Diodorus in their portrayal of the Theban hegemony and of the Theban leader, although each maintains his own individuality in presenting events and characters[80]. The lack of details in VIII 8, 1-2 is not due to shortage of sources. Through Ephorus, Strabo knew well the role that Epaminondas played at Leuctra, Mantinea and for the history of all Arcadia. The two battles constituted the main nucleus of the *Histories* of Ephorus (books XXIII-XXV), which was still very popular and appreciated in the 1st century A.D., as Plutarch attests[81], in spite of Polybius'

[78] See below.

[79] Str., VI 1, 2 [C254].

[80] On the innumerable sources used by Strabo in Book VIII cf. Biraschi 2000, pp. 26-27; Baladié 1978, pp. 19-32. On the relationship between Strabo and Ephorus see also Forderer 1913; Baladié 1996, pp. 17-18; Prandi 1988, pp. 50-60; Parmeggiani 2011, pp. 31-32, *passim*; Filoni 2014, pp. 847-926; Candau Morón 2018, pp. 21-35. Cf. Nicolai 2019, pp. 203-224.

[81] Plu., *De Garr.* 514c.

criticism of lack of military experience in land fighting that comes out from the description of these two military clashes[82]. According to the historian of Megalopolis Ephorus' accounts of naval battles were, on the contrary, to be considered as more valuable. This judgement, however, does not detract from the overall positive opinion that Polybius had of Ephorus.

Ephorus' view of Epaminondas is extremely positive. We know his thinking in particular from Diodorus, in whose work information about the Theban general is collected and who describes him as far superior to his fellow citizens in quality, philosophical culture and military ability[83]. Comparison with other leaders, contemporary or earlier, shows that each of them excelled in some way, but that in Epaminondas all the virtues were combined. Polybius remembers him as universally admired and defeated only by bad luck[84].

As is well known, the foundation of Megalopolis and its role as the capital of the Arcadian Confederacy are only conceivable at a time of acute crisis for Sparta, such as the period after the battle of Leuctra, during which the Thebans were responsible for raids in Laconia and supported the Helots of Messenia. The Arcadian Confederacy aimed at weakening the power of Sparta and creating an alternative centre of power in the Peloponnese with the support of the Thebans. Pausanias reports that the Arcadians chose as founders of Megalopolis exponents of Tegea, Mantinea, Kleitor, Mainalia and Parrhasia but that the promoter of the synecistic process was Epaminondas[85]. Although the foundation of the city was undoubtedly desired by the Arcadians, who placed themselves in a position of clear and deliberate antagonism to Sparta, certainly the support of the Thebans was essential for its realisation.

Similarly, the initiative in 370 B.C. for the second foundation of Mantinea, which after the diecism imposed by the Spartans in 385 B.C. had been divided into five demes, was taken, according to Pausanias[86], by the Thebans and Epaminondas. Even without exaggerating the role played by the Thebans, it is difficult to imagine that the inhabitants of Mantinea had not thought of the possibility of counting on their support and on that of their very capable leader. After the defeat of Sparta nothing prevented the Mantineans, who had been forced to live κατὰ κώμας, from reconstituting their city. The decision was taken

[82] Plb., XII 25 (= Ephor., *FGrHist* 70 T 20). For a correct interpretation of the Polybian critique see Parmeggiani 2011, pp. 40-42.

[83] D.S., XV 88, 1.

[84] Plb., IX 8, 2; 13.

[85] Paus., VIII 27, 2; 52, 4; IX 15, 6. Cf. X., *HS* VI 5, 3-5. Cf. Hornblower 1990, p. 77; Demand 1990, p. 118; Nielsen 2002, p. 118.

[86] Paus., VIII 8, 10; IX 14, 4.

by all the citizens and Agesilaus' attempts to convince them to suspend the process with the offer to resume it at a later date with the material support and consent of Sparta[87] were to no avail. They had understood the importance and political strength of a unitary state in order to have an autonomous existence and return to play a significant role in the Peloponnese and thus managed to prevent the second synoecism from being seen as a concession by the Laconian city.

When, however, Epaminondas died, the city was unable to maintain the dominions it had gained through his victories[88]. It is possible to find in Strabo, who quotes Ephorus[89], the accusation against the Thebans of a lack of ἀγωγή and παιδεία, which led to a loss of power after the death of their leader despite the advantages that Boeotia offered (IX 2, 2 [C400]):

> Ἔφορος δὲ καὶ ταύτῃ κρείττω τὴν Βοιωτίαν ἀποφαίνει τῶν ὁμόρων ἐθνῶν καὶ ὅτι μόνη τριθάλαττός ἐστι καὶ λιμένων εὐπορεῖ πλειόνων. […] τὴν μὲν οὖν χώραν ἐπαινεῖ διὰ ταῦτα καί φησι πρὸς ἡγεμονίαν εὐφυῶς ἔχειν, ἀγωγῇ δὲ καὶ παιδείᾳ μὴ χρησαμένους – ἐπεὶ μηδὲ τοὺς ἀεὶ προϊσταμένους αὐτῆς –, εἰ καί ποτε κατώρθωσαν, ἐπὶ μικρὸν τὸν χρόνον συμμεῖναι, καθάπερ Ἐπαμεινώνδας ἔδειξε· τελευτήσαντος γὰρ ἐκείνου τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ἀποβαλεῖν εὐθὺς τοὺς Θηβαίους γευσαμένους αὐτῆς μόνον, αἴτιον δὲ εἶναι τὸ λόγων καὶ ὁμιλίας τῆς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ὀλιγωρῆσαι, μόνης δ' ἐπιμεληθῆναι τῆς κατὰ πόλεμον ἀρετῆς.

The failure of hegemony of Thebes was determined by the Thebans' inability to understand the value of culture and peaceful diplomacy and by the fact that they relied only on military power and armed force[90]. This serious shortcoming made them incapable of fully grasping the advantages of their land and its excellent position on the sea, potentialities which, if properly exploited, would have made them able to achieve not only land but also sea hegemony[91], as Diodorus reports (XV 79, 2)[92]:

[87] X., *HS* V 2, 5-7; VI 5, 3-5.

[88] D.S., XV 88, 3-4.

[89] *FGrHist* 70 F 119.

[90] These limits allow us to understand the reason for the absence of Pelopidas in the praise of Ephorus/Strabo: the leader, who made the history of Thebes together with Epaminondas, is described as very skilful but too impetuous and not very inclined to reflection (Parmeggiani 2011, p. 569).

[91] Cf. Ambaglio 1995, p. 144; Sordi 2005, p. 7; Parmeggiani 2005, pp. 85-91; Id. 2011, pp. 577-578; Bearzot 2015, pp. 287-298.

[92] The Greek text is taken from the edition of Vial 1977 (= 2002).

> εἰ μὲν οὖν ὁ ἀνὴρ οὗτος πλείω χρόνον ἐπέζησεν, ὡμολογημένως ἂν οἱ Θηβαῖοι τῇ κατὰ γῆν ἡγεμονίᾳ καὶ τὴν τῆς θαλάττης ἀρχὴν προσεκτήσαντο· ἐπεὶ δὲ μετ' ὀλίγον χρόνον ἐν τῇ περὶ τὴν Μαντίνειαν μάχῃ λαμπροτάτην τὴν νίκην τῇ πατρίδι περιποιήσας ἡρωικῶς ἐτελεύτησεν, εὐθέως καὶ τὰ τῶν Θηβαίων πράγματα τῇ τούτου τελευτῇ συναπέθανεν.

The lack of political intelligence of the ruling class led to the abandonment of an ambitious and far-reaching strategic project, which would have been realised if Epaminondas had remained alive.

Strabo knew Epaminondas not only from Ephorus and Polybius but was certainly aware of the extraordinary fame that the Theban leader enjoyed among Latin writers. Although he used mainly Greek sources, because he remains a Greek intellectual, the Roman world was well known to him both from his political and military experience and because he was in direct contact with the cultural elites of Rome. His teacher was the grammarian and geographer Tyrannion, himself tutor to Cicero's sons, whose writings the geographer could not ignore.

Cicero's image of Epaminondas is extremely positive. He defines him in the *Tusculanae disputationes* (I, 4) as *princeps meo iudicio Graeciae* and exalts both his skills as a capable leader, calling him an expert in *ars imperatoris*[93], and his culture, oratorical skills[94] and spirit of sacrifice[95]. In a passage of the *De Officiis* (I 155) he is explicitly mentioned among those who demonstrate the cultural superiority of the Greeks. Similarly, the encomiastic biography of Cornelius Nepos, who draws on Cicero and incorporates the largely positive view that Greek historiography had of the Theban leader[96], presents him as embodying all the virtues of Greek *humanitas* and endowed with *fides, liberalitas, abstinentia, eloquentia, patientia* and love of country[97]. His triumph over Sparta is celebrated as the victory of Greece over oligarchic tyranny[98]. His death at Mantinea, described in detail by both Cicero and Nepos, had become an *exemplum* for the Romans.

[93] Cic., *Orat*. I 210.

[94] In *Brutus* (50) Epaminondas is described as *doctus*, and the *De Officis* (I 155) contains the mention of his Pythagorean education at the school of Lysias of Tarentum.

[95] Cic., *Fin*. II 97.

[96] Tulpin 1984, pp. 346-358; Id. 2000, pp. 149-151; Bonaccorso 2013, pp. 22, 41-49.

[97] Bonaccorso 2013, pp. 23-26.

[98] Stem 2012, p. 188. Epaminondas is described as having acted for the good of all Greece and in Nepos' work (*Epam*. 8, 4) he states: *universam Graeciam in libertatem vindicavit*.

The passage from Strabo IX 2, 2 [C400] stands from Ephorus but the individuality of his judgement also emerges. On the one hand the geographer highlights, like Ephorus, the superiority of Epaminondas over his Theban contemporaries, on the other hand the virtues of the leader are expressed only with the concise expression καθάπερ Ἐπανειν ώνδας ἔδειξε. His praise does not find in Strabo the space dedicated to it in Ephorus/Diodorus and also in the Roman contemporaneus sources. What emerges instead is the politician who judges ephemeral the Theban hegemony and establishes a direct comparison with Rome, which had on the contrary been able to exploit the advantages of its territory and had become a power, thanks not only to its military valour but also to its political intelligence[99]. What is significant is Strabo's insistence above all on the incapacity of the Thebans when confronted by Roman supremacy as well as the brevity of the quotation on Epaminondas' superiority over his contemporaries.

Strabo makes a selection of material on the basis of his narrative needs and of his political ideas. He takes from Ephorus and Polybius the notoriety of the battle of Mantinea due to the death that the Theban leader had met there. Nothing is said, instead, about the city's second synoecism, which led to a period of renewed importance and flourishing. It is certainly not the lack of sources that prompts him to gloss over such an important part of its history, but it is a conscious choice. Although created mainly by the will of its inhabitants, the fame of the Thebans and the notoriety of their actions and of their intervention, direct and indirect, were absolutely well known to the historians of the time and rooted in the literary tradition. Pausanias writes thus, centuries later, recalling the second synoecism of Mantinea and the foundation of Megalopolis, which in fact occurred within a short distance of each other (IX 14, 4)[100]:

> τότε δὲ ὁ Ἐπαμινώνδας ὡς τοὺς Θεσπιεῖς καταφεύγοντας ἐς τὸν Κερησσὸν ἐξεῖλε, πρὸς τὰ ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ παραυτίκα ἔσπευδεν ἅτε καὶ τῶν Ἀρκάδων προθύμως μεταπεμπομένων. ἐλθὼν δὲ Ἀργείους μὲν προσελάβετο ἑκουσίους συμμάχους, Μαντινέας δὲ κατὰ κώμας ὑπὸ Ἀγησιπόλιδος διῳκισμένους ἐς τὴν ἀρχαίαν συνήγαγεν αὖθις πόλιν· τὰ δὲ πολίσματα τὰ Ἀρκάδων ὁπόσα εἶχεν ἀσθενῶς καταλῦσαι πείσας τοὺς Ἀρκάδας, πατρίδα ἐν κοινῷ σφισιν ᾤκισεν, ἣ Μεγάλη καὶ ἐς ἡμᾶς ἔτι καλεῖται πόλις.

[99] Cf. on this topic the interesting contribution, in this volume, by Alexandra Trachsel on Strabo's attitude towards Thebes, which can be defined as "a failed Rome".

[100] The Greek text is taken from the edition of Moggi–Osanna 2010.

Strabo was aware of the central role that Epaminondas played in books XXIII-XXV of Ephorus' *Histories*. He is, however, silent about the return to a unified centre of Mantinea, just as he treats the foundation of Megalopolis as a minor event. He may have mentioned this phase of Arcadia's history in his *Historika Hypomnemata* but the view of the region that emerges and the way in which he refers to the main cities is certainly not that of one who intends to recall the main events that determined the evolution and change of a geographical area and of its urban centres, all the more so if Strabo really believed that the region was in terrible decay in his time.

The context in which he points out the need to include in his work not only τὰ νῦν but also τῶν ὑπαρξάντων ἔνια καὶ μάλιστα ὅταν ἔνδοξα ᾖ (VI 1, 2 [C253]) is that of the description of the cities of Magna Graecia. He feels the necessity to evoke their past – when significant – since the places there, except Taras, Rhegium, and Neapolis, had become completely barbarised. Amongst the information he mentions, he recalls, in some cases, their foundation by mythical figures or by the colonisation of Greek cities. Remembering the origins confers value and prestige on a city, especially when it involves well-known mythical or historical personages. On the other hand, it is a characteristic process of reconstructive memory to attribute the foundation of places to famous men, who made it possible to link them to events that gave them importance.

One of the authors of whom Strabo makes most use when it comes to the foundation stories is Ephorus himself[101], to whom the information on the original synoecism of Mantinea and those of Tegea and Heraia might perhaps be traced. These synoecisms, however, do not appear in the eyes of the geographer as events "worth mentioning" in the description of Arcadia. Ephorus, moreover, must have spoken of the foundation of Megalopolis and the second synoecism of Mantinea, given the prominence that the character of Epaminondas had in his *Histories* and his connection with the history of Arcadia. Strabo also in this case makes a precise choice of selection of material from the sources at his disposal. He is not at all interested in dwelling on the foundation and origin of places in the specific part of Arcadia where the urban centres are mentioned, and not because he had already done so previously. The reason is another and it is the same that can explain the difference between real and perceived space: the representation of the region's degradation and the statement on the non-existence of Arcadian cities are the result of his negative opinion on the Theban hegemony and of the Arcadian Confederacy, two political realities united by the desire to weaken Sparta.

[101] See *supra* n. 15.

Space is viewed through the filter of the author's political idea. And for Strabo, Sparta is a central city in the Peloponnese, the one that makes it the "Acropolis of Greece"[102] and that had achieved a centuries-long hegemony. The geographer in this case – and surely by no mere coincidence – does not follow Ephorus, who has a negative opinion of Sparta's performance after the peace of Antalcidas. In Book XX, Ephorus creates a parallel between the archaic history of the city and that of the present, formulating a value judgement. The methods adopted to try to reconstruct its political supremacy, such as the imposition of the diecism of 385 B.C., are considered violent and unprofitable. The consideration of the Spartan policy of the 4th century B.C. as a degeneration is shared not only by Diodorus (XV 1, 4), who speaks of ἀβουλία and in whose work we read the echo of Ephorus' position, but also by Polybius who defines as ἄνοια and κακία (IV 27, 2-4) the Spartan conduct after the Peace of Antalcidas with particular reference to the episode of Mantinea. Diodorus and Polybius are the interpreters of a negative judgement widespread in Greek historiography of the 4th century B.C. According to the historian of Megalopolis Epaminondas had in fact exploited the errors of Sparta (VI 43, 4)[103].

Strabo dwells significantly on the archaic past of Sparta, pointing out that it was chosen by the Heracleidae as their royal residence, according to the testimony of Ephorus, and that it was better organised than all the other Greek cities, thanks to the constitution of Lycurgus[104]. It is emblematic how he summarises Spartan political conduct up to the most recent events (VIII 5, 5 [C365]):

> οἱ δὲ κατασχόντες τὴν Λακωνικὴν κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν ἐσωφρόνουν, ἐπεὶ δ'οὖν Λυκούργῳ τὴν πολιτείαν ἐπέτρεψαν, τοσοῦτον ὑπερεβάλοντο τοὺς ἄλλους ὥστε μόνοι τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης ἐπῆρξαν, διετέλεσάν τε ἄρχοντες τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἕως ἀφείλοντο αὐτοὺς τὴν ἡγεμονίαν Θηβαῖοι καὶ μετ' ἐκείνους εὐθὺς Μακεδόνες. οὐ μὴν τελέως γε οὐδὲ τούτοις εἶξαν, ἀλλὰ φυλάττοντες τὴν αὐτονομίαν ἔριν εἶχον περὶ πρωτείων ἀεὶ πρός τε τοὺς ἄλλους Ἕλληνας καὶ πρὸς τοὺς τῶν Μακεδόνων βασιλέας. καταλυθέντων δὲ τούτων ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων, μικρὰ μέν τινα προσέκρουσαν τοῖς πεμπομένοις ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων στρατηγοῖς τυραννούμενοι τότε καὶ πολιτευόμενοι μοχθηρῶς, ἀναλαβόντες δὲ σφᾶς ἐτιμήθησαν διαφερόντως καὶ ἔμειναν ἐλεύθεροι, πλὴν τῶν φιλικῶν λειτουργιῶν ἄλλο συντελοῦντες οὐδέν.

[102] Str. VIII 1, 3 [C335]. Cf. Baladié 1978, p. 283; Id. 1980, pp. 283-285; Prandi 1994, p. 18; Biraschi 1994b, pp. 55-56.

[103] Theopompus (*FGrHist* 115 F 103) also judges Sparta's actions very negatively, as it violated the peace of Antalcidas with the diecism of 385 B.C. On the contrary Xenophon (*HG* V 1, 36), in favour of Sparta, considers that the King's Peace ratified the city's supremacy over Greece and that it had only exploited the operational possibilities provided by the agreement.

[104] Str., VIII 5, 4-5 [C334-335].

An absolutely positive judgement emerges, while nothing is said about Sparta's aggressive attitude after the peace of Antalcidas. He emphasises the duration and extent of its hegemony, which extended by land and sea over the whole of Greece and of which the Spartans were deprived only by the Thebans and then by the Macedonians. Furthermore, he goes on to say that they never gave in completely and fought at every opportunity for supremacy. Even when they came under Roman rule, after the defeat of the Macedonians, the disagreements with the Romans were due only to the misgovernment of individual persons and were not attributable to the general Spartan political conduct. With the demise of these individuals the situation changed for the better, the Romans recognised the freedom of Sparta and held it in high honour[105].

Lycurgus' constitution had created the conditions for the greatest Greek empire, which lasted five centuries[106], replaced only by the very short-lived Theban empire[107] and, after just a short time, that of Macedonia. Here, Strabo makes good use of Sparta's past, as it serves to give glory to a place that had lost political power in his times. The same does not hold for the Arcadian Confederacy: its hegemony was ephemeral, its anti-Spartan political action is judged in negative terms and behind it there was the support of another hegemony that had proved incapable of lasting. This Confederacy was intended to unite the cities of the region with the sole aim of overthrowing Sparta, but the only result was to end Greek independence and open the door to the Macedonians. One can well understand Strabo's desire to play down the synoecism of Megalopolis, to pass over the second foundation of Mantinea in silence and to withhold any information about Tegea and Heraia, describing them as being in a state of neglect or decline that was not real. Similarly, he could not agree to accept Cicero's view that Epaminondas was the one who dealt the death blow to oligarchic Sparta. Although Cicero is referring to the Theban leader as an *exemplum*[108] while Strabo's perspective is that of a geographer and therefore completely different[109], the latter could not share his idea.

[105] Str., VIII 5, 5 [C365] refers in particular to Nabis, murdered by the Aetolians in 192 B.C. In the immediately following passage (C 366) the geographer explicitly mentions Eurikles, commander of the Spartan contingent at Actium against Antony, who abused Octavian's friendship and was therefore cause of discord. Cf. Accame 1946, pp. 129-134; Cartledge 2002², pp. 59-79.

[106] D.S., XV 1, 3.

[107] Prandi 1988, p. 55.

[108] Van der Bloom 2007, pp. 157-162.

[109] Cf. Dueck 2000, pp. 176-196.

Strabo is a firm believer in the superiority of Sparta and its stability is, according to his perspective, closely related to the stability, duration and extension of its hegemony which finds a parellelism in the consistency and strength of Roman rule. What is more, the exceptional nature of Lycurgus' constitution finds a direct correspondence, in terms of value and meaning, in the values of the Roman *mos maiorum*.

6. Conclusions

The pro-Laconian and pro-Roman attitudes are closely linked in the geographer. His favourable view of Sparta necessarily implies a devaluing attitude towards the cities of the Arcadian Confederacy. Strabo, like all his contemporaries, perceived Greece as a land now politically deprived of power and was no stranger to the rhetoric underlying the *topos* of *oliganthropia*. Nonetheless, the politician who gives an extremely positive assessment of Spartan hegemony, to which he ideally parallel that of Rome, cannot but make his political position felt. It is no coincidence that he chooses to depict Arcadia in a state of disrepair and completely glosses over the origins of its cities.

The other element, which should not be lost sight of, is the presence of Homer, who is very invasive in Book VIII to such an extent that he repeatedly finds himself justifying the continuous recourse to passages from the Poet, defining them as necessary and unavoidable for those who wish fully to understand the current situation of places. Homeric exegesis is the *leitmotif* of the description of the Peloponnese and contributes to determining the narrative structure through continuous quotations and references and the constant comparison between present and past. It is no wonder that Strabo speaks of the synoecism of Heraia, Tegea and Mantinea alongside that of Elis. In fact, Strabo is not interested in the theme of the foundation of cities as such in this passage, but in creating a comparison between the present situation and that of the Homeric past by highlighting the evolution of sites and the difference in the ways the territory was settled. He dwells on Elis, which had hosted Nestor's reign, and emphasises that Elis in Homer's time, like in the case of the Peloponnesian localities mentioned by the Poet, was the name of the territory while the city was founded only later by synoecism after the Persian wars. It is only at this point that he also mentions the synoecism of other urban centres, including those in Arcadia, in order to underline their similar formation process. On the contrary, in the description of Arcadia, one picks up not so much the attention paid to the organisation of the territory and the typology of settlements but the

influence of his political viewpoint on the perception of space and its representation, which is inevitably altered with respect to reality.

These two levels of interpretation, both political and as comparison with the Homeric past, allow us to understand why Strabo conveys a certain depiction of Arcadia and places the information about the synoecisms at a certain point in his *Geography*. The analysis of how he presents urban centres and their origins reveals his political vision and at the same time sheds light on how he consciously decides to select the material that the sources yielded him.

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