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Section 2 Work in Progress

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Border Management Cultures and Strategies in Ancient Greek Federal States

FeBo Project Report 2023, 2

The project FeBo – Federalism and Border Management in Greek Antiquity (ERC 2021 COG PR. Nr. 101043954) aims at investigating the border-management strategies and cultures that stabilised the inter- and intra-federal border zones and thus contributed to the success of the *koina* that adopted those strategies to the best effect.¹ Without saying, Boiotia features among the most privileged case studies.

The FeBo research group consists of the P.I., Elena Franchi, the three collaborators Claudio Biagetti, Sebastian Scharff, and Roy Van Wijk, and a PhD student, Rebecca Massinelli (<https://erc-febo.unitn.it/about-us.html>). It also profits from the support of digital-humanities expert Daniele Fusi. Roy Van Wijk and Rebecca Massinelli joined the team at the beginning of the second year and will be engaged on work packages (henceforth: WP[s]) 2, 3 and 4, as outlined in the proposal.

The first year of the project (2022-2023) was specifically dedicated to the study of external, i.e. inter-federal border areas. The objective was the collection and analysis of evidence on economic, ethnic, cultural, and religious interactions on the borders of a *koinon* in its various

¹ See “Federalism and Border Management in Greek Antiquity (FeBo) - Project Report 1 (2023),” Münster: University of Münster, 2023, 2 p. (TJO 2022.1). URL: <https://www.uni-muenster.de/Ejournals/index.php/tjo/index>. I am grateful to Claudio Biagetti and Sebastian Scharff for their valuable suggestions for revising and supplementing these reports, and more generally for their important contribution to the project.

phases (WP 1). The research actions undertaken were aimed at investigating phenomena of cross-border cooperation and the forms in which such cross-border cooperation made possible and even necessary a special legal definition of the areas in which this cooperation took place. They were intended to analyse the extent to which these phenomena influenced processes of integration and expansion of a *koinon* and the role played by cross-border commuters in these forms of cooperation. Beyond that, the extent to which these forms of cooperation were then exploited in the context of border-management strategies came into focus. Finally, the extent to which they are to be understood in a connection with border-management cultures were investigated and will be further explored. The speakers of the FeBinars contributed to the reflection on these issues, and the webinars organised as part of the project constituted a veritable think tank for FeBo. The dynamics studied in the first year with their particular reference to the Peloponnese and Western Greece will then be analysed with specific reference to Boiotia in the second and third year of the project. The initial results were discussed and disseminated in both academic and non-academic settings.

1. Cross-Border Cooperation: from Hybridizing Border Relations to the Definition of *koinai chorai*

There are cases in which the strong receptive and creative capacity of a centre with respect to interactions with neighbouring centres makes this same centre of particular strategic relevance and thus of absolute interest to a *koinon* gravitating in neighbouring areas. This seems to have been the case in Phigalia which Claudio Biagetti took as a case study. Situated between the western foothills of Mt. Lykeion and the meeting point between the Messenian territory (to the south), the Triphylian coast (to the north-northwest) and the Arkadian hinterland (to the north and east), the city of Phigalia is certainly the major centre of the area and the one for which the available evidence is the richest and most stimulating. The ancient sources, in fact, emphasise its border location not only because of the role the polis played as a strategic crossroads (Strab. 8.3.22; Polyb. 4.3.4-5; Diod. 15.40.2), but also, to some extent, to point out its more unusual aspects related to local customs (Harmod. Lepr. BNJ 319 FF 1-3; Paus. 8.40.1-42.13), thus giving the scholars the impression of a centre of strong cultural hybridity. The article “Φιλοπότης Μεσσήνιος ἀστυγείτονας ὄντας. Arcadian Phigalia as a Geographical, Political and Cultural Crossroad” aims to shed light on the function of Phigalia as a crucial stronghold for the control of the western Peloponnese and as a centre highly receptive to external cultural influxes. It was published in the diamond open access journal *Hormos. Ricerche di storia antica* n.s. 15 (2023), 1-40.

In other cases, the considerable capacity for cross-border interaction gives rise to forms of cross-border cooperation so significant that a legal definition is possible and necessary. Quite

common are the so-called koinai chorai, border areas with economic significance, declared ‘common’ and open to joint exploitation by several communities. They are the subject of a further article by Claudio Biagetti. As Biagetti notes, the koinai chorai were often territories that had been at the centre of interpoleic disputes and continued to be disputed even after the proclamation and/or formalisation of their status as common regions. The epigraphic record preserves a number of inter-state treaties that sanctioned the creation of a common region, i.e., reaffirmed its status and conditions of exploitation. The Peloponnese stands out as a privileged observatory for the study of such border territories. The existence of jointly exploited areas in Late Classical Arcadia (IPArk 14; 369-361 BC) is the first indication of a phenomenon that enjoys a certain development in the Hellenistic period (IG V 2, 419; SEG 58, 370; IG IV 2, 75+; IG IV 2, 76-77). Although access to a territory and its resources must first have been sanctioned by a formal agreement between the communities concerned, the intervention of koina and rulers as promoters and/or guarantors of the treaties often looms in the background of such understandings, the one and the other being concerned with the stability and security of the territories over which they exercised their jurisdiction. The article summarising these and further remarks bears the title “Border Regions, Political Communities, Economic Resources: Remarks on the Territories of Shared Exploitation in the Hellenistic Peloponnese” and will be published on the diamond open access journal *Pallas. Revue des Études Antiques* 123 (2024).

2. From Cross-Border Cooperation to Management Strategy

There are also cases where the evidence suggests that forms of strong receptivity and interactive creativity as well as cross-border cooperation in and between border areas played a primary role for the integration of areas which were newly acquired by koina in a phase of expansion. This is the case for the city of Oiantheia, in West Lokris studied by Elena Franchi. The ancient Greeks and most probably the Lokrians themselves felt they had to emphasise the Lokrian identity of Oiantheia by mentioning it with few others among the cities founded by the eponymous hero of the Lokrians, Lokros. Given its location, this does not seem to be by chance. According to the most common hypothesis, it should be identified with the modern site of Mathiou in the bay of Vitrinitsa, maybe comprising Kisseli. Ancient sources indicate that Oiantheia clearly had an outlet to the sea that had its own significance, not only for the Lokrian poleis, but also for poleis of the Aitolian hinterland such as Kallipolis (= modern Steno) and Aigion (= modern Strouza). This relevance has already been highlighted in historical, archaeological and topographical research. The article shows how it was instrumental in cross-border cooperation activities that facilitated the integration of Oiantheia into the Aitolian koinon (as well as, subsequently, the recovery of its Lokrian identity). In

this case, cross-border cooperation seems to be a bottom-up phenomenon that was exploited by the koinon of the Aitolians in conjunction with two top-down strategies such as the well-known creation of new ‘tele’ (districts) for the newly acquired territories as well as the manipulation of the genealogies of eponymous heroes (and that one goes so far as to make Aitolos a relative of Lokros). The article “Oiantheia in between. Cross-border Activities in Ancient Federal Greece” was submitted to the diamond open access journal *Gerión. Revista de Historia Antigua*.

The above-mentioned cases of cross-border cooperation are often made possible by, and simultaneously make possible, situations of border porosity. Elena Franchi’s research on the cult of Apollo Pythaios in the eastern Peloponnese is dedicated to a similar case of border porosity and cross-border cooperation. Previous research leads to a distinction between the cult of Pythaios and the cult of Apollo Pythios. According to the available evidence, the former is practised primarily, but not exclusively, in the eastern Peloponnese, especially in Kynouria. Both epigraphic and literary documents contribute to a shared picture of the cult, which seems to have been practised in Kynouria by individuals who were familiar with Lakonian and Argolic cultural habits and alphabets. Whether this familiarity can be attributed to the mobility of such individuals or more generally to widespread mobility between the three regions, both cases seem to indicate that regional boundaries were porous in Archaic times, at least (and maybe not only) with reference to the cult of Pythaios. In addition to having been practised by the Kynourians themselves, the cult was probably also maintained by the Spartans and Argives: in the case of the Spartans and Argives, it formed part of their respective networks of ‘federal’ cults that were also functional to aims of extending control over areas perceived as borders. The chapter “Beyond War. Porosity of Borders and Ritual Interconnectedness across the Southeastern Peloponnese” was submitted to Marian Helm and Sophia Nomicos, editors of the volume “Laconia and the Argolid. An Interconnected Approach towards Reconstructing the Southern Peloponnese in Antiquity” (provisional title) for publication with *Teiresias Supplements Online* (in diamond open access).

Another case of the porosity of boundaries and the involvement of actors at different levels (local, regional, supra-regional) of boundary management is that of Ambrakia. The case is currently studied by Sebastian Scharff and appears to be promising. Ambrakiot politics seem to have been essentially border politics. As a point of reference of various claims to power, the territory of the city constituted a contested space. Corinthian settlers, Athenian strategoi, Makedonian and Epirotan kings, Aitolian politicians, and Roman generals all took a lively interest in the city after which the gulf is named. As a consequence, Ambrakia’s history was a history of changing affiliations from independent settlement to Epirotan capital back to independence and membership in the Aitolian League, a process that finally resulted in submission to Roman rule as *civitas libera*. In addition to the claims lodged by the major

political players of the time, the people of Ambrakia also had to face border conflicts with regional and local stakeholders including the Amphilocheians, Akarnanians, and the people of a small neighbouring town like Charadros. But what strategies were applied to secure the boundary lines? How were they established and legitimised and what can we say about the permeability of these borders? The article is currently in preparation and will be submitted in January 2024.

3. Cross-border Commuters

The border porosity analysed in the articles reviewed in the paragraph above is often a product of the recurrent passage of individuals we would call cross-border commuters. To a specific category of cross-border commuters, that is the athletes, Sebastian Scharff has devoted an article intended as the first in a series on different groups of border-crossers. Starting from the observation that the role of former athletes as envoys has not been sufficiently analysed yet, the article examines on what kind of diplomatic missions Hellenistic athletes were sent after their career. Of special interest are their roles as interstate arbitrators and mediators in political conflicts, roles which were often assumed in the context of political conflicts with or within federal states. It is striking that Eliaian victors mediated and arbitrated even in such disputes in which their hometown had been one of the conflicting parties. This reveals what significant a role the prestige gained by an agonistic victory played for becoming appointed envoy. Another main reason for being nominated as ambassadors consisted in the athletes' prior life realities as cross-border commuters which allowed them to build strong social and political networks from an early age. No doubt, former athletes, often 'heavy weights', served in many different roles on diplomatic missions of the highest importance.

The article, entitled "Mediating, Arbitrating, Crossing Borders Constantly. Federal Athletes as Envoys", was published in the diamond open access journal *Erga-Logoi* 11, No. 2 (2023), 77-90.

4. Border Management Cultures

In the early months of the project and during the various internal workshops, we investigated the possibility that in certain cases border-zone management may not be attributable to a specific border-management strategy, but rather to a border-management culture. To Sebastian Scharff, we owe the hypothesis that ethne and koina developed specific border-management cultures. Scharff devoted an article to the Aitolian and Achaian border

management cultures which specifically focuses on the two most important federal states of the Hellenistic age. It explores whether there were characteristic features of treaty-making practices in the Achaian and Aitolian Leagues respectively. Third-city arbitration delegated to member poleis and a special set of Beitrittsurkunden constituted typical features of Achaian treaty culture, whereas Aitolian-style treaty-making included particularly long dating clauses and centred on politically highly relevant contracts with major players of the day. With regard to the diplomatic personnel, the constant activities of young Achaian athletes provided a broad pool of potential future envoys, a pool that did not exist in Aitolia to the same extent. While the border management of the Achaians often referred to internal boundaries, the Aitolians seem to have been more involved with external ones. In sum, it is argued that there actually were individual treaty cultures in Aitolia and Achaia respectively. The unequal formation conditions of both leagues (polis-structured vs. tribal-based) may be understood as a reason behind these different cultures.

The article, entitled “Treaty Cultures. The Aitolian and Achaian Leagues in Comparison”, was published in the diamond open access journal *Hormos. Ricerche di storia antica* n.s. 15 (2023), 169-195.

5. A Veritable Think Tank: the FeBinars

Members of the FeBo team constantly consult with external experts. To facilitate the discussion FeBo organises so-called FeBinars, which are webinars in the context of which external experts in (ancient and modern) federalism and border studies present their case studies. Since intra-federal and external borders must necessarily be approached from various research perspectives and with different questions, FeBo organises two distinct series of lectures, each with another focus, one on internal (The Management of Internal Borders by Federal States), the other on external borders (Crossing Federal Borders: Ancient and Modern). Both series have been initiated by the inaugural lecture delivered by Hans Beck on 7 March which focused on a case study involving both intra-federal and extra-federal borders. Beck’s lecture was devoted to Boiotian border issues. Additional FeBinars were given by Francesco Palermo (an expert on contemporary federalism and conflict resolutions strategies related to federalization processes); Peter Funke, who spoke on the internal structure of the koina and intermediate levels of federal administration; Alex McAuley, who gave a FeBinar on the topic of intra- and inter-federal proxenia; Hans-Joachim Gehrke, who outlined the case of Ledrinoi; Nikos Petrochilos, who analysed cases of cross-border cooperation in West Lokris; and Corinne Bonnet with Sylvain Lebreton, who analysed the federalizing or conversely divisive potential of some cults practised in border areas.

Here is the list of previous FeBinars:

Inaugural lecture:

Hans Beck, “Interpolis Cooperation and Competition: the Case of Southern Boiotia” (7 March 2023)

FeBinar series “The Management of Internal Borders by Federal States”:

Peter Funke, “Own and Common. Reflections on the Internal Borders of Greek Federal States” (23 May 2023)

Alex McAuley, “Under and/or through the Border: Proxeny across Federal Borders in the Hellenistic Peloponnese” (29 June 2023)

Hans-Joachim Gehrke, “Internal or External Borders? The Case of Elis and Ledrinoi” (27 September 2023)

Crossing Federal Borders: Ancient and Modern:

Francesco Palermo, “The Law and the Functions of Cross-border Cooperation” (9 May 2023)

Nikos Petrochilos, “From Chalieis to Kallieis: Land, Boundaries and Threats in West Lokris and Eastern Aitolia” (23 November 2023)

Corinne Bonnet & Sylvain Lebreton, “Gods to Federate, Gods to Separate: Territorial Dynamics and Greek Divine Onomastics” (7 December 2023)

Further info, photos and videos of FeBinars can be found at the FeBo website:

<https://erc-febo.unitn.it/febo-organizes.html>

6. Dissemination

The first results of the project have already been presented and discussed in the context of conferences, lectures and seminars for doctoral students: the full list can be found [here](#) and [here](#). Simultaneously, members of the FeBo team have been engaged in disseminating FeBo to university students, high school students, students in primary schools and in various dissemination contexts. These initiatives are listed [here](#) and [here](#).