REVIEW

KINSHIP IN THUCYDIDES

Maria Fragoulaki, *Kinship in Thucydides: Intercommunal Ties and Historical Narrative*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xii + 443. Hardcover, $150.00. ISBN 978-0-199-69777-9.

This book examines kinship relations between Greek city-states and their role in Thucydides' narrative of the Peloponnesian War. As such, it offers two distinct contributions to scholarship: a better understanding of inter-communal kinship relations in fifth-century Greece and new insights into Thucydides' historiographic method. This ambitious agenda results in some exciting new observations on both topics. Nevertheless, the gains made by bringing together these two areas of inquiry are not quite compensated by the loss in interpretative clarity resulting from this bifurcated perspective.

Chapter 1 promises a 'new typology of inter-communal kinship relations', (p. 2) based on both a close reading of Thucydides' text, and insights drawn from modern anthropological and sociological scholarship. The author proposes two principal categories of kinship between communities, one based on notions of descent, and the other on non-biological ideas of 'relatedness'. The first category, for which F. adopts the Greek term *xungeneia* (ξυγγένεια), designates communities related by descent, either through colonisation or racial affiliation. Thus Syracuse, for example, enjoyed a relationship of *xungeneia* with both Korinth and Sparta, the former as a colony and the latter through their common ethnicity as Dorians. F. dismisses the commonly-made distinction between 'real' and 'fictive' kinship ties, rightly arguing that both mythical and historical ancestral figures were equally 'real' for the Greeks who forged them. In this methodological proposition, F. is following a now well-accepted theoretical principle that ethnicities are socially constructed and are often designed to conceal the decidedly messy and mixed heritage of populations.

The second category of kinship relations proposed by F. is more conceptually vague and less heuristically useful as a result. F. designates this second category with the unhelpful term 'relatedness' by which she means 'the various forms of kinship between cities and communities that do not involve descent' (p. 5). Included in this category are relationships based on various socio-cultural and political institutions such as ritualised friendship (*xenia*),

formal diplomatic relations (*proxenia*), intermarriage, and grants of citizenship. In addition, according to F., these relationships can be forged through the sharing of various cultural products including cults, festivals, and myths. Even the act of hosting a performance of Athenian drama, according to F., was a method of forging 'relatedness', particularly with populations on the margins of the Greek world, such as the Macedonians and the Molossians, who were eager to adopt the trappings of Greek ethnicity.

The problem with this typology is that both conceptually and empirically the categories of *xungeneia* and 'relatedness' overlap. F. suggests that these categories are distinct through the notions of 'kinsmen by nature' and 'kinsmen by nurture'. However, not only is the term 'kinsmen by nurture' unattested in ancient Greek, but this argument brings in by the back door the distinction between 'real' and 'fictive' kinship relations which F. says she wishes to avoid. By contrast, if we accept (as F. does) that the myths through which 'relatedness' is forged can include genealogies and other narratives involving descent, then there is little distinction between these two categories of kinship. Indeed it would be better to use the single term 'kinship' and acknowledge that <u>all</u> such relations are 'socioculturally constructed'. Some examples will illustrate my point.

The constructed nature of *xungeneia* relations is most strikingly illustrated in the case of Amphipolis, the Athenian colony that transferred its allegiance to a new metropolis, namely Sparta, in 424/3. First, it is noteworthy that although Athens was the 'official' founder of this colony, since the Athenian Hagnon served as its oikist, it was from the beginning made up of a mixed body of settlers, the majority of whom were <u>not</u> Athenian (Thuc. 4.106.1). Therefore, despite the construction of a mother-city and colony relationship in oral tradition and cult, the relationship of 'Amphipolitans' to the 'Athenians' was little more than a discursive claim based on a ritual act of foundation that obscured the mixed nature of the population.

Secondly, the ease with which this city was 're-founded' under Spartan leadership demonstrates the malleability of such *xungeneia* relations. When the Spartan general Brasidas approached the Amphipolitans with reassuring words, they turned themselves over to him and even enacted a re-foundation of the city following his death in 422 (5.11.1). At this time, the Amphipolitans decided to honour Brasidas as their founder, and tore down the buildings associated with their Athenian founder Hagnon. By establishing a tomb and cult to Brasidas in their marketplace the Amphipolitans created a mechanism for articulating a new *xungeneia* relationship, this time with Sparta (5.11.1). As in the case of the original foundation of Amphipolis by the Athenians, this episode illustrates the fact that *xungeneia* of the colonial sort is a cultural construct that often has little to do with actual relations of descent.

Even ethnic identities of communities were malleable according to need. Herodotus explicitly acknowledges that a community could become, for example, Dorian. In discussing the Kynourians of the Peloponnesus, he states that they were originally indigenous and Ionian but 'became thoroughly Dorian' (ἐκδεδωρίευνται) under the influence of the Argives after some time (Hdt. 8.73.3). It is likely that Sparta adopted Dorian identity and Athens Ionian identity only in the Archaic period, and possibly as late as the sixth century BCE.[1]

Conversely, ties of 'relatedness' are constructed not only through the political and cultural institutions indicated by F., but also frequently through narratives of descent or common ethnicity. To take some examples from F.'s own discussion, Athens' 'relatedness' to Achaean communities such as Zakynthos is articulated in part through the genealogical myth by which Ion and Achaios are brothers of the same Athenian mother, Kreousa, daughter of Erechtheus. Another genealogical link between Athens and Zakynthos appears in a myth placing both the eponymous founder of Zakynthos and the Athenian Erichthonius in the same Trojan line of descent in which Aineias also appears. In another example, Athens' ties of 'relatedness' to Thrace are constructed not only through institutions of *proxenia* and intermarriage, but also through accounts of their common Pelasgian origins. Finally, Athens' ties with Dorian Kydonia in Crete appear to have been buttressed by a myth claiming that Kydon, the eponymous founder of Kydonia, was a son of Apollo and a brother of Ion. Even the mythical figure of Daidalos, as F. herself shows us, was conscripted to reinforce Athenian ties with Kydonia. Indeed Daidalos was incorporated into the line of Erechtheus, and an Attic deme (Daidalidai) was named after him. Remarkably, Socrates himself is made to claim descent from Daidalos in several Platonic dialogues.

It is important to acknowledge that F. presents the evidence for all these examples in her book, and would probably agree with the claim that all kinship relations are sociocultural constructs (cf. her statements on p. 22). The problem is that the typology she presents suggests a divide between 'real' kinship and socio-cultural constructions of 'relatedness' when in fact she is well aware of the continuities. Indeed, F.'s comes close to acknowledging the overlap between the two categories when she suggests that certain communities mimic *xungeneia* relations in their construction of ties of 'relatedness', as in the case of Plataia's relationship with Athens, discussed below.

Chapter 2 examines kinship terminology in Thucydides and establishes, for example, that the term *oikeios* (οἰκεῖος) often stands in for a kinship relationship, whether it be *xungeneia* or 'relatedness'. According to F., *xungeneia* is

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[1] Connor (1993); Hall (1997) and (2002); Ulf (1996) and (2006); Forsdyke (2011).

the more 'factual' term, while *oikeios* has a more emotive resonance. F. fur-thermore suggests that Thucydides' use of the highly emotive pairings οἰκεῖος–ἀλλότριος and ὁμόφυλοι–ἀλλόφυλοι reveals the deep ethical power of notions of kinship in inter-communal relations.

Chapters 3–7 offer detailed studies of examples of kinship relations of both types as presented in Thucydides and a wide variety of other literary and documentary sources. F. applies the insights derived from anthropologi-cal and sociological study to enrich our understanding of the ways that rea-son and emotion interact to constitute social relations, ethical knowledge, and values. Among the principal insights offered by these detailed studies is the recognition that Thucydides' deep engagement with kinship relations reflects his concern for the 'emotive and ethical parameters of the war' (p. 20). On this basis, F. opposes the traditional view of Thucydides as the founder of the Realist school of political philosophy with its focus on rational calculations of self-interest.

Chapter 3 explores Thucydides' treatment of Korinth's relationship with its colonies, particularly Kerkyra and Syracuse. F. suggests that Thucydides' detailed discussion of the affair of Kerkyra reveals the weight he puts on the emotional and ethical dimension of kinship relations in interstate relations. As F. demonstrates, there is a double layer of *xungeneia* claims since both Kerkyra and Korinth could lay claims to kinship relations of a colonial sort with the struggling community of Epidamnos. While Kerkyra had initiated the colonial foundation of Epidamnos, Korinth, Kerkyra's own mother-city, had provided the founder. Moreover, under the pressure of their rival claims to Epidamnos, Korinth sent out a new colonial foundation (notably com-posed of 'anyone who wishes' and not only Korinthians) and 're-founded' the city. In response, Kerkyra appealed to Athens, F. suggests, by construct-ing a tie of 'relatedness' to Athens to counter the colonial *xungeneia* between Korinth and Epidamnos.

Kerkyra's ties with Athens were articulated in several ways. First, the Kerkyraians distanced themselves from Korinth by relating their seafaring prowess to their connection with the Homeric seafaring peoples the Phai-akians, rather than to the Korinthians (Thuc. 1.25.4). The equation between Kerkyra and mythical Scheria, land of the Phaiakians, moreover, allowed for the construction of ties of 'relatedness' with Athens, to judge by attesta-tions of Athenians named 'Phaiax' ('Phaiakian') and the existence of a myth describing a collaboration between the Athenian hero Theseus and two Phaiakian sailors. Finally, the Kerkyraians themselves, in their appeal to Athens, constructed a relationship based on their mutual hatred of Korinth and on of the principle of reciprocal obligation so prominent in kinship con-texts. The difference in this case is that the obligation between Kerkyra and

Athens is not based on a kinship relationship of the colonial or ethnic type, but rather relies on the promise of future rather than past benefactions.

If the Kerkyraian affair illustrates the subversion of the ethical code of *xungeneia* under the pressures of war, Thucydides' depiction of Korinth's other major colony, Syracuse, illustrates the potential for a warm relationship between colony and mother-city. Nevertheless, as F. points out, the foundation of Syracuse was not nearly as simple as Thucydides' account suggests, and the myth of colonisation of Syracuse by the Korinthian Archias obscures a long and complex process of cultural interaction and accommodation between Greek colonisers and indigenous peoples. Furthermore, F. shows how the construction of a pan-Sicilian national identity was equally important for understanding the role of Syracuse and the Sicilian city-states in the war. F. points to the importance of Hermokrates' speeches at Gela and Kamarina in this regard, and shows how Hermokrates' references to Sicily as a single country construct the idea of an historic territory or homeland that is central to modern understandings of nationalist ideology.

Chapter 4 examines the revolt of Mytilene and the destruction of Plataia with a view to the concepts of *xungeneia* and 'relatedness'. F. argues that these cases demonstrate a strong tie of *xungeneia* between Aiolian and Dorian ethnic groups, and at the same time show how certain communities (Plataia, Methymna) constructed ties with Athens that overrode this ethnic affiliation. F. begins by demonstrating that the Boiotians had strong ties with both Aiolians and Dorians, as indicated by Panhellenic and Boiotian genealogical myths and by various ancient testimony (including Thucydides) for the Aiolian ethnic affiliations of the Boiotians. Against this background, Thucydides' references to Spartan and Boiotian support for the revolts of Lesbos in 428/7 and 411 on the grounds of *xungeneia* make perfect sense.

In this context, however, the loyalty of Aiolian Methymna to Athens needs to be explained and F. shows how this city was tied to Athens through institutions of 'relatedness' such as *proxenia* and 'constitutional affinity'. And it turns out that even Mytilene had ties of 'relatedness' with Athens—namely the shared history of the Persian wars—that the Mytilenians use to explain their prior alliance with the Athenians in the presence of the Dorian audience at Olympia in 428. Indeed, F. suggests that the treatment of Lesbos as Ionian in other ancient authors such as Herodotus is a direct result of the construction of ties of relatedness based on their common experience of the Persian Wars. In this case study, then, F. succeeds in demonstrating the complexity of relations between city-states and the ways that ties of *xungeneia* and 'relatedness' could pull them in different directions, or (perhaps more accurately) be exploited at different times for different purposes in the rapidly changing conditions of the fifth century.

The case of Plataia is equally complex and fascinating since ties of *xungeneia* and 'relatedness' also drew it in different directions. Thucydides explores these tensions in a set debate, demonstrating by this narrative choice the centrality of notions of *xungeneia* and 'relatedness' in inter-communal relations. Whereas the Thebans reproach the Plataians for their recalcitrant behaviour towards their metropolis as a betrayal of their *xungeneia*, the Plataians construct a case for their 'relatedness' to both the Spartans and the Athenians based on their shared defence of Greece against the Persians in contrast to Boiotian Medism. In the case of Plataia's 'relatedness' with Athens, F. points out that it was supported by institutions, not only shared history: the grant of Athenian citizenship to the Plataians and intermarriage between the two cities go back to the sixth century. While the tie between Athens and Plataia was therefore technically a case of 'relatedness', F. points out that it is constructed in ways that evoke a *xungeneia* relationship, particularly in their claim to have defended the Greek 'family' against the Persians, a move that—like their appeal to Sparta as the liberators of Greece—evokes Panhellenic kinship. Most strikingly, F. ends this chapter by arguing that Thucydides' portrayal of the emotional and moral bonds between Athens and Plataia mimic a *xungeneia* relationship in a way that heightens the pathos of Plataia's destruction and indirectly poses the question of Athens' responsibility for this tragic outcome.

Chapter 5 examines Sparta's relations of *xungeneia* with a variety of minor city-states, including Herakleia Trachinia, Kythera, Thera, and Melos. The most illuminating case study in this chapter is the discussion of Melos where F. provides an original explanation of Thucydides' choice to represent Athens' negotiations with this tiny island in abstract dialogue form. As many scholars have noted, beginning with Dionysios of Halicarnassus in the first century, there is an inherent implausibility to the dialogue since the Melians calmly express their confidence that that their kinship ties with Sparta will rescue them from Athenian domination despite the Athenians' ruthless affirmation of the laws of power politics. Indeed the confrontation between the moral claims of kinship and the 'natural' law that the strong dominate the weak is presented with an 'almost abstract philosophical quality'. F. explains this oddity by noting the lack of kinship relations of any sort between Melos and Athens. Not only are the Melians not kin with the Athenians, but any tie of 'relatedness' is also absent in Thucydides. Indeed, although the Melians participated in the Battle of Salamis, as we know from Herodotus, this does not serve as a basis for any emotional appeal to a bond with Athens in the dialogue.

Instead, what Thucydides gives us is an almost clinical examination of the 'tension between the established and revered Greek values and the dire necessities of war' (p. 179). Following up on a suggestion made by her

supervisor Simon Hornblower (*CT* iii 220), F. argues that the dialogue is a 'piece of literature suitable for sympotic performance' (p. 171). F. notes the parallels between the Melian Dialogue and the symposium, in particular its private setting and its preliminary establishment of the rules of debate. Additional parallels, according to F., include the traditional aristocratic values of the Melians, the frankness of the speech of the Athenians, and the exploration of the themes of power, ethics, hope, and chance. While some of these parallels seem strained, this is an original and thought-provoking explanation of the unique form and content of the Melian dialogue.

Moreover, wholly convincing is F.'s claim that the dialogue does not in fact validate a 'Realist' interpretation of Thucydides, but rather—alongside all the other narratives exploring the complexity of kinship relations already discussed—demonstrates the importance for Thucydides of ethical questions in interstate relations. In a way, F.'s argument is similar to that made by Low (2007). Although Low deliberately avoids Thucydides on the grounds that he allegedly provides a distorted view of interstate relations owing to his emphasis on power politics, she too argues from other sources that there was a moral and ethical code that guided the behaviour of states and that kinship played an important role in this code.

Chapter 6 explores Athens' kinship ties and argues persuasively that despite the myth of autochthony, the Athenians actively pursued connections of both *xungeneia* and 'relatedness' with other Greek city-states. Central to the argument of this chapter is a close reading of 2.15 (Theseus' synoikism of Athens) which she argues is a focal point for the expression of Athenian identity—particularly the twin poles of autochthony and Ionianism. While it is certainly true that Theseus' synoikism serves as a kind of heroic prototype for Pericles' policy of bringing the Athenians within the walls, the claims F. makes for this passage as parallel to Pericles' own articulation of Athenian identity in the Funeral Oration seem strained and exaggerated. For one thing, Pericles' speech focuses on democracy as the centrepiece of Athenian identity, and autochthony and Ionianism scarcely appear. Likewise unconvincing is F.'s suggestion that 2.15 was written after the end of the war in 404 based on some supposed correspondences with his description (2.100.2) of the reforming Macedonian King Archelaos who reigned from 413 to 399.

Chapter 7, the last substantive one in the book, addresses the question of Thucydides' relative silence about Greek initiatives in the West prior to the Sicilian campaign. In brief, F. suggests that the almost complete suppression of both Athenian and Spartan activities in Italy and Sicily before 415 is a product of his narrative aim to represent the Sicilian expedition as a sudden folly. This is just one of many places in the book where F. identifies silences and explains them in terms of Thucydides' historiographic aims. Some of the silences, F. suggests, are a result of Thucydides' intense engagement with

Herodotus' *Histories*, and in particular his desire not to repeat but rather complement material that appears there. As in all discussions of authorial intention and intertextuality, there is a tendency to over-interpret and draw connections that are not necessarily intended (see Rood (1998) for a persuasive discussion of this problem in relation to studies of Thucydides). This is a particular problem with 'silences' and 'gaps' that may be deliberate and meaningful, or not. That said, F.'s main point, drawing on an observation again by Hornblower (*CT* iii 11, 543) that Thucydides' honing of the narrative suggests the rashness of the Athenian campaign in 415, seems right. Similarly convincing is the argument that Thucydides under-emphasises the Greekness of the Egestaians in order 'to present the Athenians as being dragged by a barbarian *ethnos* into an absurd and disastrous adventure' (p. 316).

In sum, this book is very carefully researched and contains some excellent analyses of particular passages. Overall, however, its divided agenda, lack of conceptual clarity, and digressive style make it a difficult read that might have less impact than the quality of individual observations deserve.

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