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Antonio Gonzales, Maria Teresa Schettino (ed.), *Tra le rive del Mediterraneo: relazioni diplomatiche, propaganda e egemonia politica nella Sicilia antica. Geloï, I.* Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2019. Pp. 151. ISBN 9782848676425. €16,00 (pb).

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[Authors and titles are listed at the end of the review.]

Tra le rive del Mediterraneo forms the scholarly component of a two-pronged publication effort by the organizers of the *Geloï* initiative, a collaboration among a number of European universities and Sicilian cultural associations that seeks to study and promote Sicily's role in Mediterranean history. For the organizers, Sicily's location in the center of the Mediterranean and its history of intense interaction among diverse populations make it an attractive and important island to study. The volume includes most of the papers from the inaugural conference held in Gela in 2014, with two additions (the chapters of Péré-Noguès and De Vido). The other component, aimed at the general public, is a [website](#) created to disseminate the results of the initiative's conferences. *Geloï* has already held a second conference, in 2016, and envisions publishing additional volumes in the future.

This volume addresses diplomacy in Classical and Hellenistic Sicily, with particular focus on the cultural and legal frameworks that governed relationships between communities. Schettino's introduction quickly settles us in the vibrantly heterogeneous

world of “la Grecità coloniale” (11), with its native populations, its Greek and Punic settlers, and its increasing visibility to the Roman state. This is indeed fruitful ground for an analysis of politically charged diplomatic encounters, and in summarizing the contents of the book, Schettino knits the themes and conclusions of the constituent papers together into an admirably coherent account. One disconcerting feature of this overview is the extensive reproduction of very lightly paraphrased sentences from the papers themselves that are not marked with quotation marks; this practice creates a sense of déjà-vu when one later encounters the original formulations.¹

The first two chapters appear in a section on connections and confrontations between *poleis*. Moggi sets the stage with a review of eastern Sicily’s early *polis* landscape, based primarily on Thucydides’ ‘Sicilian Archaeology’ (6.2-5). To these communities the Carthaginians posed a threat “più presunta che reale,” and provided Greek tyrants with an enemy against which they could both unite their subjects and prove their own Greekness (33). Moggi concludes his chapter with a critical reading of Hermocrates’ call for Greek Sicilian unity against Athenian encroachment at the Congress of Gela in 424 BCE (Thuc. 4.58-64). The Syracusan leader both erases the island’s non-Greek inhabitants from the picture and misapplies the concept of insularity as he encourages the *polis*-dwellers gathered at Gela to think of themselves as a natural group, i.e. the *Sikeliotai*, surrounded by a hostile sea. Zizza, in turn, examines a distinctive feature of the landscape sketched by Moggi, i.e. the relative ease with which cities were dissolved and reconstituted as compared with those in the Eastern Mediterranean. He highlights two factors: the widespread use of mercenaries as opposed to hoplite citizen soldiers, and the fact that all the *poleis* in Sicily emerged from a rejection of pre-existing communities and the establishment of new ones. Zizza pushes this second factor even further, proposing that the *apoikiai* were unstable precisely because their inhabitants knew they had been created by human beings, while the *poleis* in the Aegean had claims to autochthony and/or divine agency in their foundations. This may go a step too far, since the *apoikiai* also claimed the participation of the gods in their foundation narratives and made heroes of their mortal founders. Still, the thesis that a mythic tradition about dislocation could have significant effects on later generations of Sicilians deserves further attention.

The next section comprises three chapters on Syracusan foreign policy. Jacquemin surveys the population transfers effected in eastern Sicily by Syracusan leaders of both autocratic and democratic regimes, and ends with the claim that this succession of demographic interventions, from the Deinomenids down to Hieron II, is evidence of a centuries-long Syracusan goal to make itself Sicily's only *polis* (69). It is an intriguing possibility, but one that would require considerably more argumentation than the author provides here. Péré-Noguès next offers a detailed review of Agathocles' diplomatic policy in three main phases: from 319-311 the tyrant focused on consolidating his position in Syracuse and his influence over the rest of Sicily; from 310-306 he turned to a campaign against Carthage; and from 305 until his death in 289 he worked to create a kingdom on the model of and in collaboration with the Macedonian Hellenistic monarchs. Beyond its unobjectionable definition of the three phases, this chapter interrogates but does not really attempt to uncover the central aims of Agathocles' career, although toward the end Péré-Noguès does hint at the notion that by attempting to establish hegemony over Sicily and working to project his authority into Magna Graeca and the Adriatic Agathocles was fulfilling goals nurtured continuously in Syracuse since the Deinomenids. The present tour through the tyrant-king's varied endeavors suggests to this reviewer instead that his successes were due to opportunism rather than either long-term planning or patriotism.

Patriotism figures heavily in Motta's chapter on the ways in which Livy understood and justified the Roman brutalities of the Second Punic War. Motta argues that *ius* and *mos* were the key concepts in Livy's accounts of how the Romans dealt with Capua and Syracuse. I was not able to follow any particular claim about *mos* throughout the chapter; while the term gets some attention in the section on Capua, it is basically dropped thereafter. This chapter is strongest in picking apart the specific concept of *ius belli* as employed by Romans and Sicilians in debates about the capture of Syracuse, and in subsequent Roman negotiations with the Greeks and Macedonians.

A third section, on relations between Greeks and non-Greeks, contains the last two chapters. De Vido has written the masterpiece of the volume, reconstructing the complex diversity of populations in Sicily at the time of Timoleon and taking up the thread of Greek chauvinism introduced by Moggi in the first chapter. She begins with a

detailed study of the Halykos/Lykos, the river that at times divided Punic territory in the west from Greek territory to the east, and then turns to expose the inadequacy of such political boundaries for any full explanation of relations between and within communities. With this background, the figure of Timoleon can be considered an anachronism in two ways (123). In the historiographical tradition he is a composite hero, divorced from any particular historical context, who represents an idealized past of thriving democratic *poleis*. His project, meanwhile, was an abortive attempt to undo decades or even centuries of demographic change by promoting the *polis* as the structure that would fill Sicily (once again, as the fantasy would have it) with free Greeks. De Vido methodically diagnoses the paradoxes around Timoleon's project as well as his persona, and dissects the allure of a 'do-over' for Greek settlement in Sicily. The chapter's final section (126- 130) traces the development of a primarily Greek cultural homogeneity among ethnically disparate populations throughout Sicily after Timoleon.

Finally, Scuderi addresses the diplomatic exchange that took place between the Romans and Hieron II just before the outbreak of the First Punic War, working from Diodorus' fragmentary narrative and focusing on Hieron's fervent rejection of Roman overtures. By comparing this text with the other literary sources at our disposal, Scuderi shows that Diodorus' Hieron was voicing a harsh and contemporary critique of the hypocrisy inherent in Roman commanders' appeals to *fides* as they sought to support a policy of defensive imperialism.

Tra le rive del Mediterraneo packs a great deal into its 151 pages. The conference and volume have been well conceived and, while some of the chapters are rather conventional, others cast a much-needed critical eye over Sicilian history. Readers of Italian (and French) will find the book a useful guide to current research on the five and a half centuries in which independent *poleis* existed on the island. The most inspiring essays collected here approach these communities with innovative frameworks that require a reconsideration of received wisdom, first and foremost the irritatingly tenacious conception of the *polis* as the natural and superior form of political organization in antiquity. Such reconsiderations, whether implicit or explicit, can lead to new questions about the internal dynamics of Sicilian communities across the island, the roles of geography and ideology in conditioning interaction between groups, and the

mentalities that made the inhabitants of Sicily so prone to uproot others and so apt to be uprooted themselves.

Production value is relatively high, but the execution is not perfect. A handful of typos have been overlooked.² The section themes are quite broad, and certain chapters seem to only nominally fit in their boxes. Finally, while this is a review of the book and not the sibling website, the laudable goal of communicating the *Geloi* project's results to the public at large needs a more compelling digital presence than is currently active at the address listed.

On balance, this book is well worth the time, and its low price makes it a good value as well. Students and scholars currently engaged in research on Sicilian cultural and political history will find thought-provoking arguments with which to wrestle. While the different chapters vary in the density and reach of their citations of modern scholarship, collectively they provide a relevant and up-to-date bibliography. Taken together, they both clarify and challenge, and they will be of interest to those seeking a deeper understanding of ancient Sicily, as well as those exploring wider issues of group dynamics for which Sicilian history provides eloquent evidence.

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Notes:

1. All the papers have been digested in this way, but one example will suffice here: in the paragraph in the Introduction summarizing Rita Scuderi's essay we read "Davanti al mondo magnogreco, Roma intendeva rappresentare il suo intervento a custodia di valori quali *ius, fides, societas* e legittimarli in conformità al *bellum iustum*" (16-17); later, in the essay itself, we read "...che però davanti al mondo magnogreco intendeva rappresentare l'intervento romano a custodia di valori quali *ius, fides, societas*: si configurava perciò la teoria del *bellum iustum*..." (143-144).

2. My initial read through the text found p.37 "ridimensioneu"; p.61 n.3 "Defi"; p.63 "tranferi"; p.89 "Walsch" for "Walsh"; p. 91 "*scuscipiatis*"; p.98 n. 52 "pregnate"; and p.128 n. 50 "identità" for "identity" in an English-language quotation. In De Vido's chapter (pp. 109-134) the initial vowels of nearly all proper nouns in the Greek quotations are marked with the aspirate, incorrectly indicating rough breathing in several cases.