

CHAPTER I

*An introduction to federalism in Greek antiquity**Hans Beck and Peter Funke*

Federalism begins with a paradox. In a transhistorical perspective, federalism represents a design to unite a multitude of state-entities whose powers and prerogatives are safeguarded in the course of integration. But in its attempt to achieve unity, federalism empowers constituents and grants them authority in such a manner that they might also jeopardize the goal of integration. Federalism therefore requires persistent and complex negotiation. There is a wide range of possible responses to the challenge of shaping a federal union. To maintain federal equilibrium, members may engage in, for instance, economic, cultural, linguistic, juristic, and genuine political negotiations. Today, in federal systems with highly developed state-bureaucracies, as is the case in the European Union or in Canada, the notion of fiscal federalism has become one of the most pressing issues of such negotiations. In response to potential tensions within their organization, federal systems thus draw on a broad platform of dialogue and exchange; in turn, each response offers the opportunity to readjust the terms of cooperation and, effectively, reinvigorate the foundations of unity (Ward and Ward 2009; Erk and Swenden 2010).

In historical scholarship, the common associations of federalism depend largely on the political, societal, and cultural environment that surrounds them. As an historical category, federalism is subject to references that vary through time and space. This ascribes a distinct meaning to federalism in each historical epoch. For instance, the triangular conception of state as an organization with a monopoly on the use of force over a defined group of people within a certain territory may well be a functional template for several periods in history. But the morphology of each of these tiers, and the emphasis that is put on each, differs from society to society. Along with the idea of sovereignty, the vital determinants of state are entrenched in networks of presumptions that make political cultures distinguishable from one another. The same goes for related conceptions

of, e.g., citizenship, constitution, and commonwealth.¹ Beyond the historical encodings of statehood, federalism refers to a hardwired principle that cuts across the dividing lines of history. It indicates that the traditional boundaries between the inside and the outside of a state are somewhat yielding. In a federal state, the members subscribe to a design that extends this dichotomy through the creation of an intermediary. While each of the constituents maintains its own inside, their mutual relations, which are traditionally in the sphere of their outside affairs, are transferred to a new extended – or federal – inside. In consequence, this extended inside also demarcates the new boundary between a collective of insides and their shared outside. This pattern links the present-day Republic of India to the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands after its inception in 1581 and the Iroquois League of Five (after 1722, Six) Nations.²

The world of ancient Greece witnessed some of the most elaborate experiments with federalism in the pre-modern era. In general terms, Greek history is of course marked by the coexistence of a high number of independent ‘city-states’ or *poleis*. A recent inventory lists over 1,000 *poleis* for the Archaic and Classical periods alone (roughly five times the membership of the United Nations today), a great number of them in the relatively small natural environment of Greece itself (Hansen and Nielsen 2004). As is to be expected, *poleis* maintained a dense network of relations. The exchange was regulated through customary procedures that governed the foreign behavior of a city-state: the idea of guest-friendship (*proxenia*) and ritualized friendship (*philia*), awards of citizenship to individuals (*[iso]politeia*), adherence to a commonly accepted protocol of interstate arbitration, and the respect for the integrity of ambassadors (*presbeis*, *theōroi* or *spondophoroi*) are but few of those procedures that were regarded as *agraphoi nomoi*, or “unwritten laws” in the exchange between Greeks.³ In addition, the interaction between *poleis* was streamlined by multiple forms of political cooperation. The broader picture of such initiatives, each with its own inherent agenda, included grand military alliances (*symmachiai*), notably the Peloponnesian League and the Second Athenian League; the so-called amphictyonies, usually clustered

¹ See Fibiger Bang and Scheidel 2013. On the particular encoding of sovereignty in antiquity, see Davies 1994. Citizenship as a historical paradigm: Magnette 2001.

² On the intellectual foundations of the inside/outside approach towards state-units and their foreign policy, cf. the research carried out by the ‘Normative Orders’ Cluster of Excellence at Frankfurt University, www.normativeorders.net/en. See Hellmann, Fahrmeir, and Več (forthcoming).

³ “Unwritten laws”: Thuc. 2.37.3; cf. also Soph. *Ant.* 449–461; R&O no. 35, lines 14–15, speaks of “the common laws of the Hellenes”; Thomas 2005: 50–51. For an overview of governing norms in Greek interstate affairs, cf. Low 2007. Studies on individual devices include Adcock and Mosley 1975; Marek 1984; Herman 1987; Perlman 2000; Cojocar 2013.

around a regional cult center, that oversaw the conduct of religious and other matters related to the sanctuary; bonds between mother-cities and their colonies; the integration of neighboring cities; and, at the microlevel, the absorption of smaller villages into larger city-states.⁴

All of these projects of interstate cooperation impacted the spheres associated with the city-state in one way or the other. Take, for instance, the issue of autonomy that is considered so vital to the nature of the *polis*. The political discourse in Classical Greece was heavily influenced by questions of *autonomia* – literally speaking, self-governance; for a few decades in the fourth century BCE, the call for autonomy steered the course of the political, diplomatic, and military history of Greece (Ostwald 1982; Jehne 1994; Raaffaub 2004). Naturally this has triggered a high volume of studies that explore the notion of autonomy and its implications for the city-state.⁵ But fascination with the autonomous city-state should not obfuscate the plain insight that all Greek states were interconnected with one another in a tapestry of exchanges. While some of these exchanges recalibrated their autonomy, others suspended it for the time being; yet others, such as the absorption of one *polis* into another, discontinued it altogether. Interstate integration impacted the course of Greek history just as much as the quest for independence did (cf. Beck, forthcoming).

Federalism stands as the landmark in these forms of cooperation. The sheer prevalence of the phenomenon is staggering. As calculated in a recent study, towards the end of the Classical period almost half of all city-states in mainland Greece and the Peloponnese were integrated into one federal state or another.⁶ For the longest time, however, the study of federalism in Greece was an uphill expedition, for two reasons. First, the *polis* has long been an extremely powerful paradigm in Classical scholarship. It has always been acknowledged that Greek history was shaped by a rich diversity of states that were not necessarily *poleis* but so-called *ethnos*-states or ‘tribal states’ (see below). But those states were considered something of an embarrassment to the discipline. Preoccupation with the *polis* as the quintessential form of Hellenic statehood fostered the interpretation that *ethnos*-states were merely backwaters, characterized by a lesser form of cultural advancement and even lesser political development – and hence less worthy of examination. This view also seemed to be supported by some

⁴ See Funke 2013a; Figueira and Jensen 2013; Ager 2013; on symmachies, Dreher 2003 and Buraselis 2003; see also Chapter 24 by Kurt Raaffaub below.

⁵ In particular the works published under the aegis of the *Copenhagen Polis Centre* (CPC) between 1993 and 2004. See Hansen and Nielsen 2004: xii–xiii for a full list of publications.

⁶ Mackil 2013: 1 and n. 3 calculates that up to 40 per cent of all city-states were associated with a league.

ancient authorities, most eminently Thucydides in the so-called *Archaeology* section of his work.⁷ Today, *polis*-centric readings of Greek history have given way to significantly more colourful renderings that account for both *poleis* and *ethnos*-states “beyond Athens and Sparta” (Gehrke 1986; cf. also Brock and Hodkinson 2000). More generally, it has become axiomatic to acknowledge the rich diversity of political organizations, *poleis* and non-*poleis* alike, that branded Greek political culture. Beyond the city-state and its thrust towards the local, the forces of regionalism, emanating from *ethnos*-states everywhere, were equally commanding. This puts the study of Greek federal states on a new footing.

The second obstacle revolved around the federal paradigm as such, and its application to the ancient world. Since federal states require certain criteria to qualify as federal, it was sometimes remarked that it is not justified to attribute federal concepts to antiquity. The suitability of the paradigm was denied because its application would be anachronistic and in any case *avant la lettre*, since federalism was deemed an intrinsically modern concept. Its explanatory force, it was argued, only unfolds in response to certain traits of state development that, if posited in the context of antiquity, might obfuscate the object under examination (Giovannini 1971; *contra*: Walbank 1976/1977). Jakob Larsen, the greatest authority on the topic, addressed this concern in the opening sections of his authoritative study *Greek Federal States* (Larsen 1968), remarking that “[t]he statement which follows would be almost equally appropriate as a part of the conclusion of the book, but it is impossible to follow an account of the history and accomplishments of Greek federal states without some knowledge of the nature of such a state” (xi). In other words, in his effort to disclose the mechanics of Greek federalism, Larsen built on a set of presumptions that, to a certain degree, predetermined the conclusions of his analysis.

Today, the implicit danger of anachronistic concept attribution is less pressing than in Larsen’s day. First, tremendous progress has been made with the disclosure of genuine federal discourses in Greek political thinking. Whereas Larsen had complained about the general lack of ancient reflections on the topic – which he explained with the extent to which ancient political thought was dominated by the *polis* (Larsen 1968: xiv; cf. Walbank 1970) – subsequent scholars were able to restore the traces of federal discourses in the writings of several authors, including Xenophon, Polybius, and Aristotle, among others. These studies adumbrate a different picture than Larsen had

⁷ See esp. Thuc. 1.5–10 on the implied cultural backwardness of many *ethnos*-states. See also Luraghi 2000; Nicolai 2001.

in mind. They indicate that the intellectual reflection on federalism in antiquity was much more sophisticated than previously believed.⁸ In the fourth and third centuries BCE, those reflections were complemented by what has been interpreted as a federal movement in mainland Greece and the Peloponnese, with an ever-increasing number of states adopting federal features and adjusting them to their particular needs and circumstances of governance.⁹ Second, it has become a red herring to argue against the existence of federal designs in pre-modern times simply because the study of federalism has undergone a major transformation in recent years. The way in which social scientists view institutions has been altered on various accounts; in particular, it is now widely acknowledged to apply an approach that is receptive to the forces of social meaning and historical change.¹⁰ As has already been noted, the variant of federalism in antiquity differs – by default – from that in other periods of time; the transformation of the related concepts and cognate vocabularies in the present day once again adds its very own layer of meaning to the topic. Yet this poses no hindrance to the investigation. Today's debate is not so much impacted by the question of whether federalism existed in antiquity, but rather by the disclosure of the specific circumstances and configurations that shaped the design of federalism in ancient Greece. In sum, the rigid application of the federal paradigm to modernity is now relinquished for a historically layered, multi-faceted conception.

A brief history of scholarship: trends, themes, and today's operating consensus

The debate over the concept-attribution problem indicates just how much the understanding of ancient Greek federalism owes to the persistent advancement of scholarship. A brief survey of the major protagonists in the field and the development of trends and themes over time is in order.¹¹

⁸ See Winterling 1995; Funke 1998; Hansen 1999; Lehmann 2001; Beck 2001b; Bearzot 1994 and 2004a. Note the substantial amount of *politeiai* studies on federal states that were written in Aristotle's school, including treatises on the Aitolians (fr. 473R), Akarnanians (474R), Arkadians (483R), Eleians (492R), Epeirotes (494R), and Thessalians (495R). Of most of these, only the title and a few fragments survive, but the composition itself speaks to the rich intellectual engagement.

⁹ A federal movement was advocated for by, for instance, Hornblower 2002: 200; see also Beister 1989. The thrust towards federalization of Greek politics was, however, in all likelihood driven by power politics rather than the cognitive reproduction of political structures: Beck 2000; Funke 2009: 4–6.

¹⁰ See Ward and Ward 2009, especially parts 1 and 2; Greif 2006; Mackil 2013: 10–13.

¹¹ For an annotated research bibliography that traces the landmark contributions to the debate, see also Beck 2015.

The history of scholarship begins with the first volume of Edward A. Freeman's *History of Federal Government*, published in 1863 in London.¹² Writing in the decades following the Greek War of Independence (1821–1832), Freeman regarded federalism as a means by which to restore freedom in a country that was struck both by internal division and foreign domination – in antiquity as much as in his more recent past. Although he distanced himself from another major political upheaval that had occurred only a generation before him, that is “the excitement of the War of Secession of America” (Freeman 1893: xiii), occasional references to *The Federalist Papers* betray just how much Freeman's scholarly interest was triggered by the “late events in America” (xiii). The intellectual link between both, *The Federalist* and the freedom-paradigm as ascribed to federal states such as the Achaian and Aitolian Leagues, was Polybius, who, in Freeman's words, had served as a “chief guide throughout . . . my work” (xi). With no predecessors in the field, the accumulation of references from the body of literary sources available at the time amounted to nothing less than a Herculean task. Freeman mastered it in almost dazzling fashion, offering minute narrative histories of all forms of political aggregation beyond the local level, both in Greece and Italy, including the Lombard League and a “Fragment of the Kingdom and Confederation of Germany” (Freeman 1893: 618–634).

Despite this promising start, however, the book did not set the pace for subsequent scholarship. In J. B. Bury's *History of Greece* (Bury 1900), which became the trend-setting account in the English-speaking world for the next two generations, federalism was entirely marginalized. To be sure, Bury had served as editor of the second edition of Freeman's work, published in 1893; hence, he was intimately familiar with the subject matter.¹³ For his own monograph, however, Bury chose a decidedly Athenian and, to a lesser degree, Spartan perspective on Greek history, full of veneration for the grandeur of both city-states. By the turn of the century, the tides in federal scholarship had shifted from England to the continent. In German-speaking academia, Georg Busolt and Heinrich Swoboda supplanted Freeman's antiquarian approach with a more systematized analysis. The key notion of their investigation revolved around the idea of double citizenship, which soon became the heuristic tool with which to define a Greek federal state. The implicit *Staatsrecht*-approach

¹² Freeman's work was originally designed as a two-volume project but he never returned to the topic again after the completion of the first volume. With J. B. Bury's second edition of that volume from 1893, Freeman's *History of Federal Government* became factually a one-volume publication.

¹³ See the previous note.

was not altogether dissimilar to that of Theodor Mommsen in the field of Roman history (Swoboda had worked with Mommsen as a postdoc in 1880 and 1881 in Berlin). At the same time, the double-citizenship paradigm was fueled by the political controversy that had arisen in German state-law, more precisely the attempt to solidify the constitution of a German federal state, or ‘Bundesstaat’, vis-à-vis a confederation of German states (‘Staatenbund’). In the 1920s, this approach culminated in the publication of two towering volumes of *Griechische Staatskunde* (Busolt and Swoboda 1920–1926), which cemented the double-citizenship paradigm in scholarship.¹⁴

The axiomatic belief in two layers of citizenship enjoyed great longevity, even though the *Staatsrecht*-approach itself was soon on the retreat. Victor Ehrenberg, who was professor in Prague (where Swoboda had taught until 1926) until he was forced into emigration to England in 1939, fostered the concept in the relevant sections of his influential *The Greek State*, from 1960. According to Ehrenberg, the “true federal state” was characterized by the “transfer of the Polis constitution to the league” (Ehrenberg 1960: 126). Along with this went an inversion of political power: while the city-state was geared towards direct citizen participation, the nature of the league made it more difficult for all members to engage in politics. Effectively, federalism called for a strong league executive, whose authority was sanctioned by the abstract powers of a common citizenship. Ehrenberg’s reading again owed much to Polybius and his emphatic portrayal of the Achaian League as one super-*polis* (2.37.1; Ehrenberg 1960: 130). In a similar vein, Ehrenberg argued for a model of a generic advancement from the “primitive form of tribal or cantonal state” to the leagues of the Hellenistic Age, whose greatest political achievement was viewed in their “overcoming the old Greek state” (Ehrenberg 1960: 130).

The true breakthrough in the post-War generation was made in North America. Jakob All Ottesen Larsen, a contemporary of Ehrenberg, first got involved with the study of Greek federalism in 1921 (see Larsen 1968: vii). In 1928 he received his PhD from Harvard University for a thesis entitled *A Study of Representative Government in Greek and Roman History. Part 1: Greek History*.

¹⁴ The notion of double citizenship was first established by the Austrian scholar Emil Szanto (Szanto 1892). On Busolt, see Chambers 1990. Busolt died in 1920. The second volume of the *Staatskunde* was edited by Swoboda, based on Busolt’s manuscript. The economic crisis of the day had prevented the publisher from pushing for publication of the second half along with the first in 1920: cf. Busolt and Swoboda 1926: v–vi. Swoboda’s own *oeuvre* included several studies on individual federal states (1910, 1912) and a separate volume on “Staatsaltertümer”: Swoboda and Hermann 1913. The topic of his inaugural address as Principal of the University of Prague in 1914 was entitled *Die griechischen Bünde und der moderne Bundesstaat* (Swoboda 1914).

The dissertation was not published but it earned Larsen enough esteem to land prestigious appointments at Ohio State and, from 1930, at the University of Chicago. In 1955, *Representative Government in Greek and Roman History* was published (Larsen 1955). A prize-winning book, *Representative Government* clearly built on Larsen's PhD thesis. The manuscript itself, however, was actually the result of Larsen's appointment as Sather Professor in Berkeley in the previous year; the book resembled a set of eight lectures rather than a genuine monograph. The latter came only with the masterly *Greek Federal States*, already mentioned above, published when Larsen was eighty years of age (Larsen 1968). *Greek Federal States* was thus the great synthesis of a scholarly engagement that had lasted almost fifty years.¹⁵

Larsen's approach was straightforward. Its very core lay in the narrativization of political structures and institutions; i.e., Larsen offered an account in which the narrative exposition of the history of Greek federalism was also the main methodological tool to carry out the analysis. The strength of this approach, in which Polybius once again figured as the key witness, was the accessibility of the topic, the weakness its lack of in-depth structural analysis. In Europe, the new wave of Polybius studies led Frank Walbank (1957–1979) and Paul Pédech (1964) towards similar, philology-driven investigations. Yet in their accounts, the study of federalism was subordinated to philological questions and compartmentalized, limited mostly to the Achaian League. It was left to Larsen to craft the first synoptic study since the days of Freeman, and in fact the first monograph ever that was focused, comprehensive, and systematic enough to qualify as a true handbook on Greek federalism.

The study of individual regions of the Hellenic world had always been on the radar of scholarship (for instance, Oberhummer 1887; Woodhouse 1897; Schober 1924; Stählin 1924). In some accounts, such regional approaches also amounted to interspersed studies on individual federal states (Aymard 1938; Sordi 1958; Roesch 1965a). But only in the 1980s did federalism transform from a tentative object of investigation into a dynamic research topic, witnessing a formidable diversification of approaches and a broadening of scopes. Hitherto the study of regionalism drew largely on individual sets of evidence and the scholarly approaches associated with them, including historical topography, archaeology, numismatics, and epigraphy. The inherent quality of the new interest in regional studies was that they attempted to

¹⁵ Larsen: see the obituaries in *Classical Philology* (70, 1975: 126) and *The American Historical Review* (80, 1975: 746–748). *Representative Government in Greek and Roman History* won the C. J. Goodwin Award of Merit in 1957. The road to both monographs was paved by multiple article publications on individual leagues, including Larsen 1952, 1953, 1955, 1957, and 1960.

An introduction to federalism in Greek antiquity 9

integrate various bodies of evidence; in conjunction with the methodological premises of the “New Archaeology” and its commitment to contextual analysis (cf. Hall 2014b: 13–16), this trend promoted a focus on regional distinctness and diversity rather than universal readings of Greek history and culture. The exploration of Boiotia became in many ways a forerunner: first, the discovery of the *Hellenika* from Oxyrhynchos in the early twentieth century triggered considerable excitement over the expansion of the literary sources that came with the new papyrus fragments. Second, the literary tradition was appended by an ever-growing multitude of non-literary sources. By the mid-1980s, scholarly fascination with the region manifested itself in a sparkling research output, including two publication series and an ongoing review bibliography emanating out of one university in Canada alone.¹⁶ In the same vein, over the next decades numerous articles, edited volumes, and monographs appeared that (re-)examined the history of all Greek federal states.¹⁷

The trend of regional diversification – and, by implication, fragmentation – of scholarship was complemented by a marked increase in systematic analyses that tried to grasp the federal paradigm through the lens of certain themes. Among others, this included the general morphology of the Greek federal state (Daverio Rocchi 1993; Beck 1997; Siewert and Aigner-Foresti 2005); patterns in territoriality (Corsten 1999); the impact of a common coinage (Psoma 2001; Warren 2007); and the reception of Greek federalism in political thought and theory of later ages (Lehmann 1981 and 1985; Knoepfler 2013a; Meyer-Zwiffelhofer 2014). Very recently, the theme of common currencies was developed further in a work that skilfully disentangles the realms of political, cultural, and economic integration in a Greek federal state (Mackil 2013).

The great thematic shockwave, however, came from a series of studies that disclosed the mechanics of ethnic identity formation at the regional level. In short, the ‘ethnic turn’ and its associated paradigm shift (Hall 1997; Morgan 2003) redefined the correlation between tribe and league. In particular, it toppled the orthodox view that primitive cantonal states transformed into modern federal states, as for instance Ehrenberg understood. With this came a new conceptual approach towards the fashionable academic label of ethnicity. The impact of this “ethnicity school”¹⁸ will be

¹⁶ *Boeotia antiqua*, the *Proceedings of International Conferences on Boiotian Antiquities* series, and *Teiresias. A Review and Bibliography of Boiotian Studies* (www.mcgill.ca/classics/research/teiresias), all of which emanated from McGill University.

¹⁷ See the bibliographies in the regional case studies below for details.

¹⁸ See Beck 2003: 179; Mackil 2013: 7, n. 23.

discussed in greater detail below. Here it is important to note that the ethnic identity-approach prompted a second wave of regional studies that married the themes of regionalism and ethnic identity with federalism (McInerney 1999b; Kühr 2006; Luraghi 2008). Despite the tremendous knowledge increase that derives from these studies it has also been remarked, with regards to the potential direction of future research, that there remains a wide gulf between patterns of ethnic identity formation on the one hand and the fermentation of political structures in a federal state on the other. The interface between tribal togetherness and federalism has so far been deciphered only in part.¹⁹

This brief survey reveals how Greek federal scholarship was exposed to great tidal waves of externalism. From an overtly constitutional approach to the primacy of philology and on to the conceptual ramifications of the cultural studies turn, research has undergone several paradigm shifts. In the nineteenth century, under the triple impression of state-unification processes in Europe, new intellectual foundations of the idea of nation, and an all-new juristic conception of politics, the prevailing theme in federal studies was the notion of double citizenship. After the Second World War, federalism was associated with the paradigm of freedom and its inherent capacity to unite against a common enemy. At one point, in the early 1960s, this view culminated in a study that explored Greek federalism from the perspective of nuclear balance and hegemonic rivalry (Larsen 1962; cf. also Larsen 1944). Since the late 1980s, the politics of transnational integration in the European Union has triggered a new wave of studies that have committed themselves to the cultural legacy of ancient Hellenic federalism. This has led to repeated conferences and symposia that were dedicated to the study of, for instance, the “roots of the common European house” (Aigner Foresti et al. 1994). Most recently, the rising prominence of the twin paradigms of ethnicity and identity coincided with, and most likely was a reflection of, the political milieu of globalization and the responses it invites in the present day, including the violent competition between ethnic groups and their quest for identity at the regional level.

Today’s scholarship is not free from the remnants of externalism either, but its force is arguably less imperative. This has mostly to do with the hesitation among scholars about operating with universally viable definitions that hamper the investigation by fitting as badly as a Prokrustean bed

¹⁹ Note, in this regard, the edited volume Funke and Luraghi 2009, which explores the intersection between ethnicity and the rise of federal structures, at one particular moment and in a specific political constellation (i.e., affairs in the Peloponnese in the 360s BCE).