
This work is “an investigation into the number and identity of poleis in Arkadia in the Archaic and Classical periods. It is also an attempt to describe these poleis as political communities, as well as an analysis of the political organisation of the region” (p. 11). Arkadia was an area of Greece not particularly notable for its contribution to Hellenic civilisation, apart from an assumed and highly questionable export in mercenaries (p. 60-1; cf. X. _An._ 1.2.3, not specific) and for an excellent participation record in the Olympic Games (p. 401 and 547). It is, therefore, possibly an unprofitable place for such a project, an objection Nielsen promptly counters, by noting that while no full-scale examination of this subject has been attempted before, even at the outset it is apparent that “it is hard to see any justification for the claim that the region was backward and slow in developing poleis” (p. 12).

Chapter 1 (“Introduction”, p. 11-44) is essentially a review of earlier work on Arkadia, and a definition of _polis_ for the purpose of this study. N. is perhaps unwarranted in his claim, however, that the coinage in this region, dating from about 510 BC, is “rather late compared to some other regions” (p. 40). Chapter 2 (“The Arkadians: the People of Arkadia”, p. 45-88) is concerned with defining the ethnicity of the Arkadians in a regional or political sense set against a chronological framework of before or after the formation of the Arkadian Confederacy. Perhaps rather too much is made of a “custom of going abroad as a mercenary” and that this was so exceptional that it “contributed markedly to the assertion that the Arkadians were a truly warlike people” (p. 87). In Chapter 3 (“Arkadia: The Land of the Arkadians”, p. 89-112) the focus is the geographical extent of the region and its fluctuating western border (p. 95) in comparison to a more settled situation in the south and east (p. 96). Although two maps are provided (p. 640-2) their situation is remote to the actual discussion. Chapter 4 (“The Organisation of the People”, p. 113-57) explores the existence of local sub-divisions of the Arkadians, who by the fourth century were divided into “five sub-regional ‘tribes’” (p. 116) and among forty-eight _poleis_ (including those of Triphylia) and indicates that the people may have been “an _ethnos_ . . . but . . . not an _ethnos_ state” (p. 157). Coinage features here in the discussion (p. 121-4, 144-6), and some illustrative material would have enhanced the presentation. Chapter 5 (“The Archaic Period: The Prehistory of the Classical _Poleis_”, p. 159-228) deals with the emergence of _poleis_ in Arkadia and how far back these may be traced using temple building, for example, as evidence for early _polis_ development (p. 176-84), with sixteen possible sites being identified (p. 212-5). “If we look at the geographical location of the Arkadian _poleis_ of the Archaic period, it is immediately apparent that not a single
one is located in the centre of the region and only Kortys to the south in the Megalopolitan basin. All others are concentrated along the western ‘border’ with Elis and Olympia, and in the eastern plain ‘bordering’ on Lakonia and Argolis” (p. 218). In Chapter 6 (“The Triphylians”, p. 229-69) N. assesses the status of Triphylia and the reasons for its incorporation into Arkadia. “The conclusion is that by the 360’s Triphylia was part of both ethnic, political and geographical Arkadia and thus had become Arkadian in every sense of the word” (p. 264).

Chapter 7 (“The ‘Tribal States’ or Sub-Ethnic Federations of Arkadia Proper: The Eutresians, the Kynourians, the Mainalians, and the Parrhasians”, p. 271-307) focuses on the continued existence ‘down to and even somewhat beyond the synoecism of Megalopolis’ or “a number of states which we can reasonably describe” as tribal units (p. 306), as noted in the chapter’s title. Chapter 8 (“Great and Small Poleis in the Classical Period Prior to the Foundation of Megalopolis”, p. 309-411) is concerned with the identification of poleis of the more traditional sort, including the well-attested sites at Mantinea, Tegea, Orchomenos, and Systmhalos, again using a series of criteria: literary and archaeological evidence, constitutions and relations both within and outside Arkadia. In Chapter 9 (“Transformation: From the Synoecism of Megalopolis to the End of the Classical Period”, p. 413-510) N. deals with the creation of Megalopolis and the effect this had on existing poleis and that some survived as independent or dependent units while other simply disappeared and were absorbed by the new structure. The Conclusion (p. 511-25) reiterates many of the previous findings and “although Arkadian ethnicity must have been an important cultural factor, it was not a determinant factor in the shape the poleis took on in Arkadia: ethnicity was subsumed into the polis. Indeed, the Arkadian poleis were another instance of that ubiquitous phenomenon, the Greek poleis” (p. 525). Following the Conclusion there are a number of useful appendices (p. 529-612, containing, among other points of evidence, tabulated lists of victors in the Olympic Games, further lists of the Arkadian and Triphylian poleis), a full bibliography (p. 617-38) and indices (p. 643-80).

While the results obtained here are undoubtedly the product of meticulous research, the context in which these are discussed is hardly error-free: see, for instance, p. 14, 34, 50, 68, 191, 193, 196, while in places the sense of the English is difficult to recapture (p. 27, 29, 34, 386), and the use of italics for emphasis conflicts with its usual usage for Greek and Latin terms. There are also occasional factual mistakes such as the quotation from Grote (p. 240 and n. 51), which is incorrect, and may affect the sense of the argument, while Amyntas III was king of Macedon from 393-370/69 (p. 315), and the revolt of Cyrus against Artaxerxes is usually dated to 401 (cf. p. 86). The text is also certainly quite unnecessarily repetitive in places (for example, p. 41 and 311 almost verbatim on the theôrodokoi, p. 68 and 92, 421 and 434). Nonetheless, the evidence which emerges from this