

FOREWORD

Plataia is a place-name of basic symbolic importance in Greek history. It has an indubitable paradigmatic value for the occasional political and military unity but also for the strong tendency to diversity or disunion in many fields of relations among the Greeks. Therefore, to celebrate in a proper scholarly sense the ca. 2500th anniversary of the Battle of Plataia (479 BC), the conclusion of the successful defence of Greek *poleis* against the Persian invasion of the Great King Xerxes, the European Cultural Centre of Delphi (E.C.C.D.) organised on 26-29 May 2022 in its premises a Symposium on the wider subject “Unity and diversity in ancient Greece: thoughts on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of the Battle of Plataiai”. There a team of international scholars, members of the European Network for the Study of Ancient Greek History (ENSAGH) and further invited colleagues with similar interests, undertook to treat in common various aspects of that characteristic viewpoint on the data of ancient Greek history.

Of course, the chosen theme is inexhaustible as it touches on almost every separate sphere and category of social life in ancient Greece. However, what we have managed to assemble here are, as we think, essential re-worked papers covering crucial dimensions of the general subject connected not only with Plataia itself, its monuments and its double-sided symbolic meaning in Greek history but also with selected other studies illustrating how the double-faced trait of unity and diversity permeated many other areas of Hellenic history.

Thus the problem of the unity versus diversity of Greek religion, the Greek law systems, the Greek coinage, the systems of relations between *metropoleis* and *apoikiai*, Greek athletics and even the practice of sortition as an administrative mechanism have also profitably come under the main lens of our fundamental scrutiny. Similarities and differences fascinatingly alternate in the structure and work of many Greek *poleis* and their common/communal expression. In the articles here published that diversity is also reflected in the different forms of ancient Greek names and toponyms chosen by each contributor.

We may even wish to hope that in an age where unity and diversity remain sensitive characteristics of European understanding and sometimes painfully alternating systematic/unsystematic collaboration, the thoughts here presented and analyzed might possess further utility as precious historical parallels. Let us recall that one of the mottos of the ideal framework on which the United States of America have been built is exactly: *E pluribus unum*. Ancient Greece may, also thus, always claim a position of paradigm, positive or negative, for our present occupations and concerns.

Kostas Buraselis, Christel Müller wish to thank expressly Thomas Heine Nielsen who, apart from contributing a valuable study to the whole set, joined in as co-editor and offered the possibility of housing our collective intellectual product in the Supplements of *Classica & Mediaevalia*, thus kindly sheltering the *theoroi* of Delphi at Copenhagen.

Kostas Buraselis, Christel Müller & Thomas Heine Nielsen
(Athens, Paris/Nanterre, Copenhagen in February 2024)