

ELEIANS, *PERIOIKOI*, AND TRIPHYLIANS: NEW PIECES OF EVIDENCE

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Summary: The complex organisation of the political union of the Eleans before the *synoikismos* of 471 has been studied on various occasions. A system of allied communities, so-called *perioikoi*, had developed around a complex internal structure with federal elements. This makes it difficult to draw a clear distinction between internal and external borders. Recent finds and investigations allow new insights into these interdependencies. They will be presented in this paper. The starting point is the bronze tablet with regulations for Ledrinon, which was found in the sanctuary of Eileithyia and Sosipolis in Olympia in 2011 and has already been published. In addition, the paper presents the very latest results of the Olympia Area Survey and a bronze inscription from the sanctuary of Poseidon at Samikon, which was found only September 2024.

Our friend Mogens Herman Hansen, whom I would like to remember with gratitude in this article, was particularly interested in the various forms of organization of political communities. His focus was strongly on Athens, but by no means limited to it. This is evidenced not least by the major Copenhagen Polis Project, which he initiated. He would therefore probably have enjoyed the following observations and reflections, which I dedicate to his memory, although he might have made lots of critical remarks – as usual. My contribution does not refer to the *polis* alone but to larger political entities into which individual *poleis* were often integrated in different ways. Nowadays, we like to talk about federal states,¹ but we are also learning more and more that the structures of such larger unions were more complex. Above all, the relationship between different affiliations and multiple identities, but also questions of border demarcation,² are coming increasingly into focus.

1 See now Beck & Funke 2015.

2 Of particular note here is the ERC project by Elena Franchi (Trento): ERC Consolidator Grant. Project: ‘FeBo: Federalism and Border Management in Greek Antiquity’ (ERC 2021 Cog PR. No. 101043954).

Based on my own research, Elis seems to me to be a particularly good example for dealing with such questions. In the period before the *synoikismos* of 471 BCE,³ Elis formed a political union that had elements of a federal state,⁴ but also had very specific characteristics that are not easy to understand *prima facie*. In any case, this raises questions about the sense of belonging among the members of the union and its boundaries, both outside and inside the larger entity. I would like to explore this on this occasion, as recent finds and the latest research have shed new light on this topic.

My starting point is a discovery made during excavations at the sanctuary of Eileithyia in Olympia, led by Georgia Chatzi Spiliopoulou and Al-iki Moustaka, which was surprising in several respects.⁵ It is a bronze tablet similar to those well known from laws or other official texts from Olympia. Based on the shape of the letters, it can be dated to the first half of the fifth century. In my opinion, this is one of the most fascinating epigraphic finds of recent years. The work of Klaus Hallof, Gerhard Thür and Sophie Minon has been instrumental in advancing our understanding of this difficult text.⁶ Only because of this was I able to develop further historical interpretations that are worthy of discussion and are therefore presented here for discussion. They concern the question of affiliation and belonging, in particular the relationship between Elis and Ledrinoi,⁷ Eleians and Ledinians. The text is written in the Achaean dialect, with some elements of Eleian:

3 See now Grote 2019. – All the dates given in the following are BCE.

4 Nafissi 2003 emphasized this point in particular, see below.

5 Paus. 6.20.2-6; surprising, firstly because the sanctuary was not expected to be there, it was only discovered by chance during the construction of a water pipe, and then because the bronze tablet discussed here was found there, next to an imperial inscription, on December 1, 2011.

6 See the *editio princeps* with the corresponding commentary by Hallof 2021; Minon 2021. Thanks to Birgitta Eder, I also had access to the handouts of the epigraphic lectures by Klaus Hallof and Gerhard Thür on this text at the Eileithyia workshop in Vienna on 9 October 2017 (quoted as 'handout').

7 I use this variant of the name (instead of the previously common Letrinioi): it is attested epigraphically, i.e. in documents (in addition to the inscription discussed here, see also NIO 207). It also occurs in manuscripts of Xenophon (*Hell.* 4.2.16), see Hallof 2021: 103.

δοκιμία τοῖς Πελλανέσι τρισδικαστέρεσι·
 ὅῃκαι καζικία γένεται, μὲ θοινάζεν μεδὲ συν-
 αλοαν ποιφῆν μεδ' ὅπλα συνφάρεν μεδὲ σκαλείεν σκ-
 ἄλαν μεδεμίαν ἑταριτικὰν μεδ' ἐπὶ μάντι θύεν μαδέν-
 α αἰ μέπὶ τοῖς δαμοσίοις τὰς πόλιος· αἰ δέ τις ταύτον ποιφέο- 5
 ι, τὸν μὲν ἀρχαγὸν φάρρεν, τὰ δ' αὐτὸ δαμευτῆμεν ποτὸ Διὸς
 τὸλυνπίο, τὰ[ς μ]εγίστας χώρας ἐν τρεῖς ἄνδρες, τὸ{ς} δὲ λοιπὸν ἐ-
 ν πέντε ἄνδρες· ἀποτεῖσαι ζέκα μνᾶς φέκαστον· τὸς δὲ λοιπὸ-
 ς πάντες ὅσοι συννεῖαν ἀποτεῖσαι μνᾶν φέκαστον ἀργυρῷ· τὰς δ-
 ἔ ζαμίας πάνθας καθυτὰς εἴμεν τῷ Διὸς τὸλυνπίο· ἐπὶ ἔ μολοῖαν 10
 τοὶ δικαστῆρες ἔ ἀποφείποιν, μὲ μολῆσαι· αἰ δέ τις τὸ γράφος τα-
 ὕτο καζαλέοιτο καὶ ὁποῖα τέχνη καὶ μαχανᾷ εὐρόμενος κα[ζ]-
 ικέοντι τοὶ ξένοι Τιμαῖος, Πίθακος, Δεξζικλῆς, ἐν τῷ μεγίστοι
 ἔχουσαι τὸν ταύτε ἐγραπένον· αἰ δέ τις τὸν Κιλικικὸν δικάζ-
 οῖτο, αἰ δὲ δικάζοι καὶ δι' οἷον λόγον εὐρόμενος, ἐν τῷ μ- 15
 εγίσστοι ἔχουσαι τὸν ταύτε ἐγραπένον, αἰ δὲ ξένος, αἰ δὲ ῥ-
 αστός· τὰ δὲ κατεδίκάζαν τοὶ Πελλανῆς τοῖς Λεδρίνοις ἐπ[ίν]-
 ομα καὶ τέλεια εἴμεν. ὁ δὲ πίναξ <ἔ>α ἱαρός τῷ Διός.⁸

Decision of the Three Judges from Pellana: |

As soon as the sentence has been passed, no one shall partake of (common) meals, | nor hold a common assembly, nor bear arms in common, nor till | any land belonging to the *hetairia*, nor sacrifice at the seer⁹, |⁽⁵⁾ except at the public (seers/sacrifices) of the *polis*.

If anyone does any of these things, | the leader shall go (into exile), and his property shall be confiscated in favour of Olympian | Zeus, the largest properties before (a body of) three men, the rest before (one of) | five men. (In case of misconduct) each shall pay ten minas fine. The rest, | as many as were involved, shall each pay one mina of silver fine. The |⁽¹⁰⁾ fines shall all be dedicated to Olympian Zeus.

Furthermore, no trial should be possible | on whether the judges allow or refuse a trial.

8 Greek text from Hallof 2021.

9 I.e. to offer a sacrifice in the presence of a priest/seer who is responsible for this religious rite.

If anyone damages this writing, | and if, after ascertaining with what cunning and guile (he was at work), | the strangers Timaios, Pithakos, and Dexsikles condemn (him), he shall be liable to the severest | of what is written here.

But if one of the ‘Cilicians’ litigates, |⁽¹⁵⁾ and if (then) one gives justice, and we have found out by what (procedure) or speech (that happened), | he shall be liable to the severest of what is written here, whether he be a stranger or a | citizen.

What the Pellaneans have handed down to the Ledrinians as a sentence | shall be in accordance with the law and valid.

This tablet shall be sacred (property) of Zeus. (My translation)

My interpretation is based on the following elements, which have, essentially, already been identified by the researchers mentioned above: The *trisdikassteres* from Pellana (= Pellene), a *hapax legomenon*,¹⁰ i.e. “Three Judges,”¹¹ are identical to the three “foreigners” (ξένοι) Timaios, Pithakos and Dexsikles mentioned by name (l. 13). They are comparable to the foreign judges known primarily from the Hellenistic epoch, but here they have powers that go far beyond those known from later times.¹² Similar to the archaic *nomothetai* and *aisymneatai*, they have extraordinary and definitive powers to decide in emergency situations of a community, which result especially from internal conflicts (*stasis*).¹³ The community of the Ledrinians was apparently unable to cope with this situation on its own because it was too divided. This alone suggests that the Three Judges were appointed to restore order after a serious conflict, a *stasis*, that could no longer be reestablished by the community alone.¹⁴

This primarily involved punishing the group that stood in the way of this order, i.e. the group that had triggered the conflict and/or had been defeated in this conflict (and which could therefore be assigned the role

10 Hallof 2021: 105.

11 According to G. Thür (handout p. 2 n. 2), the term δικασταί in archaic times did not merely refer to ‘judges’ but also to ‘office holders’ in general, see Thür 2007: 42 (primarily with reference to the law of Gortyn).

12 Hallof 2021: 105.

13 Cf. Gehrke 1985: 261 (with note 5), 266.; Gehrke 1986: 44, 124, 170, 182; Gehrke 2009: 401; Hölkeskamp 1999: 12-13; Wallace 2009: 417-21, 423.

14 See also Hallof 2021: 117.

of the guilty party, regardless of what had actually happened). The first part of the decision (δοκιμία, l. 1) of the Three Judges sets out prohibitions that apply to this group, distinguishing between the leader (ἄρχηγός) and his followers or the other participants, with implications for the severity of the punishment in the event of a violation of the prohibitions.

This group was clearly a *hetairia*, i.e. a close-knit community bound together by strong friendship and camaraderie, as is typical in *stasis* contexts.¹⁵ The existence of a *hetairia* is evidenced by the reference to land in their possession (σκάλα ἐταριτικά, l. 3f.). This element belongs to the series of prohibitions, and so it seems reasonable to apply the other prohibitions to this *hetairia* as well, as previous interpreters have done.¹⁶ I consider this to be certain because otherwise the prohibitions would not be understandable at all. In this case, they could only refer to the entire community of Ledrinoi, which would have largely paralyzed its political and religious life. However, according to the inscription, the community could still be counted on as an active factor. We are familiar with prohibitions and restrictions in public life and with regard to the actions of office holders and political bodies from Athenian legislation for protection against tyranny and subversion.¹⁷ Here, however, we do not have a precautionary measure, but a regulation following an attempted revolt.

The prohibitions are therefore intended to paralyze all activities of the *hetairia* concerned. It thus disappears as such from the public life of the community and is, as it were, annulled. Its members are no longer allowed to hold communal meals, comparable to *syssitia* and similar forms of commensality. Furthermore, they are no longer allowed to hold meetings or carry weapons together (e.g. in processions or during training).

15 For more on such solidarity-based communities, see generally Herman 1987, 142-55; Welwei 1992 = 2000; on *hetairiai* in the context of *stasis*, see especially Gehrke 1985: 335.

16 Thür, handout 2; Hallof 2021: 109 is somewhat more cautious.

17 In particular, the Tyrant Law of 336 (Rhodes-Osborne, *GHI* no. 79).

They are no longer allowed to work their own farmland or make sacrifices at their seer.¹⁸

The punishment¹⁹ is harsh, but it only affects the group and its activities, or restricts the individuals belonging to it with regard to these activities, not in their existence as citizens of the community of Ledrinoi – unless this position was linked to being member of a *hetairia* (which cannot be ruled out, see below). At the very least, however, the ban on carrying weapons together is likely to have restricted their activities as hoplites (since ὄπλα are mentioned in line 3). Given the widespread and, in Ledrinoi, conceivable connection between military service and full citizenship,²⁰ this would then have been affected; they would thus have become a kind of second-class citizens. The text does not specify how long the prohibitions were to remain in force,²¹ nor is it clear for how long the extraordinary powers of the Three Judges were to apply.

The inscription even reveals (l. 14) the name of the *hetairia*: “Kiliki-koi,” the “Cilicians.” This enigmatic designation only makes sense in context if it refers to the members of the *hetairia* in question,²² who alone had a reason to take legal action against the decisions made by the three men.²³ In any case, for linguistic reasons alone, the name cannot refer to

18 We know from Olympia in particular that seers were also involved in sacrifices. However, this is no reason to regard the public seers, who can be inferred from the context (l. 5), as an Olympic or Eleian institution (cf. Hallof 2021: 109–10). Nor is this a matter of “hieroscopy,” as Hallof 2021: 109 (with n. 41) suggests with reference to Trampedach 2015: 164–78 (correct: 146–78). This is demonstrated by the diverse tasks of the seers of Olympia, for example in the monthly sacrifices of the Eleians (Paus. 5.15.10 with Weniger 1915: 103) and the sacrifice for Pelops (Paus. 5.13.2 with Weniger *ibid.*); further information in Weniger 2015: 103–4, 105–7.

19 καταζικία (l.2) = καταδικία (Hallof 2021: 106) refers to the specific condemnation of the persons concerned, with their names being included on a list (see in particular Thür handout 2, note 1, with reference to *IPArk* 8) or in other documents (Hallof 2021: 120–21). Only after this has taken place (γένηται, l. 2) can the following prohibitions naturally take effect, because only then is it legally clear to whom they apply and who can be punished for violating them.

20 In any case, this could apply to archaic Elis, see Gehrke 2023: 192.

21 Hallof 2021: 107 assumes that this is “left to their (sc. the Three Judges) discretion.”

22 Thür has clearly stated this in handout 3 with n. 11.

23 See Hallof 2021: 117.

‘real’ Cilicians, but rather to a group that had been given a name associated with the Cilicians – and thus possibly with negative connotations derived from words denoting nasty Cilician attitudes or activities – or that had adopted this name for itself.²⁴

There is clear evidence that this *hetairia* was not a purely political or even *ad hoc* alliance of convenience, nor was it an informal albeit effective clique of men, but rather a group with institutional elements and functions.²⁵ This is suggested by the existence of communal property. In addition, there were apparently communal meals – G. Thür suggests that these may have been similar to *syssitia*²⁶ – and it is possible that these were (partly) financed by the income from the land of the *hetairia*.²⁷ There were also assemblies²⁸ as well as communal appearances in arms.

The reference to a seer, especially in contrast to public cult activities, can also be interpreted as an indication of an established institution. And the fact that, in addition to “other” members, a leader is expected, could also be understood accordingly. This brings to mind the integration of possibly older (warrior) groups into the *polis*, of which there are examples primarily in Tiryns (with the *platiwoinoi*)²⁹ and on Crete (with the

24 Both options are conceivable, see Hallof, *loc. cit.* In the second case (examples in Hallof, note 89), it would be a kind of ancient resignification (on the concept of social resignification, see Butler 1997/2021: 1-42; a current example is the term ‘queer’); *Κιλίκιος ὄλεθρος* was a proverbial term for a wrongdoer (Zenob. 4.53); Theopompos (*FGrHist* 115 F 314) calls murder or violent killing *Κιλικισμός*; in the comedy *Γυναικοκρατία* by Alexis (fr. 43 K.-A.), a certain Hippokles is given the nickname *Κίλιξ* (see Arnott 1996: 153; Stama 2016: 120-21 with further references), cf. also *LSJ* s.vv. *Κιλικίζομαι* and *Κιλικισμός*. The background was obviously the notorious piracy of the Cilicians, see Luraghi 2006: 32-35.

25 Hallof 2021: 117 leaves this open.

26 Handout 2 n. 4.

27 Hallof 2021: 109. Thür thinks, albeit “with the greatest reservation,” that the *hetairia* “probably also owned a sanctuary” with plots of land “whose fruits (rental proceeds *in kind*?) contributed to the communal meals” (handout 2 n. 5).

28 Possibly in connection with a “harvest and sacrificial festival” (Hallof 2021: 107; further information *ibid.* 107-8).

29 Gehrke 1993: 54-56 (= 2019: 15-17); Hölkeskamp 1999: 257-59.

agelai or *hetairiai*).³⁰ One would then have to assume that there were several such ‘semi-official’ institutions in Ledrinai.³¹ These, and the collective of the *polis*, may well have been in a state of tension, which was associated with conflicts of loyalty.

The decision of the three-judge panel is particularly ensured and reinforced: violations of the decision by members of the affected *hetairia* are subject to severe penalties. No appeal can be lodged against the decisions of the Three Judges on the admissibility of actions.³² Circumvention of the decision is prohibited, nor can it be appealed against by the *hetairia* members. Violation of both is also subject to severe penalties.³³ In the case of the unlawful admission of an appeal, not only “citizens” but also “foreigners” are liable to punishment (l. 16f.). The aim is therefore to prevent further appeals being made also to other foreign judges or authorities (and here one must certainly think of Elis). The decision of the Three Judges is therefore legally irrevocable. Their special authority is expressed not least in the fact that everything is determined by these judges themselves.

Finally, a concluding clause (lines 17f.) states that all decisions made by the Three Judges are conform to the law and valid. As the wording itself indicates, this statement can be traced back to a third force beyond Ledrinians and Pellenians. Given the circumstances, this can only be Elis.³⁴ This is also evident in the fact that the tablet on which the decision is recorded (i.e. our inscription) is consecrated to Olympian Zeus. In this

30 Gehrke 1997: 37-43 (= 2019: 72-78).

31 Could one also imagine that, as in Crete, such groups were connected with the (militarily relevant) pederasty of the Eleians, which Xenophon mentions (*Symp.* 8.34; cf. Dover 1989: 166-68)? If so, there may have been a similar organization in Elis at times. This is just an idea, to use Thür’s words, “with the greatest reservation.”

32 “Indemnity,” Hallof 2021: 114.

33 Regarding the penalties, Hallof 2021: 116, 119 refers to the “highest” curse. However, explicit reference is made to “what is written here” (l. 14, 16). The “highest” of these punishments is banishment and confiscation of property for the leader (see above).

34 Strongly emphasised by Hallof 2021: 120-21, who refers the provision to the Eleian legal system.

way, the text was not only published but also protected as divine property.³⁵ It should also be noted in this context that all fines, including the proceeds from the possible confiscation of the leader's property, go to the temple treasury of this god.

This much should be said in due brevity about the new text and its interpretation. But what does it mean for the question of boundaries and affiliations with regard to Ledrinoi and Elis? The picture that emerges is quite ambivalent. Let us first look at Ledrinoi. It is a formally independent *polis* and is also explicitly referred to as such (l. 5). This is further reinforced by the fact that the public nature of its organization is emphasized in the same breath – in contrast to the order of the *hetairia*. The term *δαμόσιος* used for this refers either to public cult activities (sacrifices) or – more likely given the context – to public cult officials, in this case seers. This is also characteristic of a *polis*, which was always also a religious community. Ledrinoi therefore had its own cult organization.

In addition, the *polis* also had its own judiciary system. This is evident from references to legal proceedings and decisions in legal cases (l. 11 *μολῆσαι* = ‘to litigate’;³⁶ l. 14f. *δικάζοιτο, δικάζοι*). By analogy with procedural law in other Greek *poleis*, we must also assume that in Ledrinoi certain high-ranking, or even the highest, magistrates of the *polis* were responsible for ensuring access to justice, and that such office holders therefore also existed in Ledrinoi.³⁷ The fact that the confiscation of property is associated with the common term *demeusis* (l. 6 *δαμοῦξμεν*) points in the same direction, even if the term is already used as a *terminus technicus*.³⁸ If the *hetairia* had an institutional character (see above) we can assume, as already mentioned, that the Ledrinians had an internal structure based on *hetairiai* as part of their political and social order.

The inscription also clearly differentiates between inside and outside, thus confirming the existence of boundaries and different affiliations. Since the decision of the Three Judges is addressed to the Ledrinians, the

35 On this aspect, see, for example, Gehrke 2000: 145 (2019: 111) with further references; on Crete, see Gehrke 1997: 49–50 (2019: 86–87).

36 Hallof 2021: 113–14.

37 The importance of maintaining such legal procedures as an element of the *polis* as a legal order and nomocracy is particularly emphasised by Gehrke in 1993 and 1995.

38 Hallof 2021: 111.

following statements apply to this *polis*. A severe punishment is banishment (l. 6 *ῥάπην*), i.e. expulsion from the political community or *polis* to another area beyond the borders, combined with a ban on return. A distinction is also made between “foreigners” (l. 13 *ξένοι*, l. 16 *ξένος*) and “citizens” (l. 16f. *ῥαῖστοί*), which is said even in polar opposition. Wherever and however the territorial boundaries of Ledrinioi were drawn, it was clear who belonged to the Ledrinian community or was a citizen of Ledrinioi.³⁹ This fact is reflected in the Greek name (not apparent in our translations), which here – as in other cases, e.g. Delphi – does not distinguish between the *polis* as such and the totality of its citizens: both are called *Λεδρινῖοι*. Everything else we know about Ledrinioi, which will be discussed later, is consistent with these important observations gleaned from the inscription.

But that is only one side of the coin. The very designation of *demeusis*, i.e. confiscation, points to another power beyond the Ledrinians. The confiscated property does not go to their *δᾶμος* or their *polis*, but to Zeus Olympios. The same applies, as we have seen, to all other penalties, which in normal cases also ended up in the ‘state treasury’ in comparable proceedings. However, the temple treasure of Zeus Olympios, like the sanctuary and the cult rituals held there, including the famous Olympic Games, was under the control of Elis, whose territory also included the area around Olympia itself, Pisa or the Pisatis.⁴⁰ This transfer of fines is certainly not only due to the religious reverence of the Three Judges or the Ledrinians, especially since the tablet with the decision itself was also consecrated in the sanctuary and published there, i.e. in the territory of Elis.

However, Elis’s contribution becomes clearer in the form of the inscription itself, in the heading and the final provisions on conformity with the law and publication/dedication. The heading was not written by the Three Judges themselves, “for the judges, who describe themselves as *ξένοι* in line 13, would hardly have referred to themselves as

39 On the meaning of the *polis* as a community (in addition to its territorial connotation), see especially Hansen 2004: 39 with further references.

40 See Gehrke 2020; 2023.

Πελλανεῖς.”⁴¹ Even more important is the end with a second *res judicata* clause, which would in itself be superfluous after the preceding ensuring provisions. Also mentioned here, quite obviously by a third party (and partly in keeping with the heading), are the “Pellenians” and the “Ledrinians” (lines 17f.). As things stand, this third party can only be Elis. Klaus Hallof therefore attributes the heading and closing formula “undoubtedly to the Eleian editors.”⁴²

Such editing can also be detected in the text of the inscription itself, which reproduces the decision of the Three Judges from Achaean Pelene. As a result, it is also written in the Achaean dialect, a “diplomatic *koiné*,” as Sophie Minon has put it.⁴³ However, there are also quite a few elements of the Eleian dialect. These cannot all be attributed to the scribe,⁴⁴ but rather to negotiations and consultations between the Pellenians and the Eleians. Ledrinians may also have been involved, whose dialect can be assumed to have been close to the Eleian of Elis.

More important, however, as already indicated, is the final clause under Eleian responsibility. Since this clause was edited by the Eleians, one may assume, along with K. Hallof, that the determination of legal conformity and legal validity, i.e. the second *res judicata* clause, refers to the Eleian legal system. In that case, the decisions of the Three Judges for the Ledrinians would also have been lawful in Elis. As clear as the affiliations were in relation to the Ledrinians, they are just as open here in relation to the Ledrinians and the Eleians. The Ledrinians are independent on the one hand, but integrated into Elis on the other. For example, could an exile have sought refuge in Elis? Or would his banishment also apply to the Eleian territory?

What happened in the run-up to and in the context of the decisions attested to by the inscription can therefore be summarised as follows: Ledrinoi had been rocked by serious internal conflicts, leading to a *stasis*. However, internal peace was restored, probably with the involvement of Elis. The final settlement was entrusted to independent judges from

41 “denn die Richter, die sich l. 13 als ξένοι bezeichnen, werden kaum von sich selbst als Πελλανεῖς gesprochen haben” (Hallof 2021: 105).

42 “zweifellos der elischen Redaktion” (Hallof 2021: 103, see further *ibid.* 119–20).

43 Minon 2021.

44 Hallof 2021: 103.

Achaean Pellene, at this point at the latest with the active participation of the Eleians. These judges were granted extraordinary powers and regulated affairs in Ledrinioi. A specific group, a *hetairia*, was held responsible for the unrest and its activities were prohibited.

If we now examine more closely the ambivalence in the relationship between Elis and Ledrinioi that is apparent in the inscription, and thus also consider the question of belonging and the drawing of boundaries, it seems natural to look at Elis itself and its political constitution. Much has already been said on this subject, so I can be brief here.⁴⁵ It should be noted that the political union of the Eleians prior to the *synoikismos* in 471 had a rather complex internal structure in which federal elements are recognisable.⁴⁶ In addition to a central level, there were subunits with a certain degree of self-government. This may already indicate that the political elites of the Eleians had experience in dealing with different forms and levels of organization.

In our context, however, it is more important that the Eleians had established a system of alliances beyond their own union – and thus also beyond its borders – probably since the sixth century, perhaps starting even earlier. In ancient sources, the terms *perioikoi* and *symmachoi* are used for this, the latter appearing for the first time in an Eleian bronze tablet from the last quarter of the sixth century. This tablet contains a legal regulation on Olympic wrestling that applies to both Eleians and members of the *symmachia*.⁴⁷ The wording itself reveals a dialectical relationship between unity and difference. But the law is an Eleian one. This reflects exactly what can be inferred from the new inscription discussed here.

In fact, Ledrinioi also belonged to the symmachy mentioned in the bronze tablet.⁴⁸ The concept of the *perioikoi*, but also the possible analogy

45 My position can be found in Gehrke 2020 and 2023. Grote 2019 is also important here.

46 As already mentioned, this has been highlighted in particular by Nafissi 2003.

47 NIO 2 (Minon 2007: n. 5), l. 5: τᾶς συμ<α>χίας, l. 6: τᾶς συμαχίας (cf. also Nafissi 2003: 26–27).

48 On the symmachy, cf. Gehrke 2023: 195 n. 42.

of a hegemonic *symmachia*, suggest a clear relationship of dependence.⁴⁹ However, historical parallels should caution against viewing this in an overly clear-cut and one-sided manner. Swiss history, for example, has the term “zugewandte Orte” (facing places, i.e. associated territories or communities), which seems to me to be quite appropriate for describing relationships such as the one discussed here. It better reflects the circumstances that have developed over time and vary from case to case.

In any case, given the presumed complexity, an individual examination is necessary rather than generalized descriptions. As far as Elis and Ledrinoi are concerned, such an examination is entirely possible, which is a stroke of luck, even beyond the new discovery. First of all, Ledrinoi's location fits very well with the term *perioikoi*. The location is north of the mouth of the Alpheios, probably in the area of today's Pyrgos or Agios Ioannis.⁵⁰

According to Pausanias, Ledrinoi had been friends with Elis “from the beginning.”⁵¹ One may not give much credence to this yet. However, there is striking and varied evidence of Ledrinoi's connection with Elis. This is particularly evident in the religious and cultic sphere.⁵² The connection was thus anchored in the rituals and imaginations of those involved, precisely where a sense of belonging is particularly strong. This is already evident in the fact – and here the aforementioned location

49 See, for example, Minon 2007: II 484–85 on Skillus. Roy (2004: 493–501) has attributed these places (along with Ledrinoi Amphidolia, Lasion, Marganeis, Thraistos) directly to Elis as perioikic communities; in another context (Roy 2015), he even speaks of a “polis Elis with a very large territory by Greek standards, and a network of allies subordinate to it” (284). For Shipley 2018: 22, they were even “less free than the Spartan's *perioikoi*.” K. Hallof also assumes a relatively clear dependence on Elis (2021: 119–22, with Skillous as a possible parallel). A differentiated picture is offered by Grote 2019, who, in his own way, also points to a mixed or dual structure of Eleians and members of the perioikic communities (171–74) and follows this with the hypothesis that the *synoikismos* of 471 essentially meant further integration of the *perioikoi* (181–86).

50 A clear decision is not possible. For the two variants, see Leake 1830: 33; Buchon 1843: 503 with the most detailed information; further references in Papachatzis 1979: 392 n. 1; Maddoli et al. 1999: 374; Roy 2004: 499–500; Ruggeri 2004: 171; Taita 2007: 47 with n. 20.

51 Paus. 6.22.10.

52 See in particular Eder forthcoming.

plays an important role – that Ledrinioi was located on the great processional road of the Olympic Games between Elis and Olympia, on the so-called Sacred Way⁵³ or πομπικὴ ὁδός.⁵⁴

One of the central rituals, a genuine part of one of the most important festivals not only for Elis but for the entire Greek world, was therefore dependent on cooperation and good relations between Elis and Ledrinioi. For this reason alone, the Eleians had to keep an eye on conditions in Ledrinioi to ensure they remained friendly. For their part, the Ledrinians enjoyed a considerable increase in prestige in the eyes of the entire Greek public. This was not only a source of pride, but also a reason to be on particularly good terms with the Eleians, not least out of self-interest. Through long and close cooperation, such a rational bond could easily take on emotional characteristics.

But the connections went far beyond that. They were linked to cults that had a very special significance in and for Ledrinioi, at the mouth of the Alpheios. There was a specific connection between the river or the river god Alpheios and Artemis. This connection consisted of ritual and mythical-narrative elements and was present precisely in Ledrinioi. It was probably the most important feature of local religiosity. There was a temple dedicated to Artemis Alpheiaia, which still existed, its cult image intact, in Pausanias' time, when Ledrinioi was already quite dilapidated.⁵⁵ This sanctuary is probably to be identified with the sanctuary of Artemis Alpheionia or Alpheiousa at the mouth of the Alpheios, which is attested elsewhere. Traditions concerning paintings by the Corinthians Kleantes and Aregon that were visible there indicate that this sanctuary already existed in the seventh century.⁵⁶

53 Paus. 5.25.7

54 Paus. 5.15.2. For its course, Partsch 1897: 6-7 remains fundamental. – On the significance of such sacred roads, see now Mohr 2013.

55 Paus. 6.22.8-10; a relation of this temple to the sanctuary of Artemis Alpheiousa and Alpheionia (Str. 8.12.12) should be considered (see Maddoli et al. 1999: 374; Ruggeri 2004: 175-76; however, otherwise Partsch 1897: 6; Taita 2013: 379-80), if one takes Paus. 6.22.8 to refer to the territory of Ledrinioi (see also above).

56 Strabo 8.3.12; Ath. 8.346bc; on the dating of these works of art Taita 2013: 378 (with further references); on the sanctuary and its cult, see also Weniger 1907: 103-8. According to Walbank 1957: 525 this sanctuary is to be linked to the Artemision mentioned in Polyb. 4.73.4.

However, Artemis Alpheionia or Alpheiousa, who was central to the Ledrinians, was also worshipped in Olympia itself, with an annual festival.⁵⁷ Significantly, the river god Alpheios, who was so closely associated with Artemis in Ledrinioi, not only had his own altar in Olympia, but also one shared with Artemis. And these were included in the monthly sacrifices of the Eleians.⁵⁸

Significantly, this also had an impact on the intentional history: Ledrinioi's eponymous city founder Letreus (one should probably say Ledreus now) is said to have been a son of Pelops, whose mortal remains were even kept there according to one version.⁵⁹ Thus, this particular demigod, who had become the 'state hero' of the Eleians around 600⁶⁰ and whose tomb in Olympia enjoyed central veneration,⁶¹ also belonged to Ledrinioi, thus linking Ledrinioi, Olympia and Elis. The Eleians even amalgamated the cult of Artemis Alpheiaia (probably to be identified with the above-mentioned Artemis Alpheionia or Alpheiousa), which was based in Ledrinioi, with the cult of Artemis Elaphiaia, which was important to them. One month of their calendar was called Alphiaios.⁶² The strong religious-cultic connection between Ledrinioi, Olympia and Elis may also have been the reason why in Ledrinioi – following the Olympic model – the seers had a special significance, as we have seen.

In any case, the Eleians and Ledrinians were very close, especially in religious matters. This gives Pausanias' remark about the traditional

57 Strabo 8.3.12.

58 Herodoros (*FGrHist* 31 F 34 (schol. Pind. *Ol.* 5.10)); Paus. 5.14.6 (cf. Maddoli & Saladino 1995: 213 with Weniger 1907: 98-101, 108-9); schol. Pind. *Nem.* 1.3, cf. also Maddoli et al. 1999: 376; Ruggeri 2004: 175-76; Sinn 2004: 175-76, who incidentally considers an annual procession between the Artemis Alpheiaia temple and Olympia (Sinn 1981: 41). A bronze mask of a river god found in 1975 at the mouth of the Kladeos could be related to the Alpheios cult (Moustaka 2009/2010, cf. Pilz 2020: 139-40 n. 1071).

59 Paus. 6.22.8; Lycophr. *Alex.* 53-54 with schol.

60 Kyrieleis 2012/13: 82.

61 Particularly impressively described by Pind. *Ol.* 1.88-93; see also Paus. 5.13.2-3.

62 Paus. 6.22.10; Weniger 1907: 108; Trümper 1997: 199-201; Ruggeri 2004: 174-75 with n. 556; Pilz 2020: 38-41, 173-74 (who understands amalgamation as an aspect of dependence on Ledrinioi, but this does not fit with the explicit emphasis on friendship in the relevant passage in Pausanias and, in particular, the name of the month mentioned).

friendship between Elis and Ledrinoi a certain significance. All this suggests that we should not judge the Eleians' intervention in the Ledrinian *stasis* solely from the perspective of power politics. Given the extremely close ties between the two communities, a peace-brokering intervention by the stronger party was probably more an act of friendly solidarity than political dominance. This interpretation fits precisely with the fact that the Eleians did not settle matters in Ledrinoi themselves, *par ordre du Moufti*, so to speak, but left this to judges from Pellene, whose decision was also binding on themselves.

Beyond the complex internal structure of their community, the Eleians had thus created a similarly complex system beyond its borders – certainly as a result of expansionist processes and, to that extent, supported by power – which knew varying degrees of integration, closeness and distance. The Pisatis, i.e. the area around Olympia, became part of Elis itself. Relations with Ledrinoi were based on a special closeness, even affection, which was expressed in many ways in rituals and myths and was certainly very effective. Thus, Ledrinoi was independent on the one hand and part of Elis on the other; it belonged and yet did not belong.⁶³ The borders in this system were both closed and open. This probably also offered an opportunity to build a larger state structure, a phenomenon that is quite remarkable in this form in Greek history.

In addition to Ledrinoi, there is further evidence of this structure. An inscription that came to light during the old excavations in Olympia⁶⁴ also attests (around the middle of the fifth century) to regulations following a *stasis* in one of the perioikic cities, namely Skillous, probably near present-day Makrisia.⁶⁵ Here, too, Elis plays an important role, and it could be that it exercised its power more strongly here, south of the Alpheios and in the area where the Triphylian *koinon* emerged in the fourth century.⁶⁶ However, the representatives appointed to draw up the

63 This fits very well with the observations mentioned by Grote 2019: 171-74.

64 Minon 2007: n° 22.

65 On the topography, Meyer 1957: 63-66 (cf. also Lauffer 1989: 622-23; *Barrington Atlas* 58 B2 Skillous) deserves preference over Heiden 2020: 9-12 (identification with the ruins near Babes), due to his detailed reasoning.

66 For this, see Nielsen 1997: 144-57; Ruggieri 2004: 73-140.

regulations (corresponding to the Three Judges in the Ledrinoi inscription) were most likely Skillountians.⁶⁷ There are also indications in the language used that a certain degree of consideration to their concerns was given.⁶⁸ Against this background, it is particularly gratifying that new evidence can now be cited to support the previous observations and conclusions.

In this context, I would first like to mention the interdisciplinary project “A multidimensional space: Olympia and its environs,” on which I worked for several years with Birgitta Eder, Erofilis-Iris Kolia, Franziska Lang and Andreas Vött and others (primarily with the Olympia Area Survey), and which has recently been completed.⁶⁹ It has revealed a very clear picture of the settlement pattern in the region alongside the lower Alpheios river. In the immediate vicinity of Olympia and in the adjacent area of Miraka (Archaia Pisa), there was evidence of a dense distribution of settlements. However, the sites were small and highly scattered, obviously consisting of ensembles of farmsteads, hamlets and mini-villages. Traces of larger settlement complexes, which can be interpreted as small *poleis*, were found in our study area only west of Olympia, in Epitalion at the mouth of the Alpheios and further east in Salmoni. These sites can be identified with certainty or high probability as the perioikic communities of Epitalion and Marganai. The differentiation between the territory of Elis proper around Olympia, i.e. the Pisatis, and the area of the *symmachoi* is thus reflected in the settlement structure, at least in the south of Eleia. This is further confirmed by the distribution of sanctuaries.⁷⁰

A completely new document, which I am pleased to present here for the first time, provides further confirmation of the reconstruction given

67 The two men authorised to restore order (κατάστασις, l. 1) are also *damiourgoi* (i.e. senior officials). This suggests that they were locals and not strangers. If they had been Eleian *damiourgoi*, who also served in pairs (Minon 2007: II 499), they would have been primarily active in their homeland. If they were Mantineans (as suggested by a phrase in the text (l. 17) (Hallof 2021: 121 with n. 108 tends to this interpretation), we would have a parallel to Ledrinoi, and thus also the avoidance of direct control by Elis.

68 See Minon 1998: 192–93; Ruggieri 2000: 118 n. 7.

69 See in particular the overview by Eder et al. 2019 [2023].

70 Eder forthcoming, cf. Roy 2015: 183. On the close religious and cultic links between Elis and Olympia, see also Pirenne-Delforge 2019.

here. It is a lengthy bronze inscription (38 lines) that was only discovered on September 25, 2024 during excavations led by Birgitta Eder and Erofili-Iris Kolia in the sanctuary of Samian Poseidon near Kleidi. It not only explicitly proves the correct name of the sanctuary and its temple (which dates from the sixth century), but also provides important information about Makistos, a place south of the Alpheios, located near present-day Nea Skillountia and neighbouring Skillous.⁷¹ It belonged to the perioikic cities that reconstituted themselves as part of the Triphylian Koinon after the defeat of the Eleians against Sparta (400, see above). The text, in which the Makistians refer to themselves as both a *polis* and a *koinon*, may even date from the early phase of this development.

On the other hand, the inscription provides striking evidence of a close connection between Makistos and Elis. The text is written in the Eleian dialect and in the corresponding script. Of particular importance are two Makistian month names that are attested for Makistos here for the first time. One is Alphioios, which is already known from Elis (see above). Since Makistos is very close to the Alpheios river and obviously extended towards it from the south, it would also be conceivable that it was genuinely connected with Makistos. The other name, however, Narkaios, clearly points to an Eleian background. Narkaios was an Eleian hero, son of Dionysos, who is also said to have founded the temple of Athena Narkaia.⁷² Oliver Pilz has even hypothetically identified this temple with the central Eleian sanctuary of Athena on the local acropolis. Be that as it may, Narkaios was an important figure who was also relevant to the identity of the political union of the Eleians. The fact that he was also included in the calendar of Makistos shows a specific connection comparable to that which we can prove for Ledrinoi and Skillous, i.e. an overlap between independence and integration. This connection was so deeply rooted that the Makistians did not completely sever it even after they had gained independence. In essential elements of their life, in their dialect, their alphabet and their calendar, they remained clearly Eleian.

71 For its location, see Nielsen 2004: 544; Eder et al. 2019 [2023]: 155 n. 139; Heiden 2020: 13–15.

72 Paus. 5.16.6–7, see Kruse *RE* s.v. Narkaia; Maddoli & Saladino 1995: 287–88 and Pilz 2020: 42, 73–74.

This shows once again that ancient Greece knew complex and fascinating forms of political organization beyond the *polis* and that we must expect correspondingly complex boundaries and affiliations. Let us hope that further finds in this area (and elsewhere) will provide us with further insights!

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