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# THE HELLENIC LEAGUE – CREATION, FUNCTIONING, DISSOLUTION

***Abstract:*** The Hellenic League, or Symmachy of the Hellenes, established by the Macedonian king Antigonus III Doson in 224 BCE, was one of the most important political structures in mainland Greece during the late 3rd century BCE. Despite its significance, it has received considerably less scholarly attention than other Greek leagues. The limited surviving evidence makes it difficult to reconstruct the League's institutional structure, membership, and political mechanisms. This study examines the circumstances of its creation, its functioning, and the factors that led to its decline.

The League emerged during the Cleomenic War, when the expansion of Sparta under King Cleomenes III threatened the Achaean League. Aratus of Sicyon therefore sought Macedonian assistance, allowing Antigonus Doson to restore Macedonian influence in the Peloponnese. The resulting alliance united several regional leagues and peoples, including the Achaeans, Epirotes, Phocians, Macedonians, Boeotians, Acarnanians, and Thessalians. It may thus be understood as a 'league of leagues', reflecting the political conditions of late 3rd century Greece.

Particular attention is devoted to the League's Council (*synedrion*) and the position of the Macedonian king as *hegemon*. The Council appears to have functioned primarily as an ad hoc deliberative and advisory body, convened by the king and composed of representatives of the principal allied states. Its members discussed common military action and other matters affecting the alliance, while individual states retained considerable autonomy. Evidence concerning the admission of new members, the Council's precise competences, and the status of states such as Sparta and Thessaly remains inconclusive. The Macedonian king nevertheless occupied a dominant position: he convened the Council, commanded the allied armies, and played a decisive role in diplomatic and political affairs.

The League initially proved an effective instrument of Macedonian hegemony. Its forces defeated Cleomenes III at Sellasia in 222 BCE, and under Philip V the alliance participated in the Social War. During the conflicts with Rome, particularly the Second Macedonian War, the Macedonian king progressively lost the loyalty of his allies. The Achaeans' decision to join Rome ultimately demonstrated the collapse of the political foundations of the Symmachy.

The study argues that the Hellenic League functioned primarily as a defensive military alliance and an instrument of Macedonian hegemony rather than as a centralized federation. Its decline resulted less from inherent institutional weaknesses than from Rome's emergence as the dominant political and military power in the Greek world.

***Keywords:*** Hellenic League, Antigonus III Doson, Philip V, Macedonia, Macedonian hegemony, Achaean League, Hellenistic Greece

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# ГРЕЦЬКА ЛІГА – СТВОРЕННЯ, ФУНКЦІОНУВАННЯ, РОЗПАД

***Анотація:*** Грецька ліга, або Симмахія еллінів, заснована македонським царем Антигоном III Досоном у 224 р. до н.е., була однією з найважливіших політичних структур материкової Греції наприкінці 3 ст. до н.е. Попри її значення, вона привертала значно менше уваги дослідників, ніж інші грецькі союзи. Обмеженість джерельної бази ускладнює реконструкцію інституційної структури Ліги, її членського складу та політичних механізмів. У цьому дослідженні розглянуто обставини її створення, особливості функціонування та чинники, що зумовили її занепад.

Ліга виникла під час Клеоменової війни, коли експансія Спарти під проводом царя Клеомена III становила загрозу для Ахейського союзу. Тому Арат із Сікіона звернувся по допомогу до Македонії, що дало змогу Антигону Досону відновити македонський вплив на Пелопоннесі. Утворений союз об'єднав кілька регіональних союзів і народів, зокрема ахейців, епіротів, фокідян, македонян, беотійців, акарнанців і фессалійців. Таким чином, його можна розглядати як «союз союзів», що відображав політичні умови Греції кінця 3 ст. до н.е.

Особливу увагу приділено Раді Ліги (синедріону) та статусу македонського царя як гегемона. Схоже, що Рада функціонувала переважно як спеціально скликаний дорадчий і консультативний орган, який скликав цар і до складу якого входили представники основних союзних держав. Її члени обговорювали питання спільних воєнних дій та інші справи, що стосувалися союзу, тоді як окремі держави зберігали значну автономію. Відомості щодо прийняття нових членів, точних повноважень Ради та статусу таких держав, як Спарта і Фессалія, залишаються непереконливими. Водночас македонський цар посідав панівне становище: він скликав Раду, командував союзними військами та відігравав вирішальну роль у дипломатичних і політичних справах.

Спочатку Ліга виявилася дієвим інструментом македонської гегемонії. Її війська розгромили Клеомена III під Селласією у 222 р. до н.е., а за правління Філіппа V союз брав участь у Союзницькій війні. Під час конфліктів із Римом, особливо Другої Македонської війни, македонський цар поступово втрачав підтримку союзників. Рішення ахейців приєднатися до Риму зрештою засвідчило крах політичних засад Симмахії.

У дослідженні обґрунтовано тезу, що Грецька ліга функціонувала передусім як оборонний військовий союз та інструмент македонської гегемонії, а не як централізована федерація. Її занепад був зумовлений не стільки внутрішніми інституційними вадами, скільки перетворенням Риму на домінантну політичну та військову силу грецького світу.

***Ключові слова:*** Грецький союз, Антигон III Досон, Філіп V, Македонія, македонська гегемонія, Ахейський союз, елліністична Греція

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**Introduction.** The peoples of ancient Hellas, despite being divided into many *poleis*, tended to unite into larger political entities. Depending on the circumstances, these could take the form of alliances between parties recognizing each other as equals, such as the Hellenic League formed by Athens and Sparta in 481 BCE[1]. Alternatively, they could serve as instruments of hegemony for one powerful *polis* over smaller and weaker ones (e.g., the Athenian Delian League). Some resembled tribal confederations, like the Boeotian or Aetolian League, while others had a more pan-Hellenic character.

Athens, Sparta, and Thebes attempted to extend the control of their respective alliances over most of Hellas, but the first to achieve this goal was Philip II, king of Macedonia. In 337 BCE, after years of military campaigns culminating in the decisive Battle of Chaeronea, he established the Corinthian League. The member *poleis* were bound by a common peace and prohibited from interfering in the internal affairs of other associated states. Additionally, they were required to provide troops for the upcoming campaign against Persia. Civil matters were overseen by a council in which the number of representatives from each state depended on its size and significance, while military command over the allied contingents was to be held by the Macedonian monarch as the league's hegemon[2].

The Macedonian hegemony faltered during the Wars of the Diadochi, the successors of Alexander the Great's empire, but it was partially restored by Antigonus II Gonatas (ruling from 276 to 239 BCE). This ruler also solidified the Antigonid dynasty's rule in Macedonia and developed a method of controlling Greece through garrisons. Four major fortresses, known as the 'fetters of Hellas' (πέδας τῆς Ἑλλάδος), were permanently manned: Demetrias in Thessaly, Chalcis on Euboea, the Athenian Piraeus, and Corinth.

Towards the end of Gonatas' reign, the Macedonians lost Corinth to the Achaeans, leading to the decline of their influence in the Peloponnese. Demetrius II, his son and successor, became embroiled in a difficult war against the Aetolians and Achaeans, which encouraged barbarian invasions. In the face of their protector's weakness, Athens freed itself from Macedonian overlordship. The most perilous moment for Macedonian hegemony came when the monarch lost his life during a defeated battle against the Illyrian Dardanians. Since his son Philip (later Philip V) was still a minor, the role of regent was assumed by Antigonus, a member of a collateral branch of the royal family. He soon proved to be a highly capable leader, driving the invaders out of Macedonia and reclaiming Thessaly. Thanks to his successes, he was able to assume full power as Antigonus III, earning the epithet Doson ('going to give' [power] – as Philip was to become king after his death).

In 224 BCE, Antigonus III established the Hellenic League, also known as the Symmachy of the Hellenes (συμμαχία τῶν Ἑλλήνων) – the second[3] and final political entity

[1] All dates in this article (excluding publication dates) refer to the period before the birth of Christ. In the footnotes concerning excerpts from ancient works, the Greek text is provided if there is a risk of misinterpretation or mistranslation.

[2] For information on the functioning and provisions of the Corinthian League, see, for example, *Hammond N.G.L.* Philip of Macedon. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. P. 158-163.

[3] The League formed by Demetrius I Poliorcetes and Antigonus I Monophthalmus to fight against Cassander included only a small portion of the Greek states. Regarding the functioning of this Greek league, see: *Cary M.* A Constitution of the United States of Greece. *The Classical Quarterly*. 1923. Vol. 17, no. 3/4. P. 137-148; *Ferguson W.S.* Demetrius Poliorcetes and the Hellenic League, *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*. 1948. Vol. 17, no. 2. P. 112-136.

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encompassing the majority of the states of Hellas. This study aims to analyze the conditions under which this alliance was formed, the mechanisms of its operation, as well as the reasons for its failure and rapid decline.

*The aim of this study* is to fill this gap by providing a historical outline and examining the functioning of this political entity[4]. The present text certainly does not exhaust the subject but aims rather to outline it as an introduction to further research and to highlight certain research problems, such as the admission of new members to the league or the composition and competencies of the league council.

**Literature and Sources Review.** This topic, unlike the history of other Greek leagues, has not received thorough scholarly treatment. This state of affairs is undoubtedly due to the limited availability of sources, which is a frequent issue when discussing the history of Hellas and Macedonia in the Hellenistic era.

Not only has no major work been written so far, but not even a single article in English has been dedicated primarily to the Hellenic League founded by Antigonus Doson. Some studies have appeared in larger, textbook volumes, but they were brief and did not explore the topic in sufficient depth[5]. Polybius provides the most information regarding the league, though his statements of its functioning are often problematic – a point discussed further below. Plutarch provides a great deal of information on the political and military history of the League in the lives of Aratus and Cleomenes, as does Livy in his account of the Second Macedonian War (books XXXI and XXXII).

**Foundation.** To begin, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the political situation in central and southern Greece, particularly the Peloponnese, during the period in question, to understand the reasons behind the formation of the Hellenic League. By the end of the 3rd century BCE, Macedonia remained the leading power in the southern Balkan Peninsula, though its influence in Hellas fluctuated depending on the circumstances. Its continental rivals often relied on support from Ptolemaic Egypt, which financed many opponents of the Antigonid dynasty. Two leagues were gaining strength: the Aetolian League in western Greece and the Achaean League in the Peloponnese. The latter seemed at the height of its success when, under the leadership of the skilled statesman Aratus of Sicyon, it extended its control over most of the peninsula[6]. The only state in the region that opposed the Achaeans was Sparta. Although it might have seemed that the former power of Laconia had faded after its defeats at the hands of Thebes in the 4th century BCE, ambitious Spartan kings sought to restore their state's former glory.

Of all the reformers of Sparta, the most successful was King Cleomenes III (reigned 235–222 BCE). Using mercenaries recruited with funds provided to him by Ptolemy III Euergetes, he weakened the influence of the Gerousia (the Spartan council of elders). He then carried out a debt cancellation and a new land redistribution, which gained him the favor of the lower

[4] The extensive work is worthy of attention: *Scherberich K.* Koinè symmachía: Untersuchungen zum Hellenenbund Antigonos' III. Doson und Philipps V (224–197 v. Chr.). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009. However, this book is difficult to access and written in a language less common than English.

[5] For example: *Walbank F.W.* Macedonia and the Greek leagues, *Cambridge Ancient History.* Vol. VII, Part 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. P. 463–473.

[6] For Aratus's policy towards Macedonia, see, for example: *Porter W.H.* Aratus of Sicyon and King Antigonus Gonatas. *Hermathena*, vol. 20, no. 45, 1930. P. 293–311.

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classes of other Peloponnesian *poleis*. This, in turn, alarmed the leadership of the Achaean League, composed of aristocrats, oligarchs, and even former tyrants, who feared the possibility of a coup or social upheaval in their domains[7]. The aggressive stance of Sparta and the hostility of the Achaeans quickly led to war, in which the Spartans swiftly demonstrated their traditional military superiority, winning battles at Laodicea in 227 BCE[8] and at Hecatombaeon in 225 BCE[9]. The situation rapidly turned to the disadvantage of the League, as Cleomenes soon captured the strategically important cities of Argos[10] and Corinth (although not its Acropolis)[11]. Moreover, citizens of many *poleis* chose to support the Spartans over the Achaeans, which threatened to cause the collapse of the Achaean coalition.

In this situation, Aratus convinced the Achaeans that the only way out of their dire predicament was to turn to the Macedonians. He then personally travelled with a diplomatic mission to Antigonus Doson. The Macedonian king saw an opportunity to restore his country's position and agreed to the proposal for an alliance. A new Hellenic League was established, and the Macedonians entered the Peloponnese. In exchange for assistance, the Achaeans had to promise that, after the war, they would return Corinth to Macedonia[12], which marked a reversal of their previous policy.

The joint war against Sparta was the first test of cohesion and strength for the new political entity. Antigonus Doson's policy was yielding results: in 222 BCE, the Macedonians, supported by the allied forces, decisively defeated Cleomenes in the Battle of Sellasia[13], and shortly thereafter, they entered Sparta itself.

Soon after the victory, Antigonus III died, and the rule of Macedonia, along with the leadership of the League, passed to the young Philip V, who initially continued the policies of his predecessor. He led the Symmachy in the Second Macedonian War (220–217 BCE) against the Aetolians. The war against the aggressive Aetolian League, initiated by the Achaeans, was easily presented as a common cause for the Hellenes. The Macedonians achieved local successes, but the war was still far from being decided when, encouraged by Hannibal's successes in Italy, Philip decided to strike the Roman protectorate in Illyria. He hastily ended the conflict in 217 BCE with the Peace of Naupactus. Both sides agreed to maintain the status quo[14]. This was effectively a victory for Macedonia and its allies, as they gained or regained many territories, significantly reducing the land held by the Aetolian League. On the other hand, the Aetolians managed to survive despite being at a considerable disadvantage, which would have far-reaching consequences and eventually lead to disastrous repercussions for the Antigonid kingdom in the near future.

The subsequent conflicts in which Macedonia was involved (the First Macedonian War, Philip V's campaigns in Asia Minor) were of an aggressive nature, and their primary aim was to

[7] *Scholten J.B.*, Macedon and the Mainland, 280-221. *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. Malden & Oxford & Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, Malden & Oxford & Victoria, 2005. P. 153-154.
[8] Plut., Cl., 6, 3.
[9] Plut., Cl., 14, 2.
[10] Plut., Cl., 17, 4-5.
[11] Plut., Cl., 19, 3.
[12] Plut., Cl., 19, 4.
[13] Plb., II, 65; also: Plut., Cl., 28, 5.
[14] Plb., V, 103.

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expand the territory of the Antigonid monarchy. As a result, most of the allied states did not participate in these wars.

**Functioning.** When discussing the formal aspects of the functioning and structure of the Hellenic League, it must be immediately stated that the scarcity of sources means that many issues can be considered contentious or remain within the realm of hypothesis. The most data comes from a short passage in Book IV of Polybius' *The Histories* (chapters 15-19 and 22-26). This section deals with the attempt of the Messenians to join the Symmachy with the help of the Achaeans, the diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving this, and the beginnings of the war that broke out between the members of the Hellenic League and the Aetolians. Unfortunately, this account often raises more questions than it provides answers. The decision-making members of the alliance are listed in various compositions and configurations, and the political processes themselves are presented in a manner that is at least unclear.

**Members of the League.** The first such issue can be considered the group of peoples that made up the Hellenic League. Unlike, for example, the Athenian Delian League, where individual poleis were members, the Hellenic League consisted of smaller leagues and tribal groups. According to Polybius, the original members (from 224 BCE) were: the Achaeans, the Epirotes, the Phocians, the Macedonians, the Boeotians, the Acarnanians, and the Thessalians[15]. These states can be considered the most important, forming the core of the league and remaining in it for most of its existence. The formula for this new political entity was adapted to the situation in Greece at the end of the 3rd century BCE and, to emphasize its uniqueness, the Symmachy of the Hellenes is sometimes referred to today as a 'league of leagues'[16].

There is some uncertainty regarding the status of Thessaly: Polybius does not mention it when listing the allies to whom the Achaeans, according to the alliance agreements, send envoys[17]. He also does not mention Thessalian delegates when describing the discussion among the League's representatives on how to deal with the Aetolians[18]. It should be noted that Thessaly held a unique position within the Kingdom of Macedon and was more closely tied to it than other Greek states, with the Macedonian king serving as the lifelong archon of the Thessalian League[19]. Perhaps it was the king who acted as the representative of Thessaly? This theory may be supported by the fact that in both of the aforementioned passages, the historian also omits the Macedonians.

It is difficult to determine whether the defeated Sparta was included in the league. Polybius' account of King Philip V's meeting with Spartan dignitaries might suggest such a solution: Philip said that, "as far as regarded injuries inflicted by the allies on themselves, it was not incumbent on him to go beyond correcting and censuring such either by word of mouth or by letter; but that only injuries inflicted on the whole alliance called for punishment and redress by the joint action of all. As the Lacedaemonians had not committed any manifest offence against the alliance as a whole, and had engaged to meet faithfully all their obligations

[15] Plb., IV, 9.
[16] For example: *Tarn W.* Hellenistic Civilisation. Cleveland & New York: A Meridin Book, 1964. P. 21.
[17] Plb., IV, 15.
[18] Plb., IV, 25.
[19] *Scholten J.B.* Macedon and the Mainland. *A Companion to the hellenistic world*. Malden & Oxford & Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. P. 140.

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to himself, it would not be right to treat them with excessive harshness"[20]. This would imply that Philip viewed Sparta as a member of the Symmachy and its relations with other allies as an internal issue of the League. Even if this was the de facto situation, Sparta did not have the same rights as the 'old' members. Envoys were sent to it separately, they had no representatives in the League's council, and moreover, since (...) "they had been so recently set free through Antigonus, and through the spirited action of the Achaeans, and should not have in any way acted against the Macedonians and Philip"[21].

Did states that later voluntarily joined the League form a different category? The Messenians clearly wanted to belong to the League, despite the threat that this would lead to war with the Aetolians. However, after their membership was confirmed, their interests were still represented before Philip V and other delegates by an Achaean envoy[22].

During the ongoing Social War, some of the Cretan tribes (the Polyrrhenians, the Lappaeans, and their allies) became members of the Symmachy. They feared the growing power of the Cretans from Knossos, supported by the Aetolians. Philip V fulfilled their hopes by sending 700 soldiers from Illyria, Achaea, and Phocis to the island. Thanks to this support, the Cretans achieved victory and reciprocated by sending 500 of their own soldiers to the League[23]. It is unclear how they joined the League: as separate tribes, or as a unified entity (an alliance or confederation)[24]? We also know nothing about their further participation in the political life of the Symmachy.

In later parts of the text, Polybius also mentions among the allies of King Philip V the Euboeans and the Locrians (probably the Opuntian Locrians)[25], but we do not have any information about their influence on the rest of the allied states or their participation in the League's politics. Perhaps not all Greek allies of Macedonia belonged to the Symmachy, or perhaps the more significant tribes were the ones representing their interests? This could be interpreted from Polybius' testimony from book IV chapter 22: [Philip] "sent messengers with letters to all the allies, urging them to quickly delegate representatives from among themselves to Corinth" (author's translation and underline)[26].

[20] Plb., IV, 24; translation by *W.R. Paton*. Greek text: ὁ γὰρ Φίλιππος τὰ μὲν κατ᾽ ἰδίαν τῶν συμμάχων εἰς αὐτοὺς ἀδικήματα καθήκειν ἔφησεν αὑτῷ μέχρι λόγου καὶ γραμμάτων διορθοῦν καὶ συνεπισημαίνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ πρὸς τὴν κοινὴν ἀνήκοντα συμμαχίαν, ταῦτ᾽ ἔφη μόνα δεῖν κοινῆς ἐπιστροφῆς καὶ διορθώσεως τυγχάνειν ὑπὸ πάντων. Λακεδαιμονίων δὲ μηδὲν εἰς τὴν κοινὴν συμμαχίαν ἐκφανὲς ἡμαρτηκότων, ἐπαγγελλομένων δὲ πάντα καὶ ποιεῖν τὰ δίκαια πρὸς ἡμᾶς, οὐ καλῶς ἔχον εἶναι τὸ βουλεύεσθαί τι περὶ αὐτῶν ἀπαραίτητον.

[21] Plb., IV, 16; translation by *W.R. Paton*.

[22] Plb., IV, 25.

[23] Plb., IV, 55.

[24] Polybios states only: "The Achaeans and Philip hereupon received them into the general confederacy (...)" (Plb., IV, 55; translation by *W.R. Paton*).

[25] Plb., XI, 5.

[26] Plb. IV, 22. This line is based on polish translation by *Seweryn Hammer*: [Filip] "wysłał gońców z listami do wszystkich sprzymierzeńców, wzywając ich, aby poszczególni z nich spośród siebie szybko delegowali do Koryntu przedstawicieli" (author's underline). *W.R. Paton* translated this passage just as: "Philip appeared at Corinth with an army to help the Achaeans. As he arranged too late for this, he sent couriers to all the allies, begging them to send as soon as possible to Corinth representatives to discuss the measures necessary for the common service". Greek text: Φίλιππος δὲ μετὰ δυνάμεως βοηθῶν τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς παρῆν εἰς Κόρινθον: ὑστερήσας δὲ τοῦ καιροῦ διαπέστειλε βιβλιαφόρους πρὸς πάντας τοὺς συμμάχους, παρακαλῶν πέμπειν ἑκάστους παρ᾽ αὐτῶν κατὰ σπουδὴν εἰς Κόρινθον τοὺς βουλευσομένους ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῇ συμφερόντων.

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**League's Council** ***(synedrion).*** The main body of the Symmachia was the Council (συνέδριον), convened on an ad hoc basis by the Macedonian king, to which individual states sent delegates. The following states certainly had their representatives: the Epirotes, Boeotians, Phocians, Acarnians, and Achaeans[27], while the Macedonians (and, possibly, Thessalians as mentioned above) were likely represented by the Macedonian king. The Council decided on declaring a joint war and its objectives, preceded by a discussion and followed by an appropriate resolution, which still had to be approved by the individual members of the alliance[28]. It served as a space for debate and as an advisory body.

The significant degree of freedom that the members of the Symmachy had is evidenced by the possibility of rejecting the Council's resolutions. The Messenians conditioned their participation in the War of the Allies (which broke out because of them) on the capture of a frontier fortress by Philip V and its return to them, a fortress previously taken by the Aetolians[29]. On the other hand, Macedonian interests were at least partially secured by agreements, such as the prohibitions against sending embassies and letters to monarchs, except for (of course) the Macedonian king[30], as well as the submission and voting on laws that would harm those interests[31]. Although our sources mention such provisions only in the context of the Achaean League, it seems reasonable to assume that these also applied to the other members of the Symmachy[32].

Some contemporary scholars[33] claim that the Council also decided on the admission of new members to the League, but this does not seem to be confirmed by the sources. When the Messenians requested to join the Symmachia, the Achaeans responded by sending envoys to the main states of the League. According to Polybius: "The Epirots (sic!) and Philip, after listening to the envoys, agreed to receive the Messenians into the alliance"[34]. This happened at least a few weeks before the convening of the Council, and moreover, there is no mention of this issue being raised during the next session[35]. Likewise, the aforementioned Cretans, wishing to join the alliance, sent envoys to the king and to the Achaean League, and "the Achaeans and Philip hereupon received them into the general confederacy"[36]. In light of such testimonies, it is impossible to definitively determine how the procedure for admitting new members worked and which entities had the decisive voice in it, of course, aside from the Macedonian king.

It seems likely that the Council also played a role in concluding peace. Regarding the end of the War of the Allies, Polybius states only: "all the allies disposed for peace and

[27] Plb., IV, 25.
[28] Plb., IV, 25.
[29] Plb., IV, 30.
[30] Plut., Arat., 45, 1.
[31] Liv., XXXII, 22.
[32] *Larsen J.A.* Representative Government in the Panhellenic Leagues II. *Classical Philology*. 1926. Vol. 21 (1). P. 68.
[33] For example: *Walbank F.W.* Macedonia and the Greek leagues. *Cambridge Ancient History.* Vol. VII, Part 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984. P. 469.
[34] Plb., IV, 16; translation by *W.R. Paton*; greek text: οἱ δ᾽ Ἠπειρῶται καὶ Φίλιππος ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀκούσαντες τῶν πρέσβεων τοὺς μὲν Μεσσηνίους εἰς τὴν συμμαχίαν προσέλαβον.
[35] Plb., IV, 25.
[36] Plb., IV, 55.

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especially Philip (...). So that they came to an agreement on all the points of detail, and after ratifying the peace the conference broke up, each carrying back to his home peace instead of war"[37]. Similarly, earlier, Philip V had contacted the envoys and messengers of the allies concerning the suspension of hostilities and preliminary terms of the armistice[38]. Whether these were ad hoc meetings of the League's Council or conferences with the envoys of individual states is difficult to determine. The first solution seems more probable, at least when it comes to the final approval of the peace terms in Naupaktos (217 BCE), given that Polybius (V, 102, 9) uses the term συνέδρος – members of the Council, delegates – to describe these envoys[39].

Regardless of how broad the Council's competences were, there is no doubt that it also served as a forum for contacts between representatives of states that had never cooperated before or maintained close relations, such as Epirus and Achaea.

**Hegemon.** At the head of the League stood the Macedonian king as its hegemon (ἡγεμών). He commanded the joint armies in the field, even if strategists from other states were present. Antigonus III Doson was appointed commander of all the allies at the Congress of the Achaean League in Aigion at the beginning of the Cleomenic War[40]. Philip V likely 'inherited' this title, as there is no information regarding its reappointment.

The contingents provided by the Greeks in relation to the Macedonians and mercenary forces were, it seems, not very large. In the Battle of Sellasia, at the very beginning of the existence of the Hellenic League, in the army of Antigonus III Doson, there were (according to Polybius) 9,500 soldiers from the smaller states of the League out of a total of 29,200 (which made up about 33 percent of the total forces), including 13,300 native Macedonians[41].

The monarch chaired and convened the Council of the League, although it was likely not formalized, as suggested by his behavior. He could also have acted as a sort of arbitrator in matters of internal conflicts within the *poleis*. As Philip V stated in the aforementioned speech to the Spartans: "as far as regarded injuries inflicted by the allies on themselves, it was not incumbent on him to go beyond correcting and censuring such either by word of mouth or by letter; but that only injuries inflicted on the whole alliance called for punishment and redress by the joint action of all"[42]. However, it cannot be ruled out that the king had greater authority to influence internal matters in recently defeated Sparta than with the other, more loyal allies.

The king's interaction with the allied states was conducted on many levels. For example, shortly after the meeting of the Council of the Hellenic League in Corinth, Philip V appeared

[37] Plb., V, 105; translation by *W.R. Paton*.
[38] Plb., V, 102; Plb., V, 28.
[39] Prof. Jakob A.O. Larsen clearly supported the first option (*Larsen J.A.* Representative Government in the Panhellenic Leagues... P. 67).
[40] "He [Antigonos III Doson] returned to Aegium where the Council of the Achaean League was in session. He gave them an account of the measures he had taken and arranged with them for the future conduct of the war. They thereupon appointed him commander-in-chief of all the allied forces" (Plb., II, 54, translation by *W.R. Paton*). It is interesting to note that the Achaean assembly itself had the proper authority to appoint the king as the commander of all the allied forces, as the text seems to suggest: (...) [Ἀντίγονος] ἀπολογισάμενος δὲ περὶ τῶν καθ᾽ αὑτὸν καὶ χρηματίσας περὶ τῶν μελλόντων, ἔτι δὲ κατασταθεὶς ἡγεμὼν ἁπάντων τῶν συμμάχων (...).
[41] Plb., II, 65.
[42] Plb., IV, 24; translation by *W.R. Paton*.

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and spoke at the meeting of the Council of the Achaean League in Aigion[43]. Similarly, Antigonus III Doson appeared at the Achaean congress, as mentioned above.

It is easy to notice that the position of the hegemon was dominant over the Council. As Professor Robert M. Errington rightly states: "Since the Pact possessed no standing bureaucratic staff, it cemented Macedonian dominance through its centralized decision-making, while giving the outward impression that the allies were consulted"[44].

**Dissolution.** The defeat and dissolution of the Achaean League were brought about by conflicts with Rome. Even in the First Macedonian War (215-205 BC), the allies of the Antigonid kingdom could see its weakness compared to the Republic on the other side of the Tiber. Despite the enemy's engagement on many other fronts, the Macedonians were unable to drive the Romans out of the Balkans and had to settle for minor territorial gains. It is likely that the plundering raids of the Romans, fully utilizing their naval superiority, made a significant impression on the Greeks.

A much more difficult situation for the Hellenes occurred during the Second Macedonian War (200-197 BC), when the main Roman forces focused their attack on the kingdom of Philip V. This time, Macedonian diplomacy failed in terms of gaining allies, particularly the Achaeans. The Achaeans were most concerned about another reformist ruler of Sparta, King Nabis (d. 192 BC). Philip V visited the Achaean League assembly and, despite being embroiled in wars on multiple fronts, promised to join the fight against the Lacedaemonians. In return, he expected Achaean soldiers to reinforce the garrisons of Oreos, Chalkis, and Corinth[45]. The Achaeans did not agree to this suggestion, and both sides conducted their own separate wars.

The final blow to the Hellenic Symmachy was dealt by the Achaeans' decision to join the war on the side of the Roman Republic. It seems that the main motive for this move was political opportunism[46]: by 199 BC, the superiority of the anti-Macedonian coalition became increasingly evident, and Philip V was being pushed onto the defensive. Interestingly, the cities of Dymae, Megalopolis, and Argos refused to declare war on Macedonia, and their representatives left the assembly of the Achaean League during the proceedings[47].

**Conclusions.** The Hellenic League functioned more as a defensive military alliance than as a state-like entity similar to those created by the Aetolians or Achaeans. It was a key part of the Macedonian hegemonic system, alongside the system of fortresses – the 'chains of Hellas'[48] – and an extensive network of 'soft' influence. It played an important role in stabilizing the political situation in Greece for about a quarter of a century.

The League of the Hellenes likely realized the idea of panhellenism more broadly than

[43] Plb. IV, 26.
[44] *Errington R.M.* A History of the Hellenistic World. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. P. 84.
[45] Liv., XXXI, 25.
[46] Liv., XXXII, 19-23.
[47] Liv., XXXII, 22.
[48] There is no source basis for Professor William Scott Ferguson's claim (The Greek Imperialism, New York: Biblo & Tannen, 1963. P. 245) that Antigonus Doson withdrew garrisons from Corinth, Chalkis, and Demetrias after the creation of the League of the Hellenes. In such a case, it would make no sense to condition assistance to the Achaeans on the return of the Corinthian Acropolis to the Macedonians. Furthermore, it is certain that during the First and Second Macedonian Wars, the three mentioned fortresses were manned by Philip V's troops.

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previous Greek alliances, as it included not only native Greeks but also the Epiriotes and Macedonians, peoples often regarded by the Greeks themselves as semi-barbarian, despite sharing a similar culture.

The downfall of the League of the Hellenes should be attributed more to the extraordinarily strong external factor of the Roman Republic's entry into the Balkans rather than internal problems. As long as Macedonia remained the strongest state in the region and its rulers were able to prove their strength and maintain their prestige, the League served as an effective tool of political hegemony for the Antigonid monarchy.

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