

Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington, eds., *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World). Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. Pp. xxviii + 668. ISBN 978-1-4051-7936-2. \$207.95.

Readers expecting another volume on Macedonia's most famous citizen, Alexander the Great, subject of a proliferating number of collected essays in recent years,¹ will perhaps be disappointed, for the great man himself is the nominal subject of only one chapter out of the 27 contained in this new collection (although naturally references to him abound throughout). The focus on in this volume on Macedonia as a whole is explained in an introductory chapter (E.M. Anson) as a deliberate choice in response to the trend in scholarship over the last half century away from an "obsession with Alexander" towards a more holistic view of the land which produced both the conqueror himself and the Hellenistic era after his death, during which Macedonia continued to play an important role on the world stage. As promised, this volume does much to situate Alexander both in terms of his Macedonian background and the continuing impact that he had on his native land, and contains a much wider chronological range than earlier volumes on Macedonian history, which tend to cover events only to the Roman conquest and ensuing loss of political liberty.²

The volume opens with a review of the ancient evidence for Macedonia and the Macedonians. P.J. Rhodes surveys the literary and epigraphic evidence up to the Roman conquest, and rightly stresses that most of this material is written not by Macedonians, but by Greeks, and therefore gives their perspective on the contemporary Macedonians, which was generally either uninformed or outright hostile. It might have been useful to include here some discussion of Callisthenes of Olynthus (*FGrH* 124), who appears to have narrated events of the fourth century, both in his *Hellenica* and in his authorized

¹ See, e.g., A.B. Bosworth and E.J. Baynham (eds.), *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction*, Oxford 2000; J. Roisman (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*, Boston and Leiden 2003; W. Heckel and L.A. Tritle (eds.), *Alexander the Great: A New History*, Malden, MA and Oxford 2009; and the collections of papers emanating from an ongoing series of international conferences on Alexander: W. Heckel and L.A. Tritle (eds.), *Crossroads of History: The Age of Alexander*, Claremont, CA 2003; W. Heckel, L.A. Tritle, and P. Wheatley (eds.), *Alexander's Empire: Formulation to Decay*, Claremont, CA 2007; P. Wheatley and R. Hannah (eds.), *Alexander & His Successors: Essays From the Antipodes*, Claremont, CA 2009; E. Carney and D. Ogden (eds.), *Philip II and Alexander the Great: Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives*, Oxford and New York 2010.

² R.M. Errington, *A History of Macedonia* (trans. by C. Errington from original German edition of 1968), Berkeley and Los Angeles 1990; N.G.L. Hammond with G.T. Griffith and F.W. Walbank, *A History of Macedonia*, 3 vols., Oxford 1972–1988. On the background to the emergence of Macedon as "the ancient equivalent of a superpower" (to borrow Paul Millett's phrase on p. 488 of the volume under review), see E.N. Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus: The Emergence of Macedon*, Princeton 1990 and *Before Alexander: Constructing Ancient Macedonia* (Publications of the Association of Ancient Historians 6), Claremont, CA 1999; see also C.G. Thomas, *Alexander the Great in his World*, Malden, MA and Oxford 2007.

history of Alexander's expedition, from a pro-Macedonian perspective.³ While there is a greater abundance of epigraphic evidence, much of it also is generated by states outside of Macedonia. Because of the limitations of the literary sources, numismatic evidence (discussed by K. Dahmen) offers a crucial and complementary perspective on the lived experience and values of the inhabitants of ancient Macedonia; a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the numismatics of this region remains a major *desideratum*. It should be noted that while there is no chapter explicitly devoted to archaeology, the authors of all of the subsequent chapters do include (and some extensively) archaeological evidence in the analysis of their given topic.

The focus of the next section of the volume ("Macedonia and Macedonians") shifts to the geographical characteristics of the region and the self-perception of its inhabitants, as well as their perception by others. C. Thomas demonstrates that the region was a transitional zone, with porous physical dividers between its internal regions and separating it from its neighbours, a situation that was at first detrimental to political unity but eventually turned into an asset during the period of Macedonian expansion. J. Engels tackles the question of Macedonian ethnicity, fraught since antiquity, when the Argead kings had a political interest in being viewed as true Hellenes, particularly in their quest for hegemony, while the Greeks, in particular "a small group of Athenian patriotic historians and orators of the fifth and fourth centuries" (p. 86), had an equally vested interest in presenting them as Macedonian barbarians. As Asirvatham demonstrates, this dichotomy continues throughout the Roman period, when the Roman Greek writers idealized Alexander as a Greco-Roman hybrid, mingling Greek culture with the Roman civilizing ideal, while the Latin writers viewed Alexander as a minatory example in contemporary debates on the nature of autocratic rule. Both Engels and Asirvatham observe that the question of Macedonian ethnicity is both fluid and complex, because our perspectives on Macedonia largely come from non-Macedonians (as observed by Rhodes in the previous section), who often had a political or ideological axe to grind, forcing them into the ranks of the "silent people" of the ancient Mediterranean.⁴ Unlike most ancient controversies, however, the question has taken on a current significance in the political situation in the Balkans, and the final chapter in the volume (L.M. Danforth) addresses the role that ancient Macedonia has played in the contemporary cultural war over which modern group has the right to self-identify as Macedonian and lay claim to Alexander the Great and the symbols of the Macedonian royal family.

The next section ("History") offers a comprehensive overview of the political history of Macedonia, from the early Temenid kings to the reign of Alexander I (S. Sprawski), Classical Macedonia to Perdiccas III (J. Roisman), Philip II (S. Müller), Alexander the

³ See, e.g., T.S. Brown, "Callisthenes and Alexander," *AJP* 70 (1949), 225–248; D. Golan, "The Fate of a Court Historian, Callisthenes," *Athenaeum* n.s. 66 (1988), 99–120; F.S. Pownall, "What Makes a War a Sacred War?" *EMS/CV* n.s. 17 (1998), 35–55.

⁴ E.N. Borza's phrase "silent people" is quoted first by Rhodes in the introduction to his chapter on sources (p. 23), and tellingly occurs in the contributions by both Engels (p. 89) and Asirvatham (p. 124).

Great (D.L. Gilley and I. Worthington), *Alexander's Successors to 221 BC* (W.L. Adams), and the conflict between Greece and Rome (A.M. Eckstein), which resulted inexorably in Rome's acquisition of Macedonia as a province, subject of the final chapter by J. Vanderspoel, who documents its "transformation from a new territory acquired by Rome to a prosperous and important province" (274). It is rather odd that the chapter tracing the subsequent history of Macedonia in Late Antiquity (C.S. Sniveley) does not appear here, where it would seem logically to belong, but rather in the seventh and final section of the volume ("After Rome"). One wonders if this choice was dictated by criteria other than that of subject matter, for transferring this chapter to the earlier "History" section would have left Danforth's chapter on the current dispute over Macedonian identity on its own in the final section, and therefore more exposed to allegations of tendentiousness (particularly from those who might not agree with the views expressed in it) and lack of relevance in a volume devoted to ancient Macedonia. A desire to integrate this chapter also presumably lies behind the large proportion of Anson's introductory essay (almost half) devoted to the question of the ethnicity of the ancient Macedonians.

The fifth section ("Neighbours") covers the interactions between the Macedonians and the surrounding peoples, highlighting the ways in these various and varied relationships contributed towards eventual Macedonian expansion. W.S. Greenwalt discusses the political interactions of the Argead kings with their immediate neighbours, the Illyrian and Epirote peoples. D. Graninger turns to the uniquely symbiotic relationship of Macedonia and Thessaly, which served as a buffer zone for Macedonia from the ever-chaotic political instability of the Greek city-states to the south. Z. Archibald discusses the socio-economic aspects of the interactions between Macedonia and Thrace, while M.J. Olbrycht traces the relationship between Macedonia and the Persian Empire, with a particular focus on the importance of Iranian elements in Alexander's creation of his own imperial concept.

Part VI ("Politics, Society, Economy and Culture") contains chapters on a variety of topics: Macedonian kingship and political institutions (C.J. King), the social customs and institutions of the Macedonian elite (N. Sawada), Macedonian women (E. Carney), Macedonian religion (P. Christesen and S.C. Murray), the Macedonian army (N.V. Sekunda), the socio-economic realities of ancient Macedonia, from a substantivist perspective (P. Millett), Classical Macedonian art to 221 BC (C.I. Hardiman), and Hellenistic and Roman art from 221 BC to AD 337 (R. Kousser). These chapters emphasize once again how the nature of the evidence has shaped scholarly debate about all aspects of ancient Macedonia, and not just its political and military history. Moreover, underlying all of them can be discerned the overarching theme that the Macedonians, while integrated to a large degree into the Greek intellectual world, tended to adopt only those values and practices which they determined to be relevant to their own society, resulting in a unique and distinctive Macedonian culture, elements of which they in turn transmitted to the Hellenistic Greeks and eventually the Romans.

As will be evident from the preceding and necessarily brief summary, the volume offers a thorough synthesis of the wealth of issues and controversies pertaining to ancient Macedonia. Furthermore, it draws together for the first time connected narratives of comparatively neglected topics such as Macedonian numismatics, Roman Macedonia, Macedonia's relationship with the Illyrians, and Macedonian religion, which have not previously received comprehensive scholarly attention. The best of the articles in the volume present a synthetic treatment of their topic and offer new insights; the less successful (only a few) leave the reader lost in a morass of detailed information without guideposts and fail to provide the overall conclusions to be derived from this evidence.

Given the wide range of topics covered in the volume, it is not surprising that multiple discussions of certain historical episodes and repetitions of key passages from the primary sources occur, which is naturally a feature (although perhaps some would consider it a drawback) of the series, rather than the fault of individual authors. In fact, I found the discussions of the same sets of events from differing perspectives to be one of the most attractive and useful features of the volume, reminiscent of Lawrence Durrell's technique in his famous *Alexandria Quartet*. Furthermore, while a number of the essays reflect the Worthingtonian viewpoint that Philip II (rather than his more famous son) was the real architect of Macedonian greatness, individual authors often disagree on matters of interpretation; there is no consensus, for example, on who is buried in Tomb II at Vergina.

In conclusion, this volume largely delivers what it promises, a comprehensive and up-to-date collection of essays on a variety of historical and social/cultural issues that affect ancient Macedonia, which will not only stimulate further thought in specialists in the field, but will also render them accessible to those approaching the topic for the first time. While not everyone will agree with the conclusions expressed in any given chapter, the presence of complementary (and sometimes competing) scholarly perspectives contributes to the unity and the richness of thought (qualities that are sometimes lacking in handbooks of this sort) of the volume as a whole.

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