

Michael Dixon, *Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Corinth, 138-196 BC*. London: Routledge, 2014. Pp. 254. ISBN-13: 978-0415735513 (Hardcover). \$109.39.

Mike Dixon's book, *Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Corinth, 338-196 BC* was eagerly anticipated by scholars of Hellenistic Greece and Corinth alike. His 2000 dissertation on interstate arbitration in the northeastern Peloponnesus has long been a convenient guide to the published and unpublished antiquities and general topography of the southeastern Corinthia (*Disputed Territories: Interstate Arbitrations in the Northeast Peloponnesus, ca. 250–150 B.C.*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation: Ohio State University). It was among the finest of a group of topographic dissertations focusing on the northeastern Peloponnesus in Greek antiquity, and it established Dixon as a conscientious reader of archaeological and epigraphic landscapes. In his new book length study of Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Corinth, the author contributed this same care and careful research to his reading of the political landscape of the Hellenistic city. There is much to like in this book and it appears at an auspicious time.

First, it appears at a time when the Hellenistic world is enjoying a renaissance and the archaeology of Hellenistic Corinthia will get its share of scholarly attention. The publication of Sarah James' critical reevaluation of the evidence for Corinth in the 2nd century (based on her 2010 University of Texas Dissertation: S.A. James, *The Hellenistic pottery from the Panayia Field, Corinth : studies in chronology and context*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Texas, Austin), the imminent publication of the Hellenistic Rachi settlement above the sanctuary at Isthmia, David Pettegrew's soon to be published diachronic study of the historical Isthmus, and several article-length studies of the fortification and topography of the Late Classical and Hellenistic Corinthia (e.g. W.R. Caraher, S.A. James, and D.K. Pettegrew, "Towers and fortifications at Vayia in the southeast Corinthia" *Hesperia* 79.3 (2010), 385-415; D.K. Pettegrew, "The Diolkos of Corinth," *AJA* 115.4 (2011), 549-574) demonstrate the extent of scholarly interest in this period and this place. If orange is the new black, then the Hellenistic period is the new Late Antiquity.

Dixon's book provides a single destination for an expansive review of the literary sources essential to reconstructing the narrative of the Hellenistic period at Corinth. This alone makes the book valuable to scholars of the Corinthia and Hellenistic Greece. The book has seven substantive chapters and conclusion that move chronologically from the "Corinth in the Age of Philip II and Alexander III" (Chapter 2) to "The end of the Macedonian Corinth" (Chapter 7) with a topical interlude in Chapter 5 which deals with "Monuments and Cults in early Hellenistic Corinth."

Dixon's book is explicitly and almost exclusively political in scope, and he creatively weaves together the admittedly limited sources for the city's political life throughout this period. The sources mainly reference the diplomatic maneuvers of the city's political elite and various Macedonian and extra-regional powers influencing Corinthian affairs. Dixon argues that the Corinthian polis negotiated its relationship with its Macedonian rulers through the strategic deployment of *eunoia*, or reciprocal goodwill. This is

consistent with how scholars like John Ma have understood the relationship between fiercely independent cities and Hellenistic rulers (John Ma, *Antiochus III and the cities of Western Asia Minor*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1999).

This study of *eunoia* in the context of Corinth, however, comes up against limited, late, and problematic sources. For example, Dixon proposes a political aspect of the Thessalos affair recorded in Plutarch, *Alex.* 10 (p. 23). Thessalos was an actor who fled to Corinth after angering Phillip II for attempting to arrange a marriage alliance on Alexander's behalf. When Phillip demanded his return, Corinth refused despite the presence of a Macedonian garrison. Dixon offers several possible explanations for Corinth's defiance. Thessalos could be a Corinthian or have strong ties of friendship with prominent Corinthians, and the city's reluctance to turn over one of their own justified the actor's flight. Despite Dixon's speculation, the reason for Corinth's willingness to jeopardize their *eunoia* with the Macedonian dynasty remains unclear. In fact, Dixon's treatment of the affair and his acceptance of the historicity of the letter of Phillip does little to advance his arguments. While I appreciate his willingness to explore the limited sources fully, these red herrings blunt the book's impact. At times, the balance between selectivity and exhaustiveness was lost.

Elsewhere in the book measured speculation is perhaps warranted. Dixon has a tendency to understand the motivation of the Corinthian elite as monolithic. Considering the famously fractious character of the political life in Greek cities, it seems reasonable to assume that there were groups within the Corinthian *demos* who sought either different ends or different means even when a Macedonian garrison watched over the city from Acrocorinth. For example, in the complex political wrangling that involved Corinth's relationship with the Achaean League and the political influence of Aratos of Sikyon, some of Corinth's vacillating might reveal political factions within the city who had varied interests rather than the pivot of the entire city based on proximate military or diplomatic threats (Chapter 6).

Dixon's dissertation demonstrates that he is familiar and comfortable with a range of archaeological evidence. It is regrettable, then, that he did not expand his treatment of Corinthian archaeology outside of the immediate environs of the city itself. Recent research in the larger Corinthia, including the city's *chora*, provides opportunities to enrich our understanding of the social and economic realities of Corinth's political life (Chapter 5). His chapter on the archaeology of the Hellenistic period on the Isthmus focused on major monuments and sanctuaries, and most of his critical engagement with recent archaeological work in the region appeared only in his footnotes. For example, it would have been useful to understand how Dixon understood David Pettegrew's recent skepticism of the economic and historical significance of the *diolkos* trackway across the Corinthian Isthmus to the city's coffers (Pettegrew 2011 cited above). Dixon's work might have also taken on the various remains of fortifications from the Late Classical and Hellenistic period throughout the Corinthia, which have the potential to reveal various strategies employed by the city, various Macedonian monarchs, and invading armies, to control the city's *chora* and to dominate the city's economic foundation.

Finally, the book has some copy editing problems, but they never obscured the meaning of the text, although they were frequent enough to be distracting. Lest this review seem overly critical, the strengths of the book far outweigh any sins of omission or commission. It establishes an important political narrative and sets out a meaningful assemblage of texts and arguments. Dixon's book will serve as a key point in the conversation about Hellenistic Corinth for some time to come.

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