

Christian Marek, *In the Land of a Thousand Gods: A History of Asia Minor in the Ancient World*. In collaboration with Peter Frei. Translated by Steven Rendall. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford 2016. XIX+ 824 pp+ 109 illus+ 23 tables+ 23 maps. ISBN:9780691159799

The title of this book could give the impression that it is all about the Hittites rather than the history of “Asia Minor” from prehistoric beginnings to its political and cultural absorption into the Roman Empire. Originally published in German as *Geschichte Kleinasiens in der Antike*, Verlag C.H. Beck oHG, Munich 2010, in this English edition too the long history of Anatolia through its chronological and cultural stages takes the reader to the well documented final days of the Roman Empire. The historical accounts provide some idea of the likely impact of wars, internal crises, and frequently changing geopolitics on Anatolian state-level society. Indeed one can construe the adverse effects of armed conflicts and changing political climates in vanquished and conquered territories with socioeconomic consequences for urban and rural communities. The complex structure of central economic administrations and income taxation systems that financed state activities and building projects since the formation of the Hittite State, if not earlier, did not change fundamentally in the following fifteen centuries of Anatolian political and economic history. Trade activities in luxury and various other commodities including certain farm products grew significantly with the increasing economic interaction between Western and Eastern polities from the Middle Iron Age onwards. Written in a narrative style, the book analyzes the dynamics of alternating cultural and political influences that continuously shaped and reshaped the character of the Anatolian Civilization. The reader is made to realize the importance of Anatolia’s geopolitical position, especially during the Greco-Roman era, which facilitated the transmission of technologies, artistic concepts, societal norms, and literary works to and from neighboring regions in the west and east.

Consisting of 10 chapters, Marek’s cultural and historical *tour d’horizon* starts with a brief Introduction (chap. 1), with emphasis placed on physical geography (7–14). The history of research involving pilgrims, clergymen, diplomats, merchants and scientists since the fourteenth century is summarized in the next chapter (2) (16–20). The involvement of archaeologists, cartographers, natural historians in field studies up to WWI eventually developed into significant archaeological projects larger in scope, varied in orientation and advanced in technique in the aftermath of the Great War to present (21–46). The next chapter (3), which describes the lengthy cultural development from prehistoric beginning to the oldest written culture, covers the time frame extending from the Paleolithic Era to the end of the Middle Bronze Age. Paleolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Early and Middle Bronze Age sites such as Yarımburgaz, Beldibi, Belbaşı, Çatalhöyük, Aşıklı, Köşk Höyük, Can Hasan, Hacılar, Çayönü, Göbekli Tepe, Nevali Çori, Beycesultan, Troy, Kültepe, and others are mentioned while referring to techno-cultural, social, economic and political

developments that created the ethno-cultural substratum of political entities that emerged in the land prior to the LBA. The caption “Before the Assyrians (ca.2000–1700 BCE)” on page 64 is rather misleading since the presence of Assyrian merchant colonies, their organization and economic activities in Cappadocia roughly at this time is acknowledged by the author (65–67). The history of the Hittite State and the emergence of Iron Age polities in the wake of its demise are presented in chapter 4. Although the reason for encasing the twelve centuries long history of different ethno-cultural polities into a single chapter is not entirely clear (68–138), it is not distracting. As for the contribution of Peter Frei to the treatise of Hittite and Phrygian histories, it is no doubt quite significant. Historical highlights of the Hittite Empire from the Kussara Dynasty through the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms (69–76), and their rulers (Appendix 553–554) follow a brief description of the short, middle and long chronological systems, and followed by an overview on the Hittite Culture with emphasis on religion, literature, art and architecture (77–84). The chapter continues with a general description of the Hittite capital, the organization of the countryside, as well as that of the semi-autonomous states under the Hittite political and cultural dominance, and causes that brought about the final disintegration of the Hittite Empire, and its aftermath (84–95). The geographic, cultural, political and chronological background of the historical journey from Neo-Hittite principalities of the eleventh–eighth centuries BCE in the south and southeast (96–98), to Urartu whose political and cultural dominance in the eastern highlands was often curtailed by the mighty Assyrians (99–101) is well documented.

Lycians, Carians and Sidetans who left their seventh–fourth centuries BCE cultural imprints in the regional material culture records are next discussed in this chapter. Gaps in their respective early histories are due to the scarcity of historically significant local and external literary records (101–103). As for the Phrygian world of the eleventh to sixth centuries, the meager information derived from local and Greek literary sources combined with monuments and material records from Gordion, Midas City and additional sites provide a partial picture, while Assyrian sources occasionally allow some rare glimpses into their history. Obviously Phrygia was more than a local power eventually achieving a leadership stature which advanced its cultural influence and political ambitions in the central and western regions of Anatolia starting from the late ninth/early eighth century BCE. References to the destructive activities of Cimmerians in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE (110–111) is followed by Lydian and neighboring Greeks (eleventh–mid-sixth centuries BCE) narratives based on ancient historical sources ((111–125) and archaeological records. The latter shed considerable light on the economic and cultural activities of Aiolian, Dorian and Ionian immigrants and their subsequent colonization activities. The political, economic, spiritual interaction of the Greeks with their Phrygian and Lydian neighbors, as well as their contribution to literature and science (125–138) influenced the subsequent developments in the cultural history of Anatolia.

The history of the western Persian Empire and neighboring Greek city states in Anatolia (chap. 5) starts with Strabo's reference to Persians (139), and continues with consecutive historical episodes from Cyrus to Darius (139–142); conflict between Ionia and Athens (142–145); march of the ten thousand (145–149), king's peace (149–152), and satraps' revolt (152–153). In the follow-up, the Persian satrapy system and its mode of political, social and economic administration of conquered Lydian, Greek and other territories are discussed. The tolerant attitude of Persian administration towards other ethnic groups and religions, and choice of local languages (e.g. Aramaic and Greek) in conveying important decrees to a multi-ethnic population including Iranians (153–173) is quite informative. The chapter ends with the appearance of Alexander the Great in the geopolitical scene (173–79).

The next chapter (6) recounts the three centuries long and quite eventful Hellenistic history in the aftermath of the conquest up to Pax Romana in 31 BCE, referring to accounts provided by ancient historians in addition to inscriptions on stone (180–308). The political and historical developments during the rivalry and political intrigues by Alexander's generals that erupted following his death in 323 BCE are treated step by step without omitting important details. During "the battle for Anatolia" certain rural settlements were transformed into organized urban communities relatively similar to the Greek *polis*. The armed conflicts that erupted among the rival *Diadochi* due to their territorial ambitions and competition for political and military supremacy have been given ample space in the chapter (190–199). The lengthy conflicts involving the armies of the Seleucids, Bithynians, Galatians, the Attalid dynasty in Pergamon, and the Ptolemaic Empire are discussed in great detail. The lengthy review of events that led to the political ascendancy of Pergamon in the course of the third century BCE, its conflicts with the Galatians and other foes, and its close relations with Rome (207–250), which eventually allowed the establishment of Roman hegemony in parts of Anatolia (e.g. Asia, Lyconia) and Cilicia features interesting details. These inhabited territories and others were eventually incorporated as provinces within the Roman Empire after long conflicts (e.g. the Mithridatic Wars) (251–308).

In the follow up (chap.7), Marek provides a detailed account of the Roman Imperial rule in Anatolia from Augustus to Aurelianus (309–360). The expanded list of ancient sources from Imperial, Late Antique and Byzantine periods include among others Strabo's *Geographica*; Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia*; Arrian's *Periplus Ponti Euxinis*; Stephanos of Byzantion's *Ethnica*, and occasional "statements" of Syrian and Arab writers (309–312). The chapter is quite detailed regarding the organization of the countryside and frontier system, urban development and economic prosperity that started under Augustus. Episodes of subsequent political instability in some provinces because of wars and rebellions, such as conflict with Armenia (332–338) or long lasting Parthian Wars 66 BCE–217 CE (343–356), which eventually resulted in Rome's favor are also discussed in some detail. General Aurelianus who ruled as emperor for five years until his death in 275 AD, and checked Palmyrene Empire's

expansion finally succeeded in restoring Roman Empire's eastern provinces during his short reign. The next chapter (8) presenting the central administrative mechanism under the Imperial rule scrutinizes the *provincia* system of government and activities until Diocletian's reforms (284–305 CE) (361–372; 393–395). The function of the military in protecting the Imperial borders, and the road system and bridges that linked the nearby and distant provinces, as well as the nature of taxes imposed on them is also discussed (372–393). The next chapter (9), seemingly an extension of the earlier one, is the longest of the book (396–549). It describes the economic, socio-political and cultural life and activities during the Imperial period as well as the demography, ethnicity and prevailing dialects spoken in the provinces (396–400). The state controlled subsistence economy which continued to depend on agriculture, farm products and fishing flourished at this time. The industrial activities such as mining and marble quarrying were important sectors of the centralized economy with its developed trade, service and fiscal mechanisms (400–414).

The internal organization of provinces, their urban and rural foundations, and the status of traditional sociopolitical frameworks such as leagues, associations and tribes, as well as bureaucratic apparatus in charge of public affairs are the leading topics in this chapter (414–437). Describing the general characteristics of cities provided with impressive public buildings, religious precincts, rural countryside and territorial units the chapter elaborates on the hierarchical class oriented society and its stratified components (437–479). The examination of cultural heritage with emphasis on literary works, philosophies and associated authors and philosophers (480–498), continues with information on significant public events and festivals (498–508). Next, the topic of state and popular religions and cults, respective pantheons, temples and shrines eventually leads towards the slow and bloody religious experiences of the Anatolian society ending in early Christianity. The growing politicized influence of the clergy and churches in its imposition on a divided society some still clinging to deep rooted beliefs and cultural traditions could be read between the lines (508–549). In the epilogue (chap. 10) Marek reiterates that the transition to Byzantine culture in Anatolia was slow and gradual as demonstrated by the persistence of traits of Imperial Roman Civilization in the material culture remains of the fifth-sixth centuries CE (550).

In summing up, Christian Marek should be congratulated for producing this well researched, comprehensive and expansive work of scholarship. Despite the bothersome small font type used in the book, it should be recommended without any hesitation to students of Near Eastern Civilizations, especially to those interested in the political, social, economic and ethno-cultural history of Anatolia.

JAK YAKAR
SONIA AND MARCO NADLER INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY