
Ian Worthington, one of the most renowned experts on Argead Macedonia under Philip II and Alexander III, aims at bringing the protagonist of this biography, Ptolemy, into the spotlight, presenting him as the most successful of Alexander's Successors (pp. x, 5, 183, 208–212). It is the third major work on Ptolemy after the detailed, source-critical study on him as a politician and historiographer by Gerhard Wirth in 1959 (*RE* 23.2, 1603–1645, 2467–2484) and the biography by Walter M. Ellis in 1994. Intending to show how Ptolemy's achievements helped to shape the history of the early Hellenistic World (p. x), in a well-balanced division, Worthington dedicates about 1/3 of the text to Ptolemy's early career and rise under Alexander (pp. 7–69) while 2/3 concern his role in the Wars of the Successors (pp. 71–200). The reader is carefully introduced into the subject by a critical definition of the problematic modern term “Hellenistic” and its etymology (pp. 5–6) and chapter on Ptolemy's familial, cultural, and socio-political background (pp. 9–23). The historicity of the tradition that Ptolemy was the illegitimate son of Philip II, thus Alexander's half-brother, is comprehensibly rejected (pp. 9–10). While the date of the legend's circulation is debated and sometimes dated to the reign of Ptolemy II, Worthington argues that Ptolemy himself spread the rumor about his Argead descent in about 308 when he campaigned in Greece and wanted to disadvantage his rivals by marrying Alexander's full sister Kleopatra and additionally claims to Argead roots (pp. 151–153). However, the assumption that Ptolemy's father Lagos came from a humble family and was upgraded by his marriage to Arsinoë, identified as a cousin of Philip II, cannot be verified. The authenticity of the claim to her Argead descent (through a son of Amyntas I) is uncertain and might be a piece of propaganda stemming from the time of the Wars of the Successors. Also, the suggestion that Ptolemy was “never entrusted with more than minor troop commands” and “destined to be one of the peripheral figures of Alexander's invasion” (pp. ix, 9), thus a late bloomer, seems to be a bit exaggerated in regard to Ptolemy's position in the structures of Alexander's empire after 330 and particularly during the Indian campaign.

As for Ptolemy's life as a warrior prior to Alexander's death (pp. 23–69), the study instructively focuses on the difference between Ptolemy's own account of his achievements in his lost *History of Alexander* (with its unknown title) and other sources. Reasonably, Worthington points out that Ptolemy falsely accused his enemy Perdikkas of recklessness while attacking Thebes (p. 26) and exaggerated his own role when writing about the Battle at the Persian Gates and the capture of Bessos (pp. 38–39, 46, 214). It is also convincing that Arrian did not cite Ptolemy but Aristoboulos on Ptolemy's involvement in the murder of Kleitos: Ptolemy was silent about this. He did not want to draw attention to his failure as the *somatophylax* of Alexander who reportedly felt threatened (pp. 48–49). Worthington thinks that the same is true for Ptolemy's statement about the siege of the town of the Malloi: He distrusts Ptolemy's claim that he was absent from this disaster and thinks that Ptolemy wanted to cover up his failure to
have protected Alexander (pp. 61–62, 215). It would have been helpful to mention some of the recent studies showing that Ptolemy was also silent about the involvement of another somatophylax, Hephaestion, apparently his good friend, whom he posthumously honored when he wrote his History.

The second part of the book on Ptolemy’s career after Alexander is devoted to Worthington’s reasonable argument against the older tradition that Ptolemy pursued a policy of ‘defensive imperialism’ in the sense of restricting himself to Egypt (p. 8). He can show that while, apparently, Ptolemy had no interests in the central and Eastern parts of the former Achaimenid and Alexander’s Empire, he wanted to extend Egypt’s possessions as far as possible. This is shown by Ptolemy’s military activities in Kyrenaika, Greece, Asia Minor, the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean (pp. 150–181). Worthington points at Ptolemy’s garrisons in Peloponnesian cities, fight for Cyprus and Rhodes, naval base on Andros, and influence on the League of the Cycladic Islands.

After a compact chapter on the most important aspects concerning Ptolemy as ruler of Egypt (pp. 185–200) and a brief outlook on his heir (pp. 201–208), Worthington concludes that Ptolemy deserves to be regarded as the most successful of Alexander’s Successors (pp. 208–212) – a justified view.

Appendix 1 treats Ptolemy’s lost historiography, its bias and much debated date of composition (pp. 213–219). Worthington argues for some time later in his reign (p. 218). Appendix 2 treats the sources (pp. 221–223), Appendix 3 provides a timeline (pp. 225–228). The book also contains 4 maps of fine quality, a bibliography (pp. 229–234) and an index (pp. 245–253). A great advantage is the use of footnotes instead of endnotes.

There are only a few minor comments on this well written study on an important political actor in crucial times of change. While in this book, Ptolemy is also credited with the foundation of the museum and library at Alexandria (pp. 139–144), it could have been mentioned that there are some doubts about this role. Predominantly, it is assumed that Ptolemy II was responsible for the creation. There are some other debates that could have been mentioned: the doubts about the assumption that Alexander adopted the title ‘King of Asia’ (p. 31), and that the visit to Siwa had anything to do with claims to divinity (pp. 33–34). Also, the portrait of the coin characterized as a portrait of Kassander (fig. 6.2, p. 104) in whose name the coin was minted shows Herakles wearing a lion’s scalp in fact.

In sum, everyone interested in the history of Alexander and the Successors is recommended to study this convincing book and internalize especially its critical treatment of Ptolemy’s own fragmentary accounts of his achievements.

Sabine Müller
Marburg University
sabine.mueller@staff.uni-marburg.de