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HECKEL, WALDEMAR, *The Conquests of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xxii + 218. Cloth, \$25.00. ISBN 978-0-521-84247-1.

From the scholarly perspective, Alexander the Great is perhaps the most intensely studied individual in the Ancient World. The wider public invariably admires him as the greatest conqueror of Greco-Roman Antiquity, yet there are few scholarly treatments of the military aspects of his reign that focus on campaigns and battles. [[1]] Instead, most modern books on Alexander's military target war-gamers and concentrate on weapons and the organization of the army. [[2]] The history of Alexander's battles and maneuvers are thus handed over to willing but amateurish enthusiasts whose writings are of little scholarly value. A book on Alexander's conquests by Waldemar Heckel, one of today's leading specialists in the field, is accordingly a welcome development.

It is unnecessary to list all the books and articles by Heckel that have corrected and enhanced our knowledge of the prosopography of Alexander's history. But it is worth noting that his studies in this aspect of the period are not restricted to purely personal histories, and that—developing the expertise gained in the course of his prosopographical studies—Heckel recently turned in more detail to military history, which was always included in various ways in his biographies of Alexander's men, and slightly before the present book he published an illustrated history of Alexander's campaigns [[3]] as well as a medium-sized chapter bearing the same title as the present work for a Blackwell's Companion. [[4]] Of these treatments, the book under review here is the longest and the fullest. Still, as Heckel confesses in his *Preface*, his aim is not "to retell in full the story of Alexander's conquests." Nor is this an ordinary scholarly monograph; the author consciously avoids referring to even the most important previous scholarly opinions on his topic. Instead, Heckel proposes to discuss how both popular and professional works exploit traits of Alexander's personality and the cruel sides of the conquest to enter contemporary political debates, hence the sound and repeated criticisms of comparing Alexander to modern "tyrants" such as Hitler and Stalin.

Despite the *Preface*, Heckel's book remains in most regards a traditional account of Alexander life minus the usual pseudo-psychological considerations on how power corrupts talented men. The focus is on the best known battles and campaigns of the great Macedonian king: Granicus, Issos, Gaugamela, the Indian campaign and Gedrosia. Major political crises (e.g. the Philotas affair) and Alexander's general plans (e.g. his policies towards Persian elites) are analyzed as well. In the latter case, Heckel is generally balanced and convincing, even where he

challenges prevailing views of modern scholarship, such as the theory that Alexander and his staff conspired against Philotas. On the other hand, Heckel occasionally hesitates and avoids a clear statement of his views: thus for example Alexander's policy of training Persian units in Macedonian warfare is described in a way that suggests Heckel's equal distance from contemporary interpretations ranging from a full "integration" of the Persians to making them "a counterbalance" *antitagma* to the Macedonian army disappointed at the King's policies (pp. 139–41). Heckel's general conviction seems to be that in 324 BC the Asian cavalry, at least, was fully integrated into the Companion Cavalry. But their inclusion in the cavalry might mean that a third structure bearing a noble title of *hetairoi* was created, although Heckel himself is aware that the Companion cavalry was a national force, which was different from the inner circle of Alexander's counsellors and friends (in this respect, see a sound gloss in the Glossary on p. 168), who were also called *hetairoi*.

When describing the military side of Alexander's reign, Heckel again joins a competent narrative with a sound rejection of more hazardous modern hypotheses (e.g. that there were two battles of Granicus). How much could be added to this book by its author is shown by handy appendixes treating Alexander's officers, the number of his troops, and the administration of the empire (i.e. the list of known satraps). Heckel is perhaps the most competent scholar available to write a narrative of Alexander's conquest that covers local wars fought by his satraps far from the main theatre of his victories. These campaigns were essential to a consolidation of Macedonian supremacy over the former Persian Empire, yet there is no systematic study of how the Macedonian military (both the army units and commanders) worked in areas peripheral to Alexander's main route. Heckel himself approached these problems in individual entries in his *Marshals of Alexander's Empire* and in his prosopography of Alexander's reign. [[5]] Yet no one has put all the data on satrapic achievements together into a systematic, more or less diachronic account of the conquest. I had hoped that the book under review would incorporate more data from peripheral theatres of the conquest, and the fact that Heckel did not exploit his knowledge of this aspect of Alexander's age is perhaps my most important disappointment with it.

In general, however, it seems wrong to complain too much. Heckel has given us a well-written and sensible book, with a good selection of facts and problems having to do with Alexander's reign and the wars he fought. Even without an overwhelming scholarly *apparatus*, the book can be still read with profit by professional historians and classicists, and its views generally represent a prudent compromise among the most important modern scholarly opinions. But its primary addressee is the curi-

ous layman interested in (ancient) military history. For such individuals, the book may prove very attractive, even if it lacks eye-catching pictures, reconstructions of armament, or the sort of maps and plans that might fully explain the author's battle reconstructions. In general, however, the needs of laymen have been well understood, and the three appendixes and the glossary seem to be written mainly for them.

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[[1]] Except, perhaps, for a well-known book by the retired general and military theorist J.F.C. Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great* (New York, 1960).

[[2]] They were nonetheless sometimes written by outstanding specialists such as N.V. Sekunda, whose *The Army of Alexander the Great* (London, 1981) is full of inspiring insights into the details of armament and Alexander's army, especially as seen through the eyes of Greek tactical writers.

[[3]] W. Heckel, *The Wars of Alexander the Great, 336–323 BC* (Oxford, 2002).

[[4]] W. Heckel, "The Conquests of Alexander the Great," in *A companion to the classical Greek world*, edited by K. Kinzl (Oxford, 2006) 560–88.

[[5]] W. Heckel, *The Marshals of Alexander's Empire* (London, 1992); W. Heckel, *Who's Who in the Age of Alexander the Great: Prosopography of Alexander's Empire* (Oxford, 2005).