

BOOK REVIEW

Ancient Macedonians in the Greek and Roman Sources: From History to Historiography. Edited by TIMOTHY HOWE and FRANCES POWNALL, with the collaboration of Beatrice Poletti. Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2018. Pp. xv + 264. Hardback, 75.13\$. ISBN: 978-1-910589-70-0.

As the editors note in their introduction, the non-Macedonian origin of our source material, plus the large gap in time between that kingdom's political pre-eminence and our surviving sources, makes it difficult to study the ancient Macedonians. This volume attempts to unpack "the process through which history becomes historiography" (viii) – how the memory of the Macedonian past took the written form it eventually did. Timothy Howe and Frances Pownall thus expand a notion important to their own previous work (and that of other contributors) – that distortion of the "historical" Alexander is not just a product of Roman-era authors, but occurred from the very beginning of historical writing on Alexander in the fourth century BCE – to cover earlier Macedonian history and the Successors to Alexander's empire.

The volume includes an introduction followed by eleven essays, divided into four thematic sections: I, Succession and the Role of Royal Women; II, *Philia*, Politics and Alliances; III, Royal Self-presentation and Ideology; IV, The Memory of Alexander. Those themes arose out of the 2012 conference from which some of the papers originated. As usual with Classical Press publications, endnotes and bibliography (which generally stops at 2014 or 2015) appear after each individual chapter, and the volume contains a general index.¹

The most valuable papers are those which set out to problematize or dispel assumptions often taken for granted by modern scholars. Timothy Howe's chapter, on Euridike (mother of Philip II), works well in the leadoff spot, providing a succinct explanation of the issue confronting us: the surviving Roman-era authors (e.g. Diodorus, Plutarch, Justin) were "literary stylists in their own right, with their own literary purposes, audiences and interests" (2). Thus we cannot simply

¹ I found some scattered typographical errors, mostly minor; the only one I will point out is to read Burliga (for "Burlinga") 2013 in the notes and bibliography for Bowden's chapter.

take them as faithful reflections of earlier works, now lost; they sifted and selected from the material available to them according to their own purposes, which often involved conveying a moral lesson to their contemporary audience – a mission for which Alexander and the Macedonians were well-suited. Frances Pownall’s answer to the question of “Kallisthenes: tutor of the Royal Pages?” is an emphatic “No.” She provides an extended illustration of the “extreme caution” necessary in order to separate Alexander’s actual achievements from the “biases and agendas of the Roman-era sources who offer the only extant continuous narratives of his expedition” (69). Alexander Meeus argues that modern scholars place far too much weight on the treaties and alliances between the Successor kings. Thus he not only offers an analysis of ancient historical writing, but also touches on the effects modern scholarship can have as well – in this case, having imposed 19th-century ideas of “balance of power” onto terrain where it does not belong. Hugh Bowden proposes that a section of Arrian’s account of Alexander’s campaign – from Troy to the Granikos – evokes Books 19-21 of Homer’s *Iliad* in various ways. His more general point lies at the heart of the volume’s purview: “more weight should be given to literary considerations when reading accounts of the battle [of Granicus] and the surrounding events than has been given hitherto” (163).

Not all the essays directly confront ancient historiography *per se*, but their concern with the nature of our evidence can justify their inclusion. Victor Alonso Troncoso examines the striking diversity of animal imagery (at least ten different species) on the coinage of the Macedonian kings from Alexander I to Philip III. His discussion of the Argeads’ “zoology of power” is supplemented by several high-quality images. Paul Johstono provides a well-argued demonstration that Ptolemy II’s “Grand Procession” cannot be dated as early as 279/8, based on the presence of specifically Galatian shields (*thyreoi*) erected in the Royal Pavilion.

Space precludes detailed discussion of each piece, but scholars of ancient Macedonia and ancient historiography will find plenty of interest. Rebecca Frank examines the portrayal of Olympias in Trogus/Justin before suggesting an intriguing contemporary parallel with the figure of Cleopatra VII in Augustan-era literature (especially Horace, *Odes* 1.37). Sabine Müller reviews the evidence for Hephaestion’s career and argues that stories of a *lifelong*, close personal relationship with Alexander should be seen as literary embellishments, not reflective of the historical reality. Sulochana Asirvatham considers the ways in which Plutarch, in his *Lives*, judges three of the Successors (Demetrius, Pyrrhus and Eumenes) in relation to a particularly imperialistic and panhellenic Alexander. Daniel Ogden’s

brief but entertaining treatment of the legends surrounding the death of Seleukos dips into a wide array of sources from the 3rd century BCE to the 5th century CE. His chapter is thus an excellent reminder of just how much that was written about the ancient Macedonians has been lost, and of the careful work that can (and should) be conducted, along the lines of this volume, in evaluating the sources that do survive.

CHRISTOPHER BARON

University of Notre Dame, cbaron1@nd.edu