

Chapter 9 examines how the mail rings were woven together. The dominant European pattern was the 4-in-1, in which each ring attached to four other rings, in alternating rows of solid and riveted rings; this pattern was established early (although the third-century BCE Tifenau shirt is exceptionally a more rigid 6-in-1) and endured due to its balance of flexibility, protection and weight. The ubiquity of the 4-in-1 pattern in Europe from antiquity to the Middle Ages stands in contrast to Japanese manufacture that saw a variety of intricate patterns, although usually on composite armour where the mail weave was partially decorative.

Chapter 10 explores how the mail ‘cloth’ was finally constructed into a shirt. An examination of the Vinmose mail shirt shows that it was constructed in the flat and then turned into a garment by joining the various edges of the mail fabric with riveted links. Mail construction tended to follow the civilian tailoring practices of the time, so that the construction of Roman mail closely resembled that of a tunic and was also similar in cut to the tube-and-yoke linen armour that had preceded it.

Chapter 11 examines the technical aspects of the ring manufacture, particularly the various differences in how the riveted rings were coiled on the mandrel, overlapped, flattened and riveted. Small differences in technique provide insights into the craft process and also the genealogy of the technology, with persistent regional variations hinting at a deeper craft tradition. Chapter 12 provides a brief summary and suggests that digital reconstructions of mail may provide a novel avenue of scholarship. The last pages feature a ring-by-ring digital reconstruction of the Vinmose shirt. An extended appendix provides an invaluable database of mail specimens, providing a short description, the current museum location and past publications for each.

The production values are superb, replete with numerous high-resolution photographs and illustrations in colour, offering a close-up look at mail scattered across international collections and not always on active display. This definitive book will prove a cornerstone for pre-modern armour studies for decades to come.

State University of New York at Albany

MICHAEL J. TAYLOR
mjtaylor@albany.edu

ON BEING GREEK

BEATON (R.) *The Greeks. A Global History*. Pp. xii + 588, maps. New York: Basic Books, 2021. Cased, US\$35. ISBN: 978-1-5416-1829-9.

[doi:10.1017/S0009840X2200169X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009840X2200169X)

What did and does it mean to be(come) Greek? B.’s exciting new book revolves around these questions and how the answers to them have evolved over time – a very long time. B. takes us through three and a half millennia of history concerning ‘the Greeks’ in fifteen compact, easy-to-read chapters, aimed at a general rather than an academic audience. The breadth of B.’s knowledge is enviable, and pretty much anyone who picks up this book stands to learn a great deal from it, as this reviewer certainly did. In spite of its scale the book is remarkably well balanced and coherent. The Peloponnesian

War is treated on an equal footing as, say, the literary culture of Roman Greece or the recent debt crisis that threatened Greece's membership of the eurozone.

In a helpful five-page preface B. sets out his aims. He writes: 'The collective heroes and heroines of the story told in this book are all those people who have spoken and written the Greek language throughout the long centuries of its recorded evolution' (p. 1). B. goes on to clarify that he will not be telling 'the story of a *place*' because confining himself to the frontiers of the modern Greek state dating from 1913 would mean leaving out the 'global reach' of Greek history (p. 3). Although he credits 'the artistic and scientific achievements of a group of city-states led by Athens and Sparta around two and a half thousand years ago' as 'the origin of much of the arts, sciences, politics, and law as we know them throughout the developed world today' (p. 3), this is not what he means by global reach. Rather, he wants to tell the story of 'a whole interconnected *series* of civilisations' (p. 4), including also the reign of Alexander, the spread of Greek-speaking Christian communities, the role of Greek magnates in creating the modern global shipping industry and much more.

As these programmatic statements illustrate, the book is unapologetically Hellenocentric and Philhellenic. In the early chapters B. acknowledges the importance of cultural exchange between Greek-speaking and non-Greek-speaking communities, but the decisive spark of brilliance is typically attributed to the Greek speakers. This starts with 'the very first of those Greek inventions whose effects are still with us all over the world today: the alphabet' (p. 46). B. offers the familiar account of the single, Greek individual adding five signs for vowels to the consonants-only script of the Phoenicians to create the world's first alphabetic (rather than syllabic) writing system. He adds: 'The alphabet was soon being adapted to write Phrygian . . . and Etruscan' (p. 48). Evidence for the adoption of an alphabetic system in Phrygia and Italy, however, can be dated earlier than the first surviving Greek alphabetic inscriptions (R. Parker and P.M. Steele [edd.], *The Early Greek Alphabets* [2021], pp. 2–3). Some scholars, especially Semitists, argue that these other alphabets are not derived from Greek, but rather that they 'all . . . go back to a shared (unattested) ancestor, which may already have featured some shared innovations such as (some of the) vowel signs' (W. Waal, 'Mother or Sister? Rethinking the Origins of the Greek Alphabet and its Relation to the Other "Western" Alphabets', in: P.J. Boyes and P.M. Steele [edd.], *Understanding Relations between Scripts II: Early Alphabets* [2019], p. 109; cf. W. Waal, 'On the "Phoenician Letters": the Case for an Early Transmission of the Greek Alphabet from an Archaeological, Epigraphic and Linguistic Perspective', *Aegean Studies* 1 [2018], 83–125). These are ongoing, hotly contested issues, and a bigger caveat seems desirable, also in a general audience book.

With similar confidence B. calls the Milesian Presocratics 'the first philosophers . . . the first scientists and the first mathematicians', though adding 'how much they learned from the older civilisations of the Near and Middle East is debated today' (p. 96). The Greeks themselves did not think that they were the first philosophers, but credited this to *inter alia* the Egyptians, the Chaldaeans and Indian gurus (W. Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* [2004], pp. 49–70; L. Cantor, 'Thales – the "First Philosopher"?', *BJHP* [2022]). Modern scholars have also long since pointed out that only on the basis of a very narrow definition of philosophy would *just* the Greeks – and not those living in China or India – be practising it in this early period (see, with references to earlier scholarship, e.g. R. Seaford, *The Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece and Ancient India* [2020]; G.E.R. Lloyd, *Expanding Horizons in the History of Science* [2021]).

B.'s clear definition of Greeks as Greek speakers is fruitful and refreshing. Paradoxically, this is most evident when the definition comes under pressure, which B. always confronts head-on. A case in point is his treatment of Philip and Alexander. They claimed descent from the hero Heracles and were hailed by some (most famously Isocrates) as saviours of the Greeks against the Persian 'barbarians'. Others (most famously Demosthenes) felt Philip had 'nothing to do with the Hellenes'. B. dryly notes: '[T]he highest levels of Macedonian society were thoroughly Greek-speaking by the mid-fourth century BCE ... Macedonia ... was rapidly *becoming* Greek' (pp. 155–6). Yet, during Alexander's expedition against Persia 'more Greeks actually fought on the *Persian* side against him' (p. 168), and, after his death, 'the Athenians were as jubilant as they had been at the death of Philip' (p. 178).

In his deft discussion of the 1990s conflict between Greece and (what is now known as) North Macedonia over the name and legacy of ancient Macedon, B. again focuses on language, remarking that 'the ancestors of all the Slavonic languages, or dialects, spoken in the southern Balkans in modern times did not appear on the scene until almost a thousand years after the time of Philip II and Alexander' (p. 451). But, returning to Demosthenes, he adds that 'the Athenian orator ... could not have disagreed more' with the 1990s Greek rallying cry: 'Macedonia is Greek. Read history' (p. 451).

Similar moments occur in B.'s masterful account of the 'Greek revival' leading up to the Greek revolution and the declaration, signed by Great Britain, France and Russia, that Greece would form an independent state, and the subsequent installation of the Bavarian philhellene Prince Otto as king (Chapters 13–14). At the outset of this development Greek speakers still thought of themselves as *Romioi* (Romans), meaning Orthodox Christians. The term *Hellenes* had since the time of Julian the Apostate been reserved for 'not just an *ancient* but a *pagan* people' (p. 398). But, influenced by interest in these ancient Hellenes in western Europe, the Hellenising of the *Romioi* gathered steam, as did the idea that as 'new Hellenes' they could become potential citizens of a modern state on the French revolutionary model. The patriarchate of the Orthodox Church in Constantinople did not like this revolutionary fever and reminded the Greeks that God had raised up the mighty empire of the Ottomans to rule over them (p. 401). When, with Otto deposed, in 1890 a Frenchman worked to revive the Olympic Games and inaugurate them in Athens, and the new Danish King George I of the Hellenes provided 'strong support', B. adds, 'the Greek royal family ... of course were not ethnically Greek either' (p. 419).

The book closes with reflections on migration away from and into Greece. Astoria in Queens, New York, is labelled 'perhaps the biggest Greek village in the world' even if 'Greek Americans ... do not necessarily speak Greek well, or even at all' (p. 465). B. narrates the growing local resentment and violence against refugees arriving on the Greek islands, and notes the wrangling involved in the opening in 2020 of the first official mosque to function in Athens in almost 200 years (pp. 461–2). Movingly, B. cedes the last paragraph of the book to verses by the poet Hiva Panahi, a refugee from Iran who publishes both in Kurdish and in Greek – as final testimony to language as a way of becoming Greek.

University of Virginia

INGER N.I. KUIN
ik6mg@virginia.edu