



stepping stone for curious readers not yet ready to get into the deeper debates and source discussions that feature in, for example, that of A. Powell's *A Companion to Sparta* (2017).

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THE BORDER REGION OF BITHYNIA

FERRAIOLI (F.) *Un'area di frontiera. La Bitinia dall'età arcaica all'età ellenistica*. (BAR International Series 3106.) Pp. xii + 99, colour ills, maps. Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2022. Paper, £37. ISBN: 978-1-4073-5979-3.

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This book is the fruit of three years' research at Naples University, in the framework of the project 'Grecità di frontiera: Greci e non Greci sulla costa asiatica della Propontide dall'età arcaica all'età ellenistica'. F. published his first book a decade ago about a civic subdivision, mainly Megarian: *L'Hekatomys: analisi della documentazione* (2012). In this new volume F. provides a synthesis of the territory of Bithynia, a long-lasting boundary area as a geographical part of Asian Propontis, from the Archaic period up to Roman domination and the creation of the double province Pontus-Bithynia, focused on the interactions between Greek and non-Greek populations. The two parts of the book are divided by Alexander the Great's expedition into Asia, followed by the emergence of a Bithynian dynasty, resulting in one the few Hellenistic kingdoms that was not ruled by Graeco-Macedonians.

The first part, 'Greci e non greci in Bitinia fino ad Alessandro Magno', is divided into two sections. The first one concerns the Greek foundations in the area that are mainly Megarian (Astakos, Chalcedon, Olbia), while Kios is Milesian and Myrleia was established by Colophon, including the institutional and cultic aspects. The history of these Greek cities is strongly influenced by the great regional powers: Persian hegemony, through the neighbouring satrapy of Hellespontine Phrygia, with the capital at Daskyleion, but also Athens and the Delian League in the second half of the fifth century, followed by a short Spartan domination at Chalcedon and Byzantium. The second section examines the Iranian and native presence, including the important family of the Mithridatids in Kios at the beginning of the Pontic royal house. F. provides a general overview of the Bithynians based on literary sources, a Thracian population that immigrated into North-Western Asia Minor probably during the Iron Age.

The second part, 'Il regno ellenistico di Bitinia e i suoi rapporti con il mondo greco', is more diverse. It starts with the political history of the kingdom, discussing also the historiographical tradition, that is, mainly local historians from Heraclea Pontica such as Nymphis and Memnon. Bithynia is therefore fully integrated into the Hellenistic concert of powers, especially via the rivalry with the Attalids, the vicissitudes involving the Northern League and the Galatians, before gradually becoming a client kingdom of Rome, with the end of independence following the death of Nicomedes IV. The prestige policy of the Bithynian kings is obvious through euergetism and philhellenism, from Nicomedes I onwards, adopting a Greek style. Several cases are documented, such as the sanctuaries at Delphi and Delos, the aid to Rhodes after a major earthquake and the

granting of *asylia* to the Asklepieion of Cos (on this topic a second letter of Ziaelas [spelled Zigelas] has recently been published by D. Bosnakis and K. Hallof, *Chiron* 50 [2020], 287–95). The Bithynian kings also acted as founders of cities with Greek institutions, several bearing dynastic names (Zipoition, Nikomedeia, three times Prusias) or, in the case of Bithynion, named from the eponymous hero Bithynos (later renamed Claudiopolis); some of them are refoundations of previous Greek settlements, such as Nikomedeia near Astakos, Prusias by the Sea (former Kios) and Apameia (former Myrleia). The following section concerns the Greeks and the natives in Hellenistic Bithynia, turning to the indigenous part of the kingdom, whose elite was composed of knights of native origin, based in rural areas (a recent bibliographical reference could here be added: M. Dana, ‘Local culture and regional cultures in the Propontis and Bithynia’, in: M.-P. de Hoz, J.L. Garcia Alonso, L.A. Guichard Romero [edd.], *Greek Paideia and Local Tradition in the Graeco-Roman East* [2020], pp. 39–71). A final chapter presents economic aspects, from the appearance of the kingdom in the Hellenistic world until the economic crisis that preceded Roman intervention.

A short appendix is devoted to numismatic evidence on the Bithynian kingdom (starting with Nicomedes I), presenting the monetary issues of the kings and of the Greek *poleis* in the region. Brief English abstracts are given at the beginning of every chapter. The book is based on the relevant literary and epigraphic evidence (sometimes with translations), making use of the main titles from a modern historiography that is growing fast. It further illustrates Italian interest in this region and kingdom, ranging from G. Vitucci’s *Il regno di Bitinia* (1953) to the recent works of E. Paganoni, especially her useful and well-documented monograph *Forging the Crown. A History of the Kingdom of Bithynia from its Origins to Prusias I* (2019).

The index of sources, names and places is followed by several maps (unfortunately, the quality of the maps is mediocre) and illustrations of some coins.

While overall the book gives the impression of a synthesis too brief, presenting the main results in every area, less concerned with a detailed analysis, some ideas are noteworthy, such as the focus on the contacts between Greeks and non-Greeks and their fluctuating relations (the predominance of Greek foundations, then the local hegemony of kings such as Doidalses and the progressive organisation of the Bithynian state), and the insistence on the native component of the kingdom, generally neglected by scholars in favour of the Hellenising constituent.

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RECEPTIONS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

FINN (J.) *Contested Past. A Determinist History of Alexander the Great in the Roman Empire*. Pp. x + 244, colour ills. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022. Cased, US\$70. ISBN: 978-0-472-13303-1.

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When Alexander the Great died in 323 BCE, he immediately became a mythical figure who later authors could create new narratives around. In this interesting book on the afterlife of