

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 ill. 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

Alexander F. examines 'the ways in which Roman authors manipulated narratives about Alexander to accommodate for the rise of Rome and its empire, recognizing the influence of the reign of Augustus as a catalyst for these revisionist histories' (p. 20). Throughout the book F. claims that authors created narratives depicting a linear deterministic trajectory from Alexander to the Roman Empire, not to gain prestige or provide moral anecdotes, but 'to better understand, explain, and justify Rome's place in global history' (p. 2), which served 'the important job of placing Greece within Rome and Rome within Greece' (p. 11).

The book comprises six chapters, a conclusion, a list of figures, and source and general indexes. In Chapter 1, 'Contested Pasts: Alexander the Great and Determinist History', F. presents the overall argumentation and the methodological and theoretical framework. This framework includes considerations of the well-known problems in the surviving Roman source material (Diodorus, Justin/Trogus, Curtius, Plutarch and Arrian) and the choice of drawing on an influential theoretical trend in recent decades that asserts a complex relationship between memory, history and identity in approaching the past. The aim has been to place authors in their immediate contexts and to explore how memory operates as collective representations that constitute a basis for presenting the past. Building further on these insights, F. regards 'revisionism, and the artificial construction of historical determinisms, as an essential component of the creation of collective memory' (p. 6) and argues that authors 'coped with their new situations by creating "intentional" histories to connect themselves directly with an image of Alexander the Great' (p. 183). Here, F. relies on the concepts of 'Mnemohistory' and 'Intentionale Geschichte' from J. Assmann (1988, 1992 and 1997) and H.-J. Gehrke (2001, 2003 and 2010), which nicely encapsulate that what concerns F. is not Alexander as such, but rather how he was remembered and used in the Roman period. By applying this fruitful approach, F. moves the perspective from past events in and of themselves to a society's understanding of the past, which foregrounds collective and social memory as drivers, not just in a people's understanding of their own past, but also in the written versions of that past.

Chapter 2, 'Trojan War Reprisals', traces how Graeco-Roman authors used the Trojan War to place Troy, Alexander and Augustus in the same *longue durée*. Although F. commits considerable space to show the importance of Susa as a unique place where the Greeks and Romans encountered the Persians (by nicely incorporating Aeschylus' *Persians*), the chapter is mostly devoted to a thorough interpretation of the mass weddings at Susa in 324 BCE. F. argues that this event arranged by Alexander foresaw the achievements of Rome's first emperor because it was 'a fitting stage for a reinterpretation of the outcome of the Trojan War' that placed 'the conquests of Alexander – their most exemplary imperial predecessor – in a historically determinate continuum of East-West conflict' (p. 24).

Chapter 3, 'Writing Rivalry: the Persian Wars and the Battle at Thermopylae', discusses Alexander's battle of the Persian Gate in 330 BCE. F. argues that the Romans presented this event as a 'reenactment' of the more famous battle at Thermopylae in 480 because this understanding attached them to Spartan history and consolidated their own East-West conflict in the Seleucid Wars in the second century (which contained a battle at Thermopylae in 191). Furthermore, Alexander's victory at the Persian Gate signified the capture of Persepolis, which, according to F., constituted a turning point for later authors as it was a transfer of power from Persia to Macedon. The event, therefore, had the potential to be incorporated into the wider framework of *translatio imperii* because it could be connected to 480 as well as anticipate a new emerging Roman Empire. F. claims that these 'mnemohistories', beginning with Polybius and peaking in the reign of Augustus, reformulated the genre of universal history by aiming to create all-encompassing narratives in a (stoic) teleological framework. Thus, Alexander was made to 'fight at a Thermopylae-esque battle, because the Romans did' (p. 185), making

it possible ‘to locate Alexander – with the Romans – in a long line of determinate empires who solidified their power at a battle at Thermopylae’ (p. 79).

Chapter 4, ‘Imagining Imperial Power Figures’, addresses the final plans of Alexander as depicted in Diodorus (18.4.4–5). Building on recent decades of scholarship, according to which the Sicilian historian is ‘substantially reflecting the intellectual and political attitudes of the late Hellenistic period’ (p. 85), F. argues that the plans were a Hellenistic invention fabricated to describe the merits of those men who symbolised the transition from republic to empire. As Alexander was seen as the forerunner for these new emperors because he promoted ‘the benefits of benevolent autocracy’ (p. 87), his final plans were manipulated, according to F., for political gains and made into a *topos* applicable to different periods. F. is, therefore, not surprised to find that ‘the Macedonian soldiery refused to carry out Alexander’s “last plans:” they were not Alexander’s at all’ (p. 112).

In Chapter 5, ‘Alexander in Civil War(s)’, F. directs attention to the civil war period and Pompey’s famous *imitatio Alexandri*. F. argues that the comparison with Alexander originated in Pompey’s war against Sertorius, which emphasises that statesmen and authors clearly understood how to appropriate Alexander for themselves and their opponents. F. suggests that a binary good–bad concept of Alexander emerged from the numerous duels played out among the elite during the last few decades of the Republic, which was applied to the conflict between Octavian and Marc Antony and retrospectively to that between Pompey and Sertorius.

Chapter 6, ‘Contexts of Invention: Alexander the Great at Jerusalem’, covers Alexander’s visit to Jerusalem as this fabricated story is found in the first-century CE Jewish historian Josephus. F. argues that Josephus created this story to compare Alexander and the Babylon king Nebuchadnezzar II to connect the Jews to those Romans who had given them positions and privileges. As Alexander was depicted as emulating Nebuchadnezzar, according to F., this point shows that both the successful conquerors and the consequences of their actions were closely linked to the history of the Jews.

F. has written an important book on Alexander’s Roman afterlife. The study is soundly structured and convincingly argued throughout, with five separate case studies, all emphasising the same fundamental argument. There is an impressive engagement with modern scholarship, which clearly situates F.’s interpretations in the wider Alexander scholarship. The great reward is F.’s choice of theoretical framework. By relying on memory and identity studies to unlock the material anew, the book improves our understanding of the numerous ways in which historians reassessed the past. By contextualising the Roman authors, F. effectively shows how new concepts of Alexander with great appreciation for the Greek world were created in line with the emerging Roman Empire.

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