

*Alexander der Grosse: Ingenium und Macht*

BY FRITZ SCHACHERMEYR.

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Pp. 535, with 15 illustrations and 7 maps.

Should the historian confine himself to collecting and enumerating facts or should he attempt to inspire his readers, spurring them on to heroic deeds? This question has been raised frequently in recent decades: the reply to it was either positivist or nationalist. There is still a third answer, however, and this seems to us the appropriate one for our generation. For we live in an age when the mere accumulation of material can no longer satisfy, while, on the other hand, the consequences of uncritical enthusiasm for the cult of the hero have not been forgotten. This third point of view places the individual in the centre of history, that is, sees him as a whole, his greatness as well as his faults, his achievements for humanity—if any—

as well as his crimes. None of the famous personages of the past is more suitable for such treatment than Alexander the Great, who frequently has been held up as a brilliant example by the partisans of the conquerors.

We refer to a type of historic presentation that gives an impetus not to action but to an understanding of man's essential nature; it will do greater justice to the facts than has hitherto been the case, for it conceals nothing. In the case of Alexander in particular it has been alleged that the sources portraying the hero Alexander as a human being were not to be relied upon. Therefore we hold that Schachermeyr's work not only marks an advance in what concerns the intellectual approach but, in comparison with

previous studies dedicated to the great Macedonian, it shows a deeper understanding. Schachermeyr's language likewise appears superior, provided one is not opposed to this kind of epic style which is so colourful and vivid that the difficult labour of the scholar is rarely discernible. Though it may not always be the language of the Hellenes but sometimes that of the present, the author on the whole refrains from drawing parallels to our own times. Nor is this necessary for a historian who, like Schachermeyr, proceeds from a knowledge of Alexander's epoch and of present-day European problems to arrive at an understanding of universal causations.

Thus we behold an Alexander who destroyed in order to build anew, who had himself worshipped as a god in order to rule all men equitably for their own benefit; we are told of his ideals and his brutality, his political genius and his illusions. We come to understand how these ideals take their place in the history of Greek thought and how these illusions were shaped by a geographical concept apparently making the conquest of the whole world possible. In this matter of geography, Schachermeyr's extensive travels were of great help to him; he is equally well versed in the history of the Near East which he has studied intensively. Unfortunately it was not possible to include in full the large number of notes which were to accompany his presentation. We hope therefore that the author will have an opportunity to explain his attitude on certain details more explicitly elsewhere.

As we turn to the discussion of the

book's contents in detail our purpose is primarily to emphasise those portions of it offering new material as compared with previous accounts. Such material is presented already in the first chapter: whereas formerly historians had mainly confined themselves to the assembling and presentation of events, Schachermeyr attempts to order them within their important sociological and cultural context, the realisation of which is of fundamental value beyond the specific subject under discussion. The author describes the characteristics of the Balkan countries and the nature of their people, which has largely remained the same down to the present day (cf. the book by G. Gesemann, *Der montenegrinische Mensch*, 1934). The narrow scope of this rural existence is dominated by ancestral custom and traditions—binding forces, which nevertheless allow some leeway for many a violent emotion. The upper strata of noble Macedonians already lived for the pleasures of hunting and feasting, was eager for fame, jealous of its honour and ever ready to avenge any slight upon it.

Quite a different attitude had been cultivated in the meantime in the Greek cities, and its influence soon made itself felt on the Macedonian court and aristocracy. Actually, the king and the nobles never became true Greeks, old ties were abandoned freely without new ones taking their place. This was the point where the limitless possibilities of political thought and action characteristic of the era of Alexander had their origin.

Such possibilities did in fact exist at that time in still another field, the

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intellectual, embodied in the person of Aristotle. The reader understands and shares the author's deep interest and sympathy as he is shown the crown prince of Macedonia as a companion-figure to the philosopher whose geographic teachings, even in their practical application, became decisive. Alexander's conception of the universe may be reconstructed (Schachermeyr is the first to have made an attempt to show this) from the meteorology of the Stagirite; undoubtedly the use of maps played the same important role in the instruction of the prince as it did later in the Academy.

Another chapter takes us to the scenes of Alexander's campaigns. Here too, in the Orient, the author finds a duality of urban culture and rural aristocratic tradition, the former developed in the cities of Asia Minor, the other carried by the Iranian nobility. The presentation turns next to the literature of the campaigns. Opposing the revolutionary proposals of Tarn (*Alexander the Great*, II, 1948) Schachermeyr defends the earlier point of view of Felix Jacobi (*Fragmente Griechischer Historiker*, II, 618 *et seq.*). As the most ancient sources after Callisthenes, he accepts Onesikritus and Clitarchus; as the most recent, Aristobulus and Ptolemy. He wants Onesikritus used only with reservations because he finds in him too great a mixture of historical description and utopian romancing, a circumstance, however, that contributes to the fascination of this writer's work. On the other hand, Clitarchus is ranked surprisingly high despite the confusion of his presentation as a whole. From his account it is

possible to disentangle a number of separate stories, told by soldiers of Alexander's forces, which have retained their dramatic vividness. For example, the description of Alexander's entry into Babylon—taken over from Clitarchus by Curtius, V/1, 17 *et seq.*—is held to be the report of an eye-witness. On the other hand, Schachermeyr is suspicious of Ptolemy's reliability for the very reason that has heretofore made this writer so prized by researchers. He considers that Ptolemy gives us the official viewpoint of 'General Headquarters' that is, of Alexander himself, in other words, that he is a source not wholly free of partisan tendencies. When we look at similar cases—Caesar's Commentaries, or the Annals of Charlemagne's court—we can readily understand Schachermeyr's hesitation in accepting, for example, the statements concerning the losses of the Persians as the unvarnished truth.

In his description of the first years of the campaign, the author discusses Alexander's role in the three great battles and also notes the slowly rising opposition of Parmenion and the conservative attitude of the Macedonian generals which he represented. New material is offered above all on the invasion of the Siwa oasis; basing his opinion on chronological facts, Schachermeyr believes that even before the inception of this enterprise directives had been sent as far as Branchidai that the divinity of Alexander should be recognised; from this he concludes that Alexander expected from the very beginning to be received by Ammon as a god. For the period after the battle

of Gaugamala the author draws far-reaching conclusions from the report that the Macedonian army had proclaimed Alexander as King of Asia.

The section dealing with the period from the death of Darius to the invasion of India is presented by Schachermeyr as being influenced by the aforementioned contrast between Alexander's new universal outlook and the conservatism of those Macedonians who wanted to see the policies of Philip of Macedon continued. The trial of Philotas, the catastrophe of Clitos, and the conspiracy of Baktra are interpreted from this angle. Concerning the matter of proskynesis—the nature of which is a matter of controversy—the author assumes a connexion with the holy fire of the Persian kings.

The campaign in India harks back to the Aristotelian concept of the universe, although this was of but small assistance: new geographic problems constantly arose—on the Caspian Sea, in the Punjab and at the mouth of the Indus. Despite the surveying of the region, undertaken simultaneously with the campaign, no definite solutions were found. The presentation of these questions is based on careful studies made by Schachermeyr and offers much new material. Maps and sketches give even the layman insight into them.

It has often been alleged that Alexander in the last year of his reign selected Babylon as the capital of his empire. In the author's opinion this is a false thesis based on an erroneous conception of the character of Alexander's rule. There was no permanent seat of government but it shifted with 'General Headquarters' as they were moved

from place to place according to the ruler's decision. Whenever he disappeared with his army into the far reaches of India or Gedrosia there was no way even of appointing new local governors to fill vacancies. Only for the finances of the realm was there a central office, but that too had no permanent seat; it was embodied in the person of Harpagos, who performed the functions of his office, or at least was supposed to perform them, first in Ekbatana, then in Babylon, and finally in Tarsus.

It is a novel and very important thesis of Schachermeyr's that in the last years of his rule Alexander hesitated to make Greek mercenaries the mainstay and dominant class in the cities which he founded. He had followed this practice previously. As they had always obeyed his command with great reluctance and had been constantly ready to revolt, Alexander wished in future to hand over this task to the Semites from the Syrian and Phœnician coast districts in the belief that these would adapt themselves more readily to the new conditions and would at the same time be capable of transmitting a universal hellenistic culture to their surroundings.

The picture of Alexander drawn by Schachermeyr is influenced strongly by the ruler's 'last projects' as Diodorus (XVIII, 4, 4) reported them. Wilcken, Herve, and Radet as well as others have assumed that these plans may be traced back to Hieronymus of Cardia; Schachermeyr attempts to explain with new arguments why there is no mention of them in the other sources

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which treat directly of Alexander. Since Tarn estimated the value of these reports very sceptically, it would perhaps be advisable that Schachermeyr return to this problem in greater detail than was possible within the scope of an all-inclusive presentation.

Finally this reviewer wishes to draw

attention to various reviews of the book which have come to his notice: B. Bradford-Welles (Yale University), *American Journal of Archeology*, 1951; C. A. Robinson, Jr. (Brown University), *Classical Philology*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 1952; Roberto Andreotti (Turin), *Rivista di Filologia*, 1952.