II. Macedonia in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods

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1. Introductory note

Alongside Athens and Sparta, Macedonia was the Greek state that inspired, and continues to inspire, the most historical and general interest. Its rise from a country of farmers and stock breeders to the leading Greek power in the 4th century BC, the historical role as the ‘fence’ (Polybius, IX 35.1-4) of southern Greece, fending off the invasions of the peoples of the northern Balkans, the global historical significance of Alexander the Great’s campaign to the East (the work not only of a single military genius, but of his Macedonian followers), and the three wars against the Romans, possibly the most characteristic example of resistance to Roman expansion to the East, are the four elements that constitute the history of Macedonia as an independent state, and which justifiably inspired and inspire such historical and general interest.

In contrast to this exceptionally important historical role, the sources available to us for the history of the Macedonians until the Roman conquest are relatively few. Until the reign of Philip II, i.e. the second half of the 4th century BC, the extant information is incidental in nature, mainly digressions in works on the history of the city-states of southern Greece. General works on the history of Macedonia started to appear from the time of Philip onwards. Of these, however, only a very few fragments have survived, and in some cases only the titles. This is mainly due to the fact that these works, as well as a large portion of the Hellenistic literary output, was neglected in the Augustan period, with its classicising turn, resulting in their loss. The loss, for example, of the work of Hieronymos of Kardia (ca 350-270 BC), which covers the events of the fifty years from the death of Alexander the Great until the death of Pyrrhus (323-272 BC), cannot be made up for through the relatively few fragments contained in the work of Diodoros (1st century BC) or the details that Plutarch provides in his biographies. Nor in the highly rhetorical work of Pompeius Trogus, the Historiae Philippicae, which comes down to us in an Epitome of Justin from around AD 150. Other literary sources include the political rhetoric of the 4th century BC, which is known to us mainly through the speeches of Demosthenes and is typified by the Athenian rhetor’s political prejudice towards the rising new Greek power. These political speeches had, as we know, a great influence on the later sources of the Imperial period, as well as on modern European historiography, resulting in the following paradox: in contrast with what is usually, perhaps always, the case, the history of the conflict between the Athenians and Macedonia is known to us not from the perspective of the victor, but from the perspective of the defeated.

The history of Alexander the Great’s campaign to the East is known from much later works, e.g. Plutarch’s Life and Arrian’s Anabasis, which however focus on the personality of the king and are influenced at many points by the classicising trend of the milieu in which they were written (1st – 2nd century AD). As for the history of the resistance to the Romans in general works, the information provided is not only limited, but undoubtedly influenced by the ultimate domination of the Romans. This is also true for Polybius (2nd century BC), whose central theme is the rise of Rome as a global power, and especially so for the Roman history from the city’s foundation by Livy (1st century BC).

In addition to the digressions mentioned above and the few fragments in works on Macedonia, what remains for the history of the ancient Macedonians are inscriptions,
which only a few refer to the 5th and 4th centuries BC (the earliest from Athens), the vast majority coming from the 3rd and 2nd centuries, in particular the Imperial age.

There is, however, a large volume of prosopographic material, i.e. the names of people, institutions, festivals, etc., known from literary sources and inscriptions, as well as the relatively few sparse remains of the Macedonian dialect. To all these we must add the exceptionally important finds from archaeological excavations conducted mainly in the second half of the 20th century, finds which, without of course being able to fill the gap created by the lack of other sources, constitute an important source for the art, general culture and daily lives of the ancient Macedonians throughout all the phases of their history.

Four basic themes have been posed in the historical research of ancient Macedonia as an independent state (by which we mean the centuries from the foundation of the Macedonian kingdom around the mid-7th BC century until its dissolution by the Romans in 168 BC). The first concerns the origins of the Macedonians, or their ‘Greekness’, specifically as to whether they were a Greek tribe, like the others, or something else (which, however, is never defined by those who deny the Greekness of the Macedonians). The second theme concerns the internal organisation of the state, from the foundation of the Macedonian kingdom (ca the mid-7th century BC) until the time of Philip II. The third concerns the cultural relations of the Macedonians with the southern Greeks, and the fourth the historical role of Macedonia from Alexander’s campaign to the resistance against the Romans.

### 2. Part A: The Origin of the Macedonians

As regards the problem of the origin of the Macedonians, it should be said that, independently of the volume and type of information available and of the attitudes expressed by southern Greek writers, and regardless of the judgments or prejudices of earlier and contemporary scholars, what is of utmost importance is what the Macedonians believed about themselves. Directly related to this are the definite (objective, one might say) pieces of evidence that verify their own purported self-conscious identity. Or, to put it differently: if the Macedonians started to define themselves from one specific period (specifically, the 4th century BC) and onwards throughout the rest of their history as Greeks, and if the linguistic evidence garnered from various aspects of their culture is Greek, then the problem of their original descent is irrelevant. In any case, as primarily earlier scholarship has correctly observed, and as is self-evident, no nation can prove a pure ethnic descent, without intermarriage or influences from other nations.

In the famous epigram that accompanied the dedication of the Persian shields, the spoils from Alexander’s victory at the River Granicus (324 BC), the Macedonian king spoke collectively of himself and the other Greeks, except for the Spartans (‘Alexander the son of Philip and all the Greeks except the Spartans from the Barbarians who dwell in Asia’, Arr., *Anabasis*, I.16.7, Plutarch, *Alexander*, 16.18). The letter that he sent Darius after the battle of Issus begins with the phrase ‘Your ancestors invaded Macedonia and the rest of Greece and did us harm although we had not done you any previous injury. I have been appointed commander-in-chief of the Greeks and it is with the aim of punishing the Persians that I have crossed into Asia, since you are the aggressors.’ (Arr., *Anabasis*, II. 14). In the treaty between the king of Macedonia Philip V and Hannibal (215 BC), given in Polybius (VII.9), Macedonia is emphatically referred to as a part of Greece: reference is made to the Gods ‘who rule Macedonia and the rest of Greece’, whilst the allies of the Carthaginians are given as King Philip, the Macedonians and other Greeks. Moreover, around half a century later, on the pediment of a monument dedicated to the Roman general Quintus Caecilius Metellus, an ordinary
Macedonian from Thessaloniki, both his Macedonian and his Greek origins were emphasised with the phrase ‘honour and gratitude are due to those who have served the homeland and the other Macedonians and the other Greeks’, (IG X 2.1, 1031).

These points, to which others could be added, leave no doubt that in the following centuries the Macedonians identified themselves as a Greek tribe. The same conclusion can be reached from the great majority of their surviving linguistic traces: the names of the Macedonian months, such as Xandikos, Dios, Artemisios, Hyperberetaios, Peritios, etc., which are associated (as in the cities of south Greece) with festivals, are Greek. Personal names – and not only those of the higher social classes, but also those of the lower classes – are, aside from a very few, Greek. These date from the 6th-5th centuries BC and, as with the names of the festivals, are not, of course, attributable to the ‘Hellenisation’ of the Macedonians via the coastal cities. In none of the cases where Macedonians and other Greeks communicate is an interpreter mentioned, meaning that the Macedonian and Attic dialects were mutually comprehensible. This is also testified in a fragment from the fifth-century comedy ‘Macedonians’ by the comic poet Strattis, in which a Macedonian (a character in the comedy) has the line – obviously speaking in the dialect of his origin – ‘Wha’ ye Attics ca’ a hammer-fush, me freen’ (J. M. Edmonds, The Fragments of Attic Comedy, vol. 1 Leiden 1957, p. 823, fr. 28, Edmonds has here translated the Macedonian’s speech as though he were a Scot).

Only if one accepts this Greek identity of the Macedonian dialect, is it possible to understand why Attic Greek became the language of government for the Macedonian state under Philip II, and only then is it also possible to understand why the Macedonians, after the conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander, used Attic. A people with such political achievements, both in the case of Philip II and his victory over the Athenians as well as Alexander with the conquest of Asia, has such a strong sense of self as not to abandon its own language in favour of another. This, as K. J. Beloch and other historians have correctly observed, would be the only example in world history.

To say that Philip and Alexander used Greek in the same way as Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great used French, as critics of the Hellenicity of the Macedonians do, is a mark of prejudice, because in neither case, of Prussia or of Russia, was French used as the official language. And to argue for the ‘idiosyncrasy’ of the Macedonian language with reference to phrases such as ‘Macedonian speech’ (Plutarch, Alexander, 51.4) or ‘Macedonian in voice’, (Plutarch, Eumenes, 14.5) signifies either ignorance or prejudice, since the phrase ‘We talk Peloponnesian’ (Theocritus, XV, line 92) indicates dialect and not, of course, a Peloponnesian language.

The questioning of the Greek origin of the Macedonians has mainly been done (irrespective of the intents or prejudices of the arguments) through reference to the distinction between Greeks and Macedonians made in literary sources from the 5th century BC. Such questioning pays particular attention to a relatively few, clearly loaded phrases in which the Macedonians are characterised as culturally inferior (‘barbarian’, e.g. Demosthenes, Third Philippic, 31). Despite the fact that these phrases cannot be taken as evidence for a generally negative attitude of the southern Greeks towards the Macedonians, and of course even less for some kind of ‘barbarianism’, I consider it necessary to add a few, indicative details which reflect the historical reality and irrefutably verify it. I shall then discuss some of the phrases in which the distinction referred to is made.

The earliest evidence that we have, i.e. Herodotos, does not leave any doubt that the name ‘Macedonians’ signifies a Greek tribe. In the first reference (I 56), Herodotos discusses the Dorian ‘genos’ (‘race’), which ‘settled in Pindos, in the territory called Macedonia’. In his second reference (VIII 43), Herodotos uses the phrase ‘Dorian and
Macedonian ethnos’ ('nation') when describing cities in the Peloponnese (Spartans, Corinthians, Sikyonians, Epidaurians, Troezenians) that took part in the naval battle of Artemeisian (480 BC). ‘Makednos’ is also found as an adjective in the Homeric epics, and means tall or tapered (Odyssey, 7.106: ‘fylla makednos aigeiroio’, ‘leaves of a tall poplar tree’).

The historical reality is reflected in the mythological tradition testified to in Hesiod, according to which Makedon, the founder of the ‘genos’ of the Macedonians, was the son of Zeus and Thyia, daughter of Deucalion, and brother of Magnes, the former living on Olympus and the other in Pieria (R. Merkelbach-M.L. West, Fragmenta Hesiodea, Oxford 1967, fr. 7). The sons of Makedon are given as Europas, Pieros and Amathos, names of Macedonian cities. According to another tradition, Makedon was the son of Aiolos, brother of Doros and Xouthos (FGrHist 4 F74, Hellanikos), a tradition that demonstrates a clear link to the Greek tribes. This, and other evidence (mainly linguistic, demonstrating the relationship between the dialects) support the view of earlier and contemporary historical research that Macedonia was one of the north-western Greek tribes, with Pindos as its place of origin.

A typical example of the belief that the Macedonians constituted a Greek tribe from the historical evidence itself is the point made by the Akarnanian politician Lykiskos in a speech given at Sparta in 211 BC, during which he said that the Macedonians were ‘of the same race [homophyloi] as the Achaians’ and the Dorian Spartans. The other Greeks must unite with those of the ‘same race’, the Macedonians and their king Philip in order to face the threat of ‘another race’ (allophyloi), i.e. the Romans (‘now Greece is threatened with a war against men of a foreign race who intend to enslave her,’ Polybius, IX 37.7-8). In the speech of the Aitolian politician Agelaos at Naupaktos in 217 BC, the Macedonians are presented as another Greek race with whom the other Greeks should unite in order to face the enemy (Polybius, V 104).

In addition to this evidence, which relates to a significant external threat and crisis, there is more evidence from other specific incidents, which is equally revealing. From the 4th century, Macedonians were listed as victors in the Panhellenic Games. Among the Greek cities from various regions that acknowledged the right to immunity of the Asklepeion at Kos in 243 BC were the Macedonian cities of Pella, Kassandreia, Amphipolis and Philippoi (Hatzopoulos, Institutions II, nos 36, 41, 47, 58). In 209/8 BC, King Philip V attempted to influence Chalkis’ participation at the Panhellenic festival of Artemis Leukophryene organised by Magnesia on the Meander, emphasising, as we can see from a phrase in a letter of his quoted in the decree of Chalkis, that the Magnesians are relatives of the Macedonians (I. Magnesia, 37). Only one example suffices from the imperial period, the decree of the city of Ephesus (162/163 or 163/164 BC), in which the Macedonians are mentioned amongst other Greek ‘ethne’ (nations), lines 16-20: ‘the month which we call Artemision, the Macedonians and the other Greek ethne call Artemisio’ (I. Ephesos 24B).

The impression given by these few yet indicative references is that the distinction between Greeks and Macedonians, if it is not due to political bias, as in the case of Demosthenes, should be attributed to a reasonable lack of contact during the archaic and classical periods; a lack of contact that justifies an ignorance of the real conditions existing in Macedonia. Since this distinction has often been exploited, we should attempt to give a brief presentation of it here.

Macedonia was known in southern Greece mainly through the territory and organisation it had achieved since the time of Alexander I (ca 495-452 BC). We shall discuss both further below. It is worth noting here, however, that this state included areas from Upper Macedonia as far as the River Strymon. Such a state, with its various
Macedonian tribes, also included regions in which other, non-Greek tribes lived and who were later expelled, such as the Illyrians, the Paionians and the Thracians, and which was probably not very well known to the Greeks of southern Greece. The tribe from which the Argead kings, who with Alexander I and his ancestors had made ‘Makedonis’ the centre of the state (Hdt. VII 127), i.e. the area between the Haliakmon and Loudias rivers, is also very little known. According to tradition, as preserved in Herodotos (VIII 137-138) and Thucydides (II 99.3), the Macedonian kings descended from Argos and were the descendants of Temenos, i.e. they were descendants of Herakles. A dedicatory inscription to Herakles Patroos from Vergina - even if it dates to the reign of Perseus (178-169 BC) - is indicative of the connection between the royal family and its ‘ancestor’ (SEG XLVI 829).

In the 5th century we know that there were mass settlements from southern Greece in Macedonia: for example, in 478 BC after the destruction of Mycenae by the Argives, a large section of the population fled – thanks, of course, to the interest shown by the Macedonian king Alexander I - to Macedonia (Pausanias VII, 25, 6), whilst in 446 BC residents of Histaia in north Euboia migrated to Macedonia after the capture of their island by Perikles (FGrHist 115, F387, Theopompos). According to Thucydides (IV 124.1), in 423 BC Greek hoplites were serving in the army of Perdikkas II. Macedonians, however, would rarely have gone down to southern Greece and the region would have started to become better known in the early years of the Peloponnesian War. It is indicative that cities within the area of Macedonia that belonged to the Delian League are referred to in the tribute lists as belonging geographically to Thrace.

In my opinion, this lack of knowledge for the region and its inhabitants is one reason for the distinction made between Greeks and Macedonians. Another reason is that the latter had not participated in the Greek political and cultural developments of the 6th and 5th centuries BC, and thus the basic element of these developments, i.e. the democratic city-state did not exist in Macedonia, which was governed by a monarchy. This explains the fact that in the mid-4th century, even Isokrates, in the letter to Philip in which he proposed the union of the southern Greeks under Philip’s leadership in the war against the Persians, distinguishes between Macedonians and Greeks (To Philip 107-108). Even so, the relatively few references that are extant do not allow us to generalise this distinction as the universal attitude of all southern Greeks. In his speech On the crown (330 BC), Demosthenes criticised a large number of politicians from southern Greek cities who had followed a pro-Macedonian policy and were traitors (On the crown, 295). One would wish to know the thoughts of these ‘traitors’ on Macedonia, but unfortunately they are known only through the charged accounts of the Athenian political rhetor, which Polybius comments upon negatively (XVIII.14).

Even so, the position of a large section of contemporary and earlier scholarly work on the origin and language of the Macedonians, which has not been influenced by this distinction and unreservedly accepts the Hellenicity of the Macedonians in terms of their origin and language, is absolutely correct. The opposite view comes up against not only historical reality but often against common sense. If a proper name or common word has a non-Greek origin, or even a custom (e.g. Aristotle, Politics, 1324b 15-16), it is considered to be non-Greek, this is not a counter-argument, and to continue to be proposed as such serves anything but academic interests.

Inscriptions and other finds are prevalent in contemporary research. They are few, of course, but indicative enough and from far-flung parts of the Macedonian hinterland, demonstrating the Hellenicity of the Macedonians, without us having to accept the vague, and thus unconvincing, view that they were Hellenised by the residents of the Greek coastal colonies.
Select bibliography

Language

Prosopography

Relations between Macedonians and the cities of southern Greece

3. Part B: Political History (500–168 BC)

3.1. Alexander I (ca 495-452 BC)
The political history of Macedonia as a part of Greek history essentially begins in the reign of Alexander I (495-452 BC) of the Argead dynasty, which belonged to the Macedonian tribe that founded the state. The most likely scenario is that this Macedonian tribe, having come from the region of Orestis, migrated around 700 BC in an easterly direction in search of more land, eventually occupying Pieria and later neighbouring Bottiaia. The Macedonian state was founded in this region around 650 BC (Thuc. II 99). It seems more likely that the dynasty’s name points to its founder and not to a fabricated origin in the Peloponnesian Argos (according to the myth invented later, in the era of Alexander I, to connect Macedonia to southern Greece). According to Herodotos (VIII.139) six kings had ruled before Alexander: Perdikkas I, Argaioi, Philip I, Aeropos I, Alketas and Amyntas I. From the time of Amyntas I (father of Alexander I) and for a
long period during the reign of Alexander I (until 479 BC), Macedonia was subordinate to the Persians.

Alexander I, the seventh Temenid king (Hdt., VIII.137.1), was known in Greek history as a ‘Philhellene’, a characterisation used as an argument by some of those who would deny the Hellenism of the Macedonians. They are unaware, however, or choose to be unaware, that this characterisation, given to him for his position during the Persian War, simply means one who loves the Greeks, and was used not just for foreigners, but also for Greeks (e.g. it was later used for the king of Sparta Agesilaos, Xen., Agesilaos, VII.4: ‘it is honourable in one who is a Greek to be a philhellene’; cf. the inscription IG X 2.1, 145, 3rd century AD).

Alexander I fully understood that defeating the Persians was of vital importance for Macedonia, and it is thus very likely that it is he who should be thanked for the supply of timber with which Themistokles built the Athenian fleet. This is the reason he was honoured a little later by the Athenians as a ‘protector and benefactor’ (Hdt. VIII 136.1) and a ‘protector and friend’ (Hdt. VIII 143.3).

Alexander was a ‘Philhellene’ for the services he offered to the Greeks fighting against the Persians, even though he was forced to follow Xerxes during his campaign, especially at the battle of Plataia (479 BC), according to Herodotos’s celebrated description (IX 44-45). Moreover, this offer is also indicated by the presence of a golden statue of Alexander at Delphi, next to the tripod, a votive offering of the Greeks for their victories at sea (Hdt. VIII 121.2, Dem., Philip’s Letter, 21).

The Macedonian kingdom, with the extent that it was known up to the reign of Philip, owed much of its emergence as a strong political power to the skills of Alexander I. According to Thucydides (II 99), Alexander and the previous Macedonian kings, generally referred to as ‘his ancestors’, expelled the Paionians from the lower Axios river valley, the Edonians from Mygdonia, the Eordaioi from Eordaia, as well as the Almopes from Almopia. They also took over Anthemus (V. 94.1) at the cove of the Thermaic gulf – which Herodotos even says was offered to Amyntas I by Hippias, son of the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus. A work that can be considered exclusively Alexander’s own is Macedonian domination in the area of Bisaltia and Krestonia. The local populations living here were different from those of the Pieres, Bottaeans, Edonians, Eordaioi and Almopes that we saw in Thucydides and who were expelled from their regions. The related tribes of Upper (mountain) Macedonia (Lynkestai, Elemiotai, Orestai, Tymphaioi, and Parauaioi) became, in Thucydides’s (II 99.2) phrase, ‘allies and dependents’, meaning that he forced their leaders to accept his suzerainty. In Alexander’s day, then – and in particular after the defeat of the Persians at Plataia, against whom Alexander achieved a crushing victory as they retreated through Macedonia (‘made their defeat irreparable’, Demostenes, Against Aristokrates 200, On Organisation, 24) - the territory of the Macedonian kingdom quadrupled.

A characteristic demonstration of the achievements of the Macedonian king are the coins that were minted with silver from the mines of Dysoron in the region of the Strymon. The horse rider portrayed on one side is clearly the king himself; the other side bears his name.

Of equal historical importance is Alexander’s work in the area of foreign policy, where with new ideas and initiatives he made expansion of the state and reinforcing of the central authority top priorities. Strengthening of Macedonia’s military might was of urgent necessity. This strength had previously been dependent upon the cavalry, which consisted of noble Macedonians who bore the Homeric title of ‘hetairoi’, i.e., companions. Because the cavalry would certainly not suffice for the new needs, Alexander set about organising (to a limited extent) the infantry. What clearly shows his political gen-
ius was the new attitude with which this organisation was done: the Macedonian infantry were named ‘pezetairoi’, i.e. the infantry (pezoioi) ‘companions’ of the king, as were the nobles. In this way, a strong bond was created between the Macedonian peasants, hoplites and the monarch on the one hand, and a political counterweight against the nobles on the other. Bonds between the army and the king were also strengthened to a significant degree with the granting of land by the king to the ‘hetairoi’ nobles and also, albeit a smaller territory, to the ‘pezetairoi’. Historians have different views on the creation of these ‘pezetairoi’ (see, for example, Hatzopoulos, Institutions, 269), due to the problems presented by the only piece of evidence that we have for it (FGrHist 72 F4 Anaximenes). Historical reasoning, however, makes its attribution to Alexander I necessary, and thus the view presented here is accepted by most scholars. Indeed, the discovery in the west cemetery of Archontiko near Pella of graves that belonged to warriors - members of the local military aristocracy, as can be ascertained from their ‘rich’ burial goods and which date from before and up to the reign of Alexander I - leaves almost no doubt that these individuals were associated with Alexander’s programme, perhaps even his predecessor kings, i.e. Alketas I (6th century) and Amyntas I (ca 540-598 BC). This also shows that the efforts to create and organise a Macedonian army date to several years before the reign of Philip II.

Of course, the Macedonian infantry, both in terms of numbers and in terms of organisation, did not yet have (and could not have) the strength that it was later to develop later thanks to Philip II, who established the general military service. Even so, the concept of its organisation along the lines discussed above is an incontrovertible element in the assessment of Alexander I as an exceptionally skilled leader. This becomes even better understood if we consider that the Macedonian kingdom was not an authoritarian regime, since the assembly of the army played an important role. The army elected the new king or the ‘ephor’ (regent) of an underage successor from the Argead family and even operated as a court in cases of high treason.

Alexander I’s policy towards the Macedonian cities, which we should imagine as being more or less dependent on the monarch, is less known to us. Of the great majority of these cities we know only the names (Ichnai and Pella for example, are described as poleis in Herodotos VII.123). One of the finest seems to have been Ichnai, which had been minting coins until the 5th century. As for their organisation, Hesyichios informs us of the terms peliganes (s.v. ‘peliganes: the glorious; the councillors (bouleutai) at Syros’) and tagoi or tagonana (s.v. ‘tagonana: Macedonian authority’), which obviously ascribes to them, in the first case, a kind of boule or gerousia, and the most important nobles in the second case. The ‘languages’ in Hesyichios are confirmed in letters in the form of inscriptions: in a letter from Philip V, for example, to the city of Dion – dated to around 180 BC – the ‘epistates’ (civic magistrates), ‘peliganes’ and ‘other citizens’ are mentioned as the recipients (SEG XLVIII 785). In deeds of sale from Tyrissa (in the region of Yiannitsa) ‘royal judges’ and ‘tagoi’ are mentioned (SEG XLVII 999).

For the organisation of a state undergoing vast expansion, as Macedonia was in the period of Alexander I, the forty-five years or so of his reign were too brief to achieve much. Internal cohesion was still relaxed since the leaders of the related tribes of Upper Macedonia could not, of course, fully accept domination by the Argead king. Beyond the borders there were foreign, non-Greek tribes, such as the Odrysian Thracians to the west and the Illyrians to the north, who under certain conditions could endanger the security of the Macedonian kingdom. There was also a danger from the south, in other words Athens, in whose sphere of influence, as members of the Athenian League, were many of the coastal cities along the Thermaic gulf as far as the Hellespont. For this reason, Macedonia’s vital interests came into conflict with those of
Athens, as was already clear from 465 BC, when the Athenians attempted to occupy the territory of the Lower Strymon, suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Edonoi when they attempted to proceed inland. As many historians agree, Alexander contributed significantly to this failure of the Athenians.

3.2. Perdikkas II (452-413 BC)

The internal problems that arose from the great territorial expansion of the Macedonian kingdom in the reign of Alexander I appeared a few years after his death (under unknown circumstances), when his son Perdikkas (452-413 BC) ruled Macedonia. Dynastic clashes, secessionist movements among the kings of Upper Macedonia, interventions by the powers of southern Greece (i.e. Athens and Sparta) during the Peloponnesian War, not to mention the invasion of Odrysian Thracians comprise the political history of the Macedonian kingdom over the forty or so years in which Perdikkas ruled the country.

Although we have relatively few sources for Perdikkas II, we can say – and this is generally accepted by historians – that he was definitely politically resourceful in the way he dealt with all these difficult situations. In this way he managed to impose upon the two rivals to the throne, his brothers, to whom their father had also given a part of his realm. Perdikkas also managed to vacillate between Athens and Sparta, switching alliances between the two as it suited, in order to secure the independence of his state. This, of course, held more for Athens, which wanted a Macedonia that was dependent upon it, because it was from Macedonia that Athens secured timber, the primary raw material upon which its power was based.

It is worth looking at the various changes in Perdikkas’s relations with the Athenians during the Peloponnesian War so as to ascertain the Macedonian king’s political versatility, which in certain circumstances was, however, not enough to deal with the understandable weaknesses of Macedonia as a rising power. In 429 BC, Sitalkes, the king of the Odrysian Thracians, invaded Macedonia, pillaged a number of regions and reached as far as Anthemous (Thuc. II 100), clearly indicating that Macedonia did not yet have sufficient military power. This was also apparent during Perdikkas’s military campaign alongside the Spartan king Brasidas against the Lynkestai in 423 BC, against whom Perdikkas had hired Illyrian mercenaries. The campaign failed as a result of the treason of the Illyrian mercenaries (Thuc., IV 124-125). Even so, the way in which Perdikkas II won over the nephew of the Thracian leader Seuthes (to whom Perdikkas gave his sister Stratonike in marriage, Thuc. II 101. 6), thus securing the latter’s withdrawal from Macedonia, is an example of his political versatility.

3.3. Archelaos (413-399 BC)

In this period, Macedonia witnessed exceptional progress in its internal organisation as well as in other fields. There were specific reasons for this: the political conditions prevailing in southern Greece during the last phase of the Peloponnesian War, a weakened Athens as a result of the disastrous Sicilian Expedition, the city’s ultimate defeat, and, above all, the presence of an able monarch in Macedonia. The creator of this Macedonia was King Archelaos, whom Plato characterises as a callous tyrant (Gorgias, 471 c-d, Alkibiades II., 141 d, 7). Thucydides, however, saw him as an active and clear-sighted king. In terms of the infrastructure of the country (fortresses and roads) and the equipping and organisation of the army (infantry and cavalry) Archelaos achieved more than any of the previous eight kings of Macedonia, is the ancient historian’s brief but incisive comment (II 100.2). To what we can attribute this rise in the strength of the
Macedonian army is not quite known. Some younger historians argue that it mainly involved the creation of units of heavily-armed hoplites. This is one possible hypothesis based on the painful experience of the failed response to the invasion of Sitalkes, due to the lack of an infantry of sufficient standards (see above).

Archelaos, an illegitimate son of Perdikkas II who was however recognised as legitimate early on (Plato, Gorgias, 471a, Aelian, Historical Miscellany, XII 43), was proclaimed King in 413 BC by pushing aside various relatives, rivals to the throne. In the (relatively brief) period of the 13 years of his reign (he fell victim to a conspiracy in 399 BC that had personal and political motives), in addition to reinforcing the country’s defence capabilities he posited and (to a certain degree) achieved three other goals: improvement in its administrative organisation (alongside the establishment of centralised power), an increase in its power abroad and, most of all, cultural development. All this was done with the perspective that in the near future Macedonia could become an important power with a leading role in Greek politics.

As is known, Archelaos moved the capital of the country from Aiges to Pella, in the western section of the Thermaic gulf (see Hatzopoulos, ‘Strepsa’, 42-43). In a diplomatic manner, he avoided an alliance between the kings of Elimia and Lynkestai - Sirras and Arrhabaios – by giving his daughter in marriage to the former (Aristotle, Politics, 1311b 13-14). With the help of the Athenians (who urgently needed his help in ensuring their timber supply) he occupied Pydna in 410 BC. In response to the appeal for help from the Aleuadai (aristocrats of Larissa) against their political rivals, he invaded Thessaly, occupied Larissa, withdrawing only once the Aleuadai had been established, yet maintained his occupation of Perrhaibia.

The importance that Macedonia acquired as a political power in southern Greece can be seen, perhaps more than in any other event, in the fact that in a vote of 407-6 BC the Athenians honoured Archelaos as a protector and friend, with specific reference to the export of timber for the construction of the new fleet that the Macedonian king had approved (IG I3 117, SEG X 138). We can easily understand the importance of this decision if we take into account that the Athenians, after the loss of Amphipolis in 421 BC, had no entry point into Macedonia for their timber supply and were thus dependent upon the good will of the Macedonian monarch. In contrast, only a few years earlier, it was the Athenians who had imposed their own terms upon Perdikkas (in 426/5 BC with the settlement of his relations with Methoni and in 423/422 with the treaty of alliance with reference to the monopoly on the supply of timber, IG I3, 89).

In the only fragment of his speech On Behalf of the Larisians (ca 400 BC), the rhetor Thrasymachos of Chalcedon, a political rival of the Aleuadai and Archelaos, called the Macedonian king a ‘barbarian’ (‘Are we to be slaves of Archelaos, barbarians though we be Greeks?’ H. Diels, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Berlin 19526, 85, B2). The bias of the ancient rhetor’s phrase as well as the prejudice of certain contemporary historians who refer to it, deniers of the Greekness of the Macedonians, is clear. The same prejudice can be seen in the evaluation of the Macedonian monarch’s cultural work, which we discuss below (Part C).

3.4. The great crisis (399-359 BC)

In the 40 years from the death of Archelaos (399 BC) till Philip’s ascension to the throne (360 BC), the Macedonian kingdom experienced the most serious crisis in its history. A number of aspects of this crisis are unknown, or insufficiently known, to us because the information available to us from the (mainly literary) sources of the 4th century BC or much later is limited and, at many points, problematic. Nonetheless, even
with this information the three main points that comprised this crisis are clear. The first consists of the political instability arising from inter-dynastic conflicts that result in the overthrow of the ruling king (and occasionally his murder). The other two points are products of this political instability: interventions by the powers of southern Greece in favour of one or the other side, and the expansionist policy of Olynthos at the expense of the central section of the kingdom along with the invasions of the Illyrians. This last shows how serious the crisis was.

This political instability is manifest in the list of kings of this period, as compiled (with minor variations) by the Byzantine chronographers: Orestes (young son of Archelaos): 399-398/7 BC; Aeropos (initially Orestes’s regent): 398/7-395/4 BC; Pausanias (son of Aeropos) and Amyntas II, the so-called ‘Little’: 394/3 BC; Amyntas III: 394/3-370 BC; Argaos: 393/392 BC; Alexander II (son of Amyntas III): 370-369 BC; Ptolemy Alorites (regent): 368-365 BC; Perdikkas III (son of Ammyntas III): 365-360 BC.

Of these kings, four (according to information generally considered reliable) had a violent end, on the initiative of those who succeeded them: Pausanias, Amyntas II, Alexander II and Ptolemy Alorites. With the exceptions of Amyntas III and Perdikkas III who governed for 24 and six years respectively, their reigns lasted only for between several months to four years. It is not impossible that a lead box with a lid, most likely from Vergina, with the dotted inscription ‘Child of the Argeads’ (SEG XLI 580), is connected to the conflicts between the royal princes during the first half of the 4th century BC and the use of magic to neutralize one’s rivals. This political instability was accompanied, as mentioned, by external interventions.

Unable to deal with the invasion of the Illyrians as a result of the rebellion by Argaos, his rival to the throne, Amyntas III, whose skills are praised by Isokrates (Archidamos, 46), requested help from Olynthos, making significant territorial concessions in the central section of the state in return. This help was not given, the Illyrians withdrew after being paid a significant sum of money, and Argaos was expelled with the help of the Thessalians (382 BC). Quite reasonably observing that Olynthos (more precisely, the Chalkidian League) was the most serious danger for the very existence of the kingdom, which could not be faced with the available powers and in the given conditions, Amyntas requested help from Sparta. Using the pretext that it was applying the terms of autonomy, as established with the King’s Peace of 386 BC, Sparta intervened in that year (382 BC) and after three years (379 BC) it disbanded the Chalkidian League. Even so, after the foundation of the Second Athenian League (377 BC), and in particular after the Athenian victory over the Spartans in the naval battle of Naxos (376 BC), the power most able – and with most interest - to intervene in Macedonia was Athens. And from 371 BC, after the victory over Sparta at Leuctra, this power was to be Thebes.

Several years later both powers were to intervene in Macedonia, during the new crisis that was burdening the country, after the death of Amyntas (summer 370 BC). A certain Pausanias emerged as a rival contender to the throne against the young Alexander. Queen Eurydice, Alexander’s mother, descended from the royal family of the Bacchiadai of Lynkestai, requested help from the Athenian general at Amphipolis, Euphrates (Aeschines, On the Embassy, 26-29). Another historical tradition, more likely inaccurate scandal-mongering (Justin, Epit. VII.4.7-5.8), holds that Eurydice, in collaboration with Ptolemy Alorites, the husband of her daughter Euryne, arranged the murder of her son and able king, Alexander II (369 BC). Alexander’s intervention in Thessaly in 371, after a request from the Aleuadai of Larissa and the subsequent campaign of Pelops, led to a peace treaty with Thebes and the handover of captives, including Alexander’s young brother (and later king) Philip. After the murder of Alex-
Thebes took on even more of a crucial role in Macedonian politics: the Thebans exploited Ptolemy’s dispute with the Athenians over their demands in Amphipolis, at the same time taking Philoxenos, Ptolemy’s son, hostage in Thebes.

From the time of Amyntas III, when the Illyrians withdrew in exchange for a sum of money, Macedonia had been paying a tribute to the neighbouring tribe. In order to put an end to this humiliating relationship, king Perdikkas III campaigned against the Illyrians. In the battle that took place in 360 BC he was killed along with 4,000 Macedonians (Diodorus, XVI 2, 4-5). This painful defeat was the peak of the crisis: a significant section of Upper Macedonia went to the Illyrians, whilst the Paionians invaded the country. Three rivals to the throne – Pausanias, who had been expelled by Ptolemy Alorites; Argaios, who had pushed Amyntas III aside for a brief period; and a certain Archelaos, eldest son of Amyntas III from his first marriage – contested the throne. At this particularly critical moment, it was a blessing for the country that its rule was assumed by the regent of the underage successor Amyntas, the 22-year-old Philip, son of Amyntas III. He not only saved Macedonia from collapse, but he also fundamentally changed the course of its history, as well as that of all Greek history.

3.5. Philip II (360-336 BC)

Macedonia’s rise from political instability (and consequent dependence on others) to the position of leading Greek power was an achievement of Philip, a characteristic example of the determining role played by great personalities in history. Clear political goals, working indefatigably to achieve them, organisational talent, skillful political conduct (to subjects and rivals), cultural virtuosity (with a sense of humour) were Philip’s undoubted traits as a great personality – undoubted because even Philip’s eminent rival Demosthenes admitted them, albeit in his own way. Indeed, the historian Theopompos of Chios, a contemporary of Philip, characterised him (in his work Makedonika, which unfortunately does not survive) as Europe’s greatest political man (FGrH 115 F27). According to his brief statement, which survives in Polybius (VIII.9.1), ‘Europe had never produced such a man as Philip, son of Amyntas’.

Macedonia had to and was able to become, with the resources it had available to it (significant human resources and a number of raw materials) a great power. This was necessary first effectively to prevent any future invasions by neighbouring tribes, of which it had painful experiences, and, second, to secure the cohesion of the state, after the collapse of the Chalkidian League and the incorporation of the cities of Pydna and Methone (in its central section) as well as Amphipolis in 357 BC. With all this, it had to play a leading role in southern Greece, which was made possible – but also necessary – by the political weakness of the Greek city-states. This weakness enabled the Persian king to play a regulatory role in Greek political affairs, which he had gained with the King’s Peace of 386 BC. These three goals, reasonable given the conditions of the day, defined, in the order given, Philip’s activities in the 24 years of his reign.

Philip displayed his leadership abilities as soon as he assumed power, in the year of the great crisis (360/359 BC): he secured the withdrawal of the Paionians in exchange for payment of a tribute, and in the same way convinced the Thracians to withdraw their support for Pausanias, the rival to the throne (Diod. XVI 3, 4). He first arrested Archelaos and had him put to death. After this, he defeated Argaios, who had staged a surprise attack with the help of the Athenians in Macedonia, reaching as far as Aiges from Methone, (Diod. XVI 3, 5-6) was defeated in a surprise attack. The following year he led an expedition into Illyria with 10,000 infantry and 600 horse men (Diod. XVI 4, 3) and, with one decisive victory, became ruler of the whole of Upper Mace-
donia, and all the Macedonian tribes of the region became subject to the Macedonian state (Diod. XVI 4,7; 8, 1). In a period of less than two years, the size and population of the kingdom doubled. Two years later (356 BC), Philip took the title of King, with the consent of Amyntas who withdrew from public life.

Although Philip clashed with Athens, through his successful campaigns over the next twenty years, Macedonian supremacy was established throughout the whole of the Balkan peninsula. In 356 BC, the Paionians became directly dependent on the Macedonian state, later participating in Alexander the Great’s campaigns. Cities were founded: Herakleia (today’s Monastir) in Lynkestis in 344 BC, Philippi in 356 BC, and Philippopolis in 342/1 BC. Macedonian influence spread to the coastal areas of Thrace as far as the Hellespont (351 BC). Olynthos was occupied (348 BC), whilst victories were scored against the Scythians and the Triballians during the campaign along the Danube (339 BC). These are characteristic examples of this rise, achieved by a people with the resilience and self-confidence that an able leader creates, especially when he shares in all the hardships of war. With the ascendance to the throne of Epirus of Philip’s brother-in-law Alexander (brother of his wife Olympias) in 342 BC and the victory over the Phokians in the same year, Macedonian influence reached from the coast of the Adriatic as far as the Hellespont, and from the Danube as far as Thermopylae. Four years later, with the victory at Chaironea (in September 338 BC) against the Athenians and the Thebans, Macedonia became the only power in Greece. This was the expected consequence of Philip’s successes, which, in the judgement of Philip and the pro-Macedonian faction in Athens (from 346 BC), could have happened without conflict. This development was due to the opposite judgement, or, more precisely, ideology, supported by the anti-Macedonian faction and promoted with the rhetorical talent of its leading proponent, Demosthenes.

This ideology believed that Athens could regain the leadership role it had had a century-and-a-half beforehand, something which was going against reality, as it had been shaped after the rise of Philip. With the reorganisation of the army implemented by the Macedonian king (establishment of the military service, creation of the phalanx of sarissa-pike wielding hoplites, combining of various weapons, choice of able leaders from all parts of the country), the self-confidence of the people, the effectiveness of the leader, as well as the plentiful economic resources, this leading role belonged to the rising new Greek power of the north.

Even though Demosthenes and his fellow ideologue politicians supported an unswerving resistance, it did actually contain an element of reality in amongst its ideological fervour, which derived from a knowledge of the earlier history of Macedonia. If the progress of the country depended upon the presence of an able king, and the kings of Macedonia often found themselves victims of murder, then the Athenians’ resistance should be founded upon the hope of such a prospect recurring again, which would be followed by a weakening of the country. This is why Demosthenes, on hearing the news of Philip’s death in 336 BC appeared in a white robe of joy, even though this daughter had only recently died (Aeschines, Against Ctesiphon, 77; Plutarch, Demosthenes, 22.1-2.). What neither he nor anyone else could foresee, however, was that the new Macedonian king would be one of the greatest leaders in history.

The policy of unswerving resistance, however, in addition to the difficulties of its application - based on the ideology of reviving Athenian hegemony – could not provide a solution to the political crisis of the Greek world in the 4th century. In contrast, the conception of the ‘League of Corinth’, also known as the ‘Hellenic League’ (Koinon ton Ellinon), founded by Philip after the battle of Chaironea and during the conference of Corinth (337 BC), proved a constructive solution. Macedonia was to be its leading power – politically and militarily, Athens its cultural centre (and base of its naval
power), and the other city-states would retain their autonomy. This Greek federation was also to include the cities of Asia Minor that were to be liberated from Persian rule by the Panhellenic campaign, as proclaimed at the Corinth conference. Despite the different developments that took place later with Alexander the Great, the Hellenic League was to be (on an organisational level) a ‘point of reference’ for the later Macedonian kings in the formation of their policy to southern Greece.

3.6. Macedonia from the beginning of Alexander the Great’s campaign to the end of the Wars of the Successors (335-277 BC)

3.6.1. Antipater (335-319 BC), Cassander (319-297 BC), Demetrios Poliorcetes (294-287 BC), Lysimachos (287-281 BC)

During the campaign to the East, the government of Macedonia was assumed, as deputy to the throne (and one of Alexander’s leading supporters when he became king), by Philip’s general Antipater, who had a dual role: maintenance of political relations with Greece and the effective confrontation of any anti-Macedonian movement, as well as the deployment of any new military forces that would be required during the campaign. The only anti-Macedonian movement came from Sparta, and its King Agis, inspired by memories of the city’s former glories. It was easily put down by Antipater, with a victory at the battle of Megalopolis in 331 BC. Far more serious was the rebellion which broke, with Athens at its centre and which was known as the Lamian War, after Alexander the Great’s death in 323/322 BC. The rebellion was put down by Antipater with the help of Alexander’s generals, Krateros and Leonnatos. The failure of this challenge to Macedonian power was paid by Athens (with the destruction of its fleet at Amorgos and the abolition of its radical democracy) and Demosthenes with his life (he committed suicide so as not to be arrested in 322 BC).

In the approximately 44 years that passed from the death of Antipater (319 BC) until the ascension to the throne of Antigonos Gonatas (277 BC), Macedonia suffered a second great crisis in its political history, with all the accompanying tribulations. The country, the king and the army that only a decade beforehand had changed the political map of the ancient world with the dissolution of the Persian Empire, suffered more than any other during the wars between the Macedonian generals, former comrades-in-arms during the great campaign.

In the first phase of these wars, during the clash between Polyperchon, an old general of Alexander the Great (appointed by Antipater as deputy to the throne, but who proved to be politically inept) and Antipater’s son Cassander, the entire royal family was eliminated over a period of 11 years. First, the legal king Philip III Arrhidaios and his wife Eurydice were killed on the order of Alexander’s mother Olympias, who had shifted her allegiance to Polyperchon (319 BC). Olympias herself was the next to be killed (having first been confined at Pydna by Cassander, who had been running Macedonia since then, by an indictment of the army assembly in 316 BC). Six years later, Cassander had Alexander’s wife Roxane and their son Alexander IV put to death, to prevent them from claiming their rights to the Macedonian throne. And in 309 BC Polyperchon had Alexander’s son by the Persian Barsine, along with his mother, killed on the wish of Cassander.

Macedonia enjoyed political stability during the reign of the – undoubtedly skilled – Cassander (319-297 BC). Cassander married Alexander’s half-sister Thessalonike for reasons of political expediency, giving her name to the city he founded (316/5 BC) at the inlet of the Thermaic gulf. The foundation of Thessaloniki and Kassandra (on the
site of Potidaia) show Cassander’s political vision. Also successful was his campaign against the Illyrians. In 306 BC, following the example of the other Successors, Cassander took the title of King. He had, however, already lost a significant part of his influence in southern Greece after the intervention of Demetrios Poliorcetes, son of Antigonos the One-eyed, who had Asia Minor under his control. With the establishment of his control over southern Greece (he even sought to revive the Hellenic League in 303/2 BC), Demetrios Poliorcetes was to become the next king of Macedonia.

He achieved this thanks to the dynastic conflict that broke out between Cassander’s two younger sons, Antipater and Alexander, after the brief rule of only a few months of Cassander’s eldest son and successor, Philip IV (297 BC). The conflict arose after Antipater’s refusal to accept the division of the kingdom proposed by his mother Thessaloniki. Thessaloniki was killed by Antipater, who later fled to Lysimachos, king of Thrace, when Alexander requested help from Demetrios Poliorcetes and Pyrrhos. Once Pyrrhos had withdrawn (with the annexation from Macedonia of Akarnania, Tymphaia and Ambrakia as the reward for his intervention), Demetrios Poliorcetes came along. Returning to southern Greece (since his intervention was not necessary) he had Alexander, who had accompanied him thus far, killed in Larissa, and was immediately proclaimed king of Macedonia (294/3 BC). Demetrios's autocratic behaviour, and the opulence of his personal life, offended public opinion, something that gave Pyrrhos and Lysimachos the excuse to ally against him and intervene in Macedonia. At Beroia, Demetrios’s army shifted allegiance to Pyrrhos. Demetrios was then forced to flee Macedonia and the country was divided between Pyrrhos and Lysimachos. Lysimachos is mentioned as king of Macedonia over the next six years (287-281 BC), on whose order Antipater was also killed.

3.6.2. Ptolemy Keraunos: Invasion of the Celts (280-278 BC)

The dramatic adventure begins in 281 BC, after the defeat and death of Lysimachos at Kouropedion in Asia Minor. The victorious Seleukos crossed the Hellespont, with his homeland of Macedonia as his destination, only to be killed by Ptolemy Keraunos, son of Ptolemy I, the king of Egypt (by Eurydike, daughter of Antipater and sister of Cassander), who, after the rift with his father over the issue of the succession, moved within the circles of Seleukos. With the support of the army (due mainly to the fact that it had avenged the death of Lysimachos), Ptolemy Keraunos became king of Macedonia in 280 BC. A few months later, the Celts invaded Macedonia. This dire defeat – in which Keraunos was killed – was followed by a long period of torment for the country, lasting for around two years. Celtic raids into the open countryside were successfully confronted to a certain degree by the general Sosthenes, although he refused to become king. After his death in 278/277 BC, the country fell into complete anarchy, with four rivals to the throne. An end was put to this by Antigonos Gonatas, son of Demetrios Poliorcetes, with his proud victory over the Celts at Lysimacheia, who went on to become one of Macedonia’s most able kings.

3.6.3. Antigonos Gonatas (277-239 BC)

Antigonos Gonatas - the origin of this name is not quite known - governed for 38 years, from 277 until 239 BC. During this period, Macedonia was one of the three great powers of the Hellenistic world, alongside the Seleukid kingdom and Ptolemaic Egypt. His success in this role, and in the necessary restructuring of the country, is mainly due to his personality as king. This is an especially important observation, if we taken into consideration the ‘balance of power’ of the era, during which differences and conflicts over spheres of influence caused much instability. Moreover, during the Wars of the
Successors (as well Alexander’s campaigns in the East), Macedonia lost a significant portion of its most valuable resource, its manpower.

With the weight of the victor, Antigono Gonatas restored order within the country by, amongst other things, expelling the tyrant Apollodoros from Kassandra and bringing Thessaly and Paionia back under Macedonian rule. He also founded the city of Antigoneia at Paonia, near the river Axios (Stephanos Byzantios, s.v. ‘Antigoneia’; cf. F. Papazoglou, *Les Villes*, 324). Even so, Antigono was defeated a little later, in 275/4 BC, during Pyrrhos’s latest invasion of Macedonia. Pyrrhos even took Aiges, where Celt mercenaries pillaged the tombs of the Macedonian kings (Diod., XXII.12, Plut., *Pyrrhos*, XXVI 6). This looting is believed to be the reason for the dire condition in which the tombs were found, scattered throughout the fill in the Megali Toumba at Vergina. Antigono also used Celt mercenaries, although his main support came from the fleet with which he kept Thessaloniki and other coastal cities under occupation.

Under Antigono Gonatas, Macedonia played the role of the great power, when there was no longer any threat of intervention from the king of Epirus. After Pyrrhos’s death at Argos in 272 BC, his army shifted allegiance to Antigono and Macedonian influence was restored over southern Greece. With the realism that characterised him (and which conditions necessitated), Antigono did not tamper with the independence of Epirus, instead appointing Pyrrhos’s eldest son to govern the country. To preserve his influence in southern Greece, he kept Macedonian garrisons at only three strategic points (Demitrias, Corinth and Chalkis). The cities’ autonomy was not compromised, and in only a few cases and for specific local reasons were tyrannical regimes indirectly supported. Macedonian influence in southern Greece (mainland and island) appeared to have been established with Antigono’s victory in the so-called Chremonidian War (267-261 BC), waged by Athens and Sparta (*IG* II² 686, 687) with the support of Ptolemy II Philadelphos, and also with his victory in the last naval battle of Kos (probably in 255 BC).

Subsequent developments did not, however, justify this impression. The King of Epirus invaded Upper Macedonia (resisted by Antigono’s son Demetrios) and Antigono’s nephew Alexander rebelled in southern Greece (during which Corinth and Chalkis acceded to Alexander until his death, i.e. from 249-245 BC). Moreover, its inefficient military forces meant that Macedonia was unable to respond to the rising political power of the confederacies, which were ideologically opposed to the monarchical system that it represented: in 243 BC Aratos of Sikyon, son of a political friend of Antigono, betrayed him and took over Corinth, making it a member of the Achaian League. He handed over the garrison of the city, which was comprised of mercenaries of Antigono from Syria, to Aratos and the garrison then turned against the Macedonian king after the victories of Ptolemy III against Seleukos II in the third Syrian war (246-241 BC). Antigono Gonatas had been an ally of the Seleukids from 276 BC, when he married Antiochos II’s sister Phila.

Antigono Gonatas died in 239 BC at the age of 80, having already appointed his son Demetrios as his successor. In Greek, and we could say European history, he is best known for his belief that kingship (and power in general) is ‘a worthy kind of slavery’ (Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, II 20). Or, to put it another way, that the king is the servant of the people. In the modern period, this view was also expressed by Frederick the Great, King of Prussia.
3.7. Demetrios II (239-229 BC), Antigonos Doson (229-221 BC)

Military confrontations on two fronts, against the Aitolians in southern Greece and against the Dardanians in the north, cover the first ten years of the reign of Demetrios (239-229 BC), demonstrating the consequences of Macedonia’s inability to make its mark on the new environment. The expansionist ambitions of the Aitolian Confederacy in Acarnania spurred Epirus to make political approaches to Macedonia, with Demetrios taking as his wife Phthia, the daughter of Alexander II of Epirus. The Aitolians turned against Macedonia, supported by the Achaians (who invaded Attica), and they were able to wrest parts of Thessaly from Macedonian control. Demetrios, preoccupied in southern Greece, abandoned Epirus, resulting in an uprising in that kingdom against the royal family, leading to its fall. The Dardanian invasion of Paionia forced Demetrios to forge an alliance with the Illyrians, who defeated the Aitolians and then invaded Acarnania, occupying the fortress point of Medeon (Polybius, XI 5). This development was primarily a result of the political short-sightedness of the two confederacies, a political short-sightedness that led to foreign interventions, making the prospect of a stable collaboration with Macedonia - necessary for the common interest - difficult and sometimes impossible.

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After Demetrios’s death the running of the country was assumed by Antigonos, the so-called Doson, as regent for his son Philip; Doson was the son of Demetrios the Fair, king of Kyrene and half-brother of Antogonos Gonatas.

Immediately on assuming power, Antigonos Doson restored Macedonian control to those areas of Thessaly that had been taken by the Aitolians, and successfully repelled the invasion of the Dardanians. Thanks to these successes he was proclaimed king and married Phthia, the widow of Demetrios. His most significant achievement, however, was the restoration of Macedonian influence over southern Greece. The positive response in the Peloponnese to the revolutionary programme of Kleomenes III, king of Sparta, forced the leader of the Achaian League, Aratos, to seek help from the Macedonian king, in exchange for Corinth. In 223 BC, Antigonos Doson was elected general of the Achaian League, and brought the Arcadian cities onto his side, and in the next year (222 BC) he defeated Kleomenes at the battle of Sellasia. Macedonian influence was restored with the Hellenic League (Polybius, IV 9.4), put together by Antigonos. Its members included Macedonia and the Confederacies (except for the Aitolian). The Illyrian invasion forced him to return to Macedonia, where he died after having successfully managed to repel the invaders (Polybius, II 70, Plut., Cleomenes, 30).

3.8. Philip V (221-179 BC), Perseus (179-168 BC)

The history of Macedonia in the years of Philip V and his successor Perseus, was sealed, as we all known, by the struggle for independence against Rome, a struggle that did not concern only Macedonia but the whole of the Greek world of the East. In this struggle, Macedonia was alone, and she ultimately lost, resulting in the dissolution of the Macedonian kingdom and the enslavement of the other Greeks to Rome. This defeat was the result not only of Rome’s greater military might; it was also due to the political short-sightedness of the other Greek states. This was, as Polybius tells us, the message of Thrasykrates of Rhodes afore the Aitolians, when he argued that the struggle against Philip would lead to the ‘enslavement and destruction of Greece’ (Polybius, XVIII 37.9). Another factor, already mentioned, was that Macedonia had lost a great section of its manpower in the East and the wars that followed. Given these (negative) conditions, the struggle against Rome is quite understandably of particular historical interest.
Philip’s main goal, from his ascent to the throne at the age of only 17, should have been – and was – to expel the Romans from the southern section of Illyria, which had become a Roman protectorate from the first and, in particular, the second Illyrian wars (229/8–219 BC). It is indicative that among the young king’s councillors was Demetrios Pharios, from near the city of Pharos from whence he had been expelled in 219 BC. The presence of a great power to the south of the kingdom was a severe threat for its very existence. In southern Greece, however, with a few obvious exceptions, the opposite view prevailed: because they had put an end to Illyrian raids along the western Greek coasts (as far as the Peloponnese), the Romans had been welcomed in Isthmyia from the end of the first Illyrian war (228 BC) as though they were a fellow Greek tribe.

The first great opportunity for averting the Roman danger was presented during the Second Punic War, specifically after Hannibal’s third victory at Lake Trasimene (Polybius, V.101.5–6), in 217 BC. Up until then, Philip had been engaged in a war with the Aitolians. In 219 BC, according to Polybius (IV 62.1–2), the Aitolians destroyed Dion, whilst a year later Philip did the same to Thermopylae (V 8.4–9) and its allies Elis and Sparta. In 217 BC - having secured the respect of the majority of Greeks (Polybius, VII 11.8, see also IG IV 2, 590, SEG I 78: dedication of the Epidaurians for the punishment of the Aitolians) - he agreed to a peace treaty for the reason mentioned above, the last peace to be agreed on the initiative of the Greeks themselves. At the conference of Naupaktos (Polybius, V 102-105), held just for this purpose, the Aitolian politician Agelaos spoke in a brilliantly vivid way, of the need for an alliance of all the Greeks under Macedonian leadership against the danger of the ‘black clouds’ that had appeared in the West. His argument was that whichever power won the war underway in Italy, the Romans or the Carthaginians, it would intervene in Greece, the most likely result being its enslavement, if an alliance did not exist to counter this likelihood (Polybius, V.104).

The alliance that Philip forged with Hannibal in 215 BC (after the victory of the latter at Cannes) did not offer anything positive as both sides were too weak to fulfill the term of mutual support stipulated in the treaty (Polybius, VII.9, Livy, XXIII 33.9-12). As for Philip, he was obliged to expend the limited powers he had left (with himself at the head) on various fronts (Illyria, the Peloponnese, Central Greece), and especially so after 211 BC when the Romans and the Aitolians had agreed the so-called ‘rapacious treaty’ (Polybius, IX 39), according to which any cities and territory gained would go to the Aitolians and the moveable property and persons to the Romans. This war, the first Macedonian War, in which, aside from the Aitolians, the Spartans, Elians, Messenians, Athenians, Illyrians and the kingdom of Pergamon under Attalus I participated on the side of the Romans, was concluded with the peace that Philip agreed first with the Aitolians (206 BC) and then with the Romans (205 BC). The peace was drawn up on the basis of the status quo; the main result was that southern Greece and a part of Asia came under Roman influence, and the unity of the Greek world had broken down irretrievably.

This breakdown took on even greater dimensions - with all the consequences this was to have for Macedonia - a little later with the developments that took place after the death of Ptolemy IV of Egypt (204 BC). The ensuing decline of that country led to a secret deal between Philip V and Antiochus III of the Seleukid kingdom, with the aim of breaking up the dominions of Egypt (Polybius, III 2.8, XV 20, Livy, XXXI, 14.5). With the vigour that characterised him, Philip proceeded with a series of (partly successful) military operations along the west coast of Asia Minor and in Karia, whilst Antiochus invaded southern Syria. The impending prospect of Macedonian influence in their region led Rhodes and Pergamon to seek an intervention from Rome (200 BC). Even though a year earlier the Romans had rejected a similar plea from the Aitolians, the answer this time was positive. One view attributes this to purely imperialist aspira-
tions over the Greek East, whilst another, more likely, attributes it to the fear of an ‘alliance’ of the two great powers of the day. Given the painful memories of the war with Hannibal, the likelihood of an invasion of Italy by Macedonia and the Seleukids had to be avoided with a pre-emptive intervention by the Romans.

The reality, however, was completely different. The Romans put to Philip the demand that he abandon Ptolemaic territories, not go to war in Greece and to agree to the resolution of differences with Rhodes and Pergamon through the arbitration of a neutral state; demands that he rejected (Polybius, XVI 27.2, 34.1-7, Livy, XXXI 18, Diod., XXVIII.6). He was thus forced to accept the prospect of war, at which moment Antiochos III abandoned him, preferring to tolerate the presence of the Romans in southern Syria. A political mistake made out of political short-sightedness, which cost both him and the Greek world dearly.

In this new war with Rome (the so-called Second Macedonian War, 200-197 BC), Macedonia was again alone, but with more rivals: these now included the Achaian League, as well as the Macedonian tribe of the Orestians (Polybius, XVIII 47.6, Livy, XXXIII 34.6). Philip’s proposals for compromise were rejected by Rome, which even demanded that he pull out his garrisons from Corinth, Chalkis and Demetrias, which would mean Macedonia shrinking to the position it had before Philip II. Philip’s refusal led to a decisive battle that took place at Kynoskephalai (in southern Thessaly) in the spring of 197 BC.

In this battle, of the 26,000 men under the command of the Roman consul Titus Quintus Flaminius around one third were Greeks, primarily Aitolians and the Epirot tribe of the Athamanes (Livy, XXXIII 4, 4-5). Philip’s army was made up, according to Livy (XXXIII 3.1-5) and confirmed by two copies of Philip V’s regulation of military service (one from Kassandra and the other possibly from Amphipolis, SEG XLIX, 722, 855), of mainly new recruits from Macedonia. The war ended with his unavoidable defeat. According to the peace terms imposed by Rome, Macedonia lost all its foreign possessions (and Thessaly), was obliged to disband its fleet, to pay a war indemnity of 1,000 talents and to be Rome’s ally (with all the obligations such a relationship involved, Polybius, XVIII 44, Livy, XXXIII 30).

Over the next 18 years of his reign, Philip took various measures for the economic reform of the country (increase in taxes and duties, exploitation of unused metal mines), demographic reinforcement (support for large families, settlement of Thracian populations), government decentralisation (as we can see from the coins minted locally in certain areas). With these policies, and the successful campaigns against Thracian tribes (Odrysians, Bessoi, Dentelitai, Maedoi) Macedonia remained the most powerful state in the Balkan peninsula, continuing its historic role as the ‘fence’ (Polybius, IX 35.1-4) of the main territories of Greece and the Greek cities of Thrace. Other measures, with the clear aim of strengthening the country’s defensive powers, also make an impression: cereals and money were stored at fortified positions in the hinterland in order to support a large number of mercenaries (Plutarch, Aemilius Paulus, 8). The Greek population of coastal cities was also transferred to the hinterland, and Thracians and other foreigners settled in their place. It cannot be proved that Philip was looking to another military showdown with Rome, as is argued by his contemporary Polybius and later historians. Following a serious crisis in the royal family – his younger son Demetrios was killed, apparently by his elder son Perseus – Philip died in 179 BC at Amphipolis. The country’s government was taken over by Perseus, who proved unable to rise to the occasion, and so it is perhaps true, as Livy (XL 54-58) says, that Philip had wanted to appoint his distant relative Antigonos as his successor.

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Perseus’s place in history has been tied to the final war against Rome (the so-called third Macedonian War of 171-168 BC), which ended with his defeat and the lamentable dissolution of the Macedonian kingdom. Three factors contributed to the outbreak of war: Perseus’s attempt to restore Macedonian influence in southern Greece, something promoted mainly through the anti-Roman (for political and social reasons) sections of the population; the political will of the military leadership in Rome at that time, which equated such a policy with ‘rebellion’ and responded to it accordingly; and the reproachable morality and political short-sightedness of Eumenes II, the king of Pergamon. In a speech to the Senate in 172 BC Eumenes exhorted the Romans to intervene politically in order to confront the (supposed) serious danger stemming from Macedonia. A fragmentary inscription from Dion confirms what Eumenes had claimed in relation to the signing of an alliance between Perseus and the Beotians (Alliance between King | Perseus and Beotians), allowing us to correct the text of Livy (XLII 12.5-7), which previously stated that the three copies of the treaty were produced on stelai, one of which was set up at Thebes, another at Delphi and the other alterdisidenum (altero ad Delium, older version). The third stele with the inscription of the treaty was set up in the sanctuary of Zeus Olympios at Dion (altero ad Dium).

With the clarion call of preserving the democracy of the Greeks, Rome declared war against the Macedonian king (SEG XXXI 542). Perseus scored a number of successes in the first two years, allowing him to request a peace treaty from the Roman Senate. But the Romans sought an unconditional settlement. The significant tactical errors that he made during the third year and the effective leadership of the Roman Consul Lucius Aemilius Paulus, resulted in Perseus’s crushing defeat at the decisive battle of Pydna (22 June 168 BC). Perseus fled to Amhipolis and from there to Samothrace, where he was arrested and later transferred to Rome. Here, he was put to death, along with a number of other captives, after having been dragged along during the procession of the successful Consul’s triumph.

The country was introduced to the new side of Roman imperialism, with the cruelty that typified it: the Macedonian kingdom, as a unified state, was divided into four regions (‘merides’). The first lay between the Strymon and Nestos rivers, with a few fortified positions to the east of the Nestos, and its capital at Amphipolis. The second region lay between the Strymon and the Axios rivers and had Thessaloniki as its capital. The third had as its borders the Axios river and the Thermaic gulf to the east, Mt Vermio to the west and Mt Pineios to the south, its capital being based at Pella. The fourth section included Upper Macedonia as far as the borders with Epirus and Illyria, with its capital at Pelagonia (Livy, XLV 29-30, Diodoros, XXXI 8.8, Strabo, VII fr. 48). Each ‘meris’ was run by an oligarchic-style body known as the ‘Council’. Marriage and economic relations between people of different ‘merides’ was forbidden, as was the exploitation of mines and the felling of trees for the construction of ships. In addition to this, all officials of the former kingdom’s government were obliged to settle with their families in Italy. The Roman leadership of the day imposed upon Macedonia a complete economic and political decline, in every way possible.

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The political history of Macedonia as an independent state has been studied, and continues to be studied, from different starting points. However, from no perspective is it correct to disregard one of its basic characteristics. This is the importance of the psychological endurance and fighting spirit of its people, which can be seen in the surpassing of internal crises, but also in the campaign to the East, as in the resistance (with limited capabilities) against Rome. From this perspective, Macedonian political history is of particular interest not only for Greek history, but also for world history.
Select bibliography

Historical geography


Borders of the Macedonian kingdom


Political history – institutions


**Macedonian wars**


**Inscriptions**


4. Part C: Culture

No comprehensive work on the cultural history of ancient Macedonia from the foundation of the Macedonian kingdom until the close of classical antiquity currently exists. The difficulty in the writing of such a work lies in the fact that not only are there relatively few references (and circumstantial at that) in the literary sources, but, in addition, a large section of the archaeological finds (inscriptions, artistic monuments, material culture) has not been published. The examples from both categories that are presented here have been selected on the criterion of the two (known) basic elements of this cultural history: the decisive role of the monarchy in the country’s cultural life (in particular during the 5th and 4th centuries BC) and its Greek character.

Macedonian kings, such as Alexander I, Perdikkas II, Archelaos, Perdikkas II, Philip II and Antigonos Gonatas took care to have intellectuals from southern Greece in their circles or to maintain relations with them out of personal interest. Clearly, they were aware of the importance of these relations for the promotion of their country throughout the Greek world.

Alexander I was known for his relations with Pindar and, in particular, Bachylides. The former, of whom it is mentioned that he visited Macedonia (Solinos, IX 16), composed a victory ode (fr. 120, 121, Snell) in honour of the Macedonian king, probably on the occasion of Alexander’s victory in the Olympic Games (most probably of 496 BC, see Hdt. V 22.2, Solinos, VII 2.14), but also for his offer to help in facing the Persian danger. The memory of the friendship between the two men was preserved for many generations. As Dio Chrysostom (II 33) and other authors inform us, during his destruction of Thebes (335 BC) Alexander the Great, recalling the friendship between the poet and the ancestor whose name he bore, made sure to keep Pindar’s house
intact. Bachylides wrote, as we know, a symposium song dedicated to the Macedonian king (fr. 20 B, Snell).

Perdikkas II hosted Hippocrates, the well-known doctor from Kos, in his court as well as the poet of ‘lyric and dithyrambic odes’ Melanippides of Melos (Suda, s.v. Hippocrates, Melanippides). The most impressive example that we know of, however, is that of Perdikkas’s successor, Archelaos. The palace of Pella was decorated with compositions by the celebrated painter of the period, Zeuxis of Herakleia (Aelian, Historical Miscellany, XIV 17). In his court, Archelaos hosted the epic poet Chorilios of Samos (Athenaeus, VIII 345d), the Athenian tragic poet Agathon (Aelian, Historical Miscellany, II 21, XIII 4) and possibly the musician Timotheos (Plutarch, Moralia, 177b). It is also said that he invited Socrates to Macedonia, an invitation that the Athenian philosopher declined (Seneca, De beneficiis, V 6.2-6, Diogenes Laertios, II 25, Dio Chrysostom, XIII 30).

The best known for his ties with Macedonia, and in particular with Archelaos, was Euripides. It was in Macedonia that Euripides composed his ‘Bacchae’, in which the Macedonian landscape has a strong presence, and his drama ‘Archelaos’, of which only the plot is known to us from the later Latin writer Hyginus (CCXIX 143-144). According to this, the drama was an indirect glorification of the Macedonian monarch, since a king of the same name appears as founder of the dynasty.

Archelaos is the foremost example of a Macedonian king who epitomised the decisive role of the monarchy in the cultural life of the country. It was he who founded the athletics and musical games at Dion (Diod, XVII 16.3-4), which lasted for nine days, just like the number of the Muses. These Games took place at the end of October every four years, just like the Olympic Games, according to one version, or, according to a less likely version, each year. These Games bore the name Olympia, not in contrast to the Olympic Games (we know that Archelaos had taken part and won in the Olympic and in the Pythic Games; Solinos, IX 16), and, as one might expect, it is inconceivable that he would have expressed his opposition to the southern Greeks in this way. The Games at Dion had a significant duration and, as the only state-run cultural event of Macedonia, were an institution of decisive importance for the cultural life of the country. As mentioned, Dion was destroyed by the Aitolians in 219 BC, although inscriptions and other monuments demonstrating its continued importance must exist, and will hopefully one day be found. Nonetheless, it is generally accepted by historians that the cultural work of Archelaos was due to the fact that the Macedonian aristocracy enjoyed a high level of education, at least from the picture we garner from the generals of Philip (Antipater and Parmenion) and Alexander the Great (Ptolemy, Krateros, Seleukos). Antipater, author of a historic work with the title ‘The Illyrian Deeds of Perdikkas’ (Suda, s.v. Antipater) – a history of Perdikkas’s wars against the Illyrians – was a close friend of Aristotle, with whom he kept up a regular correspondence. Ptolemy’s historical work on Alexander’s campaigns in Anatolia was a primary source for the historian Arrian.

The dynastic in-fighting within the Macedonian kingdom following the death of Archelaos undoubtedly limited the flow of intellectuals from southern Greece to the Macedonian court, but did not cut it off altogether. Plato’s student Euphraios was part of Perdikkas’s immediate environment (Plato, Epistles, V 321c-322c). The detail provided by Athenaios in his Deipnosophistae (XI 508d-e), that Euphraios’s influence was so great that it was impossible for one to participate in royal symposia unless he were familiar with geometry or philosophy, may be an exaggeration, but it is also indicative. So is the fact that Plato’s successor Speusippos, in his letter to Philip II, expresses his pro-Macedonian feelings with extensive reference to the work of a historian called Antipater, who lived at Athens and who was definitely connected with the Academy. In
this letter, Philip’s territorial ambitions in Chalkidike and his foreign policy in general are also justified.

Equally indicative are certain examples that have a direct relationship with the Macedonian court in the time of Philip. The first is an epigram written on the order of the mother of the Macedonian king, Eurydice the daughter of Sirras (perhaps the leader of Lynkestai and not Illyria, as a number of modern historians have argued). The epigram (Plutarch, Moralia, 14b) accompanied a dedication by Eurydice in the temple of the Muses at Pella, and it expresses her satisfaction at having been able to learn to read at such an advanced age. This is of interest not so much for its personal element, as for what it suggests of the cultural atmosphere of Macedonia.

Two other examples, which refer to Philip are equally indicative of the atmosphere of the great Macedonian king’s own cultural interests. In the first, Philip, with the humour that characterised him, asked a group of Athenian joke-writing experts to write, especially for him, some witty jokes and to send them to him for the price of a talent (Athenaios, Deipnosophistai, XIV 614e). The second example has the Macedonian king meeting one of his fanatical opponents at Delphi, the Achaean intellectual Arkadion, who detested Philip and had gone into self-exile when the pro-Macedonian faction in his city prevailed. Philip asked him where he was going, and Arkadion replied that he was going to settle in a place where Philip was not known. Arkadion then laughed, invited Philip to dinner and the enmity thus dissipated (Athenaios, Deipnosophistai, VI 249c-d).

Of the kings of the 3rd century, Antigonos Gonatas stands out as a great cultural figure in addition to his distinguished political activities that have been mentioned. At Athens he had been a student of Zeno, whom he particularly admired (Dio. Laertius, VII 15, Aelian, Historical Miscellany XII 25). Another student of Zeno, and friend of Antigonos, was Persaeus of Kition, whom Antigonos appointed as governor of the garrison at Corinth (Dio. Laertius, VII 36). Intellectuals from various regions were hosted at the court of Antigonos Gonatas, such as Aratos of Soloi, Menedemos of Eretria, the historian Hieronymous of Kardia, the lyric poet Alexander the Aitolian and the epic poet Antagoras the Rhodian. Moreover, Antigonos maintained relations with the distinguished philosophers of his day, the Cynic philosopher Bion of Borysthenes, Arkesilaos and Timon of Phliny.

One could argue that relations between leaders and various (even foreign) intellectuals is a common phenomenon and can be observed even in the modern period; for this reason, a number of contemporary historians do not assess these relations as evidence of the Greek character of Macedonian civilisation. For the objective observer, this is definitely reliable evidence, especially when accompanied, as it should be, with the will of the kings to spread Greek education throughout their country. This can be seen in institutions such as the Games established by Archelaos, or even Alexander the Great’s wish that 30,000 Persian boys learn Greek (Plut., Alexander, 47, 3). To this we can add the use of the Attic dialect in the country’s administration, and especially the desire of the people themselves, without which such a policy would have been absurd. In any case, the Greek character of cultural life can be seen not only in the literary sources (names of people, place names, institutions, etc.) but also in inscriptions, such as artistic monuments, and in material culture. These are as equally indicative, as are the works by the Macedonian historians and poets within the circle of Antigonos Gonatas, such as Marsyas of Pella and the epigrammatist Poseidippos, and the circle of Philip V, such as the epigrammatist Samos, son of Chrysogonos of Edessa.

Some indicative, in my opinion, examples of the various categories are here given in brief. Of particular interest, as regards the first category, are objects with inscriptions
dating to the 5th and 4th centuries BC: here we can include, for example, the bronze strigil inscribed with the name APATHOS (SEG XLIX 671, 5th century), the stelai with the names KLEIONA and ATTYA (SEG XLIII 363, 450-400 BC) from Aiane, and the Attic kylix cup with the Macedonian name Machatas from Pontokomi in the prefecture of Kozani (SEG XLIX 776, 5th century BC). In addition, the stele from Pella of the young Xanthos, son of Demetrios and Ammadika (5th century BC), which has him portrayed along with objects from his daily life (dog, pigeon, wheel). With the exception of the bronze strigil, which could have been transferred from some other part of the Greek world, it is probable that the remaining objects were produced in local workshops. The same holds for the 67 grave stele - most of them inscribed (SEG XXXV 771-808) - which were found scattered in the fill of Megali Toumba at Vergina, and which date to the last quarter of the 5th century and the first quarter of the 3rd century BC. All the names - a total of 84 survive, of which 75 are complete - with the exception of three are Greek. Indeed, most names were common throughout the whole of the Greek world, already known from the mythological traditions of the Greeks.

To the second category belong monuments of art that indicate the Macedonians’ knowledge of the mythological traditions of the southern Greeks, the Homeric epics in particular. One of the earliest, as far as I am aware, is an Attic red-figure hydria (water container) from Pella, dating to the late 5th century BC, on which is portrayed the contest between Athena and Poseidon over the name of the city of Athens. Its use as a funerary urn is indicative of how familiar the locals were with Greek mythology. The same goes for the representations on vessels for daily use with scenes from the Homeric epics and the Athenians tragic poets, Euripides in particular, the majority of which come from Pella but also from many other cities of Macedonia. The names of the heroes are written on some of these representations, on others they are not, indicating that the images portrayed were widely known. Particularly impressive is the painted decoration of a cist grave from around 300 BC, also excavated at Pella. As the preliminary publication of the grave notes, the image represented is related to later portrayals, primarily of the Roman period, where gatherings of cultural and intellectual personages are shown. The dead man buried here was perhaps a philosopher himself, or an important figure with specific philosophical and intellectual interests.

Select bibliography


Monuments