

Alexander the Great

Alexander the Great

By

Krzysztof Nawotka

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

Alexander the Great, by Krzysztof Nawotka

This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2010 by Krzysztof Nawotka

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-1743-0, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1743-1

CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Chapter I: Childhood, Family, Macedonia	1
1. Birth of Alexander	
2. Macedonia	
3. The Argead dynasty	
4. Philip II and the rebuilding of the Macedonian state	
5. Philip II and Alexander's Macedonian army	
6. Alexander's childhood and school years	
Chapter II: The Heir to the Throne	43
1. At his father's side	
2. Chaeronea	
3. The congress at Corinth and the beginning of the Persian war	
4. The Pixodarus affair	
5. Cleopatra's wedding	
6. Death of Philip	
Chapter III: The New King.....	83
1. The takeover. Philip's funeral	
2. War in the north	
3. The destruction of Thebes	
Chapter IV: From Abydos to Alexandria	109
1. Granicus – the first victory	
2. Freedom for Greeks of Asia	
3. From Halicarnassus to Cilicia: the campaign in Asia Minor	
4. The battle of Issus	
5. Phoenicia, Syria and Palestine	
6. The son of Ammon	

Chapter V: King of Asia.....	213
1. From Memphis to Mesopotamia	
2. The revolt of Agis III	
3. The battle of Gaugamela	
4. Babylon, Susa and Persepolis	
5. The death of Darius III	
6. Philotas affair and the fall of Parmenion	
7. The conquest of eastern Iran	
8. Time of intrigues and anxiety	
Chapter VI: Expedition to India	295
1. From Sogdiana to the Indus	
2. Taxila and Porus	
3. Hyphasis – the end of the expedition	
4. Towards the Ocean	
Chapter VII: The Last Years	331
1. In the footsteps of Cyrus and Semiramis	
2. Empire in crisis	
3. The weddings at Susa	
4. The mutiny at Opis	
5. Greece in 324: the exiles and a new god	
6. The death of Hephaestion	
7. Return to Babylon	
Chapter VIII: Death, Last Plans, Tomb	371
1. The king died	
2. Alexander's legacy	
3. Alexander's tomb	
Bibliography	387
Index	419

PREFACE

Alexander III, King of Macedonia, son of Philip II and heir to Achaemenid kings of Persia, is one of the most fascinating and frequently discussed figures of world history. By contemporaries he was more commonly hated rather than admired or loved, but soon after his death his legend began and it is still alive today. A belletristic account of his life and deeds – the so-called *Alexander Romance* – was in ancient, the medieval and early modern times one of the most universally known books in Europe, Asia, and Africa having some 80 versions written in 24 different languages. The book's protagonist was the first in Western Civilization to be hailed Great, in all probability a title already bestowed upon him when the generation remembering his deeds was still alive, at the court of his onetime brother in arms – Ptolemy I of Egypt. Alexander's brief reign marks a borderline between two great epochs of ancient times: the Classical and the Hellenistic. And this is by no means merely a convention in historiography. Without any exaggeration one can say that after his death the world was no longer the same as when he had ascended the Macedonian throne, regardless of whether one believes that this was a direct consequence of Alexander's actions or simply the effect of general historic processes that were underway in the second half of the 4th century BC. Someone who so much personifies this great turning point in the history of the Western civilization naturally attracts scholarly interest. On the other hand, the specific aura and charisma of this young ruler, the scale of his conquests and the exotic landscapes and peoples encountered during a tireless trek of over 35,000 km spanning three continents is what the broader public have always found particularly appealing.

That is why for a long time now not even a year has passed without a new book on Alexander. Apart from detailed studies, a number of complete monographs now exist whose authors frequently stress that they are not biographies. Strictly speaking if we were to apply the same rigorous definition of what a biography is to antiquity as we do to later epochs, virtually no biography related to this period could be written. But since so many non-biographies of Alexander already exist, I believe that there is space for a new biography, if only somewhat relaxed genre defining criteria are applied. This necessitates presenting Alexander as a component of the historical processes in his epoch and considering his

influence on the developments in Greece, Macedonia, the Persian Empire and neighbouring countries. Another reason for focusing more on Alexander as a person is the growing awareness that ancient societies were far less institutionalised than was assumed in modern times and in fact they operated on a much more personal level. Today we know that concepts as obvious in modern states as automatic procedures or Weberian impersonal rational bureaucracies were quite unheard of not only in the feudal Persia of the Achemenids but also in 4th-century Greece and Macedonia. In a world where borders as we understand them today did not exist and relationships between people from various countries were frequently stronger than loyalty to a particular state, the significance of such a powerful personality on the shaping of events cannot be overrated. Finally, although Alexander is considered to be the greatest military commander of ancient times and, indeed, much of this book deals with the wars fought during his reign, it was not this author's intention to make a meaningful contribution to military history. Instead it is hoped that this book will interest the reader in Alexander as a man and politician of outstanding talents and unparalleled charisma, but also one who erred in judgment and more than once displayed grave character faults.

Three reasons may be found to justify the writing of yet another book entitled *Alexander the Great*. First, of the many books on this subject the last comprehensive, serious and, indeed, in this author's opinion, the most important monograph was published over twenty years ago (Bosworth 1988) and since then our perception of various aspects of antiquity has changed. Of particular value has been the rapid progress in study of the Achaemenid Persia, which has been experiencing an extraordinary boom in its last three decades. Ancient Persia has in many ways now been rediscovered. This has come about thanks to: the Persepolis tablets (some of which have only recently been published), other oriental and archaeological sources, detailed analyses of references made by the classical authors and a general movement away from the purely western perspective that had prevailed for years. Especially since P. Briant's monumental synthesis (1996), our understanding of how the Achaemenid state was run and therefore also the Macedonian conquests from the Persian perspective have had to change. Moreover, our general knowledge of eastern societies and their response the Macedonian invader has been broadened by a systematic uncovering of sources from these regions, particularly ones originating from Babylon. Finally, in recent years many important monographs have come out on: history and topography of territories covered by Alexander's expedition (in general Wood, 1997); Macedonia (Hammond, 1989; Borza, 1990; Errington, 1990) Iran, India,

and other regions of the ancient world (e.g. Holt, 1988; Eggermont, 1993; Karttunen, 1997; Habicht, 1999; Debord, 1999; Sartre, 2001, 2003; Speck, 2002); specific aspects of 4th-century history such as the attitude of mainland Greece towards Macedonia (Jehne, 1994; Blackwell, 1999); the way the elites functioned in Greece (Herman, 1987; Mitchell, 2002) and Macedonia (Heckel, 1992); the position of women in Macedonia (Carney, 2000) and Persia (Brosius, 1996); Macedonian colonization (Fraser, 1996); finances and numismatics (Le Rider, 2003; Holt, 2003); history of art and ideology (Stewart, 1993; Cohen, 1997) as well as the first monographs on Darius III (Briant, 2003), Olympias (Carney, 2006), and new biographies of Philip II (Hammond, 2002; Corvisier, 2002; Worthington, 2008). To that there is a plethora of new books on military history, although without much real progress except for the critical assessment of study of Macedonian army logistics pioneered by Engels in 1978 (Roth, 1999). All this new knowledge and all these new interpretations clearly require the actions and personality of Alexander to be once again reviewed.

Second, for a long time it has been a common knowledge that the most serious obstacle faced in Alexander research is the number and quality of historical sources available. A few authors were already writing about Alexander in his lifetime and over a dozen more wrote about him not long after his death when they still had access to eyewitness accounts. Unfortunately all these works have disappeared almost without a trace. The earliest extant historical work to mention Alexander at least in passing is that of Polybius, who wrote in the mid 2nd century BC, whereas the most important ancient accounts date from the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. The quality of these accounts depends not only on the considerable time that had elapsed between the time of writing and the epoch of Alexander, but also on the methods the authors used, frequently relying on a single source. Ancient Alexander historians are customarily classified into two groups depending on the sources they use. One is the works of Flavius Arrianus (Arrian) and the anonymous *Itinerarium Alexandri*, which are based on the writings of Alexander's companions – the King of Egypt Ptolemy I and Aristobulos. Their accounts are of greater value for events prior to 327 BC, for they made use of the now missing books of the famous historian Callisthenes of Olynthus, who also accompanied Alexander. The second category, commonly called the Vulgate, includes Diodorus, Curtius Rufus and Justin, who above all based their writings on the Alexandrian historian Cleitarchus, Ptolemy's contemporary. Plutarch cannot be included in either of these groups, for this outstandingly erudite scholar made use of the works of as many as 24 different authors, mainly Alexander's contemporaries, in an extraordinarily modern way. To the

modern reader Arrian's rhetoric is more palpable than that of the Vulgate authors and for this reason he was for many years considered to be the most trustworthy source. However, his methodology in fact simply relied on rejecting information that might in any way cast Alexander in a negative light and thus his stance primarily reflects the Macedonian propaganda version of events. W.W. Tarn and N.G.L. Hammond both largely rely on Arrian and to give him greater credibility they maintain the theory regarding the existence of the Royal Journal (*ephemerides*), which was allegedly kept at Alexander's court throughout his reign and later taken to Alexandria in Egypt, where it served as a source for Ptolemy and thus also indirectly as a source for Arrian.

Source research in recent decades has uncovered so much new information regarding Alexander's history that writing a new biography has become both possible and necessary. Commentary on Arrian and other studies by A.B. Bosworth (1980, 1988a and 1995) have shed new light on Arrian's methods, his reliance on earlier sources and generally allowed us to wonder whether the significance of this ancient author regarding the life and times of Alexander may have been somewhat overrated. At the same time the value of the so-called Vulgate authors have undergone a positive reappraisal, particularly thanks to new commentaries (Atkinson, 1980, 1994 and 2009) and other studies (Baynham, 1998a) on Curtius Rufus, who for all his extravagant rhetoric and moralising is a very valuable author especially in that he was well informed about events within the Persian camp. Although today hardly anyone believes in the existence of the so-called mercenary source, i.e. an account written by a Greek mercenary in the Persian camp that Curtius Rufus and Diodorus had seen, evidence corroborating what these authors write about the Persian camp has been found. Therefore we can assume that the Vulgate authors had indirect access to this information from earlier historians who had actually heard the oral accounts of Greek mercenaries on Persian pay. Interest in Plutarch is currently undergoing a genuine revival, whereas the commentary to his *Alexander* (Hamilton, 1999; 1st edition in 1969) is rightly considered to be classics of the genre. Historical and philological commentaries have also appeared to his other work: *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander the Great* (D'Angelo, 1998; Cammarota, 1998; Nawotka, 2003). Finally scholars have now more boldly made use of smaller anonymous works such as the *Metz Epitome* (which is associated with the Vulgate group though it makes no references to the others and is based on the works of historians a generation after Alexander) or extant fragments of the writings of Alexander's contemporaries Ephippus and Chares. The author of this book agrees with

those (Plezia, Bielawski, 1970) who argue that the document found in an Arab manuscript is the translation of a genuine letter from Aristotle to Alexander regarding the treatment of Greeks and barbarians. With newly discovered 4th-century Greek inscriptions as well as already well known but newly researched ones we have an increasingly better understanding of Alexander's policies towards the Greeks and how they were received – differently on the east coast of the Aegean and differently on the west coast. Of particular value is the steadily increasing amount of eastern sources, which not only allow us to more accurately establish the dates of key events but also move away from the Eurocentric view held in some earlier studies. That is also the value of later, even mediaeval Zoroastrian sources maintaining the Persian tradition, which unlike the western sources was consistently hostile towards Alexander.

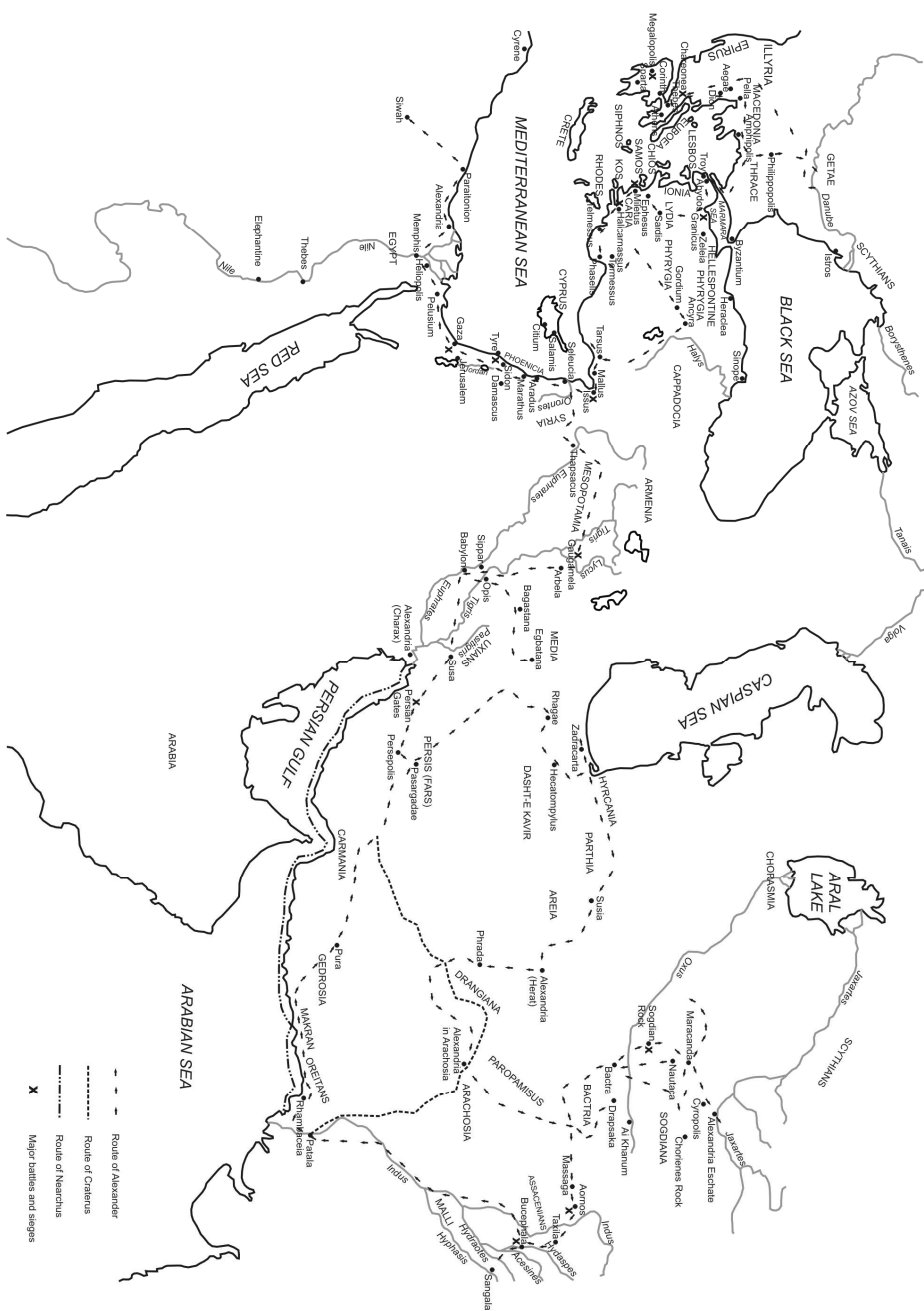
Third, one should note how historical interpretations have changed over recent decades. In the period immediately after World War II the immense influence of W.W. Tarn's book (1948) gave Alexander the image of a benign propagator of the Western civilization and the brotherhood of the various peoples within one empire. The work of another great scholar from that period, F. Schachermeyr (1973), gave us the heroic image of this great Macedonian and it is not surprising that the first edition of his monumental biography (1947) is entitled *Ingenium und Macht*. However, scholars subscribing to this traditional view of Alexander (e.g. Hammond or Lane Fox) are now very much a minority among historians. The tragic consequences of 20th-century militarism and totalitarianism, a gradual departure from European colonialism and the mission of taking up 'the white man's burden' as well as from the traditional world outlook in the postmodern era inevitably led to a revision or even deconstruction of Alexander the Great's character. The process of diminishing Alexander's greatness has been continuing since the 1950s. A decisive blow to the predominance of Tarn's image of Alexander was delivered by E. Badian (1960, 1964), for whom the Macedonian prefigured the 20th-century dictators Stalin and Hitler, being preoccupied with organising large-scale purges and surrounded by the 'loneliness of power'. The next step in the new trend was to reject the notion that Alexander was motivated by any grand ideas or non-military objectives. Today's chief proponents of this minimalist view, represented above all by P. Green, A.B. Bosworth and I. Worthington, have reduced Alexander's life to purely a matter of military history. Excluding his talents as a commander (although sometimes questioned too), Alexander has now all too frequently been depicted as a megalomaniac, alcoholic (most vividly: O'Brien 1992; more balanced: Kets de Vries, 2004), tyrant and hothead who for no profound reason laid

waste to the local cultures of Europe, Asia and Africa and thus, as it is sometimes asserted, is to be blamed for radical Islam's hatred of the West (Prevas, 2004). Such extreme views may only be expressed if one treats sources very selectively, and that surely indicates that the pendulum of reaction against the over idealisation of the great Macedonian has swung too far in the opposite direction (Holt, 1999a; Briant, 2002). Nonetheless, I believe, that without either idealizing or deconstructing Alexander, his times may be reassessed from a non-military perspective. For instance in the light of recent research of 4th-century Greek society it is worthwhile to consider the reasons why Macedonian policies succeeded or failed on either side of the Aegean Sea. The last quarter century's breakthroughs in research into Achaemenid Persia in fact demand that the effectiveness of Alexander's policies in the various countries of the Persian Empire be reviewed in terms of his attitude towards Achaemenid tradition and cultural conflicts during his campaign in the East. Although for a long time yet to come no doubt no one will dare formulate any grand theories the way Tarn did, there is now enough room to make careful generalisations and sum up the historical discussions of the last few decades.

This book presents the story of Alexander strictly on the basis of ancient sources. In the footnotes I have endeavoured to refer to all primary and most secondary ancient sources. On the other hand, for all effort to synthesise modern scholarship in this book, no attempt has been made to cite all modern literature concerning Alexander and his epoch. The sheer volume of such works would make the task quite unfeasible and, from the point of view of most readers, both tedious and unnecessary. Those specifically interested in historiography concerning Alexander the Great can refer to specialist literature dealing with this subject (e.g. Seibert, 1972). Footnotes in this book may serve to inform the reader of the most important historical discussions of recent decades. The names of ancient authors and the titles of their works are quoted using the abbreviations also applied in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* and Liddell, Scott, Jones' *Greek-English Lexicon*. The titles of periodicals are abbreviated according to *L'Année Philologique*. When ancient times are discussed in this book, unless otherwise stated, all given dates are BC/ BCE.

Finally, I have the pleasant task of thanking all the people and institutions without whose help this book would never have been published. The several years of research and especially the enquiries made in the libraries of Vienna and Oxford were possible thanks to generous grants from the Polish State Committee for Scientific Research and the Lanckoroński Foundation as well as the hospitality of St John's College

Oxford within the Oxford Colleges Hospitality Scheme and on other occasions. I am grateful to the University of Wrocław for financing my trips to Turkey and Iran for the purposes of seeing for myself the topographic problems Alexander's expedition must have encountered. The English version of this book is based on the Polish edition of 2007, with numerous improvements and corrections. The translation was produced by Witold Zbirochowski-Kościa, whose careful attention to details, linguistic skills and patience I would like to acknowledge in this place. It could be made thanks to a grant from the Foundation for Polish Science which had also supported the Polish edition of my book. I have presented various research problems at conferences in Rzeszów, Barcelona, Kraków and Wrocław as well as historical society meetings and seminars in Wrocław, Warsaw, Toruń, Liverpool, Taipei, Delhi, and Delphi. I would like to thank those, too many to name here, who provided insightful and frequently critical comments during the discussions that followed my lectures. Some mistakes I have been able to correct thanks to talks with many scholars. Among those I am particularly grateful to, are: Prof. Fergus Millar, late Prof. Józef Wolski, Prof. Ewa Wipszycka-Bravo, Prof. John Davies, late Prof. Tadeusz Kotula, Prof. Alicja Szastyńska-Siemion, Prof. Maurice Sarte, Prof. Christopher Tuplin, Prof. Leszek Mrozewicz, Prof. Andrzej Łoś, Dr. Zofia Archibald, Dr. John Ma, Dr. Gościwit Malinowski, Nicholas Purcell and Robin Lane Fox. But I dedicate my most heartfelt thanks to my wife, Małgorzata Możdżyńska-Nawotka, who has over the years provided the unstinting support that allowed me to research and write this book.



CHAPTER I:

CHILDHOOD, FAMILY, MACEDONIA

1. Birth of Alexander

In Antiquity people believed that the birth of someone destined to be great was accompanied by signs, portents and strange happenings. Alexander's biographer, Plutarch, states that his mother, Olympias, dreamt of a fiery thunderbolt that had entered her body, whereas his father, Philip II, envisioned in his dream a seal on his wife's body in the shape of a lion, which allegedly foretold the extraordinary 'lion-like' nature of his son. Another persistently repeated tale has Philip seeing in a dream on the night of consummation Olympias having sexual intercourse with a giant serpent, presumably an incarnation of the god Ammon from the Siwah Oasis in the Libyan Desert. According to a much later legend, emerging no doubt after Alexander's visit to Siwa, Philip was then told by the Apollo Oracle at Delphi to henceforth offer sacrifices to Ammon and was also told a prophecy that he would lose the eye with which he had seen the deity lying next to Olympias.¹ Such tales could emerge from the traditional view that Olympias had in her native Epirus engaged in mysterious Orphic rituals, which were much feared by the Greeks, and an important element of this practice was the breeding of serpents in her home.² The belief that Alexander was conceived by the god Ammon did not mean in the opinions of contemporaries that he was not the son of Philip. After all, they knew the myth of Alexander's forebear Heracles, who was the son of Alcmena but also of the god Zeus. At various stages in his career, Alexander himself sometimes boasted that he was the son of Philip and at other times allowed people to believe that he was conceived by the god Ammon.³

¹ Ephor., *FGrH*, 70 F217; Plu., *Alex.*, 2-3; Paus., 4.14.7; Luc., *Alex.*, 7; Just., 11.11.3, 12.16; *It. Alex.*, 12; see Baynham, 1998, p. 149; Hamilton, 1999, pp. 4-6. For an alternative version of the legend, but one still maintaining the notion of divine conception and lion shaped seal, see: Ps.-Callisth., 1.4-8.

² Cic. *Div.*, 2.135; Plu., *Alex.*, 2.9; see Lane Fox, 1973, pp. 44-45.

³ Ogden, 1999, pp. 27-28.

The Greek authors, always eager to synchronize historic events, state that Alexander was born the same night one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, was burnt down by Herostratus in the desire of immortalizing his name. The goddess was too busy assisting Olympias in the birth of Alexander to protect her own temple from destruction. Iranian magi living next to the temple lamented, for they foresaw that what had happened that night would bring great misfortune to Asia, which meant the Kingdom of Persia.⁴ Plutarch reports an anecdote that Philip, while laying siege to the town of Potidaea, in one day received news that his army commander Parmenion had routed the Illyrians, that his race-horse had won a race at the Olympic Games, and that his wife had given birth to Alexander. We know nothing more about the battle with the Illyrians and therefore have no means of establishing the date. There is an image on Philip II's coins of a cloaked rider with a Macedonian hat (*kausia*) on his head commemorating an Olympic victory, though we cannot be certain whether they refer to an individual horse race or a chariot race. Far more significant is that fact that this was almost certainly the first ever Macedonian victory at the Olympic Games. Although Herodotus does in fact report an earlier success at the time of Philip's predecessor Alexander I, this was possibly just a propaganda ploy invented by the Macedonian court, for this king's name has not been preserved on the list of Olympic victories. Philip's Olympic success probably occurred on 26th July 356, whereas Alexander was born on the sixth day of the Athenian month *Hekatombaion*, called *Loos* in Macedonia, which according to modern calculations would have most probably been either 19th or 20th July 356.⁵

2. Macedonia

Alexander's fatherland was situated to the north of Thessaly with borders that have not been precisely defined but most certainly did not resemble the borders of today's Macedonian state (FYROM)⁶ and were much closer

⁴ Hegesias, ap. Plu., *Alex.*, 35-36 (*FGrH*, 142 F3); Timae., ap. Cic., *N.D.*, 2.69; Cic., *Div.*, 1.47; Plu., *Alex.*, 2.7. Burning of Artemisium by Herostratus: Str., 14.22.1; Solinus, 183.23. Magi in Ephesus: Str., 14.1.23. See Briant 1996, p. 875; Shabazi 2003, pp. 7-14. Asia as the Persian empire: Nawotka 2004.

⁵ Plu., *Alex.*, 3.5-8; Plu., *mor.*, 105a; Just., 12.16.6. Brown 1977, pp. 76-77; Badian 1982, p. 38; Bosworth 1988, p. 19; Hammond 1992, pp. 356-357; Hamilton 1999, pp. 7-9. Alexander I at the Olympic Games: Hdt., 5.23; but see Borza 1982, pp. 8-13; Thompson 1982, p. 113.

⁶ On fluidity of the name Macedonia see: Czamańska, Szulc 2002.

to the borders of today's Greek province of Macedonia. The fluidity of Macedonia's borders even in Antiquity means that from the political history point of view it is most convenient to define the borders as the circumference of those territories ruled by Macedonian kings excluding the conquered areas of Greece, Thrace and Asia. During the reigns of Philip II and Alexander the kingdom was divided into two: Lower Macedonia in the east and Upper Macedonia in the southwest. At the start of his reign Philip II only had control of Lower Macedonia, which was indeed the cradle of the Argead dynasty.

Upper Macedonia is a mountainous region stretching from the Emathia Plain to the Pindos Mountains and including the catchment area of the river Haliakmon as well as the upper reaches of the river Axios (Vardar). Almost the entire region (90%) is over 500 m above sea level, whereas 50% is above 1,500 m. In that part of the Balkan Peninsula the main mountain ranges run longitudinally. The Haliakmon Valley is situated between two such ranges, those of the Pindos Mountains and the southern ranges of the Dinaric Alps (Peristeri, Vitsi, Vourinos). In Antiquity Upper Macedonia was divided into several smaller states and in the Haliakmon Valley itself there were: Orestis in the north, Tymphaea to the south and Elimeia to the east of Tymphaea. The remaining Upper Macedonia states were situated further east and separated from Lower Macedonia by the Vermion range, namely: Palagonia in the north and Lyncestis and Eordaia in the south. Upper Macedonia was ethnically mixed. Apart from the Macedonian tribes such as the Elimeians and Lyncestis, there were tribes more closely related to the Greek Molossians of Epirus, such as the Orestians. Illyrian elements have also been traced among the inhabitants of this part of Macedonia. The ethnic diversity of Upper Macedonia is considered an important factor accounting for its looser ties with the central authorities in Lower Macedonia. The Upper Macedonia tribes were ruled by their own dynasties, the most important of which was the Lyncestis' royal family, the Bacchiads once expelled from Corinth by the tyrant Cypselus. Relations between the Argeads and the ruling families of Upper Macedonia were frequently marked by mutual distrust and political rivalry. If we add to that the basic weakness of the Lower Macedonia government, it is hardly surprising that before Philip ascended to power, bonds between the Argead kingdom and the Upper Macedonia states were at best loose.⁷

Lower Macedonia was situated by the Thermaic Gulf, in an alluvial valley where the silt had accumulated from the rivers Haliakmon, Axios,

⁷ Errington 1990, chapter i; Billows 1994, p. 3.

Ludias and Gallikos. It was surrounded by mountain ridges (Paiko, Voras, Vermion and Pieria) and the Pieria plain at the foot of Mount Olympus. One has to remember that in the 4th century BC the shore of the Thermaic Gulf was some 30 km further inland than it is today and thanks to the river Ludias seafaring ships could sail up to the port of Pella, the capital of Philip and Alexander's kingdom. A large part of low-lying Emathia situated above that river was in Antiquity a barren uninhabitable marshland. The area was not drained until the 1920s, and no traces of earlier permanent human settlement have been found there. Attempts to drain these marshes during Philip's reign were doomed to fail because contemporary technical knowledge was quite inadequate to deal with the sheer scale of the task. Worse still, the predominance of marshland in parts of Lower Macedonia resulted in malaria epidemics that affected not only the local population but also agricultural output. Settlements were concentrated on terraces on the sides of the bordering mountains. On the south side of the lower course of the Haliakmon and to the south of the Emathia, close to today's village of Vergina, lay the first Agread capital – Aegae. The fertile and well irrigated parts of Macedonia allowed for the growing of crops and rearing of cattle. In the 4th century many Macedonians were still engaged in herding, taking cattle up in the mountains in the summer and then taking the herds down to lower lying areas for the winter. We also know that wine was produced, though on account of its cooler climate outside of the seacoast there were no olive trees, so typical for the Mediterranean zone. At least 1/3 of ancient Macedonia was covered with forests and all wood collected from these forests belonged to a royal monopoly. This was both economically and politically very important because the sea powers of the Greek world, particularly Athens, lacked their own forests and therefore were forced to import wood from Macedonia.⁸

By the end of Philip II's reign the Kingdom of Macedonia covered a territory of 43,000 km², which was several times larger than even the largest of the ancient Greek states. Thanks to the conditions of its soil and climate Macedonia was able to produce abundant crops capable of feeding a large number of people despite obviously primitive agricultural methods. Although no sources provide enough data to adequately estimate the number of Philip II or Alexander's subjects, the number of soldiers these rulers were able to deploy in Macedonia itself indicates that the demographic potential must have been large, though probably not over

⁸ Geography of Macedonia principally after: Borza 1990, pp. 23-57, 287-299; also Corvisier 2002, pp. 37-41; Thomas 2007, pp. 23-32.

two million as Hammond believed.⁹ Historians have tried to calculate ancient Macedonia's population on the basis of 19th-century census records, assuming that under the backward and unindustrialised Ottoman Empire the population size would have been more or less the same as it had been in the same area in Antiquity when it was supported by cattle herding and primitive agriculture. According to such estimates Macedonia's population at the start of Alexander's campaign was approximately 1-1.5 million. However, there are other theories which suggest that populations in the pre-industrialised age did grow, though so slowly as to be indiscernible. Accordingly the population of Macedonia at the end of Philip II's reign would have amounted to approximately 660,000. Even if we take the lowest of these estimates, at the time of Philip and Alexander there would have been roughly three times more Macedonians than inhabitants of the largest Greek *polis* of Athens, with populations well under 300,000 and in that 100,000 citizens of both sexes at the most.¹⁰

The matter of ancient Macedonians' ethnicity is one of the most hotly discussed issues regarding those times. Ancient sources frequently mention speeches or simple remarks being uttered in Macedonian by Alexander or other Macedonians of his day or from the later times of the Diadochi. For years scholars have been arguing whether or not by stating that something was said in Macedonian meant that they were merely using a Greek dialect or in fact a quite separate language. The academic dispute has become even more heated on account of the more than century-old political conflict over territory and independence. Both sides of the political dispute have tried to gain a moral advantage over their opponents by resorting to 'historical' arguments as to the right to land on account of its ethnic past. At the turn of the 20th century Macedonia – the southernmost state of the Balkans at the time of the emergence of modern nationalisms – was ethnically a very complex country with a predominance of Slavic elements. That was when the Greeks started claiming their rights to the land on account of its ancient history. The reason the Greeks felt they had a stronger claim to Macedonia than for instance the Bulgarians was because, according to them, the Macedonian state had for so long had a Greek ethnicity and it was already clearly visible in Antiquity, especially during the reigns of its most illustrious rulers Philip II and Alexander the

⁹ Hammond 1994, p. 40, n. 38.

¹⁰ Billows 1994, pp. 198-206. Population of Attica: Hansen 1991, pp. 90-94. Low estimates for Attica (ca. 200,000) and Macedonia (660,000) are after Corvisier 2000, pp. 32-44. Thomas 2007, p. 49 lists 700,000 for Macedonia under Philip II.

Great. This ‘official’ Greek stance is shared by many Western historians.¹¹ However, the other, Southern Slavic (Macedonian and Bulgarian), side also willingly use ‘historic’ arguments. They stress the non-Greek ethnic character of ancient Macedonians and claim that they were the predecessors of today’s Southern Slavs. With such reasoning they have even tried to posthumously ‘Slavicise’ Alexander the Great.¹²

Unfortunately, pre-Hellenistic Macedonians are one of the ‘mute’ nations of history in that they have not left any traces of literature or monumental inscriptions. Even the quite numerous graves of Macedonian aristocrats contain no inscriptions. Only half of the 140 or so words claimed by ancient authors to be Macedonian are undeniably of Greek origin and even in these cases contemporary linguists do not discern a typically Greek evolution of particular words. Moreover, although all the ancient inscriptions discovered in Macedonia, especially in recent decades, are in Greek, this does not mean this was the everyday language of Macedonians. Indeed, the rulers of Thrace, Scythia and Illyria commissioned monuments with Greek inscriptions and yet we know that Thracians, Scythians and Illyrians had their own non-Greek languages. At the time Greek was simply the preferred language among the cultural elites of much of the Mediterranean area, as Latin later was in medieval Europe. It should be remembered that in the pre-Hellenistic age all Greeks spoke and wrote in their local dialects, not in the standardised form of the language, *koine*, which in fact developed only at the start of Hellenistic epoch. Ca. 6300 inscriptions found in Macedonia are predominantly in (Attic) *koine*, some in various Greek dialects of the coastal cities and only a *tabula defixionum* of Pella possibly in the local dialect close to North-West Greek. Obviously the Attic dialect or *koine* could not have been the native language of the local inhabitants. Indeed, the predominance of Attic dialect inscriptions may in fact indicate that for the local population Greek was a foreign language and that the ‘literary’ Attic form had been learned only at school. Ancient authors testify that the ordinary Macedonian did not fully understand Greek.¹³ This fact did not stop the most outstanding supporter of the claim that ancient Macedonians were actually Greeks, N.G.L. Hammond, from espousing the quite curious view that the

¹¹ Presentation of Greek position: Kalléris 1954-1976; similar: Lane Fox 1973, p. 30; Cawkwell 1978, pp. 22-23; Hammond 1979, pp. 39-54; Hammond 1999, pp. 31-33; O’Brien 1992, p. 26; Corvisier 2002, pp. 49-50; Worthington 2004, pp. 7-8; Panayotou 2007. See: Borza 1990, pp. 3-12, 90-97.

¹² Mikołajczak, Stamatowski 2002; Moroz-Grzelak 2002; Danforth 2003.

¹³ Borza 1990, pp. 90-94; Borza 1994; Borza 1999, pp. 41-43. See now Panayotou 2007 for Macedonian as a Greek dialect.

Macedonian language was, indeed, a Greek dialect but one unintelligible to the Greeks.¹⁴

Although most of the evidence does suggest that in the 4th century Macedonian was a separate language to Greek, one cannot consider this issue closed. After all, there is no clear dividing line between a different dialect and a different language. For instance, many consider present-day Macedonian to be in fact a dialect of Bulgarian. However, ethnic identity is not only determined by language, it also depends on the awareness of belonging to a different ethnic group or nation. Belonging to an ethnic group depends on a subjective conviction that some common factors exist binding a group of people together and distinguishing them from other ethnic groups. Such factors may include: common ancestry, a common history, culture, association with a particular territory or a sense of group solidarity. Analysis of all extant sources unequivocally shows that in the 5th and 4th centuries the Greeks did not regard Macedonians to be part of their ethnic group nor did the Macedonians themselves ever claim to be Greek. It was only in the Hellenistic epoch that Macedonians became fully Hellenised and it was only with the growing dominance of Rome in the Balkan Peninsula that a sense of affinity developed between the Macedonians and Greeks. It was then that Alexander the Great was belatedly included in the pantheon of Greek national heroes. By the time of the Roman Empire Plutarch was willingly using Alexander of Macedonia as an example of how Greek military prowess was equal to that of mighty Rome. However, in Alexander's day the Macedonians had a separate ethnos. What is more, they were aware and proud of it. The undeniable closeness of Macedonian to Greek would have made the latter language partly intelligible to most Macedonians. A similar situation can be seen today among Scandinavian or Slavonic nations whose members can understand respectively another Scandinavian or Slavonic language even if they have never been taught it.¹⁵

Even if 4th-century Macedonians distinguished themselves ethnically from their Greek neighbours they most probably had the same proto-Greek roots as members of the historic Greek tribes. Moreover, the Macedonian royal court was already becoming Hellenised in the 5th century and especially intensively during the reign of Archelaus – the patron of many Greek artists including Euripides. This state of affairs was partly due to a desire to have political influence in the Greek world, but no doubt also due

¹⁴ Hammond 1995; now also Worthington 2008, p. 8.

¹⁵ Weber 1968, p. 389; Badian 1982; Haarmann 1986, pp. 260-262; Borza 1990, pp. 90-97, 305-306; Borza 1992; Borza 1996; Hall 2000, pp. 19-26, 170-172, 177; Nawotka 2003, p. 27; Thomas 2007, pp. 32-37.

to Macedonian awareness of the attractive aspects of contemporary Greek culture, which indeed fascinated many Mediterranean countries of that epoch. Naturally the ruling dynasty and aristocracy were the first to be Hellenised. The frescos and numerous artefacts found in recent decades in Macedonian graves from the second half of the 4th century show that the royal court favoured Greek and especially Attic art.¹⁶

During the reign of Philip II Macedonia was still predominantly a rural country where cities, unlike in Greece, played a very peripheral role in both the political and economic sense. Despite efforts made by the administration (incidentally a fact much exaggerated by many historians), Philip's kingdom remained poor. Before Philip's reign there was virtually nothing that could be called a city in Upper Macedonia, though archaeologists have uncovered the remains of fortified settlements which must have been the commercial centres of the rural communities. In Lower Macedonia the only urban centre of note was the kingdom's capital Pella, which was by no means the 'poor and small town' described by Demosthenes. In fact the length of its defensive walls at the time of Philip II (7-8 km) was comparable to the length of the walls of Athens (6.5 km), and although it might not have been as populous as Athens, Pella needs to be regarded as an important urban centre.¹⁷ The other towns of Edessa, Dion and Aegae were much less significant though the last of these, even after it ceased being the capital, still maintained its status as the burial place of Macedonian kings and the centre of their cults. Ancient sources do not clearly state when the royal residence was transferred from Aegae to Pella, but historians believe it occurred during the reign of the state's reformer Archelaus. Pella had no natural defence advantages and this was a malarial region, but it was situated on an important trade route, along which at the time of the Early Roman empire the famous road *via Egnatia* was built. Furthermore, while the coastline remained under the control of the Greek colonies of Pydna, Methone and the Chalcidian League, Pella, with its access to the Aegean via the river Ludias was the Kingdom of Macedonia's only seaport. This allowed Macedonia to export timber brought down the river Axios from the nearby mountains as well as no doubt minerals and agricultural products.¹⁸

It was not their economic but their political significance that distinguished Macedonian cities most from those of Greece. In the Greek world the city and surrounding rural areas (*chora*) generally constituted a

¹⁶ Barr-Sharrar 1982.

¹⁷ Diod., 18.66. Montgomery 1985; Montgomery 1997; Hammond 1994, p. 56; Thomas 2007, pp. 81-83.

¹⁸ Greenwalt 1999; Corvisier 2002, pp. 53-57.

separate state (*polis*). Of course there were numerous exceptions to this rule. There were large *poleis*, such as Athens, which would include more than one urban settlement with inhabitants who had typically urban occupations. On the other hand, there were also many small states that did not have a single urban centre. Nevertheless, by the mid 4th century for the Greeks the *polis* was almost always associated with citizenship and the natural political centre. In accordance with contemporary convictions they would also naturally have a democratic system of government.¹⁹ In the Classical period no Macedonian urban settlement could be characterised as a *polis*. At most some had limited autonomy but still under the supervision of a royal prefect. Thus Macedonia avoided the political fragmentation so typical in Greece, while all the subjects considered themselves to be Macedonians first and only next the inhabitants of, for instance, Pella, Edessa or Dion.²⁰

This form of social organisation, different from the *polis* concept and called *ethne*, was also present in neighbouring Thessaly as well as to a large extent in Thrace. Moreover, these three countries, which were much larger than Greek states, also kept the tribal system throughout the Classical period. In Thrace it was still present at the time of the Roman empire. On account of the fact that everywhere this social structure was eventually succeeded by the *polis*, one cannot regard *ethne* to have been a viable alternative but instead an earlier stage in the evolution of society. A typical structure for *ethne* societies, even in 4th-century democracy dominated Greece, was the oligarchy or aristocracy. The political significance of the ruling classes rested on their control of outlying territories or of smaller towns which, as in Greece, did not have the status of independent states.²¹

The 4th-century Greek historian Theopompus states that in Macedonia during the reign of Philip II there were 800 aristocratic *hetairoi* whose revenues from landed property equalled that of 10,000 of the wealthiest Greeks.²² It is now impossible to verify this statement and it may be a rhetorical exaggeration. Significant, however, is the very fact that contemporary observers perceived Macedonia to be a country dominated by a wealthy aristocracy. Their wealth has been confirmed by the archaeological uncovering of some 100 warrior graves whose lavishness resembled more those of nobles from the Mycenaean age or those of contemporary Thracian aristocrats than those of Greeks of classical age.

¹⁹ Arist., *Pol.*, 1286b20. See Gauthier 1984, p. 86; Quass 1979.

²⁰ Errington 1990, pp. 222-234.

²¹ Archibald 2000.

²² *FGrH*, 115 F225b.

The most sumptuous sepulchres are the royal graves at Vergina, which shall be discussed in detail in Chapter III. The number of *hetairoi* during Philip II's reign rose to approximately 1,800. This would have been so not only because of a natural rise in the number of Macedonian aristocrats resulting from the country's prosperity, but also from a large influx of foreigners, especially Greeks. The closeness between the king of Macedonia and his aristocrats is apparent in their name, *hetairoi*, which simply means companions – the king's companions. The *hetairoi* accompanied the king in battle as well as in hunting and feasting, yet in the monarch's regular presence they were bound by none of the submissiveness and strict adherence to court ceremony that was so typical of ancient states of the East. The lack of an administrative or court hierarchy meant that both Philip II and Alexander ruled with the aid of their closest entourage, especially a group of seven to eight *Somatophylakes* ('personal bodyguards'). Despite their name, the latter were not only to physically protect their king but also serve as officers carefully selected from the king's most trusted men to carry out special missions. The king, who wore no unique garments or head covering distinguishing him from his wellborn subjects, was probably addressed by name. Indeed, the ancient authors draw our attention to the fact that there was generally little social distance between Macedonian kings and their subjects, who in the Classical and Hellenistic periods still had easy access to their monarch and relative freedom to speak out (*parrhesia*) in his presence. The abilities of riding a horse, using weapons and hunting were an essential part of every young Macedonian aristocrat's education. The hunting down of the first wild boar and the killing of the first enemy in battle were elements of the Macedonian 'rites of passage'. It was only then that a young aristocrat was entitled to wear a belt and feast, as was the fashion in the ancient world, in a half reclined position. The Greeks were shocked by a peculiar form of pederasty practiced by Philip II's *hetairoi* in which the adult could be the passive partner in a homosexual relationship.²³ Macedonian aristocrats loved breeding horses which originated from the famous Median Nesaian breed brought over to Macedonia during the Persian rule.²⁴

Little is known about Macedonia's lower social orders before the Hellenistic period as they were not an object of interest to ancient authors. The usual custom in the Balkan states was for the aristocracy to rule over a serf majority, who in Thessaly were called the *penestai*. And such was no

²³ Theopomp., *FGrH*, 115 F225. Flower 1994, pp. 109-119.

²⁴ Errington 1990, pp. 152-154, 219-220; Billows 1990, pp. 19-22; Borza 1990, pp. 85-88; Badian 1996, pp. 11-12; Heckel 2003, pp. 206-208.

doubt also the social structure in aristocratically dominated Macedonia.²⁵ This social structure probably determined the composition of the Macedonian army, whose only valuable element was the aristocratic cavalry. This would have been so on account of the fact that in most ancient states the army was composed of citizens or subjects who were obliged to equip themselves for war at their own cost. Therefore lacking their own adequately protective (and expensive) armour, proper training and no doubt motivation, serfs were a lightly armed infantry of virtually no military value, especially when pitched against the phalanx: the basic Greek formation of classical times which had for centuries dominated battlefields in the Mediterranean zone. The phalanx was also a product of the given social structure and mentality of the *polis*, inhabited as it was by a predominantly free and relatively well-off peasantry. The *polis* citizen would acquire his own hoplite equipment, which included a breastplate, helmet, greaves, a large circular shield, a spear and a sword. It is estimated that in all such equipment would have cost approximately 300 drachmas, which was more or less as much as a hired worker could earn in a year. This meant that genuinely poor landless people who had to support themselves by working for others could not become hoplites. On the other hand, hoplite armour was considerably cheaper than the purchase of a warhorse, which could cost from 500 to 6,000 drachmas. Moreover the feeding and care of such a horse could be compared to the annual expenditure of a family of six. The fact that riders were expected to cover all these costs meant that only the very richest could afford to serve in the cavalry, which traditionally remained the preserve of aristocracy.²⁶ Therefore the predominance in Greek armies of hoplites, i.e. middle-class soldiers, reflects the egalitarian and democratic aspect of the *polis*.

Apart from being relatively well trained, the hoplites were noted for their courage, determination, ability to maintain discipline on the battlefield and solidarity among brothers in arms. These were characteristics associated with the civic nature of the *polis*, where the decision to wage war was decided at public gatherings by the votes of citizens after open and free debates. The amateur composition of the citizens' army determined its preferred military tactic which was to try to resolve a war with one rapid hoplite attack. The phalanx was usually eight ranks deep and would advance on the enemy by breaking into a run in an attempt to break his lines with a massed full frontal assault, i.e. without any complicated manoeuvres or use of tactical reserves. The only

²⁵ Billows 1994, pp. 9-10.

²⁶ Figures after Hanson 1999, especially pp. 104-105, 226-227.

contemporary formation capable of withstanding such an attack was another phalanx. Greek city-state armies were, however, reluctant to fight protracted wars far from their *polis*. Such was the prestige of the phalanx as the most important formation in the Greek army that for a long time some of the wealthier citizens chose to serve in the heavily armed infantry rather than the traditional preserve of the aristocracy, the cavalry. This exceptional prestige stemmed not only from the fact that the infantry decided the outcomes of battles and therefore also the fate of the city-state, but also because being a hoplite required particular courage and physical prowess. What is more, in some states, such as Sparta, weaker men served in the cavalry, whereas the phalanx was reserved for the very best warriors. This image of Greek city-state armies started to change in the 4th century when the cavalry regained importance and highly trained mercenary light infantry (*peltastai*) units were introduced. Nevertheless, up to the Battle of Chaeronea or even later faith in the citizen hoplite army's ability to deliver the decisive blow was upheld in Greek military doctrine.²⁷

Ancient sources provide no convincing evidence of the permanent existence of a fully battle worthy infantry in the Macedonian army before the reign of Philip II and Diodorus actually claims that Philip was the creator of the Macedonian phalanx.²⁸ Some historians even claim that on account of the social conditions the creation of such a hoplite infantry would have been impossible. Contemporary states lacking appropriate social or cultural conditions to have their own citizens' hoplite army usually hired mercenaries. Such a course of action was taken up by the Great King and satraps of the western provinces of Persia, the rulers of Egypt as well as the tyrants of Thessaly, though in the last of these countries attempts to form its own heavy infantry had been made since at least the 6th century. The primitive level of agriculture combined with the aristocratic character of the state meant that Macedonian kings lacked the financial resources to hire very well trained but expensive Greek mercenaries. Before the reign of Philip II Macedonia's army was usually limited to the aristocratic cavalry and primitive light infantry, both of which stood little chance against the Greek phalanx on the battlefield. That is why throughout most of the Classical period Macedonian was a militarily weak state on whose territories the armies of stronger Greek states frequently intervened.²⁹ This situation changed radically under

²⁷ Hanson 1999, pp. 84-141; van Wees 2000, pp. 87-88; Lendon 2005, pp. 102-105.

²⁸ Diod., 16.3.1-3.

²⁹ Greenwalt 1999, p. 171; Archibald 2000, p. 230.

Philip II and his reorganisation of the Macedonian army will be discussed later in this chapter.

3. The Argead Dynasty

Macedonian tradition, preserved by Herodotus and Thucydides, speaks of wanderings of the ancestors of the Macedonians, their conquest of Pieria and other lands in Lower Macedonia as well as of the expulsion or subjugation of the original inhabitants. Modern research has confirmed that such events indeed took place around 650. It was then that the Makedones conquered Lower Macedonia or at least the part of it in the vicinity of Aegae, which today is associated with the archaeological remains near the village of Vergina. Aegae became a Macedonian bastion and the first capital of the Macedonian state, if at this early stage one can use such a term.³⁰ Other Macedonian tribes occupied the lands of the Elimeia and Lyncestis in Upper Macedonia. In all probability while these tribes were still moving the Makedon warriors were led by the Argeads, the first Macedonian royal dynasty. It was under their leadership that over the last 100 or 150 years the tribes went on to conquer the whole of Lower Macedonia.

According to Herodotus, the Macedonian dynasty was descended from Temenos of the Heraclids, the refugee from Argos. Scholars who accept this version call it the Temenid dynasty and explain the relative stability of their position in Macedonia as a result of their external origins.³¹ However, Herodotus's version is not confirmed by other ancient sources, whereas the key elements – origins traced back to the Greek heroes, especially Heracles – are a bit too typical of the genealogical tales deliberately made up for Greek or Hellenised aristocrats to be believed. Presumably it was invented no earlier than after the Persian wars at the court of Alexander I, which was then trying to use Hellenophile propaganda to sway Greek public opinion and improve relations with Athens. Philip II and Alexander III, on the other hand, had specific political motives to stress their genealogical affinity with Heracles in particular.³²

Alexander I was the actual founder of the Macedonian state and historically its first ruler. As a very talented political player he was consummately able to exploit not only the Persian occupation of Thrace

³⁰ Hdt., 8.136-138; Th., 2.99. Borza 1990, pp. 84-85.

³¹ Hdt., 8.137-139. Hammond 1979, pp. 3-14, 152.

³² Badian 1982, pp. 34-36; Borza 1982, pp. 7-13; Huttner 1997, pp. 65-85; Hall 2000, p. 64.

and Macedonia but also their subsequent defeats at Salamis (480) and Plataea (479) by the league of Greek states. During the time of Persian dominance Alexander I was a loyal vassal of Darius I and Xerxes I. He gave away his sister Gygaia to the Persian aristocrat Bubares and adopted the Persian system of administration as well as elements of Persian culture. Thanks to his ties with Persia, Alexander I consolidated his control over Lower Macedonia and subjugated the mini states of Upper Macedonia.³³ But at the same time he also maintained contact with Athens, selling her Macedonian timber to build a fleet. Although tales of the Macedonian king helping the Greeks during the 480-479 wars with Persia, particularly just before the Battle of Plataea, are most probably apocryphal, Alexander's loyalty to the Persian suzerain certainly did not survive Xerxes' European defeat. Alexander I's adroitness in liaising with both the Persian invader and the ultimately victorious Greeks, particularly Athens, enabled a peripheral and backward Macedonia to become for a short while a regional power in its part of the Balkans.³⁴

The next attempt to build a strong Macedonian state was undertaken by Archelaus (413-399). He was an ally of Athens in the final phase of the Peloponnesian War and tried to reform his weak and peripheral state by building roads and fortresses. It was presumably his decision to make Pella Macedonia's capital because, according to Xenophon, in 382 it was the most important city in the land and it is hard to imagine that the shifting of the capital would have occurred in the years of chaos that followed Archelaus's death.³⁵

Besides, the reasons for the move could only have been economic as in military terms Pella was in a more vulnerable position than the old capital at Aegae. Indeed, thanks to the river Ludias, Pella had access to the sea, which allowed the king of Macedon to make additional profits from the export of timber and other forest products (pitch and resin) as well as other natural resources. Political stability as well as the external security provided by Archelaus' reign allowed Macedonia to become prosperous, as is testified by the high quality of its silver in two-drachm coins that were issued in that period. Thucydides also attributes Archelaus with arming his soldiers with the '*hoplon*', which for a long time was interpreted as evidence that he had created a heavy (hoplite) infantry. Currently a more sceptical opinion prevails which notes the lack of any

³³ Fol, Hammond 1988, p. 249; Borza 1990, pp.100-105; Brosius 2003a, pp. 230-231.

³⁴ Borza 1990, pp. 113-115, 123-131.

³⁵ X., *HG*, 5.2.13. Hammond 1979, pp. 139-140; Borza 1990, pp. 166-171; Greenwalt 1999, pp. 163-164.

trace in the sources that such weapons were used by Macedonians at the time as well as the fact that the ancient authors suggest Macedonia's military weakness at the start of the 4th century. However, we know that Archelaus conducted an aggressive foreign policy and towards the end of his reign he ordered military intervention in Thessaly on the side of the Aleuad aristocratic family. It was thanks to this intervention that Macedonia gained the borderland region of Perrhaebia, which provided it with an important link to Greece. Moreover, a Macedonian garrison was briefly installed in Thessaly's chief city – Larissa. However, Archelaus' successes were short-lived as Macedonian troops had to withdraw from Thessaly as Spartan forces, then imposing hegemony over the whole of Greece after the Peloponnesian War, moved in. Nonetheless the Thessalian expedition is noteworthy in that it showed the direction of Macedonian expansion which became so important in the times of Philip II and Alexander. Even if Archelaus had actually formed some hoplite units, they would have in all certainty been disbanded in the years of chaos that followed his death.³⁶ This monarch had promoted the Hellenisation of the Macedonian elites by organising theatre festivals in Dion and inviting to his court numerous Greek artists, including Zeuxis, Agathon, Timotheos and Euripides, who reportedly was torn apart by a pack of dogs in Pella.³⁷ It was this policy of Hellenisation that would prove to be his lasting legacy.³⁸

Archelaus' other achievements, administrative ones, came to nothing in the anarchic early decades of the 4th century, when the Argead dynasty was blighted by assassinations and political coups. Mini states broke away from Argead control in Upper Macedonia and the whole country was subjected to repeated invasions and looting by neighbouring nations, particularly the Illyrians. At the time of the Theban hegemony over Greece Macedonia became *de facto* a Boeotian fief. As a guarantee of his loyalty, King Alexander II had to give to the Thebans hostages, including his own brother Philip, who spent three years in Thebes and returned to Macedonia in 364. Shortly afterwards war broke out between Macedonia and the Illyria, which was then rising in power and whose king, Bardylis, defeated in battle Philip's brother, King Perdiccas III, killing him and some 4000 of

³⁶ Th., 2.100.2; Polyae., 2.1.17; X., *HG*, 5.2.40. Milns 1976, pp. 92-93; Markle 1978, p. 485; Cawkwell 1978, p. 31; Borza 1990, pp. 165-166; Snodgrass 1999, p. 116.

³⁷ Satyr., *Vit. Eur.*, fr. 39.21; St.Byz., s.v. Βορμίσκος. Schorn 2004, pp. 310-311, 340.

³⁸ Borza 1990, pp. 161-177.

his troops.³⁹ Most history books state that the battle took place in 359, though some historians believe that it happened somewhat earlier in 360.⁴⁰

4. Philip II and the rebuilding of the Macedonian state

Born in 383 or 382, as the third son of King Amyntas III and Princess Eurydice probably originally from the Upper Macedonian kingdom of Lyncestis, Philip was a long way down the line of succession to the throne. For this reason he was probably not regarded to be a particularly important member of the family, which would account for the fact that he was so willingly selected to be handed over to alien powers as a hostage when it became a political necessity. When his father was still alive Philip was given to the Illyrians to ensure Macedonian tributes were paid on time and then in 367/366, together with 30 other Macedonians, he was next handed over to the Thebans. Though we know very little about the young Macedonian prince's stay in Thebes, historians stress its significance of this episode in the life of Philip – the future king and military innovator. According to a legend preserved in a work by Diodorus Philip lived in the house of the father of the Theban leader Epaminondas and together with the latter was taught Pythagorean philosophy. This must be an apocryphal tale as by then Epaminondas would have been around fifty and most certainly engaged in warfare and power politics rather than learning Pythagorean doctrine. Much later anecdotal Greek sources present Philip as a rather uneducated man who was hardly likely to have studied philosophy. We can only presume that from his stay in Thebes Philip gained respect for the Boeotian army and the innovative tactics employed by their generals as well as personal contacts with the elites of Thebes, which was then the most powerful state in Greece.⁴¹

After his return to Macedonia, Philip received from his brother Perdiccas III a province to govern, and it was then that he began to form his own military units. Philip did not take part in his brother's battle against Bardylis, and when Perdiccas was killed, Philip along with his nephew Amyntas, became the obvious candidate to the Macedonian throne. Various ancient sources provide two versions of what happened next. One states that on account of the crisis the Macedonians immediately

³⁹ Diod., 16.2.4-5; Polyæn., 4.10.1. Pająkowski 2000, pp. 148-155.

⁴⁰ Borza 1990, p. 200.

⁴¹ Diod., 16.2.2; Plu., *Pel.*, 26.4-8; Plu., *mor.*, 334c-d; Just., 7.5.1-2; Scholia in Aeschin., 3.112; Suda, s.v. Κόρινθος. Ogden 1999, pp. 12-13; Carney 2000, p. 41; Hammond 1994, pp. 8-10; Corvisier 2002, pp. 69-73.