
REVIEWS

Waldemar Heckel, *In the Path of Conquest. Resistance to Alexander the Great*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, xvi + 348 pp. [978-0-19-007668-9].

There is no one among the scholarship on the Hellenistic world unfamiliar with Waldemar Heckel. His distinguished career lends a unique character to the work under review. In this instance, the author examines in detail the resistance of conquered populations to foreign domination, considering the various forms it took. These forms encompass opposition to military aggression, attempts to overthrow established governments through rebellion, disloyalty from newly appointed officials—often manifested as abuses of power and disobedience to higher authority—and resistance by the Macedonians themselves to the new behaviour of the monarch, particularly in the form of insubordination or conspiracy. The author analyses these various forms of resistance and their underlying motivations. He also explores the reasons for the lack of a more significant and pervasive resistance movement.

The book begins with a brief introduction [pp. 1-7], followed by the main explanatory chapters. These are developed in chronological order and maintain a notably narrative tone, tracing historical events and integrating them with discussions on the main topic. Each chapter is further subdivided into sections. Furthermore, the sources are presented in quotation form without providing the original text, incorporating the translation only occasionally.

The author initially addresses the Panhellenic War (340-334 BCE) [1. “In the Face of Panhellenic War”, pp. 8-19], delineating the context preceding Alexander's accession to the Macedonian throne and the ideological basis for the Asiatic campaign. He further provides insights into Achaemenid history. The next chapter [2. “The Long Road to Asia Minor”, pp. 20-40] focuses on the consolidation of the Macedonian conquests in Greece and considers the perspectives of the Thracians, Illyrians, and other peoples on Alexander's arrival in Asia Minor, as well as Achaemenid defensive strategies in the region. In the following chapter [3. “First Clash in Asia Minor”, pp. 41-57], the author presents a thorough analysis of the complexities surrounding the confrontation between Macedonian and Persian forces in Asia Minor. The fourth chapter [4. “From the Aegean to Cappadocia”, pp. 58-75] explores the resilience of minor Achaemenid satrapies in Asia in the aftermath of the Battle of Granicus (334 BCE). In the subsequent chapter [5. “Persian Countermeasures”, pp. 76-81], the author conducts an in-depth analysis of Persian activities in the Aegean Sea. The sixth chapter [6. “The Great King and His Armies”, pp. 82-88] examines the figure of King Darius III. The author analyses the depiction of the monarch in Classical sources and provides an overview of the composition and size of the Achaemenid army. Furthermore, the historical focus is on

the development of the Battle of Issus (333 BCE). In the seventh chapter [7. "The Campaign in Cilicia", pp. 89-97], the author continues his focus on the battle, offering a detailed examination of key aspects such as the geographical positioning of the battlefield, the deployment of troops on both sides, and the casualties sustained by each army. In the next chapter [8. "The Levant and Egypt", pp. 98-129], the author redirects his analysis to events in the Mediterranean Levant and Egypt. He traces the history of local resistance from the Achaemenid period to opposition against Alexander's invasion, analysing illustrative examples, including Tyre and Gaza. This chapter places particular emphasis on the absence of resistance in Egypt and briefly addresses the failed revolt of Agis III in Greece. In the following chapter [9. "Darius' Last Stand and the Collapse of Persian Resistance", pp. 130-156], the focus shifts to the Battle of Gaugamela (331 BCE) and the ensuing conquest of Mesopotamia and Iran, with particular emphasis on the capture of Persepolis. The tenth chapter [10. "The End of Darius III", pp. 157-170] is devoted to examining the fate of Darius during his flight through the eastern satrapies, along with the role of his executioner, Bessus, satrap of Bactria. The author emphasises the legitimacy acquired by Alexander in his role as avenger of the murdered king. In the next chapter [11. "The War in Central Asia", pp. 171-200], the author places particular emphasis on the confrontation between the troops of the Achaemenid Empire, now incorporated into the Alexandrian army, and the soldiers of the remaining satrapies who remained hostile to the Macedonian king, namely Bactrians and Sogdians. The twelfth chapter [12. "Persianizing and the Internal Enemy", pp. 201-220], addresses the adoption of Persian culture within Alexander's newly established empire. In the following chapters [13. "From the Hindu Kush to the Indus", pp. 221-233 and 14. "From the Punjab to Pattala", pp. 234-264] the author examines the conquest of the last vestiges of Achaemenid rule in the empire's easternmost regions. Additionally, the insubordination of Alexander's troops during the Indian campaign is a focal point of discussion. Subsequently, chapter fifteen [15. "Return to the West", pp. 265-278] addresses Alexander's return to Babylon with his troops, along with his efforts to consolidate both the conquered territories and his implemented policies. In the concluding section of the book [16. "Epilogue", pp. 279-283], the author presents a series of reflections on the main theme of the work, namely the resistance to Alexander's conquests and his treatment of the subjugated empire. This section further explores the reasons behind the fall of the Achaemenid empire.

In addition to the main body of the book, the author includes an appendix with the collected sources and some considerations on major issues. Furthermore, the author provides an index of terms and proper names, facilitating the identification of specific areas of interest within the work. Additionally, a glossary of Greek terms helps newcomers to the period become acquainted with the subject matter. The bibliography is comprehensive and generally consistent. Furthermore, eight maps distributed throughout the text offer an excellent visual representation of the geographical context in which the events of the book unfold.

In conclusion, Heckel's work, grounded in a long career dedicated to the study of Alexander, reinforces the traditional narrative upheld by the academic community regarding the opposition to Graeco-Macedonian conquests, often relying on clichés and common tropes. Drawing extensively on Graeco-Roman classical sources, the author presents what may have been the prevailing Greek perspective –a viewpoint that continues to influence modern interpretations. While Heckel's primary focus is on internal resistance within the Graeco-Macedonian sphere, this approach offers limited consideration of the perspectives of indigenous peoples affected by Alexander's campaigns. Future studies on resistance to conquest might benefit from incorporating

sources beyond the Graeco-Roman tradition, such as Babylonian cuneiform tablets, which contribute a unique layer to our understanding of this period. Later sources could also be valuable, as they reflect the enduring memory of these events, with common expressions like the Middle Persian term *gizistag Skandar* “accursed Alexander” suggesting a long-standing perception of Alexander and his campaigns. Overall, this work enriches the scholarly discourse by presenting a thorough analysis of Alexander’s conquests through a classical lens, thus contributing to our understanding of a crucial historical narrative.

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