
Francesco Maria Ferrara, *Basileus e Basileia. Forme e Luoghi della Regalità Macedone*, Roma, Edizioni Quasar, 2020, 437 pp. [ISBN 978-88-5491-047-8; eISBN 978-88-5491-030-0].

As historical topics of the main interest, space and landscape have been usual aspects of discussion in the scholarship (mainly European, but not only) on the Ancient World. Since the 70's, approaches on the study of ancient perception, construction and transformation of the territories during Antiquity have attracted the attention of different lines and traditions within the very different views of understanding the Ancient World. However, there have been areas, like the Roman historical territories, where these approaches have been currently occupying several projects and research. At the same time, maybe due to the scarcely nature and complexity of the sources, maybe to the lesser attention of concern by current scholarship, other areas and ages have received a lesser attention. This is the case of Ancient Macedonia. In fact, the less attention Ancient Macedonia usually received by scholarship is a clear reality nowadays, and despite the obsessive attention Alexander (and, to a some extent, even his father Philip II), Argead Macedonia is still a deep unknown to us. Of course, a lot of work and knowledge have been done during the last decades, and we are very far from what Macedonian Studies meant for our colleagues of a half century ago. Nevertheless, our fieldwork benefits more from scholarship tendencies like the 'Achaemenid Studies' that from the general research on Ancient Greece, where Ancient Macedonia sometimes use to play a kind of historical role in a concrete moment. If *the devil is in the details*, we must focus on all those elements that can allow us to picture and figure a complex historical portrait of Ancient Macedonia from itself, beyond the usual approach of description just in opposition to the usual Greek organizing and governmental reality of the *poleis*.

Kingship and ruling have been probably the richest theme concerning the Argead realm in modern scholarship. Again, Alexander and Philip work here as the steppingstones in a before/after perspective, between breakdown and continuity, but we still deal with a wide range of questions to solve. It is within this large interrogative camp that we must celebrate the arrival of a new work. Under the title of *Basileus and Basileia*, Francesco Maria Ferrara offers the reader a complex and well documented account of one of the most visual features of the Macedonian Kingship, as it is the study of the places from where royal rule worked. These *Forme e Luoghi della Regalità Macedone*, as the subtitle points clear, is the real topic the reader will find in the book. Actually, the author shows a deep knowledge of the bibliography, both the literary sources and the modern criticism and the archaeological results. With what I feel like an aim of challenging the reader and the traditional perspectives, M. M. Ferrara also puts his skills to a complex exam when he tries to expose in great detail the reality of the Macedonian palaces (and the royal residences too) in relation with the Macedonian kings, in order to offer his audience an historical account that goes beyond simple archaeological or even historical reconstruction both of architectural structures and/or facts of kings; in the end, what we read is a very deep reflection on the forms and traces of how Argeads exhibit his power and his attempts to present themselves as legitimate rulers of the realm.

Indeed, Ancient Macedonia had a long history of struggles of power in Antiquity, even beyond the Argead times, and we can hear along the corpus of the ancient authors how usual were then the claim for kingship from different successors or pretenders. This rich conflictivity resulted in also a richness in the forms and ways to show and demonstrate royalty among the many who claim to be able to rule the realm. Ferrara goes beyond narratives and accounts to offer a description from the material world, and analyses the way these narratives were showed within architecture and artistic expressions. Of course, these expressions from the art were also furniture from where new depictions and perceptions of royal power became usual in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean World, due to the Macedonian expansion with Alexander and the Hellenistic Dynasties that influenced so much the later Roman model of royal authority. So, Ferrara's work is a delicate and delightful piece of historical mastery that aims to think in deep Ancient Monarchies and their expressions, beyond discourses and facts.

Divided in five chapters, and with most that 1500 footnotes and a large bibliography, the book may request the full attention of the reader, due to the very interesting, but complex, approach and the deep knowledge the author shows on the many aspects his thoughts and interpretations put in touch, always concerning a vast lapse of time and historical realities (from kings to emperors, from legal rulers to tyrants, cities to palaces, ideas and myths to political pretensions...). Chapter One (titled like the whole book, i.e., *Forme e luoghi della regalità macedoni*, 27-52) introduces the reader to the Macedonian palace architecture. Chapter Two, titled *Il mondo dei palazzi ellenistici* (53-150), describe some points of the Macedonian society (but I must confess there is more here that we do not know than certainties, as far as we, the scholars, are still discussing the deep details of the social organization, composition and hierarchies between the different groups and classes in Macedonia...). Chapter Three, *La Macedonia: i re, i basileia, le città* (151-284) focuses in three study cases of royal cities (Aigai, Pella and Demetrias), and their royal buildings. Chapter Four (*Analisi funzionale dei palazzi ellenistici*, 285-354) offers a description of functionality for the royal palaces (where he describes an artificial inaccuracy in the division between public and private for the ancient rulers, as far as we know public and private, even in Macedonia, are closely linked, and the king worked as the public representative of the community under his authority in matters of religion or management of collective resources, etc.). Finally, under the title of *Il basileion in Macedonia*, chapter Five (355-394) analyses the archaeological remains of three palaces in Macedonia.

After concluding the reading of this work, I must congratulate the author for such a collection of thoughts and data. The conclusions and wide discussions within the book will inspire new understandings, arising also further approaches that will surely improve our knowledge, even beyond the Ancient Macedonia's field of research. I find, nevertheless, the author does not focus enough on the previous influence of Achaemenid models. He, of course, points it out clearly, but both the bibliography on Achaemenids and the treatment Achaemenid influence could have in the Argead (and later) Macedonian palaces and kingship material exhibitions, in my humble opinion, deserve more attention. However, I can not imagine other than M. Ferrara to face such a huge task of research in the future.

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