

Reviews

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Robin Waterfield, *Creators, Conquerors and Citizens. A History of Ancient Greece*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2018, 528pp., ISBN: 9780198727880

The British classical scholar, Robin Waterfield, has previously written similar studies explaining the structure and manner of presentation of the book in question: 2003 – *Athens: From Ancient Ideal to Modern City*, 2006 – *Xenophon's Retreat: Greece, Persia, and the End of the Golden Age*, 2009 – *Why Socrates Died: Dispelling the Myths*, 2011 – *Dividing the Spoils: The War for Alexander the Great's Empire* and 2014 – *Taken at the Flood: The Roman Conquest of Greece*. In the last four decades, he also translates into English many ancient Greek texts.

Robin Waterfield, through the publication of 2018, produces a compact and comprehensive volume that includes over seven centuries of Greek history. He structured the work in three acts: Archaic (750-480 BC), Classical (480-323 BC) and Hellenistic period (323-30 BC), ending the whole „odyssey” with Rome's conquest of Hellenistic Egypt. To each era, the author emphasizes the main characteristics of the Greek milieu, the political, military, economic, spiritual, social aspect etc. The characters who shaped the history of Greece, from Solon and Pericles to Alexander and Cleopatra are well presented in the course of these acts.

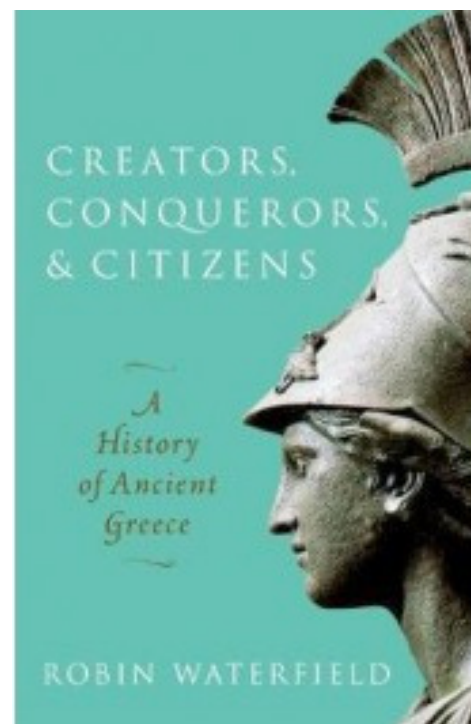
The motto of this work is a passage from Herodotus who asserted that „we Greeks are one in blood and one in language: we have temples to the gods and religious rites in common and a common way of life”. Of course, throughout the text, this unity, more or less visible and conceived by the ancients, is obviously questioned. This matter being a paradox of ancient Greece: political disunity combined with underlying cultural solidarity.

The Greece prehistory, the Mycenaean and the Homeric period constitute a brief introduction to this extensive work. It is to be appreciated that the first act, the archaic period, receives equal treatment with the Classical and Hellenistic period. The archaic period is initially related to aristocracy and the archaic state, and later to law and politics. The author uses the term aristocracy as synonymous with „wealth-and-warrior elite”. Also, the tumultuous political changes of the city-states are well covered, a good example being Athens, following the expulsion of Hippias by Cleomenes being affectively a client state of Sparta. With regard to the theme of war during the archaic period, the discourse is reduced to the Persian war and general data on military structure, hoplites, phalanx etiquette, tactics or land and naval warfare.

The second act, dedicated to the Classical period, comprises mainly the story of two states, Athens and Sparta. Ironically, these two states are responsible for repelling the Persians, and also principally to blame for keeping the Greek states disunited and vulnerable. Another important aspect of this period included in this work is the social and family life, the Athenian and Spartan women and finally, sexuality. Of course, to the ascension and the end of Alexander the Great is dedicated a special attention. Following the chaos of

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his death leads practically to the beginning of the Hellenistic period.

The last act thus encompasses the Greeks, Macedonians and Romans during the Hellenistic period. The narrative spirit of the author makes it easy to understand the complexity and tumultuous period of the succession of the kingdoms and the systematic intrigues of the dynasts. Also, an image of Hellenistic culture, the development of the arts and the value of education are well outlined. Regarding philosophy, we observe that Plato's and Aristotle's schools flourished and even more four new schools arose: Cynicism, Stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism. In the same spirit mentioned, the end of the Hellenistic period is briefly discussed. Therefore, after the last of the Hellenistic kingdoms fell to Rome, ending three centuries of Greco-Macedonian monarchy, mainly after the Battle of Actium (31 B.C.) and the establishment of the Roman Empire by Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus.

A strong point of this work is constituted by the recommended reading list that corresponds to each chapter of the book, reaching all aspects of Greek life in the course of seven centuries. In *Creators, Conquerors, and Citizens*, Robin Waterfield also seeks to include the lynch pin of interactions from the East and the West, and the role ancient Greece

played in the formation of modern society. The author presents a very readable political history of ancient Greece while also providing chapters on Greek religion, literature, social constructs or arts in context. The use of ancient sources throughout the text also offers quality information. However, I believe that this incursion into the history of Greece is rather dedicated to a wide audience, introducing the reader to major periods and players of ancient Greece.

The entire „odyssey” offered to the reader, is facilitated by several tools and helps made available by the author. The black and white maps as well as the chronology and a king lists place the events where they belong, making it easy for the reader to follow the text. In addition, the glossary provides the necessary explanations for every unusual term to a wide audience. On the other hand, a more detailed bibliography would have been very useful. For example, in the introduction, detailed and important informations on the diet, population and life of the Greeks are provided without the use of bibliographic references. This aspect would have been also very useful for a specialized audience. I consider that this manner of presenting the history of a complex civilization, like that of the ancient Greeks, could best be used by students.