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HELLENISTIC WARFARE 1



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FUNDACIÓN LIBERTAS 7

Valencia
2011

First Published in 2011
Depósito Legal: V-156-2012
ISBN 978-84-615-5994-7

By Fundación Libertas 7, Instituto Valenciano de Estudios Clásicos y Orientales
Calle Caballeros 20-22, ES-46001 Valencia, Spain
www.fundaciónlibertas7.org, info@fundacionlibertas7.org
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Monografías del Instituto Valenciano de Estudios Clásicos y Orientales nº 2

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Page layout by Pepa Cañete
Printed by Gráficas Mari Montañana S. L.

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Printed in Spain

Impreso en España

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3. MILITARY AND BUILDING ASPECTS OF MACEDONIAN RULE IN THRACE (DURING THE REIGN OF PHILIP II)

Undoubtedly, a close interconnection between military and building activities can be firmly established. Many modern towns, for example, especially in central Europe, evolved gradually from ancient military camps, created by the Roman army during the Principate (27 BC - AD 284). The military and building activity of the Roman army was especially significant in the case of frontier provinces on the Lower Danube: in Dacia and in both of the Moesian and Pannonian provinces.¹

Undoubtedly in case of the Roman Empire the state played the predominant role in building and urban activities. In the case of the Greek or Hellenistic civilizations, however, the most significant phenomenon was that of the city-state. "Why city-states existed in a preindustrial society, where some 80 to 90 percent of the population, at least, were necessarily engaged in food production is a mystery, which scholars have seldom addressed or even recognised. [...] Most of the city-states' population consisted of peasants who lived in the city and walked to work their land outside it, in the city's near vicinity".²

Perhaps at least part of the explanation of the above-mentioned phenomenon of the city-state is the military explanation. This military explanation is expressed even by the Greek term itself. "The word itself for a city, in Greek *polis* was derived from an Indo-European designation for a fortified enclosure (Sanskrit *pur*, Lithuanian *pilis*). [...] Other designations for a city, such as the Slavic *gorod* and the Germanic *burgh*, carry the same meaning of a fortified enclosure, around which the future city formed!"³ Undoubtedly, the city fortifications evolved gradually. "The overwhelming majority of Greek *poleis* appear to have had no circuit walls until the 6th century B.C. in Ionia and

This article is prepared for the First International Conference on Hellenistic Warfare (Toruń) Oct.10.- 13, 2003). We would like to express our warm gratitude to the organizing committee and especially to Prof. Nicholas Sekunda for the invitation and the possibility of presenting our article. See further now J. Hatłas, *Urbanizacja Tracji w przededniu oraz w epoce hellenistycznej* (in print).

¹ M. Żyromski, 'The Roman towns' development on middle and lower Danube - the military factor' in ed. A. B. Biernacki, P. Pawlak, *Late Roman and Early Byzantine Cities on the Lower Danube from the 4th to the 6th Century A.D.* (Poznań 1997) 13-29.

² A. Gat, 'Why city states existed? Riddles and clues of urbanisation and fortifications' in ed. M.H. Hansen, *A comparative study of six city states culture* (Copenhagen 2002) 125-139 at 125.

³ Gat, *op. cit.* 130.

northern Italy, and until the 5th century in mainland Greece, after centuries of urban growth".⁴

However, the leading theme of our article is to analyse the military and building aspects of Macedonian rule in Thrace, especially in the context of urban and town development. The Macedonian military operations against Thrace during the reign of Philip II were close interrelated, from the very beginning, with the whole political relations and conflicts between Macedonia and Athens.

The most important aim of the policy of Philip II was the consolidation of his position in mainland Greece. Because the Odrussian rulers, in a more or less open form, were allies of Athens, so they automatically became the enemies of the Macedonian state. The Macedonian conquest of Thrace began from the South, starting with the Aegean Sea coast. Propontis and the Thracian Chersonese were the first to fall under Macedonian rule. Unfortunately, the historical sources to clarify the details of these military operations are sparse in the extreme.

The first important military operation against Thrace was conducted by the *strategos* Antipater in the autumn of 347 BC. The political situation was favourable to the Macedonians. After the death of Kotys I the Odrussian state was divided into three parts, ruled by Kersebleptes, Berisades and Amadokos. Amadokos had died a few years previously (in 351 or 350 BC) and his successor Teres II was pro-Macedonian in his political attitudes. Macedonian military operations most probably had two aims. One aim was the preparation of successive and more intense attacks on the Odrussian state. The other aim was, however, to put political pressure on Athens. The military expedition of Antipater was executed very rapidly. As a result Teres II had to accept Macedonian sovereignty, but was allowed to stay on his throne.

However, Kersebleptes, the other remaining Odrussian king, was an unofficial ally of Athens, so he became the next target of Macedonian attack. The Macedonian operations of 346 BC brought about a situation that Kersebleptes lost some of his territory. In accordance with the treaty of Philocrates of July 346 BC, Kersebleptes was forced to pay tribute. Nevertheless, in the opinion of some scholars, we can not say with certainty that Kersebleptes became a vassal of a Macedonian king: we can only definitely say that his position became less certain.⁵ Not very long after Kersebleptes initiated a process of slowly rebuilding his political and military position. He attacked some towns in Hellespont, which were allies of Philip II, and in the spring of 342 BC Kersebleptes probably succeeded in conquering some other towns. He

⁴ Gat, *op. cit.* 132.

⁵ K. Jordanov, *Političeskite otnošenija meždu Makedonija i trakijските dāržavi (359-281 g. Pr. Chr.)* (= *Studia Thracica* 7, Sofia 1998) 53-4.

even gained the support of Teres II - the other Thracian king, who was the successor of Amadokos and who was known for his pro-Macedonian political attitudes. So, an informal internal Odryssian alliance had become established. Of course the response of Philip II came very quickly. The Macedonian army, well organised and equipped, attacked Thrace at the end of May or the beginning of June 342 BC. The first aim of the operation was mouth of river Maritsa, where the town of Kardia was situated, which became the Macedonian strategic base. The important town of Ainos was conquered next. The fighting was long and hard. Nevertheless, Philip II received reinforcements in 341 BC and conquered such towns as Drongilon, Kabyle and Maisteria. These towns were situated in the very heart of Odryssian territory (Demosthenes, *De Chers.* 2, 35-37; 44-45). However, the conquest of Thrace was not so easy. Even the victory of Philip II over Kersebleptes in 341 BC did not mean (in the opinion of some scholars), the end of Odryssian kingdom. For in the meantime the core of the Odryssian state had moved towards the North and North-West.⁶ The position of the Macedonians was not so strong, because their garrisons had been placed in many, already existing, towns and also in some deserted territories. On the other hand, already in 340 or 339 BC some of the Thracians had started to rebel and Philip II had to send some military units to the aid of his *strategoi* Antipater and Parmenion. In any case, quite a large portion of the territory of modern Bulgaria was not under Macedonian control - especially the territories lying to the north of middle course of the rivers Tundja and Maritsa. Only a few towns like Philipopolis, Kabyle, Drongilon and Mastejra constituted centres of Macedonian rule.

The Macedonian army conducted military operations in the same year, 340 BC in southern Thrace, but their sieges of Perinthus and Byzantium were not successful. Then Macedonians once more transferred their attention to northern Thrace, where they conducted some operations in the Dobrudja against the Scythians in 339 BC.

The rule of Philip II ushered in a new era, which is described in modern historiography as "proto-hellenism" or as an "early Hellenistic phenomenon".⁷ So, the Macedonian attack on Thrace and the subjugation of the greater part of this region had distinctive and long lasting consequences. One of these consequences, especially important in the case of inner regions of Thrace, was the establishment of many Hellenistic towns. The Macedonians founded some towns on the Thracian plain and in the area of middle course of the Strymon (the modern Struma). These towns had mixed populations which comprised

⁶ Jordanov, *op. cit.* 7.

⁷ Jordanov, *op. cit.* 7.

both Macedonian and Thracian population groups, and perhaps also a Greek element.⁸

Starting with the above-mentioned events of 341 BC, we can start to begin to talk of a so-called "Philipic colonization" in Thrace (in the opinion of some scholars at least). Nevertheless, the question of the "urbanization activity" of Philip II is a question of long lasting discussion among modern scholars. It is a fact beyond doubt that Macedonian rule promoted the process of establishing new towns and of transforming already existing communities into regular towns. On the other hand the scale of this phenomenon remains unclear. First of all we simply do not know how many towns were founded by Macedonians, and how many towns were only rebuilt and developed.

Nevertheless, we can establish some stages in the colonisation activity of Philip II.⁹ In the first stage Philip II tried to conquer the northern coast of the Aegean Sea. He first of all tried to establish his control over the gold mines in this area. In the consequence he conquered Krenides, where a new town was founded: named Philippi (after the name of the Macedonian king himself). Next Macedonian colonization was centered on some towns on the rivers Struma and Mesta. In the end the military operations of Philip II were conducted against Greece and afterwards against Thrace as well.

Probably the Macedonian conquest of Thrace was carried out by Philip II in accordance with some deliberate plan, because the Macedonians choose some towns (or more importantly fortified points) in the conquered areas, which were used both as centres of Macedonian power, and as strongholds against possible Thracian uprisings. Apart from this the Macedonians promoted agriculture and trade throughout the conquered territories.¹⁰

We now have to ask a question of crucial importance: is it possible to talk about any Thracian towns or similar urban settlements before Philip II and his army came to Thrace? The answer to this question is, however, neither clear nor simple. There are two different hypothesis current among scholars, which are both represented in the modern historiography. In the opinion of some scholars towns and urban settlements in Thrace only start with the reign of Philip II.¹¹ On the other hand in the opinion of other scholars (opponents of the first group) some towns existed in Thrace long before the reign of Philip II, and indeed the evolution of urban settlements could have started even as early as

⁸ N.G.L. Hammond, *Starožytna Macedonia* (Warsaw 1999) 184.

⁹ Z. Gočeva, 'Gradovete na Trakija i kolonizacijata na Filip II' in *Poselišten život v drevna Trakija. Vtori simpozium 6 – 9 oktombri 1986* (Jambol 1986) 60-74.

¹⁰ Hammond, *loc. cit.*

¹¹ P. Balabanov, 'Gradovete v drevna Trakija predi pohodite na Filip II' in *Poselišten život v drevna Trakija. Vtori simpozium 6 – 9 oktombri 1986* (Jambol 1986) pp. 41-59 at 44.

Neolithic times. Some urban settlements from that time were even in possession of stone walls.¹² (Pejkov 1986: 33-34). The question of urban settlements is even more complicated because there is no exact and clear definition of the phenomenon of the "town" itself. In the case of the ancient city, one could postulate that the town had to have some public buildings and other elements, but any exact definition is still lacking.

There is some evidence for towns in Thrace already existing in the middle of first millennium B.C. We could cite the inscription from Vetren and the example of the *emporion* at Pistiros (founded by Greek colonists), which perhaps started in the last decade of the fifth century BC.¹³ Some archeological research conducted in the end of twentieth century in Bulgaria seems to confirm the hypothesis that some urban and commercial centres (for instance Pistiros)¹⁴ existed in Thrace already during the reign of Kotys. Further development of urban settlements was connected with the reign of Philip II and Alexander III, when some new towns were established.¹⁵ Also some information from the ancient historians confirms the existence of urban settlements in Thrace even before the Macedonian conquest.¹⁶ This is especially true in the case of the Aegean Sea coast. We know from the ancient historians that over 15 urban centers already existed in Aegean Thrace in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. One of the most famous was Doriskos, mentioned by Herodotus (VII 25, 58, 59, 108, 121). However, these urban settlements in Thrace only arose under the strong Greek influence. So in Hellenistic times they were practically identical to the Greek *poleis*.¹⁷

Nevertheless, even in the mountainous inner regions of Thrace there were some fortresses already in the beginning of first millennium BC. At the same time there were some open settlements in the Thracian plains.¹⁸ So, we are dealing with two kinds of urban settlements - with or without fortifications.

¹² A. Pejkov, 'Nekotorye nabljudenija, svjazannye s vozniknovenien goroda vo Frakii' *Pulpudeva* 5 (1986) 31-34.

¹³ M. Domaradski, V. Taneva, *Trakijската kultura v prechoda kăm elinističeskata epoha* (= *Emporion Pistiros Vol. 2*, Septemvri 1998) 16.

¹⁴ See for example: L. Domaradzka, 'Inscriptions découvertes dans le haut de Maritza (ancien Hébrois)' *Archeologia* 44, 1993 (1994) 55-57; M. Domaradzki, 'Pistiros – centre commercial et politique dans la vallée de Maritza (Thrace)' *Archeologia* 44, 1993 (1994) 35-55; J. Bouzek, M. Domaradzki, Z.H. Archibald, *Pistiros I. Excavations and studies* (Prague 1996).

¹⁵ M. Domaradski, V. Taneva, *Trakijската kultura v prechoda kăm elinističeskata epoha* (= *Emporion Pistiros Vol. 2*, Septemvri 1998) 16.

¹⁶ Z. Gočeva, 'Gradovete na Trakija i kolonizacijata na Filip II' in *Poselišten život v drevna Trakija. Vtori simpozium 6 – 9 oktombri 1986* (Jambol 1986) 60-74 at 60.

¹⁷ Chr. Danov, *Trakowie* (Warsaw 1987) 126.

¹⁸ G. Kitov, D. Agre, *Văvedenie v trakijската archeologija* (Sofia 2002) 53-4.

The fortresses were not so big - in the shape of circle or ellipse. Their walls were made of stone but without any binding agent. These fortresses were established in the mountainous regions (especially in the least accessible places). Some of them were used as *acropolis* or as *refugium* sites.¹⁹ Some of these fortresses defended important merchant routes. They were built especially at the beginning of the fifth century BC. In the opinion of Z. Gočeva the above-mentioned fortresses could be perhaps described as towns as well. This is especially the case where these fortresses were built on artificially fortified places, with some inner fortifications, and can be described as the core of a tribal federation.²⁰

One of the most important towns in ancient Thrace was certainly Philippopolis, the name of which is most probably derived from the name of Macedonian king Philip II.²¹ Nevertheless, the beginning of this town can be traced to much earlier times than the rule of Philip II and his conquest of Thrace. Archaeological evidence shows that urban settlement in this area (on the hill called Nebet Tepe) can be dated to the first millennium BC or even earlier. A temple and a settlement (Eumolpia,²² Pulpudeva) have been found there. It is possible that Nebet Tepe formed the core of a settlement in this place already in the Bronze Age. The biggest problem in the case of Philippopolis is, however, the question of the date of its defensive walls. It is possible that an urban settlement already functioned here in the first half of fourth century. Consequently, it is extremely difficult to maintain the central urbanizing role of the Macedonian conquest in the case of Philippopolis. The other well known town is Kabyle. It lies within the semicircle of the river Tundja, situated on the hill called Zajči Värch, which is visible from a long distance away. On this hill was founded a temple, which can be traced back even to the eleventh or tenth century BC and which played an important religious role.²³ This temple functioned down to the second century BC. It is assumed that before the Macedonian conquest, Kabyle consisted of two separate archaeological locations - the temple situated on the Zajči Värch hill, and the settlement on the hill Hisarläk.²⁴ The chronology of Kabyle is, however, uncertain – a situation similar to that of Philippopolis. For example we do not know when the

¹⁹ M. Čičikova, 'Selištna sistema' in *Kratka enciklopedija. Trakijska drevnost* (Sofia 1993) 254-256 at 255.

²⁰ Z. Gočeva, 'Gradovete na Trakija i kolonizacijata na Filip II' in *Poselišten život v drevna Trakija. Vtori simpozium 6 – 9 oktombri 1986* (Jambol 1986) 60-74.

²¹ V. Velkov, 'Nadpisi ot Kabile' in *Kabile 2* (Sofia 1991) 7-53 at 9.

²² A. Pejkov, 'Krepostta na drevnotrakijskija grad Evmolpija' in *Poselišten život v drevna Trakija. Vtori simpozium 6 – 9 oktombri 1986* (Jambol 1986) 30-40.

²³ V. Velkov, 'Nadpisi ot Kabile' in *Kabile 2* (Sofia 1991) 7-53 at 10.

²⁴ M. Domaradski, V. Taneva, *Trakijskata kultura v prechoda kām elinističeskata epoha* (= *Emporion Pistiros Vol. 2, Septemvri 1998*) 18.

defensive walls, conquered by Philip II in 341 BC, were first built. On the other hand, there is no doubt at all that the urban settlement made considerable progress after the Macedonian conquest, especially during the second half of the fourth century BC. It was during this period that Kabyle became a town in our, modern sense of the word. Some monumental buildings were built, the *agora* and a temple, and a regular network of streets was laid out. The town of Kabyle, founded by Philip II, is the urban settlement which has been best investigated so far. The town was situated near the important road leading from Thracian Chersonesus to the mouth of Danube.

By way of conclusion we can say that it is without doubt that Philip II built or rebuilt many towns in Thrace. However, we do not know the scale of this phenomenon. First of all we do know how many towns were built by Macedonians from the very beginning, and how many towns were only rebuilt based on already existing towns or other types of urban settlement. The greatest and most prolonged influence of the Macedonian conquest can, however, be traced in the case of the inner regions of Thrace. The model of the Hellenistic town was transferred here and this type was used later on. The good example of this situation is provided by the town of Seuthopolis,²⁵ which had been the capital of state during the reign of Seuthes III. This king established his political power base, with its capital at Seuthopolis, in about 331 BC, in spite of the opposition of the Macedonian administration and even of Antipater: the legate of Alexander the Great himself in Europe.²⁶ So Macedonian colonization in Thrace, although starting with Philip II, was a very prolonged process. Macedonian rule in Thrace was not strong at all times. During the reign of Lysimachus Macedonian rule in Thrace (especially North of rivers Maritsa, Tundja and Arda) was very unstable and even ephemeral. So new political centres were established. The rule of Seuthes III was not, however, exceptional. We can name other examples such as that of Spartocus in Kabyle and Dromichaites among the Getae.²⁷ Undoubtedly, the importance of Macedonian colonization in Thrace has to be seen rather in terms of its prolonged consequences, rather than only in terms of ad hoc acts.

²⁵ M. Čičikova, *Sevtopolis* (Sofia 1970); M. Čičikova, 'Antična keramika' in *Sevtopolis. Vol. 1, Bit i kultura* (Sofia 1984) 18-114; M. Čičikova, 'Novi nabljudenija vārchu gradoustrojstvo i arhitekturata na Sevtopolis' in *Sbornik. Trakijskata kultura prez elinističeskata epoha v Kazanlāškija kraj* (Kazanlāk 1991) 60-70; M. Čičikova, 'Sevtopolis' in *Kratka enciklopedija. Trakijska drevnost* (Sofia 1993) 250-252; M. Čičikova, 'Sevtopolski nadpis' in *Kratka enciklopedija. Trakijska drevnost* (Sofia 1993) 252-253.

²⁶ K. Jordanov, *Političeskite otnošenija meždu Makedonija i trakijskite dāržavi (359-281 g. Pr. Chr.)* (= *Studia Thracica* 7, Sofia 1998) 7.

²⁷ *Idem.*

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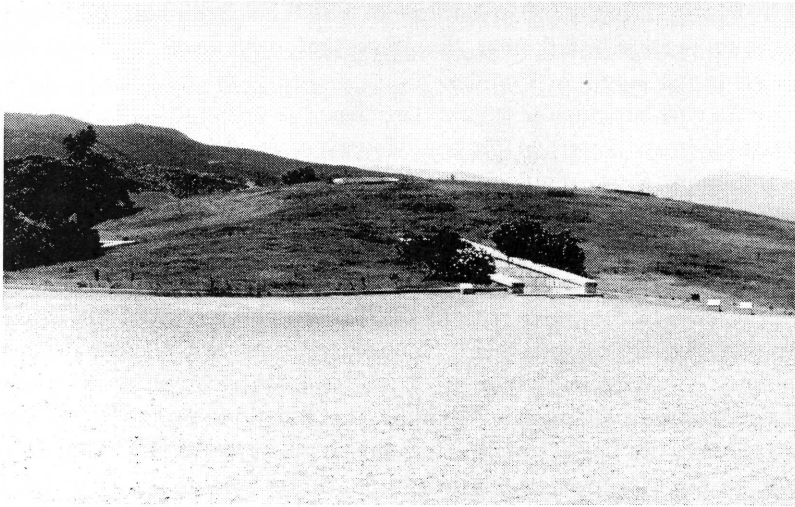


Fig. 1: Vergina – the grave of Philip II (Photo. J. Hatłas)

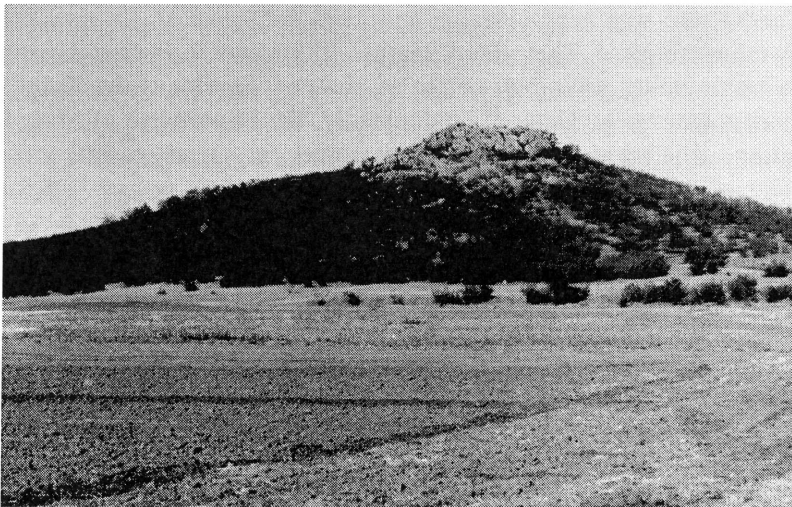


Fig. 2: Zajči Vārch, Kabyle (Photo. J Hatłas)