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THE FRONTIERS OF PHILIP II'S MACEDONIA

Abstract: The greater kingdom of Macedonia was created by Philip II. Its precise frontiers are a matter of dispute. In this article it is argued that they reached in the northwest Prilep and part of Dassaretia beyond Lake Little Prespa, in the north the watershed range between Yugoslavia and Republic of Macedonia, and in the east Akhladhokhori and the river Nestus. These frontiers were eminently defensible. The argument is based on a study of the ancient literature and of the topographical situation in each area.

It is a great honour to contribute to this volume in honour of Fanoula Papazoglou. She is the greatest scholar in the topography and the history of the Balkan area in ancient times, and her work will be of eternal value. We have a common interest in the study of topography, and we share the belief that anyone who writes on that subject must have travelled over the area, preferably on foot. So after a conference in Thessaloniki we joined forces, and together with my wife and Miltiades Hatzopoulos we walked through part of North-west Macedonia, tracking down the course of the Via Egnatia. It was a most happy occasion.

Any study of the northern frontier of Macedonia in the time of Philip II must begin with that northwestern region. It was there that Philip made the first advance of his frontier. According to Diodorus 16. 8. 1 'Philip, having conquered the Illyrians in a great battle [in 358], and having made subject [i. e. to himself] all the inhabitants up to the Lake called Lychnitis, returned to Macedonia'. This statement, I have argued, was derived from the work of the competent contemporary historian Ephorus¹. Its accuracy is confirmed by two passages. The statement of Demosthenes in 351, that Philip was said

* Maps of the area are available in my *Atlas of the Greek and Roman World in Antiquity* (New Jersey, 1981) no. 12 and 24, and in my books, *A History of Macedonia I* (Oxford, 1972) Maps 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 17, and *Philip of Macedon* (London, 1994) Fig. 4.

¹ See my articles "The Sources of Diodorus Siculus XVI" in *CQ* 31 (1937) and 32 (1938), and especially *CQ* 31. 81 f. and 85 f. = my *Collected Studies I* (Amsterdam, 1993) 3 f. and 7 f.

to be 'fortifying cities among Illyrians' (*The First Philippic* 48), can only apply to an area of Illyrian inhabitants occupied by Philip. In Arrian 1. 5. 5 the naming of a river 'Eordaicus', flowing from Lake Little Prespa, in Alexander's first campaign in 335 shows us that the region was named Eordaea when it was conquered by Philip².

The extent of the advance of the frontier is staggering. In the last years of Perdiccas III the Macedonian kingdom had not extended westwards and northwestwards beyond Pieria and Eordaea. At that time the Orestae had become a member of the Molossian group of states, and 'the king of the Pelagones' had been hailed as a benefactor of Athens then at war with Macedonia³. In 351 Demosthenes looked back to the days when the then independent states [of Upper Macedonia] 'had wanted to be on good terms with us' (*ibidem* 4). After his great victory over the Illyrians in 358 Philip incorporated into his kingdom all these peoples – from south to north Elimeotae, Orestae, Lyncestae, Derriopes and Pelagones. Thus his northern frontier in 358 was extended to beyond Prilep as far as Mt Babuna – a distance of about 100 kilometres from Eordaea. Because these were Greek-speaking peoples and because they were accorded equal terms with the Macedones of the original kingdom, they were recruited by Philip to serve in the King's Army.

To the west of these peoples there were from south to north Tymphaei and Parauaei belonging to the Molossian group; the Dassaretai who were of Chaonian stock⁴; and then Illyrian tribes. The Dassaretai were separated from the Illyrians by the large Lake Lychnitis, now called Lake Ochrid. When Philip made all the people up to Lake Lychnitis subject to himself as king, he took into his kingdom not only a part of Dassaretis to which he gave the name Eordaea, but also a large number of Illyrians who occupied the region round the two Prespa Lakes and the hilly country between the north end of Lake Ochrid and Derriopus. Much of this territory was fertile. Near Lake Ochrid lay a rich silver mine at Damastium⁵. It was among these Illyrians that Philip was fortifying cities which he founded with Ma-

² Arrian 1. 5. 5, his account being derived from Ptolemy, the contemporary of Alexander; see my argument in *JHS* 94 (1974) 77 = *Coll. Stud.* 3 (1994) 12. The inhabitants of this western Eordaea were called Eordetae by the geographer Ptolemy 3. 13. 26.

³ *IG* 11² 190; see M. N. Tod, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* 2 (Oxford, 1948) no. 143 in the year 362 and no. 148.

⁴ Hecataeus (*FGrH* 1 F 103) "Dexari: a tribe of the Chaones, next to the Encheleae ... living below Mt Amyron", on which see my comments in *Epirus* (Oxford, 1967) 481.

⁵ See *Živa Antika* 3 (1953) 261, reporting the workings of a very ancient mine with lead and silver; see my comments in *A History of Macedonia* 1 (Oxford, 1972) 93 f.

cedonians transplanted from Lower Macedonia in these early years of his reign⁶.

The new western frontier ran from Mt Plakenska to the northeastern end of Lake Ochrid; then down the east side of Lake Ochrid below the range of Mt Petrina to Sveti Naum; then from there to the tip of Lake Little Prespa. This frontier lay some thirty-five kilometres to the west of the previous frontier of Derriopus and Lynxus, which had followed the line of the lofty Peristeri range. Any army invading from the West would in future have to fight its way through two parallel mountain ranges, as the Romans found to their cost. Moreover, with this frontier the Macedonians enfiladed the natural route from the north down the corridor of Lake Ochrid and Lake Malik, which had been used for the invasion of both Epirus and Orestis by the Illyrians over the previous forty years.

In 357 and 356 Philip was involved in the problems of his eastern frontier. He acquired control of Amphipolis, of which the inhabitants were mainly descendants of the Greeks of Chalcidice. At first he treated it formally as an independent ally; but within the city his political opponents were banished and their lands were given to Macedonian settlers. Thus Amphipolis was effectively within the orbit of the Macedonian Kingdom, and the part of its territory which lay east of the Strymon provided a frontier. Then in 356 Philip was invited by the citizens of Crenides to help them in a war against the Thracians. This city, some 65 kilometres east of Amphipolis and 16 kilometres inland from the coast, had been recently founded by Greeks of Thasos and was in a desperate plight. Philip defeated the local Thracians and their allies, the Thracians of King Cersobleptes, who was the ruler of the Odrysians. Having undertaken to defend the liberty of his ally, Philip 'enlarged it with a mass of settlers, renamed it Philippi, and so increased the output of its gold mines that they yielded him 1000 talents a year'. This information in Diodorus was derived from Ephorus, a trustworthy contemporary⁷. It is supported by a statement by a later writer (Appian *BC* 4. 105) that 'Philip fortified the city as a natural stronghold against the Thracians and named it Philippi'.

The policy of Philip was the same here as in the northwest part of his kingdom. The intervening country between Amphipolis and Philippi was taken into the kingdom, and its people became his subjects. He acquired the rich gold and silver mines of Mt Pangaeum as his property, and he secured their safety by bringing settlers from

⁶ For their possible location see my article "The Western Frontier of Macedonia in the reign of Philip II", *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson* (Thessaloniki, 1981) 213 = *Coll. Stud.* 2 (1993) 237.

⁷ See n. 1 above.

Lower Macedonia and converting a Greek city on the coast into a 'city of Macedonians'. He changed its name from Oesyne to Emathia⁸. We have learnt recently from inscriptions that Philip was the possessor of land that he had won by the spear, and that he granted the use of that land to the native peoples. Thus some of the land that was reclaimed by draining near Philippi was 'given' by Philip to Thracians 'to cultivate', no doubt at a fixed rent. Another part was 'given' to Philippi 'to possess'⁹. For Philip treated Philippi formally as an independent city. But within the city his settlers were influential, and he exercised control over the gold mines. A sign of his control is revealed by the fact that the coinage of Damastium and the coinage of Philippi bore the names of Macedonian mint-officials¹⁰.

Where was Philip to draw a defensible eastern frontier? The independence of his ally, Philippi, was threatened by the neighbouring Thracians – especially those of the hilly country between Philippi and the river Nestus –, and by the Odrysians of Cersobleptes, whose kingdom was centred in the middle valley of the river Hebrus and extended to the river Nestus. It was when these Thracians of Cersobleptes crossed the Nestus to invade the territory of Philippi that Philip had been invited to intervene. The obvious choice of frontier for Philip was the river Nestus. It lay some 30 kilometres to the east of Philippi's gold mines on Mt Dionysus. In its delta the river is large and perennial, and above the delta there are a series of remarkable defiles, beside which the railway cuts its way. My conclusion that Philip adopted the Nestus as his frontier is supported by two passages in later writers. Pausanias 1. 10. 2 mentioned the rule of Lysimachus over 'Thrace and later his additional rule over Nestii and Macedonians' at a time c. 287 when 'Pyrrhus ruled over most of Macedonia'. Here Thrace extended evidently up to the Nestus, and beyond it lay the 'Nestii' (being Thracians) and Macedonian settlers. Then Strabo stated plainly that Philip acquired the territory between the Strymon and the Nestus (7 C 323), and that 'Philip and Alexander in their own times' set the boundary between Macedonia and Thrace at the mouth of the river 'Nestus' (7 frags. 33 and 35)¹¹. The

⁸ Ps-Scymnus 656-8 and Steph. Byz. s. v. *Oisyne*.

⁹ The inscription was published by C. Vatin in *Proc. 8th Epigr. Conf.* (Athens, 1984) 259–70 and was discussed by me in *CQ* 38 (1988) 382 ff. = *Coil. Stud.* 3 (1994) 211 ff. See now M. B. Hatzopoulos, "Macedonian Institutions under the Kings", *Meletemata* 22 (Athens, 1996) 2. 25 ff.

¹⁰ See *A History of Macedonia* 1 93 f. and 2. 668 with n. 4.

¹¹ Hatzopoulos, op. cit. n. 9, 1. 184 does not include the fragments in his discussion of Strabo C 323. In that passage Strabo was describing the Aegean seaboard of his own time under Augustus when 'the Macedonian territory extended from Thessaloniceia to the Strymon'. He then added 'some, however, assign to Macedonia the land from the Strymon to the Nestus'. Here the 'some' looks back to earlier times for which Strabo made much use of Polybius.

probable sources of these passages were Hieronymus, the best author for Hellenistic history to the death of Pyrrhus, and Polybius writing about the course and setting of the Via Egnatia.

Some archaeological evidence now comes to our aid. The so-called 'citadel of Kalyva' on the right bank of the Nestus, overlooking the best point of crossing in the delta, has been excavated, and the lay-out of its fortification has been attributed by the excavator to the time of Philip II¹². It has a large rock-cut cistern of much the same size as the rock-cut cisterns at Aeane in Elimeotis and at St Erasmus by Lake Ochrid. I have argued elsewhere¹³ that the fortification at St Erasmus was built by Philip II to defend the narrow passage alongside Lake Ochrid on his western frontier.

The achievements of Philip in these early years, 358–355, were recounted by Alexander in a speech to the Macedonians at Opis. If the speech is derived from an account by Ptolemy or/and Aristobulus (as Arrian claims in general terms in his *Preface*), it is a correct, if exaggerated, record. It runs as follows. In the northwest Philip saved the peoples of Upper Macedonia from the raids by Illyrians, Triballians and the neighbouring Thracians and made them live in cities under good laws. This is generally accepted to be true. Next, Philip 'added the great part of Thrace to Macedonia, developed trade by taking over the best situated places on the coast, and made safe the working of the mines' (Arr. 7. 9. 3). Alexander is speaking here of the coastal sector of Thrace, which extended eastwards from the northeast coast of Chalcidice¹⁷; of the harbours such as Amphipolis, Phagres, Galepsus, Oesyne-Emathia and Antisara; and of the mines around Mt Pangaeum and near Philippi, which Philip developed so greatly. This account is consistent with a frontier set by Philip at the Nestus.

The most vulnerable part of the Macedonian kingdom was the district between the Iron Gates of the Axios river and the coast. Any invader who occupied that district would cut the kingdom into two parts, as Sitalces, the Odrysian king, had done in 429. Towards the end of that century Archelaus strengthened his defences by founding a city of Macedonians at Manastir beside the Iron Gates¹⁵. In the years of weakness when Perdikkas III faced the threat of invasion by the Illyrians into West Macedonia he gave a separate command with

¹² The report is in *The Archaeological Ergon in Macedonia and Thrace* (Thessaloniki) 2 (1988) 451 ff.; it is discussed by me in *Philip of Macedon* 54.

¹³ In *A History of Macedonia* 2. 653 and *Philip of Macedon* 54 f. with Fig. 6.

¹⁴ Chalcidice itself was thus 'towards Thrace', e. g. in Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5. 2. 12 and 24.

¹⁵ The reports of the excavations are in *Starinar* 12 (1961) 222 f. and briefly in *Archaeologia Jugoslavica*, 5 (1964).

an armed force to Philip, whose task, it seems, was to defend the district between the Iron Gates and the coast¹⁶. The immediate enemies north of the Iron Gates were the Paeonian tribes. When Macedonia was weakened by the death of Perdiccas and 4000 Macedonians, the Paeonians began to ravage Macedonian territory, but they were persuaded by Philip's gifts and promises to keep the peace, while he dealt with an Athenian landing on his coast (Diod. 16. 2. 6 and 3. 4). Then he attacked the Paeonians, whose king had just died, defeated them in battle and 'compelled them to obey the Macedonians' (Diod. 16. 4. 2). At least one and perhaps two more campaigns were needed to enforce that obedience¹⁷.

The heart of the land of the Paeonians lay between the Axios and its eastern tributary, the Bregalnitsa. It was bounded on the south by the Macedonian stronghold at the Demir Kapu and on the north by the mountains which form the watershed between the Aegean Sea and the Danube. These mountains were named from west to east by Strabo as 'Illyrian, Paeonian and Thracian' (C 313; cf, 318). Only one Paeonian kingdom is mentioned in our sources. Its capital was at Astibus on the Bregalnitsa; excavations have revealed very costly burials and a worship of kings after death. When Philip defeated the Paeonian king Lyppeius c. 356 (Diod. 16. 22. 3), he incorporated Paeonia in the kingdom and left the Paeonian king to govern his own people. Thereafter Philip's enemies beyond his northern frontier were the Dardanians (Justin 8. 6. 3), whose homelands were the areas of Kosovo and Metohija. To fight against these and other enemies the Paeonian king sent an élite force of cavalry to serve with the King's Forces.

The western frontier of the Paeonian kingdom was formed by the watershed range which separates the middle Axios river from its highest waters. The region west of the range, which is called Polog, was held by the Dardanians as far south as Bogomila¹⁸. From there they were able to invade the Macedonian territory between Prilep, Stobi and Bylazora (Veles). Philip's eastern frontier in Paeonia adjoined from north to south the Triballi¹⁹, the Agrianes and some Thracian tribes as far as Mt Orbelus (Belasitsa). It then turned east and ran along the mountain range to join the river Nestus. Between this part of the frontier and the sea the native peoples were Thra-

¹⁶ Speusippus, *Epist Socrat.* 30. 12 mentioned the separate command. In *Philip of Macedon* 18 I proposed to put this district under Philip.

¹⁷ Diod. 16. 22. 3 and Demosthenes, *First Olynthiac* 13, may refer to separate campaigns.

¹⁸ The strategic importance of this area is described in my contribution to the *Festschrift* in honour of G. Mihailov, (Sofia, 1995[1997]) 223–30.

¹⁹ The Triballians were described as neighbours of the Macedonians by Arrian 1. 1. 4 and 7. 9. 2.

cians. From them Philip raised an élite force of cavalry which fought alongside the King's Forces²⁰.

In this article I am describing the frontier of Philip's kingdom on the basis of the literary evidence, of which a considerable part is derived ultimately from trustworthy writers – Ephorus, Ptolemy or/and Aristobulus, Hieronymus and Polybius. That frontier was, of course, not permanent. In the west Philip himself added Tymphaea and Parauaea, and Pyrrhus took them back into the Molossian group. Paeonia or part of it was lost to the Gauls, then to Dardanians, and finally restored by the Romans. Perseus added territory east of the Nestus. Because the frontiers changed with the changing fortunes of the Macedonian Kingdom, there is little to be said in favour of any map entitled 'Ancient Macedonia'²¹.

²⁰ These Thracian 'Scouts' from within the kingdom were distinct from the Thracian Odrysians in Diodorus 17. 17. 4 who was describing the forces taken to Asia by Alexander.

²¹ Such as is published in M. B. Hatzopoulos' important work, cited in n. 9 above. This is not the place for a detailed criticism.