CHAPTER 19

AMPHIPOLIS

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1. Amphipolis as an Athenian Colony and City-State

Amphipolis was founded at the mouth of the river Strymon in an important strategic location by the Athenian general Hagnon in 438/7 BC. Long before its foundation great powers and personalities of the Greek world had sought to exploit the agricultural produce, shipbuilding timber, and precious metals in the lower valley of the river Strymon, and to control the network of roads which used the Strymon valley to link the Aegean coast with the interior of Thrace (fig. 40).

In the middle of the seventh century BC colonists from Andros had already settled at Argilos on the coast to the west of the mouth of the Strymon and at the same time Parians founded Eion to the east of the river mouth. Literary sources and archaeological finds demonstrate the early penetration of the hinterland of the Strymon by these colonists: conflicts are mentioned between the Parians and the Bisaltes and should relate to early Parian activities to the east of the Strymon.

There had been an earlier Thracian settlement on Hill 133, situated in the vicinity of Amphipolis which is to be identified with the Greek “Ennea Hodoi.” It is very likely that a Greek emporion was established there,

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probably by Parians, and should be connected with the advance of Parians and Thasians from Eion on the coast to Berge in the interior. The Parians were followed by the Persians, when Darius I conquered Thrace in 514 BC. After this, there were unsuccessful attempts by the tyrants of Miletus to gain a foothold by the mouth of the Strymon: Histiaios fortified Myrkinos in 514 BC and Aristagogas attempted to capture Ennea Hodoi in 494 BC.

Mt. Dysoron’s mines were vigorously exploited by the Macedonian king Alexander I and if it is indeed to be sought to the east of the Strymon and identified with Mt. Menoikion, then we must admit the presence of Macedonians in the region of Amphipolis after the Persian Wars we can then understand why Philip II later refers to this presence in his letter to the Athenians.

Next, the victor of the Persian Wars, Athens, gradually came to control the region. After Eion was captured by Cimon from the Persians (474 BC), the Athenians twice used it as a base for unsuccessful attempts to advance into the region of Ennea Hodoi. The first attempt has been dated immediately after the capture of Eion and the second to 464 BC with the establishment at Ennea Hodoi of an Athenian colony. However, this initiative was quickly eliminated in a combined attack by the Edones and the neighbouring communities. Finally, a third attempt resulted in the foundation of Amphipolis in 438 BC on the site of Ennea Hodoi, 5 kilometres from Eion on the coast.