Four great rivers flow into the Thermaic gulf: the Gallikos, the Axios, the Loudias, and the Haliacmon. These gave central Macedonia its fertility, its forests that produced timber for safe, seaworthy ships, and avenues for communication with the hinterland.

The earliest signs of human presence around the Thermaic gulf can be dated to the end of the middle and the late Neolithic period. These traces were discovered in the plot of the “Vellideion Centre” in the area of the Thessalonike International Fair. Remains of Neolithic settlements in the wider area of the Thermaic gulf were also excavated in Stavroupoli, Trilofos, and Thermi. In Toumba at Thessalonike, another important Bronze Age settlement, more than ten consecutive building phases were identified.

During the first and second periods of colonisation, in the twelfth and eighth centuries BC respectively, several Greek cities to the south sought new wealth and resources in coastal Macedonia. The products that
attracted the colonists were ship-timber, wheat and other cereal crops, and the abundant minerals in the area.\textsuperscript{7}

The archaic period signalled the beginning of a period of prosperity for Macedonia, for both inland and coastal settlements. The intensive trade with Euboea, the coastal cities of Ionia, and Corinth, in the seventh and sixth centuries BC (in which Attica became an active player from the sixth century), together with the exploitation of gold, silver, and iron mines and timber, made a great economic impact on Macedonia.\textsuperscript{8}

In the privileged areas around the Thermaic gulf, at Karabournaki, Tell Lebet,\textsuperscript{9} Stavroupoli,\textsuperscript{10} Sindos,\textsuperscript{11} Aineia,\textsuperscript{12} Agia Paraskeui,\textsuperscript{13} Agios Athanasios,\textsuperscript{14} the Gona Tumba, Sedes and Thermi,\textsuperscript{15} settlements evolved during the archaic and classical period that contributed to the population which was subsequently resettled in the foundation of Thessalonike in 316/5 BC.

**The Hellenistic City of Cassander**

The fourth century BC was an extremely important period for Macedonia. During this century its two most famous kings, Philip II\textsuperscript{16} and Alexander III,\textsuperscript{17} changed the course of history, not just for Greece but for all the civilized world of the south-east Mediterranean and the East. The strategy of occupying a city, even within the boundaries of the Macedonian kingdom,

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\textsuperscript{8} P. Adam Veleni, *Θεσσαλονίκη, νεράιδα, βασίλισσα, γοργόνα. Αρχαιολογική περιεξαγωγή από την πρώτη θέση της ουράνια αρχαία* (Thessaloniki, 2001), with bibliography.


\textsuperscript{10} Lioutas, Gioura, “Τσογράφικές αναζητήσεις” (see above, note 3).


\textsuperscript{13} K. Sismanides, *Το νεκροταφείο της Αγ. Παρασκευής, Αμητός, τιμητικός τόμος στον καθηγητή Μ. Ανδρόνικο* (Thessaloniki, 1985).

\textsuperscript{14} M. Tsimpidou Auloniti, *Οι ταφικοί τύμβοι του Φοίνικα και του Αγ. Αθανασίου* (Athens, 2005).

