

CHAPTER FOUR

ALEXANDER AND THE GREEKS

Michele Faraguna

The reign of Alexander the Great marks a turning point in the development of Greek history. The extent and direction of this development has, however, been the subject of endless debate among scholars. The complexity of the problem lies in the broad and multi-faceted nature of the topic itself: Alexander's relations with the Greeks were shaped by a variety of political and cultural factors. Propaganda and political reality above all are difficult to disentangle. And since our sources almost invariably reflect the Greek point of view, there is the constant risk of overestimating the importance of Greek interests in Alexander's mind. This essay will show that the encounter between Alexander (and, before him, his father Philip II) and the Greek world can best be understood as the clash between two alien political traditions¹ and the failure of the city-state system to adequately respond to the new challenge of the Macedonian monarchy.

Philip, Alexander, and the League of Corinth

The battle of Chaeronea, fought in the summer of 338 between Philip II of Macedon and a coalition of Greek cities led by Athens and Thebes, was quickly perceived as an epoch-making event.² Eight years later, the Athenian orator Lycurgus remarked that along with the bodies of those who had died on the battlefield 'was buried the freedom of every other Greek' (1.50). The same pessimistic tone can be found in the funeral oration attributed to Demosthenes that was given for the Athenians who died fighting Philip. Here the defeat is

¹ On Greeks and Macedonians as representing distinct ethnic entities and cultures see, most recently, Borza 1996.

² Carlier 1996; Cawkwell 1996. For a useful treatment of the battle see Hammond and Griffith 1979: 596–603.

blamed on 'fortune' (*tukhe*) and the will of the god; the future holds little reason for hope (Dem. 60.19–24).³

Philip exploited his crushing military victory by imposing an extensive settlement of political affairs in Greece. The settlement was largely modelled on long-established Hellenic diplomatic practices but its main aim was to ensure stability and Macedonian hegemony. The first step taken was a number of separate treaties with the members of the alliance that had fought against him (Ael. *VH* 6.1). These followed no pre-determined pattern but rather were arranged on an *ad hoc* basis according to the stance of each state during the war. Settlements were generally mild, especially in the case of Athens whose still intact naval power made the prospect of a prolonged siege hardly desirable to the Macedonian king. Philip concluded a treaty of 'friendship and alliance' (Diod. 16.87.3; *P.Ryl.* III.490, ll. 60–63) and did not attempt to interfere in Athens' internal affairs. Athens no doubt lost its naval confederacy but retained all its vital territorial possessions.⁴ Elsewhere, constitutional changes were enforced, or pro-Macedonian governments established, yet it still remains unclear whether they were the products of Macedonian pressure or of internal struggles. Philip's military intervention in the Peloponnese led to the settlement of a number of long-standing territorial disputes between Sparta, which, it must be stressed, had not taken any hostile action against Macedonia, and its bordering states (Argos, Arcadia, Messene) invariably to Sparta's disadvantage, thus weakening its resources and serving the overt aim of creating political balance in southern Greece. Philip furthermore increased his political and military control over Greece by placing Macedonian garrisons in Thebes, Corinth, Ambracia and, possibly, in Chalcis, which were later to be known as the 'fetters of Greece' (Pol. 18.11.5).⁵

³ Loraux 1981: 125–127. The same idea often recurs in Dem. 18 (see esp. 18. 200, 270–271 and 303). For the authenticity of the funerary oration see Clavaud 1974: 25–35.

⁴ Whether Athens received on this occasion the territory of Oropus, as it has been traditionally held, has now come under dispute. See Knoepfler 1993: 295 and n. 50, anticipating his still unpublished argument in favor of attributing the 'gift' of Oropus to Alexander and downdating it to 335.

⁵ Roebuck 1948; Hammond and Griffith 1979: 604–623; Jehne 1994: 141–151; Harris 1995: 134–135. On Philip's settlements in the Peloponnese see also Magnetto 1994. For the case of Aetolia cf. Bosworth "Early Relations" 1976; Grainger 1999: 46–50.