

REVIEW

REINHOLD BICHLER AND
GREEK HISTORIOGRAPHY

Reinhold Bichler, *Historiographie—Ethnographie—Utopie. Gesammelte Schriften IV: Studien zur griechischen Historiographie*, edd. Robert Rollinger and Kai Ruffing. Philippika 18.4. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016. Pp. x + 271. Paperback, €48.00. ISBN 978-3-447-10607-8.

The book under review is the fourth instalment of Reinhold Bichler's *Gesammelte Schriften*. It was preceded by a volume on Herodotus' art of history (*Studien zu Herodots Kunst der Historie*, vol. 1 (2007)), another on utopia and the imagination of foreign worlds (*Studien zur Utopie und der Imagination fremder Welten*, vol. 2 (2008)), and a third volume on the history of classical scholarship (*Studien zur Wissenschafts- und Rezeptionsgeschichte*, vol. 3 (2010)). Bichler is also the author of a celebrated work on Herodotus (*Herodots Welt. Der Aufbau der Historie am Bild der fremden Länder und Völker, ihrer Zivilisation und ihrer Geschichte* (2000)) and an introduction to the same ancient historian (*Herodot. Eine Einführung* (2000)), which he published with Robert Rollinger, one of the editors of his *Gesammelte Schriften*. He is an authority in the field of ancient Greek historiography. His interests are not limited to Herodotus, but extend to Hellenistic historiography and the age of Alexander.

Readers will find this book of great use, since it combines as many as thirteen articles scattered in various *Festschriften*, conference proceedings, and edited volumes published between 2003 and 2014. Apart from two pieces in English, the rest of the articles, as well as the foreword by the editors and the *Vorbemerkungen und Dank* by the author, are in German. A list of Bichler's publications from 2007 to 2016 and a useful *index locorum* are included.

Even though the texts roughly follow a chronological order, there are a few shared traits that can be discerned in the volume as a whole. The first is Bichler's long-standing interest in ancient Greek historiography and its relationship to the Eastern world, focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on Persia. This field of enquiry is connected to the founding father of Greek historiography, Herodotus, and to Ctesias of Cnidus, but also other fragmentary historians are discussed, such as Agatharchides, Berossus, and Nearchus. The second is the author's continued commitment to the study of the early Hellenistic age and especially of Alexander the Great. Bichler approaches the period by focusing on a set of ancient historians directly connected to Alexander: Diodorus Siculus, Arrian, Plutarch, Curtius Rufus,

and Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus, among many others. A further general topic is ancient chronology, involving both the Trojan War ('Die Datierung des Troianischen Krieges als Problem der griechischen Historie', 1–14) and periodisation in antiquity ('Über die Periodisierung griechischer Geschichte in der griechischen Historie', 103–32). Finally, the article 'Probleme und Grenzen der Rekonstruktion von Ereignissen am Beispiel antiker Schlachtenbeschreibungen' (43–66) does not fall within the above-mentioned topics, but focuses instead on the factual analysis of a few notable ancient battles in the following order: Gaugamela (331 BC), Cunaxa (401 BC), Pharsalus (48 BC), and Mantinea (418 BC). The article shows the difficulties of any easy and straightforward reconstruction of events regarding the ancient world and is exemplary in the way it treats the sources that deal with those battles.

The text that deals with the dating of the Trojan War appropriately opens the collection, both for the significance of the theme and for the fact that it has been a matter of dispute since ancient times. If on the one hand modern scholars are inclined to rely on Eratosthenes' calculations, who set the destruction of Troy 408 years before the first Olympic Games (776 BC), which dates the end of the war in the year 1184 BC, Bichler shows that there were many diverging opinions in classical culture on this foundational event. In this case, as in the rest of the volume, Bichler adopts an approach that includes an exhaustive and accurate *Quellenvergleich*, i.e. a comparison of the different sources that helps to assess the topic under examination.

Herodotus' presence in this book is paramount, but only two articles are specifically focused on his historical work. The first one deals with the political endeavours of former winners of the Olympic Games (*Olympionikai*: 'Über die Rolle und das Schicksal siegreicher Athleten in Herodots *Historien*', 29–42), the other with Herodotus' strategies to offer different degrees of reliability in the description of past events and far away regions ('Die analogen Strukturen in der Abstufung des Wissens über die Dimensionen von Raum und Zeit in Herodots *Historien*', 133–56). There are a couple of publications that should be mentioned regarding this latter text. Since analogy is used to explore exact numbers, calculations, source-references, estimates, and speculations in the *Histories*, one would have expected at least one reference to Aldo Corcella's book *Erodoto e l'analogia* (1984). On Herodotus' chronologies and Croesus' alleged fourteen-year reign, which is discussed by Bichler on 138–9, a recent contribution by R. W. Wallace should now be added to the debate: 'Redating Croesus: Herodotean Chronologies, and the Dates of the Earliest Coinages', *JHS* 136 (2016) 168–81.

Herodotus's role is also of great significance for two articles dealing with Ctesias of Cnidus, who has long ago been labelled as a novelist and the author of biased and false history (see now A. Meeus, 'Ctesias of Cnidus. Poet,

Novelist or Historian?’, in L. I. Hau and I. Ruffell, edd., *Truth and History in the Ancient World: Pluralising the Past* (New York and London, 2016) 172–201). This historian and physician’s writings have recently undergone a general reassessment, especially after Dominique Lenfant’s edition with French translation and commentary (Paris, 2004). The majority of his accounts, mainly preserved in Photius’ *Library*, are still considered fictional, and Photius’ own evaluation of Ctesias’ *Persica* (cod. 72, 35b35–36a1 = T 8 Lenfant) understandably influences modern scholarship:

ἀνεγνώσθη βιβλίον Κτησίου τοῦ Κνίδου τὰ Περσικὰ ἐν βιβλίῳ κγ’ ...
 σχεδὸν ἐν ἅπασιν ἀντικείμενα Ἡροδότῳ ἱστορῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ψεύστην αὐτὸν
 ἀπελέγχων ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ λογοποιὸν ἀποκαλῶν.

Read a work of Ctesias of Cnidos, the *Persica* in twenty-three books ... on almost every point giving an account opposed to Herodotus; he accuses him of lying frequently and calls him a story-teller (trans. N. Wilson).

Bichler, in the article ‘General Datis’ death in the battle of Marathon’ (67–81), instead of simply blaming Ctesias for his falsehood, shows that his account helps to illuminate his relation to Herodotus, while ‘Der Lyder Inaros. Über die ägyptische Revolte des Ktesias von Knidos’ (15–28) sets off from a specific passage in Photius’ summary of Ctesias’ works, namely the Egyptian uprising by the Libyan/Lyidian Inaros (Phot. *Bibl.* cod. 72, 40a27–40b35 = F 14.36–9 Lenfant), to address wider questions on the historicity of the event and Ctesias’ audience.

Ethnography and the study of empires are the subjects of two intertwined articles: ‘Über das Königtum der Inder, Araber und Aithiopen in der griechischen Ethnographie’ (83–101) and ‘Die Wahrnehmung des Alexanderreiches: Ein Imperium der Imagination’ (183–218). The former text discusses ethnographic differences between India, Arabia and Ethiopia from the Greek perspective through the analysis of education, institutions, laws, religious taboos, and traditions, while the latter article is included in the second volume of *Imperien und Reiche in der Weltgeschichte* (2014) which deals with historical empires from a global perspective. The exceptional nature of Alexander’s empire, i.e. the contrast between its brief historical existence and its powerful and romanticised legacy, makes Bichler’s contribution a meaningful presence in a volume on global history.

Two pieces focus on specific episodes of Alexander’s military campaign (‘Ein merkwürdiger Fall von Euergesie. Alexander der Große und die Geschichte von Kyros und den Arimaspen’, 157–67) and biography (‘Konnte Alexander wirklich nicht schwimmen? Überlegungen zu Plutarch, Alex. 58,4’,

169–81): neither of them add much to our knowledge, yet both are still valuable, because the reader can draw useful insights on how to deal with complex and diverging traditions. There is also an article on the controversial figure of Semiramis (‘Semiramis and Her Rivals. An Essay’, 219–35), which, unfortunately, does not stand out for scholarly reasons, but for the poor quality of the English. Just a few examples: ‘But above all he emphasized the fact that there had never been carried war into foreign countries from India’ (224); ‘in the preserved works about Megasthenes’ lost *Indica*’ (same page); ‘Hecataeus of Abdeira [*sic*] may have been the first to report of this information’ (226); and, finally, ‘the concept of this monumental work [i.e. Pompeius Trogus’ *Historiae Philippicae*] which is lost is still preserved in the work *Epitome* by Justinus’ (230), which is a funny way of saying that Justin wrote an epitome of Pompeius Trogus. I regret to say that, apart from linguistic polishing, this article also needed better copyediting: there is no consistency in the citations of ancient authors. Finally, given the intended readership of this piece, which I suppose mainly consists of Classicists, an approximate date for Bishop Otto von Freising’s life and his *Chronica sive historia de duabus civitatibus* might have been helpful (232–3; he was born around 1112 and died in 1158).

In the last article, ‘Der Antagonismus von Asien und Europa—eine historiographische Konzeption aus Kleinasien?’ (236–52), Bichler first considers the notions of Asia and Europe as they appear in Herodotus, whose overall geographical and political conception avoids stark oppositions, and in Isocrates, who opposes Europe and Asia from an Athenian standpoint and associates Europe with freedom and Asia with slavery. He then discusses Livy’s history (especially Books 33–4 and a speech by the Macedonian King Perseus in Book 42), where the boundary between Asia and Europe is not definite, as well as the Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters, and Places* and Aristotle’s *Politics*: a tripartite concept emerges that includes Hellas, barbaric Europe and barbaric Asia. In the Augustan age the concept of Europe gains new relevance, but does not entail a European conscience by the Roman elites. Bichler’s conclusions on the ideological contrasts between Asia and Europe are supported by the writings of Strabo, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Arrian. Even though they were born in Asia Minor, they praised Europe’s freedom and criticised Asia for its despotism and lack of freedom (‘Unfreiheit’): hence the ‘historiographical conception from Asia Minor’ expressed in the title of this last piece.

It is customary to conclude book reviews with a list of typos, which I am afraid I cannot deliver in full, given the great number of blemishes I have come across. I shall limit myself to those that I find particularly annoying: 17, *λογοποιόν* for *λογοποιόν*; 68, ‘Pliny the Eider’ for ‘Elder’; 123, ‘historiegraphische’ for ‘historiographische’; 166 n. 33, ‘Duan W. Roller’ for ‘Duane’; 171 n. 11, a lot of mistakes in the accentuation of Greek words such as

Κύδνον, ποταμόν, καύματι; 175–6 n. 25, the same issue occurs with θανάτου and σώματι; 177 n. 32, Αυιονύσου for Διονύσου; 224, ‘according <to> Megasthenes’; 236 should be a blank page, while the final chapter should start on p. 237.

The overall coherence of the book is not completely clear to the present reviewer, who has gone through the work from cover to cover. However, the loose chronological order might explain this slight lack of cohesion. At the same time, the intended reader will probably pick only one article at a time and will not be affected by that shortcoming. The articles collected in this book, despite some blemishes, are excellent examples for students and scholars alike of the methodology that lies behind serious historical research in Ancient History. This book represents the efforts of a great *Althistoriker*, who has focused throughout his career on the study of ancient sources, their comparison and interpretation. Let me conclude by joining the editors’ hope that this volume, like the three preceding volumes of Bichler’s *Gesammelte Schriften*, might find many interested readers. Each of them will profit greatly from Bichler’s sound methodology, clear historical analysis, and profound knowledge of Greek historiography.

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