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The Seleucid Army N. Sekunda: *Seleucid and Ptolemaic Reformed Armies 168–145 BC. Vol. 1: The Seleucid Army under Antiochus IV Epiphanes.* Pp. 80; ills. Stockport: Montvert, 1994. Paper. ISBN: 1-874101-02-7. Vol. 2: *The Ptolemaic Army under Ptolemy VI Philometor.* Pp. 84; ills. Stockport: Montvert, 1995. Paper. ISBN: 1-874101-03-5.

Hans Van Wees

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identified these as historical personages, e.g. Alexander IV (323–c. 310) and his mother, the Bactrian princess Roxane. B. claims, on the basis of autopsy, that, in the case of M, 'the folds in the clothing over the chest clearly give the contour of a female breast' (p. 47). However, the feminization of childhood is a *topos* in art: cf. the childhood portraits of Frederick the Great! Thus identifications with the child-king Alexander IV and Roxane cannot be discounted.

The fresco from the 'Kinch' tomb at Naoussa does not necessarily show a Macedonian cavalryman spearing a Persian, as B. claims (p. 29). The easterner's shield is not of Persian type (i.e. oblong and made of wickerwork), but, rather, a round bronze shield of Macedonian type, c. 24" in diameter (Aelian, *Tact.* 12), decorated with a twelve-pointed version of the 'star of Vergina' (cf. the shield in the Boscoreale painting). The natural inference is that the oriental is an Iranian recruit (cf. Alexander's 30,000 *epigonoî*) training with a comrade-in-arms.

This is an important book which casts new light on the demography, property law, and social functioning of the Hellenistic empires.

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THE SELEUCID ARMY

N. SEKUNDA: *Seleucid and Ptolemaic Reformed Armies 168–145 BC. Vol. 1: The Seleucid Army under Antiochus IV Epiphanes*. Pp. 80; ills. Stockport: Montvert, 1994. Paper. ISBN: 1-874101-02-7.

Vol. 2: The Ptolemaic Army under Ptolemy VI Philometor. Pp. 84; ills. Stockport: Montvert, 1995. Paper. ISBN: 1-874101-03-5.

The false impression created by the format of these books, by Angus McBride's colourful illustrations, and by the series editor's repeated announcement that we are dealing with an abridged version of a 'much larger academic work' (forthcoming), is that we are dealing with a popularizing account of Hellenistic warfare. In fact, the only apparent concession to the popular market are some cuts in two of the narrative chapters; the remainder offers a discussion so scholarly and detailed that it is hard to imagine what a longer and less popular version might look like.

The thesis running through both volumes of S.'s work is that, after suffering serious defeats at the hands of the Romans in the mid-second century B.C., the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms rapidly 'romanized' their armies to a 'quite remarkable' extent (I: 3). It is convincingly argued that Antigonos IV and Ptolemy VI introduced a new basic military unit much like the Roman manipule. Stelae from Hermopolis reveal that the Ptolemaic unit, which had a standard-bearer and other staff attached, was, like the manipule, composed of two smaller units led by hekatontarchs, i.e. centurions (II: 10–17), a title which first appears in the prosopographical evidence around 150 B.C. (II: 4–9). Similarly, Asklepiodotus' *Taktika* describes, as a relatively recent institution, a *syntagma* with a standard-bearer and other staff, composed of two smaller units led by hekatontarchs. S. argues with some justice that Asklepiodotus must be thinking here of the Seleucid army of the second century (I: 5–10).

The possible borrowing from Rome is indeed remarkable, but its significance is not

perhaps as great as S. claims. As he duly concedes, other key features of Roman organization are not copied: there is neither differentiation of *hastati*, *principes*, and *triarii*, nor integration of light-armed into the infantry structure, and hence there is no cohort; instead, there is a hierarchy of larger units which bears no relation to the Roman system, except that Asklepiodotus' *phalangarkhia* happens to coincide roughly with the legion in strength. As a result, it would not have been possible for the reformed armies to adopt the precise formation and tactics characteristic of the Romans, either. Perhaps they managed to approximate these in the way suggested by S. (I: 10–11), but the only evidence in support is Asklepiodotus' brief description of a quincunx-style formation which may be used 'when the army marches in several divisions' (XI.7). It is not obvious that these 'divisions' are *syntagma*/maniples, and even if they are, the passage surely does not represent the normal formation of the Seleucid army: it is merely the last item in a long list otherwise made up of twenty-odd varieties of oblongs, squares, and wedges.

The reconstruction of Late Hellenistic arms and armour which takes up the greater part of both volumes is split between, first, a discussion of the literary evidence (above all Polybius: I: 12–28); secondly, an analysis of painted stelae from Sidon, here attributed to the Ptolemaic garrison holding that city for a few years in the middle of the century (II: 18–33); and thirdly, meticulous captions to the figures and colour plates. This arrangement means that S.'s observations on the possible adoption of Roman arms and armour in the East are rather scattered, which in turn tends to obscure how little the evidence amounts to when it is all put together. It would seem that, in fact, the only item of Roman equipment of which there is any sign at all in the reformed armies is the mail corslet. For the Seleucid army, its use is attested only in I *Maccabees* 6.35, which S. accepts as accurate (I: 16), although he casts doubt on some of the other information conveyed by the same text (I: 14–15, 28). For the Ptolemaic army, all we have is a mail shirt worn on one of the seventeen Sidon stelae, a low frequency which is not very satisfactorily explained (II: 23–4), and perhaps also on a stele from Crete (II: 73, *ad fig.* 78). With regard to the rest of the equipment, S. himself notes in his summing up that shields remain exactly as they had been in the third century, and, most strikingly, that 'none of the "Romanized" soldiers . . . have replaced their spears with Spanish swords and *pila*' (II: 33, *cf.* 26). The absence of weapons so vital to Roman warfare must be far more significant than the occasional presence of a piece of body armour which, according to Polybius, most Roman troops were in any case not wealthy enough to wear.

The main thesis, then, may be overstated, but these books do offer a fine and very useful study of the minutiae of Hellenistic military organization and equipment. Production values are a little disappointing insofar as there are too many printing errors and the Greek font does not stretch to diacritical marks (or even to a character for final sigma, which is rendered as zeta instead). Clearly the whole budget has been blown on the attractive and imaginative colour plates, and it was money well spent. I could not help noticing a small omission (or is it?) in the picture of a large, naked Galatian mercenary, who moves aside his shield to reveal nothing but a pink void. Presumably there simply is not enough evidence to reconstruct the size and shape of Galatian genitals.