

maps are only provided in a few early chapters, which later parts of the volume refer back to; since there is no table of maps or illustrations and no page numbers are given, the reader is forced to go on a manual search for each map when it becomes relevant again later. The maps themselves are usually reproductions taken from other works. Some of them are small and difficult to read. A few additional maps and a wealth of illustrations are provided in a downloadable online supplement; this has no doubt kept the cost and size of the volume down, but it raises the question whether the purpose of the book is to be a companion to Athens in its own right, or not. For future scholars, the usefulness of this volume will partly depend on the resilience of CUP's file hosting infrastructure.

Yet none of these points could weigh against the achievement of this volume; they merely suggest ways in which a work that is already great could perhaps be even better in future editions. In its current state, it is already broadly comprehensive, accessible, affordable, and eminently useful for students of the ancient Greeks at any level.

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**A. Konecny and N. Sekunda (eds)**  
***The Battle of Plataiai 479 BC*. pp. 296.**  
**Vienna: Phoibos Verlag, 2022. ISBN 978-**  
**3-85161-271-4 (hardback), 978-3-85161-**  
**272-1 (e-pdf). £73.70 reduced to £66.45**  
**(according to Amazon).**

The occasion for this collection of essays on various aspects of the Battle of Plataea (as it is usually spelled in English-language sources) is the 2500th anniversary, in August or September 2022, of the battle which is presented in the Preface as a decisive event in world history. To quote, "The largest political entity the world had hitherto seen, in possession of the mightiest military host of the time, was conquered by a feat of arms which, until that day, none had dared believe possible." One might well find things to criticise in this description. "Conquered" is surely the wrong word, because it implies the takeover of the Persian empire, as achieved only by Alexander the Great, and Plataea was certainly a serious defeat, but Marathon and Salamis had already shown that it was possible to defeat Persian forces. In fact, the most serious blow

struck against the Persian empire, supposedly on the same day as Plataea, may well have been the defeat of Persian land forces, at Mycale in Asia Minor, and the subsequent destruction of the remains of the Persian fleet, by the Greek fleet, now led by king Leotychidas of Sparta, aided by contingents from local Greek cities that had gone into revolt. Moreover, these defeats did not remove the threat from Persia in the eyes of the Greeks; even after the Spartans and their Peloponnesian allies had withdrawn from the continuing war to free Greek islands and cities that were still under Persian control, the Delian League under Athens' leadership continued the fight for a generation, and Spartan leaders, especially king Agesilaos, became involved in anti-Persian campaigns in Asia Minor and elsewhere for much of the fourth century BC. However, it is certainly true that no Persian king ordered a serious attack on mainland Greece after Plataea and Mycale, and attempts to regain their lost subject territories in the Aegean were largely confined to diplomacy.

After a Preface and preliminary short summary by Konecny of the historical background to Plataea, the papers fall into three sections, Kings and Commanders, Strategy and Tactics, and After the Victory. The first section has studies of Xerxes, Mardonios, Pausanias and Aristides, mostly by McGregor Morris. I found the first particularly interesting, as, drawing on Persian sources but also on remarks and attitudes attributed to Xerxes and his circle by Herodotus, it showed what the actual viewpoint of Xerxes and the ruling group in the Persian empire is likely to have been concerning the invasion of mainland Greece, and how far the character and achievements of Xerxes could be seen to conform to the Zoroastrian ideal of a just king. In contrast, the view presented by Herodotus and exaggerated in later Greek tradition was infected by the need to portray the Persians as inferior to the Greeks. A similar attempt to get behind later hostile tradition, to the reality of what Pausanias may have been doing while commander-in-chief of the Greek forces and later as Regent for his nephew in Sparta was also instructive, especially to someone who has not given much consideration to Classical Greek history, though teaching it in general civilisation classes, since undergraduate days. But I feel bound to comment that much is inevitably hypothesis, relying on informed speculation, for the sources indicating factionalism in Sparta and serious disagreements on policy are minimal; one may even wonder how easy it was for factions to become established in Spartan society, when the board of ephors changed every year. A much more plausible picture of Aristides than the perfect

“just” Athenian of Plutarch’s Life is also presented, but I found this less striking because I have long been familiar with the arguments for distrusting the idealised portrait of later tradition (but I was surprised to see no reference to the hostile ostraka, quoted by Hornblower in his entry on Aristides in the Oxford Classical Dictionary). The account of Mardonios, by Wiesehöfer, is short, revealing how little we know of him.

The main part of the book concerns various issues relevant to the battle itself. “The Face of Battle at Plataiai” by Konijnendijk and Bardunias, which discusses the actual method by which the hoplite phalanx was managed in battle, is of particular interest. I have to confess that I was unaware that this was a focus of considerable controversy, but this is clearly the case; the demonstration, with the aid of experiments with suitably prepared volunteers, of what seems the only way that a body of hoplites could manoeuvre coordinatedly and fight effectively, seemed conclusive (pp. 222-226, with illustrations in figs. 1-5), and their general discussion of what happened in the battle, and Konecny’s separate discussion of the topography and its unavoidable effects on tactics used by both sides (provided with many illustrations and plans), seemed perfectly sensible. Sekunda discusses the vital but rarely noted problem of how both sides were supplied with food and water, and makes many interesting comments on how this must have affected decisions made by the commanders on either side. I cannot help feeling uneasy that he seems to be ignoring Herodotus’s counting the large light-armed contingent (psiloi) in the Greeks’ army; though many may have been primarily shield and baggage-carriers for the hoplites, the Spartans would not have needed more than one or two of the seven that, according to Herodotus, accompanied each man to fulfil these duties (it seems highly likely from Herodotus IX.61 that the psiloi with the Lacedaemonian and Tegean forces fought in the main conflict). Finally, the account by Gaebel of the Boeotian, especially Theban, cavalry underlines how valiantly they fought on the Persian side, even trying to protect the Persian forces when the battle was clearly lost and they were fleeing, and inflicting notable casualties on some of the smaller Greek contingents, which emphasises how useful Greek cavalry could be against hoplite infantry if these were in disorder.

Two final papers concern the various attempts to commemorate the victory. Patay-Horváth is concerned largely with the Delphic monument, its actual appearance, and the likely false story that Pausanias had an extra inscription added to

the base, while Jung, in the only paper in German, discusses the failure of the little city-state of Plataea to get itself generally recognised by all Greeks as effectively sacrosanct, as its treatment at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War was to demonstrate.

Overall, a collection of generally interesting and thought-provoking papers.

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**Malcolm Bell III, *The City Plan and Political Agora* (Morgantina Studies VII). pp. 444. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 2022. ISBN 978-3-7520-0021-4 (Print), ISBN 978-3-7520-0131-0 (eBook), hardcover €129.**

We have been waiting for many decades for the full edition of the agora of Morgantina, a site of extreme interest both from an urban and architectural point of view, so this volume is welcome. It presents the results of many years of excavations in which numerous archaeologists have engaged, and it is the work of the man who has represented the American “side” of research for forty years. As is well known, a wide debate has arisen in recent years concerning the chronology of both the town-planning and the public monuments of the city (and also the private houses near the agora), for which a chronology in the Hellenistic age, both earlier and later to the period of the *basileia* of Hieron II, have been proposed.<sup>1</sup> Malcom Bell in fact does not return to the subject, but lets the excavation data speak for themselves, which were already exposed (at least in part) in the preliminary reports of the field campaigns, twelve from 1957 to 1988, but are now published in full in this volume, both for the urban plan, and for the monuments of the agora.

The first three chapters are dedicated to the discussion of topographical and urban problems. Bell first discusses the geo-morphological and topographical setting of the site, the water supply, the exposure to the winds and the sources of building material, emphasizing that in various points of the Serra Orlando hill it was possible to quarry the limestone used for the construction of the buildings. He then moves on to the heart of

<sup>1</sup> The discussion about chronology is exposed by Mége 2021: 27; 208-212 for the House of Ganimedes.