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### **Zosia Halina Archibald ancient economies of the northern Aegean, fifth to first centuries BC (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) (Review)**

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Archibald, Z.H. (2013), *Ancient Economies of the Northern Aegean, Fifth to First Centuries BC*. Oxford: OUP.

The northern Aegean coastline is geographically varied and resource-rich, and prior to Roman annexation was carved up between the territories of Greek *poleis* and the powerful Macedonian and Thracian kingdoms. Archibald's northern Aegean 'super-region', however, extends far beyond the coast, well into southern Bulgaria. Reacting to the traditional focus in Classical scholarship on the Greek-dominated coastline, A argues that the only way to understand the economy of this region over the *longue durée* is to trace the connections between its micro-regions: the focus, therefore, is 'not on a single political entity or kingdom, but on a network of socially and politically interdependent and interlinked units' (20).

Networks (socio-cultural, intellectual, economic) are a leitmotif of this volume, but so too are narratives – how this region has been viewed and described. Chapter 1 is bookended by the differing perceptions of nineteenth-century explorers and modern scholars. In Chapter 2, the limited views of ancient Greek writers are compared. But beyond these specific perspectives, A is keen to explore the broader narrative of how communities exploited the landscape. Political and social parameters, the resultant settlement patterns and fiscal systems, are outlined in the rest of Chapter 2. Much of this is theoretical but the impact of key historical events is highlighted: the crippling Persian occupation of the early fifth century BC and the later Roman victory at Pydna in 168 BC, most notably.

In Chapter 3, A turns to the region's various polities as 'economic agents'. The impact of Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea* (Oxford, 2000) on the writing of regional economic history is acknowledged but A is keen to integrate market analysis into this ecological approach. Indeed 'market-type transactions' at Pella, Adjyska Vodenitsa and Byzantion are returned to in Chapter 5. However, the evidence is such that in none of these cases is the role of markets clarified; the available data for this region in this period is insufficient to support analyses like those Peter Temin has produced for the Roman period (*The Roman Market Economy* (Princeton, 2012)).

Long-term processes are the focus of Chapter 4. Land exploitation is examined through the lens of the remarkable series of estate centres excavated in recent decades, many Hellenistic (Tria Platania, Komboloi, Vrasna) but some earlier. The site at Kozin Gramadi and the density of villas in Roman Thrace show these complexes were neither uniquely Macedonian nor Hellenistic. Intensive management of this land led to great wealth and local elites were keen to celebrate this, as the tombs from Agios Athanasios to Kazanluk show. These tombs are often feted as 'conspicuous consumption' writ large but A also draws on Thorstein Veblen's connected but often overlooked theory of the 'instinct of workmanship', to examine how production developed to supply such consumption.

The way in which the movement of goods connected the northern Aegean is the subject of Chapter 5. Testimony for the role of both rivers and roads as axes of communication is stressed and the distribution patterns of traceable commodities examined. There were periods of discontinuity but in general the picture that emerges is of a region well integrated into broader networks of exchange. The archaeological evidence from the *agora* at Pella is used to support

this, as are the new data from Adjijyska Vodenitsa. A detailed excursus deals with the strategic importance of Byzantium and its control over the Bosphorus.

The final two chapters focus on consumption. Food and the famed northern Aegean dining culture are examined in Chapter 7, in which the archeological data for storage and diet are integrated into a discussion of northern versus southern Greek dining habits. Distinctly northern habits are also clear in funerary practices (Chapter 8), the widespread burial of companion animals and the erection of tumuli being two of the more striking. Conspicuous consumption in death was rife.

The interconnectedness of the northern Aegean has never been approached from this perspective before. Much of this book, therefore, is about ways of thinking about this region, the plurality of its societies and economies. It is not a volume to dip in and out of; as noted early on, 'this book is consciously arranged like a series of successive stage sets, which gradually reveal the full perspective of the remote past' (v). A has an exceptional grasp of the primary evidence, archaeological and literary, relating to the region and exploits these fully. But there are occasions when this evidence could have been explained in more detail or visualized. Much is made of routes of connectivity but none of the 'extended distribution patterns' (224) of commodities that reveal them are mapped; 'curves and dips' on graphs are mentioned but nowhere shown (198). These criticisms aside, the depth and breadth of the analysis in this volume is staggering. It will prove a key text for anyone interested in the history of the northern Aegean or theories of regional economic history more generally.

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