

**Antigonus The One-Eyed: Greatest of the Successors. Jeff Champion, Pen and Sword, 2014.**

**ISBN 978 1 78303 042 2**

The beauty of Champion's biography of Antigonus Monophthalmus (the "One-Eyed") lies in the breadth of its coverage. Antigonus, coeval with Philip II, was born in the late 380s and famously died, tilting at empire, at the battle of Ipsus in 301. For the first two thirds of life of this ambitious and ruthless Diadoch ('Successor'), we have little source material outside of side references in the Alexander sources. It is only after the death of Alexander the Great that Antigonus, as a major player in the wars that followed, takes centre stage in the source material that has come down to us. Thus Champion's narrative, of necessity, becomes a 'potted' history of the early Hellenistic period and it is here that the book shines. The general reader, looking for an overview of the period immediately following Alexander's death, could do far worse than read this book – no matter its focus on Antigonus.

The book is of 235 pages (excluding preface and maps) and is divided into twenty-two chapters beginning with "The Macedonian Homeland" and finishing off with a "Conclusion and Epilogue". Along the way twenty chapters provide a chronological narrative of Antigonus' career. Each deal with the episodes of that career including, for example, his rise post Alexander; the battles with the 'Perdiccans'; his campaigns against Eumenes; the Third Successor War and the Peace of the Dynasts of 311. All the major battles are discussed from Orcyni, through Paraetaceni, Gabene, Gaza and, of course, the 'bridge too far' of Ipsus. Pleasing is the inclusion of a (necessarily short) chapter on the campaign against Seleucus in Babylonia. Whilst difficult to reconstruct due to the fact it is unknown to the Greco-Macedonian sources, Champion makes an engaging narrative of scant cuneiform references. Indeed, "engaging narrative" can be applied to the work as a whole as Champion's prose is concise and interesting and the author makes a good fist of juggling the plethora of Greco-Macedonian personalities and the many concurrent events that can often confuse a casual reader.

For a work pitched toward a more general audience, the notes, at book's end for each chapter, are quite fulsome. Five appendices are also included: The Chronology of the Successors; The Literary Sources (see below); Antigonus and the Argeads; The cost of war; Antigonus and the Freedom of The Greeks. These subjects are rightly considered outside of the main narrative. As one with more than a passing interest in the subject, it is pleasing to see that Champion has adopted the 'mixed' or 'eclectic' chronology most fully expounded by Tom Boiy and recently added to by Alexander Meeus. "Antigonus and the Argeads" examines the relationship of the Antigonids with their Argead predecessors. Here Champion wonders at the Antigonid claims of Argead ancestry (Philip V; Perseus) setting aside Edson's arguments relying on evidence from the reign of Antigonus Gonatas. Champion seems unaware of the Antigonid *progonoi* monument on Delos. This was an 'ancestor group' of statues, including a "Perdiccas", numbering twenty and erected by an Antigonid king – near universally agreed to be Gonatas. These clearly included Argead predecessors (Billows, "Kings and Colonists", Berkley, 1994, p 42 – esp. n 49). Blood is thinner than propaganda.

The "Freedom of the Greeks" is a subject close to this reviewer's heart and space does not permit anything other than noting that Champion covers this sop of ancient Greek politics well – even noting the hide of Flamininus' use of the slogan. The "Cost of War", while working with uncertain

evidence, manages to convey the huge sums that the Successors required for their constant wars. Something of an ancient Jessie James, Antigonus' habit of stripping any treasury within reach was clearly a matter of necessity.

Champion's command of the literary (and other) sources is clear. It is a pleasurable feature of the book that each chapter is headed by a quotation from one of those sources which form something of a summary 'prologue'. The main narrative source for this period is Diodorus Siculus who is supplemented by Justin's epitome of Trogus, Plutarch's Lives as well as several minor sources such as Polyaeus, Pausanias, Appian and others. It is Diodorus, though, who provides the backbone and thus it is the Sicilian who necessarily bulks large in Champion's narrative being, as Champion says in his appendix on the sources (p 176), "the most detailed account of the period of the Successors". Champion's approach to Diodorus – it is "more profitable to assess Diodorus' narrative on its own merits" rather than attempting to assign his work to a particular author and then judge its worth "on the perceived reliability of that author" – is correct, if unlikely to endear him to the 'Hieronyman industry'.

The 'standard work' on Antigonus is Billows' "Antigonus Monophthalmus and The Creation of the Hellenistic State" (Berkley, 1990). The reader of Champion's "Antigonus" would be well advised to consider reading that of Billows as well for the latter is, naturally, much referred to throughout. Champion's Antigonus, refreshingly, is a somewhat more 'hard scrabble' figure than that of Billows. Champion eschews several of Billow's more excusatory or admiring views, seeing Antigonus for the far more practical and, at times, ruthless individual he most certainly was. For example, Champion notes (p 146) that Antigonus, under his reformed 'Corinthian League' was hardly to lead the Greeks "as a friend" as Billows claims. Billows' judgement that Antigonus' experience at Priene (334) and actions at Cyzicus in 318 hinted at Antigonus' later attitude towards the Greeks "appears to suppose too much" (p 193). And Antigonus' refusal to pay the Cossaeans for passage in 317 is more likely due to his wish not appear any less than Alexander who also forced a passage rather than any lack of money as Billows somewhat unconvincingly argues (p 47).

Interestingly, while Champion seems largely to disagree with Billows' view that the sources' depiction of Antigonus' ambition is exaggerated by hindsight, Champion, himself, appears somewhat conflicted on the issue. While Champion accepts the appointment of Cassander as chiliarch being a check on Antigonus' ambitions with a note referring to Errington's view that this (and the replacement of Antigonus' friend Menander as satrap of Lydia – "From Babylon to Triparadeisus", *JHS*, 90, 1970, pp 69-70) was to contain Antigonus' ambition (pp 25-26), he later (pp 30-31) concludes Diodorus' report that Antigonus "would no longer take orders either from the kings or from Antipater" (19.41.4-5), "may stem from hindsight". Yet four pages later, when, after Antipater's death, Antigonus declares that he will make all Asia his own while ignoring the kings, Antigonus simply "no longer saw any need to disguise his ambition" and Champion sees this is Antigonus simply "planning his future".

There also exist the 'basic' errors of one not quite familiar with the terminology and history of Alexander III. Page 21 sees Seleucus described as "the commander of the elite infantry unit, the *hypaspists*" who "later became one of Alexander's bodyguards". A commander of *hypaspists* he was but of the king's immediate foot guard, the *agema* rather than the lot. He most certainly was never a bodyguard of that king only ever being described as *heatairos*. Worse comes on page 32 where

Antipater appoints “one of Alexander’s former bodyguards, Polyperchon”, as regent. Faults Alexander had aplenty but promoting the Macedonian Colonel Klink to the prime rank of bodyguard (*somatophylax*) was not among them.

Overall, these are small criticisms though; the result of abiding interests in particular aspects of the wider narrative. Champion’s “Antigonus” is well constructed: its chronologically arranged chapters, with their source quoted ‘teasers’ as chapter subheadings whisk the reader along. Discussions of the politics leading to the Second Successor War lead directly to the clashes of Paraeteceni and Gabene just as the treatment of the Peace of the Dynasts takes one to the war against Seleucus. As noted at the outset, this is a marvellous ‘potted history’ of the period 323-301 and highly recommended – especially to general readers.