ForeWord Reviews

HISTORY

Dividing the Spoils: The War for Alexander the Great's Empire
Robin Waterfield
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The name unfailingly evokes heroic adventure, dazzling conquests, exotic realms, a tragic early death … but quite what happened after the conqueror's demise in Babylon, in 323, at age 32, poses a major mystery. In a clear narrative, classical scholar Robin Waterfield captures the continuing high drama that gave rise to half the states between the Indus and the Nile.

Alexander's conquests, Waterfield points out, cut "a narrow swath across Asia and back, leaving much untouched." What he did leave was a mess: no will, no blood heir—but a pregnant Queen Rhoxolane back home in Macedon. Hopes for primacy immediately fired up Alexander's senior generals (more than a dozen in number); and while they managed at first to consolidate the vast assembly of territories, within forty years they and their successors had carved it up. In retrospect, the complexity of that process makes modern Middle Eastern or Balkan politics seem like a child's game.

Each of the Successors (as historians have termed the generals and senior administrators) had a different relationship to Alexander, to the various contingents of troops, and to each other. Waterfield clearly identifies the power, support, and policy of the lead players, concisely profiling their past achievements, current position, and future possibilities. Perdiccas, Craterus, Antipater, Antigonus, Leonnatus, Seleucus, Ptolemy, and their colleagues were all graduates of a remarkable school of military and political experience, and—as Meleager quickly learned—a wrongly played hand meant death.

Though the Egypt that Ptolemy received and the Macedon that Cassander took over were reasonably well-defined and stable, the Asian territories were volatile. Here Waterfield is the vital guide: it was not only who got a swath of Anatolia or Mesopotamia, or the Black Sea or Mediterranean territory, but how that ruler got it, what came with it, and what he was able to do with it. These were the lands that Rome had conquered and Hellenized.

Politics, warfare, and culture are brilliantly captured in this fascinating account, fully supported by maps, genealogies, and mini-bios of key players, together with black-and-white plates, bibliography, and index. An essential Who's Who for any student of this remarkable

transformational period.

Peter F. Skinner