

Hecht, Christine: *Zwischen Athen und Alexandria. Dichter und Künstler beim makedonischen König Archelaos*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2017. ISBN: 978-3-447-10890-4; X, 228 S.

Rezensiert von: Elias Koulakiotis, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Ioannina

The work is the outcome of a doctoral dissertation at the University of Tübingen and aims at examining the literary and artistic production at the court of Archelaos (413–399 BC). Until now the research focussed on the person of the king as patron and benefactor.¹ Hecht shifts the interest to the artists and their works, using the general term „intellectuals“ including poets, artists, producers and thinkers. The central question (p. 37) is why in the ancient sources a bunch of intellectuals is associated to Archelaos and to each other. This study is simultaneously a prosopography and an inventory of the artistic production of certain intellectuals, often presented as a distinct group in ancient sources (p. 26): It comprises Euripides, Agathon, Timotheos, Choirilos and Zeuxis, of whom only Euripides and Agathon assuredly visited Macedonia.² Hecht is aware of the interplay between history and fiction regarding these informations, usually of anecdotal character. It is in fact a historic-philological investigation into the textual and visual artistic production, searching for common features among the works by the above poets and artists. (Chapter I: *Einleitendes zu Forschungslage, Quellen, Methoden und Begriffen*).

In Chapter II (*Archelaos und Makedonien*) Hecht focusses on the life and image of the Macedonian king. Athens played an important role in shaping this image. Athenian intellectuals used him as a projection screen in order to express the deep political and moral crisis provoked in Athens after the military defeat and the vicissitudes of the democratic regime during the Peloponnesian War. One of these projections regarded the old bipolar couples, king/tyrant and Greek/Barbar, which the monarch Archelaos and his behaviour embodies. In fact, it seems that Archelaos is used as case study in order to

(re-)frame the discussion on the Athenian identity.

Archelaos' money was very attractive not only for the city of Athens, but for individuals as well. Towards the end of the fifth century there is a flow of Athenian artists to Macedonia, which becomes an artistic Eldorado. For Archelaos, the artistic patronage was addressed both to the rest of the Greeks and to the Macedonians. It was a means of consolidating his own position towards the Macedonian aristocracy and to promote his acceptance among the rest of the Greeks (p. 12). The court at Pella gave the artists the material context to experiment with new elements and forms of expression. However, these new trends in the poetic production were not always welcomed in Athens: In a period of crisis, tradition often prevails over innovation. The traditionalist discourse revived moments of past glory, such as the victory over the Persians, who meanwhile became Sparta's best ally. The new approach of such historic subjects by the artists invited in Pella did not always please the Athenian audience. That is perhaps, according to Hecht, the main reason why works by poets residing in Macedonia were harshly attacked. (Chapter III *Die Makedonienaufenthalte der griechischen Intellektuellen*).

Chapter IV (*Die Dichter und Künstler um Archelaos als Wegbereiter des Hellenismus*) is dedicated to the five intellectuals and their works. Hecht uses Gérard Genette's theory of „Intertextuality“ (p. 39–40) and searches for structural, stylistic and thematic influences of the works created by the artists around Archelaos over the later production during the Hellenistic period. „Hellenistic“ is defined as a cultural phenomenon, character-

¹ See lastly S. Müller, *Die Argeaden. Geschichte Makedoniens bis zum Zeitalter Alexanders des Großen*, Paderborn 2016, p. 173–182; F. Pownall, *The Role of Greek Literature at the Argead Court*, in: S. Müller / T. Howe / H. Bowden / R. Rollinger (eds.), *The History of the Argeads – New Perspectives*, Wiesbaden 2017, p. 215–229.

² The sculptor and architect Callimachos, allegedly the inventor of the Corinthian capital (Vitruvius, 4,1, 9–10), should also be added to Archelaos' guests: Ch. Saatsoglou-Paliadeli, *The Arts at Vergina-Aigai, The Cradle of the Macedonian Kingdom*, in: R. Lane-Fox (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, Leiden u.a. 2001, p. 271–295, here p. 275–276.

ized by mixture of genres, realistic representation, elaborated style, sophisticated mimesis of previous works, experimental attitude as well as focus on the everyday human preoccupations and new ways of religiosity, such as deification of rulers. According to Hecht, such features already exist in the works of the above artists, and their production could be interpreted as a forerunner of the Hellenistic artistic production and thus inscribed in the complex phenomenon of the artistic patronage as known at the courts of the Hellenistic world.

The most emblematic work is perhaps Euripides' *Archelaos*. In this tragedy (very probably produced between 408 and 406 and presented in Macedonia) the role of women in the (re-)construction of the royal dynastic genealogy of the Argeads is important. The genealogy itself is more extant than ever before in our sources and pace Hecht, it becomes a propagandistic means for the mythologizing of the living monarch. One can agree that we deal with a work produced in Macedonia and commissioned to Euripides by Archelaos for reinforcing the position of the king both inside and outside his kingdom. However, in this new genealogy, if it is indeed the oldest manipulation of the dynastic line, the homonymous forefather of the king is great grandchild of Heracles, son of Zeus. I think that the accent is on the relation to Heracles (i.e. Argos), not to Zeus, as Hecht argues (p. 57). It is not a direct divine sonship. This interpretation leads in my view to a second objection in Hecht's analysis, when Euripides' *Bacchae* is discussed: Hecht proposes the identification of Archelaos to Dionysos, and as such this should be interpreted as a foreplay to the rulers' divinization and assimilation to this deity, as known in the Hellenistic times. Yet, in the *Bacchae*, the political leader and therefore the obvious analogous figure to Archelaos is Pentheus. Therefore, I cannot completely follow this argumentation.

Agathon was a very idiosyncratic composer, poet, musician and actor, member of the avant-garde of the poetic and musical composition and stands for the New Dithyrambos. He combines rhetoric and experimental elements in order to renew tragedy. Timotheos was a *poeta doctus*, whose textual and

musical production was characterized by archaism, mannerism and melting of genres. Choirilos introduced the historical epos. Last, but not least, Zeuxis embodies innovation in painting: However, I am not entirely persuaded by Hecht's argument that the image of Pan presented by Zeuxis to Archelaos adumbrates the assimilation of the royal Macedonian figure to this deity. Granted, the addressee's tastes were important, but hybrid creatures, like Centaurs, with all their political, cultural and military reminiscences, were after all beloved by Zeuxis.³

Chapter V (*Die Intellektuellen um Archelaos als Konstellation. Abgrenzen und Ausblick*) poses pertinent questions on the formation of a network of artists and their group identity, both in real life and in terms of representation. The answer given by Hecht is that Archelaos and Pella were chosen by later authors as a projection screen for representing innovation retrospectively. For later authors, the successor of Athens and the precursor of Alexandria in cultural terms could only be found in Macedonia, the matrix of the Hellenistic civilisation. Its „capital“ city, and a most controversial king, were credited with the shape of things to come. In a whole, this is a convincing interpretation, which takes into account modern approaches of the artistic production and reception theories; it enriches our image of the self-presentation of the Macedonian king and offers new aspects of the artistic patronage phenomenon. In situating the artists and their work between tradition and innovation, it contributes to fill a gap in the Greek cultural history of the late 5th and early 4th century BC and to bring out the continuity between late classical and Hellenistic artistic production.

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³ On the use of the iconography and cult of Pan by the Macedonian kings see E. Voutiras, Pan en Macédoine, in: M. Kalaitzi et al. (eds), *Tales from the lands of the ethne. Essays in honour of M. B. Hatzopoulos*, Meletemata 78, Athens 2018, p. 397–411.