Review

Robin Rönnlund

University of Thessaly and Swedish Institute at Athens
robin.ronnlund@sia.gr

Georgios A. Zachos. 2021. ***Tabula Imperii Romani, J34-Athens: Thessaly***. Athens: Academy of Athens. ISBN 978-960-404-384-2, pp. 130, 7 maps, paperbound.

The central Greek region of Thessaly is perhaps most famous for the important Neolithic sites of Sesklo and Dimini, and the area is one of the first to which agriculture spread in mainland Europe. Regarding later periods, important Classical–Hellenistic cities, such as New Halos (Reinders and Prummel 2003), Kastro Kallithea (Tziafalias et al. 2009), and Goritsa (Bakhuizen 1992) are also found within the region, and recent archaeological exploration highlights the wealth of the area in Antiquity. The Roman period in Thessaly, however, have for long been overlooked; this in spite of the existence of large, important regional centers such as Demetrias, Hypata and Larisa.

For the scholar not literate in modern Greek, Thessaly constitutes one of the most inaccessible regions of Greece when it comes to archaeological evidence. Apart from a handful of foreign projects and collaborations in the area, nearly all fieldwork has been conducted by the local ephorates, and is consequently mainly available as short governmental notices in Greek. The only study presenting archaeological material from the whole region remains Friedrich Stählin's *Das hellenische Thessalien* (Stählin 1924), a landmark in Thessalian studies, which remains influential today, even if outdated. More thematic overviews exist, such as the chapter on Thessaly in the *Inventory of Archaic and Classical poleis* (Decourt et al. 2004), and the *Αρχαίες πόλεις Θεσσαλίας και περίοικων περιοχών* (Nikolaou and Kravaritou 2012), but these focus on urban sites and mainly on the Classical and Hellenistic periods. A gazetteer of sites –especially in English– summarizing the totality of Roman period sites and finds in the region would consequently be highly influential among scholars.

Enter the *Tabula imperii romani* (*TIR*) project, which has been in the making for nearly a century, aiming at publishing the archaeology of the Roman empire based on the 56 sheets of a 1:1,000,000 map of the wider Mediterranean world. There has been a drive to publish the Greek sheets of the *TIR* by the Academy of Athens, with several volumes published in recent years (within the *J 34 Athens* sheet, we may note the Aegean islands, Attica, Boeotia, and Epirus) For the reasons stated above, the addition of this volume on Thessaly by Zachos is especially welcome, as there has been remarkably little research on the Roman period in this region.

The volume contains a preface, a list of abbreviations, an introduction to the history and archaeology of Roman Thessaly, a catalogue of sites organized after geographical sub-region, and an index of place-names. Included is also an appendix with four full-color maps of Thessaly, one of the perioecic region of Achaia Phthiotis, one plan of Larisa (map 6), and one of Demetrias. All bibliographic entries are given within and after each section.

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As is outlined in the preface (11–2), the volume aims to deal exclusively with the period 168 B.C. to the end of the 4th century A.D. in the mainland portion of the modern administrative region of Thessaly (*perifereia Thessalias*), excluding the southern portion of the traditional region as it belongs to the modern region of Central Greece. The latter has been presented in a previous volume in the series by the same author (Zachos 2016). The northern perioecic area of Perrhaibia, however, is included in the volume, even if technically belonging to sheet K34 of the *TIR* – according to the author, as it both traditionally and administratively belongs to the region of Thessaly. The review of the history of Roman archaeology in Thessaly in the preface briefly outlines the current state of research, correctly stressing the pivotal role of the local Greek archaeological authorities in producing most of the available evidence.

The introduction (17–27) presents Thessaly thematically in sections, beginning with a very short summary of the available written sources (17), which, apart from the epigraphical dossier, Zachos regards as not overly reliable for the period studied.

The overview of the geography (17–8) of the region (as also the catalogue of sites) follows –somewhat surprisingly– the division of Thessaly into *tetrades* or sub-regions, supposedly established in the Archaic period by the semi-mythical Aleuas of Larisa.

The next section contains a short outline of the limited available information regarding the historical developments in Thessaly in the time following Flamininus's liberation of the Thessalian league from the Kingdom of Macedon in 196 B.C. (18–9). This includes the changes in spatial extent of the region, which belonged to the provinces of Achaea and Macedonia interchangeably over the centuries of Roman rule.

A sizeable part of the introduction is taken up by the section on the Thessalian League (19–21), also referred to by the Greek *koinon*. The development of the organization of the league in the Roman period is known mainly from epigraphical evidence, showing that it controlled much of the internal political and economic affairs of the region until it appears to disappear in the mid-3rd century A.D.

The section on federal cults (21) briefly mentions the cults of Athena Itonia and Zeus Eleutherios as the most prominent ones in the Roman period, while also mentioning the possible cult of Achilles as inferred from coins depicting the hero in the time of Hadrian. Imperial cults (21–2) are well-documented in the epigraphic record from Augustus and onwards, especially in the larger urban centers.

As the volume mainly consists of a catalogue of archaeological sites, it is somewhat surprising that the section on settlement patterns (22) is so brief. Broadly, Zachos correctly observes that the number of settlements drop dramatically in the archaeological record as one enters the Roman period, with only a few larger centers surviving and no new cities established. Roman re-investment in these pre-existing cities could be lavish, however, as exemplified by the construction of large public works in Larisa and Demetrias. Zachos sees economic and not only political factors underlying the decline of settlements, but does not present any specific reasons to explain the de-urbanization phenomenon apart from the military conflicts in the late Hellenistic period.

The section on the imperial road network in Thessaly (22–3) deals with the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and the Roman *milliaria* found in the region, and appears mainly to be a summary of the work by Decourt and Mottas (1997).

The coinage of Roman Thessaly is next addressed (23–5), showing that local cultic motifs were continuously depicted on coins issued by the League and the imperial mints alongside more general Roman themes and imperial portraits until the end of local mints in the 3rd century A.D. The same section gives an overview of the economy of Thessaly in the period, mainly focusing on the various exportable goods produced in the region.

The tenth and final section in the introduction introduces some (upper) parts of Thessalian society (26), stating that the majority of the wealthy families resided in the largest regional centers of Larisa, Demetrias and Hypata (the latter outside the geographical scope of the volume). The existence of Roman names in epigraphical sources (mainly funerary inscriptions) indicate an influx of persons from the Italian peninsula from as early as the 2nd century B.C., mainly in the administrative centers of Demetrias and Larisa. Among the religious groups,

of which there were many (especially in the large local capital of Demetrias, as has been much researched by Sofia Kravaritou), only Jews and emerging Christian communities are mentioned.

The main bulk of the volume consists of the catalogue of sites (29–119), 172 in total, arranged by sub-region, including Phthiotis, Thessaliotis, Hestiaiotis, Pelasgiotis, Magnesia, Perrhaibia, Athamania, Dolopia, Aithikia, and finally an addendum to Achaia Phthiotis (this region was published as part of Zachos 2016). Each sub-region is presented with a brief introduction to the main relevant ancient sources, topography and bibliography, before presenting an index of sites. The latter are given in alphabetical order, with short descriptions of main archaeological findings, relevant bibliography, and location on the maps. Due to the nature of the available evidence, some entries are far more detailed than others, such as Larisa (60–72) and Demetrias (82–90), and there are also descriptions of some important historical events, like that of the battle of Palaipharsalos (30–1).

Gazetteers of Thessalian archaeology are not numerous, and this volume will thus be important for the study of the region, as many non-Greek speaking scholars still rely on the *Inventory* or the unreliable *Barrington Atlas* (Talbert 2000). This is where the main contribution of the volume lies, in presenting a relatively complete and updated catalogue (until 2020) of Roman period sites in Thessaly *in English* as derived not only from secondary publications, but from the primary (if preliminary) reports by the local archaeological authorities. This work will surely help at rectifying the present situation where many scholars are relying on outdated and uncritical secondary sources of the 20th century.

However, the volume is not free from faults, of which –sadly– there are many. The introduction, even if admirable as a general overview of the present interpretations of the socio-political organization of Roman Thessaly, poorly reflects the thematic contents of the catalogue, which mainly relates to settlements and cemeteries. It is regrettable that there is no real outline of the local economic system of Thessaly apart from the goods exported to the wider empire, and that the only social group mentioned is the absolute urban elite. The plantation economy that was established in the region already from the 2nd century B.C. is clearly reflected in the archaeological evidence, and its demographic effect must have been immense, as is evident from elsewhere in Greece (Alcock 1993). The statement that the Thessalian elite mostly "lived and operated in Larisa, Demetrias […] and Hypata" (26) lacks nuance, as exemplified by the lavish funerary monuments and grave goods found at locations such as Episkopi at Mouzaki (ancient Gomphoi?) (*ArchDelt* 49 *Chron*. B΄1 (1994) [1999] 329; *ArchDelt* 50 *Chron*. B΄1 (1995) [2000] 380; *ArchDelt* 52 *Chron*. B΄2 (1997) [2003] 473; *ArchDelt* 53 *Chron*. B΄2 (1998) [2004] 448), Xinovrysi east of Kallithiro (*ArchDelt* 43 *Chron*. B΄1 (1993) [1998] 256), and Zarkos (ancient Phaÿttos) (Rienach 1887, 70), which testify to the presence and wealth of local elites.

There are also several problems with the catalogue as presented, both relating to modern and ancient topography, as well as to the way in which the sites are presented. What strikes this reader first, is the inclusion of a relatively large number of sites, which clearly fall outside of the chronological span of the volume. Archaic to Hellenistic sites with no reported Roman material, such as the *kastra* at Sykeon (42), Skoumpos (49), and Agios Ioannis (94) figure among the entries, as does a number of locations only known from Livy's accounts of occurrences in the pre-Roman period. The criteria for including certain Hellenistic settlements are also not clear, with several cities mentioned in the same passages in Livy not included in the catalogue, as for example, Eretria (33.6), Phacium/Phakion (Liv. 32.13, 36.13), Phaeca (Liv. 32.14), and Silana (Liv. 36.13). Furthermore, it makes little sense to include Orthos, Peirasia, Pelinna (at Paliogardiki?), and several other Classical–Hellenistic cities in the catalogue, as there is no published material of the Roman period from these sites. This situation of extensive urban abandonment is also outlined in the section on settlement patterns in the introduction (22), and the evidence provided in each individual catalogue entry makes this even more clear.

Additionally, the catalogue does not make enough distinction between actual archaeological sites and locations identified from literary sources. As examples, the identifications of ancient Euhydrium/Euhydrion (29–30), Kallitheron (37), and Ereikinion (105) with the archaeological sites of Chtouri, Sekliza and Kastri Eleftherochoriou are highly conjectural and unsubstantiated, which is not stated nor reflected in the catalogue.

As Zachos expresses a sensibly critical understanding of Strabo as an author presenting a diachronic palimpsest of the ancient region (17), it is surprising to find in the catalogue several unlocated sites only known from this author, such as Alalkomenai (43–4), Ichnai (36), and Oxyneia (48). As these catalogue entries (and others like them) contain no other information but scholarly speculation, it is doubtful whether they should have been included, which is also the case with semi-mythological locations such as the Homeric Asterion (36), Ithome (45), Ormenion (82) and Thaumakia/Thaumakie (100). Furthermore, the use of both ancient and modern toponyms for headers in the catalogue is confusing and causes in some cases the double inclusion of one site. For example, the site at modern Vlochos (42) is also included under the entries for Asterion (36) and Limnaion (39), leading to three parallel –but not identical– sets of information relating to the same site.

The choice of arranging the catalogue according to the reconstructed Archaic–Classical *tetrades* is somewhat inexplicable, as its *merē* do not appear to be overly relevant to most of the Roman period in Thessaly. The epigraphic evidence indicates that the tetradic system was gradually abandoned in the early Roman period, and a more consolidated Thessaly appears in the 1st century B.C. (Bouchon and Helly 2015, 246–49). As the supposed borders of these *tetrades* (if they indeed were territorial and not just social/military) are not known, it would have been more useful to use modern administrative units such as the regions (*nomoi*). The modern topography of Thessaly as presented in the catalogue is also not fully correct, with several apparent mistakes (ancient Atrax is not in Pineiada in the municipality of Farkadona, but in Kastro in the municipality of Larisa, 54; Paliampela is not in the municipality of Sofades but in Palamas, 41). The exclusion from the catalogue of the ancient sub-regions Achaia Phthiotis, Ainis, Malis, and Oitaia –which were all integrated parts of Thessaly in the Roman period– is unfortunate, especially as Ainis and the role of its largest settlement Hypata in the Thessalian political landscape is frequently discussed in the Introduction.

Disregarding these stated issues, the collected information presented in the catalogue clearly highlights the discontinuity between Hellenistic and Roman Thessaly. Several large and important urban sites –such as Atrax, Pelinna (?) and Pharsalos– appear to have been partially or completely abandoned in the first decades of the 2nd century B.C., and several others shrunk to a fraction of their former sizes. A community's choice of sides in the Roman–Macedonian conflicts in the late Hellenistic period appears to have influenced this process –at least initially– but it cannot explain the continuous dwindling of urbanity in Thessaly in the centuries to come. Overall, the settlement pattern of the Roman period appears to quickly drift towards smaller, scattered villages rather than larger nucleated settlements. The epigraphic evidence indicates that the abandoned urban centers of the Classical–Hellenistic period were often only used for some communal purposes, as exemplified by the manumission inscriptions noted at several of these locations, several of which contain references to the *polis* long into the 2nd century A.D. (Zelnick-Abramovitz 2013).

Overall, the *TIR* series aims at being affordable –as indicated by the low retail price– but the quality of this volume appears to have suffered as a result. The type-setting and proof-reading are poorly executed, with numerous peculiarities and inconsistencies. The many examples of faulty type-setting are especially troublesome, such as the chaotic paragraph indentation and the inconsistent use and formatting of headers, of which there appears to be no real system.

Perhaps most regrettably –as the main function of the volume is to facilitate access to evidence– the disorderly and idiosyncratic bibliographical system makes it often difficult to follow references, mainly because the bibliography is only found at the end of the paragraph. Some quotes, claims, and observations are thus left without the reader being able to understand which of the cited works is actually the reference. A great number of bibliographical entries are incomplete, misspelled ("Stahlin" for Stählin, 11), or contain errors ("Nielsen 2004" for Hansen and Nielsen 2004), offering the impression of hurried compilation.

Mistakes in punctuation and character formatting are plentiful throughout the volume, the most awkward probably being the haphazard italicization of Latin and ancient Greek ("*annual strategos*", 19; "taurothēría", 24). Inconsistent and misspelled transliterations of toponyms are further frequent in both ancient ("Aenis" for

Ainis, 17; "Makran Kome" for Makra Kome, 23; "Phthiotis" and "Phthiōtis" appear in same paragraph, 29) and modern Greek ("Seklitza" for Sekliza, 37; "Peneiada" and "Peneias" in same entry, 54–5; "Palama" for Palamas throughout the volume), and the stated adherence to the UN and ELOT standards (which are, in fact, two different systems) of transliterating modern Greek (12) is not apparent ("Pharsala" for Farsala, 31; "Skoubos" for Skoumpos, 49; "Trikke" for Trikki, 50). A closer proof-reading would probably also have eliminated the more evident factual mistakes, such as the identification of the present Neochoritikos river with ancient Enipeus (18, should be the Tsanarlis) or the claim that Christian communities existed in Hypata "as early as the early 1st c. A.D." (26).

Despite its shortcomings, this volume will be an invaluable resource for any researcher of Roman Thessaly, but should be read with caution, due to the aforementioned issues. With its unprecedented level of detail and English language, the volume will be of tremendous interest and use for scholars of ancient Thessaly and for anyone researching the Greek mainland in the Roman period, and will hopefully prompt more work on this fascinating and still understudied region.

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